



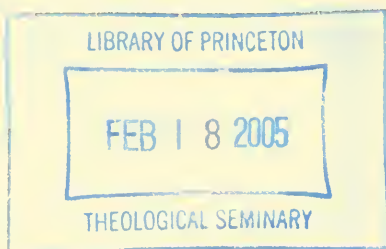
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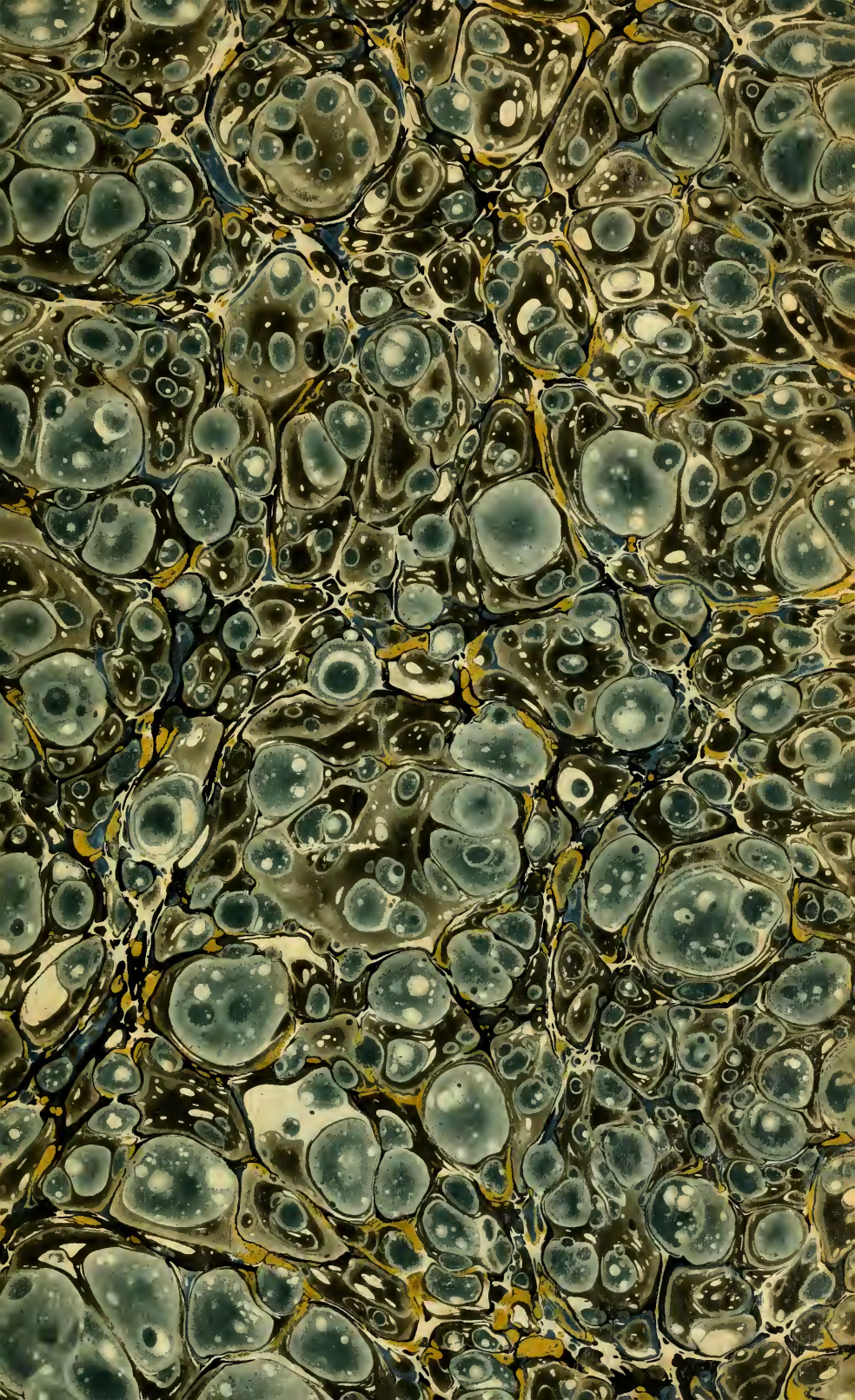


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THE  
COMPLETE WORKS  
OF THE  
**REV. ANDREW FULLER,**

WITH A  
MEMOIR OF HIS LIFE.

BY  
ANDREW GUNTON FULLER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

**VOL. II.**

EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES AND NOTES—SERMONS AND SKETCHES—CIRCULAR  
LETTERS—LETTERS ON SYSTEMATIC DIVINITY—THOUGHTS ON PREACH-  
ING—LIFE OF PEARCE—APOLOGY FOR MISSIONS—TRACTS AND ES-  
SAYS—REVIEWS—ANSWERS TO QUERIES—FUGITIVE PIECES.

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EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE

APOCALYPSE.





TO THE

BAPTIST CHURCH OF CHRIST

AT KETTERING.

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DEAR BRETHREN,

It is at your request that these Discourses appear in print. When in the course of exposition I first entered on them, it was not from an idea that I at that time sufficiently understood the prophecy, but from a hope that by this means I might understand it better. And, now that I have ventured to publish, it is not because I am fully satisfied of having given the true meaning in every instance. There are parts in which I can only say, I have done the best I could. If, however, I had not been satisfied as to the general meaning of the prophecy, or had been conscious of having thrown no new light upon it, I should have felt it to be my duty to withhold my papers from the public eye.

Observing the blessing pronounced on "him that readeth, and on them that hear, the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein," I had a desire to enter upon it, accompanied, I think, with some sense of my dependence upon the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit. The reason also assigned why we should study this part of the Holy Scriptures in particular,—that "the time is at hand," seemed to have greater force after a lapse of above seventeen hundred years than it could have at the time of its being written. I conceived also that the events of the present times, though we should beware of illusive hypotheses founded upon them, yet called for a special attention to prophecy. They might also be expected to throw some light upon it. Some late writers upon the subject appear to understand many things which earlier ones did not; and there is reason to expect that prophecy will be understood much better in years to come than it is at present.

The method I pursued was, first to read it carefully over, and, as I went on, to note down what first struck me as the meaning. After reducing these notes into something like a scheme of the prophecy, I examined the best expositors I could procure, and, comparing my own first thoughts with theirs, was better able to judge of their justness. Some of them were confirmed, some corrected, and many added to them.

I have dealt but little in quotations; refusing nothing, however, from any writer, which appeared to me to be just. And, as to what appeared otherwise, I have generally passed it over without attempting to refute it, as being rather desirous of giving the true meaning than of proving that other men's opinions were founded in mistake.

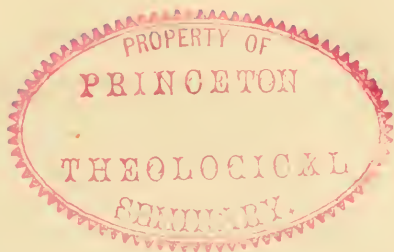
The exposition of a prophecy, delivered in symbolical language, must be liable to many mistakes. A style so highly figurative furnishes great scope for the imagination, which, unless it be accompanied with a sober and just judgment, will lead us into labyrinths of error. How far I have been enabled to avoid them, and to succeed in throwing light upon any part of the prophecy, it is not for me to decide. This I know, my object has been to obtain its true meaning, and to communicate it in a manner suited, not to the curious, but to the Christian reader.

The manuscript has lain by me between four and five years, during which I have frequently re-examined its contents, and availed myself of any farther light which by reading or reflection has appeared on the subject. During this period several of our most highly esteemed friends, who joined in the request, are gone the way of all the earth. We shall soon follow them. We have seen enough, amidst all the troubles of our times, to gladden our hearts; and trust that our children will see greater things than these.

I am your affectionate Pastor,

ANDREW FULLER.

*Kettering, March 21, 1815.*



## SCHEME OF THE PROPHECY.

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THE addresses to the seven churches are applicable to all other churches in similar circumstances in all ages, but not prophetic.—The things which the apostle was commanded to write being those which he *had seen*; those which *were*, and those which *should be hereafter*, prove that the prophecy commences, not from the time of the vision, but probably from the ascension of Christ, in like manner as the four monarchies of Daniel commenced from the rising up of the Babylonish empire, many years before the time of the vision.—Chap. i.—iii.

The book of *seven seals* contains the whole of the prophecy, the trumpets being only a subdivision of the seventh seal, and the vials of the seventh trumpet.—Chapters iv. v.

The opening of the *first seal*,—on which appeared “a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer,”—represents the great progress of the gospel in the apostolic age.—Chap. vi. 1, 2.

The opening of the *second seal*,—on which there appeared “a red horse, and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another,”—signifies the wars between the Jews and the Romans, who had united in persecuting Christ and his followers.—Chap. vi. 3, 4.

The opening of the *third seal*,—on which there appeared a “black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand,” &c.,—denotes a famine, or scarcity approaching to famine, in which the necessaries of life would be required to be weighed out with the utmost care, and which was fulfilled during the reigns of the *Antonines*.—Chap. vi. 5, 6.

The opening of the *fourth seal*,—on which there appeared “a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell followed,”—signifies great mortality, owing to the intrigues and intestine wars in the empire, between the years 193 and 270, which produced famine and pestilence, and by diminishing the number of men gave ascendancy to the beasts of prey.—Chap. vi. 7, 8.

The *fifth seal* was opened,—on which were seen “under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them that they should rest [or wait] yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” This seal represents the state of the church about the year 270, when it had endured nine out of the ten heathen persecutions, and was about to endure the tenth, under Dioclesian and Maximian, after which God would avenge their cause, by an utter overthrow of their persecutors.—Chap. vi. 9—11.

The opening of the *sixth seal*,—on which appeared “an earthquake,” and as it were a day of judgment,—signified the Revolution of Constantine, when the pagan empire was overthrown, and the prayers of the souls under the altar were answered.—Chap. vi. 12—17.

The “sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads” portends danger to the spiritual interests of the church from its outward prosperity, and distinguishes the faithful from the crowd of nominal Christians that would now be pressing into it.—Chap. vii. 1—8.

This chapter concludes with a vision of the martyrs who had overcome, serving to strengthen the servants of God to encounter new trials.—Chap. vii. 9—17.

The *seventh seal* is opened.—A solemn pause ensues.—It is then subdivided into *seven trumpets*, which are put into the hands of seven angels; and the sounding of them is pre-  
faced by “another angel’s offering up the prayers of the saints with much incense, filling his censer with fire, and casting it into the earth,” denoting that the judgments to be brought by the trumpets would be in answer to their prayers.—Chap. viii. 1—5.

The sounding of the *first four trumpets*, which affect “the earth, the sea, the fountains of waters, and the sun, moon, and stars,” denote the judgments on the *continental*, the *maritime*, and the *mountainous* parts of the empire, by the invasion of the northern nations, the issue of which was the eclipse of the *government* supreme and subordinate. As the seals overthrew the Pagan empire, these overthrow the Christian.—Chap. viii. 6—12.

The sounding of the *fifth, or first woe-trumpet*, on which followed “smoke from the bottomless pit, and locusts,” represents Popery as filling the world with infernal darkness, and thus preparing the way for Mahomedan delusion and depredation.—Chap. ix. 1—12.

The *sixth, or second woe-trumpet*, is complex, relating partly to the “loosing of the four angels in Euphrates,” followed by “an army of horsemen,” and partly to the conduct of “the rest of the men, who were not killed by these plagues,”—the former denoting the rise and ravages of the Turks, by whom the eastern empire, and with it the Greek church, were overthrown; and the latter, the idolatries and cruelties of the members of the western church, who, instead of taking warning from the fate of the eastern, repented not, but persisted in corrupting the religion of Jesus Christ, and in persecuting his witnesses.—Chap. ix. 13—21, to chap. xi. 14.

The vision of the angel with “a little book open,” whose cry was followed by “seven thunders,” refers to the western or papal church, which the prophecy now goes some ages back to take up, and which occupies the whole of what follows till the beast and the false prophet are taken, or down to the times of the Millennium.—The “thunders” may probably refer to the same things, in the form of a general threatening, which are afterwards particularly disclosed under the vials: for it appears to be of their execution that the angel swears by Him that liveth for ever and ever that there shall be *no delay*: but that in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound (that is, in the times of the pouring out of the vials,) the mystery of God should be finished. This accounts for the command “not to write them,” as they would be particularized under the vials.—Chap. x.

The eleventh and three following chapters are considered as *three general descriptions* of the false church, chiefly under the 1260 years of antichristian usurpation, together with the state of the true church during the same period. These general descriptions of course are not confined to the times of this or that trumpet, but comprehend those of the greater part of the trumpets.

The *first general description*, contained in the eleventh chapter, denominates the false church “gentiles,” and the true church “witnesses,” who bear testimony against them. It leaves out of “the temple of God” the place occupied by the former. It represents, by the “slaughter of the witnesses,” the prevalence of the antichristian party; by their “resurrection and ascension to heaven,” the Protestant Reformation; and by the “earthquake,” in which a tenth part of the city fell (and which, by the way, marks the termination of the sixth, or second woe-trumpet,) the late revolution in France. By the sounding of the seventh angel, a signal is given of the progress of the gospel. And, by the song of the heavenly choir, are intimated the judgments which should be inflicted on the antichristian party, and the Millennial glory that should follow.—Chap. xi.

The *second general description*, contained in the twelfth chapter, represents the true church, prior to the introduction of antichristian corruptions, as “clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” These corruptions originate in a third part of the stars of heaven being drawn from their orbits by the tail of the dragon, and cast upon the earth; or by the rulers of the church being seduced by the riches and honors of the Roman empire. The dragon, having thus prevailed over a part of the Christian church, aims to devour the other. The true church fleeth into the wilderness, where she exists without legal protection or toleration till the Reformation in the sixteenth century, when Michael fights her battles, and the dragon is cast down. Succeeding persecutions are the effect of his defeat.—Chap. xii.

The *third general description*, contained in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters, represents “a beast rising out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, &c.,” signifying that secular government by which the false church has been all along supported—namely, the Roman empire under its last head, after it had been divided into ten independent kingdoms, each of which was a horn of the beast. When



paganism was overthrown, the beast in one of its heads was "as it were wounded to death;" but, when Christianity became so corrupted as to be paganized, "the deadly wound was healed."—Chap. xiii. 1—10.

Another beast "rose out of the earth, with two horns like a lamb, but who spake as a dragon,"—denoting the hierarchy, or false church itself, which is contemporary, and all along acts in concert with the first or secular beast.—Chap. xiii. 11—18.

During the ravages of these beasts, and in opposition to them and their followers, appears "a Lamb standing upon Mount Zion and with him 144,000, having his Father's name written in their foreheads." Their victory over antichristian error and corruption at the reformation is signified by "the voice of many waters, like thunder, and of harpers harping with their harps." The spirit lately excited to carry the gospel to the heathen is thought to be denoted by the evangelical "angel." The diminution and approaching dissolution of the antichristian power is represented by "another angel following, and saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen!" And the danger of symbolizing and tampering with antichristianism is suggested by the solemn warnings of a "third angel." Then follows that of which the signal only had been given in the cry of the second angel—namely, the overthrow of Babylon, which is denoted by a harvest and a vintage.—Chap. xiv.

Three general descriptions having been given, each of which carried us to the end of the 1260 years, the series of the prophecy, from the time of the sounding of the seventh, or third woe-trumpet, is now resumed. This trumpet wears a two-fold aspect: it is partly a woe-trumpet, and partly what may be called a jubilee-trumpet. In the former view the SEVEN VIALS are a subdivision of it—in the latter it comprehends the Millennium, and all that follows to the end of the prophecy.—Chap. xv.

The sounding of the seventh angel is the signal for the commencement of the pouring out of the vials, and is supposed to have taken place within the last five-and-twenty years. The vials are interpreted on the principle of their resemblance to the trumpets:—namely, the *first*, poured out on the "earth," is supposed to denote the late wars on the continent, between France and the other continental powers: the *second*, poured upon the "sea," the wars carrying on in the maritime nations of Spain and Portugal: the *third*, poured upon the "rivers and fountains of water," the wars which, if the principle here adopted be just, will ere long befall Italy and Savoy, the countries where was shed in shocking profusion the blood of the Waldenses: the *fourth*, poured upon the "sun," the oppression of the supreme government to which the antichristian church will be subjected at the time: the *fifth*, poured on the "seat of the beast," such judgments as will either drive him from his den, or render him very miserable in it: the *sixth*, poured on 'Euphrates,' and producing the battle of "Armageddon," partly the overthrow of the Turkish empire, and partly the temporal ruin of the adherents of popery: the *seventh*, poured into the "air," the overthrow of the spiritual power of popery, and of every other species of false religion.—Chap. xvi.

The three following chapters are considered as *Notes of Illustration*, containing more particular accounts of several subjects which have been already introduced. In the first of them (chap. xvii.) the false church is described under the opprobrious name of "the great whore," and the powers which support her under that of "a beast with seven heads and ten horns." This beast, namely, the Roman empire, "was, and is not, and yet is." When it was Pagan, it existed with all its beastly properties; when it became Christian, it was supposed to have lost them, and to be a beast no longer; but by the corruptions introduced into Christianity, and which were supported by it, the beast still continued.

The "seven heads" of the beast have a two-fold application.—First, they are said to be "seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth;" referring to the seven hills on which Rome, when in its full extent, is well known to have stood, and so pointing out the seat of the hierarchy.—They are also said to be "seven kings," that is, governments, under which the empire had subsisted, did subsist, or would subsist hereafter. The forms under which it had subsisted, but which were passed away at the time of the commencement of the prophecy, were *kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, and military tribunes*; the form under which it then subsisted was that of *emperors*; and that which was "yet to come, and to continue a short space," was the government which succeeded the overthrow of the emperors, and continued under various changes for about 300 years, till the days of Charlemagne; when a government was established which combined all the nations of Europe in support of the antichristian hierarchy. This short-lived intermediate power might, on some accounts, be considered as the "seventh" head of the beast, and as such be distinguished from its last head, which, in this view, would be the "eighth:" but upon the whole it was rather to be considered as belonging to that in which it terminated, and which in this view would be "of the seven."

The "ten horns" are the kingdoms of Europe, which, till the Reformation, all united with the empire in supporting the harlot; but which have already begun and will go on to hate her, to eat her flesh, and to burn her with fire.—Chap. xvii.

The second of these *Notes of Illustration* (contained in the 18th chapter and the first eight verses of the 19th) is a *sacred ode*, sent, as it were, from heaven, to be sung at the overthrow of the antichristian church, in which are celebrated not only the "fall of Babylon," but "the marriage of the Lamb;" that is, not only the termination of the reign of the beast, but the introduction of the Millennial reign of Christ, which shall follow upon it.—Chap. xviii. xix. 1—8.

The third and last of these *notes* (which begins at the ninth verse of the 19th chapter) describes the *actual accomplishment* of the fall of Babylon, which the foregoing ode had anticipated. He whose name is the Word of God goes forth "riding upon a white horse," (The appropriate symbol for the success of the gospel,) joined by his faithful followers. This provokes the adherents of the beast and of the false prophet, who, gathering together their forces to oppose them, perish in the attempt.—Chap. xix. 9—21.

As the overthrow of the antichristian hierarchy was celebrated in the preceding ode, under the symbol of "the fall of Babylon," prior to its actual accomplishment; so was the Millennium under that of "the marriage supper of the Lamb." This glorious period is now introduced as *actually taking place*. The "beast and the false prophet," or the secular and ecclesiastical powers, being fallen, the dragon himself is next seized and thrust into a state of confinement.—"Thrones" may denote stations of importance both in the world and in the church, which will now be filled by righteous men: thus "the kingdom is given to the people of the saints of the Most High; and, as the public mind will favor it, righteousness will every where prevail; corruptions, oppressions, wars, tumults, and rebellions, will cease from the earth, and all nations feel towards each other as children of the same family.—Now "judgment" is given to the martyrs, inasmuch as the cause for which they were slain is vindicated, and their memory honored; while "the rest," or the remnant of the antichristian party, who escaped from the battle in which their leaders were "taken," will be as dead men till the thousand years are ended. To them this glorious period will be a burial, but to the other a "resurrection."

After the Millennium, Satan is loosed for a little season, and makes one more desperate effort to corrupt the world, and to destroy the church.—This brings on the general conflagration—the resurrection of the dead—and the last judgment.—Chap. xx.

After this appear "the new heavens and the new earth," spoken of by Peter, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." The world, purified from sin and its effects, becomes the everlasting abode of the righteous, who, having been raised from the dead, are immortal.—The whole animate and inanimate creation, in so far as it has been "made subject to the vanity" of subserving the cause of evil, is emancipated, and possesses that for which it has "travailed in pain," from the fall of man until now.—No more shall the earth be polluted and desolated by a succession of *beasts*; but lo, "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them, and be their God!"

**CONCLUSION.**—The present the period of the vials; or that space of time which begins with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and ends in the Millennium.—The termination of the 1260 years probably uncertain. A time of persecution to be previously expected.—Great success will attend the preaching of the gospel before the Millennium.—Aspect of the present times.—The Millennial glory.—Concluding reflections on the recent changes in Europe.



## EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES.

### DISCOURSE I.

#### THE INTRODUCTION AND PREPARATORY VISION.

##### Revelation i.

I HAVE lately expressed a wish to enter upon this difficult part of the Holy Scriptures; not because I conceive myself at present equal to the undertaking, but because I think I understand something of it, and hope, by going through it in the way of exposition, to understand more. I enter on it with fear: but, as I shall not attempt to explain that which appears to me of doubtful import, I hope it may not be presumptuous, but a profitable undertaking.\*

Ver. 1—3. The book takes its title, it seems, from the first verse. All scripture is a revelation, in some sense, but this is a disclosure of things to come.

Christ is the great prophet of the church. He it was, as we shall see, that was found worthy to open the sealed book. It is necessary to distinguish between the knowledge of Christ as a divine person, and that which he possesses as the prophet of his church. As divine he knows all things; all things are naked to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; but as a prophet he receives his messages from the Father, and makes them known to us. In this sense he knew not the day of judgment; that is, it was no part of the revelation which God gave to him to make known to men. As Christ in the character of a prophet has these things revealed to him, so, in communicating them after his ascension, he made use of an angel. It might have been too much for a mortal man to be admitted directly to converse with him in his glorified state.

The writer introduces himself to the churches in the character of a *witness*, declaring that the things which he was about to communicate were from above—they

were "the word of God," and therefore might be depended upon—"the testimony of Jesus Christ," on the fulfilment of which he rested the truth of the gospel, and which he himself in vision plainly "saw."

To induce us to give the most serious attention to the subject, a blessing is pronounced on those who "read, and hear, and keep," the words of this prophecy, especially as the time of its fulfilment was at hand. I recollect no other part of Scripture that is prefaced with such an inducement to read and understand and practically regard it. The prophecy must be of immediate concern to the church of Christ, and requires to be read and heard, not for the gratifying of curiosity, but for the obedience of faith. We must "keep" it, as one engaged in a voyage through dangerous seas keeps his chart, and consults it on all necessary occasions. It is that to the New Testament church which the pillar of the cloud was to the church in the wilderness, guiding it through the labyrinths of antichristian errors and corruptions. It must not be neglected under a notion of its being hard to be understood. As well might the mariner amidst the rocks neglect his friendly chart under an idea of its being difficult to understand and apply it.

It would seem, too, from this promise, that the successful study of the prophecy depends not merely on literary attainments, but on a practical regard to the things contained in it. Whatever advantages attach to the former, and these are many and great, they will not succeed nor obtain the blessing without the latter.

Ver. 4—7. The proconsular Asia had probably been the chief seat of the writer's labors since the death of the apostle Paul. To the churches in this province, therefore, he was directed to address the prophecy. The benediction is affectionate and appro-

\* These discourses were delivered in the years 1809 and 1810, drawn out in 1811, and have lain by from that time to the present (1815.)

prate. The periphrasis used of God the Father, "Who is, and who was, and who is to come," is singularly appropriate as an introduction to a prophecy concerning the mutability of creatures. The "seven spirits" are the abundant gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Spirit in respect of his abundant gifts and graces. The number seven is not only a well-known symbol of perfection, but corresponds with the number of the churches; and, as they represent the whole church, so these describe the Holy Spirit in his rich and abundant influences.

To the blessing from the Father and the Holy Spirit he adds, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." By the first of these appellations our Lord accredits the prophecy as being his testimony; and by the last two cheers his suffering followers, by reminding them of his having emerged from death and obtained a complete ascendancy over all his and their enemies.

And now, having mentioned the name of Jesus Christ, he cannot leave it without adding a sweet doxology on his dying love, and its interesting effects—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Nor has he yet taken leave of this subject: Christ's suffering people must be directed to his second coming, when the persecuting Jews who pierced him in his person, and the persecuting Gentiles who were now piercing him in his members, will be called to account. To their just punishment, dreadful as it will be, the servants of God will add their "Amen."

Ver. 8. The apostle, after expatiating on the glory of Christ in his salutation, now introduces him as speaking himself. That these are his words, and not those of the Father, will appear from comparing them with ch. i. 1, and xxii. 6—16. It was Jesus Christ, and not the Father, who communicated, through the angel, with his servant John. The Father is sometimes referred to in the prophecy; but, if I mistake not, it is in the third person only: not as speaking, but as spoken of. Jesus Christ therefore is "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the almighty;" and consequently is able to preserve his church, and to execute the punishments denounced in this prophecy against her enemies.

Ver. 9—20. It was usual for the most eminent prophets to be introduced to their work by an extraordinary vision. Such was the introduction of Isaiah (ch. vi.) of Jere-

miah, and of Ezekiel; and such is that of John. Having been banished to the Isle of Patmos by Domitian for preaching Christ, the spirit of prophecy came upon him on the Lord's-day, when he heard from behind him a great voice as of a trumpet, saying I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, and what thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia. Turning to see whence the voice proceeded, he saw "seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of them one like unto the Son of man." It was from him therefore that the great voice proceeded. In short, he saw the Lord Jesus Christ, who as to his human nature had lived and died on earth, but who as to his divine person was "the first and the last," standing, as the great High Priest over the house of God, in the midst of his churches, clothed with ineffable glory.

The effect of such a vision was more than a frail mortal could sustain. He who when his Lord was upon earth leaned familiarly on his bosom now "fell at his feet as dead." But, laying his right hand upon him, he said, "Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." This impressive vision would not only excite in his mind a deep interest in the kingdom of Christ, and so prepare him for what he was to see, and hear, and write; but must have tended greatly to relieve him from his anxieties for his brethren and companions in tribulation from whom he had been separated. All the apostles were dead: he only was left, and the heathen rulers had banished him. Hell and death threatened to swallow up the church. In this situation he is told not to fear, for that his Lord lived, and had the control of both the invisible and visible world.

Being commanded to write "the things which he *had seen*, the things that *were*, and the things that *should be hereafter*," we may conclude that what he wrote respected not only the future state of the church from the time of the vision, but the whole gospel dispensation, from the ascension of Christ to the end of the world.

What is said of the "seven stars and seven golden candlesticks" would tend greatly to encourage both the ministers and the churches of Christ. There was a golden candlestick in the tabernacle, and in the second temple.—Exod. xxv. 31—40; Zech. iv. 2. That was but one candlestick, though it had seven branches: but these are seven candlesticks; agreeing with the different constitutions of the Old and New Testament church, the former being national, and the latter congregational.

## DISCOURSE II.

## THE EPISTLES TO THE CHURCHES.

Rev. ii. 1—17.

BEFORE we enter on these epistles distinctly, it is proper to make a few general remarks.

*First:* Some have considered these churches as *prophetically representing the different states of the church at large under the gospel dispensation*. There is no doubt but analogies may be found between them: but it appears to me that the hypothesis is unfounded. The church of Ephesus, if designed to represent the whole Christian church in the age of the apostles, might be expected to sustain as high a character at least as any that follow; whereas Smyrna, in respect of its purity, is manifestly superior to it. Every thing addressed to the latter is in its praise; which is not the case with the former. But surely it is not true that any age of the church since that of the apostles is to be compared with it, much less that it has excelled it in evangelical purity.

Others, doubting the justness of this hypothesis, have considered the epistles to the churches as referring to *the then present state of the church*, and the sealed book to that which was *future*. And this they consider as agreeing with the division of the book into “things which the writer *had seen*, things which *were*, and things which *should be hereafter*,”—Ch. i. 19. This is MR. LOWMAN’S view of it. When I entered upon these Discourses from the pulpit I adopted this opinion: but before I had proceeded far in the work I was compelled to give it up; the reasons for which will appear when we enter on the opening of the seals, in ch. vi., under the fifth general remark in Discourse VI.

Instead of considering the epistles to the seven churches either as prophetic, or as descriptive of the state of the *church at large as it then was*, I should rather consider them as descriptive of the *state of those seven churches as they then were*, and as designed to furnish encouragements, reproofs, warnings, and counsels, *to all other churches and Christians, in all future ages, as their cases are found to resemble theirs*. The application ought not to be confined to one age more than to another, nor even to collective bodies: every one, in every age, that hath an ear to hear, is called to “hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

In applying them to ourselves, we should consider the Great Head of the Church as watching over us, and closely observing the state of our hearts towards him, with all our proceedings, whether good or evil; and inquire what would be his address to us were he to commission an angel or an apostle to write to us.

*Secondly:* By the epistles being addressed to the *angels*, we are not to understand them as concerning the pastors only, in distinction from the churches, but to consider them as their representatives. That which the Spirit saith in these epistles is “to the churches.”

*Thirdly:* In every address to the churches Christ assumes a distinct *character*, taken from some one part of the description given of him in the preceding vision; each of which, if we rightly understand it, will be found to be appropriate to the character or circumstances of the church addressed.

*Fourthly:* Every address begins with *commendation*, provided there be any thing to commend. This shows that Christ knows all, and notices that which is good amongst us as well as that which is evil; nay, that he takes more pleasure in noticing the good than in complaining of the evil—an example worthy of our imitation in dealing with one another. If we wish to reclaim our brethren who have fallen into sin, we must begin by appreciating the good in them, and by candidly commending it, before we reprove them for their faults. Such was the conduct of Paul to the Corinthians, when about to censure them for their abuse of the Lord’s supper—“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them unto you.”

*Fifthly:* Most of the churches have somewhat on account of which they are *censured* and *admonished*. This is an humbling truth, even of the first and purest churches: how much more of those in our times! If the Son of God, whose eyes are as a flaming fire, were to pronounce our character, would there not be “somewhat against us?” We can see each other’s errors and defects; but it were to much more advantage if we could detect our own.

*Finally:* Every epistle concludes with a *promise* to him that overcometh, and an *exhortation* to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Professing Christians in this world are soldiers enlisted under the banner of Christ. Some have proved deserters; many have been partially overcome; the Captain of the Lord’s host here addresses them, holding forth the glory that awaits them who are finally victorious.

Ver. 1—7. *Ephesus* was the metropolis of the Proconsular Asia; and it is probable that all these churches were planted by the labors of the Apostle Paul, during his two years’ residence at Ephesus, when “all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”—Acts xix. 10.

The Ephesians appear to have been in a good state when the apostle Paul took leave of their elders at Miletus; but he then gave them to expect a time of trial after his de-



parture, and which by this time seems to have come upon them.

The *character* which our Lord here assumes is taken from ch. i. 16, 20, and seems to contain both encouragement and warning; which fitly applies to their character, as partly commendable and partly blameable. They had been distinguished by their exertions in promoting the cause of Christ, and their sufferings on account of it. They "worked," yea, they "labored" for Christ, and when called to encounter persecution, bore it with "patience." They were zealous also in the exercise of a strict and holy discipline, not suffering evil characters and impostors to remain amongst them: and in this course of obedience they had "not fainted." Altogether, this is a high character. Yet even here is something amiss; they had "left their first love." We see here that the Lord looketh at the heart. We may retain our character and respectability among the churches, while yet, as to the state of our minds, Christ has somewhat against us. To leave our first love is a very common case, so much so that some will give young Christians to expect it as a matter of course: but Christ treats it as a *sin*, and calls on the parties to "repent" of it, yea, and threatens to "remove their candlestick out of its place except they repented." To decline in our attachment to Christ, his gospel, his ordinances, his people, and his cause, is practically reproaching him: it is saying, to those around us, We have not found that in his religion which we once expected to find. "O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me!"

A declension in love is followed by a degeneracy in good works. If this had not been the case, they would not have been admonished to do their "first works." Either they were neglected, or attended to in a half-hearted manner, different from what they were at the beginning.

The Lord, to show that he did not find fault with them with pleasure, again commends them as far as they were commendable: they hated the doctrine of the *Nicolaitanes*, which he also hated. Clemens of Alexandria, as quoted by Eusebius, speaks of these as a people who practised a community of wives, living in fornication and adultery. It is thought, and with some probability, that they were the people to whom Peter and Jude refer—the antinomians of the primitive church.

If we have an ear to hear what the Spirit saith unto this church, we shall learn from it, among other things,—that works are the chief test of character—that in serving the Lord in this world there is great occasion for patience under sufferings, and discrimination of characters—and that, while justly

censuring others, we may decline in spirituality ourselves.

The promise to him that overcometh is, that he shall "eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." That which grew in the earthly paradise became inaccessible by sin; but no flaming sword nor cherubim prevent access to this.

Ver. 8—11. Of the church of *Smyrna*, as well as several others, no mention is made except in these epistles.—Polycarp, the disciple of John, was pastor of it, and suffered martyrdom. Whether he was the angel here addressed is uncertain; but when he suffered, which was about the year 162, he speaks of himself as having served Christ eighty-six years, and Irenæus speaks of him as having been ordained bishop of Smyrna by the apostles. This church seems distinguished by its *persecutions*; all that is said has respect to them.

The character under which Christ addresses them is taken from ch. i. 11, 18. "These things saith the first and the last, who was dead, and is alive." The former is expressive of his Godhead, and suggests how vain it is for the enemies of the gospel to oppose him. In the latter he holds up himself as an example of persecution before them, and as an earnest of deliverance from it.

The commendation of their "works" in the midst of tribulation and poverty (poverty, it is likely, arising from their persecutions) is much to their honour. We see here of what little account worldly wealth is in the estimation of Christ. We hear much of *respectable* congregations and churches, when little else is meant but that they are numerous or opulent: but the estimation of Christ goes on quite another principle. What a contrast there is between this church and that at Laodicea! They were rich in this world's goods, but poor towards God: these were poor in this world, but rich towards God.

It is intimated that they had not only to contend with heathens, but *Jews*, who had a synagogue in this city: and it is remarkable that, in the account of the martyrdom of Polycarp, the Jews are spoken of as being very active in it, and as joining the heathens in kindling the fire. We see here to what a state of mind that people were left after having rejected Christ: they had been the people of God, but were now no longer such, but blasphemers: their synagogues had been places where God had been worshipped: there our Lord himself attended, and to them the friends of God in heathen countries had been used to resort; but hence they became the synagogues of Satan!

They are given to expect more persecutions, but are encouraged to meet them with fortitude. The devil would stir up his agents

to imprison some of them for a season, and some of them might expect to die for the name of Christ; but, if faithful unto death, they are promised a crown of life.

It was about sixty-seven years after this that Polycarp, and other members of this church, suffered martyrdom; the account of which is given by Eusebius in a letter from the church of Smyrna. When Polycarp was apprehended by his persecutors, they set him on an ass, and brought him to the place of judgment. He was met by some of the magistrates, who took him into their carriage, and tried to persuade him to deny Christ and save his life, but which he resisted. On his approaching the place of execution, the proconsul, ashamed of putting so aged and venerable a man to death, urged him to blaspheme Christ. It was then that he answered, "Eighty-six years I have served him, during all which time he never did me injury; how then can I blaspheme my king and my Saviour?" When further urged, his answer was, "I am a Christian." When threatened with wild beasts, he said, "Bring them forth." When with fire, he reminded them of the eternal fire that awaited the ungodly. His last address to God had more of praise in it than of prayer.

It is a high honor to this persecuted people that nothing is said to them in a way of reproof. To be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in an evil generation," is great, even in respect of our fellow creatures; but to be without rebuke from Christ himself is much greater.

To this suffering church Christ saith, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Let every one that hath an ear hear this language, and be armed by it against the fear of man.

Ver. 12—17. *Pergamos* was a city of Mysia, not far from Troas. We find the apostle Paul at this latter city more than once; and "a door was here opened to him of the Lord, to preach Christ's gospel."—2 Cor. ii. 12. Here it was that he afterwards commemorated the Lord's death with the disciples; and, as he had to wait seven days for their coming together, it would seem as if they had to come from some great distance. The church at Pergamos might therefore be planted about the same time.

The character under which our Lord addresses them is taken from chap. i. 16,—“He that hath the sharp sword with two edges”—and wears a terrible aspect towards a corrupt party amongst them, against whom he threatens to wage war.

Kind and encouraging things however are addressed to the body of them. Christ knew their "works," and their firm adherence to him under great trials and persecutions, in which one of their number in particular, and probably their pastor, had suffered martyr-

dom. Pergamos was a city said to be "sacred to the gods:" here therefore we might expect to find the head-quarters of idolatry and persecutions; and their standing firm in such a place, and at such times, was much to their honor.

But there were "a few things" amongst them which displeased Christ. Some of the members tampered with idolatry and its ordinary attendant, fornication; and the rest connived at it. This is called "the doctrine of Balaam," because it was in this way that that wicked prophet drew Israel into sin. They had also some of the "Nicolaitanes" amongst them, whose principles and practices the Lord abhorred.

They are called upon to repent on pain of Christ's displeasure, who threatens, except they repent, to come unto them quickly, and to execute the judgments of his word against them, even against the transgressors themselves, and all who favored them.

These warnings and threatenings require our attention, and that of all who are guilty in a greater or less degree of the same evils: nor do the encouragements to them that overcome require it less. The "hidden manna," the "white stone," and the "new name," being promised as the reward of them that overcome, seems to refer to the blessedness and honor of a future state, rather than of the present; though Christians doubtless have a foretaste of them even in this life. The "hidden manna" refers to those who should deny themselves of "eating things sacrificed to idols," and other carnal enjoyments, for Christ's sake; and denotes that there is a feast in reserve for them, which shall infinitely exceed the pleasures of flesh and sense. The Romans in judgment are said to have given their suffrage for condemnation by casting black stones into an urn, and, for absolution, by casting in white stones. White stones are also said to have been given by the Greeks to the conquerors in the Olympic games, with their names upon them, and the value of the prize they won. The application of this is easy.

### DISCOURSE III.

THE EPISTLES TO THE CHURCHES CONTINUED.

Rev. ii. 18—29; iii.

THE character under which our Lord addresses the church of *Thyatira* is taken from chap. i. 13—15, with this variation: there he is described as "one like unto the Son of man:" but here he is called "The Son of God;" as denoting his divine personality. With this agrees what is said of him, that "his eyes were like unto a flame of fire," discerning the secrets of the heart; "and his feet like fine brass," denoting the sta-

bility and glory of his proceedings. It is like saying, "All things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom you have to do." "Seeing then that ye have a great high-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, hold fast your profession!"

It is a high commendation that is given of this church, for its "works, and charity, and service, and patience, and works." Nor is this last word repeated without cause; it denotes their *persevering* and even *abounding* in good works; "the last were more than the first." There are few churches, I fear, of which this can be said. Christ may know our works—and our works: but in most cases the first are more than the last!

Yet, with all this excellence, Christ has a few things against them. With all this positive good, there was a mixture of relative evil. "The woman Jezebel" seems to relate to a corrupt part of the church, who though united to God's people, as Jezebel was by marrying an Israelitish prince, yet were in heart attached to idolatry, and labored to seduce others into it. As a corrupt part of the Christian church is described as a harlot, so a corrupt part of a particular church may be thus designated; and as Jezebel pretended to divine authority, and had her prophets to draw the servants of God into literal and spiritual fornication, so these had a kind of religion which would comport with eating and drinking at idolatrous temples, and so with occasional conformity to idolatry. They had had space to repent; the Lord had long borne with them: but his forbearance operated, as it often does, to harden them in their sin. This forbearance, however, will not continue always: Jezebel, with her adulterous paramours, will, except they repent, be cast together into a bed of devouring fire; and this for a warning to the churches.

It seems that, like some among the Corinthians, they boasted of their *knowledge*, as being able to distinguish between eating at an idol's temple and worshipping it (1 Cor. viii. 1); they spoke of their *depths* in knowledge; but Christ calls them "the depths of Satan," and virtually disowns their abettors, distinguishing the faithful from them—"Unto you, I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. But that which ye have hold fast till I come."

The promise to them that overcome the temptations of the present life is a final triumph. They shall judge the world of the ungodly: and those who have persecuted them, and set themselves against them, will then fall before them. As a potter's vessel is broken to shivers, so shall they be destroyed; and all this according to the commission which Christ received of his Father.

Nor is this all: Christ will give unto them that overcome "the morning star." As this is one of the names assumed by himself (chap. xxii. 16,) it may denote that he himself will be their portion.

The exhortation "he that hath an ear, let him hear," &c., may in this case direct our attention to the following important particulars,—That we may be members of a true church, and yet not true members of the church; that the mixture of evil characters and evil things which at present is found in Christ's visible kingdom greatly tarnishes its glory, but in the end he will gather them out, and then shall the righteous shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father; that we may have space given us for repentance and yet never repent, which will greatly aggravate our doom; that there is a species of knowledge with which it is our honor and happiness to be unacquainted; finally, that the hope of victory is sufficient to stimulate us under all our conflicts.

Ch. iii. ver. 1—6. The church of *Sardis* lies under the heavy charge of having "a name to live while it was dead." The address to it is taken from chap. i. 4, 20, and may be designed to direct them and their pastor where to look for reviving grace. Nothing is said in a way of commendation, except to individuals amongst them. This indicates a bad state indeed. There are not many churches, but individuals might be found in them who love the Lord. The "works" which Christ knew appear to be the same as those which he had "not found perfect before God." Though therefore he knew them, he did not approve of them. It is bad for the world to be dead; but for a church to be so is worse: this is salt without savor, which is neither fit for the land nor the dunghill. It is bad for individuals to be dead; but for the body of a church to be so is deplorable. It is implied that they were not only destitute of spirituality, but had defiled their garments by worldly conformity.

There had been some good amongst them, or they would not have been called to "remember how they had received and heard;" and some remains of it might continue. As no complaint is made of false doctrine, it is likely they continued orthodox, and kept up the forms of godliness. There seem to have been something of truth, love, and zeal; but they were like dying embers, ready to expire.

Christ admonished them to awake from their supineness, to take the alarm, and to strengthen the things which remained, that were ready to die. This is done by each one beginning with himself, and ending with one another.

The means of recovery from such a state are, "remembering how we received and heard" the gospel at the first. Call to re-



membrance the former days, not to get comfort under our declensions, but to recover those views and sensations which we had at the beginning of our Christian course. There were many, also, who at first had received the gospel with much heart, and had heard it with delight, but who in the course of forty years would be removed by death. Let them call to remembrance the love and zeal of their fathers, and be ashamed of their own declensions. If these admonitions did not awaken them, they are given to understand that Christ will come upon them in an unexpected hour, even as a thief cometh in the night.

The "few names which had not defiled their garments" are highly commended. To walk with God at any time is acceptable to him: and to do this while others around us are corrupt is more so. This is being faithful among the faithless. They shall walk with Christ in glory, honor, and purity.

With this agrees the promise to them that overcome: "They shall be clothed in white raiment; and Christ will not blot out their names from the book of life." The blessed God is represented as keeping a register of his servants, not as elect, or as redeemed, or as called, but as his *professed followers*. When any turn back, their names are blotted out. Hence at the last judgment it is made the rule of condemnation. "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."—Ch. xx. 15. Some were never there, having never professed to be the followers of Jesus, while others who had been there were blotted out: in either case their names would not be found there. Hence also it is the rule of admission into the New Jerusalem.—Ch. xxi. 27.

"He that hath an ear to hear let him hear." Let us beware of judging ourselves by what others think of us. We may have a name to live amongst our brethren, and yet be dead. Our names may be written among the professed followers of Christ, and yet be blotted out when he comes to judgment. But let faithful individuals know that, whatever may be the end of others, Jesus will confess them before his Father, and before his angels.

Ver. 7—13. There is a great difference between the church at *Philadelphia*, and that at *Sardis*: in that there was nothing to commend; in this nothing is censured. The character under which they are addressed is taken from chap. i. 18, and accords with the address itself. "He that was holy and true" approved of them; and "he that had the keys of David, who opened and no man shut, had "set an open door before them."

The Lord knew and approved of their works, and would make them more and more successful. They were not distinguished by opulence, nor perhaps by any of those

things that render a people respectable in the eyes of the world; but of their "little strength" they had made good use; they held fast the truth, and stood firm under persecution, which is of more account in the esteem of Christ than all other things.

This, and most of the primitive churches, met with great opposition from the Jewish synagogue, which is here again called "the synagogue of Satan;" whose members, having rejected the Messiah, were no longer worthy of the name of Jews. They that say they are what they are not, whether it be Jews or Christians, are commonly the bitterest of persecutors. Their "coming" to them in a way of cringing submission may refer to a state of things in which, a door being opened in a way of success, the Christians should be increased in number and in power; while the Jews, owing to their wars with the Romans, would be glad of their friendship.

The gospel is called "the word of Christ's patience," in respect of what it was to them. The retention of it under a succession of cruel persecutions required great patience; yet they had kept it, and the Lord promised in return to keep them in a particular time of trial that was coming upon the world. It might be by a renewal of persecution in the empire, or by the prevailing of corruptions in the church. As the Lord punishes sin by giving men up to sin, so he rewards righteousness by preserving them in the paths of it. We have had many of these hours of temptation, and may have many more: blessed are they that are preserved through them!

They are directed to look for the coming of their Lord, and to hold fast truth and true religion, lest their adversaries should wrest it out of their hands, and so deprive them of their reward.

The promise to them that overcome is, that they shall be "pillars" in the celestial temple; and, unlike those of the Jewish temple, which were removed by the Chaldeans and by the Romans, shall "go no more out." We are not to reckon the future greatness of men according to their talents in this life, but according to the use made of them. Those who have here had but "a little strength" may there become pillars in the temple. The pillars of the church on earth go out and leave it by death; but those of the church above will abide forever.

The writing upon them of the name of God, and the name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem, and of his own new name, doubtless means as much as this—that they shall be treated as the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, as citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, and as those who are redeemed from among men.

It is for us, both as individuals and as churches, to take encouragement from this

address to hold that fast which we have, that no man take our crown.

Ver. 14—22. The Laodicean church appears to have been in the worst state of any of the seven. Sardis, though it had nothing to commend, had a few excellent names: but Laodicea is censured without distinction. Yet even this church is not given up, but *rebuked in love*.

The character under which the Laodiceans are addressed is that of "the Amen, the faithful and true witness." Being lifted up with their riches, they might be tempted to refuse this faithful witness that was borne against them; but, however disagreeable, it was "true." Christ is here called "The beginning of the creation of God." It is true that as to his human nature he was himself created; the name here assumed, however, does not refer to this, but to his being the head (*αρχη*) and first cause of creation. Thus, in Col. i. 15, he is called "the first-born of every creature;" not as being himself a creature, but the first cause of creation: "For (it is added) by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." A message from such a character deserved their serious attention.

Christ knew their works, but could not approve of them; for they were "neither cold nor hot." They may be said to be cold who have no religion, and pretend to none; and they to be hot who are zealously engaged in Christ's work: but these people were neither this nor that. They were not decidedly religious, and yet would not let religion alone.

This state of mind is represented as being peculiarly offensive to Christ. To halt between truth and error, God and the world, is worse in many respects than to be openly irreligious. Corrupt Christianity is more offensive to God than open infidelity. No man thinks the worse of religion for what he sees in the openly profane; but it is otherwise in respect of religious professors. If he that nameth the name of Christ depart not from iniquity, the honor of Christ is affected by his misconduct.

These people appear to have been very proud, and withal very ignorant of themselves. Their opulence seems to have lifted them up. Religion seldom thrives with much worldly prosperity. Men covet such things, and value themselves upon them; but they are commonly snares to their souls. It is a hard thing for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. If these were the "riches" of which they boasted, it shows that the estimate of worldly greatness, formed by the faithful and true witness, is very different

from that of the generality of men. Of what account is it in his sight to be rich and increased in goods, while as to our spiritual concerns we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked?

Being charged with *blindness*, and counselled to use means to remove it, it would seem, however, that the riches of which they boasted included those of the mind; and that they were proud of their *knowledge* and *gifts* as well as of their wealth. Like the Corinthians, "they were full, they were rich, they reigned as kings" without the apostles. There is much of this still among professing Christians. One party looks down upon another, and values itself for its superior light; one declaims against pharisaism in the true spirit of a pharisee; another is busy about the mote in his brother's eye, regardless of the beam in his own. The sentence of the faithful and true witness, concerning all that are wise and righteous in their own eyes, is, Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and knowest it not!

In respect of the *counsel* offered them, they are addressed like sinners in common, who knew not the Saviour. This was probably the case with many of them; and if some had known him, yet, being in a backsliding state, the best counsel that could be given them was, that they should come as sinners *immediately* to the Saviour. They are directed to seek the true *riches*, the true *righteousness*, and the true *wisdom*, and to deal with Christ for them; not as giving him any valuable consideration for them (for this as being *poor* they could not,) but as parting with all for them. This is "buying without money and without price." This is the way in which sinners come to Christ at first, and this is the way for backsliders to be restored. The child that has been ill taught must begin anew, and go over every rule again.

To reconcile them to this sharp and humbling reproof they are assured that these were not the words of an enemy, but of one that bore them good will. It shows the great forbearance and long-suffering goodness of our Lord, even towards them that have greatly dishonored him. It also teaches us to put a right construction on divine rebukes, receiving them as the rod of correction to bring us to repentance.

To counsel is added a word of encouragement and of warning:—"Behold I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Here again they seem to be treated rather as sinners than as Christians. If the common invitations of the gospel be acceptable, they are welcome to them. Jesus stands at their door and knocks for admission. Do they hear him? and will they open the door and welcome him? If so, he will come in, and be



their guest. But if they are so taken up with their present company as not to hear him, or at least not to open to him, he will go away as he did from the Jewish temple—"Behold your house is left unto you desolate."

If this serious and tender address did not reclaim them as a body, yet the promise to them that should overcome, that they should "sit down with him in his throne, as he also had overcome, and was set down with his father in his throne," might encourage individuals to return and hold out to the end.

Let these censures, warnings, and encouragements, addressed to the seven churches in Asia, as a specimen of the whole, be heard and regarded by the churches of Christ, and by every individual member of them, to the end of time.

#### DISCOURSE IV.

##### THE VISION PRECEDING THE BOOK WITH SEVEN SEALS.

Rev. iv.

THE whole of this chapter is introductory to what follows. The scene of the vision is the heavenly world. Nowhere else could it have been with equal propriety. Where, but at the fountain of intelligence and influence, should a creature learn the secrets of futurity? When Ahab's destiny was revealed to Micaiah, the scene of the vision was laid in heaven.—1 Kings xxii. 19—22.

A door being opened, the apostle is invited to enter in. Having entered, he immediately finds himself under prophetic inspiration. He was not removed from the earth as to his body: but as Ezekiel was carried by the spirit to Jerusalem, and saw what was transacting there, while his body was still in Chaldea, so it was with him: he was still in the Isle of Patmos, while wrapt up by divine inspiration, and introduced into the immediate presence of God.

In this supernatural state of mind he beheld a "throne," and one "sitting upon it," who was the supreme disposer of all the concerns of creatures. Such a sight would impress him with the conviction that whatever should befall the church, or the world, it was all according to his will who ruled in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.—Ver. 1, 2.

No description is given of the ever-blessed God, only that his glory seemed to resemble the lustre of certain precious stones; and this may allude to the visible glory of the God of Israel as displayed in the temple. A rainbow was also round about the throne, in appearance like an emerald. We know that this from of old was a sign of peace and good will to men. It may here denote that the glorious majesty of God, which in

itself was too much to be endured, would be displayed towards his church in connection with covenant mercy.—Ver. 3.

Having spoken of the king eternal, immortal, and invisible, sitting on his throne, he next describes his retinue. Here are twenty-four seats, or subordinate thrones, on which sat twenty-four elders, clothed in white, and with crowns of gold upon their heads. The "lightnings, and thunderings, and voices," may denote not only the awful majesty of God, as when he appeared at Sinai, but that from him proceeded all the terrible judgments which would shortly afflict the earth. Besides these there were "seven lamps of fire before the throne," which are said to be "the seven spirits of God;" answering, it may be, to the seven candlesticks, and being as it were a lamp to each candlestick. The light imparted by the churches is all derived from the Holy Spirit. These seven lamps enlighten the world.—Ver. 4, 5.

"Before the throne was a sea of glass like unto crystal." This crystal sea, as it was in appearance, but which was so solid that the harpers are afterwards described as standing upon it, may be opposed to the troubled tumultuous sea out of which the beast would rise, and may denote the grandeur and immutability of the divine throne as opposed to the turbulence and uncertainty of earthly thrones. The four living creatures seem to be the same as those described by Ezekiel, and to allude, as they did, to the cherubim in the holy of holies. That which the wheels were to the one the elders are to the other; connected with them, like horses in a chariot, in all their movements. Of the former it is said, "When the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; when those stood, these stood; and, when those were lifted up from the earth, these were lifted up over against them: for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels."—Ezek. i. 21. Of the latter it is said, "When those living creatures give glory, and honor, and thanks to him that sitteth on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four-and-twenty elders fall down before him, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

The living creatures cannot be angels, for both they and the elders are distinguished from them in chap. vii. 11, where all the angels are said to "stand round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four living creatures." Besides this, the living creatures and the elders speak of themselves as "redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people,

and nation.”—Chap. v. 9. Those who led the worship under the Old Testament might be meant by the living creatures of Ezekiel; and those who lead the worship under the New Testament may be signified by those of John. They and the elders, like the stars and the candlesticks, appear to be the representatives of Christ’s ministers and churches in the heavenly assembly. They are not described as being themselves on earth, or in a state of affliction, but as before the throne of God, as though a number of the spirits of just men made perfect had been chosen of God to represent in his immediate presence their brethren upon earth, and who, as things should be described which concerned the church, would express the interest they felt in them.

The description of the living creatures as bearing a resemblance to certain animals, and as having each six wings, which wings were “full of eyes within,” would naturally express their useful properties, particularly the union of zeal and knowledge; and their unceasing ascriptions of glory to God may denote the tendency of their ministerial labors. The elders were crowned, but they cast their crowns before the throne. Such appear to be the scene and scenery of this preparatory vision.—Ver. 6—11.

## DISCOURSE V.

### THE BOOK WITH SEVEN SEALS.

#### Rev. v.

THAT which is here called “a book” must not be supposed to resemble our books, which since the invention of printing have been very different from those of the ancients. Conceive of seven skins of parchment, written upon one side,\* and rolled up, suppose on wood. At the end of every skin a seal is affixed on the backside, so that the contents of it cannot be read till the seal is opened. This book, or roll, or volume, being “in the right hand of him that sat on the throne,” denotes that futurity is known only to God. The proclamation made for one that should be worthy to open the book shows how desirable it was that the mind of God in regard to futurity should be revealed, for strengthening the faith and supporting the hope of his church upon earth; and as John had been invited for the very purpose

\* By the punctuation in our translation it would seem as if they were written upon on both sides; but this would not comport with the contents being secret, which they were till the seals were unloosed. It seems, therefore, that a comma is necessary after the word “within,” in verse 1. Several other versions, and some editions of our own, read it, *A book written within, and on the back side sealed with seven seals.*

of learning “the things that should be hereafter,” things which related to the church of Christ, which he had been employed in raising, it must be peculiarly interesting to him. He must needs be anxious to know the things that should befall these his people in the latter days. To see a book therefore which contained them, and yet none in heaven or earth found worthy to open it, might well make him weep.—Ver. 1—4.

This want of a suitable person to open the book is introduced for the purpose of *doing honor to the Lamb*, whose success gives universal joy and satisfaction. The work of making known the mind of God was an honor too high for any mere creature in heaven or on earth; it was given to Christ as the reward of his obedience unto death.—Ver. 9. The honor of preaching the gospel is represented as being of *grace*: “Unto me (said Paul,) who am less than the least of all saints, is this *grace* given, that I should preach among the gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” That which Christ received as the reward of his death, we receive in our measure of *grace*, and for his sake; and a great favor it is to be bearers of such good tidings.

One of the elders, perceiving the apostle to weep under an apprehension that all must remain unknown, saith unto him, “Weep not; behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” John was not so unacquainted with the Scriptures as to be at any loss whom this could mean. Probably, however, he expected to behold his Lord in some majestic form corresponding to the imagery: but lo, instead of a lion, he saw a lamb, a lamb as it had been slain! yet invested with perfect authority, and possessing perfect knowledge, so as to qualify him for the work: for he had “seven horns, and seven eyes.”—Ver. 5, 6.

This glorious personage, in whom are united the majesty of the lion and the gentleness of the lamb, approaches him that sat upon the throne, and takes the book out of his right hand; denoting on his own part the undertaking of the work, and on that of God his perfect approbation.—Ver. 7.

And now the whole church of God by their representatives are described as falling down before the Lamb, and joining in a chorus of praise. “The golden vials full of odors” doubtless allude to those of the priests who offered incense, and denote that the church on earth is ever employed in presenting its petitions before the throne. They had also “harps” as well as vials, and “sung a new song,” denoting the great occasion there now was for joy and praise. A new song is suited to a new manifestation of mercy. The Lamb is found worthy to



take the book, and to open the seals; and they perceive the ground of it to lie in his having redeemed them at the expense of his blood. For this they bless his name, as also for his having made them kings and priests unto God, and given them to expect that, however they were at present oppressed on earth, they should even there be finally victorious.—Ver. 8—10.

Nor could the angels on such an occasion be silent, but must join in the choir. Myriads of myriads, a number that no man could number, unite in ascribing worthiness to the Lamb, and that on the same ground as redeemed men had done, namely, his having been “slain:” a proof this of disinterested affection, both to the Redeemer and the redeemed. “He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham:” yet angels unite in praising him for his love to men.

In enumerating the things which he was worthy to receive, it is remarkable how they keep their eye on those perfections of which he had *emptied* himself in his humiliation. He did not lay aside any thing pertaining to his *goodness*, but merely what belonged to his *greatness*. He was no less holy, just, faithful, and merciful, when on earth, than he is now in heaven: but he emptied himself of “power,” as laying aside his authority, and taking upon him the form of a servant—of “riches,” as becoming poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich—of “wisdom,” as making himself of no reputation—of “strength,” as becoming weak and subject to death like other men—of “honor,” as not appearing in his native divinity, but as a man, and a man of obscure birth, despised of the people—of “glory,” as subjecting himself to shame and disgrace—and of “blessing,” as receiving not the benedictions so much as the execrations of those among whom he sojourned. The purport of the song is, By how much he hath emptied himself on earth, by so much let him be magnified and exalted in heaven!—Ver. 11, 12.

Nor is the song confined to angels; the whole creation joins in praising him that sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb, for ever; while at every pause the representatives of the redeemed add their emphatic “Amen,” adoring in humble prostration him that liveth for ever and ever.—Ver. 13.

Such an august and affecting representation expresses the sentiments which become the friends of Christ while contemplating that great cause which is carrying on in the world, and which the world in a manner overlooks. To this may be added, If such be the glory ascribed to the Saviour whilst events are merely foretold, what will it be when they are actually accomplished, and when they shall be reviewed in the heaven of heavens to all eternity!

## DISCOURSE VI.

## THE SEALS OPENED.

## Rev. vi.

BEFORE we enter on the opening of the seals, the sounding of the trumpets, or the pouring out of the vials, it will be proper to make a few general remarks.

*First:* The whole series of events here revealed is included in the sealed book. We are not to conceive of the seals as containing one series of events, the trumpets another, and the vials another; but as all being included in the seals: for the seven trumpets are only subdivisions of the seventh seal, and the seven vials of the seventh trumpet.

*Secondly:* This division into seals, and subdivision into trumpets and vials, appears to be the *only one* which the prophecy requires, or even admits. Not to mention its divisions into *chapters*, which are sometimes made in the midst of a subject, the scheme of dividing it into *periods*, which Mr. LOWMAN and many others have favored, seems to be merely a work of the imagination. There are doubtless some remarkable periods in the prophecy, such as that of the 1260 years, &c.; but to make them *seven* in number, and for this purpose to reckon the day of judgment, and the heavenly state, as periods, is fanciful. It is by the division of the prophecy itself into seals, and the subdivision of the seventh seal into trumpets, and of the seventh trumpet into vials, that we must steer our course.

*Thirdly:* In tracing the events symbolized by the seals, trumpets, and vials, there is no necessity for supposing that every preceding one must be finished before that which follows it can have begun. It is enough if they succeed each other in the manner of the four monarchies predicted in the seventh chapter of Daniel. The Babylonish empire was not extinct before that of Persia began; nor that of Persia before that of Macedonia began; nor that of Macedonia before that of Rome began. The latter end of each would be contemporary with the beginning of that which followed: yet upon the whole they succeeded each other *in the empire of the world*: and this was sufficient to justify their being represented in succession. Thus the wars of the *red* horse in this chapter might commence before the conquests of the *white* horse were ended, and continue in part while the events signified by the *black* horse occurred. The beginnings and endings of each might run into the other, while yet upon the whole they were successive. It is on this account that I am not solicitous to determine the year when each begins or ends.

*Fourthly:* So far as the seals, trumpets, or

vials, respect the world, it is *as connected with the church*. The plan of this prophecy is much the same as that of the Old Testament: it follows religion, and what concerns religion only. Why is there so much said in the scriptures of *Nineveh* and *Babylon* rather than of other heathen cities in those times, but because these powers had to do with the people of God? Why are the ravages of the four beasts predicted by Daniel, but for the same reason? Had it not been for this, they might have risen and fallen unnoticed by the Scriptures, as much as *Carthage*, *Palmyra*, or *Pekin*. It is this that accounts for so much being said by Daniel of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is this that accounts for so much being said by John of the Roman empire rather than of the other great empires of the earth; for it was here that Christianity would be principally embraced. And, as the Roman empire and the profession of Christianity would in the latter ages be in a manner confined to Europe, so the greater part of what respects the world in the latter part of these prophecies is in a manner confined to that quarter of the earth. The Scriptures, foreseeing that Europe would be the seat of both the Christian church and the antichristian beast and harlot, predict events concerning this part of the world while they overlook the other parts.

Nor must we expect to find *all* the great events even of those parts of the world which are connected with the church. As the Old Testament history, in respect of the nations connected with Israel, is *select*, so we may expect to find the New Testament prophecy. If some of the mightiest changes in Europe have no place in this prophecy, we are not to consider the omission of them as a defect, but rather take it for granted that God did not judge the introduction of them necessary for his purpose.

*Fifthly*: The commencement of the prophecy is, I apprehend, to be reckoned from the ascension of Christ. It has been common, I am aware, to reckon it from the time of the vision, which is supposed to have been under the reign of Domitian, about the year 95. On this principle Mr. LOWMAN proceeds. Hence he confines the opening of the first seal, on which it is said "there appeared a *white* horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown, and went forth conquering and to conquer," to the success of the gospel *after the year 95, leaving out the whole of that which accompanied the labors of the apostles*. In like manner the opening of the second seal, on which there went forth "a *red* horse, and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another," is confined to those wars between the Jews and Romans which occurred between the years 100 and 138, *leaving out the whole of those which issued in the de-*

*struction of Jerusalem.\** But surely it must appear singular that in a prophetic description of the success of the gospel in the early ages the most glorious part of it should be left out; and that in a like description of the wars between the Jews and Romans the most terrible part should be omitted. The reason given by Mr. Lowman for its being so is, "The destruction of Jerusalem, *being past*, can hardly be supposed to be denoted by a prediction of a judgment to come." Doubtless it is in general true that prophecies are predictions of things to come: in some instances however they may refer to events *the beginnings of which* are already accomplished. There is a remarkable instance of this in the prophecies of Daniel concerning the four monarchies. He speaks of his seeing them all "rise up out of the sea," ch. vii. 1—3; yet at the time of the vision the first of them, namely Babylon, had risen, and reigned, and was near its end; for it was in the first year of Belshazzar, who was its last king. And why should not the apostle in like manner commence the prophecy with the commencement of the Christian dispensation, though he wrote above sixty years after it? This makes the sealed book to contain a perfect system of New Testament prophecy, from the ascension of Christ to the end of all things. By this we include the success of the apostles in the conquests of the man on the white horse under the first seal, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in those of the red horse under the second seal. By this too we are furnished with an easy interpretation of the division of the book into "things which the writer *had seen*, things which *were*, and things which should be *hereafter*." He had actually seen the great progress of the gospel from the time of Christ's ascension, and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; he then saw the church struggling under a cruel persecution; and that which should be revealed to him would carry on those struggles till she should rise triumphant over all opposition in her New Jerusalem glory.

Ver. 1, 2. There is no doubt of this being meant of the glorious success of the gospel in the early ages of the church, even when it had to encounter the most bloody persecutions. Of this the *white horse* is the appropriate symbol.—Ch. xix. 11, 12. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty: with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness: and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things."—Ps. xlv. 3, 4. I need not show how truly this accords with historic fact. Suffice it to say that from the beginning, as the Jews al-

\* See Lowman's History of the First and Second Seals, pp. 40—42.



leged against the apostles, "Jerusalem was filled with their doctrine." It was foretold that, before the destruction of that city, the gospel should be preached in all the world.—Matt. xxiv. 14. Paul himself preached it, and that fully, "from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum:" and, as he says in behalf of himself and his fellow-laborers, "God always caused them to triumph in every place." The Cæsars set themselves against it; yet in spite of all their efforts there were, even in Paul's time, saints in Cæsar's household.

The epistles of Pliny and Tiberianus, governors of Asia Minor and Syria, to Trajan the Emperor, within ten or twelve years after the banishment of John to the Isle of Patmos, furnish a striking and unexceptionable proof of the progress of the gospel in those times. By the amazing number of persons who avowed themselves Christians, and so exposed themselves to death, they were moved with compassion, and wrote to know what they were to do with them. "The number is so great," says Pliny, "as to call for the most serious deliberation. Informations are pouring in against multitudes, of every age, of all orders, and of both sexes: and more will be impeached; for the contagion of this superstition hath spread, not only through cities, but villages, and hath even reached the farm-houses." He also speaks of the temples as having been almost desolate, the sacred solemnities [of idolatry] as having been intermitted, and sacrificial victims as finding but few purchasers. "I am quite wearied," says Tiberianus, "with punishing and destroying the Galileans."

Ver. 3, 4. This and the two following seals relate to the judgments of God upon the church's enemies. Great and terrible wars are as naturally suggested by the symbol of a red horse as the success of the gospel was by a white one. The wars particularly alluded to appear to be those between the Jews and Romans, who having united in persecuting the church, as well as in crucifying its head, were now permitted to "kill one another." It is well known that in the reign of *Vespasian*, the Jews having rebelled against the Romans, Jerusalem was taken and destroyed, the temple reduced to ashes, and an immense number of persons slain.\* Forty or fifty years after this, in the reign of *Trajan*, the Jews in Egypt and in Cyprus rebelled, and are said to have slain, with great marks of cruelty, *four hundred and sixty thousand men*; yet the Jews were every where subdued: a far greater number, therefore, must have been slain amongst themselves. Soon after this, in the reign of *Hadrian*, the Jews who were left in Pales-

tine after the destruction of their metropolis were drawn into a new rebellion, by adhering to a pretended messiah, whose name was *Barchocab*. In these wars, besides what were lost on the side of the Romans, the Jews are said to have had a thousand cities and fortresses destroyed, with the slaughter of above *five hundred and eighty thousand men*. The Jews having employed the Roman power to crucify the Lord of glory, God employed it to destroy them and their city. Their carnal policy told them that if they let him alone all men would believe on him, and the Romans would come and take away both their place and nation. Whether guilty or not guilty, it was judged expedient that he should die, and that the whole nation should not perish. The whole nation however *did* perish, and that by means of the Romans. Such was the result of that policy which was employed against the Lord, and against his Christ: and thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel,—“and after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”—Chap. ix. 26.

## DISCOURSE VII.

### THE OPENING OF THE SEALS CONTINUED.

#### Rev. vi.

VER. 5, 6. A *black* horse is the symbol of famine, or of a scarcity approaching to famine, by which the necessaries of life required to be dealt out by weight and measure, and special orders to be given that nothing should be wasted.—Lam. v. 10; Lev. xxvi. 26. Such appears to have been the state of things in the Roman empire for a long time, during the reigns of the *Antonines*. It is in reference to these, among other calamities, that *Tertullian* speaks, representing the heathens as ascribing them to the Christians, because they taught men to despise the gods.†

The "measure" here referred to is the *chœnix*, which contained the ordinary allowance of corn to a man for a day; and as the price of a measure of wheat in those times was a roman "penny," which was the amount of a day's wages, it follows that for a poor man to have lived on wheat bread would have required all his labour, without any thing for other necessaries, or even bread for his family!

Ver. 7, 8. The *pale* horse was the symbol of great *mortality*, by various means: particularly by the sword, by hunger, by pestilence, and by the beasts of the earth.

\* Mr. Lowman, from *Usher's Annals*, says "A million and a half according to some, according to others two millions, besides what were slain on the side of the Romans."

† Apology, Ch. XL. Lowman's History of the Third Seal, p. 46.

The facts were, that between the years 193 and 270, that is, in less than eighty years, there were more than twenty emperors, and at one time thirty pretenders to the throne. It is said also there were thirty usurpers, who raised war for themselves in different parts of the empire. Such a state of things is sufficient to account for all that is here predicted: for intestine wars must needs produce famine and pestilence, and by destroying men give an ascendancy to the beasts of prey. In this manner the enemies of the gospel were visited, who continued, with but little intermission, to persecute the church of God.

In understanding the symbols of the *white*, the *red*, the *black*, and the *pale* horses, of the success of the gospel, and the judgments of God on its enemies, there is sufficient unity of design. They all bear a relation to the church, and to the Jews and Romans only as persecuting it.

Ver. 9—11. A view of an *altar*, and the *sacrifices* that had been made upon it, fitly represent the numerous martyrdoms which had been made at the time under the heathen emperors. The "souls under the altar" are the departed spirits of those Christians who had fallen in the arduous contest, which are supposed to cry aloud for retribution. The "white robes" denote the heavenly honours conferred upon them. The answer to their appeal, in which they are encouraged to expect a retribution "after a little season, and when the number of their fellow-servants and brethren, who should be killed as they were (by the hands of paganism,) should be fulfilled," determines the period to which the vision refers. It is supposed that they had suffered under *nine* of the ten persecutions, and had only to wait for the completion of their number under the *tenth*, which being accomplished, God would take vengeance on their persecutors. The opening of this seal, therefore, would refer to about the year 270, when the ninth persecution was past, and the tenth, under *Dioclesian* and *Maximian*, was approaching; and which is said to have been more extensive and bloody than any which had gone before it. Its professed object was nothing less than the utter extirpation of Christianity. The places for Christian worship were every where demolished, bibles destroyed, and an immense number of Christians put to death. "It were endless and almost incredible," says *Echard*, "to enumerate the variety of sufferers and torments: they were scourged to death, had their flesh torn off with pincers, and mangled with broken pots; were cast to lions, tygers, and other wild beasts; were burnt, beheaded, crucified, thrown into the sea, torn in pieces by the distorted boughs of trees, roasted by gentle fires, and holes made in their bodies for melted lead to be

poured into their bowels. This persecution lasted ten years under *Dioclesian* and some of his successors; and the number of Christians who suffered death and punishment made them conclude that they had completed their work: and in an ancient inscription they tell the world that they had *effaced the name and superstition of the Christians, and had restored and propagated the worship of the gods*. But they were so much deceived that this hastened the destruction of Paganism."\*

This was the first persecution that reached Britain, then a Roman colony, in which *Alban* suffered, and great numbers after him. "Our stories record," says Fox the martyr-ologist, "that all Christianity almost in the whole island was destroyed, the churches subverted, all books of Scripture burned, and many of the faithful, both men and women, slain."

Ver. 12—17. "An earthquake" is the appropriate symbol of a revolution; and an earthquake accompanied with an eclipse of the sun and moon, and, what was more than an eclipse, the "falling of the stars to the earth," as though nature itself were dissolved, denotes, I conceive, the overthrow of the *pagan* empire by the arms of Constantine. The ruling powers of the world are that to the common people which the sun and moon and stars are to the earth: hence great changes in nations are expressed by God's "shaking the heavens and the earth;" and sometimes by the very imagery here used. "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment."—Isa. xxxiv. 4, 5. The revolution that took place in the time of Constantine was not of a civil, so much as of a religious character. The government was still imperial, and the difference between one emperor and another would be of little or no account. But it was an eclipse of those powers which had so long endeavored to crush the cause of Christ. It is language applicable to the last judgment: and was to them actually a day of judgment in miniature. The bloody enemies of Christ must now have felt, whether they would or not, that they had incurred the wrath of the Lamb. Now the number of the martyrs under the pagan persecutions is completed, and the prayer of the souls under the altar are answered.

\* *Roman History*, Vol. II. p. 550. Eusebius in the VIIIth book of his *Ecclesiastical History* gives a particular account of this persecution, of which he was an eye-witness.



## DISCOURSE VIII.

## THE SEALING OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

Rev. vii.

VER. 1—8. This chapter is a continuation of the sixth seal; and bears a relation to the great revolution which had taken place by the accession of a christian emperor. Considering what the church had had to encounter under a succession of heathens, this event would appear to be most auspicious. Christians would now look forward to times of peace, happiness, and prosperity. And true it is that during the life of this emperor there was not only a season of peace, but considerable accession to the christian profession. On this account, it seems, Mr. LOWMAN and others have been led to interpret this sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads of the numerous conversions made in those times to the christian faith. But sealing denotes, not conversion, but the preservation of those who are converted. Those who were sealed did not by this become the servants of God, but are supposed to be such already. Instead of signifying the enlargement of the church, the object is to prevent it from being utterly swept away. It portends danger no less than the striking of the doorposts of the Israelites when the destroying angel should pass through the land; or than the marking of those who "sighed and cried" when Jerusalem was to be destroyed by the Chaldeans. It was for the preservation of a seed for God amidst a flood of corruption. Hence, when these evils had actually deluged the church, we find the sealed servants of God standing in triumph upon Mount Zion.—Ch. xiv. 1. God seeth not as man seeth: that which man is apt to think a great acquisition, God often knows to be a great temptation.

It is remarkable that, instead of a congratulation of the church on its recent victory, by the striking up of the heavenly choir (as is usual in the prophecy when new and glorious events occur,) the choir on this occasion is mute. It is described, indeed, as a day of judgment to the persecuting heathens, and in itself doubtless afforded matter of thankfulness to Christians; but, had they known what would arise out of it, the joy of that day would have been turned into mourning.

From this time men were ripe for such speculations as those of Arius, who argued that, if Christ was begotten of the Father, there must have been a time when he was not; and for all the intrigues, wars, and persecutions, which on both sides by turns were practised. From this time our Lord's doctrine of the new birth seems in a manner to have been laid aside, and conversion to Christianity was little more than being baptised, or con-

senting to wear the Christian badge. From this time conversions were mostly produced by authority, or by the hope of worldly advantage, or by exhortations addressed to kings that they should convert their subjects. From this time the glory of the church seems to have been placed more in splendid edifices and pompous ceremonies than in conformity to its head. In short, from this time she became a courtier, and, laying aside her own simple garb, appeared in a dress more befitting the mother of harlots than the bride of Christ. "What she gained in outward splendor and prosperity," says Mr. FABER, "she lost in purity of manners and doctrine. The holy simplicity of primitive Christianity was no more; and the heresy of Arius introduced a succession of crimes disgraceful alike to humanity and religion."—See Mosheim's Account of the Fourth Century.

Doubtless there were hypocrites and merely nominal Christians in all ages of the church; but they were never before so designated as they now are. "The servants of God" are from this time distinguished from "the men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads." This distinction might not take place immediately after the accession of Constantine, but from that time the seeds of it were sown. The alliance between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, described in the thirteenth and seventeenth chapters by a woman riding on a beast, originated here. Here, therefore, we must look for the grand origin of that apostasy which the apostle Paul foretold, and which succeeding ages witnessed. If the account given of the state of things by MOSHEIM be just, it requires a great stretch of charity to believe that what was called the Catholic church, even in the fourth century, was the church of Christ. Christ certainly had a people at that time, but they seem to have consisted of individuals rather than of that visible community which called itself the church. They were "the servants of God whom he sealed in their foreheads."

These ideas will be confirmed by attending to the manner in which the sealing of the servants of God is introduced. Four angels are seen "standing on the four corners of the earth." Angels are the executioners of the divine providence. Their number answering to the four quarters of the earth may express its extending over the whole world. Their "holding the winds" would denote that they were commissioned of God to afflict the earth with evils, or to withhold them, according to his will. The short period in which they held back the winds seems to refer to that season of tranquillity which the church enjoyed on the government's becoming christian, and before the temptations of its new situation had had time to operate.—Ver.

1, 2. But, as the principal part of the commission of the four angels was to "hurt the earth and the sea," they stand ready, only waiting till the *greater* angel has sealed the servants of God ere they execute it.

The "winds," which were to be let loose upon the earth and the sea, were *spiritual* rather than temporal judgments, and would principally grow out of the new order of things; namely, errors, superstitions, corruptions, divisions, and a conformity to the manners and habits of the world. These were the winds which in the end swept away the great body of nominal Christians into the gulphs of popery and Mahomedism.—Ver. 3.

And, as many of the symbols in the prophecy are taken from the *Jewish* temple, so the servants of God are symbolized by a certain number for an uncertain, taken from the twelve tribes of Israel. The Christian church, being now the true "Israel of God," were to the apostate Christians what Israel was to an apostate world; namely, God's witnesses.—Ver. 4—8.

Ver. 9—17. After the sealing of God's servants is accomplished, the saints and martyrs of Jesus, who during the preceding persecutions had overcome and been received into glory, joining with the whole heavenly chorus, engage in a triumphant song of praise to God and to the Lamb. The reason of their being here introduced seems to be that the sealed servants of God, who were yet on earth, and had to pass through a series of trials, might by a view of their happy end be strengthened to follow their example. As great numbers would be against them in this world, they are directed to view the numbers of friends which they have in heaven; who not only look back to their own deliverance, and ascribe it to God, but seem to look down to their brethren upon earth, and to say, "Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering!"

The view of such a holy and happy assembly is supposed to excite in the apostle emotions of admiration and joy. On this one of the elders asks him what he conceives them to be, and whence they could come. It would seem as if they must be pure celestial beings, whose whole existence had been filled up with righteousness and blessedness. He does not presume, however, to say what he thought they were, whether men or angels, nor to offer any opinion as to whence they came, but modestly refers it to his instructor to inform him. The answer is, in effect, that they are men—men who were lately upon earth, exposed to great tribulations, but who had come out of them. And, as to their "white robes," they had been once impure, but were washed and made white, not in their own blood, though that in innumerable instances had been shed, but "in the blood of the Lamb." It

was as believing in his death that they were justified and sanctified; and, having lived by faith on him, they were without fault "before the throne of God."

Still more to stimulate the servants of God in this world to persevere, he adds, "And he that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes!"

## DISCOURSE IX.

### THE SUBDIVISION OF THE SEVENTH SEAL INTO SEVEN TRUMPETS.

Rev. viii.

VER. 1—6. We are now come to the opening of the last of the seven seals, and which is longer, and includes far more, than the preceding six. They have reached but little beyond three hundred years; whereas this will reach thence to the end of all things.

"Silence in heaven about the space of half an hour" seems to denote a solemn pause preparatory to other events. It is like saying, And now prepare thee for another scene!—This scene is, "the appearance of seven angels standing before God, to whom were given seven trumpets." As nothing is said on the opening of the seventh seal but what follows under the trumpets, the latter must be considered as a subdivision of the former.

But, prior to the sounding of the trumpets, "another angel" comes forward, and stands at the altar, "having a golded censor, to whom much incense is given, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar before the throne." There were two altars belonging to the temple-worship; one for sacrifice, called "the altar of burnt-offering," and the other for burning incense, called "the golden altar before the throne." The allusion here is to the latter. Our great High-priest, having offered himself without spot to God, passed into the heavens, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Through him our prayers ascend with acceptance before God.

The "prayers" here referred to appear to have a special relation to the events about to be predicted by the sounding of the trumpets. The events would occur in answer to those prayers; which might be so many intercessions for the success of Christ's cause, and against that of its adversaries. Heathen Rome was overthrown in answer to the prayers of the souls under the altar, and Christian Rome may fall in the same manner. Should it be objected that in the lat-



ter there would be less to pray against, it may be answered that those who, under the name of Christians, corrupted and debased Christianity, modelling it to their fleshly minds, and converting it into an engine of state policy, might incur more of the divine displeasure than those who, under the name of Heathens, openly opposed it. For the persecutions of pagan Rome the persecutors only were punished, having their power taken from them and given to the Christians; but for the corruptions of Christian Rome we shall see the empire itself dissolved, and divided amongst the barbarians.

The symbolical language under which these events are represented is that of the angel taking the censor, filling it with fire of the altar, and casting it into the earth; on which follow voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake. "Fire" cast into the earth by an angel would be the precursor of dreadful wars; and an "earthquake" is the well-known symbol of a revolution, or such an overturning in matters of government as should introduce a new order of things. Such were the events which distinguished the times between Constantine and Augustulus, especially those between the years 400 and 476. Whatever virtues attached to Constantine or his successors, and whatever obligations the Christians were under for the protection afforded them by their government, yet the system which from those times was adopted proved ruinous both to the church and to the empire. The corruptions of the former, as we have seen already, required the servants of God to be sealed in their foreheads; and the calamities of the latter we shall see described under the sounding of the first four trumpets.

Ver. 7—12. The fulfilment of these predictions must, according to the chronological series of the prophecy, be looked for in the fourth or fifth centuries. They are the same things particularly described as those which followed the fire cast by the angel into the earth. Moreover, as the seals went to destroy the empire as Pagan, the trumpets will go to overturn it as Christian. Both issue in an "earthquake" (ch. vi. 12, with viii. 5.) the ordinary symbol of a revolution.

The Roman empire, as being now the seat of Christianity, is here considered as a world of itself; having not only its earth, its sea, and its rivers, but its sun, and moon, and stars. By the *earth* we may understand those parts of the empire which were *continental*, as Gaul and the southern parts of Germany. On these fell the effects of the *first* trumpet, burning up the trees and the grass, or destroying great numbers among the middle and lower orders of men. By the *sea* we may understand those parts of the empire which were *maritime*, such as Spain, Portugal, and the lower parts of

Italy. On these fell the effects of the *second* trumpet, turning the waters into blood, and destroying whatever was in them. By the *river*s and *fountains of waters* may be understood the *mountainous* parts of the empire, as Upper Italy, and the countries about the Alps; at no great distance from which rise the Loire, the Po, the Rhine, the Rhone, and the Danube. On these fell the effects of the *third* trumpet, imparting to their streams a mortal bitterness. By the *sun, moon and stars*, we may understand the governing powers, supreme and subordinate. On these fell the *fourth* trumpet, smiting them with darkness, or with a general eclipse. Finally, by a *third part* only being affected at once may be meant, not only that the events should take place by several successive calamities, but that the effect of the whole would not be to *destroy* the western empire, but merely to *subvert* it. The empire was to continue, though under another form, namely as composed of the ten kingdoms. Mr. CUNINGHAM very properly remarks the difference between the effects of the trumpets, which refer to the *subversion* of the empire, and those of the vials, which refer to its *final dissolution*. The former are partial, the latter total.—Dissertation, pp. 80, 81.

Whether the events pertaining to each trumpet can be exactly ascertained or not, thus much is certain, that the ravages of the Goths, the Vandals, and the Huns, were that to the empire which a terrible hail-storm, accompanied with thunder and lightning, is to the "trees and the fields;" which a burning mountain, thrown into the sea, would be to the waters; and which a blazing meteor that should fall upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and imbitter them, would be to a country; while the effects of these successive ravages on the government would resemble a great though not a total eclipse of the heavenly bodies.

## APPENDIX TO DISCOURSE IX.

### CONTAINING A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS.

IN the northern and north-eastern parts of Europe, bordering on the Baltic and the Euxine seas, there were many barbarous nations which were never subdued by the Roman arms: such were the Saxons, the Visigoths, the Ostrogoths, the Vandals, the Burgundians, the Huns, the Alans, &c., and who were often associated in their enterprises. About the year 376, during the reign of the eastern emperor Valens, the Goths having been driven from their own country by the Huns and Alans, a body of not fewer than two hundred thousand of them, besides women and children, under *Alavivus* and *Fritigern*, two of their chiefs,

obtained permission to settle in Thrace, a province of the Roman empire. To the imprudence of admitting such a body of hostile emigrants were added several instances of injurious treatment after their arrival. These first produced resistance, and then a battle, in which the Romans were defeated, and the emperor lost his life. By the prudent and energetic measures of Theodosius the Great, who succeeded Valens, the Gothic emigrants were so far subjugated as to be rendered serviceable to the empire. But after his death the jealousies between Rufinus and Stilicho, ministers of state at Constantinople and Rome, under Arcadius and Honorius the emperors, afforded them opportunity to renew their hostilities.

*Alaric*, an Arian Christian, the successor of *Fritigern*, had been in the Roman service for several years, having commanded a body of his countrymen in the wars of Theodosius: but thinking himself not sufficiently rewarded by that prince, and perceiving as he thought a fair opportunity, he was disposed to carve for himself. To this he is said to have been encouraged by Rufinus, principal ruler under Arcadius at Constantinople, whose duty it was to oppose him. Marching his army into Macedonia and Thessaly, he laid waste the country as he went. Through the treachery of Rufinus the straits of Thermopylæ were left unguarded, and so opened a free passage for him into Greece, where the villages were plundered and burnt, the males who were capable of bearing arms massacred, and the females led captive. His successes obtained for him a command in the eastern empire, which having improved to the strengthening of his own army, he resolved to invade that of the west. Having laid waste Epirus and Pannonia, he in 402 entered Italy. Italy however was for this time delivered from his depredations. The Romans under Stilicho, after twice defeating him, suffered him to quit the country with the remnant of his army.

In 406 another vast army, composed of Goths, Huns, Vandals, Suevi, Burgundians, Alani, &c., under *Radagaisus*, a heathen, attempted the invasion of Italy. The number of fighting men is said to have been two hundred thousand, besides slaves, women, and children, who are reckoned to have amounted to as many more. But neither were they successful. *Radagaisus* was defeated and slain, and a great part of his army either perished or were sold for slaves.

But, though the capital of the western empire was by these events once more saved, yet its provinces were reduced to desolation. Gaul was at this time invaded by the *Vandals*, the *Suevi*, the *Alani*, and the *Burgundians*, who, with the remains of *Radagaisus's* army, destroyed all before them. "On the last day of the year (says *Gibbon*,) when the waters of the Rhine were probably fro-

zen, they entered without opposition the defenceless provinces of Gaul. This memorable passage of the Suevi, the Vandals, the Alani, and the Burgundians, *who never afterwards retreated*, may be considered as the fall of the Roman empire in the countries beyond the Alps; and the barriers which had so long separated the savage and the civilized nations of the earth were from that fatal moment levelled with the ground.—The banks of the Rhine were crowned, like those of the Tiber, with elegant houses, and well cultivated farms. This scene of peace and plenty was suddenly changed into a desert; and the prospect of the smoking ruins could alone distinguish the solitude of nature from the desolation of man. The flourishing city of Mentz was surprised and destroyed; and many thousands of Christians were inhumanly massacred in the church. Worms perished after a long and obstinate siege; Strasbourg, Spire, Rheims, Tournay, Arras, and Amiens, experienced the cruel oppression of the German yoke; and the consuming flames of war spread from the banks of the Rhine over the seventeen provinces of Gaul. That rich and extensive country, as far as the ocean, the Alps, and the Pyrenees, was delivered to the barbarians, who drove before them in a promiscuous crowd the bishop, the senator, and the virgin, laden with the spoils of their houses and altars."—Decline, &c., ch. xxx.

Thus far events appear to answer to the "hail and fire mingled with blood" under the *first* trumpet, which, as they are said to be on the *earth*, correspond with the calamities which in those times were brought upon the *continental* parts of the empire.

*Alaric*, the king of the Visigoths, had made peace with the emperor Honorius, and been made master-general of the Roman armies in Illyricum. In the invasion of *Radagaisus* he took no part, but was attentive to the recruiting of his own army. In 408 he made large demands on the Roman government, accompanied with intimations of what would follow if they were not complied with. Stilicho persuaded the senate to comply with them, and four thousand pounds of gold were promised him under the name of a subsidy. But, before the promise was fulfilled, Stilicho was disgraced and slain. Of the measures of his successors, *Alaric* is said to have had just cause of complaint. The result was, he determined again to invade Italy. Passing over the Alps, he pillaged the cities of Aquileia, Altinum, Concordia, and Cremona, which yielded to his arms; increased his forces by the accession of thirty thousand auxiliaries; and without opposition marched to the gates of Rome. Here, encompassing the city, he reduced it to a state of famine, of which many thousands died. To this succeeded a destructive pestilence. At length the siege was raised



on a large sum of money being paid him: but his terms of peace being rejected by Honorius, who had shut himself up in Ravenna, Rome was a second time besieged. After this it was taken, and for three days given up to the plunder of the besiegers. Vast numbers of the Romans were slain, not only by the Goths, but by their own slaves, forty thousand of whom, being liberated, fell upon their masters.

About ten months before this terrible calamity on Rome and the Lower parts of Italy by the Goths, Spain and Portugal were invaded by the *Vandals*, the *Suevi*, and the *Alani*. These nations had already desolated Gaul, whence passing over the Pyrennees they conquered the peninsula. *Echard* says, "The Vandals took Galicia, where they settled; the Suevi pushed their conquests farther; and the Alani fixed themselves in Portugal and Andalusia. From these barbarians (he adds) descended the ancient kings of Spain."

The calamities of this invasion are thus described by *Gibbon* from a Spanish Historian:—"The barbarians exercised their indiscriminate cruelty on the fortunes of the Romans and Spaniards, and ravaged with equal fury the cities and the open country. The progress of famine reduced the miserable inhabitants to feed on the flesh of their fellow-creatures: and even the wild beasts, that multiplied without control in the desert, were exasperated by the taste of blood, and the impatience of hunger, boldly to attack and devour their human prey. Pestilence soon appeared, the inseparable companion of famine; a large portion of the people was swept away; and the groans of the dying excited only the envy of their surviving friends. At length the barbarians, satiated with carnage and rapine and afflicted by the contagious evils which they themselves had introduced, fixed their permanent seats in the depopulated country."—*Rom. Hist.* ch. xxxi.

These events seem to answer to the "burning mountain cast into the sea," causing a third part of it to become blood, and destroying a third part of all which were in it, as described under the *second* trumpet. If *Ætna* or *Vesuvius* had literally been thrown into the ocean, it could hardly have produced a greater effervescence among the waters than these things produced among the nations. The *sea* would also have a special reference to these calamities being brought upon the *maritime* parts of the empire.

After this, the empire received another mighty shock from the *Scythians*, or *Huns*, a heathen nation, more barbarous and cruel than either the Goths or Vandals. *Attila*, their king and commander, was distinguished by his ferocity, affecting to be called the

"scourge of God," and declaring that "the grass would never grow upon those places where his horse had trodden!" About 441 he fell upon the eastern empire, where, bearing down all before him, the country was in a manner destroyed by fire and sword. *Gibbon* says, "The whole breadth of Europe as it extends above five hundred miles, from the Euxine to the Adriatic, was at once invaded and occupied, and desolated by him." The government at Constantinople, after seventy cities had been razed to the ground, was compelled ignominiously to purchase his retreat.

In the year 450 *Attila* again declared war against both the eastern and western empires. He was defeated in Gaul with a loss (says *Echard*) of 170,000 men; yet in the following year he invaded Italy with a larger army than that with which he had entered Gaul. *Aquileia* after a siege of three months was taken, and so effectually destroyed that the succeeding generation could scarcely discover its ruins. After this, *Verona*, *Mantua*, *Padua*, and many other cities, shared the same fate; the men were slain, the women ravished, and the places reduced to ashes. These devastations, however, were confined to those parts of Italy which border on the Alps. *Attila* threatened Rome, but was induced, partly by fear of the Roman army, partly by the remonstrances of his own, and partly by the embassy of *Leo* the Roman pontiff, to forego the attempt, and, returning into his own country, he shortly after ended his days.

This surely must be the "great star burning as it were a lamp," which followed the sounding of the *third* trumpet, and which, shooting like a fiery meteor from east to west and falling upon the rivers and fountains of waters, impregnated the streams with a mortal bitterness. If the rivers and fountains denote, as has been supposed, the *mountainous* parts of the empire, whence they have their origin, the facts have a remarkable coincidence with the prediction.

As to the remainder of the history, every thing from this time went to *eclipse* the imperial government. Africa, Spain, Britain, the greatest part of Gaul, Germany, and Illyricum, are said to have been dismembered from the empire; the court was full of intrigues and murders; *Valentinian* the emperor ravished the wife of *Maximus*, one of his senators; *Maximus* in return got *Valentinian* murdered, usurped his throne, and compelled *Eudoxia* the empress to marry him; *Eudoxia*, in hatred to the usurper, invited *Genseric*, the Vandal, to come over from Africa and revenge the death of *Valentinian*; *Genseric* prepared to invade Italy; *Maximus*, on hearing it, instead of taking measures for repelling him, sunk

into despondency; the senators stoned him to death, and threw his body into the Tiber; Genseric entered Rome without opposition, and gave it up to be sacked and plundered by his soldiers for fourteen days. Hence, as bishop Newton observes, "the western empire struggled hard, and gasped as it were for breath through eight short and turbulent reigns, for the space of twenty years, and at length expired in the year 476, under Momyllus, or Augustulus, as he was named in derision, being a diminutive of Augustus."

After this, Odoacer, king of the Ostrogoths, invaded the country and seized the government, which he held, however, not as head of the western empire, but merely as *King of Italy*. There were indeed a senate and council after this, but they had only the shadow of authority.

Thus it was, I conceive, that the eclipse of the sun, moon, and stars, as described under the *fourth* trumpet, was accomplished. It may be thought that these events had *too slight a relation to the church of Christ* to become the subject of prophecy: two things, however, may be alleged in answer. *First*: They were necessary for the accomplishment of other prophecies, particularly Dan. vii. 7, 8; 2 Thess. ii. 7. Hereby a way was made for the beast to have "ten horns," as after the overthrow of the empire it was divided into so many independent kingdoms, which with little variation continue to this day. Hereby also a way was made for the "little horn" of Daniel's fourth beast, or the papal antichrist, to come up amongst them; or, as the apostle expresses it, for the man of sin to be revealed. "The mystery of iniquity hath already begun to work (saith he), only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way: and then shall that wicked (one) be revealed." While the imperial authority continued, there was not sufficient scope for ecclesiastical ambition; but, when this was removed, the other soon appeared in its true character. The Goths embracing the *religion* of the conquered Romans, the clergy became objects of superstitious veneration amongst a barbarous people, and of this they availed themselves to the establishment of their spiritual authority. Hence the see of Rome made no scruple of setting up for supremacy.

*Secondly*: In these judgments upon the empire we perceive the divine displeasure for its having corrupted the Christian religion, and transformed it into an engine of state. The wars of the Assyrians and Babylonians were the scourges of God on those who had corrupted the true religion; and such were those of the Goths, the Vandals, and the Huns, on the Christian governments of the fourth and fifth centuries.

## DISCOURSE X.

## THE FIRST WOE-TRUMPET, OR THE SMOKE AND LOCUSTS.

Rev. viii. 13; ix. 1—12.

As the first four trumpets were connected in their objects, so are the last three. The last verse of the eighth chapter is introductory to them.

Ver. 13. "This solemn denunciation seems to be introduced for the purpose of drawing our attention to the great importance of the events which were to happen under the last three trumpets. It serves also as a chronological mark to show that these three trumpets are all posterior to the first four, not only in order, but in time; and that they belong to a new series of events."\* The most distinguishing plagues which were to befall the church and the world are designated by them. The first two seem to refer to the prevalence of popery and Mahomedism, and the last to those vials of wrath which should effect their overthrow.

Ch. IX. ver. 1—12. The fifth, or first woe-trumpet, is short, but awfully impressive. Looking at this dreadful irruption of darkness and desolation, we perceive the necessity there was for "sealing the servants of God in their foreheads," that they might be preserved amidst these trying times. These are the "winds" which those ministers of vengeance to whom it was given to hurt the earth (ch. vii. 1, 2), at length let loose upon it. The professing Christian world being exceedingly corrupt, it became necessary to try them. The "sealed" servants of God would endure the trial; but "those men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads" would be carried away and perish.

That the locusts refer to the ravaging hordes of Saracens, who, with Mahomed at their head, subdued and destroyed the eastern part of christendom, seems to be generally admitted; and some have considered the "smoke" as denoting his false doctrine, and the "star" which fell from heaven to the earth as meaning himself. But, on the most mature consideration, I concur with those expositors who, while admitting the locusts to be Mahomed's destructive hordes of Saracens, yet understand the smoke of *popish* darkness, which was preparatory to the other, and the fallen star of the fallen bishop of Rome. † If the fourth trumpet

\*Cuninghame's Dissertation, p. 84.

† It is true that that part of the prophecy which treats *directly* of the great papal community is yet in *derivation*: but, as in a history of any nation frequent mention requires to be made of other nations, so, in a prophecy of the ravages of Mahomedism, mention may require to be made of popery, as preparing its way.



refer to the subversion of the imperial government under Augustulus, it may be presumed that the fifth would refer to things not very distant from it, and probably rising out of it: but the appearance of Mahomed was 130 years after this event, and seems to have no immediate connection with it. On the other hand, there is a connection between the subversion of the imperial government and "the revelation of the man of sin." It was the imperial authority which "let" or hindered him, and which, when "taken out of the way," made room for his appearing.—2 Thess. ii. 4—8. Thus the eclipse under the fourth trumpet prepared the way for the irruption of darkness under the fifth. The mystery of iniquity had long been at work; but now it burst forth as the smoke of a great furnace, impeding the light of the gospel, and darkening the moral atmosphere of the Christian world.

With this also agrees the application of "the fallen star" to the pope or bishop of Rome. It comports with the symbolical style of the book that a prophetic person should denote not an individual, but a succession of individuals in an official character. The bishop of Rome was once a star in the Christian firmament; but abandoning the doctrine and spirit of a Christian minister, and setting up for worldly domination, he "fell from heaven unto the earth," and thus became a fit agent for "opening the bottomless pit." The bishop of Meaux acknowledges that "Hell does not open of itself: it is always some false doctor that opens it."

The *darkness* of popery is not only of infernal origin, but brings with it a state of mind prepared for the grossest delusions. Intercepting the light of truth, it darkened the world with its doctrines. It changed the truth of God into a lie, and, like old heathenism, "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, Amen!" Wherefore God gave them up to Mahomedan imposture, depredation, and ruin. As the smoke brought forth the locusts (though both proceeded from the pit,) so popery brought forth Mahomedism.\* But for the one, the other could not have prevailed as it did where the light of the gospel had once appeared. The Roman Catholics have made great noise about the keys; and truly a key has been given them, "the key of the bottomless pit!"

As to the *locusts*, they are described chiefly by their *depredations*. The wrath of God is less directed against them than against that out of which they came. They were indeed *from beneath*, and so was the conquering system of Assyria and Babylon;

but, as these powers were the rod of God's anger against a nation which had corrupted the true religion, it is not till they in their turn are punished that much is said of their crimes. And thus the destructive hordes of Saracens that laid waste a great part of the eastern world are described as executing a commission, not against "grass, or green things, or trees," like ordinary locusts, but "against the men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads"—that is, against the corrupters of Christianity.—Ver. 4.—There was a *direction* given to their successes very much like that which has of late years been given to those on the continent of Europe against the papal countries. The Christianity of the Greek church, whose patriarch resided at Constantinople, was in a great degree absorbed by them.

It is observable, however, that the men against whom their commission was directed were not to be *killed*, but tormented for a certain time. They doubtless did kill great numbers, *individually* considered; but with all their ravages they only harassed those countries where corrupted Christianity prevailed. They were not able to destroy either the Greek or the Latin Church.

The *time* in which they should harass them is limited to "five months," which probably alludes to the usual season for the ravages of the natural locusts. It has been thought to intend so many prophetic days, or years. Five months, reckoning thirty days to a month, and each day a year, would be 150 years; and this was the period in which the Saracen arms are said to have prevailed. They began about 612. After the death of Mahomed, they continued, though with some interruptions, to carry on their conquests. In 713 they entered Spain, which in a few years was subjugated to them, and, passing the Pyrennees, they entered France, which was then said to be the only rampart of Christianity. They advanced as to a certain victory, whereupon ensued one of the bloodiest battles that the world had ever seen. Of the Saracens there were 400,000 men, besides women and children, who came with them, designing to settle in France, and no doubt to extirpate Christianity from Europe. *Three hundred and seventy thousand* of them are said to have been slain, including their general. This battle was fought by *Charles Martel*, the grandfather of Charlemagne, in 734, and put a stop to the progress of the Saracen arms in Europe. About 762, after the "five months" of years which were given them to continue had elapsed, they ceased to extend their conquests by settling peaceably in the countries which they had conquered, and so ceased to ravage as locusts.

The *description* given of these locusts, ver. 7—10, answers to most of the peculiari-

\* See Mr. Cuninghame's Dissertation on the Trumpets, ch. VI.

ties of the Saracen armies ; as their use of cavalry ; their turbans resembling crowns, in which they gloried ; the union of fierceness and effeminacy in their character ; the impenetrability of their forces ; the rapidity of their conquests ; and their carrying with them the sting of deadly imposture.

Finally : This fearful army is described as having "a king over them, even the angel of the bottomless pit," whence they came, and "whose name in the Hebrew tongue is *Abaddon*, but in the Greek *Apollyon*." This would seem to be Mahomed and his successors, or Satan as working by them. The genius of Mahomedism is to *destroy* the lives as well as the souls of men.

After this we are told, "One woe is past : and behold there come two woes more hereafter." By the term "hereafter" it seems to be intimated that the second woe would not follow very soon after the first, but that a considerable lapse of time would intervene betwixt them. In this respect the language differs from the introduction of the third woe, in ch. xi. 14, where it is said, "The second woe is past, and behold the third woe cometh *quickly*."

## DISCOURSE XI.

### THE SECOND WOE-TRUMPET, OR THE ARMY OF HORSEMEN.

Rev. ix. 13—21.

WE here enter on the sixth, or second woe-trumpet, which, embracing different contemporary events, may be expected to require several discourses. That part of it which we are now upon contains a description of the revival of the Mahomedan desolations by the *Turks*, in the thirteenth and following centuries. It will be recollected that the second woe was not to come quickly, but "hereafter." Such was the fact. Several centuries elapsed between the ravages of the Saracens and those of the *Turks*. But as the desolations wrought by the followers of Mahomed, whether Saracens or *Turks*, would be less injurious to the cause of Christ than the abominations of popery, there is not only much less said of them than of the other, but what is said is finished before the other is particularly begun, that the thread of the principal subject might not be broken. There is no reason to think that the Turkish wars would have occupied a place in Scripture prophecy, but for their being the appointed means of crushing a corrupt part of the Christian church. For these reasons I question the propriety of calling the Mahomedan power *the eastern antichrist*. There is no doubt of its being *opposed* to Christ, and the same may be said of heathenism ; but *nothing is called antichrist in the Scriptures which makes*

*no profession of being on the side of Christ*. If there was an eastern antichrist, it was that community which the Mahomedans destroyed, namely, "the men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads !"

The leading facts corresponding with this part of the prophecy were as follows :—The *Turks*, a people who in the ninth century had migrated from the neighborhood of Mount Caucasus, and settled in Armenia Major, by the eleventh century became formidable to their neighbors. They consisted of *four Sultanies*, the seats of which were at *Bagdad*, *Damascus*, *Aleppo*, and *Iconium* : all in the neighborhood of the Euphrates. Their principal struggles were with the eastern Roman empire, or the Christians of the Greek church. For about two centuries their ambition was restrained, partly it may be by the European crusades, or what were called *the holy wars*, for the recovery of Jerusalem : but, the disasters which attended these undertakings inducing the European princes at length to relinquish them, they were then at liberty to pursue their objects. In 1281 they obtained a decided victory over the eastern Christians ; and in 1299 a new empire was founded by *Othman*, composed of the four Turkish Sultanies, which still subsists, and is called after his name the *Ottoman* empire. During the fourteenth century their successes continued. In the middle of the fifteenth (1453) Constantinople was taken, the eastern Roman empire fell, and with it the Greek church, neither of which, except in the religion of the latter being embraced by the Russians, has since lifted up its head.

The "four angels" then denote the four Turkish governments near the Euphrates. These are called angels, as being *messengers* of wrath, commissioned to destroy the corrupt Christians of the east. The "loosing" of them refers to the removal of those obstructions which for a time impeded their progress. The "voice" which ordered them to be loosed proceeding from the "four horns of the golden altar" signifies that these judgments, like those in chap. viii. 3—5, would be in answer to the prayers of the saints : or, perhaps, as bishop Newton says, "intimating that the sins of men must have been very great, when the altar, which was their sanctuary and protection, called aloud for vengeance." Their continuance "for an hour and a day, and a month and a year," reckoning by prophetic time, includes 391 years ; which beginning from 1281, the year of their first victory over the eastern Roman empire, extends to 1672, the year of their last victory over the Poles ; from which period they have been sinking into such disorder and imbecility as forebode their ruin. Their armies being described as "horsemen," answers to the numerous cavalry of the *Turks*. The number of them, consisting of

"myriads of myriads," shows the vast armies which they brought into the field. "Breast-plates of fire, of jacinth, and of brimstone," may denote the glittering harness with which the horses were caparisoned. Their "heads being as the heads of lions" is expressive of their strength and fierceness. "Fire and smoke and brimstone, issuing out of their mouths," seems to allude to the use of gunpowder in war, which began about this period. Great guns were used in the taking of Constantinople in 1453. The symbol is expressive of what a body of horsemen, fighting with fire-arms, would appear to a distant spectator, who had never before seen or heard of any thing of the kind.

There is one remarkable difference between the *locusts* and the *horsemen*: the former were not commissioned to *kill*, but merely to *torment*; whereas of the latter it is said, "By these were the third part of men *killed*, even by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone which issued out of their mouths." They both, doubtless, killed men as individuals; but the latter only were permitted to kill those *political bodies* to which the prophecy refers. The eastern Roman empire, and the Greek church as connected with it, fell not by the Saracens of the eighth, but by the Turks of the fifteenth century. Finally, their "power was in their *mouth*, and in their *tails*." Now, as the fire and smoke and brimstone are said to issue from the former, they would seem to denote their artillery; and, as in respect of the latter they resemble the locusts, these are the destructive *principles* which they propagate by the sword in common with the Saracens. Mahomedism was that to the Christian church in the east which Assyria and Babylon were to Samaria and Jerusalem. Its first appearance in the seventh and eighth centuries was a judgment upon them for having corrupted the Christian doctrine and worship; but as a body it went only to "torment" them, not to "kill" them. It said, "Repent, or I will remove thy candlestick out of his place!" but they repented not. Its last appearance therefore, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, carried the threatening into execution. The candlestick of the eastern church was removed, and her children were killed with death!

But that which is the most remarkable is the effect, or rather the want of effect, of these terrible judgments on those who survived them. "The *rest of the men* (that is, of the men who had not the seal of God in their foreheads,) who were not killed by these plagues, repented not." As those that were killed were the eastern Roman empire and the Greek church as connected with it, so those that were not killed were the western Roman empire and the Latin church. These two churches were as *Aholah* and

*Aholibah*. The fall of the one ought to have been a warning to the other; but it was not. They persisted in their image-worship, which was only the old idolatry of the Pagans under a new form: nor were they behind them in their murderous persecutions, their foul impostures, their filthy intrigues, and their fraudulent impositions. And though, soon after the overthrow of the Greek church, the Reformation began, yet they reformed not. The Council of Trent, which was called on this occasion, sat eighteen years, and at last left things as it found them. Babylon was not to be healed!

## DISCOURSE XII.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE WESTERN OR PAPAL APOSTACY.

#### Rev. x.

THE eastern church, as connected with the Roman empire, being slain, the remainder of the prophecy may be expected to concern the *western*, or "the rest of the men, who were not killed by these plagues." This it does; so much of it, at least, as brings us to the taking of the beast and of the false prophet and so to the commencement of the Millennium. The corruptions of the western church have been intimated before; as by the sealing of the servants of God in their foreheads, chap. vii.; by the judgments inflicted on the western empire under the first four trumpets, chap. viii.; and by the clouds of smoke from the bottomless pit: but now the prophecy treats directly and exclusively of them. Nor is it surprising that the apostacy of this church should occupy so large a part of the prophecy,\* inasmuch as both for its duration and mischievous effects there is nothing equal to it under the gospel dispensation. The period allotted for its continuance is no less than 1260 years; during which the holy city is trodden under foot, the witnesses prophecy in sackcloth, the true church fleeth into the wilderness, and the saints of the Most High are persecuted to death by a ferocious and cruel beast. This apostate church was, no doubt, the *man of sin* foretold by Paul; and, notwithstanding what has been advanced against it by a late respectable writer, I have no doubt of its being the *Antichrist* which the Christians in John's time had *heard should come*.†

\* From the beginning of chap. x. to the end of chap. xix.

† This appears to be evidently made out by Mr. Scott, in his notes on 2 Thess. ii. 3—12, and 1 John ii. 18. As to its being a character of Antichrist that he "denieth the Father and the Son" (ver. 22,) it is of the Antichrist *already come*



Before we enter upon this subject it will be proper to give the outlines of the ten chapters in which it is contained. Chap. x. I consider as merely introductory. Chap. xi. gives a general representation of this corrupt and persecuting power, with the state of the church of Christ under it, during the 1260 years. Chap. xii. gives a second, and chap. xiii. and xiv. a third general representation of it during the same period. Chap. xv. and xvi. gives a more particular account of that part of the subject which commences at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and contains a subdivision of that trumpet into seven vials, the pouring out of which brings us down to the Millennium. The xviii, xviith, and xixth chapters contain what in modern publications we should call *notes of illustration*, giving particular accounts of things which before had only been generally intimated.

We are not to expect the events relating to the western church to follow the conclusion of those of the eastern, *in order of time*. In tracing the issue of the one, we were led almost down to the times of the Reformation; but, in taking up the other, we must expect to go many centuries back again. It is in prophecy as it is in history, when describing contemporary events, the writer, having gone through one series, returns and takes up the other. It is thus in the history of Judah and Israel in the second book of Kings; with this difference, that, in carrying on those histories together, the writer went through only a single reign of one of them ere he returned to the other; whereas in this the overthrow of the eastern church is completed before the account of the western is begun. The former brought us down to the fifteenth century; the latter, when tracing the origin of things, may glance at events as early as the fourth.

Ver. 1—11. The "mighty angel" appears by his description to be the Son of God himself, and this may indicate the importance of the vision. His being "clothed with a cloud" may express the concealment

that this is spoken, who had professed Christianity, and whose apostasy consisted not in a disavowal of the name of Christ, but of certain Christian doctrines, which included a *virtual* denial of Jesus being the Christ, as that also was a virtual denial of the Father. Had these "forerunners of Antichrist," as Mr. Scott very properly calls them, been avowed infidels, they could not have been *seducers* to the churches of Christ (ver. 26,) a name given to false teachers. Such were those *deceivers* in 2 John 7, who, by denying the real humanity of Christ, denied his being come in the flesh. But, if a *virtual* denial of the Father and the Son rendered those who were *already come* Antichrists, there is no reason why it should not do the same of *him that should come*. It is not probable that John would have allowed "the man of sin" to acknowledge either the Father, or the Son, while he usurped the place of both.

of his designs, and the hiding of his power. He could have crushed this great conspiracy at the outset, but he did not. The "rainbow on his head" is the sign of peace, or of covenant mercy, and may here denote that whatever evils might be permitted in order to try the church, yet there should not be such a deluge as to destroy it. His countenance being compared to "the sun," and his feet to "pillars of fire," may intimate that neither is his glory tarnished nor his majesty diminished, by all the corruptions which are introduced under his name. Finally, his "coming down from heaven" seems to denote a change of scene. The Lamb's company stand upon Mount Sion; but the harlot sitteth upon the waters, and the beast riseth out of the sea. Thus, as the subject respects the same apostate community, the scene is the earth, and the angel descends from heaven to disclose it.

The "little book" which the angel held open in his hand relates doubtless to the western apostacy. It has been thought to be a kind of *Appendix*, or *Codicil*, to the sealed book, and a part of what follows to be *chapters* of it. But this seems too much: for, if so, it would not properly belong to the sealed book, whereas all that pertains to the apostacy, and to the state of the church to the end of the world, belongs to the trumpets, which trumpets are a subdivision of the seventh seal. It is not therefore anything *added* to the sealed book, but a marked division of it,—a book as it were within a book.—The angel's setting his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, would express his absolute dominion over both. His "crying with a loud voice as when a lion roareth" was awfully preparatory to the seven thunders which immediately uttered their voices. On hearing them, John was about to write, but is told by a voice from heaven to "seal up the things which the thunders uttered, and write them not." The thunders then were not mere sounds, but certain "things," which, though they were not at present to be disclosed, yet in due time should be fulfilled. Their fulfilment too was an object of such importance, and lay so near the angel's heart, that with the utmost indignation he "sware by Him that liveth forever and ever that *there should be no delay*;" but that in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he should begin to sound, they should be accomplished.\*

\* Whether  $\sigma\tau\iota$   $\chi\alpha\rho\omega\varsigma$   $\alpha\upsilon\kappa$   $\sigma\epsilon\alpha\iota$   $\sigma\tau\iota$  be rendered, as in our version, that *there should be time no longer*; or, more literally, as by Mr. DAUBUZ and others, that *the time shall not be yet*; or, as Dr. GILL says the words will bear to be rendered, that *there should be delay no longer*; the meaning cannot be that time itself should then be at an end. Nor does it seem to be an object of sufficient importance for an oath that the time for the seven



From these considerations it appears plain that the seven thunders relate to the same "things" as those which are afterwards disclosed under the seven vials. They both express the wrath of God against the papal antichrist; the one describes it only in general, and that in the form of *threatenings*, the other descends to particulars, and describes it as *actually executing*. The thunders being introduced before the prophetic account of the apostacy may denote the displeasure of God against it from its very beginning, and tend to support the faith and patience of the church under it.

The forbidding the apostle to write, and commanding him to eat the book, seems like saying,—The apostacy is not yet ripe. The wrath of God against it will be deferred for the present. Under the sounding of the seventh angel he will pour forth the vials of his indignation upon it. At present, therefore, write it not; but receive a general impression of things by eating the book!—The allusion doubtless is to Ezek. iii. 1—3, and denotes that he must understand and digest its contents. The book, he was told, would be sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his belly. The same desire of understanding the future state of the church which made him weep when no one was found worthy to open the sealed book must make him rejoice when an open book was put into his hand, with a direction to eat it; but when he came to digest it, and to perceive the corruptions and persecutions that should prevail, and for so long a period retard the progress of the gospel, it would be grievous to him.

To teach him that what he had now seen and done was designed only as a general impression, preparatory to what should follow, he is given to understand that he must go over the ground "again," writing prophecies which respect many "peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings."

thunders to be executed *should not be yet*. It is not their not being yet, but their being at the appointed time; not the protraction, but the accomplishment *notwithstanding the protraction*, to which the angel swears. There is a manifest reference in the passage to Dan. xii. 7: "And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and a half, and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." It was of the Papal Antichrist, of whom Antiochus Epiphanes was a type, that the man clothed in linen spake, and of him speaks the angel to John. As the former predicts his fall, so does the latter; and as Antiochus had been permitted to scatter the power of the holy people for a time, times, and half a time, so should Antichrist be permitted to scatter the church of Christ for the same prophetic period, reckoning a year for a day, that is, for the space of 1260 years. See "Prideaux's Connection," Part II. Book III. at the close.

## DISCOURSE XIII.

THE FIRST GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE  
PAPAL APOSTACY, AND OF THE STATE OF  
THE CHURCH UNDER IT.

Rev. xi. &c.

I CONCEIVE with Mr. LOWMAN that the following chapters contain three general descriptions of the papal Antichrist, and of the state of the church under it; only he confines them to the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth chapters, whereas it appears to me that the thirteenth and fourteenth should not be divided, but considered as containing between them the third general description. The reasons for considering these four chapters not as one continued prophecy, but as general representations of the events of the same period, are the following:—

*First*: The events foretold by the slaughter and resurrection of the witnesses in ch. xi.; by the flight of the woman into the wilderness, and the victory over the dragon in ch. xii.; with the ravages of the beasts and the triumph of the Lamb's company in chapters xiii. and xiv., are the same.—*Secondly*: These representations are not confined to one or two trumpets, but comprehend the times of the greater part of them. Some of the things represented, particularly those at the beginning of ch. xii., in which the origin of the apostacy is traced, appear to go back to the times of the first four trumpets, namely, to the fourth and fifth centuries; others, particularly those at the close of chapters xi. and xiv., which describe the overthrow of the apostate church, go forward to the times of the last trumpet, and even of the last vials, into which that trumpet is subdivided. This will be evident by comparing ch. xi. 19 with ch. xvi. 18. In both mention is made of "lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail;" both, therefore, manifestly refer to the same events.—*Thirdly*: In each of these descriptions there is a reference to the 1260 years, the period which in prophecy marks the duration of the antichristian power. So long were the witnesses to prophecy in sackcloth, so long the woman to be in the wilderness, and so long the beast to make war with the saints. It is therefore to the events of this period that these chapters relate; containing an account of the rise, the reign, and the overthrow of the papal Antichrist.

It could scarcely be expected that so long a period, embracing such multifarious characters and events, events too which so deeply interest the church of God, should be passed over without particular notice. The sacred writer is as it were made to pause, and to give us several distinct views of the subject,

according to the different lights in which he beheld it. I only add, if these chapters do really comprehend the events of the 1260 years, we might almost presume, in going over them, to meet with something under each description relating to so distinguished an event as the *Reformation*, and must certainly have thrice to cross the meridian of our own times.

The first of these general descriptions, which we now enter upon, does not appear to trace the origin of the apostacy, but to take it up from the time in which things were so matured that, in taking the measurement of God's temple, the papal community was ordered to be left out, as not belonging to it.

Ver. 1. 2. The language no doubt is Jewish, but the doctrine, worship, and worshippers of the *Christian* church are intended. Christianity, having become the religion of the state abounded with converts; but such would be their character, and such the kind of religion they would introduce, that the extent of the church would require to be contracted. The outer court, containing the body of the worshippers, must be left out. That which had been known by the name of the Catholic church must be given up as idolatrous; and thus the profanation of the temple by Antiochus would be acted over again.\*

Ver. 3—6. The import of these verses is that, during the long period of papal corruption and persecution, God would have his faithful witnesses, who should bear testimony against it, though it were in sackcloth. As, in the language of the prophecy, a king denotes not an individual monarch, but a succession of kings, or a kingdom, so by "two witnesses" we are doubtless to understand not two individual witnesses, but a competent succession of them. This is manifest from their continuing through the long period of 1260 years, which can only be true of a succession of men. Some have supposed them to be the Old and New Testaments, others the old and New Testament churches;

\* "Our Reformers (says Mr. FABER) never thought of unchurching the church of Rome, though they freely declared it to have *erred*. Hence, while they rejected its abominations, they did not scruple to derive from it their line of episcopal and sacerdotal ordination." Vol. II. p. 3, note.

The English Reformers might allow the church of Rome to be a true church of Christ; but do the Scriptures support them in this concession? The church of Rome was once a part of God's temple; but hence it is left out of the measurement. Instead of being "the holy city," it is a body of idolaters who tread it under foot. It is not Zion, but Babylon. Some of God's people might be found in her, but they are commanded to come out of her. She is not the bride, the Lamb's wife, but the mother of harlots. Finally, If the church of Rome continued to be a church of Christ, what must that church be who fled from her persecutions into the wilderness?

but I see no reason why they should not be understood of the faithful servants of Christ, who, *during this period*, would bear witness for the truth. It is of the *true church* as opposed to the *false* that the other general descriptions speak; namely, of the woman and her seed who fled into the wilderness, and of the Lamb's company as opposed to that of the beast: I conclude, therefore, that such are the two witnesses in this.

Moreover, the correspondence of 1260 days, in which they should prophecy, with the "time, times, and the dividing of time," in Daniel (ch. vii. 25,) not only determines the general application of the prophecy, but the parties concerned in both to be the same. In the latter end of the fourth, or Roman, government, according to Daniel, a little horn should grow up among the ten horns, that should "wear out the *saints of the Most High*, until a time, times, and the dividing of time." According to John, the witnesses, during the same period, should prophecy in sackcloth, and be persecuted and slain. The *witnesses* of John, therefore, and the *saints* of Daniel, are the same.

These two witnesses are said to be "the two olive-trees and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth." The olive-trees and the candlestick of Zechariah, to which there is a manifest reference, were not the same. The former supplied the latter, or the two sides of the bowl of it, with oil. The candlestick seems to have signified the church, and the olive-trees the prophets of God who were with the builders helping them—Ezra v. 2. Corresponding with this, the olive-trees of John are faithful ministers, and the candlesticks Christian churches. The same prophecy which bears witness against the corruptions of Antichrist supplies the friends of Christ as with fresh oil, and enables them to shine as lights in the world. Both the olive-trees and the candlesticks in different ways are witnesses to the truth.

The "fire that proceedeth out of their mouth" denotes the divine threatenings to which those who reject their testimony are exposed. In this way all who have perseveringly set themselves against the truth of God have been slain by it, not only as incurring the wrath to come, but spiritual judgments even in this life; such are blindness of mind and hardness of heart, the most awful and sure presages of eternal death.

Their having "power to shut heaven that it rain not in the days of their prophecy, to turn waters into blood, and to smite the earth with plagues as often as they will," denotes the influence of prayer when presented in faith and in conformity to the will of God. There is a reference no doubt to the prayer of Elijah against apostate Israel, which prayer was answered with a death: but, without any thing properly miraculous, the



prayers of God's suffering servants may draw down both temporal and spiritual judgments on persecuting nations. The terrible things which God is now in righteousness inflicting on the nations may be in answer to the prayers of his servants of former ages, who century after century have been crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth!" Such cries enter the ears of the Lord of Hosts, and must be answered.

#### APPENDIX TO DISCOURSE XIII.

THE history of the witnesses prior to the eleventh and twelfth centuries is difficult to be traced, owing to the want of materials: and during those centuries almost all the accounts that we have of them are from the pens of their persecutors, who have not failed to transmit their memory to posterity in the most odious colors. That some who in church-history are deemed heretics were really such need not be questioned: but let any serious Christian read the church-history of MOSHEIM; and, unless he can find a portion of true religion under the article of "heresies and heretics that disturbed the peace of the church during this century," it is difficult to say where he is to look for it. After the utmost search through other parts, he may ask, "Where is wisdom, and where is the place of understanding?"

There is little doubt but that all through these dark ages there were many thousands who stood aloof from the corruptions of the times, and bore practical testimony against them; and who, notwithstanding some errors, were much nearer the truth and true religion than those who have reproached them as heretics.

There is reason to believe that amongst the *Novatians*, the *Paulicians*, the *Cathari*, the *Paterines*, and others who separated from the catholic church, and were cruelly persecuted by it, there were a great number of faithful witnesses for the truth in those days.

We should not, like Bishop Newton, confine the witnesses to councils, princes, and eminent men, who in their day bore testimony against error and superstition. They will be found I doubt not in great numbers amongst those who were unknown, and consequently unnoticed by historians. God hath chosen the *things that are not* to bring to nought the things that are. Let a church-history of our own times be written on the principles of that of MOSHEIM, and the great body of the most faithful witnesses would have no place in it.

The history of the witnesses will be principally found in that of the *Waldenses* and

*Albigenses*, who for a succession of centuries spread themselves over almost every nation in Europe, and in innumerable instances bore testimony, at the expense of their lives, against the corruptions of the anti-christian party.

*John Paul Perrin*, a French protestant of the city of Lyons, who early in the seventeenth century wrote the history of these churches, traces their origin to *Peter Waldo*, who was also a citizen of Lyons. Waldo, as we shall see presently, was not the father of the Waldenses; but he was an excellent man. About the year 1160 he began to bear testimony against the papal corruptions. The archbishop of Lyons, being informed of his proceedings, sought to apprehend him; but Waldo, having many friends in the city, was concealed there for about three years. After this, he was driven from Lyons, and it is said that he retired into Dauphine in the south of France, and afterwards into Picardy in the north; and that his followers spread themselves, not only in Piedmont, Provence, Languedoc, &c., but in almost all the nations of Europe.

Waldo translated, or procured to be translated, the Scriptures into the French language; by means of which his followers disseminated the truth over a great part of Europe.

In *Piedmont*, whither some of his followers were driven, churches were planted, which though exposed to innumerable oppressions and persecutions from their princes, who were stirred up by the priests, yet continued to bear witness to the truth, not only till the Reformation, but for a considerable time after it. In *Picardy*, whither Waldo himself retired, the houses of three hundred gentlemen who adhered to him were razed to the ground, and several walled towns were destroyed. Being driven thence, he and his followers retired into *Flanders*, where great numbers of them were burnt to death. Thence many fled into *Germany*, particularly into *Alsace*, and the country along the Rhine, where the bishop of *Mayence* caused to be burnt thirty-five burgesses in one fire, and eighteen in another, who with great constancy suffered death. At *Strasbourg* eighty were burnt at the instance of the bishop of the place. They were scattered through the whole kingdom of *France*. From the year 1206, when the Inquisition was established, to 1228, such multitudes were seized, particularly in France, that even the bishops declared to the monks inquisitors, that "the expense of supporting them would be more than could be defrayed, and that there would not be found lime and stone sufficient to build prisons which should contain them!" A hundred and fourteen were burnt alive at one time in Paris. In 1223 they had goodly churches in *Bulgaria*, *Croatia*, *Dalmatia*,

and Hungary; and, notwithstanding the persecution, in Germany, one of their martyrs assured his persecutors, in the year 1315, that there were then 80,000 of the same mind in the country. In Bohemia, a colony of Waldenses settled and planted churches 240 years before the time of Huss. Another colony went from Dauphine about 1370, and settled in Calabria, where they were defended by their landlords against the priests till 1560, when they were exterminated by the papal soldiery. In England, during the reign of Henry II., namely, from 1174 to 1189, they were persecuted under the name of *Publicans*. About 1315, LOLLARD, who was seven years afterwards burnt to death at Cologne, came over to England and taught many, who thence were called *Lollards*, and were persecuted without mercy. Soon after the death of Lollard, the same doctrines were taught by *Wickliff*, whose followers also for a century and a half, down to the Reformation, were burnt in great numbers.

*Perrin*, as has been observed, traces the origin of the Waldenses and Albigenses to PETER WALDO: yet there are several things even in his history which prove their existence LONG BEFORE THE TIME OF WALDO. He quotes *Reynerius* the inquisitor, who wrote within sixty years after Waldo, as saying of the Waldenses that "they had resisted the church of Rome for a long time." He quotes a Waldensian poem, called *The Noble Lesson*, which poem appears by its contents to have been written about the year 1100, that is, forty or fifty years at least before the appearance of Waldo. He quotes *Claudius Rubis*, who, in his *History of Lyons*, says of the Waldenses, in a way of reproach, that "being retired unto the Alps, at their departure from Lyons, they became like the rest of the people of that country, besom-riders," or sorcerers. There must then have been a people among the Alps who were reproached as sorcerers, before the disciples of Waldo went and joined them. Finally, in *Perrin's* History of the Albigenses, he says, They received the belief of the Waldenses soon after the departure of Waldo from Lyons, that is, soon after 1160, and yet that the instruments who were employed in this work were *Peter of Bruis*, *Henry*, *Joseph*, *Esperon*, and *Arnold Holt*. But *Peter of Bruis* began to preach against the corruptions of popery in 1110, and was burnt in 1130, and *Henry* was soon after imprisoned at Rome; all before the times of Waldo. There must therefore have been a body of these faithful witnesses from an early period, probably from the times in which the Christian church began to be overspread with corruptions.

In the spring of 1655 a most horrible massacre of the Waldenses was perpetra-

ted in the dominions of the duke of Savoy. On this occasion Sir Samuel Morland, going over as envoy from the protector Cromwell to the court of Savoy, was charged, as he says, by archbishop Usher, before he left England, to make the most diligent inquiry into the antiquity of the Waldenses.\* Having finished his business at Turin, and retired to Geneva, he was requested by secretary Thurloe to write his *History of the Evangelical Churches of the Valleys of Piedmont*. In his history, Sir Samuel, besides relating many things of the Waldenses since the days of *Perrin*, and narrating the particulars of the late massacre, makes it appear that these churches remained united with all other Christian churches so long as they retained the true religion; but, when the church of Rome departed from it, they began to depart from her; and that the followers of *Peter Waldo*, who about 1165 fled from the south of France into the valleys of Piedmont, were not the first Waldenses, but rather that they joined themselves to those their faithful brethren who had been there long before them.

The learned Dr. ALLIX, a French protestant who took refuge in England on the revocation of the edict of Nantes, largely establishes the same thing in his *Remarks on the Ecclesiastical History of the Ancient Churches of Piedmont and of the Country of the Albigenses*. He has proved that these people, from their situation in the valleys, and not from Waldo, were denominated *Wallenses*, or the *Vaudois*—that though not free from a portion of the general corruption, yet they continued to maintain the leading principles of what is now called the protestant religion—that before the year 1026 a body of men in Italy, connected with *Gundulfus*, believed contrary to the opinions of the church of Rome, condemned its errors, and sent their brethren into divers places to oppose themselves to the superstitions that reigned throughout the west—that in the

\* It was on occasion of this horrible massacre that MILTON wrote the following sonnet:—

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughter'd saints, whose bones  
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold;  
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshipp'd stocks and stones,  
Forget not: in thy book record their groans,  
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese, that roll'd  
Mother and infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
To heaven. Their martyr'd blood and ashes sow  
O'er all th' Italian fields, where still doth sway  
A triple tyrant; that from these may grow  
A hundred fold, who, having learn'd thy way,  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe!

Not only did the English government interfere with the court of Turin in behalf of the remnant of these persecuted people, but a collection was made for them through the nation, which amounted to nearly £40,000, (a prodigious sum in those times,) which was sent to them by Sir Samuel Morland.



same century another body of the Christians of Italy denominated *Paterines*, and whose principles were much the same with those who were afterwards called Waldenses, separated from the church of Rome—that soon after the year 1100 it was said, “If a man loves those that desire to love God and Jesus Christ, if he will neither curse, nor swear, nor lie, nor whore, nor kill, nor deceive his neighbor, nor avenge himself of his enemies, they presently say, He is a *Vaudès*, he deserves to be punished; and by lies and forging are found to take away from him what he has got by his lawful industry”—that about 1160 many of the followers of Peter Waldo retired into the valleys of Piedmont, and there joined the *Vaudois*—that, Waldo himself being condemned as a heretic, it was common for the papists to call all religious people Waldenses, hoping thereby to fix a stigma upon them, and to represent them as a sect but newly risen up—and that from this time to the Reformation, a period of between three and four hundred years, the Waldenses were persecuted with but little intermission; partly by armies sent to destroy them, and partly by the horrid process of the inquisition; which persecutions they bore with unparalleled constancy.

Similar remarks are made by Dr. Allix on the churches of the *Albigenses*, so called from *Albi*, a city in the South of France. He has proved that these churches continued for many centuries independent of the pope—that about the middle of the eleventh century *Berengarius* of Tours opposed the doctrines of the Romish church, and was charged by its adherents with having corrupted almost all the French Italians, and English—that early in the twelfth, namely, about the year 1110, *Peter of Bruis*, and after him *Henry*, taught the same doctrines, for which the former was burnt, and the latter died in prison—that in the fourth canon of the Council of Tours, held in the year 1163, it is said, “In the country about Thoulouse there sprang up *long ago* a damnable heresy, which by little and little, like a canker, spreading itself to the neighboring places in Gascoin, hath already infected many other provinces”—that between 1137 and 1180 Languedoc was so full of the disciples of *Peter of Bruis* and *Henry*, that the archbishop of Narbonne, writing to Louis VII. king of France, complains as follows:—“My lord the king, We are extremely pressed with many calamities, among which there is one that most of all affects us, which is, that the catholic faith is extremely shaken in this our diocese, and St. Peter’s boat is so violently tossed by the waves that it is in great danger of sinking!”

From the whole it appears that in the early ages of the papal apostacy, before the

introduction of image-worship, transubstantiation, and other gross departures from the faith, the opposition of the faithful would be less decided than in latter times. Other Christian churches, while they preserved their independency, might not go the same lengths as that of Rome; but neither might they at once separate from it, nor probably be clear of a participation in its corruptions. The opposition to it might be expected also to be chiefly from individuals rather than from churches; and this appears to have been the fact.

The famous *CLAUDE*, bishop of Turin, in the ninth century, though he preached the doctrine of Christ in great purity, and boldly opposed almost all the errors of popery, yet does not appear to have so separated from the church of Rome as to form independent churches. The principles however which he taught led to this issue, and were acted upon after his death. His preaching and writings contributed greatly to the spread of true religion in the Valleys of Piedmont.

From the fourth to the tenth century but little is said of the Waldenses in history: yet as *Reymerius*, who wrote about the year 1230, speaks of the *Vaudois* as “a sect of the *longest standing*,” and as the Council of Tours, about seventy years before this, speaks of the same heresy as having “sprung up *long ago*,” we may conclude even from the acknowledgments of the adversaries that God was not without his witnesses in those dark ages. *MILTON* also, in the sonnet before quoted, represents the *Vaudois*, or people of the Valleys, as having “kept God’s truth so pure of old, when all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones.” He must therefore have considered them as having preserved the purity of Christianity while our Saxon ancestors were yet heathens. After the tenth century, when iniquity was at the full, the opposition was more decided. For 500 years, during the most murderous wars and persecutions, the *Paterines* the *Petrobrussians*, the *Waldenses*, the *Albigenses*, the *Lollards*, the *Wickliffites*, &c., maintained their ground. Nor were they contented to bear witness to the truth in their own countries, but employed missionaries to almost all the nations of Europe; and this notwithstanding each missionary could expect nothing less than martyrdom for his reward!

Nor were their labors unproductive. The numbers who espoused their principles in the South of France only were such that a crusade of 500,000 men was sent against them. It was by this army of bloody-minded fanatics that the city of *Beziers* was taken, and the inhabitants, without distinction, men, women, and children, to the number of 60,000, were put to the sword!

## DISCOURSE XIV.

THE FIRST GENERAL DESCRIPTION CONTINUED; OR THE SLAUGHTER AND RESURRECTION OF THE WITNESSES, WITH THE FALLING OF A TENTH PART OF THE CITY.

Rev. xi. 7—13.

VER. 7—12. If the testimony of the witnesses be the same as their prophecy in sackcloth, it must continue through the whole of the 1260 years. But it does not appear that the beast at the termination of that period will be able to “overcome and kill them,” seeing he himself will then be slain and his body given to the burning flame. Several commentators therefore have rendered it, *while they shall perform, or be about to finish*, their testimony, &c. And with this agrees the account which represents the beast and his party at the time of the slaying of the witnesses as being in the plenitude of their power.

The *slaughter* of the witnesses would not, according to the usual style of the prophecy, denote their being put to death as individuals, but silenced and crushed as witnessing bodies. It was thus, as we have seen, that the eastern empire, and the Greek church as connected with it, were *killed* by the turkish horsemen.—Ch. ix. 18.

Of the *beast* that shall kill them no mention is made before; but we shall hear much of him hereafter. Suffice it at present to say, it is the same as Daniel’s fourth beast, ch. vii., and as that which is described by John, in ch. xiii. 1—8 of this book, as having “seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns:” it is the *Roman empire under its last form, as divided into ten independent kingdoms*. There he is described as rising out of the sea; here out of the abyss, or bottomless pit: the one, as Mr. Faber remarks, may denote his political, and the other his spiritual origin.

The witnesses were to be killed *in the great city*, which “spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” We shall have occasion more than once to notice an antichristian *city* as opposed to the church of Christ, just as the great harlot is opposed to the bride the Lamb’s wife. It will be proper therefore to fix the meaning at the outset. If the prophecy had related to Old Testament times, when God chose a literal city in which to build his temple, a literal city might have been properly opposed to it. When Zion was his dwelling-place, Babylon was its adversary. But, as the true church under the gospel is not confined to place, neither is the false church. The New-Testament Zion does not consist of material buildings, but is a community scattered among the nations; and such is the New-

Testament Babylon. The “*great city*” therefore means Rome, not in respect of its buildings, nor the inhabitants within its walls, nor as a political empire, the symbol of which is the *beast*; but as the head of the antichristian community. This city, or community of nations under one ecclesiastical head, was a Sodom for its filthiness, an Egypt for its idolatry and persecution, and a Jerusalem for its malignant hatred of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The dead bodies of the witnesses were to lie in the street of the great city *unburied*: that is, being silenced and crushed throughout Christendom, they would for a time be treated with the utmost indignity and reproach, as those are who are denied the ordinary decencies of burial. Nor would these indignities be inflicted by the highest orders only; but “peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations,” that is, the body of the inhabitants of Christendom, would take a part in them. While insulting the witnesses, they would make merry on their own account, as being no longer tormented with their testimony.

Such is the description given of the witnesses, and of the treatment which they would receive, both from the ruling powers and the common people. The question is, What are the facts which correspond with it? It is thought by some that both the slaughter and the resurrection of the witnesses are yet to be fulfilled. If so, it is vain to look for corresponding facts in *past* events. This was the opinion of bishop NEWTON, of doctor GILL, and of other expositors of note. I cannot but consider this as a mistake. In the bishop it appears to have been founded on the supposition of *the time of the dead that they should be judged*, spoken of in ver. 18, referring to the last judgment, or “the consummation of all things;” but which manifestly refers to the avenging of the martyrs by the judgments to be inflicted on the Papal power, under the seven vials, antecedent to the Millennium.—Comp. ch. xi. 18, 19; ch. xvi. 12—21. Dr. GILL speaks of the war by which the witnesses are slain as being “the last war of the beast” (on chap. xi. 8); but the last war of the beast is that in which he and the false prophet will be taken; and in which the followers of Christ, instead of being killed, shall be victorious over their enemies.—Chap. xix. 20.\* It is remarkable, too, that both the slaughter and resurrection of the witnesses, together with the falling of a tenth part of the city, are introduced before the termination of the sixth, or second woe-trumpet. I question therefore whether these prophecies can refer to events of so late a date as this hypothesis requires.

The time in which the witnesses are slain, and their bodies lie unburied, appears to be

\* See President Edwards on Agreement in Extraordinary Prayer, p. 100.



a time in which the beast is in the height of his power, or, as President EDWARDS says, "in which the true church of Christ is lowest of all, most of all prevailed against by Antichrist, and nearest to an utter extinction; a time in which there is left the least visibility of the church of Christ, yet subsisting in the world, and the least remains of any thing appertaining to true religion whence a revival of it could be expected."—

p. 92. It is true we know not what is before us; but, if such a state of things as this should return after what has occurred in Europe within the last three hundred years, it will, as Mr. EDWARDS I think has proved, be contrary to all God's usual methods of proceeding. I cannot therefore but think with him that the persecution and slaughter of the witnesses *preceded the Reformation*.

After the suppression of the Bohemians, for nearly a hundred years, true religion was in a manner crushed. The enemy continued without resistance to "wear out the saints of the Most High." Not a *society* or *body* of Christians was to be found which dared to oppose the general corruption. The Popish party considered the heretics as suppressed, and congratulated each other on so happy an event. The security that they felt was manifest by the bare-faced manner in which they sold their pardons and indulgences at the time when Luther's indignation was first kindled against them.

Whether the "three days and a half," during which the witnesses should lie unburied, denote three years and a half, and refer to a particular period of that duration, or only to a short space of oppression, in allusion to the "three times and a half," as being a kind of 1260 years in miniature, I am not able to determine; nor have I seen any thing on the subject relating to a particular period which afforded me satisfaction. However this may be, if the slaying of the witnesses refer to the times immediately preceding the Reformation, their resurrection and ascension to heaven must denote the Reformation itself, and the placing, by Divine Providence, of the parties concerned in it out of the reach of their enemies. The resurrection, as it were, of the Waldenses, the Wickliffites, and other reputed heretics, in the persons of Luther and his contemporaries, with the rapid progress made by them in various nations nearly at the same time, would cause great fear to fall upon their adversaries; and the security in which they were placed by the secession of those nations from the see of Rome was equal to their being taken up to heaven in a cloud, where those who thirsted for their blood could only look after them with malignity and envy.

Ver. 13. After the resurrection of the witnesses, and before the sounding of the seventh, or third woe-trumpet, follows an

*earthquake*, and a tenth part of the city falls. In the earthquake are slain of men (or names of men) seven thousand, and the remnant are affrighted, and give glory to the God of heaven. If the meaning of this passage can be clearly ascertained, it will determine the time of the sounding of the seventh angel, and serve as a medium by which to judge of several other things.

The "earthquake" must, I conceive, denote a *revolution*, as this is the appropriate and well-known symbol of such an event. The "city" is doubtless the same as that which in the 8th verse is "spiritually called Sodom and Egypt;" that is, the Romish church, or the Apocalyptic Babylon. By "a tenth part" of it it must be understood a considerable portion of it, and very probably a part belonging to one of the ten horns, or kingdoms, into which the empire under its papal form was to be divided. By "the names of men," Dr. GOODWIN and others have understood *titles* or *orders* of men, and supposed that the revolution signified by the earthquake would destroy them. Or if the phrase denote, as some have understood it, *men of name*, it would signify the destruction made among the higher orders, and which would of course be accompanied with great slaughter among the common people. "The remnant that were affrighted and gave glory to God" would denote those of the same community who escaped, and whose fears would forebode other examples of the divine justice.

What event is there during the 1260 years of antichristian usurpation which answers to these characters? It has been understood of the fall of the Greek church in 1453, when Constantinople was taken by the Turks: but that event has been described in the vision of the horsemen (chap. ix;) and it is the western or Latin church that occupies the whole of these chapters. It were much better to understand it of the falling off of the northern nations from the see of Rome, which was an immediate consequence of the Reformation. Its being "in the same hour" with the resurrection of the witnesses would favor this interpretation, but in several other particulars it does not agree. No reason can be given why the seceding northern nations should be called "a tenth part of the city;" nor do any events which attended the Reformation appear to correspond with the slaughter of "seven thousand names of men." If the tenth part of the city fell as early as the Reformation, the seventh angel must have sounded his trumpet "quickly" after it; and this some writers who believed the former have very consistently maintained, conceiving also that the Millennium commenced, or would commence, towards the middle of the eighteenth century. But surely we must allow that events have con-



tradicted this explication. The character of the seventh trumpet is that under it the kingdoms of this world were to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ: but the nations which have fallen off from the papal see have not answered to this description, but have rather sunk into formality and irreligion. And, as to the Millennium, one of its characters is that the beast and the false prophet shall first have gone into perdition, and Satan be bound; but neither of these has taken place. It is also in the Millennium, if ever, that we are to look for the cessation of war, and the universal prevalence of true religion, both among Jews and Gentiles, neither of which has yet come to pass.

All things considered, I know of no event that seems to correspond so well with the prophecy as *the late Revolution in France*. Thus it has been understood by some of the ablest expositors, and that for ages prior to the event. A writer in the *Eclectic Review* has collected no fewer than ten of them who have referred to this event, and that long before it occurred, and several of them in commenting on the passage. Among these are the names of Dr. THOMAS GOODWIN, and VITRINGA. Dr. GOODWIN, who wrote in 1639, says, "By the tenth part of the city, I understand, as Mr. Brightman before me, some one tenth part of Europe." "I think it probable that France may be this country; and that in this *revolution* men will be deprived of their *names* and *titles*, which are to be rooted out forever, and condemned to perpetual forgetfulness." "France may have the honor to have the last great stroke in the ruining of Rome. And this figurative earthquake, though happening only in one country, may extend its effects to others, so that a great shaking of states, as well political as ecclesiastical, may be intended."

VITRINGA, who wrote in 1719, asks, "What can be more suitable than to understand here by the *tenth part of the city* some illustrious kingdom, which, being under the dominion of Rome with respect to religion, was of distinguished rank among the ten kingdoms, and had hitherto defended the Romish superstitions? It is here said, in a figurative sense, that it would *fall*, since by means of those mighty commotions by which it was to be shaken it would be torn from the body of the antichristian empire." "France may be the forum of the great city." "The *earthquake* in this tenth part of the city is an event which history must illustrate. It is not perfectly clear from the prophecy of what kind these commotions are; whether warlike, such as are wont to shake the world, and subvert the existing government, or whether they are such as arise on a sudden from the insurrection of a nation that has been long oppressed: the

words of the prophecy appear to favor the latter sense. In the predicted catastrophe some thousands will undoubtedly perish *distinguished* by their elevated dignities or nobility of birth."—*Eclectic Review for February*, 1814.

Dr. GILL, in 1748, speaking of the *earthquake*, says, "Something yet to come is here intended;" and "I think the kingdom of *France* is meant, the last of the *ten* kingdoms which rose up out of the ruins of the Roman empire." And, in his note on chap. xiii. 18, he speaks of the destruction of Antichrist as "quickly following the downfall of the kingdom of *France*, as the *tenth* part of the city, which should fall a little before the third woe came on."

The revolution in France has been truly a moral earthquake, which has shaken the papal world to its centre. One of the *ten* kingdoms which composed it, and that the principal one, has so fallen as at present to be rather a scourge than a support to it. If by *names of men* be meant *titles*, they were abolished: or, if *men of name*, the slaughter predicted of them certainly corresponds with the calamities which befel the princes, the nobles, and the priests, during that awful period; and, as the fall of a few thousands of great men would involve that of an immense number of the common people, such has been the effect in this instance. Whether the remaining adherents to the papal cause have given "glory to God" in the manner they ought, or not, they have felt his hand, and by their fear and dismay have been compelled to yield a sort of involuntary acknowledgment of his justice.

The only objection I feel to this application of the prophecy is that it is said to be "in the same hour" as that in which the witnesses ascended into heaven, which, if understood of that legal security which from the Reformation was afforded to the protestants against popish persecutions, may seem to be at too great a distance for such a mode of expression. It is however not only under the same trumpet, but *during the period in which the witnesses continue to enjoy that security to which they were then introduced*, that this event has occurred. Instead of the great Babylonish city recovering itself so as to renew its persecutions against the witnesses, it is itself smitten of God as by an earthquake and in a measure overthrown. If the opinions of GOODWIN, VITRINGA, and GILL be correct, and if the events which have of late years occurred be the accomplishment of them, the last of these writers must have been mistaken in supposing the slaying of the witnesses to be something future; for the fall of the city is placed *after* the slaying and rising again of the witnesses. If therefore the one be now past, so is the other.

## DISCOURSE XV.

## THE FIRST GENERAL DESCRIPTION CONCLUDED; OR THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVENTH ANGEL.

Rev. xi. 14—19.

AFTER the great earthquake, we hear as it were the cry of the watchman, telling us the hour of the night—"The second woe is past, and behold the third woe cometh quickly!" When the first woe was past, the second and third woes were to come *hereafter*; but between the last two there would be but a short space. As things should approach to a crisis, events would occur in more rapid succession.

This *second woe*, as it introduced the Turkish horsemen (ch. ix. 13—19,) must have commenced about 1281, and (if the falling of a tenth part of the city has been rightly interpreted) ended about 1791. Its having commenced with the introduction of the Turks does not prove that it comprehended them only, nor that it must needs end with the passing away of their empire. On the contrary, the accomplishment of their overthrow seems to be reserved for the sixth vial of the third woe-trumpet, which will be poured upon the Euphrates, near the times of the Millennium.

But, it may be asked, how is it that the sounding of the trumpets should be introduced in this place? If this and the three following chapters contain *general descriptions* of the papal apostacy, *including the times of various trumpets, but not divided by them*, how is it that in the midst of one of these descriptions mention should be made of the second woe ending, and the third woe coming quickly? I answer, Though these general descriptions are not divided by trumpets, yet, as they comprehend the times of the trumpets, each of them might have been so, and, for our information, one of them actually is so. And, as the termination of the sixth and the sounding of the seventh trumpet forms an era in the church of Christ, it is here marked with peculiar emphasis. It is from this era, as we shall find, that, after these three general descriptions are given, the series of the prophecy is resumed, and the vials are introduced.

But, if the sounding of the seventh angel forms an era in the Christian church, it requires that we pause, and pay particular attention to it.

The events of this trumpet were anticipated by the angel at the distance probably of more than a thousand years, when he forbade the seven thunders to be written—"The days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he should begin to sound," are marked as the period when the great designs of heaven, foretold in prophecy, should be accomplished.—Chap. x.

The contents of this trumpet are of deeper interest than any that have preceded it, both to the enemies of the church and to the church itself. It wears a two-fold aspect. Towards the enemies of the church it is a *woe-trumpet*, and a signal of mighty vengeance: towards the church itself it is a harbinger of joy, a kind of *jubilee-trumpet*, announcing the year of enlargement; for, when the "seventh angel sounded, there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever!" Under the *former* of these aspects it includes the seven last plagues, which are but so many subdivisions of it, and which are, I conceive, the execution of the seven thunders in chap. x. These thunders, it is observable, are not only referred to "the days of the voice of the seventh angel," but to those in which he should "*begin to sound*," that is, to the early part of them. Under the *latter* aspect it comprehends all the success of the gospel previous to and during the Millennium, with all the glorious results of it as described in the remainder of the prophecy. We are not to consider it, however, under either of these aspects as being *more than a signal of things which are to follow*. As the vengeance will not all be poured forth at once, so neither will the kingdoms of this world at once become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ: but from the sounding of this trumpet both shall have a commencement, and both be singularly progressive under it.

With respect to the *time*, if the application of the "earthquake and the falling of a tenth part of the city" to events which have occurred within the last twenty years be just, there can be little if any doubt of the seventh angel's having sounded his trumpet within that period, and of the whole of these verses containing a general view of the state of things from our times to the commencement of the Millennium.

On this occasion the heavenly chorus strikes up. The four-and-twenty elders, who sit before God on their seats, fall upon their faces and worship God. This heavenly chorus is not introduced on ordinary occasions. Things must therefore be pending of deep interest to the church of God. By the matter of the song we may learn something of what they are. Corresponding with the two-fold aspect of the seventh trumpet, those who have destroyed the earth are to be destroyed, and those who have suffered for Christ are to be rewarded.

The character under which the Most High is praised—"the Lord God Almighty, who is, and was, and is to come"—seems to imply that he could have suppressed the power of his enemies at any time; that though, for wise reasons, he had not for ages past exerted his strength, yet now he was

about to "take unto him his great power, and to reign;" and that all this is the result of his immutable counsels.

The "anger" of the nations had been great both against God and his servants, opposing him, and persecuting them with unrelenting cruelty: but now *his* wrath is come; now the blood of the martyrs of past ages shall be avenged (chap. xviii. 20;) now their labors and sufferings shall produce their effects; from the seed which has been sown during a succession of centuries in tears and blood a harvest of joy will spring up; finally, those who by persecutions, corruptions, and unjust wars, have destroyed the earth, shall now be themselves destroyed.

Under the image of opening the heavenly temple seems to be set forth the glorious state of the church when these judgments shall be executed upon her enemies. As the temple was polluted and shut up under certain idolatrous reigns, and opened in times of reformation, so the gospel temple has been treated under the reign of Antichrist, and so it shall be restored at or towards the end of the 1260 years. "The ark of the testament being seen" implies the removal of the veil; and as it was not to be seen in the second temple, but only in the first, its being seen here would seem to denote the *restoration* of pure primitive Christianity, as it was taught, believed, and practised, when the gospel temple was first erected. "The lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquake, and hail," are the same things which are described under the seventh vial.—Chap. vi. 18—21. Both refer to the same events; only this is general, and that more particular: and as there the language seems to refer to the efficacy of the gospel, and of the spiritual judgments on those who reject it—purifying the moral atmosphere of the world—such appears to be its meaning here.

## DISCOURSE XVI.

THE SECOND GENERAL DESCRIPTION; OR  
THE GREAT RED DRAGON, AND THE  
WOMAN FLYING INTO THE WILDERNESS.

Rev. xii. 1—6.

THE first general description, it has been observed, took up the apostacy at the time when things were so matured that the Catholic church was ordered to be left out of God's temple, as not belonging to it: but this appears to trace it to its origin. Here we go back to an early period of history; possibly as far as to the fourth century, and to the times of some of the first trumpets. At a time when the church was in danger of being lost in superstition and worldly conformity, it was natural for the faithful to feel anxious for the cause of Christ. For

their encouragement, the church is described in vision as bearing a *seed* which should be preserved by the special care of heaven, through all these evil times, and become in the end victorious over the whole earth. Such appears to be the scope of this second general description.

Prior to the introduction of antichristian corruptions, the church is described as "a woman clothed with the sun, and having the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars;" denoting the plenitude of gospel light which compassed her as a garment; her superiority to the Jewish dispensation; and, in consequence of her adherence to the doctrine and examples of the apostles, her triumph over ten successive persecutions.

The woman is said to be "with child, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered;" denoting, it may be, the earnest desires of the true church after the increase of believers. Such has always been its character. Worldly men who have taken upon them the Christian name have invariably been employed in compassing selfish objects. But true Christians have at all times been distinguished by a desire to extend the kingdom of Christ.

The following description, by EUSEBIUS, of the labors of the immediate successors of the apostles, is doubtless applicable to the church so long as it adhered to their doctrine and example. "They built up those churches the foundations of which were laid by the apostles, promoting greatly the doctrine of the gospel, and scattering the salutary seed of the kingdom of heaven at large over the whole world.—Travelling abroad, they performed the work of evangelists to those who as yet had not heard the word of faith, being very ambitious to preach Christ, and to deliver the books of the divine gospels. And these persons having only laid the foundation of faith in remote and barbarous places, and constituted other pastors, committed to them the culture of those they had perfectly introduced to the faith, departing again to other regions and nations, accompanied with the grace and co-operation of God."—Lib. III. c. 37.

While the woman is thus in labor, "behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads, whose tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth, stands before her, ready to devour her child as soon as it was born." The dragon is in ver. 9 expressly called "the devil and Satan who deceiveth the whole world," and all that is said of him in the remainder of the prophecy agrees with this in its literal application: but, by his having the heads and horns of the Roman beast, is intimated that it was under this form, or by means of this government, that he did what he did in the present instance.



As the woman is not an individual, but the society of the faithful, so neither is the man-child an individual, but the woman's seed, which, in ver. 17, is explained of them who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." It was this seed that the dragon aimed by persecution and corruption to destroy. This child was *born to rule*: not however at present; for, if so, there had been no need of his being caught up to the throne of God, nor for his mother's flying into the wilderness for 1260 years. It is at the termination of that period that the man-child, or the seed of the church, shall rule; and this accords with Dan. vii. 27, "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." Nor need it be objected that the sceptre of this government is a rod of iron; for such the kingdom of Christ must ever be to the ungodly.

There are two marks by which the times referred to in this vision may, if I mistake not, be ascertained. One is the 1260 days, or years, which, being the appropriate number of the reign of the papal Antichrist, proves it to have no reference to the times of paganism. The other is, that the ten horns are not upon the beast, but upon the dragon, and the crowns are not as yet upon them, but upon the seven heads. When the horns are spoken of in reference to the times following the overthrow of the empire by the northern nations, and of its becoming ten independent kingdoms, they are described as being upon the beast, and as having crowns upon them.—Ch. xiii. 1. This indicates that the introduction of the vision contained in the first five verses of this chapter, though it does not go so far back as to the days of paganism, yet neither does it go so far forward as to the times of popery; but to those which were *intermediate and preparatory*, namely, the fourth and fifth centuries, in which Christianity became exceedingly corrupt, and a connection was introduced between the secular and ecclesiastical powers which issued in what is exhibited in ch. xvii., a woman riding upon a scarlet colored beast! I do not suppose that the 1260 years of the reign of Antichrist are to be reckoned from the time when these corruptions began. Antichrist did not commence his reign from his birth; but thence his way was preparing. It is of what was done *prior* to the woman's flight into the wilderness for 1260 years that these verses speak. By the accession of Constantine, the beast was "as it were wounded to death;" and this may be the reason why no mention is made of him. Under the Christian emperors the beast for some time would lie apparently dead: the dragon, however, "that old serpent the devil and Satan, who deceiveth the whole world," knew how even

at that time to make use of the pomp and power of the empire to serve his purposes.

It is in the corruptions of the fourth and fifth centuries that we are to look for the origin of popery. It was by the influx of worldly power and glory into the church that Satan first seduced a great part of those who had shone like stars in the Christian firmament, and (alluding perhaps to his having originally drawn into apostacy a great part of the angels of heaven) cast them to the earth. But perceiving, notwithstanding what had been done as to a number of the *leaders* of the church, that a large body of the faithful were still intent on not only preserving but extending the Redeemer's kingdom, the dragon aims to destroy the fruits of their labors. When he saw that the bait of worldly pomp and power had so far succeeded as to draw the principal men into his net, it was doubtless his object to make a full end of the church of Christ. But he was disappointed. The woman "brought forth a man-child, who, in the end, would rule all nations as with a rod of iron."

By the woman's flying into the wilderness seems to be meant her retiring into obscurity, where she would exist without legal protection, in some such manner as David did when he fled from the persecutions of Saul, and without any other defence than that which was afforded by the shielding providence of God. In this way the true church existed in all the nations of Europe from the time that popery first obtained the ascendancy, and during the long period of its domination. Wherever this religion prevailed, all those Christians who refused to yield to its corruptions were driven into obscurity. It was thus not only in those countries bordering upon Italy, but in others at the greatest distance. It is thought by some to have been thus with the *British churches* in Wales, with the *Culdees* in Scotland and Ireland, and probably with every other body of Christians where this influence extended. Many of them were so pursued by persecution, that, if they had any communion with each other, it was in a secret way. If they met to worship God, it must be in the night, in woods, or mountains, or caves of the earth. So little visibility belonged to the church, in this state, that it requires some attention to ascertain where it was to be found. To the question, however, "Where was your church before Luther?" we may answer, *IN THE WILDERNESS*, where prophecy has placed her, and whither those who ask the question had driven her. If one place was more distinguished than another as affording a shelter to the faithful, it was among the mountains and valleys of the Alps.

It may be difficult to decide upon the time when the woman fled into the wilderness. This, however, we know, that very

soon after the revolution by the accession of Constantine corruptions in doctrine, divisions, intrigues, persecutions, and a flood of superstition, overspread the Catholic church.\*

In such a state of things true Christians must not only be offended, but must become offensive to others, and so be persecuted, and compelled to retire as into the wilderness.

The ancient *Vaudois* are said to "date their origin from the beginning of the fourth century; when one Leo, at the great revolution in religion under Constantine the Great, opposed the innovations of Sylvester, bishop of Rome. This agrees with what was said by *Rainerius*, a monk inquisitor of the thirteenth century, that they were the most pernicious of all sects, for three reasons. 1. "Because it is the *most ancient*. Some aver their existence (says he) from the days of Sylvester, others from the very times of the apostles. 2. Because it is so *universal*: for there is hardly a country into which this sect has not crept. 3. Because all others render themselves detestable by their blasphemies; but this has a great *appearance of godliness*, living a righteous life before men, believing right concerning God, confessing all the articles of the creed, only hating and reviling the church of Rome."

## DISCOURSE XVII.

THE SECOND GENERAL DESCRIPTION CONTINUED; OR THE WAR BETWEEN MICHAEL AND THE DRAGON.

Rev. xii. 7—17.

VER. 7—12. The dragon, having driven the true church into the wilderness, is supposed to have carried things in his own way among the rest. At a certain period, however, during her 1260 years' residence in the wilderness, Michael her prince espouses her cause, and makes war upon the dragon.

There is no doubt a reference in this part

\* We may see into what a gulf of superstitious imposture the Catholic church was sunk within fifty years after the death of Constantine, by the following story, taken from Dr. ALLIX. Sulpicius Severus, who lived early in the fifth century, wrote *The Life of a Saint Martin of Tours*, who had lived in the latter part of the fourth. In writing this life, Sulpicius speaks of a certain altar, which the popular superstition had rendered famous, because some martyr was pretended to have been buried in the place. "St. Martin not being able to make any certain discovery of the name of the martyr, and the circumstances of his sufferings, and being loth absolutely to doubt the truth of it, thought fit himself to go to this famous sepulchre in company with some of his brethren. Being come to the place, he earnestly begged of God to reveal to him the name and merit of the martyr. After

of the prophecy to what was predicted in Dan. x. 13—21, xii. 1. Michael is there described not only as standing up for the people of God under Persian oppression, but as fighting the battles of the church in later ages, even during the "time, times, and half a time," or during the dominion of Antichrist.

The account given of Michael agrees not with that of Messiah the prince, who defends his church against the dragon, "that old serpent the devil." Each has his angels, who perhaps are the visible agents in the war. But, before we determine the application of this part of the vision, it will be proper to notice a few of its general characters.

*First:* The scene is laid in "heaven." Yet in this heaven there is supposed till now to have been a place found for the dragon. It could not therefore be in the church above, where there has been no place for him since he "left his first estate." But in the church below there has. The latter therefore must have been the scene of the present contest.

*Secondly:* The war is made by Michael on the dragon, and not by the dragon on Michael. This intimates that it must have been at a time when the dragon possessed such a plenitude of power in what was called the Christian church that his object was not to extend so much as to retain it.

*Thirdly:* Whatever of worldly power and policy might accompany the war, the war itself was *spiritual*. It was a war between truth and error, righteousness and unrighteousness; for the victors "overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony."

*Fourthly:* It is supposed that in this great struggle many of Michael's adherents would lose their lives, but that nevertheless they would overcome. The cause of truth and righteousness would prevail, and those who suffered for Christ's sake would bear such a testimony for truth, and obtain such a victory over the world, as to be more than conquerors.

this, turning himself towards the left, he saw standing a hideous ghost. They command him to declare himself. The ghost obeys, tells his name, confesses that he had been executed for robbery, that it was only the error of the people that caused him to be canonized, that he was in nothing like the martyrs, they were in glory, whereas he was in pain. The good St. Martin, being troubled to hear this account, caused the altar to be carried to another place, and so, says his biographer, delivered the people from a superstitious error."

The same *Sulpicius Severus*, though a monk himself, yet, speaking of the monks of his time, says, "They do almost all things in such a manner that you would not so much think they had repented for their former crimes, as that afterwards they had repented of their repentance!"

Such are the characters of the war: to what event during the 1260 years of anti-christian usurpation does it apply? I can conceive of none but the *Reformation in the sixteenth century*. Satan, as ruling by means of Rome, was then attacked, and cast out of those nations where the Reformation prevailed; which nations, being the seat of Christ's visible kingdom, are accounted as "heaven," while those which still cleave to the apostacy are "the earth."

A song of the heavenly host is introduced on this occasion: for the "loud voice" (ver. 10) does not appear to be that of an individual, but of a multitude, who join as with one voice in a shout of joy and praise. It fits the lips of the holy army of martyrs before the throne, who, feeling for their brethren upon earth, rejoice in their having obtained a portion of relief. As Satan accused Job, and obtained permission of God to persecute him, so, by the agency of the bishop of Rome, he had from century to century accused and persecuted the saints of the Most High. But now were come "salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren," say they, "is cast down, that accused them to our God day and night." The Reformation was at once a pledge of Antichrist's consumption, and of the increase of the Redeemer's kingdom.

The weapons by which the victory was obtained are celebrated by the heavenly host, and are worthy of our special attention. Some of the followers of Christ among the Albigenes, the Bohemians, and the Reformers, thought it necessary to take arms, and fight for their religion: but it has proved, I believe, in almost every instance, that where a body of Christians have taken the sword to defend themselves against *persecution* they as a body have perished by the sword. Whatever of this spirit there might be amongst the Reformers, it was not by this, but by "the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony," that they overcame.

The "heavens," from which the dragon is cast out, are called upon to rejoice, while a woe is pronounced upon the inhabitants of "the earth and of the sea," or those *continental* and *maritime* nations where he still dwelleth, and to which his influence is in one sense confined. The power of Satan in this way, being reduced to narrower limits, would be the more mischievous within those limits. He would consider the Reformation as only a first step towards the overthrow of a system by which, under the Christian name, he had deceived mankind with equal facility as by the delusions of heathenism. Knowing therefore that his time was short, he would be the more assiduous in improving it. The denuncia-

tion wears a terrible aspect towards those nations which, notwithstanding all the light of the reformation, still cleave to the apostacy. It may be equal to saying, Woe unto you Austria, France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy; for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time!—From this language it might be expected that, in those countries which rejected the Reformation, popery would operate so as either, by producing its proper effect, to lead its votaries into downright infidelity, or, by rivetting the delusion, to render them more and more the dupes of imposture. And thus it has actually operated: the nations which still cleave to it are nearly divided into two classes, the deceivers and the deceived; the former of which appear to be the destined instruments of heaven in destroying the latter, and so of executing the vials of God's displeasure upon them.

Ver. 13—17. The wrath of the dragon, for having been cast out of heaven, is directed against not only the spiritual welfare of his own subjects, but the lives of those Christians who were situated within his territories. The friends of Christ in popish countries have since the Reformation been persecuted with increased violence. In the ordinary measures of legal process, persecution has indeed diminished; it has in a manner been shamed out of countenance by the prevalence of tolerant principles: but, the more it has been restrained in this way, the more violent have been its ebullitions in a way of occasional outrage. Of this the massacre of Paris in 1572, the cruelties in the valleys of Piedmont in 1655, and the revocation of the edict of Nantes in 1685, are horrible examples.

From the times of the Reformation the church of Christ had in a manner come out of the wilderness. Having obtained a degree of legal protection in several nations, its members were not obliged as heretofore to retire into woods, and mountains, and caves, nor to have recourse to midnight assemblies for the purpose of hearing the gospel: but after these renewed persecutions the woman is obliged to fly a *second time* into the wilderness, as to her wonted place of refuge. Such has been the state of the protestants in all popish countries: such has been their state in France from the revocation of the edict of Nantes, in 1685, to the Revolution in 1789, though of late they were treated with less severity than formerly, being allowed to meet in the day time, only under military inspection. Nor was it in *popish* countries only that the wrath of the dragon vented itself. A portion of the poison of a persecuting spirit was found among protestants, even in our own country, from the Reformation to the Revolution of 1688. If one place was more



distinguished than another, as affording a shelter for the woman at the time of this her *second flight*, I suspect it was *North America*, where the church of Christ has been nourished, and may continue to be nourished, during the remainder of the 1260 years. And, as to those parts of the church which still exist in a state of insecurity, the serpent has not been suffered to make a full end of them; they are nourished by the word of God, and shall doubtless survive the reign of antichristian corruption and persecution.

The flood of waters cast after the woman by the dragon, and the war made on the remnant of her seed, referring, as it appears, to the latter end of the 1260 years, may be something *yet to come*. It is not impossible that persecution may yet be revived. The antichristian cause can hardly be supposed to expire without some deadly struggles. Indeed it is in the very act of "making war on him that sitteth upon the horse, and his army," that the "beast and the false prophet will be taken;" and this seems to be the same war which is here made with the "remnant of the woman's seed."

Should a flood of persecution yet be in reserve for the church of Christ, it may be the last effort of an expiring foe; and from that the *earth* will preserve her by swallowing it up: it may be in some such way as the invasion of the Philistines preserved David, or as political struggles have often been favorable to Christians, by furnishing those who wished to persecute them with other employment. The dragon, provoked by his want of success against the woman, may vent his malice on the remnant of her seed that are within his reach; but his time is short. His agents, "the beast and the false prophet," will soon be taken; and the Angel, with a great chain in his hand, shall next lay hold of *him*, and cast him into the bottomless pit.

### DISCOURSE XVIII.

THE THIRD GENERAL DESCRIPTION: OR  
THE BEAST WITH SEVEN HEADS AND  
TEN HORNS.

Rev. xiii. 1—10.

THE apostle, in vision, standing as upon the sea shore, sees "a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy." A beast rising out of the sea is an empire opposed to God and his Christ rising out of the perturbed state of things in the world.

The description given of this beast leaves no doubt of its being the same as the fourth beast in the seventh chapter of Daniel, namely, *the Roman Empire*; with only a few cir-

cumstantial differences. Daniel viewed it in its *whole duration*, whereas John describes it with special reference to its *last* or *papal form*; Daniel says nothing of its heads, which John does; and, lastly, Daniel speaks merely of the ten horns pertaining to the beast, but John describes them as having "crowns," which shows that the times referred to are those in which the western empire would be overthrown, and ten independent kingdoms arise out of it.

This seven-headed and ten-horned beast does not appear to be the pope, or popedom, nor the church of Rome; but *that secular power which has supported the church of Rome through the whole of her corrupt and bloody progress*. The beast is not the harlot, but that on which the harlot rides. That which has been denominated *The Holy Roman Empire*, of which sometimes a French and sometimes a German monarch has been the head, seems to be the government principally intended, as being the great supporter of that church. It is not this government, however, *exclusively* of that of the other European nations, but merely as a *principal* amongst them. The ten horns were not distinct from the beast, but constituent parts of it. Europe, prior to the Reformation, was a family of nations, united in respect of religion by one ecclesiastical head. As nations they were independent, and often engaged in war with one another; but *in supporting the church* they were united. The beast is indeed distinguished from its horns, as any other beast may be, while yet the horns are constituent parts of it. The ten horns are said to "agree and to give their kingdom to the beast" (ch. xvii. 17:) that is, they united with the emperor in supporting the church. Things were so managed indeed by the church that the rulers of every nation in Christendom were in a manner compelled to unite in her support. "All the civil powers were obliged by the council of Lateran to take an oath, on pain of ecclesiastical censures, that they would endeavor to exterminate all who were declared heretics by the church out of their dominions; and if any prince or ruler refused to do so, after admonition, it was to be certified to the pope, who should declare all his subjects absolved from their allegiance, and any Catholic was free to seize his dominions." Such was this monstrous beast, and such the means used by his rider to guide and govern him.

Of the heads and horns of the beast we shall have occasion to speak hereafter more particularly. At present we may observe he is described as possessing the properties of the first three of Daniel's four beasts, a leopard, a bear, and a lion, each ferocious and destructive: and, whereas the dragon is said to have given him his authority, the government, though professedly Christian, was under the influence of the wicked one. Af-

ter the empire became Christian, the dragon for a while seemed to take the work of seducing and persecuting men into his own hand (ch. xii. 1—6); but he is now contented to transfer it to the beast as a kind of deputy under him.—Ver. 2.

“I saw one of his heads,” continues the apostle, “as it were wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed, and all the world wondered after the beast.” To understand this, we must know what is meant by the heads of the beast, and this we must learn from ch. xvii. 7—11. They are there said to be “seven mountains on which the woman sitteth, and seven kings, five of which are fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come.” It was not one of the seven mountains that was “as it were wounded to death,” but one of the seven kings, or governments, or forms of government, under which Rome existed. These according to *Tacitus* the Roman historian, were *kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, military tribunes, and emperors*; five of which forms of government had passed away at the time of the prophecy; the sixth, namely that of *emprors*, then was, and the other was not yet come. The wound which the beast is said to have received in one of his heads was so serious that he was for a time considered as dead; yet was he not dead in reality, but merely “as it were wounded to death:” for after this he revived and lived and reigned, to the wonder of the world. Hence the language in ch. xvii. 8, “And they that dwell on the earth shall wonder—when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is!”

There are two interpretations of this part of the prophecy on which good commentators have been divided. One is that the sword by which the beast was wounded was that of the northern nations in the fifth century, by which Rome, under its sixth or imperial head, was overthrown; but by means of popery the wound was healed, and she who had been given up for lost became in a new form the mistress of the western world. The other is that the deadly wound was caused by the sword of CONSTANTINE, who, having in different engagements defeated his pagan colleagues, subverted the ancient religion of the empire, so that for a few years the beast was as it were dead; but that when, under the influence of corruption, it again became idolatrous and persecuting, the beast revived, and the world wondered after him.

Till of late I have preferred the former of these interpretations; but upon a closer examination of the prophecy I am inclined to think the latter to be the meaning. It does not seem likely that so extraordinary a change in the empire, and one that so deeply interested the church of God, should be overlooked, while one which is much more ordinary, and of but small account to religion,

should be held up to view. It seems also, notwithstanding the corruptions introduced under the first Christian emperors, it were too much to suppose that the empire continued to be the *same* beast as it was in the times of paganism, or that the difference was so small as not to require any kind of notice in the page of prophecy.

That the species of Christianity introduced in the times of Constantine was injurious to the church is allowed, even by those who approve of national religious establishments; yet the prophecy may be very applicable to the event. Supposing this to be its true meaning, there is no countenance given by it to that partial and corrupt system which at that time was introduced. On the contrary, there is a strong intimation conveyed in those saving terms “as it were” that the beast, though stunned, was not slain. He was not wounded to death, but merely *as it were* wounded to death. As soon as circumstances favored his recovery, the wound was healed, and the beast resumed his wonted vigor.—Ver. 3.

“They worshipped the dragon and the beast.” The homage of the world is generally paid to success, though it be in the worst of causes. Those powers which raised and supported the antichristian harlot, being successful, receive the homage of the nations called Christian, though in paying it they sink into old idolatry under a new name, and in reality worship the wicked one.—Ver. 4.

The “great things” spoken by this secular beast may refer to that spirit which gives not God the glory of success, but, like Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, arrogates every thing to self. Its “blasphemies” relate to words and assumptions more immediately directed *against God* and his cause. The charge of blasphemy was preferred against all the *heads* of the beast (ver. 1,) though most of them were pagan, and of course unacquainted with the true God. The blasphemies referred to therefore must be not merely his speeches directly uttered against the Great Supreme, but his *arrogating and assuming that which exclusively belongs to him*. This charge is repeated and enlarged upon in ver. 6, where also it is followed with “making war upon the saints.” If God had been within the reach of the beast, he would have made war with him; but, as he was not, his hatred against him was discovered in making war upon his people. A species of practical blasphemy seems to constitute the principle from which all persecution proceeds; for it is no other than usurping the throne of God in the mind of man? This principle has been common through all those pagan and papal governments which have come in contact with the church of God. Nay, is it not exceedingly prevalent in almost all the governments now in being? It is rare,

very rare, for those who occupy the supreme place in civil affairs to respect the claims of conscience and of God. Had these claims been properly respected, it had never entered the minds of the rulers of any nation that all the people within certain geographical boundaries should be compelled to worship God in a given way!

The blasphemies of this beast are directed not only against the "name," but against "the tabernacle of God, and them that dwell in heaven," or his celestial attendants. The very saints and angels before the throne are by him represented as rebels against God, by receiving that homage which is due to him, and participating in their abominations. The church of God on earth, relatively considered, or as being his "tabernacle," possesses a sacred character. If any man destroy or defile it, as Antiochus did that of the Jews, him will God destroy. What then must be the guilt contracted by those persecuting powers who, under the pretence of extirpating heresy, have reproached the living God, and done every thing in their power to drive the religion of the Bible out of the world!

The time allotted for the continuance of this beast is "forty and two months." A day being here put for a year, it is the same period as the "thousand two hundred and threescore days" in which the witnesses were to prophesy in sackcloth, and the woman was to continue in the wilderness.

The war which it was "given him to make with the saints" is the same as that which he is said to have made against the witnesses.—Chap. xi. 7. It is that continued series of persecutions which, during that part of the 1260 years which has already elapsed, he has been carrying on against the followers of Christ.

As the beast had assumed the place of God, so the multitude consented to treat him as the sovereign lord of conscience, and to be of that religion which he required. In describing this unworthy compliance, however, the Holy Spirit takes care to except "those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life;" thus branding the idolaters with the black mark of reprobation. Such language wears a terrible aspect towards those who enter into the abominations of Antichrist and persevere therein; but a pleasing one towards the chosen of God, who in the worst of times maintain their allegiance to Christ.—Ver. 8.

The account of this secular beast (which from its character of supporting the popish hierarchy may be denominated papal) here closes with a few words by way of solemn warning—"If any man have an ear let him hear. He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and faith of the saints." The per-

secutor shall soon be persecuted, and the destroyer destroyed; and this not only in the world to come, but even in this world. Meanwhile, let the saints know that this is the season for the trial of their patience, and of their faith; the one to bear up under the persecutions of their enemies, and the other to keep in view the crown of life before them.—Ver. 9, 10.

## DISCOURSE XIX.

### THE THIRD GENERAL DESCRIPTION CONTINUED: OR THE BEAST WITH TWO HORNS LIKE A LAMB.

Rev. xiii. 11—18.

VER. 11—15. The former of these beasts we have considered as designed to symbolize the Roman empire under its last head, or that secular government which, in connection with the ten horns or kingdoms of Europe, supported popery through all its foul and bloody deeds: but here arises another beast, diverse from the former, yet acting in concert with him. Daniel, when describing the fourth or Roman beast, speaks of a *little horn* which should grow up as it were insensibly among the ten horns, and displace three of them. John says nothing of this little horn of Daniel, and Daniel is equally silent about this second beast of John: but from the character given to them both they appear to be one and the same, namely, *that ecclesiastical power which was to co-exist with the secular, and both assist it and be assisted by it.*

This beast is described as "rising out of the earth," in which particular it is distinguished from the other, which "rose out of the sea." For a beast to rise out of the sea is for an empire to rise out of the perturbed state of things in the world, and such was the empire before described; but for one to rise from the *earth* is for a power to grow up insensibly, like a weed in a garden, out of the established order of things.—Such was popery.

"And he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon." This perfectly answers to that affectation of Christian meekness, accompanied in reality by the spirit and doctrine of the wicked one. On one occasion it can be *the servant of servants*: on another the deposer of kings and deposer of empires.

"He exerciseth all the power of the first beast, before, or in the sight of him." "He is (says bishop NEWTON) the prime minister, adviser, and mover, of the first or secular beast. He holdeth *imperium in imperio*, an empire within an empire; claimeth a temporal authority as well as a spiritual; hath not only the principal direction of the



temporal powers, but often engageth them in his service, and enforceth his canons and decrees with the sword of the civil magistrate."

"He causeth men to worship the first beast." As the secular authority invested the ecclesiastical with power and riches and honors, so, in return, the ecclesiastical, by consenting that Christianity should become an engine of state policy, and conscience itself be subjected to its interests, transferred that homage to man which was due only to the eternal God. It is this ecclesiastical influence that has constituted the European nations a continuation of the old Roman empire. It is the only bond which for ages has held them together, so as to render them one great antichristian beast.—Ver. 12.

He is next described by his pretended miracles. He doeth great wonders, so that he maketh (or seemeth to make) "fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast." This part of his character answers to what was foretold by the apostle of the man of sin—that he should come with "signs and lying wonders." All these impositions of "the false prophet," as he is elsewhere called (chap. xvi. 13, 14,) being wrought in the sight of the first beast, and in that of the people, were to ingratiate himself with them, and to persuade them that he was, as is said of the sorcerer, "the great power of God." While therefore he was professing to honor magistracy, he was laboring to subject it to himself.

To show his devotion to the secular beast, he directs the people to make an image to him; which being done, he, after his manner, endues it with life, and speech, and great authority: but all is "deceit;" for the object is not to exalt the secular beast, but himself.

This making of an *image* to the beast seems to allude to the heathen practice of making images to their deities. The gods themselves were supposed to be invisible. The same deity had images made to him in divers places. The design of making an image to a god would be to acknowledge him as *their* deity, and to give a visibility and an establishment to his worship. To "make an image to the beast whose deadly wound was healed" would therefore be to give visibility and authority to his worship; or to require implicit obedience to his commands in whose reign *Paganism was revived under the name of Catholic Christianity!* It is as guarantee of this system that the first beast is designated by the *healing of his deadly wound*, and that the second beast exerts all his influence in his favor.

It has been observed that, while the secular beast is said to make war upon the saints, the ecclesiastical is only said to "*cause* them to be killed." The council of Lateran de-

creed not to put heretics to death, but to deliver them over to the secular power to be killed! "The inquisitors (says BURNET) on this occasion, with a disgusting affectation of lamb-like meekness, are wont to beseech the civil magistrates to show mercy to those whom they themselves have given up to be consigned to the flames!"—Ver. 15.

Ver. 16—18. Such was to be the growing influence of this last beast that he could "cause" all ranks and degrees of men to enlist under the banners of the first, to receive like soldiers his mark and number, and so to be aiding and assisting in the execution of his measures. Such has actually been the conduct of the Roman hierarchy: so that the common rights of men have been suspended on condition of their receiving the papal badge. Such, in fine, is the nature of the alliance established by this system between the ecclesiastical and the secular powers: each plays into the other's hands: the church consents that religion shall be an engine of state policy, and in return the state supports the church in all her corrupt proceedings.

Respecting the "mark" and the "name" of the beast, it is opposed, I conceive, to the seal of God on the foreheads of his servants.—Chap. vii. And as the *seal* and *name* of God on the forehead appear to be the same (compare chap. vii. 3 with chap. xiv. 1,) so may the *mark* and the *name* of the beast. Both are thought to allude to the ancient practice of marking servants and soldiers with their owner's name in their forehead or in their hand.

I cannot pretend to be certain what is meant by the "*name* of the beast." It may be observed, however, that, as the beast here evidently means the *secular* and not the ecclesiastical power, there is a name given to him in the prophecy. He is called "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is" (chap. xvii. 8, 11;) the meaning of which I conceive to be,—the government that existed in all its beastly properties as Pagan, but appeared to have lost them as Christian, but that in supporting a corrupted Christianity resumed them. In other words, it is *Paganism revived under the form of Catholic Christianity*. Now, as names are signs of character, to have this name or mark of the beast would be the same thing as being openly of this character or religion.

As to the "number of his name," I have nothing to offer which is fully satisfactory to my own mind. It is something which requires "wisdom and understanding to count it;" and yet, by its being the "number of a man," it would seem not to surpass human comprehension. It may be a name whose numerals amount to 666, as the Greek word *καταίεως*, or other words in which this number has been found: but, as this appears to be merely conjecture, I leave it undecided.

## DISCOURSE XX.

THE THIRD GENERAL DESCRIPTION CONTINUED; OR THE LAMB'S COMPANY.

Rev. xiv. 1—5.

UNLESS we consider the whole of the fourteenth chapter as a continuation of the thirteenth, we cannot be said to have a third general view of the rise, reign, and overthrow of popery; for the whole of the *thirteenth* chapter is taken up with a description of its rise and reign, and nothing is said in it of its downfall. Nor is any thing said of the state of the church of Christ during these "forty and two months," save that the beasts "made war" with its members and "caused them to be killed." But, if the *fourteenth* chapter be considered as a continuation of the subject, we have then a complete view of it, and a most animating description of the state of the church of Christ during the "forty and two months," or 1260 years, in beautiful opposition to the beasts and their followers.

Ver. 1. The first of the beasts was a monster, having seven heads and ten horns; a compound of the leopard, the bear, and the lion. And as to the last, though in respect of its horns it was *like a lamb*, yet it had nothing of a lamb in its nature. What a charming contrast is here; not only between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdoms of this world, but between a compound of hypocrisy and malignity, and the religion of Jesus Christ! There was something *like a lamb*: but, lo, here is *a lamb*!

One of the beasts is described as rising out of the *sea*, and the other out of the *earth*; but the Lamb as standing upon a *mountain*. "Standing" is a reigning posture.—Dan. xi. 3. He had been slain, but now "stands up, and rules with great dominion." It also denotes that the party is not only unvanquished, but triumphant. It might have been supposed that from the rising up of these beasts the Lamb should have found no place to exercise his government among men; but he stands his ground, and has his followers, as the beasts have theirs. His kingdom was never overturned even in the most corrupt ages.

The place on which he stood was "Mount Zion." This is his proper ground, as much as Babylon was of the other. In his church even upon earth, and amidst the sharpest persecutions, the Lamb standeth upon the mount Zion.

The company said to be with him are the same that were sealed in chap. vii. This sealing was prior to the papal apostacy, and contained an assurance that God would preserve himself a people under it; and lo, after all the ravages of the beasts, here we find them; not in Babylon, but with the Lamb in Zion. The followers of the beast

were designated by his mark and the number of his name; and the followers of the Lamb "have his Father's name written in their foreheads." These are the same with the two witnesses, and the woman that fled into the wilderness: they denote the Israel of God, and were that to an apostate church which the twelve tribes who served God day and night were to an apostate world.

In reviewing the dark ages of popery, we are apt to think there could have been but few who clave to the truth in those times: but, if the Christian world were again put to such a test of their sincerity, it were well if the number of the faithful proved greater than in those days. MEDE (says Bishop NEWTON) hath observed, from good authorities, that in the war with the Waldenses and Albigenses there perished in France alone a *million*: from the first institution of the Jesuits to the year 1480, that is, in little more than thirty years, *nine hundred thousand*. In the Netherlands alone, the duke of Alva boasted that within a few years he had dispatched to the amount of *thirty-six thousand*, and those all by the hand of the common executioner. In the space of scarcely thirty years the inquisition destroyed by various kinds of tortures *one hundred and fifty thousand*. Saunders, himself a popish writer, confesses that an *innumerable multitude* of Lollards and Sacramentarians were burnt throughout all Europe; who yet, he says, were not put to death by the pope and bishops, but by the civil magistrates." That is, the secular beast did the work, and the ecclesiastical only caused it! These, and many more whose names will appear another day, composed the company who stood with the Lamb.

Ver. 2, 3. But hark! A sound is heard—It is from a great distance—It is like the roaring of the sea, or the rolling of thunder—It is the sound of a multitude—There is music—It seems like a new song—It is the moving of God's host!—What can be the meaning? If I mistake not, this is a description of the same event which is signified in the first general view by the resurrection of the witnesses, and in the second by the victory of Michael and his angels over the dragon and his angels; that is to say, *The reformation of the sixteenth century*. The song intimates that something has occurred which furnishes matter for rejoicing. A *new song* commonly supposes a new or recent deliverance; and to what event during the 1260 years can this be applied unless it be to the Reformation? It was then that the army of the Lamb felt its ground, and gloriously triumphed. That which at a distance was only "as it were" a new song, on drawing nearer proved to be one in reality, and one that none but the redeemed could unite in. The joy attending the Reformation would be confined to the



faithful. As to worldly men who engaged in it, they would rejoice only as their temporal interests were promoted by it: and, as to the devotees of the beasts, they would deplore the dangers of the church: but they who had been reclaimed from the apostacy of their species, and preserved from that of professing Christians, would enter into the spirit of it. In them it was the triumph of faith. The blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony would be the burden of their song.

The Lamb's company are here particularly characterized. *First*: By the things from which they had been preserved; namely, *spiritual fornication and adultery*, into which the generality of professing Christians had fallen. *Secondly*: By the course they had pursued. They followed the Lamb whithersoever he went: in his doctrine, worship, afflictions, spirit, and conduct, he was their example. *Thirdly*: By the distinguished blessings conferred upon them. They were "redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb." They were the travail of his soul, in which he was satisfied. In them appeared the efficacy of his death: while others, though calling themselves Christians, still continued under the worst of bondage. And as, in the law of the first-fruits, a part was accepted for the whole, so, when that which called itself the church apostatized, those who continued faithful were accepted as the Christian church, or reckoned as the Lord's portion. *Fourthly*: By their sincerity and purity. "In their mouth was found no guile; for they were without fault before the throne of God." While the followers of the beasts were trimming and worshipping, as their worldly interests required, these were upright before God in all their conversation.

Such is the contrast between the beast and the blasphemies of his worshippers on the one hand, and the Lamb and the praises of his followers on the other.

## DISCOURSE XXI.

THE THIRD GENERAL DESCRIPTION CONCLUDED; OR THE MESSAGES OF THE THREE ANGELS, THE HARVEST, AND THE VINTAGE.

Rev. xiv. 6—20.

If the foregoing application of the new song of the Lamb's company to the *Reformation* in the sixteenth century be just, it may be expected that what follows will relate to events subsequent to that distinguished era.

Ver. 6, 7. I am aware that this commission of the flying angel has been generally

understood as addressed to papal idolaters, and the passage of course applied to the evangelical labors of the reformers. The fall of Babylon, and the warnings against worshipping the beast and his image which follow, may have led to this application. There are other things, however, which have led me to consider "the angel flying in the midst of heaven" as sent to pagan rather than to papal idolaters.

It is true we are in danger of magnifying the events of our own times, and of expecting to find things occupying a conspicuous place in prophecy which upon the great chart of the divine proceedings may have no place, or at most be only as a speck. I have not sought however for any thing which might be applied to the events of present times, nor interpreted the passage in any other than what appears to be its most natural meaning.

There are four characters pertaining to the prophecy, some of which appear to be inapplicable to the evangelical labors of the reformers, but which are all applicable to the attempts to evangelize the heathen. 1. The parties to whom the message is sent are not merely the nations of Europe, but EVERY NATION, AND KINDRED, AND TONGUE, AND PEOPLE. 2. The message itself seems to intimate that they had hitherto read only the book of nature, and that without learning from it so much as WHO MADE THE HEAVENS, AND THE EARTH, AND THE SEA, AND THE FOUNTAINS OF WATERS. 3. It is supposed that when the spread of the gospel should be attempted in good earnest, and in a humble dependence upon God, *difficulties* which before seemed insuperable would subside. The church has long felt too much like the unbelieving Israelites in respect of going up to possess the promised land. Giants have seemed in the way, and walls reaching up to heaven; but, when the work is attempted in the name of Christ, it is like *an angel flying in the midst of heaven*, whose course none are able to arrest. 4. The *tone* in which the nations are addressed is solemn and imperious. "The hour of his judgment is come!" There was something resembling this when the gospel was first announced. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—"The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness," &c. The kingdom of the Messiah was then at hand, but now it draws near in its most extended form; and those nations and governments that will not bow to him shall be dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel! It is now coming to this, that "All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul!"—



which, as our poet expresses it, is equal to saying—

And all the kindreds of the earth  
Shall worship, or shall die!

The desire which has been kindled of late years to carry the gospel among the heathen does not appear to be an object unworthy of a place in prophecy. It has engaged the attention of a larger portion of the Christian church, and excited more earnest prayer and disinterested exertion, than perhaps any thing which has occurred since the Reformation. Nor ought we to consider what has hitherto been done as any thing more than the commencement of the angel's flight. It has indeed for its *object* the evangelizing of "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people;" but at present this is far from being accomplished. We have seen enough, however, to convince us with what ease the great God, by touching the hearts of a few individuals, can accomplish it.

Ver. 8. This is the first time that mention is made of *Babylon*. The allusion doubtless is to old Babylon, by which the church was formerly oppressed; and to the predictions of her fall as given by the prophets (Isa. xxi. 9; Jer. li. 8:) but the *Babylon* here referred to doubtless is Rome, considered as the head of that great antichristian community which has corrupted the religion of Christ, and persecuted his followers.

There may be no such immediate connection between the preaching of the everlasting gospel to the heathen world and the fall of antichristian Babylon as that the latter should be the effect of the former; but it may comport with the wisdom of God to render it a concomitant. When the servants of Christ lay themselves out for his name in one way, it is not unusual with him to promote the same general object in another. If we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, temporal blessings are added unto us; and thus if we lay ourselves out in extending his cause among the heathen, he may at the same time, by his providence, be working in another quarter the overthrow of that which is opposed to it.

The cry of the angel does not denote that *Babylon* will be *immediately* and *entirely* destroyed at this time; for, if so, the warnings of the third angel, which follow, would be unnecessary. Besides, it is by the *harvest* and the *vintage*, towards the close of the chapter, that the overthrow will be effected. But the church is here called upon to *expect* it, and to observe the course of events, as preparing the way for it.

Ver. 9—13. This is the language of solemn warning. It is addressed to all whom it concerns, good and bad, especially to those who live at the time here referred

to, the time immediately preceding the fall of the antichristian power, and so looks with a severe aspect on those who persevere in their attachment to it, notwithstanding the light which will have been diffused in the world. They who at *any period* surrender their consciences to human authority, and fully imbibe the antichristian system, will incur the wrath of God: but they who do this in the face of that light which by this time will be spread through the world will incur greater degrees of the divine displeasure than those who have been carried away with it in darker ages. The twelfth and thirteenth verses would seem to portend a time of *persecution* prior to the final overthrow of the antichristian power; a time which may be as the last struggles of the beast. This is the flood cast out of the mouth of the dragon after the woman (ch. xii. 15;) the gathering together of the "kings of the earth and of the whole world to the battle of the great day of God Almighty (ch. xvi. 14;) and the *war* made by the beast and the kings against him who sat upon the horse, and against his army.—Chap. xix. 19.

Ver. 14—20. The angels have delivered their messages, and now the Lord himself appears. He comes as it were to judgment, and to the antichristian party a terrible judgment it will be. Under the symbols of a *harvest* and a *vintage* is predicted its utter overthrow. Whatever distinction there may be between the one and the other, both I doubt not refer to that series of calamities which is reserved to destroy the beast and his adherents. They refer to the same things which have been noticed from ch. xi. 18, when the wrath of God was come, and the time of the dead that they should be avenged, and those destroyed who had long destroyed the earth. This being a general description of events which will be more particularly set forth under the pouring out of the vials, we shall find them again under "the battle of Armageddon, or the great day of God Almighty" (ch. xvi. ;) also in the "supper of the Great God," to which the fowls are invited, and in which "the beast and the false prophet are taken."—Ch. xix.

One thing is remarkable in both the *harvest* and the *vintage*, they indicate that the papal abominations shall be *ripe, fully ripe*. There is a tendency to maturity in both good and evil, in individuals and communities, and even in the world itself. Popery matured is Infidelity. To this it tends, and here it will probably land the great body of its adherents. I see no solid ground for Mr. Faber's hypothesis of an *infidel king*, any more than of an *infidel antichrist*, the historical exposition of the eleventh chapter of Daniel by Prideaux (*Connection Part II. Book II., III.*) appearing to me to be the true one; but I have no doubt that infidelity is, and will be, the distinguishing feature of

the last times. What is said of the "scoffers of the last times" is indeed descriptive of what we daily witness; but it is only of individuals that these things are spoken. Infidelity does not appear to be symbolized in the Scriptures, either by a *beast*, a *horn*, or a *king*: it is merely the papal beast grown old, or popery as having produced its proper fruits, which fruits may be the appointed means of its destruction.

## DISCOURSE XXII.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE VIALS.

Rev. xv.

THREE general descriptions having been given of the antichristian power, each of which carried us to the end of the 1260 years, the series of the prophecy *from the time of the sounding of the seventh trumpet* is now resumed. This trumpet, it has been observed before, wears a two-fold aspect. It is partly a woe-trumpet, and partly the harbinger of joy. The seven vials are a part of it, and answer to the former view. The other part comprehends the success of the gospel preparatory to the Millennium, the Millennium itself, and all that follows to the end of the prophecy, and answers to the latter view. At present we are to consider it as a woe-trumpet, or as comprehending the seven vials; which, containing a *more particular* account of the judgments already hinted at towards the end of the general descriptions, will, like them, bring us to the close of the 1260 years.

The angels with the vials are called "a sign in heaven, great and marvellous," because the judgments which follow are signal and fearful, and the times very eventful, so as deeply to interest the church of God.

The seven vials are denominated "the seven last plagues, in which will be filled up the wrath of God." This supposes that in various instances God had already poured forth his wrath upon these antichristian powers, but that this should be the **FINISHING BLOW**. Hence it follows that we are not to consider these vials as including all those plagues which at different periods have been poured upon the antichristian party, but merely *those which shall bring it to its end*. As the vials are a subdivision of the third and last woe-trumpet, they could not begin to be poured out till that trumpet was sounded: and, as they are emphatically called the seven *last* plagues, they must refer to the latter end of the 1260 years. In short, they are the particulars of what was signified under the general representations by God's wrath being come, and the time of the dead that they should be avenged—and by the harvest and the vintage.—Ch. xi. xiv.

All those expositions of the vials, there-

fore, which suppose them to have been pouring out at different periods from the beginning of the 1260 years, appear to me to be founded in mistake. The farthest point to which we can look back for the commencement of these calamities may be found to be within the last five-and-twenty years.—Ver. 1.

The "sea of glass mingled with fire" is the same which is said in ch. iv. 6 to have been before the throne. It is opposed, I conceive, to that perturbed element from which the beast arose; and describes the pure, calm, and triumphant state of those who have overcome. The striking up of the heavenly choir on this occasion was to express the great good that should arise from these evils. The song they sing is that of "Moses and the Lamb." As the song of Moses at the Red Sea magnified the victory of the Lord over the Egyptians, so this song will celebrate the triumph of the Lamb and of his followers over enemies of a similar character. If the works of God in redeeming his people from the long and hard bondage of Egypt were "great and marvellous," much more so would they be in delivering his saints from the long and hard bondage of "that great city which is spiritually called Egypt;" and, if his "ways were just and true" in the former instance, they would be still more manifestly so in the latter.—Ver. 2, 3.

It is not in malignity towards any creature, but in love to God, whose honor had for so long a time been trampled under foot, that these heavenly minds rejoice; not for the evil considered as evil, but for the good that should arise from it. Hence, anticipating the righteousness which the world shall learn when these judgments are abroad in the earth, they triumphantly ask, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." By this language we are given to expect that *the judgments on the antichristian powers, in connection with the preaching of the gospel, will contribute to the universal spread of true religion over the face of the earth*.—Ver. 4.

As the throne of the God of Israel was in the holy of holies, so his throne in heaven is described as in his temple; and as, when the high-priest entered into the former once a year, he saw the ark of the testimony, so, the heavenly temple being opened, the apostle looked and saw the seven angels come out from before the throne, as having received their commissions. They are described as "clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles." Nothing could better express the state of their *minds* in executing the divine displeasure. God had sometimes employed evil angels to execute his will, even towards



his own people, as in the case of Job, and in such instances they have been certain to discover their malignity. But when good angels execute the divine will, though it be upon his worst enemies, they have no malignant bitterness, but are influenced purely by the love of God and righteousness.—Ver. 5, 6.

Next to the description of the messengers follows the delivering to them their respective messages; and this was from the hand of one of the four living creatures who represented redeemed men. God does not usually employ his people in this world to overthrow either corrupt churches or antichristian governments. This is a kind of work not suited to them. They must, however, have some concern in it. Their prayers for deliverance are answered by terrible things in righteousness upon their persecutors; and to all the judgments of God they must add their cordial *Amen*.—Ver. 7.

The effect of the delivery of these messages is described as “filling the temple with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power, so that no man could enter it.” “This cloud (says Dr. GUYSE) appeared like a thick smoke, awfully glorious, which was a symbol of the divine vengeance (Ps. xviii. 8,) as going forth from the presence of the Lord, and to be executed by the glory of his power, in the destruction of Antichrist; even as the cloud on the tabernacle was of his dreadful judgment upon Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and the murmuring Israelites (Numb. xvi. 19, 42;) and as Moses could not enter into the tabernacle, nor the priests stand to minister in the temple, while the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord (Exod. xl. 35; 1 Kings viii. 11;) so no one could enter into this heavenly temple to intercede for the preventing of these grievous calamities upon the beast: none were suffered to do this, that judgment must have its free course, till all the seven punishments to be inflicted by the ministry of the seven angels were fully executed in their order.”

## DISCOURSE XXIII.

### ON THE VIALS.

Rev. xvi. 1—9.

I ENTER upon this part of the subject with diffidence, because I consider the events predicted as mostly future; and the exposition of unfulfilled prophecy, especially when couched under symbolical language, is rarely accurate. When in looking at a symbol we compare it with facts, we can judge of the one as being designed to predict the other: but, in looking at the symbols without the facts, we can seldom make much out in explaining them. Nor does it appear to have

been the design of prophecy to enable us to foresee things with any considerable degree of precision; but to keep up a general hope before the accomplishment, and to strengthen our faith after it.

Ver. 1. Before entering on particulars I shall offer two or three general remarks:—

*First:* Some of these “plagues,” and it may be the greater part of them, will consist in wars between the nations of Christendom. Such is doubtless the meaning of those in which mention is made of “blood,” and of the “battle of Armageddon, the great day of God Almighty.” It is thus that the nations which have shed the blood of his saints will have blood given them to drink!

*Secondly:* As the grand design of these wars is the destruction of the antichristian hierarchy, they may be expected to have a *providential direction* given to them, causing them to bear more especially upon that object. If this remark be just, it furnishes a presumption that the vials have been pouring out for the last twenty years. As a fire kindled in a city has a direction given to its ravages, by the wind, or by some other means; so Providence has caused the desolations of the Continent to bear principally, though not entirely, upon the papal cause.

*Thirdly:* The resemblances between the vials and the trumpets may throw more light upon the subject than any other medium of which we are in possession. It is a fact very remarkable that each of the seven trumpets has a point of resemblance to one of the seven vials—For example, The first trumpet affected the earth; and so does the first vial.\* The second trumpet turned the sea into blood; and the second vial was poured out upon the sea, which became as the blood of a dead man.† The third trumpet affected the rivers and fountains of water; and so does the third vial.‡ The fourth trumpet respected the sun; and the fourth vial does the same.§ The fifth trumpet was followed by darkness and pain; and such were the effects of the fifth vial.|| The sixth trumpet was complex, relating partly to the depredations of the Euphratean horsemen in the east, and partly to the idolatries and persecutions of the beast and his associates in the west; and so is the sixth vial, relating partly to the Euphratean waters being dried up, and partly to the battle of Armageddon, by which the cause of the beasts will be ruined.¶ Finally, The seventh trumpet presents a closing scene; and so does the seventh vial.\* These resemblances cannot be accidental. Though they refer to events, therefore, more than a

\* Comp. ch. viii. 7, xvi. 2.

† Ch. viii. 8, xvi. 3.

‡ Ch. viii. 10, 11, xvi. 4.

§ Ch. viii. 12, xvi. 8, 9.

|| Ch. ix. 1—3, xvi. 10.

¶ Comp. ch. ix. 14, xi. 14, xvi. 12—16.

\* Ch. xi. 15, xvi. 17.



thousand years distant from each other, yet there must be some important points of likeness between them; and as the trumpets are all, except the last, fulfilled, we may by means of them form some judgment of the vials which yet may be unfulfilled.

It is on this principle that Dr. GILL seems to have proceeded in expounding the vials. "The first vial," says he, "will be poured out upon *the earth*, and designs those popish countries which are upon the *continent*, as France and Germany, especially the latter: and, as the first trumpet brought the Goths into Germany, so the first vial will bring great distress upon the popish party in the empire.—The second vial will be poured upon *the sea*, and may intend the *maritime* powers belonging to the church of Rome, particularly Spain and Portugal: and, as the second trumpet brought the Vandals into these places, so this vial will affect the same, and bring wars and desolations into them.—The third vial will be poured out upon the *rivers and fountain of waters*, which may point to those places adjacent to Rome, as Italy and Savoy: and, as the third trumpet brought the Huns into those parts, so this vial will bring in large armies hither, which will cause much bloodshed, and a great revolution in church and state."\*

This comment on the vials, founded upon their analogy with the trumpets, bids fair, in my judgment, to be the true one; especially that on the first three which has just been quoted.

The doctor adds—"As yet I take it none of them are poured out, though some great and learned men have thought otherwise. As yet there have been no such devastations on the continent, as in France and Germany, as to produce the above effects; nor in the countries of Spain, Portugal, &c." This was doubtless the case in 1752, the year in which the sermon from which the above extract is made was printed, but this is more than can be said in 1810!

Ver. 2. If by the "earth" be meant "the *continent*, as France and Germany, especially the latter" (and I know of no interpretation more natural,) we have certainly seen a succession of evils falling upon the men who "had the mark of the beast," first in France, and after that in Germany, grievous as the most "noisome sores," and like them indicative of a state of corruption and approaching dissolution.

Ver. 3. If this vial respect the papal *maritime* nations, particularly Spain and Portugal (and here also I know of no interpretation more natural,) we have seen a commencement of things in those countries, but have not yet seen the issue. What it will be God knoweth. Whether this or that political

party prevail, it will be a plague, and a plague that will tend to accomplish the ruin of the antichristian cause.

There is a circumstance of additional horror in this vial, which was not in its corresponding trumpet: the blood into which this "sea" would be turned is described as stagnant, "as the blood of a dead man;" as though such a quantity should be shed as not only to tinge, but to congeal the ocean, turning it as it were into a putrid mass!

Ver. 4—7. If the *rivers and fountains of waters* denote "Italy and Savoy," these countries may be expected to be the scene of the next great convulsions which shall agitate Europe. And, if it be so, it may be a just retribution for the blood of the Waldenses, which was there shed in shocking profusion for many successive centuries.

The responsive language of the angels on this occasion accords with such an interpretation, and is exceedingly impressive. It shows in what light the persecution of the faithful is viewed in heaven. This sin implies such a hatred of God and his image as would, if he were within reach, dethrone and kill him! Unjust war is a great sin: it is murder on an extended scale: yet it is not to be named in comparison of persecution for Christ's sake. The one is destroying God's natural image; but the other is aimed at his moral image. In the former "the potsherd striveth with the potsherds of the earth:" but in the latter man striveth with his Maker! This was the sin which crowned the wicked life of Herod the tetrarch, who to all his other crimes "added this, *above all*, that he shut up John in prison!" Blood shed in persecution of God's servants hath a cry which must sooner or later be heard. The persecutions of former ages may be forgotten by men: but he "who is, and was, and shall be" will not forget them. The judgments of our own times are examples of this: all Europe, previously to the Reformation, was stained with the blood of the martyrs; and, since that memorable era, France and Germany, and Spain, and Portugal, and Italy, have been deeply engaged in that impious practice. Is it surprising then that all Europe in measure, and those nations in particular which have persisted in it, should be made to drink the bloody draught? While we feel, and ought to feel, for suffering humanity, it is not for us to join with the merchants of the earth in their wailings; but rather with the angels in heaven, saying, "Thou art righteous, O Lord, because thou hast judged thus!"

Ver. 8, 9. In discoursing upon the trumpets it was observed that the Roman empire, then become the seat of Christianity, was considered as a world of itself; having not only its *earth*, its *sea*, and its *rivers*, but its *sun*, and *moon*, and *stars*; symbols of its supreme and subordinate governments.—Ch.

\* Sermon on The Glory of the Church in the latter Day, pp. 12—15.

viii. 6—12. When the sun was eclipsed, on the sounding of the fourth trumpet, it signified the fall of the imperial authority: but the fourth vial, though poured upon the sun, yet, unlike its corresponding trumpet, does not terminate upon it, but upon the people on whom it shines. The sun here, instead of being eclipsed, or having its power diminished, has it increased. Its heat is rendered more intense, so as to become a plague to those who are under its influence.

By the "sun" is undoubtedly to be understood the supreme secular government of what is called the *Holy Roman Empire*, which is denominated the *beast*, and distinguished by its carrying or supporting the harlot. Its scorching heat cannot be understood of the persecution of the faithful; for they would not "blaspheme" under it. It would seem, therefore, to be the galling tyranny by which the adherents of the beast will be oppressed: while yet they repent not of their deeds.

## DISCOURSE XXIV.

### THE VIALS CONTINUED.

Rev. xvi. 10—21.

VER. 10, 11. By the "beast" we have all along understood that secular government which at the head of the other European governments has supported the *papal Antichrist*. This certainly has not been the imperial government of France, but of Germany, to which therefore the character of the *beast* belongs. The station from which his influence and authority proceeds will be his "seat," or throne, or we may say his *den*; and that which the swellings of Jordan were to the lions which made their dens amongst the thickets growing upon its margin (Jer. xlix. 19,) that will this plague be to him, causing him, if not to quit his den with howlings, yet to be very miserable in it. This is intimated by his "kingdom being full of darkness," and by their "gnawing their tongues for pain." The supporters of the papal cause will be confounded. Darkness and anguish will come upon them. Yet being given up, like Pharaoh, to hardness of heart, they will continue to blaspheme the God of heaven, and will not repent of their deeds. These blasphemies and this perseverance in impenitence are sure signs of its being the determination of Heaven to destroy them. Individuals may repent and escape; but as a community they are appointed to utter destruction.

Ver. 12—16. This vial, so far as respects the *temporal* dominion of Christ's enemies, possesses a final character; and seems partly to respect the overthrow of the Turkish power, signified by the "drying up of the

waters of the Euphrates," and partly that of the papal, signified by the battle of "Armageddon," or of that "great day of God Almighty."

With regard to the first, as the sixth trumpet respected the rise of the Turkish power to punish the eastern church, so the sixth vial seems to denote its overthrow, along with that of the western church. The drying up of waters fitly expresses that diminution of strength and defence in a nation which issues in destruction. Thus, when God would destroy Babylon, he saith, "A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up—I will dry up her sea, and will make her springs dry. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment and a hissing, without an inhabitant." "The kings of the east" may denote those who shall be employed in overthrowing this power, as the armies of Cyrus and Darius, on the waters of the Euphrates being diverted, were employed in overthrowing Babylon.

I have expressed a doubt whether either the doctrines or the wars of Mahomed would have had a place in this prophecy but for their relation to the Christian church (on ch. ix. 13—21; ) and I think it questionable whether the downfall of the Turks would have been noticed but on the same account. This was the reason of so much being said of old Babylon. She might have risen and fallen unnoticed by the prophets, if she had had nothing to do with Jerusalem. But though she was an instrument in God's hand in purging that corrupted city, yet seeing she "meant not so," but set herself against God himself, it required that she should in the end be overthrown, and that her overthrow should be marked in prophecy. In like manner, though Mahomed and his followers were instruments in punishing a corrupt part of the Christian church, yet seeing they meant not so, but set themselves against Christ himself, they also shall be overthrown, and their overthrow is marked in prophecy.

With regard to the second part of this vial, or that which respects the *papal* powers, this is the most tremendous. This is the last struggle of the beast and his adherents, and it will issue in their utter overthrow. This is "the great day of God Almighty;" the same as the *harvest* and the *vineage* in chap. xiv., and the "taking of the beast and the false prophet" in chap. xix.

Preparatory to this great day we have the *mustering of the forces*.—"Three unclean spirits like frogs" are described as going forth amongst the nations, to gather them together; one from the mouth of the dragon, another from that of the beast, and another from that of the false prophet. These *spirits* may denote the corrupt *principles* which shall be disseminated in the earth,



tending to deceive and destroy mankind. As the *dragon* is described as the grand mover of all these mischiefs, as he is not said to be taken with the beast and the false prophet in chap. xix., and is denominated "that old serpent the devil and Satan," I consider him as a being of a different order from either of them; and, as the unclean spirit which proceeded from the dragon may be supposed to correspond with his character, it may be a spirit of *diabolical malignity against God and true religion*.—The *beast* being understood of the last head of the Roman empire, the great supporter of popery, the unclean spirit proceeding out of his mouth may be that which assumes the place of God in the consciences of men, and converts Christianity into an engine of state policy.—The *false prophet*, though designated by a new name, appears to be the same power that was represented in chap. xiii. by the two-horned beast, and in 2 Thes. ii. 3 by "the man of sin." This is evident from the character of each being the same. The coming of the man of sin was to be with "signs and lying wonders." The two-horned beast "deceived them that dwell on the earth by means of his miracles;" and amongst the operations of the three evil spirits mention is made of "miracles," which seem to pertain to the false prophet. The man of sin, the two-horned beast, and the false prophet, therefore are the same; namely, the papal hierarchy, or the community of which the pope is the head. The evil spirit proceeding out of his mouth may be that of *blind zeal, and religious imposture*.

These three evil spirits, discordant as they may be in some respects, will be united in their opposition to true religion. Hence in the great battle wherein the beast and the false prophet are taken (chap. xix.) and which, as has been observed, is the same as this at Armageddon, the whole triumvirate is engaged "against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." It will be a character, it seems, of these times, that the friends and enemies of Christ will be nearer together than they have been wont to be: irreligion and false religion will unite their standards and fight with neither small nor great but with Christ and his adherents. Where men agree in the grand outlines of false doctrine, and conceive themselves to meet in their political interests, they can easily overlook other differences.

It seems as if a spirit of infatuation, like that in Pharaoh and his host at the Red Sea, would possess the enemies of Christ prior to this their last overthrow. The kings of the earth are gathered together, partly by hatred of God and religion (the spirit of the dragon,) partly by the desire of subjugating both to political purposes (the spirit of the

beast,) and partly by blind zeal and religious imposture (the spirit of the false prophet,) and being assembled will direct all their force against God and his cause. In what particular mode their hostility will be manifested, and by what means Christ will prevail against them, it is too much for us to determine. The former may be by direct persecution, or, if by war, it will be one whose object shall be to exterminate the true religion; and the latter may be by turning their hearts one against another. Though they have been gathered together, and have unitedly engaged in this notable enterprise, yet, finding it unsuccessful, they may fall out with one another. The spirit of the dragon may prevail over that of the beast and that of the false prophet, and he may think to govern the world without them. The antichristian kings also, perceiving how things are going, may be for joining the strongest side. But, if so, they will find themselves deceived. The next vial will purify the world of their baleful influences, and the angel with a great chain in his hand stands ready to lay hold on the dragon himself and to cast him into the bottomless pit.

The warning language addressed to the faithful (ver. 15) seems to intimate that these important events will come upon men unexpectedly, and that many will be stripped by them of their professions and prospects. Blessed are they whose religion will stand the test of such times of trial.

Ver. 17—21. As the sixth vial has issued in the overthrow of the temporal power of Antichrist, the seventh seems to respect its *spiritual* dominion, or the hold which it has on the minds of men.\*

The moral atmosphere of the world has long been polluted by false religion, from which it seems to be the object of this vial to cleanse it as by a thunder-storm, which thunder-storm produces a great earthquake, and this the falling to pieces of the great antichristian city, and other cities with it. The face of the world hence becomes changed, and the wrath of God pursues, as by a terrible hail-storm, the men who repent not of their deeds.

Nor will this purification of the moral atmosphere be confined to Christendom, but will extend to the whole earth. Paganism, Mahomedism, apostate Judaism, and every thing which stands opposed to the truth, shall now be driven out of the world. An "earthquake" is the well-known symbol of

\*That these are very distinct we need go no further than Ireland for proof. Popery has there long existed, not only without the aid of temporal power, but in a manner against it: yet there are few if any countries where it has faster hold on the minds of men.



a revolution; and so great and mighty a revolution of religious principle may well justify the description given of it. And now, a voice out of the temple of heaven, even from the throne of God, is heard, saying, "IT IS DONE!" The threatening of the angel in chap. x. 7 is accomplished—the 1260 years are ended—THE MYSTERY OF GOD IS FINISHED!

As this vial seems to be wholly of a *spiritual* nature, the "thunders, and lightnings, and earthquake, and hail," do not seem to refer to wars, or to any other temporal calamities, but it may be to the effects of truth, and to those *spiritual judgments* which will fall on them who continue to reject it. The *body* of Antichrist, as I may say, will be destroyed by the temporal sword, as described under the preceding vial; but the "spirit of Christ's mouth" shall destroy his *spirit*. Such from the beginning was the doom passed upon that wicked one; and such is the punishment of those who escape in the great battle wherein the beast and false prophet shall be taken, but who repent not of their deeds: they shall be "slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceedeth out of his mouth."—Chap. xix. 21.

The city being "divided into three parts," as by an earthquake, denotes I think the breaking up of the papal system; and what "the cities of the nations" which fall with it can be understood to mean but those worldly establishments of religion which have symbolized with popery, not only in worship and ceremonies, but in an *alliance with the kingdoms of this world*, I cannot conceive. To understand "the great city" of the Roman empire, and "the cities of the nations" of *particular states*, neither comport with the meaning of the terms in other parts of the prophecy nor with the *spiritual judgments* denoted by this vial. "The great city" is mentioned in several other places in the prophecy—as in chap. xi. 8, "Their dead bodies shall lie in the streets of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."—And in chap. xiv. 8, "Babylon is fallen, that great city."—And in chap. xviii. 10, 21, "Alas, that great city, Babylon."—"Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down." In none of these passages does it appear to mean the empire, but the church of Rome. The empire is symbolized by a *beast*, from which the great city is distinguished.—Chap. xi. 7, 8. But if "the great city" mean the Church of Rome, even "great Babylon who now comes in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath," "the cities of the nations" must mean those ecclesiastical communities which have symbolized with her.

## DISCOURSE XXV.

THE GREAT HARLOT, AND THE BEAST THAT CARRIETH HER.

Rev. xvii.

HAVING gone through the vials, we have arrived at the commencement of the Millennium. Indeed we descended to this period in each of the three general descriptions, and in the pouring out of the vials have only retraced the latter part of the ground more particularly. All that remains between this and the twentieth chapter would in modern publications be called *notes of illustration*. No new subject is introduced, but mere enlargement on what has already been announced. We have heard much of the beast in the thirteenth chapter; but in the seventeenth we have a still more particular account of him, and of the woman that sitteth upon him, without which we should not have been able to understand the other. We had a hint given us of the fall of Babylon in the fourteenth chapter; but in the eighteenth and part of the nineteenth we have a triumphant ode, sent as it were from heaven, to be sung on the occasion. Finally, we have been given to expect, in the fourteenth chapter, that prior to the overthrow of the antichristian cause the gospel would be making progress; but in the nineteenth we see the word of God going forth, riding upon a white horse, and the antichristian powers destroyed in the very act of opposing him.

The first of these *illustrative notes*, as we shall call them, is contained in the seventeenth chapter, and respects the leading characters of the antichristian party.

Ver. 1—6. The object of this vision was not to gratify curiosity, but to show the justice of those plagues which were, or were about to be, inflicted.

The opprobrious name given to the woman determines its reference to a corrupt and false church, as opposed to "the bride the Lamb's wife." Her "sitting upon many waters," and which are said to be "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" (ver. 15,) prove that this corrupt and false church would not be confined to a single city, or nation, but would extend over a number of nations. The "kings of the earth that have committed fornication with her" are all those governments which are or have been within the pale of her communion, and which till the Reformation included the whole of western Europe, "the great Gothic family," as they have been denominated. It is this their idolatrous communion with her that is called fornication. Those who have been made "drunk with the wine of her fornication" are those who have drunk into her doctrines,

worship, spirit, and practices, and have become as it were intoxicated by them.

To have a view of this harlot, the apostle is carried in vision "into the wilderness." She was represented before as sitting upon many waters; but, as she is now to be described as riding upon a beast, it is proper that it should be upon the earth. Though the imagery however is changed, yet the meaning may be much the same: for a wilderness, no less than many waters, signifies peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. Hence the nations into which Judah was carried captive are called "the wilderness of the people."—Ezek. xx. 35. For the apostle to be carried into the wilderness may be equal to his being placed in the midst of the nations of Europe—say in London, Paris, Madrid, or Vienna—at a time when papal Rome was in all her glory.

Being in the wilderness he sees a woman sitting upon a beast, which beast was caparisoned with scarlet trappings, full of the names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. This beast is manifestly the same as that which is described in the thirteenth chapter as "rising out of the sea," and is no other than the *Roman empire under its last head or form of government, or that which has been known in history as the western or Holy Roman Empire, in connection with the kingdoms of Europe, which are its ten horns*. It is this government which has given the title of *emperor*, sometimes to a king of one nation, and sometimes of another; but, whoever has possessed it, he has been considered as the grand supporter of the papal hierarchy.

It is said that the ancient pagan emperors were wont to be dressed in "scarlet" in times of war,—a fit attire then for a bloody period, and now for a bloody persecuting government. Its "names of blasphemy" express its impious and antichristian character, assuming the throne of God in the minds and consciences of men.

The "purple, and scarlet, and gold, and precious stones, and pearls," with which the woman was arrayed, allude no doubt to the attire of a harlot of no ordinary rank. The design is to describe her as being of the world, and seeking the things of the world, or as contriving by her meretricious ornaments to dazzle the eyes of her beholders. It is by that ceremonious pomp, splendor, and will-worship, which have often been defended under the name of *decency*, and deemed necessary, both to gratify the taste of the polite and to excite the admiration of the vulgar, that false religion makes its way. The "golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication," are her corrupt principles and idolatrous practices, recommended by her seducing emoluments. The "name on her forehead" is thought to allude to the ancient practice

of harlots, who not only used to put their names on their doors, but some of them upon their foreheads. It is expressive not only of the general character of the antichristian church, but of her impudence; practising day by day the foulest and filthiest impostures, and yet calling herself the Holy Catholic Church, and denying salvation to all without her pale! The name of "mystery" was given to this apostasy by Paul as well as John, and with this very proper exposition, "The mystery of iniquity." The system is full of "the depths of Satan," which it is an honor not to know.—She is farther denominated "Babylon the great." Here we see that the apocalyptic Babylon and the harlot are the same: it is Rome, as an antichristian community extending over many nations. What Babylon was to the Old-testament church she is to the New; and such will be her end.—Finally, she is denominated "The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." There are other corrupt churches as well as that of Rome; but she is the principal, and the parent of them, the harlot of harlots. Not only by "forbidding to marry" does she open the flood-gates to illicit commerce between the sexes, and even to unnatural crimes, but sells indulgences and pardons in the name of Jesus Christ!

To complete the character of this mother of harlots, she is described as making others intoxicated, and as being herself "drunken with the blood of the saints!" Persecution is the crowning sin of the greatest sinners.

The apostle, having beheld her, "wondered with great admiration," as well he might. So much wickedness, be it committed by whom it might, was wonderful; but who could have thought that this was a picture of what would be called *The Holy Catholic Church, in whose pale only was salvation!!!* The Christian church was an object dear to him: what then must be his feelings to be told that it should come to this!

Ver. 7. The answer of the angel is designed to allay the admiration of the apostle: and this it does by accounting for what had been seen. When Hazaël wondered at his own predicted cruelties, and scarcely thought them possible, he was told in answer, "The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria." This was answer sufficient; and that of the angel resembles it. The character of the woman is accounted for by her alliance with the beast. Let the Christian church consider this, and tremble at such alliances!

Ver. 8—11. Having given an account of the woman, the angel proceeds to describe "the beast that carrieth her." This no doubt is the Roman empire, described as the "beast that was, and is not, and yet is." Prior to the overthrow of Paganism by Constantine, it was—it was that idolatrous, blasphemous, persecuting power which Daniel had fore-



told. From that period, professing to become a Christian government, the properties of the beast were as it were laid aside, and it *was not*. Such was its character from the days of Constantine to the revelation of the man of sin. It might have been denominated *the beast that was, and is not; or the late Pagan, but now Christian empire*. But, notwithstanding this his profession of Christianity, his origin is "the bottomless pit," and his end "perdition." He may deceive the blinded multitude with his pretences of being *not* that which he once was; but, as the angel informs the apostle, he *yet is*. He had indeed a "wound by a sword," which was thought at the time to be mortal, but it did not prove so. The corruptions of Christianity healed it, and all the properties of the beast revived in their wonted vigor.

The angel proceeds to inform the apostle more particularly concerning the "seven heads" of the beast, and intimates that in understanding this subject there will be employment for "wisdom." They are said first to be "seven mountains on which the woman sitteth." This determines the seat of the hierarchy to be Rome, well known as standing, when in its full extent, upon seven hills. They are also said to be "seven kings," or forms of government, under which the empire had subsisted, did subsist, or would hereafter subsist. The forms which had subsisted (as has been observed on chap. xiii.) were *kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, and military tribunes*: the form which subsisted at the time of the commencement of the prophecy was that of *emperors*; and that which was yet to come, and to "continue a short space," seems to be that non-descript government which succeeded the overthrow of the emperors, and continued in divers forms for about three hundred years, till the establishment of that government which from the days of Charlemagne to the Reformation (a space of above seven hundred years) combined all the nations of Europe in support of the anti-christian hierarchy.

This short-lived intermediate power might on some accounts be considered as the "seventh" head of the beast, and as such be distinguished from its last head, which in this view would be the "eighth:" but upon the whole it was rather to be considered as belonging to that in which it merged, and which in this view would be the seventh, or "of the seven."

There is an apparent difficulty in this *last head* of the Roman government being described as *the beast that was and is not*, as though the changes here alluded to were peculiar to that last head, when in fact they respect the beast under different heads. The answer I conceive to be this:—The beast, it is true, *was* under his first five heads, and *was not* under his sixth; but till

the last stages of his existence this description could not be applied to him, or become as it were *his proper name*. From this time he would be known as *the beast which was and is not*, or as the no longer pagan, but Christian empire.

Ver. 12—18. In every description of the Roman beast, whether by Daniel or John, the ten horns are a distinguished part of it. "Ten kings," in the language of prophecy, are ten kingdoms, or governments. They were not kingdoms at the time of the vision: hence the kings are said to have "received no kingdom as yet;" but, on the overturning of the empire by the Goths in the fifth century, those nations which had before been dependent provinces, together with others that were without its jurisdiction, became independent kingdoms; and, having embraced the religion of Rome, in process of time united in supporting it.

The reign of these kings is said to be "one (or *the same*) hour with the beast;" that is, with the last head of the Roman empire. They had overturned the empire in its preceding head or form; but by agreeing together in religion they established it under a new form: and, being of the same mind with the beast in this his new form *as to supporting the church*, they unanimously "gave their power and strength and kingdoms to him," for this end. They did not subject their kingdoms to him as a secular power, for then had they not been independent; their only connection with him would be ecclesiastical, or in his supporting the harlot. That this was the only bond of union between them is manifest from the result of things: when their love should be turned into hatred, they are not said to hate the beast, but the whore; it was the whore therefore, and not the beast, that was the object of their attachment. While he, caparisoned in scarlet, should carry her through all her filthy and bloody courses, they would be with him, holding up his trappings, or lending their authority to enforce his measures.

Such was actually the conduct of all the governments of Christendom prior to the Reformation, and such has been the conduct of many of them since. It is thus that they are said to have made "war with the Lamb." Their proceedings with respect to religion have been antichristian. All that has been done for more than a thousand years in invading the rights of conscience has been assuming his throne; and all the cruel edicts against what they call heresy and heretics, with all the bloody executions of them, have been in direct hostility against his kingdom. "But the Lamb shall overcome them." Whosoever shall gather together against him will fall for his sake. They may ask, Who is like unto the beast, and who is able to make war with him? But the



Lamb is "Lord of lords, and King of kings," and must prevail. His army, too, is a select band, "called, and chosen, and faithful," who following their leader are certain to be victorious. The overthrow of the governments of Christendom does not respect them as *monarchical* in distinction from republican (for one of Daniel's "kingdoms" was a republic,) but as *antichristian*. Those governments that "make war with the Lamb," whatever be their form, the "Lamb will overcome them."

In the progress of this war it is intimated that the kings who have supported the harlot shall have their hearts turned to "hate" her, and shall be instruments in her destruction. The hierarchy will become as odious in the eyes of the nations as a wrinkled prostitute is in the eyes of her paramours. This is the way in which the antichristian church is doomed to fall. It will not be from the increase of religious people who withdraw from her communion, as she has always apprehended; but from those who have been her companions in sin, and who, when nothing more is to be expected from her, shall turn against her and destroy her. It is not by Protestantism, nor by Methodism (as serious Christianity is now called amongst us,) but by Infidelity, that false religion will be overthrown.

It may seem strange that the powers which supported the antichristian harlot should be the instruments employed in destroying her; but so it is appointed of heaven. God, who saw the end from the beginning, intended for wise ends to permit the apostasy, and so to order it that the governments of Europe should for a time unite in supporting it. But it is only for a time: when the purposes and prophecies of God are fulfilled, he will cause a spirit of discord to separate these workers of iniquity, so that they shall destroy one another.

Finally: That no doubt might be left as to what was signified by the woman, she is called "that great city which reigned" at the time of the vision "over the kings," or kingdoms, "of the earth." This was equal to saying, It is ROME, considered as the seat of an antichristian hierarchy, which in the latter part of her empire shall prevail, but which, like all her other forms, shall go into perdition.

## DISCOURSE XXVI.

THE FALL OF BABYLON, AND THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB.

Rev. xviii. xix. 1—10.

CH. xviii. This is another note of illustration; a sacred ode, much resembling that on the fall of old Babylon.—Is. xiv. 4—23; xxi. 9. That which old Babylon was to

Zion, the Roman hierarchy has been to the Christian church; and the end of the one shall correspond with that of the other.

Her fall being *sudden*, and accomplished by the "strong arm of him that judgeth her," seems to relate to her *political* overthrow, as predicted by "the harvest and the vintage," ch. xiv.; by the "battle of Armageddon," ch. xvi.; and by "the supper of the great God," ch. xix. And as the city to be destroyed does not consist of material buildings, but is a community extending over many nations, so the fire by which it is consumed will doubtless be such as is suited to the object. The events of *war* may be that to the antichristian cause which fire is to a city.

I shall barely *notice the contents* of the song, and *remark on a few of its parts*. An angel descends from heaven and proclaims the important event; and, while he pronounces the doom of the criminal, states withal what have been her crimes.—Ver. 1—3. Another voice is heard from heaven addressed to the people of God who have in different ways and degrees been connected with her, to come out of her as Lot escaped from Sodom, lest, being partakers of her sins, they receive also of her plagues.—Ver. 4. This second voice also confirms the charges exhibited against her by the first; and reiterates her doom. Ver. 5—8. A description is given of her overthrow under the image of a city on fire: Those who have been seduced by her wiles shall be filled with astonishment at beholding her fearful end.—Ver. 9—13. The criminal herself is tauntingly addressed, as having lost all that her heart had been set upon.—Ver. 14. Interested men make great lamentations on account of her.—Ver. 15—19. Apostles, prophets, and martyrs are called upon to rejoice over her.—Ver. 20. Her fall is compared to the sinking of a great millstone cast into the sea.—Ver. 21. Her desolations are described by the loss of all her enjoyments.—Ver. 22—24. Great interest is excited in heaven by her overthrow.—Ch. xix. 1—6. A general joy pervades the church of God both in heaven and earth, and the Millennium quickly follows.—Ver. 7—9. The song concludes with an account of the effect of the vision on the apostle towards his informant.—Ver. 10.

By the language in ch. xviii. 6, 7, it may seem as if the servants of God would be the executioners of his wrath upon this corrupt community: but their being called to "reward her as she rewarded them" may only denote that the judgments inflicted upon her will be according to their testimony, and in answer to their prayers. It was thus that the two witnesses inflicted plagues upon their enemies.—Ch. xi. 5, 6. The visible agents employed in the work will be the governments of Christendom which will

"hate the whore, and eat her flesh, and burn her with fire."

That which will greatly contribute to the fearfulness of her overthrow will be her *previous security*. She saith in her heart, "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." If she had been "the bride, the Lamb's wife," she could not have been more secure; so much the greater therefore will be her fall.

The events which to a political eye seem to occur only from the chances of war are here described as the process of the *Judge* of heaven and earth. The power which will be exerted will be that exercised over a condemned malefactor by a judge, at whose command the officers of justice proceed to execution. Power is the only thing that she has respected; and by the strong arm of power she shall be brought down!—Ver. 8.

We have heard of the hearts of the kings being turned to hate the whore; yet we find here kings *lamenting her overthrow*. The kings or kingdoms of Europe may then be what they now are—divided into parties. One party, and that the successful, will, from interested considerations, hate and set themselves against her; another party, from similar considerations, will espouse her cause, and these, proving unsuccessful, will lament over her.—Ver. 10.

The kings are joined in their lamentations by the "merchants," who seem to be those who have made a trade of religion; which, however it may include many amongst the laity, must refer more immediately to the mercenary part of the clergy.

The most notable article in the list of her commodities is "the souls of men." There is doubtless an allusion to Ezek. xxvii. 13, but "the persons of men" can there mean only slaves, whereas "the souls of men" are here distinguished from slaves. Tyre dealt only in men's bodies, but Rome in their souls. I know not what else to make of the sale of indulgences and pardons; of the buying and selling of church livings; of confessions, prayers for the dead, and of every other means of extorting money from the ignorant.

That which will excite the most doleful lamentations among the adherents of the antichristian church will cause the friends of Christ to shout for joy. The marks of desolation are recounted with triumph. The sounds of music, the bustle of craftsmen, the grinding of the millstone, the light of a candle, and the joyful salutations of the bridegroom and the bride, are all ceased, and succeeded by the awful stillness of death. And if any ask, Wherefore hath the Lord done this? What meaneth the heat of this great anger? the answer is, "In her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth."

The first ten verses of the nineteenth chapter, which are a part of the sacred ode, describe the effect of the fall of Babylon on the friends of God both in heaven and earth.

Ch. xix, 1—8. The heavenly host with one voice raises the shout of "ALLELUIA! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said ALLELUIA! and her smoke rose up forever and ever." What a contrast between this and the whining lamentations of the merchants!

The punishment of every community *as such* requires to be in this world: when therefore her smoke is said to "rise up forever and ever," the allusion may be to a city consumed by fire; and the meaning is, that it shall never be rebuilt, but its overthrow, like that of Sodom, shall be set forth for an everlasting monument of the divine displeasure.

After this a voice is heard out of the throne, saying, "Praise our God all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." The theme is acceptable to him that sitteth upon the throne, and must be encored. In answer to this call of the angel, the servants of God both in heaven and earth are described as in a state of delightful agitation. With one voice they renew the song, and expatiate on the subject. The sound of their voices is as that of an immense multitude of people, or as the roaring of the sea, or as continued peals of thunder, saying, "ALLELUIA; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" God had always been omnipotent, and had always reigned; but while his enemies were suffered to prevail on earth he did not *appear* to reign in that part of his empire as he now will. Now his right hand and his holy arm will have gotten him the victory!

But the song is not yet finished: it is added, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." The Lamb and his wife are fitly introduced in opposition to the harlot and her paramours; namely, the beast and the kings of the earth. The fall of the one is the signal for the glorious appearance of the other. Such was the taking away of the dominion of the *little horn* to the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, being given to the people of the saints of the Most High.—Dan. vii. 26, 27. This marriage of the Lamb I conceive is the Millennium itself. Both this and the fall of Babylon, which precedes it, are here introduced by way of anticipation.

They each come into the song of heaven previously to their being actually accomplished on earth. The account of the one follows in the remainder of this chapter, where the beast and the false prophet are taken; and that of the other in the first six verses of the chapter following.

The accession of believers to Christ at any period is represented by the espousal of a chaste virgin to her husband; and the whole gospel dispensation is described as a marriage supper. What an espousal, then, and what a supper will that be, when Jews and Gentiles, from every nation under heaven, shall be brought to believe in him! The appearance of the Christian church has not been such of late ages as might have been expected of one that had Christ for her head. She has been not only scattered by persecution, but her beauty greatly tarnished by errors, corruptions, and divisions, so as scarcely to sustain a *visible* character: but when believers all over the world shall have purified their souls by obeying the truth—when they are what they were in the days of pentecost, “of one heart and of one soul”—and when there is nothing but distance of situation to hinder their being united in one body—then will “the bride have made herself ready.”

The church is described as being *active* in putting on her robes of glory, but they are ready *prepared* for her. To her was “*granted* that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white.” Reference may be had to the wedding garments provided, according to the representation in the parable, at the expense of the bridegroom. It is said to be “the righteousness of the saints;” yet as it respects the saints not individually but collectively, and at the millennial period, it would seem to denote a *justification* of the church from all things, which have stood against her, analogous to that of an individual believer on his first espousal to Christ. As the perdition of the antichristian community is described in language alluding to that of individual unbelievers (Ver. 3, 20,) so the glory bestowed on the church at this period alludes to that which is conferred on individual believers when they are “washed, and justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Thus the church in the days of Zerubbabel, when she had been polluted among the heathen, is represented by Joshua the high priest “clothed with filthy garments,” and her justification by the “taking away of his filthy garments and clothing him with change of raiment.” Thus also the glory of the church at another period is expressed in language applicable at all times to individual believers:—“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom deck-

eth with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth with jewels.” Christ’s salutation will then be to her as a beautiful garment, and his righteousness as an ornamental robe.

Ver. 9. A blessing was pronounced by our Lord on those who saw and heard the things which were then to be seen and heard, and a still greater blessing is in reserve for those who shall see and partake of the good here predicted. The most glorious things spoken of the church of God will then be accomplished. The success of the gospel in different parts of the world during the period of the vials will then meet as a confluence of rivers near the ocean. The tides of mercy and judgment towards Jews and Gentiles will now find their level in the salvation of both. “In times past we believed not God, but obtained mercy through their unbelief;” now “through our mercy they also shall have obtained mercy.”—Rom. xi. 30, 31. In former ages God blessed the eastern parts of the world; of late ages the western; but now the kingdom of Christ, like a returning tide, shall spread over both west and east.—Isa. lx. 1—11. “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand, three hundred, and five-and-thirty days!”—Dan. xii. 12.

These predictions respecting the overthrow of Babylon, and the establishment of the church, are attested by the angel as “the true sayings of God.” Such an attestation would tend to strengthen the faith and hope of believers, who might otherwise, during the long reign of the antichristian beasts, be tempted to think that God had forgotten to be gracious, and would be favorable to his church no more.

Here I consider the sacred ode on the fall of Babylon and the marriage of the Lamb as closing, with only a few words of the apostle concerning his informant.

Ver. 10. The angel here spoken of seems to be him whose voice was heard out of the throne, calling for a repetition of the song.—Ver. 5. John probably supposed him to be the Son of God himself, who had more than once in his visions appeared as an angel, and whom he was in the habit of worshipping. But the angel refuses his adoration on the ground of his being merely a servant, the fellow-servant of him and of his brethren, who had the testimony of Jesus. *They* testified of things concerning him which were accomplished; as of his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and the way of salvation by him: *he* revealed prophecies which as yet were unaccomplished. Yet their work was much the same: the theme of their testimony contained the spirit or substance of what he had imparted for prophecy. They were therefore fellow-laborers in the same cause, and must not worship one another, but God. Christ himself is not an object of worship considered as man, but as God only. That he is God as well as man, and



as such an object of divine worship, this circumstance of the angel's refusal fully evinces. We see in his conduct what we see in that of Paul and Barnabas at Iconium; and every creature who fears God must follow the example. If Jesus therefore were not God, he ought on all occasions to have refused divine worship, and certainly would have done so. His never having done this is sufficient proof of his divinity. Nor can it be justly alleged that the worship paid to Christ was mere civil respect; for then the same might be said of John's worshipping the angel, and which he might have done without being repulsed. We learn therefore from this circumstance that Jesus is not only the theme of the gospel ministry, and the spirit or substance of prophecy, but that he is truly and properly divine.

### DISCOURSE XXVII.

#### THE TAKING OF THE BEAST AND THE FALSE PROPHET.

Rev. xix. 11—21.

WHEN the Israelites, full of fearful apprehension from the pursuit of their enemies, cried out for fear, Moses said unto them, "Fear not, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord: for the Egyptians, whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see no more forever!" In going over these last ten chapters we have seen and heard much of the beast and the false prophet, and of the mischiefs which they have wrought upon the earth: but this is the last account that we shall have of them. By the prophecies in these verses they are buried in oblivion, so that the church in after times shall know of them only as we know of Pharaoh and his host, namely, as matters of history.

In cases wherein the parties have been assured of victory, it has not been unusual for a battle to be preceded by a song of triumph. It was thus when Jehoshaphat went forth against his enemies: singers were first appointed to praise the Lord, and then the army was led on to the engagement.—2 Chron. xx. And thus our Lord, when about to engage the powers of darkness, being certain of victory, exclaimed, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out!—Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him!"—John xii. 31; xiii. 31. It is thus, I conceive, that the prophecy, having anticipated the victory over Babylon in a song of triumph, proceeds to describe the battle. The scene of the song was in heaven, but the battle in which the event will actually occur is upon earth. It is the same as that before described under the sixth vial, namely, the battle of Armageddon,—“the great day of God Almighty,”—“the supper of the great God!”

Observe the preparations for it.—“Heaven is opened, a white horse is seen, and he that sat upon it is called faithful and true, who in righteousness doth judge and make war.” We can be at no loss in deciding who this great warrior is. He is doubtless the same that is addressed in Psa. xlv. 3, 4:—“Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty: and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness: and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.”—I may add, he is the same that is described in the first six verses of the sixty-third chapter of Isaiah; and what is here predicted by John not only alludes to that prophecy, but appears to refer to the same event. His coming up from Edom with garments stained with the blood of his enemies appears to be justly paraphrased by Dr. Watts:—

“I lift my banner (saith the Lord)  
Where Antichrist has stood;  
The city of my gospel-foes  
Shall be a field of blood.

My heart hath studied just revenge,  
And now the day appears;  
The day of my redeemed is come,  
To wipe away their tears.

Slaughter, and my devouring sword,  
Shall walk the streets around;  
Babel shall reel beneath my stroke,  
And stagger to the ground.”

It may be thought that this *bloody* representation is unsuitable to the character of the *Prince of Peace*; and that the battle between him and his army on the one side, and that of the beast and kings on the other, is contrary to the genius of the gospel dispensation. To solve this difficulty, let it be observed that the war here described is of *two kinds*, and Christ sustains a two-fold character in conducting it. The first is *spiritual*; and this he undertakes as the “head of the church.” In this character he rides upon a *white* horse, and the armies of heaven follow him upon *white* horses; fitly representing the great efforts that shall be making, at the very period of Babylon's overthrow, to spread the gospel over the whole earth. The second is *providential*; and this he undertakes as “head over all things to the church.” In this character he is “clothed with a vesture dipped in *blood*.” In making war in his *spiritual* character, he does not wait to be attacked by his enemies: he goes forth in this respect conquering and to conquer. But, in so far as the war is of a *providential* character, the enemies are the aggressors. The beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, “gather together to make war against him and his army.”—Ver. 19. The idea conveyed by this language is that while he who sitteth upon the white horse and his army are going forth, to spread the everlasting gospel in the world, the beast and his allies will gather together

to oppose its progress, and will perish in the attempt.

There is no necessity for supposing the armies of Christ will have literally to fight with those of the beast and the kings: but, while they are following him in spreading the gospel, *He*, as "King of kings and Lord of lords," may work the utter overthrow of their adversaries, by setting them at variance *with one another*. We have seen this accomplished in part already in the antipathies and wars which have raged between infidelity and popery; and such may be the progress of things, till, like two furious beasts of prey, they shall both be destroyed. The account itself agrees with this supposition: for, though the armies of the beast are said to have gathered together against the armies of him that sat upon the horse, yet there is no mention of any being engaged in their overthrow but *he himself*. It is *he* that "smites the nations," "treads the wine-press," and has his "vesture dipped in blood." It is remarkable, too, that in the corresponding prophecy of Isa., lxiii. 1—5, he is said to have "trodden the wine-press **ALONE**, and of the people **THERE WAS NONE WITH HIM.**"

These remarks may suffice for the general meaning of the prophecy. Let us now attend to a few of the particulars.

It is a joyful sight to see the Son of God riding forth upon the white horse. He will not wait for the fall of the antichristian powers ere he extends his spiritual kingdom. The flight of the evangelical angel was prior to the fall of Babylon; such is still the order of things; and it is in opposing this great and good work that the enemies of the gospel will bring destruction upon themselves.

The character given to this divine warrior must not be overlooked. He is "faithful and true," as performing all his engagements to God, and fulfilling all his promises to men. "In righteousness he doth judge and make war." The cause in which he is engaged is just, and all his measures are in harmony with it. "His eyes were as a flame of fire," burning with holy indignation against his enemies. "And on his head were many crowns," denoting his great power and numerous conquests. "And he had a name written that no man knew but he himself;" for after all that is known of the glory of his character it passeth knowledge. The "vesture dipped in blood" refers to what has been said of the destruction of his enemies by means of wars kindled by their own malignity. "His name is called the Word of God," as being that divine person whose office it is to reveal the mind of God to men, and whose victories are accomplished by means of the gospel. "The armies of heaven on white horses" are the friends of

Christ who go forth in their respective stations, and lay themselves out to promote his kingdom. "The sharp sword that goeth out of his mouth" is his truth, which is not only the means of saving believers, but of punishing unbelievers. By his word they shall be judged at the last day, and his threatenings will fall upon them even in the present world. Those who are not destroyed by his judgments on the antichristian party will be despoiled of their power, and ruled as with a rod of iron. "And he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."—The vine of the earth being ripe for destruction, like grapes cast into a press, he will tread them in his anger, and trample them in his fury. "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**" In this there is something especially appropriate, as it respects those kings who have opposed his gospel, and lorded it over the consciences of his subjects. He has long sustained this name in right, but henceforward he will sustain it in fact.

And now comes on the decisive battle, "the battle of Armageddon," "the great day of God Almighty," "the supper of the great God!" Terrible things in righteousness have occurred in our times; but, by the strong language used to express this event, it seems as if it would surpass every thing which has gone before it. It is unlikely that it should consist of a single battle, but rather of a war, or succession of battles, though doubtless one must be the last. It is proclaimed by an "angel standing in the sun," whose voice would of course be heard from the rising to the going down thereof. The mode in which he announces it is by an invitation to the fowls of heaven to come as to a supper, to feast upon the carcasses of all ranks and degrees of men who shall be found on the antichristian side. The beast and the kings of the earth who make common cause with him, being gathered together with their armies to make war against him that sitteth upon the horse and against his army, will now be utterly overthrown. Those powers which shall be found supporting the papal hierarchy, together with "the false prophet," or the hierarchy itself, after a corrupt and bloody reign of 1260 years, will be "taken and cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone."

It was remarked, on chap. xvii. 7, that the corruption of the church is ascribed to her alliance with the secular beast, and it is no less remarkable that the overthrow of the secular beast is ascribed to its alliance with the church. It was "because of the great words that the *little horn*, spake against the Most High that the beast on whose head it grew should be slain, and his body destroy-

ed, and given to the burning flame.”—Dan. vii. 11. Let governments consider this, and tremble at such alliances.

It is true that neither political nor ecclesiastical bodies as such can be literally cast into a place of torment, as individual unbelievers that compose them will be: they may, however, be cast into perdition so as never to rise any more, which may be the whole of what is intended. As the Christian church in her millennial glory is described in language applicable to individual believers (ver. 8,) so the antichristian church is represented as a hardened sinner, arrested in a course of wickedness, and sent to his own place.

*Finally*: It is supposed that after this terrible overthrow there will be a remnant, like the scattered remains of a defeated army, who shall still be on the side of Antichrist; but they shall be “slain by the sword of him that sitteth upon the horse, which sword proceedeth out of his mouth.” As the battle above described is the same as that of Armageddon under the sixth vial, so “the sword proceeding out of Christ’s mouth” corresponds with the spiritual judgments under the seventh vial. They who have escaped the temporal calamities of the former will, except they repent, fall under the spiritual judgments of the latter. The threatenings of Christ’s word will overtake them. Their hearts will fail within them, as did the heart of Nabal when told of the words of David. Like him they will be smitten of God and die; and, having no successors to stand up in their place, their cause will die with them.

## DISCOURSE XXVIII.

### ON THE MILLENNIUM.

Rev. xx. 1—6.

VER. 1—3. We have seen the taking of the beast and the false prophet, and in that the fall of Babylon: but the principal mover in the confederacy is the *dragon* and of him no mention was made in the battle before described. Hence, though he had not been expressly called “that old serpent the devil and Satan,” we might have presumed that he was not of an order of beings to be crushed by the hand of man. His being in one place described as “a great red dragon, with the seven heads and ten horns of the Roman beast (ch. xii. 3,) can therefore only respect the form under which he at that time acted out his mischievous designs.

This great red dragon that had formerly been cast out of heaven is supposed to be yet on earth, and after the taking of his agents, the beast and the false prophet, is about to rally his scattered forces, and to engage in new schemes against the Lord

and against his Christ. If he be not bound, all the success against the other will signify but little; for he will not be at a loss how to deceive the world, and to engage them anew in some antichristian enterprise.

But who is able to bind him? The hand of man cannot take him. Lo, “an angel comes down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand, and lays hold on him and binds him a thousand years!” The apprehension and imprisonment of this enemy will complete the victory.

There can be no doubt who this angel is; for we know who hath the “keys of hell and of death.” To him it appertaineth, after having been manifested to destroy his works, to arrest him in his course, and to set bounds to his operations. The hand of man could not take him; but the hand of Christ can lay fast hold of him.

The dragon being cast into the bottomless pit, and shut up, and a seal set upon him to prevent his deceiving the nations for a thousand years, the kingdom of Christ shall now be established over the whole earth.

Various questions have arisen concerning this millennial state, both as to its nature and duration. With respect to the latter, the “thousand years” require, I think, in this instance to be taken literally; for, if understood of so many years as there are *days* in this period, the duration of the world would greatly exceed what we are elsewhere given to expect. The apostles seem to have considered themselves as having passed the meridian of time, and as drawing on towards the close of it. Such appears to be the import of the following passages:—“God hath in these *last days* spoken to us by his Son.—But now once *in the end of the world* hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.—The *end of all things is at hand*.—The coming of the Lord *draweth nigh*.—Behold the judge *standeth before the door*.—He that testifieth these things saith, Surely *I come quickly!*” But, if the thousand years were reckoned a day for a year, we are at present but upon the threshold of time: the last judgment must in this case be at a distance of hundreds of thousands of years.

A question of more importance is that which respects the *nature* of this millennial reign of Christ, whether it be *spiritual* or *personal*.\* Those who favor the former, consider it as a time in which the gospel

\* I say nothing of a third class, which might be denominated *political*, and which, in the delirium that prevailed a few years since, made the *dragon* to be “monarchy in general,” the *millennial thrones* (ch. xx. 4) seats of magisterial authority to which *the people* were exalted, and *the new heavens and the new earth* the results of the American and French Revolutions! Such are the effects of interpreting prophecy with the view of establishing a political hypothesis.



will be spread over the whole earth, and cordially embraced both by Jews and Gentiles; when those prophecies will be fulfilled which speak of the cessation of wars—of the stone cut out without hands becoming a great mountain and filling the whole earth—of the little leaven leavening *the whole lump*—of the knowledge of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea—of the first dominion coming to Zion—and of the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, being given to the people of the saints of the Most High.

Those, on the other hand, who plead for a *personal* reign of Christ upon earth, consider the Millennium as a state of *immortality*, a state subsequent to the general conflagration, wherein the righteous, being raised from their graves, shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years; after which, the wicked dead being raised, the general judgment shall follow.

Whatever respect I feel for some who have maintained the latter hypothesis, I find insurmountable objections to the hypothesis itself.

*First*: The idea of a personal reign appears to me nearly to *exclude that of a spiritual one, by leaving little or no place for it*.—It is clear that the pouring out of the seven vials is principally for the purpose of destroying the antichristian system, and that when this is accomplished the Millennium follows. No sooner are the beast and the false prophet taken under the sixth vial, and the world (like the temple after being polluted by Antiochus) purified from its abominations by the seventh, than the dragon is bound for a thousand years. If then this thousand years' reign be personal, the second coming of Christ must immediately succeed the ruin of Antichrist. But, if so, how or when are all those prophecies to be fulfilled which describe the prosperity of the church in the latter days? How is war to cease in the earth, and peace succeed to it, when, as soon as the troubles of the earth are destroyed, the world will be at an end? On this principle Antichrist will reign till the heavens are no more. The end of the 1260 years will be the end of time, and the church will have no existence upon the present earth but "in the wilderness." Instead of the stone, after breaking in pieces the image, "becoming a great mountain, and filling the whole earth," no sooner is the image broken to pieces than the earth itself shall be burnt up. And on the destruction of the little horn (Dan. vii. 26, 27,) instead of "the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, being given to the people of the saints of the Most High," no sooner shall that horn be broken than the whole earth will be destroyed with it!

*Secondly*: The idea of a personal reign represents Christ's second coming at a thousand years' distance from the last judgment; whereas the Scripture speaks of the one as *immediately following the other, and as being the grand object of it*. "The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be *punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*; WHEN HE SHALL COME TO BE GLORIFIED IN HIS SAINTS, and to be admired in all them that believe IN THAT DAY."—"Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all," &c.—"I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom."

*Thirdly*: The idea of a personal reign represents believers as raised to a state of immortality a thousand years before the close of Christ's mediatorial kingdom; whereas the Scripture represents the one as immediately succeeding the other. Speaking of the resurrection, the apostle says, "Christ the first fruits, and afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. THEN cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power; for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Now the resurrection of the saints will itself be the destruction of death. If therefore the end *then* cometh, there is no place for a personal reign of a thousand years between them. Besides, if death be the *last* enemy, and this enemy be destroyed in the resurrection, how can there be a Gog and Magog army to be destroyed a thousand years after it?

*Fourthly*: Those who consider the millennial reign as personal *confine the last resurrection and the final judgment, as described in the latter part of the chapter, to the wicked*: but there is nothing in that account of the resurrection which requires it to be limited to them. The sea is said to give up *the dead* which were in it; and death and hell (or the grave) to give up *the dead* which were in them; which language equally applies to the righteous and the wicked: and as to the last judgment, which immediately follows, had it been confined to the wicked it would not have been said "*whosoever* was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire," since on this principle they could *none* of them be found written in it.

If the last judgment, as described in ch. xx. 11—15, do not include that of the righteous as well as the wicked, there is no proof from this account of their being judged

at all. The Scriptures, however, are very express, that "we must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and give account of the deeds done in the body;" and that "God will bring every work into judgment, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

*Fifthly:* The account of Satan's being loosed after a thousand years' restraint, and going forth to deceive the nations, and to gather together the armies of Gog and Magog, *does not comport with a state of immortality, or with the condition of men after their resurrection.* Wicked men may rise, indeed, with the same enmity against God and religion as they possessed at death: but as to their being able to collect together, and to encompass the church of God in hope of destroying it, the idea is gross and inadmissible. The sea and the grave will give up their dead, not to become followers of Satan in a new enterprise, but to be judged every man according to his works.—Ver. 13.

*Finally:* To represent the Millennium, which precedes the last judgment, as a state of immortality, is to confound it with the New Jerusalem which follows it. The latter is indeed a state of immortality; for "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (xxi. 4:) but this language itself implies that till after the final judgment it shall not be so.

For these reasons, as well as from the figurative language of almost the whole of the prophecy, I cannot think that the Millennium is to be understood of a personal reign of Christ, in a state of immortality; but of that glorious *rest* which the church will enjoy after the destruction of her antichristian enemies. Under this view, therefore, I shall now attend to the description given of it.

Ver. 4—6. These thrones correspond with the account in Dan. vii., where, after the power of the little horn is broken, it follows, "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, was given to the people of the saints of the Most High." Stations of importance both in the world and in the church, will be filled by righteous men. Righteousness therefore will flow as a river, and corruption and violence will recede before it. The public mind will favor this course of things. Thus it is that wars and oppressions, and all other disorders, will in a great measure subside. Every thing being done on Christian principles, Christ will reign. "God's way will be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations. The peoples shall be glad and sing for joy, for the Lord will judge them righteously."—Psalm lxxvii.

The "judgment given unto them, and to

the souls that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus," denotes that God will now vindicate their characters, and avenge their wrongs. This appears to be the meaning in chap. xi. 18 and xviii. 20. The vengeance poured upon the antichristian party is in the former of these passages called *judging the dead*, because it vindicates them and the cause in which they suffered, and avenges them on their adversaries. Thus it will be during the Millennium. The cause in which the martyrs have suffered will then triumph: and, while the names of their persecutors will rot in execration, their labors will be in request, and their characters embalmed in the memory of mankind. It is thus, I conceive, that the martyrs will "live and reign with Christ a thousand years."

The antichristian party, on the other hand, called "the rest of the dead," or the "remnant" that escaped from the battle in which "the beast and the false prophet were taken, were slain with the sword of him that sat on the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth." In other words, they will become as dead men during the whole of the millennial period. They would die *as a body* in that they had no successors to stand up in their place, and *as individuals*, if any remained, would be unable to impede the progress of the gospel. After this their leader being let loose, and permitted to make one more desperate effort, they will then "live again," though it will be but for a short season.

"This (adds the sacred writer) is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." Those who consider the reign of Christ personal understand this of the resurrection of the bodies of the righteous, which they suppose will be a thousand years before that of the wicked. A "first resurrection" doubtless implies a second, as much as a "second death" implies a first: but, as the first and second deaths are different in their nature, so may the first and second resurrections. I question if there be any proof of the corporeal resurrection of the righteous being prior in order of time to that of the wicked. The only passage that I recollect to have seen alleged for it is 1 Thes. iv. 16: "And the dead in Christ shall rise *first*." It is not, however, in respect of the resurrection of the wicked that they are said to rise *first*, but of the change of the living saints: for it follows, "*then* we who are alive, and remain, shall be caught up," &c. The context says nothing of the wicked, or of their resurrection. The resurrection of the righteous being mentioned *alone*, or without that of the wicked, does



not prove that the one will be prior to the other. If it prove any thing concerning the wicked, it would seem to be that there will be no resurrection of them: but, knowing from other Scriptures that there will be a resurrection "both of the just and the unjust," we do not draw this inference; nor have we any ground for drawing the other.

The "first resurrection" appears to me to be no other than *the Millennium itself*, to which all that is said of it will apply. During this glorious period, the church will have its Pauls and Peters and Johns over again. Men will be raised up who will go forth in the spirit and power of those worthies, as much as John the Baptist did in the spirit and power of Elias. Thus the apostles and martyrs will, as it were, be raised from their graves and live again upon the earth.

The *blessedness* pronounced upon him that hath a part in it is expressive of the happiness of those times. The idea is the same as that in chap. xix. 9, "Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb;"—and that in Dan. xii. 12, "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five-and-thirty days!" Each of these passages refers to the same period. If a blessing was pronounced on those who saw the early part of gospel times, much more on those who shall enjoy the latter. It were not enough however to *exist* in those times: to be blessed we must have "a part" in all that is going on; and in order to this we must be "holy." Otherwise, God might work a work in our days which we should not believe, but despise it, and wonder, and perish!

The *first* resurrection supposes a second, and which seems to be that of the just and the unjust. In this the wicked shall be raised to die a second death; but over the followers of Christ the second death shall have no power. As a pledge of their victory, they are already made priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign in spiritual prosperity from generation to generation, for the space of a thousand years.

## DISCOURSE XXIX.

THE FALLING AWAY—THE END OF THE WORLD—THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD—AND THE LAST JUDGMENT.

Rev. xx. 7—15.

VER. 7, 8. It seems almost incredible, after so long and glorious a season of grace, that Satan should so recover his influence in the world as that the number of his adherents should become "as the sand of the sea!" Yet thus it is. What is ordinarily called the religion of a people becomes a sort of na-

tional habit, to which they are attached from generation to generation. But it is not thus with true religion. There is nothing in it suited to the temper of mind with which men are born into the world. If therefore the Holy Spirit be aggrieved, and withdraw his influence but from one generation, it will be like that which succeeded the times of Joshua, that "knew not the Lord." If in such a state of things Satan be permitted to ply with his temptations, he is certain to be successful.

"The four quarters of the earth" prior to this must have been evangelized by the gospel; but the dragon being let loose deceives them; not by any new superstition, like that of Popery; for, as to the beast and the false prophet, they will long since have gone to perdition. It may be by a persecuting infidelity, the spirit inspired by the dragon himself, that this last effort will be made. Having seen so much of Christianity in the world, the hearts of the wicked will rise against it, and be so far "deceived" by the Wicked One as to imagine themselves capable of extirpating it from the earth.

The name given to the enemies of Christ is borrowed from the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of Ezekiel, where mention is made of Gog and Magog. It does not appear however that the prophecy of Ezekiel and John refer to the same period; but that the language is merely allusive. Ezekiel's Gog and Magog seem to refer to a combination among the nations against the house of Israel, *soon after their restoration to their own land and their conversion to Christ*, and which will be prior to or at the commencement of the Millennium: but the Gog and Magog army of John is "after the thousand years are expired." The meaning may be, that, like as the nations will combine against restored and converted Israel, so will the whole world of the ungodly combine to exterminate Christianity from the earth: and, as the one would issue in the utter overthrow of the assailants, so would the other.

Ver. 9, 10. As there is nothing in the account which intervenes between this and the resurrection of the dead, the "fire that cometh down from God out of heaven" may be no other than the general conflagration itself, spoken of by the apostles Peter and Paul—"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.—The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."—2 Pet. iii. 10; 2 Thes. i. 8.

And now the grand mover of all the mischief which has taken place in the world is



not merely bound for a season, as before, but cast into perdition, where his agents, the beast and the false prophet, are. There is no mention of *their* being "tormented," because they as political bodies were incapable of it; but of *him* it is said he "shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." Perdition to them will be oblivion; but to him a state of everlasting punishment.

Ver. 11—15. A more impressive description of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment, is scarcely in the power of language. The words are simple, but the sentiments exceedingly sublime. "The language is so plain (says Mr. BLACKWELL) as not to need, and so majestic and grand as to exceed, commentary or paraphrase." But it is not for us to stand admiring the language till we overlook the event itself.

Lo, the dead, both "small and great, stand before God!" Young and old, rich and poor, all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. None are so insignificant as to be overlooked; none so mighty as to escape: the governors and the governed, the parent and the child, the master and the servant, the oppressor and the oppressed, the preacher and the hearer, all must give an account of themselves to God!

Men, owing to the imperfection of their knowledge, and of their memories, make use of "books:" but God's infinite knowledge requires no such assistance. It is merely in allusion to human proceedings that this is spoken. His memory is itself the book from which he will judge the world.

Believing sinners are justified by grace: but both believers and unbelievers will be judged "according to their works." Those who have sinned without the light of revelation will be judged by the light of nature. Those who have sinned against revelation will be judged by it, according to the light they had, or might have had. Believers themselves, though not dealt with according to their deserts, (for they will "obtain mercy of the Lord in that day!") yet their works will be censured or approved according to what they were. Their sinful works will be burnt up, though they themselves are saved; and as to their good works, though there be nothing in them deserving eternal life, or furnishing the least ground for boasting, yet will they be admitted as evidences in their favor.—Matt. xxv. 31—40.

There have been many days of judgment, as it were, in miniature, but this will be universal. Whether men have died at sea, or on land; and whatever became of their bodies, whether slain in battle, devoured by beasts of prey, or decently interred in their graves, all will rise and be judged.—Ver. 13.

"Death and hell (or the grave) were cast into the lake of fire." Death and the grave are things which belong to time, and which, as rivers are lost in the ocean, will now be

swallowed up in eternity. Prior to the day of judgment the ungodly were confined under their power as in a prison: but having received their doom they shall not be remanded thither, but shall go away into everlasting punishment. "This is the second death." Into this dreadful abyss all will be cast, as the just punishment of their sins, excepting those whose names are "written in the book of life." An interest in the salvation of Christ is the only security against eternal death.

## DISCOURSE XXX.

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH,  
WITH THE NEW JERUSALEM.

Rev. xxi. xxii. 1—5.

CH. xxi. We have seen, in the foregoing chapter, the end of the world and the last judgment, even that fearful issue of things described by the apostle Peter: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up."—But as the same apostle adds, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for *new heavens* and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;" so in this chapter, and the first five verses of the next, we find an ample description of them.

What then are we to understand by this "new heaven and new earth," this "new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven," and this "pure river of the water of life," which is supposed to flow in the midst of it? Some have considered it as only a more particular account of the Millennium. But to this it is objected—*First*: The Millennium precedes the last judgment, whereas the new heavens and the earth follow it. *Secondly*: The Millennium was for a limited time; but this is "forever and ever."—Ch. xxii. 5. *Thirdly*: Under the Millennium the dragon is only bound for a season, and afterwards loosed; but here there is no dragon nor enemy of any kind. The devil will have been cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, to be tormented day and night forever and ever (ch. xx. 10;) "and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."—Ver. 4.

For these reasons others have considered it as no other than *the heavenly state*.\* Yet it seems singular that the heavenly state should be introduced as a subject of *prophecy*. It is doubtless an object of *promise*, but prophecy seems rather to respect events in the world in which we dwell than in the world

\* LOWMAN—HOPKINS on the Millennium, p. 48.

to come. Whatever is meant by the glorious state here described, the *earth*, as purified by the conflagration, is the scene of it. The whole of what is said, instead of describing the heaven of heavens, represents the glory of that state as "coming down upon the earth."—Ver. 1—4. The truth appears to me to be this: it is a representation of heavenly glory in so far as that glory relates to the state of the earth on which we dwell; which, instead of being the stew of the mother of harlots, shall become the seat of "the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The earth will not be annihilated by fire any more than it was by water. It will be purified from sin and all its effects. The generations of a corrupt race of creatures having terminated, it will become the perfect and perpetual abode of righteousness. The creation has long been subjected to the "vanity" of supplying its creator's enemies with the means of carrying on their rebellion against him. Under this "bondage of corruption" it has "groaned and travailed," as it were in pain, longing to be delivered. And now the period is arrived. The liberation of the sons of God from the power of the grave shall be the signal of deliverance to the whole creation.—Rom. viii. 19—23.

It is not the object of the Holy Spirit to tell us what the heavenly glory is, but rather *what this world shall become, in opposition to what it now is*. This opposition is preserved throughout the description. We have read of Babylon; not that in Chaldea, but a *new* Babylon: here we read of Jerusalem; not that in Palestine, but a *new* Jerusalem—of a city by whose delicacies the merchants of the earth were made rich; now of another city in the light of which "the nations of them that are saved shall walk, and to which kings shall bring their glory and honor"—of a troubled "sea," whence arose those monsters which were the plagues of the earth; now of there being "no more sea"—of the "great whore that sat upon many waters;" now of "the bride the Lamb's wife"—of "great tribulations out of which the saints of God have had to come;" now of "all tears being wiped from their eyes, and of death and sorrow and crying and pain having passed away"—finally, of "a golden cup full of abominations and filthiness;" but now of the "pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," together with the "fruits of the tree of life, which bears twelve kinds of fruit, and yields its fruit every month."

As the new Jerusalem is denominated "the bride, the Lamb's wife," all that is said of her as a *city*, from ver. 10—27, though couched in highly figurative language, is descriptive of the church triumphant. In this, as in many other places, there is a reference

to the prophecies of Ezekiel (ch. xlvi. 31—34,) though the events predicted are not always the same. The city in Ezekiel seems to be the church in a day of great spiritual prosperity; this in a state of immortality. Her high wall denotes her complete security; her twelve gates, on which were inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, denote that none but Israelites indeed, who have the seal of God in their foreheads, will enter into it; her twelve foundations may refer to the doctrine of the apostles on which she stands; the pearls and precious stones with which she is adorned are her spiritual riches and glory; there being "no temple, nor sun, nor moon," denotes that there will be no need of those means of grace which we now attend upon; what we now receive mediately we shall then receive immediately; finally, the nations of the saved walking in the light of it may allude to the interest which surrounding nations take in a metropolitan city, and denotes that the saved, who have been gathered from all nations, will rejoice in the honor that God will have bestowed upon his church.

To complete the description of the city, and to finish the prophecy, we must consider the first five verses of the twenty-second chapter in connection with the foregoing.

Ch. xxii. 1—5. There is doubtless an allusion in these verses to the waters of the sanctuary, and the trees of life, described in Ezekiel xlvi. 1—12. Both Ezekiel and John make mention of a city—of a river—of trees growing upon the banks of it—and of the fruit thereof being for meat, and the leaf for medicine. Ezekiel's waters flowed from the temple, near the altar; those of John out of "the throne of God and of the Lamb." The city is doubtless the same in both; but I conceive at different periods. Ezekiel's city had a temple, but that of John, as we have seen, had no temple; for "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." The former therefore describes the church in her latter-day glory; the latter in a state of perfection—and which answers to the promise in ch. ii. 7, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

### DISCOURSE XXXI.

ATTESTATIONS TO THE TRUTH OF THE PROPHECY, &c.

Rev. xxii. 6—21.

WE have gone through the prophecy: all that remains consists of attestations, directions, invitations, and warnings concerning it.

Ver. 6. Such is the solemn attestation of the *angel* to the truth of all that he had

made known to the apostle. He had received it from the son of God, even the Lord God of the holy prophets, who had sent by him to signify it unto his servant John.—Ch. i. 1.

Ver. 7. After the attestation of the angel follows that of *him that sent him*. The “coming of Christ” refers to his second appearing. His declaring that this would be “quickly” is declaring that the things which had been foretold should soon be accomplished. Meanwhile they would be a guide to the faithful, and a blessing should attend those who adhered to them.

Ver. 8. This is the attestation of the *writer*. He not only saw and heard these things, but such was their effect on his mind that on one occasion he conceived the angel who revealed them to him to have been the Son of God himself, and therefore fell down to worship him. Some have expressed surprise that the apostle, after the angel had once refused his adoration, should offer it a second time: but it appears to me that what is here related is merely a repetition of what was said and done before.—Ch. xix. 10. He first tells of his having “seen” the things that were to be seen, and “heard” the things that were to be heard; and now of his having been so overcome by them as to suppose the angel from whom they proceeded to be the Son of God, and of course to have fallen down to worship him. The design of the repetition is merely to add weight to the attestation.

Ver. 10—16. He who speaketh in these verses is not the angel, but the Son of God himself, whose speech is resumed from verse 7. The eighth and ninth verses are a parenthesis, in which the writer expresses his own feelings. He who in verse 7 said, “Behold, I come quickly,” here adds, “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.” As if he should say, Do not conceal, but declare them, for they are things of immediate concern.—To this is added a solemn declaration of the near approach of that period when the characters of men should be unalterably fixed. Let the persecutors and corrupters of the gospel know that there is no change but on earth, no Saviour nor Sanctifier beyond the grave. Let the righteous know also, who have faithfully adhered to him through all the temptations and persecutions of the world, that the time draws nigh when their conflicts shall be ended, and they shall be immutably confirmed in righteousness and true holiness. And now the solemn warning of his near approach is repeated, accompanied with a declaration that “his reward is with him, and that he will give every man according as his work shall be.” The character assumed by the Judge, that of “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last,” while it as-

certainly his proper divinity, conveys an impressive idea of the proceedings of that day. It is equal to saying, He that shall judge the world will be possessed of a divine as well as of a human nature; and, where God is judge himself, the heavens will declare his righteousness,—Blessed shall they be in that day who have “done his commandments,” or who, amidst the temptations and persecutions of the world, have kept his sayings. All the blessedness contained in partaking of “the tree of life,” and of the glory of “the new Jerusalem,” shall be theirs.—On the other hand, “dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie,” are “without.” Nor does this description appear to refer to ordinary sinners, of which the world is full, but rather to the *enemies of the gospel, and the corrupters of pure religion*. Thus “dogs” denote false teachers; “sorcerers” those who have been employed in drawing away mankind by the lures of the mother of harlots; “whoremongers” those who have committed spiritual fornication with her, or her daughters; “murderers” those who have entered into her persecuting spirit; “idolaters” those who have gone into the worship of saints and images; and “he that loveth and maketh a lie” is one whose heart favoring false doctrine, has employed himself in framing and propagating it.—See chap. xxi. 8.

The Lord Jesus, having from the 10th to the 16th verse addressed himself to the apostle, here turns to the churches, assuring them that all which was revealed in the foregoing prophecy was for their use. “I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches.” Nor was it to those only which were then in being, but to all the churches of succeeding ages. The things contained in this prophecy therefore are a message from Christ in his glorified state to us. And, as in reference to his second coming he assumed the character of “the first and the last,” here he is “the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star,” which names are descriptive of Him who is God in our nature, and whose coming will introduce an everlasting day of light, and joy, and gladness.

Ver. 17—21. Christ does not only assume a name suited to the revelations which had been made, but draws from them the most affecting invitations and solemn warnings; and with these the book concludes.

Reader, as if he should say, You have read of “the water of life:” you are invited to “come,” and drink “freely” of it. You have read or heard of “the Spirit” that spake to the churches: he speaks also to you individually, and the sum of what he saith is, “come.” You have heard of the



“bride,” and of the glories prepared for her: she does not covet to enjoy these things by herself, but joins with the Spirit of inspiration in inviting you to “come.” Nay, every one that “heareth” and believeth these things is warranted to invite his neighbor. And let every one who has any regard for his own soul avoid the cup of the mother of harlots, and come to these living waters. There need be no hesitation on the score of qualifications, for it is free to all who are willing to receive it.

Know also that the words of this prophecy are sacred. If any man add to them, God will add to him its plagues; and, if any man take away from them, God will take away from him whatever he may have expected to receive of its blessings. He who testifieth these things saith, the third time, “SURELY, I COME QUICKLY.”

To this solemn testimony of Christ the apostle adds his cordial “Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus!” And, as he had introduced the prophecy with an address to the seven churches, so he concludes it with the apostolic benediction: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

## CONCLUSION.

THE reader may ask, What are the signs of the present times?—What judgments may yet be expected to befall the nations?—and, What cheering prospects await the church?

If the outlines of the foregoing commentary be just, we are now under the period of the vials, or that space of time which commences with the sounding of the seventh angel, and terminates in the Millennium. This is a period which appears to be marked in the prophecy; particularly in chap. x. 7, “But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.” That is, in the times in which the seven vials shall be poured out the great designs of heaven concerning the overthrow of the papal Antichrist, and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, as foretold by the prophets, shall be accomplished.

This is the period in which, according to Daniel, “The thrones are pitched down, and the Ancient of days doth sit—in which they shall take away the dominion of the little horn, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.” We see not yet the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; but we see that which is both preparatory and introductory to it.

Moreover, If the exposition of the vials by the trumpets, adopted from Dr. GILL, be

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just, we are as yet but under the second vial, which for several years has been pouring out upon the sea, or the maritime papal nations of Spain and Portugal; and, notwithstanding what has taken place, it may be suspected that much of it is yet to come.

Much has been written on the commencement and consequent termination of the 1260 years assigned in prophecy for the continuance of the antichristian power. If the former could be ascertained, the latter would follow of course. Some think that they have already terminated, and others that they are on the point of doing so. But of this I think we may be certain, that unless the vials are all poured out, to which few if any will pretend, the reign of the papal Antichrist cannot have terminated, seeing they are the appointed means of its destruction. The finishing of “the mystery of God” (chap. x. 7) is the same as the termination of the 1260 years, as is evident from the corresponding passage in Dan. xii. 7, where the angel swears that it shall be for “a time, times, and a half.” The pouring out of the last vial is the termination of the 1260 years: accordingly, a great voice is then heard out of the temple of heaven saying, “IT IS DONE.”—Chap. xvi. 17.

It may be questioned, however, whether the precise time of the commencement and termination of this period be not purposely concealed from us. It does not appear to be the design of prophecy so to fix the time of future events as that we should know them beforehand, to a day, or a month, or a year. It deserves, moreover, to be particularly noticed, that those prophecies in which an exact number of years is specified are generally, if not always, covered with obscurity in respect of the time of their accomplishment, and in some cases have appeared to have had different accomplishments. Seventy years, for instance, were determined for the Babylonish captivity; but, as the captives were carried away and restored at different times, it was hard to say when it began, and consequently when it ended. From the first captivity in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, when Daniel and others were carried to Babylon, to the first restoration by the decree of Cyrus, was seventy years; that is, from A. M. 4108 to 4178.—2 Chron. xxxvi. 5—7, 22, 23. From the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, in the reign of Zedekiah, to the decree of Darius to restore it, was seventy years; that is, from A. M. 4126 to 4196.—2 Chron. xxxvi. 14—21, Ezra vi. And from the captivity by Nebuzaradan, which finished the desolations, to the dedication of the second temple, which completed the restoration, was seventy years; that is, from A. M. 4130 to 4200.—Jer. lii. 30; Ezra vi. 16—22. See the Tables in Prieaux.

Again, seventy weeks of years were de-

terminated for the coming of Messiah; but things were so ordered that though the weeks were well understood to mean 490 years, yet the exact time of their commencement was not understood. A general expectation of him certainly did prevail about the time that he appeared, but that was all that was gathered from the prophecy, and might be all that it was intended should be gathered. Those who entertained carnal views of his kingdom were so blind as not to know it when it did appear. The pharisees demanded of him when the kingdom of God should come. "The kingdom of God cometh (answered he) not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is among you!" As if he should say, The kingdom of God will not, like the kingdoms of this world, rise out of turbulence, intrigue and bloodshed, nor be accompanied with ostentation and parade. Imperceptible and gradual in its operations, it comes when you little expect it. You shall not be able to point to the place and say, Lo it is here, or lo it is there! Nay, little as you may think of it, it is already in the midst of you!

In some such manner as this we may look for the expiration of the years of Antichrist, and the coming of the kingdom of Christ in these latter days. While curiosity is gaping after wonders, and demanding, When shall these things be? behold it will be amongst us! The antichristian cause rose gradually, and will probably fall gradually. "They shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end." Its temporal power has already been shaken and diminished; but it is reserved for the battle of Armageddon, that "great day of God Almighty," under the sixth vial, to accomplish its overthrow. And when this is done the seventh will purify the moral atmosphere of the world from its abominable principles, and so make way for the Millennium.

When two of Christ's disciples were inquiring after the *honors* of his kingdom, they were asked, "Are ye able to drink of the *cup* that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the *baptism* that I am baptized with." He would himself have to suffer before he reigned, and they must expect to suffer with him. It is true his sufferings would be but for a short time, and so might theirs; but they required to be the immediate object of their attention. Something similar to this may be expected in what is before us. Some commentators have supposed the *slaughter of the witnesses* in ch. xi. to intimate as much as this. I have already given my reasons for understanding that part of the prophecy of past events: but there are other passages which seem to give us to expect that the adversary will not expire without a deadly struggle. Thus towards the close of the 1200 years, in which the church

is described as being in the wilderness, the dragon is represented as casting out of his mouth a "flood" after her, and as making war with her seed.—Ch. xii. 15—17. Previously to "the harvest and the vintage"—which synchronizing with the sixth vial, describe the utter overthrow of the antichristian powers—the *patience* of the saints is celebrated, and a blessing pronounced on the dead that *die in the Lord*.—Ch. xiv. 12, 13. Previously to the battle of Armageddon, the kingdoms are gathered together *to fight against God*.—Ch. xvi. 14. The beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, are gathered together to *make war* with him that sat on the horse, and against his army, and perish in an attempt to crush them.—Ch. xix. 11—21.

If these events signify *war* between the nations, as possibly they may, yet it will be a war directed against Christ and true religion, and in which the church of Christ may expect a sharp persecution; and this not merely from one, but all parties, who, like Herod and Pilate, will be made friends, and unite in such a work as this. We may think that, from the repeated blows which popery has received on the continent, it will never be able to persecute to any considerable degree again; that from the antipathy between its adherents and the patrons of infidelity they can never again coalesce; and that, from the dishonor which public opinion attaches to intolerance, persecution can never more lift up its head: but we may be mistaken in all these particulars. If the temporal power of popery has diminished on the continent, its spiritual power has increased in Britain.\* If papists and the avowed enemies of religion have fallen out, it has been chiefly on political subjects, a union in which would bring them together again. We have lived to see both whigs and tories unite in opposing a free toleration of Christian Missionaries; and an English writer of note, who professes to be "the enthusiastic friend of freedom," though he wishes the "Catholics the utmost degree of religious liberty," yet proposes in respect of the *evangelical party*, "by well-concerted and well-applied regulations, to *restrain* them!"† The spirit of the beast and the false prophet certainly can and will unite with that of the dragon in the war with God Almighty.

It is a consolation that this persecution, or this war against religion, will be the last, and of short duration: this very effort of the enemy will prove his final overthrow: our immediate inquiry, however, seems to be, Are we able, previously to our entrance on

\* Recent events have also revived its temporal power. N. B. Written in 1814.

† Characters of the late Charles James Fox. By Philopatris Varvicensis. *Eclectic Review* for December, 1809, p. 1128.

the millennial reign of Christ, to drink of his cup, and to be baptized with his baptism?

But, though our Lord checked the aspiring minds of his disciples concerning his kingdom by presenting to them a time of trial, yet he did not fail to cheer them with the promise of glorious things beyond it. "A woman (saith he) when she is in travail hath sorrow because her hour is come: but, as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." The glory of the Millennium will more than balance all the trials during the 1260 years of antichristian usurpation. Nor shall we have to wait for the Millennium, nor even for the ruin of the antichristian cause, ere we see glorious times. Two hundred years have been thought to be the utmost point to which the pouring out of the vials can extend: they may terminate in less time: but, if not, there is great encouragement for the friends of Christ in the promised progress of his cause *during this period*. We shall not have to wait for the Millennium, I say, ere we see glorious days in respect of the success of the gospel. The seventh trumpet, though it includes the vials, and in this view is a woe-trumpet, yet is introductory of good tidings to the church. At the same time that her enemies are bleeding under the strokes of heaven, the "kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." The pouring out of the vials will be to the Millennium that which the wars of David were to the pacific reign of Solomon. The servants of Christ may have to encounter great opposition; but, as "the Lord prospered David whithersoever he went," so he will prosper them. Paganism, Mahomedism, popery, and infidelity, shall fall before them. Nor shall the obstinacy of Judaism maintain its ground. The wall shall be built, though it be in troublous times. What short of this can be intimated by the "angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people"—and *this before the fall of the antichristian Babylon?*—Ch. xiv. 6—8.

What else can be meant by the song preceding the pouring out of the vials—"All nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest?"—Ch. xv. 3, 4. The judgments referred to are those of the vials, or "seven last plagues" (ch. xv. 1); the effect of which on the nations will be to induce them to "come and worship" before God. They shall so "manifestly" appear to be the judgments of God against the antichristian powers, that the nations will be deeply impressed by the

conviction; and, by the concurring influence of the Holy Spirit and the "everlasting gospel," will be subdued to the obedience of faith.

To the same purpose is that remarkable passage in Isa. xxvi. 9, "When thy judgments are in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." "The church under the gospel dispensation," says an able writer, "is in this and the preceding chapter the *principal* subject of prophecy. Zion is introduced singing. A song is always in the prophecies a symbol of the enlargement of the church. In verses 17, 18, she complains of feeble and ineffectual efforts in extending the interests and kingdom of her Redeemer: 'We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.' She receives in answer the consoling promise of a period when she shall make vigorous and successful exertions, and no longer complain of abortive labors; when converts numerous as the morning dew shall join her standard: 'Thy dead shall live.'—'Awake and sing—thy dew is as the dew of herbs.' No season or time is particularly ascertained when this promise will be accomplished; but another event is foretold, and immediately connected with this. A judgment, a singular judgment, inflicted as the punishment of a peculiar and enormous crime, is mentioned. The event is represented as inevitable; the Lord's people may not pray for its removal, but are directed to fly to their chambers, and hide themselves until the indignation be overpast. 'For behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain!' The terms here used, compared with parallel expressions in the Revelation, put it beyond a doubt that the blood of the martyrs is intended, and the punishment predicated is the avenging of that blood. This is introduced as a coetaneous event with the enlargement of the church. Whenever that precious blood begins to be avenged, then Zion will sing of mercy as well as judgment; then a new and prosperous ministry will arise in the church, and her borders be widely extended."\*

If the "punishment" referred to at the close of the twenty-sixth chapter of Isaiah be that which is appointed for the antichristian Babylon for her having shed the blood of the martyrs, in which not only this writer but almost all our ablest commentators are agreed, the ninth verse doubtless refers to the same events. The pouring out of the vials are the "judgments" which while they are in the earth the inhabitants of the world

\* Dr. LIVINGSTONE'S Sermon on Rev. xiv. 6, before the New York Miss. Soc. April 3, 1804.



will learn righteousness. Many judgments have been in the earth without producing this effect; but the Lord will in this instance accompany them with his word and Spirit, and so render them effectual to salvation.

The same things in substance are taught us in Rev. xix. 11—19, where, prior to the last struggle with the beast and the false prophet, Christ is described as “going forth upon a white horse, and as being followed by the armies of heaven on white horses.” And when their enemies, provoked by their success, shall gather together in order to oppose their progress, they themselves shall fall to rise no more.

The *period of the vials* being a season of WARFARE, it is in this, rather than in the Millennium itself, that we are to look for the most distinguished VICTORIES over error, superstition, and irreligion. The Millennium is a *reign*; but a reign presupposes possession of the throne, and that, in cases where it has been previously occupied by an enemy, a *victory*. It is in this period therefore that we are to look for the overthrow of paganism, Mahomedism, popery, and infidelity; and towards the close of it may expect the malignant opposition of the Jews to give place to the gospel. The glorious millennial rest will not commence while such an enemy remains unsubdued. The marriage-supper of the Lamb must include the children of Abraham in its train. The return of this long-lost prodigal will heighten the joy of the feast, and be as life from the dead.

Supposing the period of the vials to have commenced within the last five-and-twenty years, let it be considered *whether the aspect of the times do not correspond with what we are given to expect*. It must of necessity be a period of *unprecedented wars*; and, if those wars are designed of God to avenge the blood of the martyrs, it may be expected they should have a kind of special direction given them towards the countries where that blood has been principally shed. How far this is applicable to late events it is easy to judge. It must also be a period of *extraordinary prayer and unprecedented exertion for the spread of the gospel*. It is during this period that “the kingdoms of the world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.” But the accomplishment of such mighty moral changes is not to be expected by any other than the means above mentioned. When the Lord buildeth up Zion he regards the prayer of the destitute; and when his servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor her dust, then the time to favor her, even the set time, is come.—Ps. cii. 14—17. Had we been more importunate in prayer we might have been more successful; but, with all our imperfections, the prayer of faith has been presented and heard! God hath given the word, and, compared

with former times, great is the company of those that publish it. Can we overlook that providence which has been raising up numerous societies and plans, some for teaching the poor to read, and others for furnishing them with books, especially with the oracles of God? Ought we to overlook the translation of the Scriptures into the various languages of the east; or the circulation of them through the earth in such a degree as perhaps was never before known? Can we be inattentive to the desire after evangelical preaching which prevails, not in one or two countries only, but almost every where? If our Lord concluded, from the flocking of the Samaritans to hear the word, that “the fields were white already to harvest,” are we not warranted to draw the same conclusion?

Let us observe the state of the public mind a little before the coming of Christ, and compare it with its present state. “The people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts whether John were the-Christ or not.” And who that is not blind to the operations of God’s hand does not muse in his heart whether the extraordinary changes which have of late years taken place in the world do not indicate something great to be pending—whether, notwithstanding the many vendors of false prophecies, and mistaken comments on the true, there be not a body of genuine and important prophecies fulfilling and about to be fulfilled—whether some of the convulsions among the nations may not issue in what is foretold of the restoration of the Jews—and, finally, whether all that is going on be not a preparing the way of the Lord, and making straight his paths?

Look at the blessing already attending the various attempts to propagate the gospel. To some it may appear a “day of small things;” but, if God does not despise it, it will increase. Already have we been provoked to jealousy by Hindoos and Hottentots: nor is this all; look at our fleets and armies: did we ever before hear of so many lovely groups of Christian people amongst them? It would seem as if God had begun with these publicans and sinners to shame the rest of the nation.

*Finally*: If these be not sufficient, look at the state of mind amongst the *enemies* of religion. Do not their hearts fail them, like those of the Canaanites before Joshua and his army? Why do the brahmans tremble for their gods? and why are practical unbelievers afraid of godliness, whether in or out of the establishment? It is pleasant to observe, while endeavouring to stigmatize it under the name of “Methodism,” how despondingly they confess their inability to arrest its progress.\* Surely these are tokens for good to the church of Christ.

\* See Edinburgh Review, No. XXII., p. 241, Art. Methodism.

On the period of the vials being closed, that of the Millennium will commence. "The Lord gave Solomon *rest* round about from all his enemies;" and the Lord will now give rest to his people from theirs. It is probably in allusion to his quiet and pacific reign that that of the Messiah is denominated a *rest*—"His rest shall be glorious."—Isa. xi. 10. Then wars and oppressions will cease; then the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold of the image, being broken to pieces, and become like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, the stone that smote it will have become a great mountain, and shall fill the whole earth; then the judgment having sat upon the little horn, and his dominion being taken away, "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. Amen."

ADDED IN 1814.

The above was written in 1810 or 1811, since which time the tide of human affairs has taken another turn. A mighty change has taken place in Europe, in favor of old establishments, and so in favor of popery. We have seen the inquisition, which had been suppressed in Spain, revived; and the pope, whose temporal power had been taken

away, restored. But, as the foregoing exposition rests not on any hypothesis formed from passing events, so it is not materially affected by them. The direction that things have taken as it relates to the liberation of nations, and their restoration to peace and independence, must needs be grateful to every friend of humanity and justice: and though the papal cause may hereby regain some of its former ascendancy, yet this may be but for a short time, and *that it may be destroyed for ever*. These tides in human affairs may be permitted, as by a flux and reflux of the ocean, to wash away those things which it is the purpose of heaven to destroy. The antichristian power may rise and fall repeatedly before it falls to rise no more. Irrespective of prophecy, it is easy for an observant mind to perceive that, notwithstanding the political advantages which have arisen from recent changes to most of the papal nations, yet they are not at ease. There remains in them the seeds of discontent and of future wars. Look at the state of Spain, in particular.—Popery must be what it always has been, a persecuting enemy of true religion, or nothing. The preponderating powers of Europe, by restoring its authority, and recommending it to exercise a liberal government, suited to the times, have done all perhaps that was in their power towards lengthening out its tranquillity; but it is in vain. **WE WOULD HAVE HEALED BABYLON, they may say, BUT SHE IS NOT HEALED!**

# EXPOSITION

OF THE

## SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

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### SECTION 1.

ON THE BEATITUDES.

Matt. v. 1—12.

VER. 1, 2. We have already had a general account of our Saviour's ministry (iv. 23;) but here the evangelist informs us of his doctrine. Of this the sermon on the mount is an important specimen. Observe, First: The occasion of this sermon—it was on *seeing the multitudes* that he betook himself forthwith to a convenient place to instruct them. Christ never beheld a multitude of people without sentiments of compassion. It was on seeing the Samaritans coming down the hills to hear the word, that he told his disciples *the fields were white already to harvest*, and, like Abraham's servant, refused to eat bread till he told his tale. Secondly: The *place*—*He went up into a mountain*. Mountains were commonly covered, at least in part, with wood. Hence they afforded secrecy and retirement. In, or among, these mountain woods, the defeated forces of the five kings found shelter.—Gen. xiv. 10. Thither also the spies fled and hid themselves three days, when they departed from the house of Rahab the harlot.—Josh. ii. 22. The object of our Saviour was retirement. Seeing multitudes of people who wished to hear him, he drew them away from the interrupting concerns of cities and towns, into a place where all was still, solemn, and impressive. Thirdly: The *posture*—*He sat and taught them*. This is said to have been the usual posture of eminent teachers among the Jews. It certainly was befitting the majesty of this teacher, who taught as one having authority—as a judge, rather than as a counsellor. Fourthly: He spoke in the hearing of all, but with a special respect to *his disciples*.

Not that our Saviour confined his preaching to believers; but *this* discourse seems to have been principally addressed to them. Having lately called his disciples, it was his intention to instil into their minds, at the outset, right sentiments. At the same time, if the *multitudes* mixed faith in hearing, they would be no less profited by it than if it had been immediately addressed to him.

Our Saviour begins his sermon by declaring *who were blessed*; and, considering him as the future judge of the world, an extraordinary importance attaches to his decisions. It is observable, in general, that the characters which he pronounces blessed are not those accounted so by the world: on the contrary, they are such as the world hate, despise, and persecute. On this account all these beatitudes possess the air of paradox. It is also observable that it was our Saviour's manner of preaching to exhibit *marks* or *signs of grace*, and to pronounce those, and those only, who possess them, in a blessed state. The offer of salvation was made to every creature; but the blessings were promised only to believers. Some have pretended that marks and signs are no certain evidences of grace; and that this is a legal and dangerous way of preaching, as tending to lead men to look into themselves for comfort; but, so far as comfort proceeds from evidence of our interest in the divine favor, it must imply a consciousness of our being the subjects of those spiritual dispositions to which the promises are made. It is true the first genuine comfort which a soul possesses is by directly believing in Christ; or from a view of what he is, rather than from any thing in himself: for it is impossible that he should be conscious of any good in himself, till he has believed in him. I may add, it is equally true that the richest consolations to



a believer are derived from the same source ; namely, from beholding the glory of Christ, and of salvation through his name. But there is no contradiction between this and his knowing himself to be interested in that salvation, by an habitual consciousness of his possessing those dispositions, or sustaining those characters, to which it is promised. "Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him." If our hearts condemn us of hypocrisy, much more will the all-searching eye of God : but, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.—1 John iii. 19—21.

Ver. 3. The first of these beatitudes is pronounced on the *poor in spirit*.—Many seem to think that because they are poor in circumstances, or great sufferers in this world, therefore they shall be blessed in another : but this will prove a fatal mistake. Nor is every kind of poverty of spirit that which the Lord approves. The Laodiceans were censured for being poor ; and the same censure falls on multitudes in the present day. It is not what we are, but what we are *in our own estimation*, that is here intended ! To be poor in spirit is the opposite of being proud in spirit, or rich and full in our own eyes. He who trusts in his own righteousness, his own wisdom, his own strength, or his own inherent graces, has this lesson yet to learn : and, let me add, it is a lesson that none can learn but he that is taught of God. A lowly spirit is one of the most difficult things in the world to assume, where it is not possessed.—The blessing pronounced is suited to encourage them under the contempt of the present world, and to teach them to bear it with patience. An everlasting kingdom awaits them ; and even in the present state they have received a kingdom that shall not be moved.

Ver. 4. The next blessing is on the *mourner*.—The mourning to which Christ promises *comfort* must be restricted to that which is spiritual ; as mourning on account of our own sins, or the sins of others, or for any thing by which the name of the Lord is dishonored, or his cause injured or impeded. We are hereby taught, First : The folly of measuring the profitableness of preaching by the degrees of comfort which it affords us. We may not go to hear in a condition for the gospel to comfort us. Conviction may be more necessary for us than comfort. If the gospel comfort those that mourn, that is all which it professes to do. Secondly : The connection between godly sorrow and gospel joy. We have heard much of the gospel containing comfort for the *mere sinner* ; and if, by the mere sinner, be meant one that has nothing to plead but the mercy of God, through the atonement, like the publican in the parable, it is for such, and only such, that the gospel contains consolation.

But if, by the mere sinner, be meant the impenitent though distressed sinner, it has no comfort for such in their present state. Repentance is necessary to forgiveness, in the same sense as faith is necessary to justification ; for it is not possible for a sinner either to embrace the Saviour, or prize the consolations of the gospel, while insensible to the evil of sin. There is no grace in the gospel, but upon the supposition that God is in the right, and that sin is exceedingly sinful ; and consequently none to be *perceived* or *prized*.

Ver. 5. The next blessing is on the *meek*.—The word signifies *gentle, humble, lowly*. Every grace, however, has its semblance. There is a kind of meekness, as well as of mourning, which is merely natural or constitutional. A lamb-like temper is a blessing, and, however it may be despised by the hectoring spirits of this world, it is highly advantageous to society : but the gentleness of a renewed mind is a different thing, and has the promise of different blessings. Saul of Tarsus was naturally violent : but, being apprehended of Jesus, he came to him, took his yoke, and learned his spirit. This is that spirit which receives the engrafted word ; which insures our being guided in judgment ; which is an ingredient in the wisdom from above ; which submits to God under adverse providences ; which stands aloof from noise, contention, and clamor, and renders our religion still and affectionate ; which, in fine, is the ornament of Christians, and causes them to resemble the myrtle trees that grew in the valley, and had the Lord among them.—But how is it that such characters should have the promise of *inheriting the earth* ? It seems to be supposed that in one respect they have but little of it. But, First : Meekness of spirit is connected with rest to the mind ; and this makes much of a little. The proud and restless do not inherit the earth, though it be in their hand. The humble Christian has far more enjoyment in a cottage than they can have in distressing and dividing the world. "A little with the fear of the Lord is better than great treasure, and trouble therewith." Secondly : The meek ones shall have the rule of the world in God's due time.—Dan. vii. 27. Nor need they lay aside their meekness or engage in revolutionary schemes to accomplish it : God will revolutionize the world, by planting fear in the hearts of princes as well as subjects, and then the work is done ; and Christian principles will govern the nations.

Ver. 6. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness," &c.—It is a truth that the obedience of Jesus unto death, which is the righteousness on account of which believers are justified, is the object of their most intense desire ; but, as this is

less introduced prior to its being actually wrought than afterwards, I doubt not but that the term in this place refers to the universal prevalence of righteousness in the mind and in the world. Unbelievers are hungering and thirsting, but it is after carnal and worldly gratifications. Some thirst for gold, and care not much by what means they obtain it; others may be more scrupulous on this head, yet it is chiefly on account of their own honor. Self, in one shape or other, is the idol in the heart of every sinner. What then is true religion? An earnest desire to do right, and to see righteousness toward God and toward man prevail in the earth. Hence arise the believer's desires for the spread of Christ's kingdom, his sighs for the evils among men, and his secret moans over those of his own heart.—It is a source of great joy that, while those who hunger and thirst after the world are disappointed, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. The way to have our desire is for the mind to be one with the mind of God.

Ver. 7. "Blessed are the merciful," &c.—This character respects our dispositions towards men. It is that kindness and goodness which feels the miseries of others, not only as our fellow-creatures, but as God's creatures, and, it may be, the purchase of the Saviour's blood. There is a principle of compassion in that mutual affection which God has planted in all men, and even in animals towards their kind: and where it is cherished by the grace of God, or even by an enlightened conscience, it is productive of great and good effects to society. The true knowledge of God, as taught among the Israelites, had such an influence upon Ahab and his predecessors that, idolaters as they were, its effects were not wholly obliterated; for the kings of the house of Israel were still known and acknowledged among the heathen as *merciful kings*. The same effects are seen to this day in countries where the gospel is preached, compared with those where it is not preached. This is certainly to the honor of religion, and affords much cause for thankfulness. It must not, however, be confounded with that spirit of which our Saviour speaks. True religion may cherish natural affection, and false religion quench it: but its proper origin is not religion, but creation. That merciful spirit to which Christ annexes the blessing is an effect of the grace of God, or of love written upon the fleshly tables of the heart. Christ was full of compassion; and, as we learn of him, we feel as he felt. An unmerciful spirit is inconsistent with true religion.—Whatever pretences we may make to orthodoxy, or to devotion, if we show no mercy to the poor and the afflicted, we shall on a future day meet with judgment without

mercy. But he who imbibes the merciful spirit of Jesus, and acts upon the principles upon which he acted, shall *obtain mercy*. He shall seldom want a sympathizing friend in this world; and, what is infinitely more, shall obtain mercy of the Lord another day.

Ver. 8. "Blessed are the pure in heart," &c.—The import of this phrase, I take it, is much the same as what we mean by *pure intention*, or *godly simplicity*. It is the opposite of subtily and duplicity. Genuine Christianity lays aside, not only malice, but guile and hypocrisy. It is not enough to be pure in words, nor in outward deportment, and still less to be pure in our own eyes; for all this may consist with inward wickedness. True religion has its seat in the heart, whence are the issues of life.—Purity is a quality but little esteemed in the world. Men bless the subtle, rather than the simple-hearted; but Christ judges otherwise: the one may succeed in his measures, and rise high in things of this life; but the other shall *see God*, and stand accepted in his presence.

Ver. 9. "Blessed are the peace-makers," &c.—As one of the ways in which lust operates is by breeding divisions, contentions, strifes, wars, and the like, and thus diffusing death through every vein of society; so one of the ways in which true religion operates is by preventing, or allaying them. The desire of such persons is not merely to avoid giving or taking offence, and to stand aloof from the quarrels of the neighborhood; but, if possible, by a wise, temperate, and friendly interference, to heal them at an early stage. It is a great blessing to a church, a neighborhood, or a nation, to have such characters among them. There is no calculating the mischiefs which have raged in these different departments of society, and which might have been prevented by listening to a few words from a pacific friend.—The blessedness pronounced on these characters is the honor of being called "the children of God;" and this no doubt because they resemble him. He that seeks peace on pure and honorable principles is of God's mind, acting on the same principles as God acts in reconciling the world to himself through Jesus Christ.

Ver. 10—12. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake," &c.—It is a strong proof of human depravity that men's curses and Christ's blessings should meet on the same persons. Who would have thought that a man could be persecuted and reviled, and have all manner of evil said of him, for righteousness' sake? And do wicked men really hate justice, and love those who defraud and wrong their neighbor? No; they do not dislike righteousness as it respects *themselves*: it is only that species of it which respects God and religion that excites their hatred. If

Christians were content with doing justly, and loving mercy, and would cease from walking humbly with God, they might go through the world, not only in peace, but with applause: but he that will "live *godly in Christ Jesus* shall suffer persecution." Such a life reproves the ungodliness of men, and provokes their resentment. Persecution is not confined to those acts of violence which are sanctioned by law, and affect liberty, property, or life; but extends to slanderous and reproachful language, and every other way in which enmity is expressed. Through the goodness of God we have been long protected from legal persecution; but the enmity of the serpent will find ways of expressing itself. If, from the most disinterested compassion, you warn your wicked neighbors of their danger, you will be called disturbers of the peace; cruelties will be imputed to you of which you are innocent; and even your best actions ascribed to the worst motives. If you model your religion by the word of God, and pay no regard to human establishments any further than as they agree with it, you may expect to be represented as enemies to government, a discontented sort of people, "turning the world upside down." A view of such a state of things, to one that is weak in faith, may appear discouraging; but there is no just cause for being cast down. Only see to it that whatever you suffer be "for righteousness' sake," and that all the evil which is said of you be *false*, and *for Christ's sake*, and, instead of being discouraged, you will have reason to "rejoice and be exceedingly glad." Unbelievers may tell you that this is extravagant and impossible, and that no man can be happy in such circumstances; but it is not so. The primitive Christians entered into the spirit of their Lord's doctrine, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name's sake." When to this is added the promised "kingdom," the "reward in heaven" which awaits those that overcome, miserable as your lot may be accounted by the world, it will be found to be not only preferable to that of your persecutors, but even to that of such Christians as, by yielding in a measure to the world, escape a few of its censures. You have more satisfaction, and consequently more happiness, in this life; and your reward in heaven will be greatly augmented: for, if afflictions in general "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," much more those which we have suffered for righteousness' sake. Every wound received in this warfare will then be a scar of honor: a seed, productive of a harvest beyond all our present conceptions.

## SECTION II.

ON THE CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIAN MINISTERS.

Matt. v. 13—16.

VER. 13. "Ye are the salt of the earth," &c.—This character, I conceive, applies to the disciples, both as Christians and as Christian ministers. There are three things observable.

First: *Their use as a preservative*.—The world is corrupt, and, if left to itself, would in a little time work its own ruin; but as the Lord of hosts had a seed in Israel, who otherwise would have been as Sodom and Gomorrah, so he has a people scattered over the towns, cities, and nations of the earth, who to them are that which salt is to a substance tending to putrefaction. The influence which a few people, who imbibe the gospel and act up to its principles, have upon the consciences and conduct of others, is much beyond calculation. Had the ruling powers of France been friendly to the servants of Christ in the seventeenth century, it might have prevented the horrors of a revolution in the eighteenth; but, having destroyed or banished them, nothing was left to counteract the torrent of infidelity; which, being natural to the carnal mind, and cherished by popery, had before risen to a great height, and now overwhelmed the country. Humble and serious Christians, though often accused of being inimical to civil government, are in reality its best friends; while those governments which persecute them are their own enemies.

Secondly: *Their value as consisting in their savor*.—There are many things which, though useless for one purpose, yet may be very useful for another: but things which, by possessing only one distinguishing property, are designed for a single specific purpose, if that property be wanted, are good for nothing. It is thus with the vine, as to bearing fruit. If other trees were barren, yet their trunks might be applied to various uses: but, if a vine be barren, it is good for nothing but to be burnt.—Ezek. xv. 1—6. The same may be said of salt. Many things which have ceased to be good for food, may yet be useful for manure: but salt, if it once lose its savor, is good for nothing: it is fit for neither the land nor the dunghill. And thus if Christians lose their spirituality, or Christian ministers cease to impart the savor of the heavenly doctrine, of what use are they? of what in the family?—of what in the church?—of what in the world?

Thirdly: *Their irrecoverable condition on having lost their savor*. It is true all things are possible with God; but where persons, after having professed the name of Christ and in some cases preached his word, turn



back, or go into another gospel, there is little hope of them, and indeed none from the ordinary course of things. Salt may recover unsavory meat; but what is to recover unsavory salt?

Ver. 14—16. "Ye are the light of the world," &c.—This character implies that the world, notwithstanding its attainments in science, is in a state of darkness; and that the only true light that is to be found in it is that which proceedeth from Christ. It may seem too much for our Saviour to give that character to his disciples which he elsewhere claims as his own. The truth is, He, as the sun, shines with supreme lustre, and they, as the moon, derive their light from Him, and reflect it on the world. As ministers, it is for them to show unto men the way of salvation; and, as Christians, to set the example of walking in it. On this account they require to be *conspicuous*. There is indeed a modesty in true religion, which, so far as respects ourselves, would induce us to steal through the world, if possible, unnoticed; but this cannot be: Christians being diverse from all people in their principles and pursuits, all eyes will be upon them. They are as "a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid." Their faults, as well as their excellences, will be marked both by friends and enemies. Nor is it desirable it should be otherwise. Light is not intended to be hid, but exposed for the good of those about it. On this account we must even be *concerned* to let our light shine before men; not by any ostentatious display of ourselves, but by a practical and faithful exhibition of the nature and effects of the gospel, by which our heavenly Father is glorified. It is not merely by words, but works, that gospel light is conveyed to the consciences and hearts of men.

There is another saying of our Lord in another place, nearly akin to this, though under a different image. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples." The glory of a husbandman does not arise from his fields or vines bearing fruit, but *much* fruit. A few ears of corn in the one, nearly choked with weeds, or here and there a branch, or a berry, on the other, while the greater part is covered with leaves only, would rather dishonor than honor him. And thus it is in spiritual fruitfulness. A little religion often dishonors God more than none. An undecisive spirit, halting between God and the world, walking upon the confines of good and evil, now seeming to be on the side of God, and now on that of his adversaries, causes his name to be evil spoken of much more than the excesses of the irreligious. Hence we may see the force of the rebuke to Laodicea: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither

cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." It is also intimated that without bearing *much* fruit we are unworthy to be considered as *Christ's disciples*. He was indeed a fruitful bough. His life was filled with the fruits of love to God and man. It behoves us either to imitate his example or forego the profession of his name.

The glory of God being manifested by the good works of his children implies that they are all to be ascribed to him as their proper cause. Though we act, he actuates. A mind set on things too high for it may deny the consistency of this with the free-agency and accountableness of creatures; but the humble Christian will turn it to a better use. "Thou wilt ordain peace for us, for thou hast wrought all our works in us."

### SECTION III.

#### ON THE PERPETUITY AND SPIRITUALITY OF THE MORAL LAW.

Matt. v. 17—32.

VER. 17—19. It might appear to some of our Lord's disciples as if he intended to set aside the religion which had been taught by Moses and the prophets, and to introduce an entirely new state of things. It was true indeed that he would abolish the ceremonial law, and explode all dependence upon the works of any law for acceptance with God, as indeed Moses and the prophets had done before him; but it was no part of his design to set aside the law itself. Being about to correct various corruptions which had obtained among the Jews, he prefaces what he has to say by cautioning them not to misconstrue his design, as though he were setting himself against either Moses or the prophets, neither of whose writings were at variance with his kingdom, but preparatory to it. So far from his having any such design, he, with the most solemn asseveration, declares the law to be of perpetual obligation. Such also was his regard for it that if any one professing to be a minister in his kingdom should break the least of its precepts, and teach others to make light of it, he should be as little in the eyes of his Lord as the precept was in his eyes; while, on the contrary, those ministers who should practise and inculcate every part of it should have his highest approbation.

Ver. 20. Having made these declarations by way of introduction (and to which we may have occasion hereafter to refer,) our Lord proceeds to denounce the system of pharisaical religion, and to exhibit in contrast with it that of Moses and the prophets, which, purified from all corrupt glosses, he recommends to his followers. In general he declares that, "except their righteousness exceed that of the scribes and phari-

sees, they could in no case enter the kingdom of heaven." This, at the time, must have been a most extraordinary and alarming declaration. The scribes and pharisees were the reputed models of strict religion. The common people seem to have thought that men in general could not be expected to attain the heights of purity to which they had arrived. If, therefore, any had attached themselves to Jesus, in hopes of obtaining a little more latitude than was allowed them by their own teachers, they would find themselves greatly mistaken. For not only did he inculcate an equal, but even a superior degree of strictness to that which they practised. Nor did he, by *righteousness*, mean that which was imputed to them for justification; but that judgment, mercy, and love of God, of which the scribes and pharisees, with all their tenacity for forms and ceremonies, were wofully destitute.

In proof of the gross defectiveness of the pharisaical system of morality, he goes on to account for it, by convicting its authors of having by their glosses, in a course of time, greatly corrupted the law: and this must have cut the deeper on account of an attachment to the law being their principal pretext for opposing him.

Ver. 21, 22. The first example alleged is the sixth commandment, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" All that the pharisees understood by this was a prohibition of the act of murder: but our Lord insists that the commandment, taken from its true intent, prohibited not only the overt act, but every evil working of the mind, which led to it; such as causeless anger, with contemptuous and provoking language. This was going to the root or principle of things. The different degrees of *punishment* here referred to allude doubtless to the courts of justice among the Jews; and express not merely what sin was in itself as a breach of the divine law (for in that sense all sin exposes to hell fire,) but how many degrees of evil there were, short of actual murder, which would endanger a man's salvation.

Ver. 23, 24. Of this doctrine our Lord proceeds to make some practical uses, by applying it to certain cases. First, he enforces *speedy reconciliation with an offended brother*.—Be sure there be no enmities rankling in thy bosom from day to day, every one of which is murder in embryo; nor let any conduct of thine be the cause of their rankling in the bosom of another. The best means of preventing both is to examine thyself in thy most solemn approaches to God: for then, if ever, the conscience is tender, and likely to bring to remembrance what is wrong between thee and thy brother.—What must I do, say you, who have offended my brother? Must I not worship God nevertheless? No, not in that state, for God will not accept of thy gift. What

then, must I keep away? No; but go immediately to thy brother, and acknowledge thy fault, or, if no offence were intended, explain matters to him, and, thus being reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift.—If the door of God's house were shut against every one who refused to comply with this direction, it would make many feel: yet the door of mercy, or divine acceptance, is shut; which is of far greater account. It is observable that the exhortation is given to the offender, and the term *reconciled* is not expressive of a conciliatory spirit on his part, but of its *effect* upon his brother. The meaning of it is, *Be restored to thy brother's favor*. And this is the sense in which the word is sometimes used on a higher subject, namely, that of reconciliation to God. We are often told by the adversaries of the atonement that God is never said to be *reconciled to us* by the death of Christ, but to have *reconciled us to himself* by it. This is true; but the term in this connection does not mean his appeasing our anger by offering us mercy through Christ; but his making his soul an offering for sin, and thereby *restoring us to his favor*. Hence God's having reconciled us to himself by Christ is alleged as a motive to our being, as to the state of our minds, reconciled to him.—2 Cor. v. 18—20.

Ver. 25. From the case of an offended brother, he proceeds to that of an *adversary*, recommending a speedy agreement with him also. The law of love, if truly complied with, would promote universal peace. But a small difference, where there is little or no love to counteract it, often terminates in mutual and settled dislike; and, being accompanied with a proud reluctance to concession, litigations and contentions frequently follow, to which death only puts a period. But what is this? It is murder!—And wouldst thou wash thy hands from thy neighbor's blood? Go then, and be at peace with him! Human prudence would recommend a timely agreement for thine own sake: let religion, let benevolence, even to thine adversary, recommend it for his. Say not, Our differences shall be tried before legal judges, whatever be the consequences; but offer just and generous terms whilst thou art in the way with him, that if the breach can be healed it may, or, if not, that the fault may not lie at thy door.—It were desirable that there were no strife among us, and, if we loved one another as God's law requires, there would be none: but, seeing it is otherwise, the same principle which in innocent creatures would operate to prevent it must in guilty creatures operate to heal it.

Ver. 27, 28. Having taken an example from the sixth commandment, and reproved the pharisaical system with respect to sins

of the mind, our Lord proceeds to the seventh, and detects the sins of the flesh. They had heard that it was said to them of old time, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery;*" and they had heard the truth: but the pharisaical glosses would confine its meaning, as in the former instance, to outward actions; whereas, in its true intent, it comprehended the inward affections of the mind, censuring the wanton look and the impure desire. The pharisees were worldly men, and the religion of such men is merely *political*: so far as good and evil affect society, they feel in some degree; but, as to the honor of God, they have no concern about it.

Ver. 29, 30. As Christ had turned his former decision to practical use, so he does the present one. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, or, if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off," &c. The word rendered *offend*, in this and several other passages in the New Testament, does not mean to *displease*, but to *cause to offend*, and so it is rendered in the margin. The meaning is not, If they displease thee; but if, by becoming a stumbling-block or snare to thy soul, they cause thee to offend God, &c. Neither was it our Lord's design that we should literally go about to maim our bodies; but he hereby teaches us either that we had better be without eyes or hands than to employ them in wantonness, or that we must on pain of eternal damnation give up those companions, situations, or pursuits, though dear to us as right eyes, or right hands, which prove a snare to our souls.

The tremendous consequences held up to induce such sacrifices teach us that a single lust persisted in will issue in eternal ruin, and that it is necessary even for those whom the Lord may know to be the heirs of salvation, in certain situations, to be threatened with damnation, as the means of preserving them from it.

Ver. 31, 32. Under the head of adultery there occurred another case, namely, that of *divorce*, in which the pharisaical doctrine had greatly corrupted the law. In this case our Saviour may seem to depart from the law of Moses rather than to expound it; and true it is that he took for his standard, in this instance, the original law of creation, to which it was his design, under the gospel dispensation, to bring his followers. This law, however, as well as the other, was given by Moses: and the difference between them he elsewhere accounts for, by alleging that Moses rather suffered divorce than required it, and that because of the hardness of their hearts. In what he now taught, therefore, he was not against the *mind* of Moses or of God, neither of whom approved of divorce, except in case of fornication; but barely permitted it to prevent a greater evil. And though the law respecting marriage, as given to Israel, was less pure than

the original law of creation, yet it was much purer than it had since become in the hands of pharisaical expositors, through whom divorces were become so common, as, in a manner, to deluge the land with adultery.

## SECTION IV.

### ON OATHS.

Matt. v. 33—37.

WHAT our Lord says of swearing may have respect to the third commandment, in which we are forbidden to "take the name of the Lord our God in vain." It had also been said, "Thou shalt not swear by my name falsely; neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God." And again, "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth." To these passages, and to the construction which had been put upon them, our Lord seems to have alluded in what he here teaches.

Many have supposed that oaths of every kind are here forbidden, and therefore refuse in any form, or on any occasion, to take them. To determine this question, we must have recourse to the principles laid down at the outset of the sermon. "Think not that I am come to *destroy the law* or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled," ver. 17, 18. The question is, then, whether oaths of any kind belonged to the law, or whether they arose from the false glosses of the elders? If the former, it was not Christ's design to destroy them; but, if the latter, it was. That they were a part of the divine law, and not of merely human authority, is sufficiently manifest from Deut. vi. 13, "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt *swear by his name.*" Consequently, it was not our Lord's design to destroy them.

If it be objected that, though Christ did not destroy the moral law, yet there were various precepts pertaining to the ceremonial and judicial laws of Israel, which, on his appearance, ceased to be binding, and that oaths might be of this description,—I answer, in abolishing things which had been of divine authority, he is never known to have cast reproach on them, or to have imputed the observance of them to evil. He could not therefore be said to have *destroyed* even the ceremonial law, but rather to have fulfilled it. But the oaths against which he inveighs are expressly said to *come of evil*; and therefore could never have been of divine authority.

To this may be added, If *all* oaths be unlawful under the gospel dispensation, some



of the most solemn and impressive passages in the epistles of Paul must be utterly wrong. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not—God is my witness, whom I serve in the gospel of his Son." Each of these is an oath, and that of the most solemn kind; yet who ever thought of accusing the apostle of violating his Lord's precept?

The truth appears to be this—the Jews had construed the commandment merely as a prohibition of *perjury*; accounting that if they did but swear *truly* as to matters of fact, or *perform* their oaths in case of promise, all was right. They seem to have had no idea, or at most but a very faint one, of sinning by swearing *lightly*. But, for an oath to be lawful, it required, not only that the affirmation were true, or the vow performed; but that such a mode of affirming or vowing were *necessary*. This is evident from the words of the divine precept, "Thou shalt not swear by my name falsely, *neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God.*" Thousands of things are true which yet it would be profaning the name of God to swear to. Here lay the sin which it was the design of Christ to reprove. He did not censure his countrymen for what was said before a magistrate, to put *an end to strife*; but for what passed in their ordinary *communications* (ver. 37); that is, for light and unnecessary oaths, by which the name of God was profaned. This was a sin so prevalent among the Jews, that even Christians, who were called from among them, stood in need of being warned against it.—James v. 12.

It may appear rather extraordinary that any person who fears God should stand in need of these warnings; and, if profane swearing were confined to expressly naming the name of God, they might be in general unnecessary among persons who had any claim to seriousness of character. But as both Jews and Christians have learned to mince and soften their oaths, by leaving out the name of God, while yet it is implied, and consequently profaned, such warnings cannot be considered as superfluous. We perceive by our Lord's words that it was common among the Jews to swear "by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by the temple, by the altar, by their own head," &c. &c. They had also some curious distinctions between swearing by the temple, and by the gold of the temple; the altar, and the gift upon the altar; but our Lord, looking deep into the principles of things, considers them all as amounting to the same thing—the profanation of God's holy name.—Matt. xxiii. 16—22.

It is thus that oaths are used among men calling themselves Christians. In popish countries, your ears are continually stunned by hearing people swear, not only by their saints, but *by Jesus, by his blood and his*

*wounds*: and, even in protestant countries, these terrible oaths are turned into exclamations on many a trivial occasion. The word '*S blood, 'S wounds, &c.*, are no other than these old popish oaths minced, or contracted by the dread of expressly naming the blood and wounds of Christ. Every person who uses such language may not be apprised of the meaning; but every thing of the kind *cometh of evil*. The same may be said of all such phrases as the following—*Of faith, By my troth, Upon my soul, Upon my life, Upon my honor, Upon my word*. By our Lord's exposition of such language, in Matt. xxiii. 16—22, all these modes of speaking would be found to bear a relation to God, and so to be a *profaning of his name*.

How opposite to all this profane jargon is the simple and dignified language prescribed by our Lord,—“Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” He that is conscious of a want of veracity may find it necessary to confirm his words with oaths; but he that habitually speaketh the truth will have no occasion for resorting to such mean and profane expedients.

## SECTION V.

### ON RESISTING EVIL.

Matt. v. 38—42.

IN the judicial law of Israel, it had been enacted as follows:—"If men strive and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow, he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband shall lay upon him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. And, if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." This law, *in the hands of the magistrate*, was equitable, and adapted to the general good: nor was it our Lord's design to undermine its authority. But, by the glosses of the Jews, it had been perverted in favor of *private retaliation and revenge*. Against this principle our Saviour inveighs. He did not complain of the law in the hands of the magistrate, nor forbid his followers appealing to it for the public good; but they must neither take upon them to judge of their own cause, nor repair to a magistrate from a principle of *revenge*; but must keep in view the good of the party, or at least that of the community. He does not crush any passion,\* nor not that of anger; but merely

\*The *passions* are commonly confounded by infidel writers with *vicious propensities*. The former is the name indeed by which they choose to denominate the latter; and that with the obvious intent of apologizing for them. But they are, ne-

requires that it be not selfish, but subordinate to the glory of God, and the good of mankind. And, however unbelievers may affect to deride this precept, it so approves itself to the judgment of men in general, that you shall rarely know an individual appeal to justice, but under a profession, at least, of being influenced by some other motive than that of private revenge.

With respect to the precept "turning the other cheek to him that smiteth thee," it certainly does not mean that we should court insult, or in all cases submit to it without any kind of resistance; for this was not the practice of our Lord himself. When unjustly smitten before the high-priest, he did not invite the repetition of the indignity; but, on the contrary, remonstrated against it. "If" said he, "I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but, if well, why smitest thou me?" In this remonstrance, however, he was not influenced by a spirit of retaliation, but of justice to his own character, which, under the form of striking his person, was assaulted; and what he said had a tendency to convict the party and assembly. Such remonstrances are doubtless allowable in his followers. But the meaning of the precept is, that we render not evil for evil; but rather suffer injury, and that injury to be repeated, than go about to avenge ourselves. It is the principle, rather than the act, which is inculcated; yet even the act itself would be right in various cases; and, instead of degrading the party, would raise him in the esteem of the wise and good. When Greece was invaded by Persia, Themistocles, the Athenian general, by warmly urging a point in a council of war, is said to have so provoked the displeasure of Eurybiades, the Spartan, the commander in chief, that the latter lifted up his cane over his head in a menacing posture. "*Strike, (said the noble Athenian,) but hear me!*" He did hear him, and the country was saved. And why may not a Christian act, or rather forbear to act, on the same principle, and for an infinitely greater end, even the eternal salvation of his enemies? What else has been the language of the noble army of the martyrs from the beginning? Have they not practically said to an enraged world, *Strike, but hear us?* Similar remarks might be made on the precept of giving our "cloak to him that would sue us and take away our coat." It is the principle that is to be regarded, rather than the act. It would be far from just in many cases to give place to the overbearing treatment of men,

vertheless, perfectly distinct. The former belong to us as creatures; the latter as sinners: the Scriptures regulate the one, but prohibit the other. Elias was a man of *like passions* with other men; but, in praying for the giving or withholding of rain, he did not act under the influence of vicious propensity.

as it must tend not only to ruin our own families, but to encourage the wicked in their wickedness. But the *spirit* here inculcated is of the greatest importance: it is that disposition which would rather put up with injury than engage in litigious contests. All strife for victory, or for the sake of having our will of men, is here forbidden, as carnal and antichristian.

The precept of going "two miles with him that would compel you to go with him one" teaches us to need no compulsion in works of benevolence; but to be willing to do good to all men, even beyond their requests.

In harmony with this is the practice of "giving and lending to them that ask us." To suppose that Christ is here laying down a literal and universal rule of action would be supposing him to inculcate a practice which must soon destroy itself, by putting it out of our power either to give or lend. But by this language he recommends a kind and liberal spirit, ready to do good to the utmost of our power. Such was the spirit of Christ himself towards an impoverished world, and such is the spirit of his religion; selfishness, in every shape and form, is antichristian.

## SECTION VI.

### ON LOVE TO ENEMIES.

Matt. v. 43—48.

It was written in the law of Moses, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The construction which the Jews put upon this precept is easily discerned by the question of the self-justifying lawyer, "And who is my neighbor?" They excluded from that character heathens and Samaritans, and indeed all those of their own country who were unfriendly towards them; and so considered the command to love their neighbors as allowing them to hate their enemies.

In opposing this sentiment, our Lord did not oppose the law; but merely the selfish gloss of the rabbin; for the law did not allow of any such hatred as they cherished. Yet, in comparing it with David's language in the Psalms, some Christian writers have seemed willing to concede that the Jewish gloss was really founded upon the spirit of the Old Testament, and have represented the doctrine of love to enemies as peculiar to the gospel dispensation. That it is more clearly taught and powerfully enforced by our Saviour, than it had been before, is allowed; but the notion of his opposing his doctrine to that of Moses or David is inadmissible; for this had been to "destroy the law," and to render the New Testament at variance with the Old.

That good-will to men is both taught and

exemplified in the Old Testament is manifested from the joy expressed by David and the prophets, when predicting the conversion of the heathen. They even prayed and taught their countrymen to pray for the blessing of God upon themselves *in subserviency to it*.—See Psal. lxxvii.; Isa. xlix. Nor are the prayers of David against his enemies at variance with this principle. If they be, however, the New Testament is also at variance with it: for the same kind of language is used in Paul's Epistles as abounds in David's Psalms. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed."—"Alexander, the coppersmith, did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works!" Much confusion has arisen, on these subjects, from not distinguishing between *benevolence and complacency*. The one is due to all men, whatever be their character, so long as there is any possibility or hope of their becoming the friends of God: the other is not, but requires to be founded on character. The Old Testament writers, being under a dispensation distinguished by awful threatenings against sin, dwell mostly upon the latter, avowing their love to those who loved God, and their hatred to those who hated him; the New-Testament writers, living under a dispensation distinguished by its tender mercy to sinners, dwell mostly upon the former: but neither of these principles is inconsistent with the other. We may bear the utmost good-will to men as the creatures of God, and as being within the limits of hope; while yet, considered as the Lord's enemies, we abhor them. If we love others as we love ourselves, that is all that is required; but the love which a Christian bears to his own soul is consistent with his abhorring himself as a sinner. Our Lord exemplified both these dispositions at the same time. In denouncing the damnation of hell against the scribes and pharisees, you would think him void of every feeling but that of inflexible justice: yet, looking upon the same people in reference to their approaching miseries, he burst into a flood of tears. The same spirit possessed the apostle Paul towards his countrymen. When they rejected the gospel, he did not scruple to apply to them the awful prophecies of Isaiah, "Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive," &c., yet the same apostle solemnly declares that he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart on their behalf. So far from an abhorrence of the wicked in *respect of their wickedness* being inconsistent with genuine benevolence, it is necessary to it. The compassion that is void of this is not benevolence, but the working of disaffection to God, and of criminal partiality towards his enemies.

Benevolence has not, as observed before, an immediate respect to character; yet it considers its objects within the limits of hope, in respect to their becoming the friends of God. If a creature be a confirmed enemy to God, as in the case of devils and lost souls, true benevolence will cease to mourn over them, as it would imply a reflection upon the Creator. It is on this principle that Aaron was forbidden to mourn for his sons Nadab and Abihu, and that Samuel was reproved for mourning over Saul.—Lev. x. 6; 1 Sam. xvi. 1. Hence also we see in the benevolence of David and Isaiah towards the heathen (Psal. lxxvii., Isa. xlix.) a prospect of their future conversion: and, as this prospect was to be realized under the gospel dispensation, we perceive the reason of benevolence in it arising to its highest pitch. By the appearance and sacrifice of Christ, the glory of God was to be manifested in a way of good will to men, even to enemies; angels therefore dwelt upon this idea at his birth, and the disciples were taught to cherish it.

But to bear good will to our enemies, to pity them that hate us, and to pray for them that spitefully use us and persecute us, is, after all, a strange doctrine in the account of a selfish world. If the love of God be not in us, self-love, in one shape or other, will have possession of our souls. Hence infidels have treated this precept as extravagant, and imputed the conduct of Christians to affectation. Conscious, it seems, that self-love is the governing principle of their own actions, they imagine it to be the same with all others. The general prevalence also of this spirit leads them to expect little else from one another, and to act as if it were a law of nature for every one to love himself supremely, and all other beings only as they are subservient to him. Nor are infidels the only persons who have spoken and written in this strain: many of the advocates of Christianity have so formed their systems as to render self-love the foundation on which they rest. Neither God nor man is to be regarded but on our own account. On this principle, however, it would follow that there is no such thing as glorifying God *as God*, nor hating sin *as sin*, and that the gospel has no charms on account of its revealing mercy *in a way of righteousness*, any more than if it had revealed it in a way of unrighteousness. If our love be directed merely "to that which relieves us," it would be equally worthy of acceptance, in our account, let that relief come how it might; and thus the character of God as "the *just*, and the *justifier* of them that believe in Jesus," forms no part of the good news to sinful men: the glory of the gospel is no glory.

There is much meaning in the words of the apostle John—"We are of *God*: he



that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." Every false system of religion originates and terminates in self. This is the character of the spirit of error. But, if we be of God, we shall love him, and every image of him in creation. Those objects which bear his moral image, such as his holy law, his glorious gospel, and his renewed people, will occupy the first place in our esteem; and those which at present bear only his natural image while there is any hope of their recovery to a right mind, will be the objects of our tender compassion, and their salvation the subject of our earnest prayers.

It is thus that we manifest ourselves to be "the children of our Father who is in heaven;" who, till sinners are fixed in a state of irreconcilable enmity to him and to the general good, "causeth his sun to rise and his rain to descend" upon them, whatever be their characters.

If self-love be the spring of our religion, it is declared by our Saviour to be of no value, and that it will issue in no divine reward. How should it be otherwise, when it differs not from the spirit of the world? The most abandoned men love those that love them. If this were true religion, we do not need to be taught it of God; for it is perfectly suited to our depraved nature. But if true religion consists in being of the mind of God, or in being "perfect, as our Father who is in heaven is perfect," it is absolutely necessary that we be born again, or we cannot see the kingdom of God.

## SECTION VII.

### ON ALMS-GIVING, AND PRAYER.

Matt. vi. 1—8.

OUR Saviour having detected various false glosses upon the law, and shown the spirituality of its requirements, proceeds to discourse on some of the most common and important duties of religion. Of these he instances *alms-giving* and *prayer*. Three things are observable from what is said of the former.—Ver. 1—4.

First: It is taken for granted that the disciples of Christ were in the habit of giving alms; and this notwithstanding they generally consisted of persons who labored for their subsistence. And would this bear to be taken for granted of the body of professors among us? They might have said, We have enough to do to provide for our own houses: it is for the rich, and not for laboring people, to give alms. But feeling, as they did, for the afflicted and necessitous, especially for those of the household of faith, they would deny themselves many comforts for the sake of being able to

relieve them. True religion always teaches men to be merciful.

Secondly: As, through the deceitfulness of the human heart, the most beneficial actions may arise from corrupt designs, and thereby be rendered not only void, but evil in the sight of God, we are warned as to our motives—"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them—do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do." In what concerns the relief of individuals this council will commonly apply in the most literal sense of the words. The liberality of vain men, having no other object than to be thought generous, is commonly either publicly proclaimed or exercised in a way that shall by some means come to the knowledge of the neighborhood; while that of the modest Christian, desirous only of approving himself to God, is done in secret. The words, however, do not apply in all cases. It is not so much the act as the principle, or motive, that our Lord condemns. If we understand it literally of the former, it would follow that nothing ought to be given in public subscriptions or collections for the poor; for, in this, concealment would be improper, if not impossible. The primitive Christians did not always conceal their donations; but consulted and subscribed for the poor brethren at Jerusalem.—Acts xi. 29, 30. Nor would privacy be consistent with other commandments; particularly that in ch. v. 16, "Let your light so shine before men that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven." There is no evil in our works being seen of men, provided they be not done for this end, but for the glory of God. Secrecy itself may become a cloak to avarice: and it is a fact that many, by affecting to be very private in their donations, have contrived to keep their money to themselves, and at the same time to be thought very generous. The evil lies in the motive; doing what we do from ostentation, or to be seen of men. The desire of human applause is a canker that eats out the charity of many gifts, and renders that which would otherwise be good and well pleasing to God a mere exercise of selfish hypocrisy.

Thirdly: As every thing in this world bears a relation to eternity, we are reminded of the final issue of things. If we give from ostentation, we have our reward: but if from love, and with an eye to the glory of God, "that which has been done in secret shall be rewarded openly." It is so ordered in the divine administration that the selfish soul shall be disappointed in the end; while he who seeks the good of others shall find his own. But how is it that the works of sinful creatures should be rewarded with eternal life? In themselves considered they cannot; and if any man think, by a series of

beneficent actions, to atone for the sins of his past life, and to obtain the kingdom of heaven, he will be awfully deceived. But, if he believe in Jesus, he is accepted in him; and, being so, his offerings are accepted and rewarded, both in this world and that which is to come.

From alms-giving our Lord proceeds to *prayer*.—Ver. 5—8. The former respected our conduct to men, the latter our approaches to God. And here also it is observable that it is taken for granted that Christ's disciples are praying men. What he says is not to persuade them to prayer, but to direct them in it. Infidels may imagine that God does not concern himself with the affairs of mortals, and may excuse themselves by pretending that it were presumption in them to solicit the Supreme Being to do this or that; formalists may say their prayers, and be glad when the task is over; but Christians cannot live without communion with God. Prayer has with propriety been called the breath of the new creature. To satisfy Ananias that Saul was become a christian, it was enough to say, "Behold, he prayeth!"

What is said of the privacy of prayer will literally apply to that which is personal, or expressive of individual desire. The proper resort for this is the closet, or a place of retirement from the interruptions and observations of men. A vainglorious professor may enjoy no freedom in this, because there is none to witness and admire his devotions: but the child of God is here at home, even in the presence of his Father, who heareth him in secret. If we have no freedom in private prayer, but live nearly if not entirely in the neglect of it, and at the same time possess great zeal and fluency in our public exercises, we ought surely to suspect that things are far from being right between God and our souls.

The words of our Lord, however, must not be literally applied to all cases. Respect is had more to the principle of the act than to the act itself. To understand it of the latter would be to censure all *public* prayer, and *standing* in prayer, which was no part of the design. A good man *might* pray "standing in the synagogue," or even at "a corner of the street," on some occasions. Paul prayed with the Tyrian disciples, with their wives and children, and gave thanks to God, in the presence of a ship's company. That which Christ meant to censure was the loving to pray in public places *in order to be seen of men*. His object was not to appoint the *place* or the *posture* of prayer: but to detect the vanity of the mind, and to direct his followers to seek the approbation of God, rather than the applauses of men.

The  *motive* with which these counsels are urged is very impressive: "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward!" God

will apportion our rewards according to the things we seek. If the objects of our desire be confined to this world, this world shall be our all; but, if they extend to another, that other shall be our portion.

What is said of "vain repetitions," and "much speaking," admits of similar remarks to that which goes before it. In general it is right to avoid long prayers, especially in the family, and in the church, which are not only wearisome to men, but offensive to God. A proper sense of the majesty of the great Supreme would cure this evil. "God is in heaven, and we on earth: therefore let our words be few." The contrary practice savors of heathenism. Let the devotees of Baal vociferate from morning till noon; but let not the worshippers of Jehovah imitate them.\* Our heavenly Father knoweth what things we need. If he require importunity in prayer, it is not because he needs to be persuaded; but that his favors may be known, accepted, and prized.

It is not our Lord's design, however, to condemn *all* long prayers, nor all repetitions. He himself, on some occasions, continued for a whole night; and in Gethsemane he three times repeated the same words. They are *vain* repetitions which he censures, and the hope of being heard *for* much speaking. It is observable, however, that whenever Christ or any of the apostles were long in prayer it was in private. If many who pray for an hour or longer in public, and with tedious repetitions, were equally circuitous in the closet, whether we should commend their discretion or not, we might hope well of their sincerity. But, where the reverse of this is true, it certainly has the appearance of the very spirit which it was our Saviour's intention to condemn.

## SECTION VIII.

### ON THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Matt. vi. 9—15.

THIS admirable summary of prayer, as introduced by Matthew, would seem to be only for the purpose of illustrating, by example, the foregoing precepts. Luke, however, represents it as occasioned by our Saviour's being engaged in prayer at a certain place, and, when he ceased, one of his disciples saying unto him, "Lord teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." If in any thing we need divine instruction, it is in drawing near to God. It does not appear to have been Christ's design to establish a form of prayer, nor that it was ever so used by the

\* Heathenism still retains the same character as it did in the days of Elijah. The Hindoos at this day, in worshipping the idol Kreesnho, or Hurry, will cry for hours together, without intermission, "Hurry bolo! Hurry bolo!" i. e. Kreesnho, speak! Kreesnho, speak!

disciples: but merely a brief *directory* as to the matter and manner of it. Such a directory was adapted not only to instruct, but to encourage Christians in their approaches to God. It was putting words into their mouths. In supplicating divine mercy, they might plead, Thus and thus our Saviour taught us to say; even he in whom thy soul delighteth: hear us for his sake! Observe,

First: The *character* under which we are allowed to draw near to the Lord of heaven and earth.—“Our Father.” It has been a question, though I conceive it ought not, whether God is here to be considered as our Father in Jesus Christ, and not rather as our Creator; and whether the prayer be not suited to all men, who are God’s creatures, as well as to believers. That the prayer is free to every one who can cordially utter its sentiments there is no doubt: but, whatever others have done, Christ would never prescribe a prayer suited to an unbeliever. As the Scriptures inculcate no precept but what, if obeyed in its true intent, would prove us in the way to eternal life, so they prescribe no prayer but what, if offered up in its true meaning, would be heard and answered. It is true that God is the Father of all men by creation; but, like prodigals, they are by sin alienated from him, and his love to them as a Creator is in a manner extinguished. He cannot consistently treat them as children, but as strangers and enemies. If strict justice had its course, he would “destroy man whom he hath created, from the face of the earth.” The effect is, that, if any of the sons of men approach him as a Father, it must be through a mediator. The original relation is, as to any access to him, or communion with him, dissolved. If any sinner be now treated as a child of God, it is as an *adopted alien put among the children*.—See John i. 13.

It is no small proof that the privilege of approaching God as a Father has respect to the mediation of Christ that it is almost confined to the gospel dispensation. To Israel, it is true, pertained the national adoption; but this was only a shadow of that to which believers were predestinated through Jesus Christ. Old-Testament believers were no doubt related to God as a Father, as well as we; but they were not ordinarily in the habit of addressing him under that endearing character. The spirit of that dispensation was, when compared with ours, a spirit of bondage. It was reserved for the times of the Messiah, in the spirit of adoption, to cry *Abba, Father*. The encouragement contained in this tender appellation is inexpressible. The love, the care, the pity, which it comprehends, and the filial confidence which it inspires, must, if we are not wanting to ourselves, render prayer a most blessed exercise.

Secondly: The *place* of the divine residence.—“Our Father, who art *in heaven*.”

As the endearing character of a father inspires us with confidence, this must have no less a tendency to excite our reverence; and both together are necessary to acceptable worship. “As for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy *fear* will I worship toward thy holy temple.” Fear without hope would sink us into despair; and hope without fear would raise us to presumption; but, united together, they constitute the beauty of holiness. It is not, however, for the purpose of inspiring reverence only that God is said to be in heaven, but to encourage us to confide in his absolute supremacy and almighty power. He is above all our enemies, and has the direction and control of all events. What can be more consoling than the thought of having the Lord of the universe for our father! When the heathen triumphed over the church, and sneeringly asked each other, “Where is now thy God?” It was sufficient to answer, “Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.”

Thirdly: The *social* principle which pervades the prayer.—“*Our Father*—forgive us,” &c. Assuredly we are hereby taught not to confine our petitions to what respects ourselves, but to identify with our own cases those of our brethren. Nor is it necessary that they should be actually present to hear us, and join with us: the prayer of faith and love will embrace in its arms brethren at the greatest distance; and not only such as are known, but such as are unknown, even the whole family of God upon earth. Neither is it necessary to social prayer that all who are present should be believers. Were this the case, we must restrain prayer in our congregations, and in our families. The worship of the primitive churches had in it both prayer and singing, and that in a language that might be understood; yet it was open to unbelievers, or any person who chose to join in it.—1 Cor. xiv. 15, 23—25. If either prayer or praise was a *positive institution*, we might be under the necessity of refusing admission to some characters, as is the case in other positive institutions; but, if they are immediately binding on all men, whatever be their characters, any man has a right to be present. If he can join in either, let him; and, if not, it is to himself only. Our only concern in such cases is, not to give unbelievers to understand that they are considered differently from what they are; and this may be avoided, without refusing to pray or praise in company with them. Paul would not have united with the ship’s company in celebrating the Lord’s supper, but he did not scruple to take common bread, and “give thanks” on their behalf, “in the presence of them all.”

Fourthly: The *brevery* of it.—“Use not vain repetitions, but in *this manner* pray ye.”



The prayers recorded in the Scriptures are commonly as brief as they are impressive. It is true our Lord continued in prayer for a whole night; but he was then by himself. The importunity which induces us when alone to wrestle with our heavenly Father for a blessing, and to be unwilling to retire without it, is very different from that tedious circumlocution so wearisome to families, and disgusting to the most solemn assemblies. There may be indeed an extreme on the other side. Some persons conclude their prayers ere they have well begun them, and without affording opportunity for their own hearts, or the hearts of others, to be affected in them. Prayer is the pouring out of the soul before God; it therefore requires to be long enough to interest the mind and affections, and not so long as to drown them in a flood of unmeaning words.

Fifthly: The *order* of it.—Our attention is first directed to those things which are of the first importance, and which are fundamental to those which follow. Such are sanctifying and hallowing the name of the Lord, praying that his kingdom may come, and that his will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. After this, we are allowed to ask for those things which pertain to our own immediate wants, both temporal and spiritual. This is seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. The glory of God's character, and the coming of his kingdom, stand first in all his works, and therefore must have the precedence in all our prayers. The love of God stands before the love of our neighbor, or of ourselves, in the divine law; and the glory of God before peace on earth and good will to men, in the gospel. We must subscribe to this ere we are allowed to ask for our daily bread, or the forgiveness of our sins. To desire salvation at the expense of the divine honor would be direct rebellion against the majesty of heaven and earth. Self-love may induce a sinner to regard a doctrine which relieves him, and merely on account of its relieving him; but that which endears the gospel to a Christian is that it reveals a way in which "God can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Why is it that sinners, under the preaching of the gospel, continue averse to the way of salvation? It is not because they would not be glad to have their sins forgiven; but, having no regard for the honor of God's name, they see no need for such an interposition as the gospel exhibits, in order to sanctify it, and render forgiveness consistent with it. Hence, like Cain, they present their offerings without an eye to the gospel sacrifice. That which some have denominated "disinterested love," or the love of God for what he is in himself, as far as I understand it, is no other than hallowing his name, which is essential to true religion. Not that we are called upon to love any thing

in the divine character which is not manifested in the work of saving sinners, nor to be unconcerned about our own salvation; but to embrace the gospel as first glorifying God, and then giving peace on earth; and to seek our own interest as bound up with the honor of his name, and as tending to promote it.

We are taught to pray for even the coming of God's kingdom, and the universal prevalence of righteousness in the world, in subserviency to the honor of HIS NAME. It is to this end that God himself pursues these great objects; to this end therefore we must pray for them. But, though they are placed *after* the hallowing of his name, yet they stand *before* any private petitions of ours, and in this order each requires to be sought. Why is it that so little has been done, from age to age, for the general interest of Christ? Is it not owing to a practical error on this subject? placing our own private interests before his, dwelling in our ceiled houses, while the temple of God has been in ruins, or at most seeking the prosperity of a small part of the church which happens to be connected with us, to the utter neglect of the general kingdom of the Redeemer?

As Christ has taught us to pray for the coming of God's kingdom, and the universal spread of righteousness in the world, we may rest assured that these things will come to pass. Christ would not have directed us to ask for a specific object, and without any proviso, when he knew it would never be granted. Whether the kingdom of God here means the same as the Messiah's kingdom, or whether it relates to that state of things when the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father and God shall be all in all, it makes no difference. The coming of the latter supposes the gradual completion of the former: to pray therefore for what is ultimate in the system is to pray for whatever is intermediate. At present God's name, instead of being sanctified in the earth, is disregarded and blasphemed. He reigns in the hearts of but few of the children of men. Instead of earth resembling heaven, as to obedience to the divine will, it bears a much nearer resemblance to hell. But it shall not be thus always. He who taught us thus to pray was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and destroyed they will be. And, as the grand means by which this great end will be accomplished is the preaching of the cross, we have abundance of encouragement to persevere in that arduous employment.

As there are three petitions in respect of God's name and cause in the world, so there are three which regard our own immediate wants; one of which concerns those which are temporal, and the other two those which are spiritual.

"Give us this day (or *day by day*) our dai-

ly bread." Bread comprehends all the necessities but none of the superfluities of life. If God give us the latter, we may receive them with thankfulness, only considering them as a trust committed to us, but we are not at liberty to ask for them. Nor are we allowed to ask for what may be necessary in days to come; but, as children on their father, must depend upon God for the bread of each day as the day occurs. Still less are we allowed to ask for the bread of others, or to covet our neighbors' goods; but must be contented with what the Lord gives us in the way of honest industry, or by the kindness of our friends.

Such is the spirit inculcated by this petition. How opposite to the spirit of this world! Man as a sinner aspires to be independent of God, and to raise himself out of the reach of adversity. He cannot trust God to provide for him and his children, but desires to take the charge upon himself. Unlike the sheep of Christ's pasture, who go in and out as he leads them, he emulates the wild beasts which roam through the forest in quest of prey for themselves and for their young ones. Ever anxious to accumulate, he has neither time nor inclination to think of anything else, till, in some unexpected hour, he is arrested in his course, and is obliged to spare time—to die! Christian, canst thou envy such a character? wilt thou learn his ways? No, surely! Covet not to be rich, lest it should cause thee to deny thy God, and, by treating sacred things with lightness, to take his name in vain. Is it best for thee, is it best for thy children, even in the present world, that thou shouldst emulate the beast of prey in providing for thy young ones? Remember "the young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." As bread in this prayer comprehends all the necessities of life, so the forgiveness of sin comprehends the substance of all that is necessary for the well-being of our souls. Sin is the only bar between God and man: if, therefore, this be removed, there is nothing left to impede the most ample communications of his favor. Sins are called *debts*, not properly, but metaphorically. All that belongs to a debt will not apply to a crime. The former, as being a mere private obligation, may be remitted by the creditor, if he please, without any satisfaction; but the latter being a public evil, committed against God as the governor of the world, cannot be consistently forgiven without an atonement which shall effectually distinguish that forgiveness from connivance. There is a sufficient resemblance, however, between them to justify the use of the term. We *owe* to God as his creatures supreme love and unreserved obedience; and, in de-

fault of paying it, fall under an obligation to punishment. As a rebel against the state forfeits his life, which is his all, to his injured country; so, as rebels against God, we have forfeited our souls, which are our all, to his injured government.

From this petition we learn four things. First: That we have *daily* sins to be forgiven. It is to our shame that it should be so: but so it is. To disown it does not make it the better, but the worse. The direction of Christ contains an insuperable objection to the notion of those deluded people who imagine themselves to have attained to a state of sinless perfection. No man that is not blinded to the spirituality of that law which requires supreme, perfect, and unabated love, can be insensible of his vast defects. The highest degree of love that we at any time attain comes immensely short of what we ought to feel, and of what we shall feel when presented faultless before the presence of the divine glory. The only reply that can be made is, that the petition may refer to past sins, and not to present ones. But is it not presented along with a petition for our *daily* bread, and in a prayer which is supposed to be daily offered? Secondly: That the shedding of Christ's blood as the price of our redemption is perfectly consistent with the free grace of God, not only in providing the Saviour, but in forgiving the sinner for his sake. If we had borne the full penalty due to sin in our own proper persons, all must allow there had been no place for forgiveness. And, if the union between Christ and his elect people had been so intimate as to render the actions or sufferings of one the very actions and sufferings of the other, the same consequence would follow. Or, if the satisfaction made by Christ in our stead had been on the principle of debtor and creditor, whatever obligation we might have been under to the surety, or to the creditor for providing him, the debt could not be said to have been forgiven. But as we have not borne the penalty of sin in our own persons, and as sin itself is transferrable to another only in its *effects*, we must still be considered as *deserving* of death, and, whatever be the considerations on which God proceeds in our forgiveness, as being freely forgiven. We may plead the atonement as that for the sake of which we may be forgiven, in a way glorious to the divine character, together with the invitations and promises of the word; but this is all. We must not go as claimants, but as supplicants. Thirdly: That the perfection and perpetuity of justification are consistent with a daily application to God for forgiving mercy. It is an important truth that he that believeth in Christ "shall not come into condemnation." There is no such idea, however, held out in the Scriptures as the pardon of sins, *past*,

*present, and to come.* Forgiveness invariably presupposes repentance. It is not bestowed on that account, yet it is inseparably connected with it. As justification includes forgiveness, we may be said to be fully forgiven from the first moment that we believe in Christ; but it is in some such way I conceive as we are said to be glorified. The thing is rendered *sure* by the purpose and promise of God; but, as in that case a perseverance to the end is supposed and provided for, so is repentance and a continued application for mercy through Jesus Christ in this. If it were true that a believer might not persevere to the end, it would be equally true that he might never be glorified: and if it were possible for him to live in sin, and never repent of it, it would be equally possible that he would never be forgiven—but he that has promised that which is ultimate has provided for every thing intermediate. Fourthly: That we are not allowed to ask or hope for forgiveness at the hand of God while we refuse it to those who have offended us. It is not enough to say, we cannot expect the comfort of it: we cannot expect the thing itself. While we indulge in implacable resentment, it is presumption to expect any other than that we shall perish in our sins.—Ver. 14, 15.

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” The last petition respected the bestowment of the greatest good; this, deliverance from the worst of evils. Christ teaches us to suspect ourselves. To be delivered from evil, we must not only avoid running into temptation, but pray that God in his providence may not lead us into it. Though temptation and sin be not in themselves necessarily connected, yet there is almost a moral certainty of their being so in our case. Christ indeed went into the field of contest, and came out unhurt; but this is more than can be said with certainty of any of his followers. They have indeed been preserved from actual compliance with many evils; but the temptation may nevertheless have left such impressions upon their imaginations and desires as to be a source of guilt and shame for years to come. He that carries about him inflammable materials will do well to keep at the greatest possible distance from fire. Many a fair character, both in the world and in the church, if led into temptation, would be soon stripped of his glory. What then do we mean by courting applauses, by forming carnal connections, by plunging into unnecessary cares, or by coveting lucrative situations? Much of what men call the *leadings of providence* is in fact God’s leading them into temptation, for the detecting of their true character. Lot might no doubt have pleaded that providence led him to discover a *rich and well watered plain*, and he only followed its openings. Gehazi

had a fine opportunity afforded him; and he only embraced it. Moses, however, had a much greater opening than either of them; but he declined it. The truth is, providence is no rule of duty, independent of Scripture. If the Scriptures warrant a measure, and providence open the way, we may safely walk into it: but woe to him that catcheth every opportunity that offers to aggrandize himself. Many a man would have killed Saul in the cave of Adullam, and have pleaded, as David’s servants did, that “the Lord had delivered his enemy into his hand:” but so did not David, because of the fear of God.—I only add, There is no necessary connection between going into temptation and coming out of it. Both Judas and Peter went in, but only one of them returned: and those who go in on a presumption of coming out again by repentance will probably be fatally mistaken.

The concluding doxology, though omitted by Luke, and thought by some not to have been originally included by Matthew, appears to agree with the foregoing petitions, and to furnish encouragement to hope for an answer.

## SECTION IX.

## ON FASTING, AND OTHER DUTIES.

Matt. vi. 16—34.

OUR Lord’s discourse is not designed to amuse his disciples with curious disquisitions, but to direct them as to their daily walk, partly in their approaches to God, and partly in their conversation with the world.

Ver. 16. “Moreover, when ye fast,” &c. Fasting is supposed to be the ordinary practice of the godly. Christ does not make light of it, but merely cautions them against its abuses. There has doubtless been much formality and hypocrisy in some who have attended to it: but it does not follow that the thing itself should be neglected. It is an appendage to prayer, and designed to aid its importunity. It is humbling, and in a manner chastising, ourselves before God. The spirit of it is expressed in the following passages—“So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or aught else, till the sun be down.”—“Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eye-lids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.” No mention is made of the time, or how often the duty should be attended to. It seems to be proper on various occasions, especially when, as the Scripture phrase is, we “set ourselves to seek the Lord.” It is only a *means*, however; if rested in as an *end*, it will be an abomination in the sight of God. In the direction of our Lord concerning it,



respect is had to the *principle* of things rather than to the things themselves. *A sad countenance*, if it be expressive of a sad heart, and in our secret approaches to God, has nothing in it improper. The evil consists in counterfeit sadness and ostentatious grief. Whatever be your concern of mind, make no show of it before men, but rather appear, when in company, as at other times. Let all be between thyself and thy Father, who seeth in secret.

Ver. 19, 20. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures," &c. The Lord here proceeds to a variety of counsels, and all upon things in common life. The inhabitants of this busy world are taken up in accumulating something which may be called their own, and in setting their hearts upon it rather than upon God. So common is this practice that, provided they do not injure one another, it insures commendation rather than reproach. "Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself." Hence we are in greater danger of this sin than of most others. In opposition to this, we are directed to "lay up treasures in heaven." Not that the heavenly inheritance is the reward of our doings: but, believing in Christ, and setting our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, every thing we do in his name, whether it be to the poor, or any others, for his sake, turns to our account. Heavenly enjoyment accumulates, as we in this way make much of it. It is thus that, in "giving alms, we provide ourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not." Men commonly choose a safe place to lay up their treasure. It is said that many millions, during the late depredations on the continent, have been placed in the English funds; and no wonder. But still there is nothing secure in this world. If we would place our treasure in a bank where no marauder cometh, it must be "hid with Christ in God."

From this passage, some have seriously concluded that it is forbidden us in any case to add to our property. To be consistent, however, they should not stop here, but go on to "sell what they have and give it to the poor:" for the one is no less expressly required than the other. But this were to overturn all distinctions of rich and poor, and all possession of property, which is contrary to the whole current of Scripture. To lay up "treasures upon earth" is to trust in them, or make them our chief good, instead of using them as a means of glorifying God and doing good in our generation. This is evident from the reason given against it, that, "where our treasure is, there will our heart be also." The Lord prospered David; yet David's *treasures* were not in this world. On the contrary, he was distinguished from "men of this world, who

had their portion in this life;" declaring, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." If, however, our treasure be in heaven, we shall not be eager to lay up worldly wealth; but rather to lay out that which God intrusts in our hands for promoting the good of his cause, and the well-being of mankind.

Ver. 22—24. "The light of the body is the eye," &c. Our Lord here seems to illustrate and enforce the principle on which he had all along proceeded; namely, the importance of *pure design* or *right motive* in every thing we do. This, to the soul, is that which a clear sight of the eye is to the body. A single eye has but one object, and this is God.\* It is opposed to an evil eye. The one is expressive of that spirituality of mind, which, as the apostle says, "approves the excellent," Phil. i. 10. The other is a mind blinded by the love of the world, or other corrupt affections, by which the judgment, which should be the guide of the soul, becomes dark, and leads it into evil. Thus the gospel is rejected, and some false doctrine received instead of it; and thus religion, by which men hope to find their way out of their labyrinths, serves only to bewilder them more and more, till at length they plunge into perdition. To show the importance of a *single eye*, it is added, "No man can serve two masters," &c. He that has his eye partly on God and partly on mammon, wishing to grasp both worlds, will deceive his soul. He may lose both; or, if not, he will certainly lose the kingdom of God. Our minds must be supremely set on him, and the world must be sought only in subserviency to him. Two masters we cannot serve.

Ver. 25. "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life," &c. This affectionate dissuasive from worldly anxiety is supposed to be the natural consequence of what had been spoken. It is as though he had said, Seeing you cannot serve two masters, serve the Lord; and, as you must not look two ways, let your eye be single; keeping one great end in view, and treating every thing else as a secondary or subordinate object. The command, "Take no thought," may seem to be inconsistent with that diligence in business which the Scriptures commend, and which is necessary to the providing of things honest in the sight of God and man. Certain it is that this cannot be done without *thought*: but the word here used is expressive of *anxious solicitude*. It does not mean every care, but the care which growth of distrust. It becomes us, after using all lawful means, to be anxiously

\* Dr. Campbell excludes the idea of *single*, rendering the word "sound," as opposed to "distempered;" but the context clearly favors the common translation.

careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let our requests be made known unto God.

Ver. 26—34. To enforce the most entire confidence in our heavenly Father, we are reminded that, having done the greater, he will do the less (he has given us our lives and our bodies; and the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment)—that he provides for the fowls of the air, which, without anxiety, receive their food at his hand—and that all our fretfulness is unavailing; for, however we may think to raise ourselves by it, we can accomplish nothing beyond the will of God, any more than we can add to our stature. And as to dress, God clothes the lilies, without any solicitude on their part, so as to cause them to surpass us all in finery. To be anxious concerning what we shall eat, what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed, is heathenism, and more suited to men who live without God in the world than to the children of the Most High. All such anxiety and distrust must proceed on the principle that God either does not know our wants, or that he careth not for us. Let it suffice us, therefore, to be told that “our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things.” Seek those things first which are of the first importance. Take care of God’s interest, and God will take care of yours. The ills of the time present are sufficient for us, without calling in those of futurity. God has promised strength for the day, but no more: the evils which we bring in from the morrow, we must bear ourselves.

### SECTION X.

#### ON JUDGING OTHERS, AND CASTING OUR PEARLS BEFORE SWINE.

Matt. vii. 1—6.

VER. 1—5. “Judge not,” &c. This prohibition, like many others in our Lord’s discourse, if interpreted in its utmost latitude, would go to censure what is elsewhere commended. If we judge not truth and error, good and evil, we cannot embrace the one and avoid the other; neither can we discharge the duties of our station in the world, or in the church, without forming some judgment of those about us. Paul and Silas are supposed to have judged Lydia to be faithful, ere they entered her house; and Peter did not scruple to tell the sorcerer that he “perceived him to be in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity.” We are not only allowed, but directed, even in this discourse, to judge of men, as of trees, by their fruit.—Ver. 16—20. It is part of our duty as ministers to declare from God’s word that they who live after the flesh will die;

and that they who are carried away by strong delusions and the belief of a lie are in the utmost danger of damnation. They may be displeased with us for thinking so hardly of them, and may allege this passage as a reproof to our presumption. The judgment which Christ forbids is that which arises not from good-will and a faithful discharge of duty, but from a *ensorious spirit*, which takes pleasure in thinking and speaking evil of those about us, puts the worst construction upon actions of doubtful motive, and is severe in detecting smaller faults in another, while blinded to far greater ones in ourselves. It stands opposed by Luke to a forgiving spirit.—Ch. vi. 27. It is therefore the judgment of rancour, selfishness, and implacability. “All men,” says Calvin on the passage, “do flatter and spare themselves; and every man is a severe censor against others. There is a certain sweetness in this sin, so that there is scarcely a man who itcheth not with a desire to inquire after other men’s faults. This wicked delight in biting, carping, and slandering, doth Christ forbid, when he saith, *Judge not.*”

It is remarkable that those who are most disposed to detect the faults of others are commonly the most faulty themselves, and therefore the least qualified for that which they are so eager to undertake. And herein lies their hypocrisy: they would seem to be great enemies to sin, whereas, if this were the case, they would begin with their own. It is therefore nothing better than selfish rancour, under the mask of zeal and faithfulness. It also deserves notice that he who is under the dominion of any sin is utterly unqualified to reprove; but he that has first repented of his own sin shall thereby be fitted to deliver his brother from his. “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

To deter us from this evil spirit and practice, we are given to expect that if we judge we “shall be judged,” and that “with what measure we mete it shall be measured to us again.” Such is the ordinary course of things even in the present life. A censorious spirit towards others brings censure in abundance upon ourselves. Hence arise debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults. Thus the sweets of society, both civil and religious, are embittered; and, instead of the ills of life diminishing, they greatly accumulate in our hands. Neither is it in this life only, nor chiefly, that such things will meet with a righteous retribution. If we go on condemning in this manner till death, we must expect to be condemned at a judgment-seat from the decisions of which there is no appeal.

Ver. 6. “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,” &c. This precept may have no immediate connection with the

foregoing one, and may apply to the disciples as teachers. Though they must preach the word to all, yet it must be with due discrimination, giving to every character that which the Scripture assigns him. Thus did Christ himself, at the beginning of this sermon. I am inclined to think, however, that there is a connection between this precept and the foregoing one; and that the former dissuades from *evil-minded* censures, and this from *imprudent* ones. Though we should reprove men from the purest motives, yet, if what we say be harsh or unseasonable, instead of doing them good, we shall provoke their resentment, and do both them and ourselves harm. The conduct of Paul in his voyage to Rome (Acts xxvii.) furnishes an example of the contrary. He was not so awed as to leave the company in any doubt who he was, nor yet so obtrusive as unnecessarily to draw upon him their displeasure. His behavior was such from the beginning as to procure him a courteous treatment from Julius the centurion.—Ver. 3. When danger approached, he gave them a respectful admonition, and, to excite their attention to the gospel, foretold what would be the disastrous issue of the voyage.—Ver. 10. Finding his word disregarded, he held his peace, till “all hope that they should be saved was taken away.” Then, with a gentle reproof for their unbelief, he renews his predictions, declares the ground on which he uttered them, acknowledges himself more fully the servant of God, and addresses them in encouraging language.—Ver. 21—25. After this he rises in their esteem, his influence among them is extended, he takes bread and gives thanks in the presence of them all, and they are cheerful, and eat with him.—Ver. 31—36. Whether this conduct issued in the conversion of any of them, or not, it so interested the centurion, that, when the soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, he kept them from their purpose for Paul’s sake. We see in it a union of zeal, which never lost sight of its object, and of discretion, which selected the best means and seized the fittest opportunities for accomplishing it. All was the effect of good will, which, wherever it prevails, either prevents the violent attacks of the wicked, or, if they come unprovoked, enables us to bear them.

## SECTION XI.

### ON PRAYER AND EQUITY.

Matt. vii. 7—12.

FROM negative religion, our Lord proceeds to enforce that which is positive—prayer to God, and justice to men. We have had directions already concerning the *duty* of prayer, and are now furnished with *encouragements* to engage in it.

Observe the terms by which it is expressed—*asking, seeking, knocking*. No mention is made of what we are to ask or seek for; but it is understood that every thing we want, both for this world and that to come, is richly *provided*, and that the way of access to God is opened by the Saviour. Such an invitation would not else have been given. It is also understood that what we receive is of *grace*, and that we must apply for it, not as haughty claimants, but as needy and unworthy supplicants. The prayer of the Pharisee had not a single petition in it. We may also perceive that true prayer is that by which we look *out of ourselves*, and seek help from above. The formalist rests in the deed done, but the believer in Jesus thinks not of his own seekings, but of the objects sought. There is also a *gradation* of desire expressed in the terms. Seeking is somewhat more than asking, and knocking more than seeking. The mind, when properly engaged in this exercise, increases in its importunity, like his who said, “I will not let thee go except thou bless me.”

Observe, next, the encouragements afforded us in the exercise. It is wonderful how they are heaped, as it were, one upon another. Here are first promises, “It shall be given you,” &c.; next examples, “Every one that asketh, receiveth,” &c.; and then an appeal to the feelings of a parent, arguing thence to the compassion of our heavenly Father.

It is of great account in prayer to lay hold of the *promises*. It is this constitutes it the prayer of faith. It is true we may pray for temporal things which are not specifically promised, provided it be in submission to the will of God, leaving it to his wisdom to give or to withhold, as seemeth good to him. But even here we must not lose sight of his general promise, to withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. It is also true that, if there were only a possibility of success in matters of salvation, considering the urgency of our case as lost and helpless sinners, we might well supplicate mercy. Such were the reasonings of the four lepers, and of Esther the queen; but though they have sometimes been applied to the sinner’s application for mercy, yet they are not cases in point. We must not compare our heavenly Father to capricious heathens, who might have spurned their supplicants, instead of hearing their petition; nor an application at a mere peradventure to coming on an invitation, and under a promise of acceptance.

And then, with respect to *examples*, our Lord directs the attention of his followers to facts. “Every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth.” This is like challenging them to find an instance of a poor supplicant perishing at a throne of grace, or of a single petition offered in the



faith of Jesus falling to the ground. Lastly: His appealing to the heart of an earthly parent, and arguing that "if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, much more will our heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him," is truly overwhelming. And is it possible, after all this, that we should ever feel reluctant to draw near to him? O what must be that alienation of heart which can make light of such a privilege, that guilt and shame that makes it seem almost a duty to stand aloof, and that distrust of God which gives to our approaches before him an appearance of presumption!

Ver. 12. "Therefore all things, whatsoever," &c. It may seem as if there could be no connection between this precept and those which preceded it. On close inspection, however, we may find it otherwise. It may have a connection with various other precepts which had gone before, and, so far as they related to the duty of man to man, contain a sort of summary of the whole. Or it may well be considered as connected with what is said on prayer. All inordinate affection toward this world (which is the impetus that moves men to over-reaching practices) has its root in a distrust of God. Were we daily to ask for all we want of him, seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and relying upon his promise to add other things as he sees them to be best for us, we should have no inclination to covetousness or injustice. But if, instead of depending like sheep on the care of their shepherd, we set off like beasts of prey, to forage the world for ourselves, we shall often judge it to be wise and necessary to seize on that which equity forbids. Hence arises the hateful distinction among statesmen between what is right and what is politic, and hence all the rapacity which desolates the earth. It will be found in the end that whatever was right was wise; but this lesson is seldom learned till it is too late. O what a world would it be if this rule were acted upon! What families, churches, cities, and nations, would our eyes behold! But this is not to be expected till it shall be written in the hearts of men by the Spirit of God.

It is remarkable that this golden rule, as we call it, is God's witness in every human breast. Every one has so much regard for himself as quickly to feel wherein *he* is wronged, and to pass censure on the person who has wronged him. He has therefore only to apply the principle to his own conduct, and the right and the wrong must instantly appear. Hence no one can plead ignorance. Even the heathens, who have not the written law, "are a law unto themselves, their consciences bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

## SECTION XII.

ON THE BROAD AND NARROW WAY; AND HOW TO JUDGE OF TEACHERS WHO DIRECT TO THE ONE AND TO THE OTHER.

Matt. vii. 13—20.

VER. 13, 14. "Enter ye, &c." Our Lord now proceeds to set before his hearers life and death, exhorting them to choose life. From the whole of what he had advanced, it must appear that the way of the world was broad, and that his own was narrow, or difficult; but though the one might be agreeable, to the flesh, and the other disagreeable, his counsel is "Enter ye in at the strait gate." It is as if he had said, If you walk in the way which I have been warning you against, the entrance will be easy, and you will meet with but few obstructions in your progress. Every thing will accord with your corrupt propensities. The transition from sin to sin, and from occasional to habitual indulgences, will be quite easy. You will have full scope for inclination, and free choice of the vices best suited to your birth, rank, or turn of mind. Temptations, like wind and tide, will help you on! You will be in no want of company; for old and young, rich and poor, learned and illiterate, walk there; but remember "it leadeth to destruction!" If, on the other hand, you walk in the way which I have marked out, great difficulties may present themselves at your entrance, hard struggles will attend your progress, and you may expect but few to keep you company: but it "leadeth unto life!" Whosoever therefore chooses the broad way, "enter ye in at the strait gate!"

Ver. 15—20. "Beware of false prophets," &c. As this warning was designed for Christians in every age, the term rendered *prophets* must here, as it often is elsewhere, be understood of ordinary teachers. There are few, if any, more dangerous temptations than those which arise from false teaching. Men are led on by one another, and by preaching more than by most other things. As the true doctrine directs to the narrow way, which leadeth unto life; so false doctrine directs to the broad way, which leadeth to destruction. It is the characteristic of false teachers that they recommend a loose religion, a flesh-pleasing scheme, the effects of which are commonly fatal. A criterion therefore by which they may be known and avoided must needs be of the greatest importance.

It is remarkable that this criterion does not consist of any external distinction conferred by others. Whatever may be said in favor of ordination from any order of men, it is not this that will render us true ministers. It is not any profession that may be made by the parties; for they may come in

sheep's clothing, and yet be wolves. Loud professions of zeal and sanctity may be resorted to merely as means of success. It is the *spirit and conduct* by which we are directed to judge of men, and of the tendency of their ministry. "Ye shall know them by their fruits."

The principle on which this rule proceeds is this: true teachers have imbibed the true doctrine, which is productive of good fruit both in themselves and others; and false teachers have imbibed a false doctrine, which is productive of evil fruits both in themselves and others. There may be difficulties in applying the rule: we may be mistaken both on the favorable and the unfavorable side; yet as a general direction for those who sit not as final judges, but merely for the practical purposes of the present life, there is none like it. Men may put on the demure and the devout for mere selfish purposes, but follow them into private and domestic life, and they will ordinarily declare themselves. We may at least know enough of men by this medium to guide us in our choice of them; and that is the end to be answered.

There are two kinds of fruit by the presence or absence of which we are directed to judge of teachers; namely, *good* and *evil*. With respect to the former, every true minister of Christ is a good tree and bringeth forth good fruit. Having believed the gospel himself, he speaks it from the fulness of his heart. The love of Christ constrains him. The love of souls induces him to labor, and to deny himself for their salvation. He seeks not theirs, but them. And, where it is so, it will appear and approve itself to the consciences of those about him. A false teacher, on the other hand, can no more bring forth this good fruit than a thorn can bear grapes, or a thistle figs. There will be a manifest want of those fruits of the Spirit enumerated by the apostle; namely, of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Even in those who may have maintained a fair character, as it is commonly accounted by the world, you will often perceive a shocking vacancy with respect to these things. When the pharisee, full of scorn and self-complacency, thought ill of Christ even for his suffering a sinner to wash his feet with her tears, he was told of his own sins. But what were they? Neither himself nor his acquaintance might know of any that could be laid to his charge. Jesus, however, was not at a loss to find them; and they consist, not so much in what he *had* done, as in what he had *not* done. In this view, how naked does the poor creature appear, and what a disparity is there between him and the sinner whom he had despised! "I entered into thy house; thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this

woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet: mine head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment."

With respect to the presence or absence of *evil* fruit, a true minister of Christ cannot live in sin, no not in private, any more than a good tree can "bring forth evil fruit." Neither can a false teacher suppress for any considerable time the ruling propensity of his heart, nor forbear to manifest it, though undesignedly, to those about him. "A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."

The motives which influence these different characters being opposite, their effects will ordinarily correspond with them. All the labors of a false teacher originate and terminate in *self*. Some, under the disguise of apparent sanctity, are seeking to gratify the foulest propensities. Others flatter their audiences either as to what human nature is, or what they are in distinction from many around them. Some are adepts at gaining an ascendancy over the minds of the people, and so of getting possession of a considerable part of their property. Others, less addicted to avarice, are eager after applause; hence their chief study is to obtain the graces of a public speaker, or that elegance of diction which shall render them admired. Where such things are, they cannot be concealed, unless it be from those who are willingly ignorant. But how opposite to every thing of the kind is the spirit and conduct of the man of God! Read 1 Thess. ii. "Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor of guile: but, as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness! nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others. Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." False teachers will often be on their guard before enemies, but, when with their friends only, will throw off their disguise and indulge in licentious freedoms, under the name, it may be, of the liberty of the gospel: but it was not so with the apostles and true ministers of Christ: "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe."

### SECTION XIII.

ON THE LAST JUDGMENT, AND WHAT WILL BE ACCOUNTED TRUE RELIGION IN THAT DAY.

Matt. vii. 21—29.

OUR Lord, in drawing to the close of his discourse, is unusually solemn and impressive. He anticipates the last judgment, and

places his hearers before the great tribunal. The sum of what he says is, that mere profession will avail nothing, and that real practical godliness is the only thing which in that day will be approved.

Ver. 21—22. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord," &c. The greater part of those who in that day will have to stand before him have not acknowledged him as their Lord; and not every one of them that have will be accepted. Professions, though repeated with earnestness, will avail nothing. It is not what we *say*, but what we *do*, that will be admitted as evidence in that day. As to what we *do*, unless the Father's will be our will, Christ will not regard us. Such is the union between the Lawgiver and the Saviour, that each is guarantee as it were to the honor of the other. If the Father's wrath abide on all who believe not on the Son, the Son no less excludes from the kingdom of heaven all who obey not the Father. Many who in this world have said, "Lord, Lord," in a way of high profession, will in that day repeat their words with very different sensations, and with earnest importunity for admittance, but all in vain. They may plead their having been not only professing Christians, but Christian teachers, and some of them possessed of extraordinary gifts, but all in vain. Having been workers of iniquity, whatever else they have wrought, it stands for nothing. They were never known as his friends in this world, and shall be utterly disowned in the next. Nothing will avail in that day but what is holy. Holiness is made of little account here; shining talents carry the bell: but there the meanest Christian is approved; while the most distinguished preacher who has lived in sin will be cast out.

Ver. 24—29. "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them," &c. The regard or disregard we pay to the doctrine and precepts of Christ in this world is here compared to building a house on a good or a bad foundation, and the issue of things at the last judgment to a tempest that shall try our work. Still he presses the necessity of practical godliness. It is he that heareth his sayings and *doeth* them whose religion will stand the test; while he that heareth them and doeth them *not*—he who has heard and talked about repentance, but never repented—has heard and talked about believing, but never believed—has heard and applauded the morality of the gospel, but never walked by it—his building shall fall, and "great will be the fall of it!" Other losses have been repaired by time, but this will be irreparable and eternal.

There are two ways, and perhaps I may

say three, in which this solemn passage has been perverted. We see here, say some, that it is by *doing*, rather than by *believing*, that we shall stand approved. But though *doing*, in the article of justification, stands opposed to believing (Gal. iii. 10—12,) yet here, being introduced as the *evidence* of a state of salvation, it is opposed to *saying*, or to mere profession, and *includes believing*. Faith itself is a practical persuasion of the truth of Christ's sayings, and is followed with a course of obedience to his precepts. Moreover, the doctrine of Christ's sayings is not the rock, but the building upon it.—We see, say others, that it matters but little what doctrines we believe, provided we lead a good life; it is not by what we have *believed*, but by what we have *done*, that we shall be judged! But, if doing Christ's sayings, instead of being opposed to believing, *include* it, this remark is altogether unfounded. Finally: Others, overlooking the scope of our Lord, are from this passage continually insisting on the doctrine of justification by faith, in opposition to the works of the law, and comparing those who believe in the Saviour for acceptance with God to the wise man who built his house upon a rock; and those who depend upon their own righteousness to the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. But this way of treating the Scriptures betrays the truth into the hands of its adversaries, who, perceiving the force put upon them in supporting a favorite doctrine, conclude that it has no foundation in Scripture. The truth is, our Lord is not discoursing on our being justified by faith, but on our being "judged according to our works," which, though consistent with the other, is not the same thing, and ought not to be confounded with it. The character described is not the self-righteous rejecter of the gospel, but one who, though he may hear it and profess to believe it, yet brings forth no corresponding fruits.

The impressive manner in which he who will be our Judge enforces the *practice* of religion reminds me of the words of that miserable man, Francis Spira, who was a fearful example of the contrary. "Take heed," said he to the spectators who surrounded his bed, "of relying on that faith which works not a holy and unblamable life, worthy of a believer. Credit me, it will fail. I have tried; I presumed I had gotten the right faith; I preached it to others; I had all places in Scripture in memory that might support it; I thought myself sure, and in the mean time lived impiously and carelessly; and, behold, now the judgment of God hath overtaken me not to correction, but to damnation!"



# EXPOSITORY REMARKS

RELATIVE TO THE

## CONVERSION OF THE JEWS.

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### LETTER I.

Ezek. xxxvii.

*To the Editor of the Missionary Magazine.*

I WAS lately reading a book, published about eighty years ago, in which the author reproves another for having prayed for the conversion of the Jews, contending that they had sinned "the sin unto death;" that therefore prayer for them was not the prayer of faith; and that there was nothing in the Scriptures whence we could conclude that they ever would be converted. I shall not trouble your readers with the author's arguments, which appear to me to have no weight; but, having been employed of late years in a morning exposition, I have met with several parts of the prophecies which have appeared to me inexplicable on any other supposition; and, as it may furnish Christians with matter and motives for prayer, I will offer a few remarks on two or three passages which I conceive to relate to this subject. My present paper will be grounded on the *vision of the dry bones*, in the 37th chapter of Ezekiel.

This vision, I allow, had its first and immediate accomplishment in the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, who in that country were like dead men, or rather like bones of a dead man disunited and scattered, and in a manner without hope of recovery. Their restoration by Cyrus was a kind of resurrection from the dead; and as the Assyrian power, which carried away the ten tribes, had been swallowed up by that of Babylon, and Babylon was now in its turn swallowed up by that of Media and Persia, opportunity would probably be afforded for many of the other tribes to attach themselves to Judah, and return with them. The inquiry at that time does not appear to have been, whether they were of Judah, or Benjamin, or Levi; but *whether they were of Israel*. This may in some degree answer

*to the two sticks of Ephraim and Judah becoming one.* Being governed also by princes of the house of David, he might be said to reign over them, and to be their one shepherd.—Ver. 16—24.

But as it is not unusual for the same thing (the passover for instance) to refer immediately to one event, and remotely to another, so it is common for a prophecy to have a partial fulfilment in something at or near the time, and a more perfect one at some distant period. God's works being a whole, and the end seen from the beginning, there is often a dignified analogy between them; system as it were within system; one train of events making way for another, and furnishing an earnest of its fulfilment. Thus the kingdom of the Messiah is manifestly predicted in the seventy-second Psalm, though it is mostly under the form of the prosperous reign of Solomon. In like manner the vision in question contains a prediction of the restoration and conversion of the Jews in the latter days, though it is mostly under the form of the return of their forefathers from Babylon. In proof of this, let the following particulars be considered. First: The number of the ten tribes who might return with Judah was too small to contain a full accomplishment of the prophecy which is expressly applied to "the whole house of Israel." Secondly: Those who were to return are described as an exceedingly great army, but that of Judah and the other tribes which returned from Babylon was very far from answering to this description: they were but a small company compared with the number which usually composed an eastern army. Ezra ii. 64. Thirdly: It is said of David, God's servant, who was to be king over them, that he should be their "prince forever." This is language which very much resembles that of the covenant with David, that "his seed should be established forever, and his throne built up to all generations, even as the sun and moon in the heavens," which is clearly

to be understood of the kingdom of Christ. There is also a similar phraseology in a prophecy of Hosea: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king, in the latter days." Fourthly: Though the company who returned with Zerubbabel were many of them godly people, yet the history of the nation from that event till the coming of Christ is far from answering to what is said of them in this prophecy, that they should "walk in God's judgments, observe his statutes, and do them." Such promises also as "his tabernacle being with them, and his sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore," seem to be much too strong for the above period. Finally: It accords with the general design of this prophet, towards the latter end of his prophecies, which was, under the form of Jewish phraseology, to foretell the glory of the latter days. Hence his description of a new temple (chap. xl. xli. xlii.) of the glory of the God of Israel as dwelling in it (xlii.); of the division of the land by lot (xlv.); of the holy waters (xlvii.); and of the city whose name should be called Jehovah-shammah, *The Lord is there* (xlviii.)

Admitting the prophecy to refer to the condition of the Jews in their last dispersion, and future return to Christ, there is something very impressive in the whole account. Their present *scattered* and *unconverted* state is fitly represented by a number of dry bones. The allusion may be to a field of battle, where, many years before, thousands upon thousands fell by the sword, and, their bodies remaining unburied, their bones lay scattered over all the plain. Once they lived, but can they live again? Israel was once a living *body*, and, what was more, lived to God; yea, they were the only people who did so. But what are they now? scattered over the face of the earth; no longer a body, but separated bone from his bone; no more possessed of that life and spirit which distinguished their holy predecessors, but *dry* as bones which have been long dead; not only devoid of everything like true religion, like other sinners, but singularly averse to it. All unconverted sinners are dry, but they are *very dry*. They indeed retain something of the resemblance of religion; but it is that which a skull retains of the human countenance—ugly, disgusting, and horrid.

Their *hopeless* condition is also fitly expressed by the question to the prophet, "Can these bones live?" Judging by sense, the answer must have been—They cannot. There is no people so apparently hardened against conviction; none who have lived among Christians so much in vain; none

who manifest such diabolical enmity and wrath when reasoned with, though it be in the meekest manner. The frequent disappointments which we have met with in attempting their conversion is almost enough to overcome us with despair. Even they themselves seem to have no hopes, except what are of a worldly nature. Yet, hoping in him with whom all things are possible, we may answer with the prophet, "O Lord God, thou knowest."

Their restoration and conversion are no less fitly represented by a *resurrection*. Such is the idea given us by the apostle of this very event. "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but *life from the dead*?" So extraordinary an instance of divine power and goodness could scarcely be illustrated by anything more suitable.

The *order* in which it will be accomplished is worthy of notice. Several things, it seems, will precede their becoming truly alive to God, some of which may be preparatory to it. If they should be collected and combined by some occurrence in providence, previously to their conversion to Christ, it will correspond not only with the account here given of their first "coming forth out of their graves," &c., and their "having the Spirit of God imparted," but with another given by Zechariah. Jerusalem is, by him, represented as "a torch of fire in a sheaf to her enemies," and afterwards as having "a spirit of grace and supplication" given her, by which her inhabitants should "look on him whom they had pierced and mourn." Though sinners do nothing preparatory to their own conversion, yet God frequently does much in this way with them, and for them; and many events may precede the effectual calling of God's ancient people, which may answer to the "noise," the "shaking," and "the bones coming together, bone to his bone." Even "the sinews and the flesh may come upon them, and the skin cover them from above," while yet there is "no breath in them." In other words, they may become a body politic, and possibly have the form of devotion as heretofore, while yet it is only a form. But if, while the doctrine of the cross is preached, the Spirit of life from God out of heaven breathe upon these slain that they live, then shall they "know that the Son of God is come, and, having an understanding given them to know Him that is true, shall believe and be in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ."—1 John v. 20.

In two or three future papers, I may offer some remarks on a few more prophecies on this subject. At present, I only observe that God's designs of mercy towards the descendants of his ancient people are, I hope, sufficiently manifest to afford a ground for the prayer of faith.

## LETTER II.

Hos. i. ii. iii.

HAVING in a former paper considered the vision of the dry bones, I shall here offer a few remarks on some passages which I conceive have reference to the same subject in the prophecies of Hosea. These are chiefly addressed to the ten tribes, as those of Ezekiel were to Judah.

Under the form of signs and parables, as I suppose, he delivers in the *first* chapter some very pointed reproofs to that idolatrous people; but concludes with great and precious promises to their distant posterity.

He is commanded to go and take "a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms," and is supposed to have children by her. Such a command communicated to the people would shock them as grossly indelicate. "Nay," saith the prophet, like Nathan to David, "but ye are the men! If the Lord be a husband to you, he must have a wife of worse whoredoms than these!"

This wife of whoredoms is supposed to bear him three children, whose names are prophetic. The first, *Jezeel*, predicts evil against the government, of which this place was a seat; the second, *Loruhamah*, intimates the discontinuance of the divine mercy to the nation; and the third, *Loanni*, God's renouncing them as his people. Yet these terrible denunciations are followed (in verses 10, 11) by something not a little encouraging to the faithful, whose hearts would tremble as for the ark of God. The promises to Abraham should nevertheless be fulfilled: children should be raised up to him from the Gentiles. Nor is this all: the children of Judah and of Israel, forgetting their former enmities, should unite in the Messiah, as under a captain or leader; and then Jezeel, from being a scene of wickedness and bloodshed, should have her day of mercy. Nor does this seem to conclude the prophecy; the first verse of the second chapter seems properly to belong to the preceding rather than the following subject, and to contain an address to the faithful of the land, directing them to look out of the then present generation for *brethren and sisters*, even to the latter days, and, in the name of the Lord, to greet them with the cheering names of *Ammi* and *Ruhamah*, My people having obtained mercy!

After many cutting things in the second chapter, in which, to show the odiousness of Israel's conduct and to bring it home to their bosoms, they are again compared to an adulterous wife, who, having dissolved the marriage bond, deserved to be stripped, and, with her spurious offspring, turned out by her injured husband. They are even told that such will actually be their portion. Yet after this, from ver. 14 to the end, the most

precious promises are made to their posterity. His "alluring her, and bringing her into the wilderness," however, seems rather to be expressive of present judgments than of future mercies. It denotes, I apprehend, not the drawings of love, but the devisings of providence to render her sin its own punishment.\* As an injured husband makes use of the adulteries of his wife to convict and banish her; so the Lord would cause the fondness of this people for idolatry and idolaters to draw them into the Assyrian net (ch. vii. 11, 12,) and they should be carried away captive among the nations as into a wilderness, and for a long time be in a manner lost, Ezek. xx. 35. Yet, as in the wilderness of old he spake kindly to their fathers, and thence gave them the land of promise, so thence shall she again "receive her vineyards;" and as "the valley of Achor," where Achan's idolatry was punished, was to Israel "a door of hope," in that the fierce anger of the Lord was hereby turned away (Josh. vii. 26;) so shall it be in this case. After having made an example of many for their idolatry, his anger will be turned away, and he will comfort the survivors. Then shall they "sing as in the days of their youth, as in the day when they came up out of the land of Egypt."—See also Exod. xv. 1—21, compared with Isa. xi. 11—16, and xii.

And now, being brought to believe in the Messiah, she shall be cured of her spiritual adultery and become chaste to God, no more polluting his worship with idolatrous mixtures, but cleaving to him with singleness of heart, as to the husband of her youth.—Ver. 16, 17.

In that day, the whole creation, which has in a manner been at war with her, shall be at peace (ver. 18,) and he that had cast her off, saying, "She is not my wife, neither am I her husband," shall "betroth her unto him forever in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies." Nor are these the only attributes that shall be glorified in her recovery: "he will betroth her unto him in faithfulness, and she shall know the Lord;" his covenant promises, made even from the days of Abraham, shall now be fulfilled, and the veil which has so long remained on her heart shall be taken away.—Ver. 19, 20.

Finally: He who had taken away his corn, his wine, his oil, and his flax, owing to their being ascribed to idols, and abused to idolatry, will now graciously restore them. God will hear, and supply the heavens with water; they the earth with rain, and the

\* I cannot find that *סָרָה* any where signifies to influence in a way of mercy, but properly means to entice or deceive; and thus God, in just judgment, entices and deceives sinners, by giving them up to their own delusions. See 2 Chron. xviii. 19—22; Ezek. xiv. 9.



fruits of it with moisture: and these the people with plenty. The earth shall yield her increase, and God, even their own God, will take pleasure in blessing them. Nor is this all: Israel shall be a blessing to the world. What the seed is to the harvest, that shall they be to the nations among whom they have sojourned. And now, instead of "Loruhamah" and "Loanmi," they are called *Ruhamah* and *Ammi*; "for I will have mercy upon her, saith the Lord, that had not obtained mercy, and will say to them that were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God." Thus, like friends re-united after a long separation, their communion is more intimate than ever.

The *third* chapter contains another prophecy on the same subject. Like the former, it is introduced under the form of a parable. The case supposed is that of a man attached to a woman who is an adulteress. Go, saith the Lord to the prophet, see if thou canst love such a one; yet such, if any thing, must be my love to this people. The prophet is further supposed to go and covenant with this adulteress, engaging her to desist for many days from her lewd courses, living as it were a widow by herself, and afterwards she should become his wife. Such was the love of the Lord to the children of Israel. He loved them notwithstanding their idolatry, and intended, at a future time, to take them to be his people. He would not receive them, however, in their idolatry, nor till a proper time had elapsed, in which they should live in a state of separation; but in due season he would take them to himself as his church and people, remembering their sin no more.

"The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice." Never surely has a prophecy corresponded more exactly with fact. Nor is this all: The whole of the Israelitish race with whom we have any acquaintance have also been "without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim;" that is, though mixed with the nations of the world, and in other respects wicked in the extreme, yet they have not been suffered to go into their former idolatrous practices; and thus have answered to the adulteress ceasing from playing the harlot, and abiding for her husband in a state of separation many days. "Afterwards shall the children of Israel return and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." On this no reflection need be made, save this, that the superabundant grace of God towards them in their outcast and perishing condition shall not only fill their hearts with gratitude, but inspire them with a holy fear of offending him any more.

## LETTER III.

Hos. xi. xiii. xiv.; Jer. xxxi. 15—21.

IN my last I offered some observations on those prophecies which I considered as relating to God's future designs of mercy towards Israel, in the first three chapters of Hosea; in this I shall notice some others in the remaining part of that book, together with a passage from Jeremiah.

The ten tribes, in this and other prophecies, are frequently personified under the name of *Ephraim*. Much is said of Ephraim's sin, and of his punishment; but several strong intimations are also given of his being brought to repentance, and obtaining mercy. Of this we have a beautiful example in ch. xi. 8, &c.: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim! Shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah! Shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together." Half the force and meaning of this melting passage appears to me to be lost, by twice introducing the supplementary term *how*. So read, it contains one continued appeal of Jehovah to his own mercy and faithfulness; but, read without it, it is an alternate appeal, first in the language of covenant mercy, addressed to himself, and then in the language of justice, addressed to the conscience and other feelings of the offender: q. d. How can I bear to give thee up, Ephraim? yet thou deservest to be delivered over to destruction. What sayest thou? Shall I deliver thee? How can I bear to make thee as Admah? Yet this is thy due. What sayest thou? Shall I set thee as a monument of endless displeasure, like Zeboim? Ah no! my heart revolts at the thought, my repentings are kindled together; I will not execute the *fierceness* of mine anger; I will not return to *destroy* Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy one in the midst of thee; and I will not enter into the city as an avenger, but rather as a father will turn away mine eyes from thee, that I may not be provoked by thy sins.

In verses 10, 11, it is intimated that there should come a time when Ephraim should be of another mind, and the Lord would spare that generation, as well as many succeeding ones, for their sakes; that the signal of their return to God should be some terrible event in the world, in which he would "roar like a lion," filling the minds of men with consternation and terror; and that, in the midst of these alarms, they should come from the west, and from the south, and from the east, as trembling doves to their windows, "and I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord."

In ch. xiii. 14 Ephraim is considered as dead and buried; and now what will his father

do? Will he lament over him, like David over Absalom? No; his power is equal to his mercy. He will storm the castle that detains him. "I will ransom him from the power of the grave, I will redeem him from death. O death! I will be thy plagues. O grave! I will be thy destruction. Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes!" In this astonishing language, we see the anger of the father towards his disobedient son, now that he is dead, turned against death itself that cut him off, and the grave that enclosed him, resolving to rescue him by destroying his destroyers.

To the above, I think I ought to add ch. xiv. 4—8, as belonging to the same subject. It is, I am aware, expressive of the blessings which the Lord *would have* bestowed upon Israel in case of their return to him, as they were most pathetically exhorted to in the preceding verses. But, if there come a time when they *shall* thus return, the blessings will then be actually bestowed. Like a field refreshed by dew, like a lily blossoming with beauty, like Lebanon casting forth her roots, God will bless him, and he shall be a blessing to all about him. Nor shall this goodness be abused as heretofore, but shall heighten his abhorrence of his former courses. Ephraim, being grafted into "the green fir-tree," shall answer to his name; he shall be "fruitful" among his brethren: nor shall he, as formerly, bring forth fruit unto himself, but to him that hath had mercy upon him.

I shall conclude this piece with a few remarks on a well known passage in the prophecies of Jeremiah, as belonging to the same subject. I refer to ch. xxxi. 15—21. The ten tribes are here, as in other prophecies, personified under the name of *Ephraim*. They had, at the time of its delivery, been carried away captive more than a century. Alluding to the distresses of that period, the prophet spake as follows: "Thus saith the Lord, A voice was heard from Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, refused to be comforted for her children because they were not!" Rachel was the mother of Joseph, from whom Ephraim descended: and, by a most affecting figure of speech, she is here represented as risen from the grave, and looking about for her children; but, finding none of them in the land of their fathers, she weeps for the loss of them with bitter lamentations. But let not Rachel, or rather the church of God whom she personates, despair. "Thus saith the Lord, Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears; for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and thy children shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope *in thine end*, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border." But whence is this hope to

be entertained by Rachel? Her children had been gone for more than a century; and their name and memorial were in a manner perished. observe the answer, "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art Jehovah my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and, after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." This confession of Ephraim is not historic, but prophetic; for the state of mind here depicted is represented as taking place at a time so very distant that he should look back upon the days of his idolatry as the period of his *youth*. Nevertheless, when he shall return to the Lord, he shall obtain mercy. Ephraim has not only a mother to bewail him, but a father, who, as soon as he hears the voice of the prodigal, is moved with compassion, and runs to meet him. "Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for, since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." The virgin of Israel is then directed to prepare for returning home. "Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps; set thine heart toward the high way, even the way which thou wentest: Turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities."

But Rachel was not only the mother of Joseph, and so of Ephraim, but also of Benjamin, whose tribe adhered to Judah; and inasmuch as her voice was heard from *Ramah*, a city of Benjamin, the prophecy would not only have a retrospective aspect to the captivity of Ephraim by Assyria, but a prospective one to that of Judah and Benjamin by Babylon. It was in the latter that the children were carried away from Ramah, which seems to have been the head-quarters of the Babylonish general after the taking of Jerusalem, and whence he disposed of his prisoners.—Jer. xl. 1—3. Thus both the ten and the two tribes, sustaining a relation to Rachel, are combined in the prophecy, as they should actually be in their restoration. Hence it follows, "How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? For the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth. A woman shall compass a man. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, as yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah, and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity, The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have re-

plished every sorrowful soul." The import of these verses I take to be this: How long wilt thou seek deliverance from human help? God will cause, what is contrary to all human calculation, weakness to overcome strength, and the church to be triumphant. Judah, with Ephraim, shall return; and righteousness, holiness, and peace, shall be established in their land. The prophecy being a vision, the prophet adds, "Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me."

As there is nothing in all this which intimates the return of the ten tribes as a *distinct nation*, but in connection with Judah, so neither is there any thing which leads us to look for the fulfilment merely in the return of Judah from Babylon, accompanied with a few of the Israelites; and, if we read on to ver. 31—34, we shall find that the blessings promised were not to be under the *same covenant* as that of their fathers, but "a new covenant," in which God will "put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be his people;" all which determines it to have reference to gospel times.

#### LETTER IV.

Isa. xi. xii.

THAT these chapters refer to the gospel dispensation there can be no doubt, seeing they are introduced with a prophecy "that a rod shall come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots;" and by some passages in them they would seem to have a special reference to the latter part of it. The language in which peace and amity, as succeeding to a state of enmity and hostility, is described in ver. 6—8, seems much too strong for any thing the church has yet seen, and to accord with no period short of that mentioned ver. 9, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Ver. 10 describes the great accession to the church of Christ from among the Gentiles. "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign to the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious." The term *rest* denotes an established government, succeeding to wars and troubles, like the reign of Solomon to that of David. Such will be the government of Christ in that day, to what it has been in all former periods, during which it has been engaged in one continued struggle. And as the reign of Solomon was exempted from wars, and distinguished by its buildings, so shall be the reign of Christ in that day. The Lord will then build up Zion, and appear in his glory.

In the midst of this glory God is represented as remembering his ancient people, both

Israel and Judah. "It shall come to pass, in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand a *second time* to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." This *second time* of God's setting his hand cannot refer to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon; for though that event might be so denominated in respect of their being first brought out of Egypt, yet the period of the whole prophecy does not answer to it. That which is here referred to is something which should be wrought for Israel under the reign of the Messiah, and at a time when "the earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" and what it can be but their conversion to him, I am not able to conceive.

What follows, in ver. 14—16, compares the return of the remnant of God's ancient people to the coming up of their fathers out of Egypt. The kingdom of the Messiah shall be enlarged, as the borders of Israel were formerly by their victories over the surrounding nations; and as then God dried up the tongue, or bay, of the Red Sea, and caused the waters of Jordan to go backward, so now he will remove every obstruction out of their way, and bring them home to himself with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

Ch. xii. is a continuation of the subject, and contains a hymn, or sacred song of praise, suited to the joyful occasion of their deliverance. It is observable that their first deliverance from Egypt was followed by a triumphant song on the shores of the Red Sea. So also was their deliverance from Babylon.—Psa. cxxvi. Their joy on that occasion was so great that what had taken place seemed to them a dream—too much to be true. Surrounding nations beheld and acknowledged "that the Lord had done great things for them;" while their thankful spirits echoed the acknowledgment: "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." But neither of these deliverances was equal to that which is here celebrated.

We may observe, in the first place, the use of the *singular pronouns*: "Thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee," &c. This may denote the *unity* that shall prevail among them. In their divided and scattered condition they said, "Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our



parts;" but now they are of one heart and of one soul.

With respect to the matter of the song, they begin with praise to Jehovah for his great mercy in pardoning their sins, or removing that fierce anger which had for so many ages burned against them. "Thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." This is perfectly in character: true penitents look back upon past sins with bitterness, and thankfulness for having escaped them and the wrath of God revealed from heaven against them. The anger of God against the Jews, for their crucifying his Son, the Lord of glory, and continuing in such bitter enmity against him, has indeed been great. It was truly said of them that "wrath was come upon them to the uttermost." The calamities which befel them in the destruction of their city, the length of their dispersion, the contempt they have endured, and, what is more than all, the judicial blindness and hardness of heart to which they are given up, are so many expressions of divine displeasure against them, with which their former history furnishes no parallel. The remembrance therefore of this, while it fills them with the deepest self-abasement, furnishes them with the highest sensations of grateful joy. It is this compound sensation that is described in Hos. iii. 5, "They shall fear the Lord, and his goodness, in the latter days."

The language of ver. 2, though suited to Old-Testament times, conveys the strongest ideas of joyful amazement. Behold, *God* is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord *Jehovah* is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." Had this part of the song been expressed in New-Testament language, it might have been nearly in the words of the apostle, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"—"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Of old he had been the salvation of their fathers; of late of the Gentiles: but now "all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Such an interposition of free and great grace may well be introduced with the note of attention "behold!" And now he will be to them a refuge. Though their sins have been great as the sea, yet, without fear, they may trust in him to heal

them; and though their builders formerly set him at nought, yet, without any apprehension of being confounded, they may rest their hopes upon him: and wherefore? Because in him they shall recognise "the everlasting *Jehovah*," the God of their fathers.

The effect of so great a salvation must needs be a general, an exceeding, a mighty joy. Such is that described in ver. 3, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." It is said to have been the custom of the Jews, on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, to draw water in a golden pitcher from the well of Siloam, and to pour it, mixed with wine, on the sacrifice as it lay on the altar, singing all the while a part of this hymn, especially this third verse, with great rejoicings, and looking forward to that abundance of blessings which they expected in the times of the Messiah. If so it was, they were not far from the true intent either of their feast of tabernacles or of the prophecy. The words of our Saviour, in John vii. 37, will hence appear peculiarly appropriate:—"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any one thirst, let him come unto me and drink!" As the keeping of the feast of the passover was prefigurative of the joy and obedience of faith under the gospel (1 Cor. v. 8), so was the keeping of the feast of tabernacles: hence, in the prophecy of Zechariah, a rejection of Christ is expressed by a refusal to come up to Jerusalem to keep this feast.—Ch. xiv. 16, 19. But though some, even in the latter days, will thus stand out against the Saviour, yet the feast shall be kept by the great body of mankind, especially by God's ancient people the Jews. The salvation of Christ shall be to them as wells of water in a dry land, from which they shall draw in abundance. Such will be the types and prophecies of their own sacred writings; which, though full of living water, have, through their unbelief, been of no account to them. The wells were deep, and they had nothing to draw with. Such also will be the doctrines and ordinances of the New Testament, in which they have hitherto seen no beauty, but rejected the counsel of God against themselves.

And now, being filled with joy themselves, they will not be able to contain it, but will feel an ardent desire to recommend the Saviour to the Gentile nations. "In that day shall ye say, Praise the *Lord*, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name be exalted. Sing unto *JEHOVAH*; for he hath done excellent things; this is known in all the earth,"—Ver. 4, 5. From this and other passages, especially Rom. xi. 12, 15, it appears that the conversion of the Jews will be a kind of resurrection to the world. In every way, God, according to his promise, will make Abraham's seed a blessing to man-

kind. Their fall and diminution were an occasion of our riches; but their recovery will be much more so. So great an event, "known in all the earth," will in a manner put infidelity out of countenance. Their coming over to Christ will be like Abner's coming over to David, which broke up the power of his enemies, and issued in the peaceable establishment of his kingdom.

Finally: Zion is congratulated and called upon to "cry out and shout, for that God will then dwell in the midst of her."—Ver. 6. I am not sure that Zion in this place is not to be understood literally of the city of Jerusalem. I may be mistaken in thinking that God has promised, not only to convert the great body of Abraham's descendants, but to restore them to their own country; but I am not able, on any other supposition, to understand several passages of scripture; especially Zech. xii. 6, and Luke xxi. 24. "JERUSALEM SHALL BE INHABITED AGAIN IN HER OWN PLACE, EVEN IN JERUSALEM.—They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, UNTIL THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES BE FULFILLED." Whatever figurative meaning may be put upon the words of the prophet, which, however, it appears to me must be very forced; yet there can be no figure in those of our Lord, which clearly intimate that that same Jerusalem which shall be for a time trodden down by the Gentiles shall be no longer so than TILL the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled. But whether Zion in this passage be taken literally for Jerusalem, or figuratively for the whole church of God, both Jews and Gentiles being united in the faith of Christ, the presence and blessing of God will be her greatest glory. The name of the city from that day shall be called *Jehovah-shammah*, THE LORD IS THERE.

#### LETTER V.

Zech. ch. xi. xii. xiii. 1.

THAT we may perceive the connection of the prophecy in chap. xii. it will be proper to observe that chap. xi. contains a prediction of the overthrow of the Jewish nation by the Romans. It is introduced by the burning of the temple, composed of the wood of Lebanon (ver. 1.) by the fall of some of their great men (ver. 2.) and by the consternation of others (ver. 3.) To represent the state of religion among them at this time, the prophet is directed to "take unto him the instruments;" that is, to personate certain shepherds which God would raise up in the land. First, the great and good Shepherd of the sheep, who should now make his appearance upon earth, ver. 4—14. Secondly, a foolish and sordid shepherd, to

which they should be given up after having rejected him, ver. 15—17. While personating the *former*, the prophet speaks of himself as commissioned to feed the flock of slaughter, especially the poor of [the flock, whose possessors slew them and held themselves guiltless, ver. 4, 5. These possessors, with the great body of the nation, are given up, ver. 6. But a remnant should be saved from among the poor, and these should be fed by the good Shepherd (ver. 7.) who also would set himself against those who sought not them, but theirs, ver. 8, 9. By the breaking of his staves, Beauty and Bonds (the instruments of his rule as a shepherd,) is set forth the dissolving of the covenant of peculiarity made with Israel, and the giving them up to divisions one among another. This judgment should be so manifest that the believing part of the nation should see the hand of God in it, and that it was his design thereby to put an end to their place and nation, ver. 11. The cause of these great evils is found in their contemning, rejecting, and crucifying Christ, ver. 12, 13. And now, having rid themselves, as they supposed, of him, God would, in just judgment, raise up for them a foolish shepherd; denoting that they should not only be deserted of God, and punished by the Roman sword, but given up to the influence of a set of blind and sordid priests, who should lead them into the ditch, and there perish with them, ver. 15—18. Such appears to be the sum of chap. xi., which is altogether *against* the body of the Jewish nation; but chap. xii. contains a prophecy of their restoration, and is therefore called, "The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel."—Ver. 1.

The events of this and the foregoing prophecy, though wide asunder as to time, yet very properly follow each other. Paul takes but little notice of the state of the Jews during their long dispersion; but passing over that chasm, as included in their being "broken off," proceeds to speak of their being "grafted in again."—Rom. xi.

The prophecy finds Jerusalem "besieged" by enemies, but very differently circumstanced from what she was in the foregoing chapter. Her enemies were then avenging the cause of God and of his Christ; and therefore, whatever might be their motives, were successful: but in this siege God is on her side, and therefore she is "a cup of trembling" to her enemies. Of course, this must refer to the period when she shall be restored.

The character which Jehovah assumes in the preface to the prophecy is worthy of notice: "Thus saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him." These mighty works relate to the first creation of the world, and the mention of them may intimate that,

at the time of the prophecy being fulfilled, they shall in a manner be acted over again. That which he will then accomplish towards his ancient people shall be a kind of new creation.

It were presumptuous to be very positive as to the meaning of a prophecy which is yet to be accomplished; but, comparing it with other prophecies of the same event, the following particulars appear to be conveyed by it. First: That the Jews shall be restored to their own land prior to their conversion: "Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem."—Ver. 6. This event may be accomplished in the ordinary course of providence, by some of the great conquerors of the world, who shall find their interest in it, and be induced, as Cyrus was in a former instance, to favor it. Secondly: That a grand combination will be formed against them with a view to dispossess them.—Ver. 2, 9. Thirdly: That the nations engaged in this combination will be repulsed, and sorely punished for their presumptuous attempt, which, after witnessing the remarkable fulfilment of prophecy towards the Jews, must be against the light of their own consciences: "Jerusalem shall be a cup of trembling (a cup as it were of poison) to those who go up against her; a rock falling upon their heads; a hearth of fire among the wood; and a torch in a sheaf."—Ver. 2—6. Fourthly: That the country and the city shall be united against the enemy.—Ver. 5—7. Fifthly: That they should be guarded by Providence, and strengthened to encounter the greatest difficulties: "The Lord will defend them, and he that is feeble among them shall be as David," &c.—Ver. 8. Sixthly: That, after all these temporal interpositions, the Lord will pour upon them a spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall lament over their sins, and the sins of their fathers, particularly in having crucified the Lord of glory.—Ver. 10.

This order of things seems perfectly to agree with what is said in Ezek. xxxvii., where the process is described, first, by "a noise," then "a shaking, a coming together bone to his bone," a being covered with "sinews and flesh and skin," and last of all by their having breathed into them "the breath of life."—Ver. 7—9. To the same purpose they are described in ver. 13, 14, as first brought out of their graves, and then as knowing their deliverer.

The only difficulty attending this statement seems to arise from ver. 5, where, previously to the pouring out of the spirit of grace upon them, the governors of Judah are supposed to strengthen themselves, and one another, in "the Lord of Hosts, their God." But it is no unusual thing for the leaders of a people in time of war, though destitute of true religion, yet to have so

much of a conviction of the dependence of all upon God as to strengthen themselves and their armies by a hope of divine assistance. Joab could say to his brother, "Be of good courage, and let us play the man for our people, and for the cities of our God; and the Lord do that which seemeth him good."—2 Sam. x. 12. So Abijah, 2 Chron. xiii.

A few remarks on the *spiritual* part of the prophecy shall conclude this paper. First: The *subjects* of this great change: these will be both princes and people. In the pouring out of the Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, there were many of the latter, but few if any of the former; but now all descriptions of men shall bow to our Redeemer's sceptre. Secondly: The *cause* of it; namely, the pouring upon them "a spirit of grace and of supplications." The spirit of true religion is a spirit of *grace* in respect of its source, and of *supplications* in respect of its issue, importunate prayer. Looking at the state of these people at present, we are grieved for the hardness of their hearts; but when the Spirit of the living God shall take the work in hand, the heart of stone shall become a heart of flesh. Thirdly: The *grand medium* of it; namely, the remembrance of Him whom their fathers crucified, and whom they themselves have pierced by justifying them in it. A believing view of Jesus on the cross will dissolve the most obdurate spirit in godly sorrow. Fourthly: The *intensity* of the grief: it shall be a *great* mourning, like that of a father for the loss of an only son, or like the lamentations at the death of Josiah, in the valley of Megiddon. Fifthly: Its *universality*: the land shall mourn, and every family of every remaining tribe. Scarcely a house shall be found, but on entering it, you shall find them weeping over their former obstinacy and unbelief. Sixthly: The *individuality and retirement* of it: "Every family shall mourn apart, and their wives apart." They will not only weep together when they meet, but retire to lament in secret over their own iniquity. Scarcely a closet or private place shall be found, but some one will be watering it with his tears. Finally: The *remedy* to all this grief: "In that day, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." By looking to Jesus they were wounded, and by looking to Jesus they are healed. The "first fruits" of this great work appeared on the day of Pentecost, when thousands were pricked to the heart, repented, and were baptized in that name which they had despised; but "the lump" is yet to appear. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen!"



# EXPOSITION OF THE PROPHECIES

IN

ISAIAH XXVI, AND ITS CONNECTION,

AS RELATING TO

## THE TIMES OF THE MILLENNIUM.

AND THOSE WHICH PRECEDE IT, INCLUDING OUR OWN.

[Written in the beginning of 1815.]

It is very evident that the prophecies in Isaiah xxvi., and other chapters connected with it, relate to gospel times. It must be in them that the Lord of Hosts makes a feast of fat things unto all people—destroys the face of the covering cast over all people—swalloweth up death in victory—and wipeth away tears from all faces.—Chap. xxv. 6—9. The only question is as to what *part* of the gospel dispensation this strong language can apply. Some of it appears to be too strong to agree with events which have yet occurred, and therefore has been generally understood of the latter-day glory, when Jews and Gentiles shall embrace the gospel to a far greater extent than has hitherto been seen. With this accords the language at the close of chap. xxiv., and which seems to glance at the conversion of God's *ancient* people. "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his *ancients* gloriously." With this also accords the whole xxvth chapter, which describes the triumphs of the church over her enemies, and to have been complete should I conceive have included the first two verses of the xxvith, where the city of God is represented as having salvation for walls and bulwarks, and as throwing open her gates and inviting the faithful to enter in.

But, as certain parts of the xxvth chapter refer to the conflicts which precede the triumph, so does the remainder of the xxvth, and the first verse of the xxvith. Now it is in these prophecies, referring to times which *precede* the Millennium, that we shall find the events of our own times. By giving what appears to be the meaning of every verse, accompanied by a quotation of the verse itself, the reader will be able to judge of the justness of the application of the prophecy.

Ver. 3—6. The faithful are encouraged to trust in the Lord in troublous times: for, before the city of God shall be encompassed with salvation, Babylon, the antichristian city, must be destroyed; which will be attended with such calamities that peace will in a manner be taken from the earth, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.

Ver. 7. The church pleading with God takes encouragement from his regard to righteousness that he will not always suffer her enemies to triumph over her.—"The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just."

Ver. 8, 9. The grievous persecutions which she had borne during the long and dark night of antichristian domination are viewed as divine chastisements, or "judgments beginning at the house of God;" under which she declares her feelings, and hopes for deliverance.—"Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."

Ver. 9, latter part. The ground of this hope is, not only that God has punishments in reserve for her enemies, but that the calamities which the infliction of these punishments will bring upon the world shall be made subservient to her increase.—"For when thy judgments are abroad in the earth the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

Ver. 10, 11. The adherents of Antichrist

will not profit by these events: but, being given up to perverseness and blindness, neither mercies nor judgments will humble them: that, however, which was unaccomplished by forbearing goodness shall be accomplished by the strong arm of justice—they shall be humbled and consumed in fires of their own kindling.—“Let favor be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people: yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.”

Ver. 12. The church expresseth her confidence that these calamities, though they should take peace from the earth, yet shall contribute to her prosperity: for all that she hath wrought, it is God that hath wrought it in and by her; and he will not forsake the work of his own hands.—“Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.”

Ver. 13, 14. She recounts her persecutions, cleaves to Christ, and anticipates the fall of her persecutors.—“O Lord, our God, other Lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They are dead, they shall not live, they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.”

Ver. 15, 16. After the fall of the antichristian powers the church will be increased, and God will be glorified; especially by the conversion of the Jews, who under the chastising hand of God shall be brought to pray unto him.—“Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation: thou art glorified: thou hadst removed it far unto all the ends of the earth. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee: they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.”

Ver. 17, 18. She laments her ineffectual and abortive labors for ages preceding in subduing the world to Christ.—“Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord: we have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind! we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.”

Ver. 19. To these complaints of the church, God graciously answers by promises of better times.—“Thy dead shall live, my deceased, they shall arise (Lowth:) awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”

Ver. 20, 21, and chap. xxvii. 1. He an-

swers further by inviting her to retire into her chambers, as for shelter from the storm. There will be no need for her to fight in this battle, but to pray in secret: it will be soon over: the blood of the martyrs must be avenged, and the antichristian power, that great leviathan, that piercing and crooked serpent, must be slain by the “sore, and great, and strong” sword of Jehovah. Then the church of Christ shall shine forth in all her millennial glory.—“In that day sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day!”—Chap. xxvii. 2, 3.

#### REMARKS ON ISAIAH XXVI. 9, IN REFERENCE TO THE PRESENT TIMES.

“When thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”

IF the foregoing piece contain the true meaning of these prophecies, there can be no doubt but the words in verse 9 refer to the calamities preparatory to the overthrow of the papal Antichrist and the introduction of the Millennium. Some of these we have seen; others are yet to come; but the most interesting character pertaining to them is that under them “the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” It is not enough to understand them of what *ought* to be, but of what *will* be. The inhabitants of the world have in all ages been taught righteousness by the judgments of God; but now they shall *learn* it. The same thing is foretold in Rev. xv. 4; where, in reference to the pouring out of the vials, it is asked “Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest?” The sense is that the judgments already found upon the earth, and those which are yet to come, will, with the word of God, which shall at the same time be spreading, be the means of effecting that great change in the moral state of the world which prophecy gives us to expect.

Let us observe the effects produced by the events which have already occurred. We are informed, by a serious and intelligent spectator, that a deep impression was made upon the continental armies by the late sanguinary contests. The Rev. Mr. HALLBECK, Moravian minister, who, in the summer of 1813, travelled through the north of Germany, while occupied by the French and Allied armies, and published a narrative of his journey, writes as follows:—“It is impossible to describe the ardor and enthusiasm which prevailed in Prussia, as soon as the people were permitted to take up arms against their oppressors. Scarcely were the

intentions of the monarch known, before the whole country was in motion, and thousands flew to arms. Counts and barons, professors and students, masters and servants, enrolled themselves as *common* soldiers, and those who could not bear arms gave money. The ladies sold their jewels, their gold, their very hair, to aid the common cause; they left the toilet to provide for hospitals, to dig entrenchments, &c.

"This enthusiasm, to which modern history presents no equal, *was combined with a religious spirit pervading the whole nation.* The *iron time* (as it is called) since 1807 had subdued the pride of the people, and the terrible judgments in Russia had opened their eyes. The soldiers were solemnly consecrated for the war by their parish ministers. It was a most affecting scene to see some thousands of young warriors together, receiving instructions from their minister, and the blessing of the church, of their parents and relatives, before they went to fight for liberty. Every heart was moved, every eye shed tears.

"The same good disposition and unparalleled enthusiasm pervaded also the regular troops. They were no more the boasting self-confident Prussians of 1809; on the contrary, modesty, and dependence on help from above, formed the general character of Blucher's army. **WITH GOD, FOR OUR KING AND COUNTRY,** was the motto embroidered on their standards, engraven in their hearts. Cursing and swearing, the common vices of soldiers, were seldom heard; no songs were allowed to be sung till revised by the colonel, and approved by a clergyman. Many of these songs were of a religious, and all of a moral tendency. The regiments were not indeed provided with chaplains, but they attended divine service as often as circumstances permitted.

"Eight hundred Prussians were once quartered in Herrnhut. The commanding officer had ordered the band to parade the streets as usual in the evening; but, being told that there was a meeting for divine worship at that hour, he postponed the music, and he and all the officers and soldiers attended the chapel.

"To this modest and pious spirit was joined a bravery equally enthusiastic, of which it is not easy to form an idea without having been a witness to it. **CONQUER OR DIE** was a resolution legible in the countenance of every soldier, which was not effaced by the most adverse circumstances, and which influenced those who were naturally of a weak and timid disposition."

I lay no stress on the *durability* of these impressions: some of them may have continued, others may have subsided; but, however this be, we may see how the mighty hand of God, when stretched out, can subdue the spirits of men. The inhabitants of

Prussia, and other continental nations, have of late years been said to be remarkable for their infidelity: but infidelity at this time seems to have hid its head.

Further, is it not deserving of notice that while some of the most awful judgments have been abroad in the earth, and men's minds have been impressed by them, an impulse has been given to circulate the holy Scriptures, such as was never before known? Without inquiring whence this impulse proceeded, its existence and extent are manifest to every observant eye. The remarks made upon this subject in respect of Russia, in the *Eclectic Review* for November, are worthy of notice, and will in part apply to other nations as well as Russia. "In contemplating the exertions which are made by Christians of all denominations for the universal diffusion of religious knowledge, it is indeed gratifying to reflect on the powerful influence which the Russian church, and the Russian people, may exert on the progress of divine truth among the nations. Their capabilities in this view are extremely great, nearly surrounded as they are by many numerous tribes, who are sitting in darkness, and in the land of the shadow of death; and their zealous co-operation in the cause of revealed truth may be regarded as one of those events which, under the guidance of a divine agency, bear the closest relation to the propagation of the gospel, and the immortal interests of the human race."—p. 431.

From what is said of the inhabitants of the world, that "when God's judgments are abroad in the earth they will learn righteousness," we are not to suppose that this effect will be produced by the events of providence *only*: the word of God, and the Spirit of God, will accompany them and co-operate with them. Such appears to be the actual state of things already in some degree, and such we may expect will be their progress.

These remarks may be thought to afford but little prospect of continued peace, but rather give us to expect a succession of judgments. I wish all success to every attempt at peace; but, so long as popery remains in the earth, I believe there will be no continued peace for it. "Is it peace, Jehu? What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are so many?" Prophecy apart, it cannot escape the observation of thinking men that popery, notwithstanding its being raised by recent events to somewhat of its former greatness, is still dissatisfied. It must be a persecuting enemy of true religion or nothing. There is not a papal nation in being, of any account, but what has in it the seeds of discontent and future wars. The preponderating powers of Europe will have to say, *We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed!*



## EXPOSITION OF PASSAGES

RELATING TO

### THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

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THE forgiveness of sin is doubtless one of the most interesting subjects to a sinful creature; and if there be one sin upon which the Divine Being has thought fit to set a mark of peculiar displeasure, by declaring it unpardonable, it is worthy of the most serious inquiry to determine what it is. Perhaps the most likely method of coming at the truth will be by first taking a view of those passages of Scripture where it is either fully expressed or implied, and then making a few remarks upon them.

There is no express mention of the sin against the Holy Spirit under the former dispensation. It seems, however, that there was a period in the lives of Cain and Saul, and perhaps of some others, when they were given up of God to inevitable destruction. The first, or rather the only express mention that we have of it, is in the evangelists, where it is applied to the Pharisees, on occasion of their blasphemously asserting, "This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." Dr. Whitby thinks these passages were only designed to warn them of the sin, and that it was not possible to be actually committed till the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost; and assigns this as a reason, that Christ afterwards prayed for those very persons. But those for whom Christ prayed "knew not what they did:" they were in the same situation with Saul while a persecutor; they "did it ignorantly, and in unbelief." This, however, was not true of *all* his murderers. Those who made answer to Judas, who confessed that he had betrayed innocent blood, "See thou to that," could not, I am afraid, have this plea alleged on their behalf. It is true the multitude did it ignorantly, and many of their rulers, as Peter candidly acknowledged; but this, I should think, is more than could be said of them all. It is pretty evident that some of

them acted upon the principles suggested by our Lord: "This is the heir, come let us kill him." It is no objection to this that it is said, "If they had known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;" for *knowledge* is not here put for a mere conviction that he was the Messiah, but for that spiritual discernment which is possessed only by believers, being "revealed to them by the Spirit, who searcheth the deep things of God." From certain passages of Scripture it appears to me that some of the Pharisees were guilty of the unpardonable sin. See John ix, 41, and xii. 42, 43.

Perhaps the next intimation that is given of this sin is in Peter's address to Simon Magus: "Repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God, *if perhaps* the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. It does not appear that the apostle considered the sorcerer as having *certainly* committed the unpardonable sin: but it seems he considered it as a matter of doubt, and therefore, with a view to impress upon his mind the greatness of his wickedness and the danger he was in, expressed himself in that doubtful manner which he was not used to do in ordinary cases.

The apostle Paul seems to have had an eye to this sin, when, speaking of himself, he says, "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly and in unbelief." None will suppose that Saul's ignorance, much less his unbelief, had anything in fit meritorious, which could induce the Divine Being to show him mercy: on the contrary it was sinful, and that for which he reckoned himself the chief of sinners. But it was not accompanied with such circumstances of aggravation as to exclude him from an interest in divine mercy: it was not the unpardonable sin.

In the epistle to the Hebrews there are several intimations of this sin; particularly

in the following passages: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

—"For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite to the Spirit of grace?"

Peter also describes the same characters: "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Lastly: It must be with reference to this sin that John writes in his First Epistle; "If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life.—There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it."—"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

The above are the principal, if not the only, passages in which reference is made to the unpardonable sin. From these, taken altogether, I shall offer the following remarks:

First: When the Scripture speaks of any sin as *unpardonable*, or of the *impossibility* of those who have committed it being renewed again unto repentance, we are not to understand them as expressing any natural limitation of either the power or the mercy of God, nor yet of the efficacy of the Saviour's blood; but merely of a limitation dictated by sovereign wisdom and righteousness.

Secondly: It is not any one particular *act* of sin that predominates it unpardonable, but the *circumstances* under which it is committed. The act, in the case of the Pharisees, was uttering blasphemous language against the miracles of Christ; in the supposed case of Saul, it was blasphemously persecuting, and otherwise injuriously treat-

ing, the church of Christ; in the case of the Hebrews, it was apostacy from the truth; in the false teachers described by Peter, it was not only perverting the truth, but returning to sensual abomination. These acts being various, the unpardonable sin could not consist in any one of them in itself considered, but in their being committed under certain circumstances.

Thirdly: The peculiar circumstances under which any of these acts becomes unpardonable seems to be the party being possessed of a certain degree of *light*; and that not merely objective, as exhibited in the gospel, but subjective, as possessed by the understanding. This light, which is attributed to the Holy Spirit, seems to afford the specific reason of the unpardonable sin being represented as committed against him. The distinction which our Lord makes between blasphemy *against the Son of Man* and that *against the Holy Spirit*, declaring the one pardonable and the other unpardonable, seems to consist in this: the former, during his humiliation, might be the effect of ignorance and unbelief; but the latter (imputing to satanic influence those benevolent miracles which were not only wrought before their eyes by the Spirit of God, but approved themselves to their consciences to be of God) could be no other than wilful malignity. And this would be the case especially after the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, when such a blaze of light shone forth in confirmation of the gospel: a blasphemous opposition to it at that period would, where the light was not only exhibited but possessed in the understanding, be a black mark of reprobation. The blasphemy of Saul was accompanied with a great degree of objective light; but it did not so possess his understanding and conscience but that he did it ignorantly and in unbelief. Had he committed the same blasphemy knowingly, or in spite of a full persuasion in his conscience that the cause he opposed was the cause of God, it is supposed, by his own manner of speaking, that it would have been unpardonable, and that he would not have obtained mercy. The case of the Hebrews turns entirely upon the same circumstance: they not only had the gospel objectively exhibited before them, but became the subjects of deep convictions, and powerful impressions. They were "enlightened," and had "tasted the heavenly gift;" were made "partakers of the Holy Spirit; tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." None of these expressions, it is true, denotes that divine change which *accompanies salvation*, being expressly distinguished from it (and John also, in his First Epistle, intimates that those *who are* "born of God" cannot be guilty of this sin,) yet they undoubtedly express powerful impressions, and deep con-

victions, together with some extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, which were common in those times. All this rendered a departure from the truth what the apostle, in the tenth chapter of the same epistle, calls "sinning wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth; treading under foot the Son of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace." It is also upon this circumstance of *light* that the case of those apostates mentioned by Peter turns. "After they have *known* the way of righteousness, to turn from the holy commandment" is that which seals their doom.

Fourthly: The *impossibility* of such characters being recovered and saved arises from two causes:—

1. The only way, or medium, of a sinner's salvation is by the sacrifice of Christ; but the nature of their sin is such that they "wilfully tread him under foot, and treat the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, as an unholy thing." Now, if the sacrifice of Christ be thus treated, there is no other way of escape: "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment." Hence it becomes a hopeless undertaking for the servants of God to attempt any thing for their recovery. What can they do? Nothing but what they have done already in vain. The grounds which they have ordinarily to go over, in saving sinners from the wrath to come, are, "Repentance from dead works; faith towards God; baptism" of water, and in the primitive times of the Holy Spirit, accompanied with "the laying on of hands;" exhibiting to them "the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment;" but these things have been *known* and *rejected*, have lost their force: why should they be repeated? No, saith the apostle, "leaving these first principles," and those who have rejected them, in the hand of God, we will "go on" with our work "unto perfection."—"The ploughman doth not plough *all day* to sow"—and "bread-corn is bruised, because he will not *ever* be threshing it."

2. The only efficient cause of a sinner's being brought to repentance, and so to forgiveness, is the almighty and sovereign influence of the Holy Spirit; and the only hope that is left for such characters must arise from the exertion of His power, with whom all things are naturally possible: "But of him they are given up! they have done despite to the Spirit of grace," and he hath utterly abandoned them to their own delusions! See Heb. vi. 7, 8.

Fifthly: The cases which in our times appear to approach the nearest to this sin are those of persons who apostatize from the truth after having enjoyed great religious advantages, obtained much light, felt strong convictions, and made considerable progress in reforming their conduct. The apostasy

of such characters, as of some among the Hebrews, is sometimes *sentimental*. Having long felt the gospel way of salvation to grate upon their feelings, they fall in with some flesh-pleasing scheme, either that of open infidelity, or some one of those which approach the nearest to it; and now, their conduct becoming equally loose with their principles, when reproved by their friends they keep themselves in countenance by professing to have changed their sentiments in religious matters. In them is fulfilled what was predicted of some by the apostle Paul: "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie;—and be damned."

The apostasy of others, like those described in the Second Epistle of Peter, is of a more *practical* nature. Having long felt the yoke of religion galling to their inclinations, they burst the bonds and let loose the reins of lust; and, to ward off reproof and keep themselves in countenance, they affect to treat all religion with contempt, raking together the faults of professing Christians, as an excuse for their own iniquities. Such characters are commonly the worst of all, and the most dangerous to society; nor do I recollect any instance of their having been "renewed again unto repentance:" "twice dead," they seem doomed to be "plucked up by the roots." In them is verified what our Lord speaks, of a man out of whom should be cast an unclean spirit, which goeth forth in search of a new habitation, seeking rest, but finding none, and at length resolves on a return to his old abode. "And when he cometh he findeth it empty, swept and garnished. Then he goeth, and taketh with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in, and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

I am afraid that to the above might be added a great number of characters who, in early life, were of a decent and grave deportment; and who, possessing promising abilities, were encouraged by their friends to engage in *the work of the ministry*. Their main study being to cultivate their powers, they have at length attained the art of conveying truth and commending virtue in a style of pleasing energy. But as they have never loved nor lived upon the truth which they have communicated, so neither have they practised the virtues which they have recommended. Slaves to popularity, avarice, or lust, they pass through life under a disguise; and, being conversant with divine things as surgeons and soldiers are with the shedding of human blood, they cease to have any effect upon them with respect to their own souls. I would not presume to pass sentence on all such characters; but neither would I be in their situation for the whole world!



The chief difficulties which attend the account of the unpardonable sin affect ministers, in their praying for and preaching to sinners and dejected souls, who are apt to draw dark conclusions against themselves. With respect to *prayer*, we have directions given us on this head.—1 John v. 16. We are not to pray that God would forgive men *this sin*, because this would be contradicting the revealed will of God; but, as we cannot tell with certainty who are the subjects of it, we may pray for sinners, without distinction, that God would give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; always submitting our petitions to the sovereign direction of unerring wisdom. But it may be asked, with respect to *preaching*, How can a minister proclaim the mercy of God to his auditory in an indefinite way? How can he invite them to a participation of the blessings of the gospel? How can he declare that if any one of them, even the greatest sinner among them, return to God by Jesus Christ, he will be accepted; when, for aught he knows, there may be persons in his presence who may be in the situation above described, and for whom no mercy is designed? To this I answer, The

same objection may be made against the doctrine of *election*; and is made by the adversaries of that doctrine. Let a minister pursue his work, and leave the effect to God. What he declares of the willingness of Christ to pardon and receive all who return to him is true; and it might be said of any man, in truth, that if he returned to God by Jesus Christ he would be forgiven. The impossibility, with respect to those who have committed the unpardonable sin, respects their repentance as well as their forgiveness; and even that is not a natural, but a moral impossibility.

With respect to *dejected minds*, let it be observed that no person, let his crimes have been what they may, if he be grieved at heart for having committed them, and sincerely ask forgiveness in the name of Christ, needs to fear that he shall be rejected. Such grief is itself a proof that he has *not* committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, because it is a mark of that sin to be accompanied with a hard and impenitent heart. Such characters may feel the remorse of a Cain, a Saul, or a Judas; but a tear of godly sorrow never dropped from their eyes.

## EXPOSITORY NOTES

ON

### VARIOUS PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE.

ON THE EXTRAORDINARY APPEARANCE TO  
ELIJAH AT MOUNT HOREB.

1 Kings xix.

[Written in 1799.]

ELIJAH lived in a time of great apostacy. His history is more particularly related than that of most of the other prophets, and is very interesting. The most distinguishing event of his time was a sore famine. For three years and six months the heavens were shut up. Of this Ahab was previously warned; and, to prove that it was a visitation from God for sin, he was assured by Elijah that, as the Lord God of Israel lived, there should be neither dew nor rain, but according to his word. Hitherto he preserves his character, not only as a man, but as a man of God. We admire his magnanimity also, when, towards the close of this afflictive period, he looked Ahab in the face and reproved him. Still more do we admire him when, singly by himself, he braved the host of Baal's adherents, and confounded them before the people. But alas, what is man! After all this he is intimidated by the threatenings of Jezebel, and flees for his life. After going a day's journey into the wilderness, he sits down under a juniper tree, and requests for himself that he may die. Hence he arose and went to Horeb, the mount of God. Entering into a cave, he was there interrogated by him whose cause he had seemed to desert, What dost thou here, Elijah? He attempts to excuse himself by accusing Israel. He had been very jealous for the Lord God of Israel: but they had digged down his altars, and slain his prophets with the sword; he only was left, and they sought his life. Thus, according to his account, it seemed time for him to flee. But, that which is worse than all, in excusing himself, he does not barely accuse Israel, but seems tacitly to reflect upon the Lord himself, as though he

had done little or nothing to vindicate his own name, and what then could his poor servant do there alone?

Jehovah could no doubt have confounded the complaining prophet; but forbearing, like himself, when dealing with erring creatures, he makes him no answer, but calls him forth to appear on the top of the mount. Here he is made to witness a very extraordinary scene.—“The Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave.”

“The Lord was not in the wind:”—that is, he did not answer Elijah out of the whirlwind as he did Job; nor out of the earthquake, nor out of the fire. These awful appearances were only harbingers which preceded the voice of Jehovah. On hearing the still small voice, like the seraphim on the appearance of the divine glory, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and retired to his cave. The interrogation, “What dost thou here, Elijah?” is repeated, and Elijah repeats his answer. The Lord replies, by directing him to go on his way to the wilderness of Damascus; to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, Jehu to be king over Israel, and Elisha to be a prophet in the place of himself. This was an answer to Elijah's tacit reflection. It was saying, I have judgments enough in reserve, both temporal and spiritual, to vindicate my name, and Israel shall feel them in due time; for “it shall come to pass that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay, and him that escapeth the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.” But is *all* Israel gone off from God? Is it

as Elijah supposes, that he only is left; and is it all wrath and terror that is revealed against them? No; there is a heart-reviving exception at the end: "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the names which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

These great events undoubtedly bear a near resemblance to the extraordinary appearances on the mount; and it seems probable, if not more than probable, that the one was designed to represent the other. If so, the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, would refer to those dire calamities with which God was about to punish Israel for their apostacy; and the still small voice to the mercy and peace which should follow. Particularly, first, by the great and strong wind that rent the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks, understand Hazael's wars, by which "the strong holds of Israel were set on fire, their young men slain with the sword, their children dashed, and their women with child ripped up:" by these means God punished the common people. Secondly, by the earthquake understand the revolution of Jehu, who "smote the house of Ahab, and avenged the blood of the prophets, and of all the Lord's servants, at the hand of Jezebel;" by this God punished the royal family. Thirdly, by the fire understand Elisha's trying prophecies, and the judgments which accompanied them: by these it is probable the idolatrous priests and false prophets were confounded. Fourthly, by the still small voice understand the mercy and goodness which followed these dire calamities. It was doubtless soothing to Elijah's mind to be told of seven thousand faithful men in reserve; and while they remained in the nation a reserve of mercy in its favor might be expected, notwithstanding all their transgressions. And this was actually experienced under the reigns of Jehoahaz the son and Joash the grandson of Jehu. The former "besought the Lord, and the Lord hearkened unto him: for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.—Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz; but the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet; so Hazael king of Assyria died, and Benhadad his son reigned in his stead."

As there appears to be a resemblance in the wind, the earthquake, the fire, and the still small voice, to the events which succeeded, so there is something in the *order* of these things analogous to the general tenor of the divine proceedings. It is common for the still small voice to succeed the wind, the earthquake, and the fire; or, in other

words, for the blessings of mercy and peace to be preceded by terrible things in righteousness.

When God revealed his word unto Moses, and by him to Israel, the terrors of mount Sinai were preparatory to other things of a different nature. Many of the appearances on that solemn occasion resembled those on the present; and indeed there appears a manifest allusion in the account of Elijah to that in the nineteenth chapter of Exodus. Nor does the still small voice which terminated the one less resemble the declarations of mercy which followed the other. Jehovah proclaimed himself, "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth;" promising also "to raise up unto them a prophet from the midst of them, like unto Moses, to whom they should hearken."

The dispensations of providence have generally moved in a similar order. Many terrible judgments have fallen on the world; but they have been commonly followed with peace and mercy to the church. The plagues of Egypt, and the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, terminated in the joyful deliverance of the people of God. The same was true of the overthrow of Babylon by the Persians. Thus it was that by terrible things in righteousness God answered the prayers of his people. The great calamities with which the world was afflicted by the successive struggles of the four great monarchies of Babylon, Persia, Macedon, and Rome, terminated in the peaceful empire of the Son of God. The diadem was overturned, overturned, and overturned again, till he came whose right it was, and to him it was given.

Similar observations might be made on the Lord's proceedings in the dispensation of his grace. As the thunders of Sinai preceded the blessings of Zion, so the terrible is still seen in many instances to go before the peaceful. Deep conviction may produce fearful expectation of eternal ruin; but, if it terminate in a well-grounded peace, we do not regret the pain of mind, because it renders the hope of the gospel more welcome.

Finally: Is there not reason to hope from these things that the present convulsions of the world will be followed with peace and prosperity to the church? The fall of ancient Babylon was followed by the liberation of the people of God; and it is intimated in prophecy that the fall of the New-testament Babylon shall be followed by the "marriage-supper of the Lamb." The present may be the time of whirlwinds, earthquakes, and fires, and God as the God of grace may be in none of them; but they may be preparatory to the still small voice of truth and peace. In this God will be



present, and will be heard. Then "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." Should this be the issue of the present convulsed state of the nations, afflictive as it may be, it will be more than compensated, and serve as a foil to heighten the glory that shall follow.

THE LYING SPIRIT PERSUADING AHAB.

1 Kings xxii. 21—23.

WHEN Ahab sent for Micaiah, there was evidently no sincerity in his request. Like many others, who ask counsel of their friends, and even seek direction of God, not with a view to be influenced, but in hope of being countenanced by it, he was determined to go against Ramoth-gilead, let Micaiah say what he might. The messenger sent to call Micaiah seems to have been furnished with a *secret* message; and tried what he could do at tampering with the prophet. Hence it appears evident that Ahab did not desire to know the mind of God, but chose delusion. Micaiah came, and Ahab thus accosted him: "Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle or shall we forbear?" Micaiah answered in a strain of irony (which might be very evident from his tone and manner of delivery) "Go and prosper. The Lord will doubtless deliver it into the hand of the king:" for who can hesitate on the truth of that which has the testimony of four hundred prophets to confirm it?

Ahab felt the irony, and conjured him to be serious. Micaiah then assumed another tone, and told him the truth without reserve; and which amounted to nothing less than that he should lose his life in the battle. Ahab, full of rancour, appealed to Jehoshaphat, that he had told him beforehand what would be the effect of sending for this man. Micaiah, like a man of God, now looked the very monarch in the face, and said, "Hear the word of the Lord!" It may be thought incredible that I only should be right, and four hundred prophets in the wrong: I will relate a vision that will perfectly account for it:—

I beheld the Lord, the great disposer of all events, sitting upon his throne, surrounded by the host of heaven. Fully acquainted with the whole of thy ungodly life, and viewing thee as ripe for destruction, he determined to destroy thee: and seeing that, in this instance, thou hast preferred flattery to truth, he has determined to destroy thee by means of flattery. Know then, Ahab, that hell and all its agents, delusion and all its instruments, are under his control: they go and come at his bidding. That spirit to whom thou hast sold thyself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord now desires

thee for his prey. He that has seduced thee into sin now asks permission of God to deceive thy prophets, that he may plunge thee into destruction; and God has granted him his desire. And that which Satan is doing for his own ends God will do for his. There is as much of the judicial hand of God in a lying spirit having misled thy prophets, as of readiness in the evil one to entangle and seize thee as his prey.

THE MYSTERY OF PROVIDENCE.

Job xii. 6—25.

THE great controversy between Job and his friends respected the system of providence. They maintained that God governed the world upon the principle of minute retribution, rendering to every man in the present life according to his works. When, therefore, great calamities befel an individual, they concluded that he was more wicked than other men. He, on the contrary, maintained that the system of providence proceeded on no such principles, but on a large scale, full of inscrutable wisdom; and that good and evil came alike to men, whether they were righteous or wicked.

In proof of this, he appeals to the following things:—

First: The success which often attends the worst of men, even in the worst of causes: "The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure, into whose hand God bringeth abundantly."

Secondly: The large proportion which wicked men possess of the earth and its productions: "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee; or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee." As if he should say, Ask them to whom they belong. Is it to good men only, or chiefly? Is it for the righteous few that the animals breed, or the productions of the earth vegetate? Is it not also, yea principally, the proud and the luxurious?

Thirdly: Adverse providences towards individuals and families, which are dispensed alike to good and bad, which there is no withstanding, and from which there is no escaping: "Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening."

Fourthly: Public calamities, which also come alike to all; such as drought and consequent famine at one time; and desolating inundations at another: "Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up; also, he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth."

Fifthly: The absolute and supreme control of God over all the devices and intrigues of men. Instead of preserving the weak,

and punishing the mighty, according to the minute rules of retributive justice, he in this world lays his mighty hand on both, and causes each to subserve his infinitely wise purposes: "With him is strength and wisdom; the deceived and the deceiver are his."

Lastly: He appeals to those events which agitate the world, and involve the overthrow of nations; in which calamities come alike to all, without respect to character.

It is a very affecting picture which is here drawn, from the 17th verse to the end of the chapter, of the overthrow of a nation by invasion. It is described as follows:—

The great advisers of public measures are driven from their seats, and the administrators of government are like men beside themselves, not knowing what measures to take: "He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools."

The strong band of power which kept all orders of the state in subjection is dissolved, and the sovereign himself becomes bound with the cord of a captive: "He looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle."

Governors of provinces are led captive, and the commanders of armies defeated in battle: "He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty."

The patriotic orator, whose eloquence has so often charmed a nation, and whose council has been frequently resorted to in a perilous hour, is heard no more; the wisdom also of the most experienced statesman is nonplussed: "He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged."

The most illustrious characters are stripped of their excellency, and those whose words made nations tremble, having lost their influence, are become weak as other men: "He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty."

On such an awful occasion, a darkness supernatural seems to have burst upon the world; as though the shades of death had found their way from beneath, and had covered the face of the earth, so that men are bewildered and lost in their pursuits: "He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death."

Such an event has an influence on surrounding nations. Like a mountain sinking into the sea and agitating the waters, it puts every thing out of place. Some are increased by its spoils, others ruined by its overthrow, and even the same nation is by turns both sunk and raised, contracted and enlarged: "He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again."

Finally: Those great characters of the land who have escaped the hands of the

conqueror, yet, having lost all spirit to resist or to stand their ground, betake themselves to flight. Wandering up and down the world, like men who have lost their way in a wilderness, they become intoxicated with grief and dismay, and know not what measures to take to retrieve their losses; or, if they did, have no resolution to pursue them: "He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way. They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man."

O my soul! can I meditate on such a catastrophe without feeling for others, or fearing for my native country? Yet, if such should be its lot, it is a part of that great system of providence that directs all human suffering, and will ultimately issue in the greatest good. Meanwhile, "having received a kingdom that cannot be moved," may I have grace that I may serve God acceptably with reverence and with godly fear.

#### THE WISDOM PROPER TO MAN.

##### Job xxviii.

IN the warm disputes between Job and his friends, the great question was, Whether the providence of God towards men, in a way of prosperity or adversity, afforded any criterion of character. They contended it did; and therefore concluded from the sore calamities which had befallen him that he was a wicked man. He, on the contrary, contended that it did not; and that there is a depth in God's ways which surpasseth mortal scrutiny. Such is the drift of his argument all through this chapter; in which he allows that man had dug deep, but contends that it was not deep enough for this: that this was wisdom peculiar to God, and that the wisdom which was proper to man was of another description.

Man, he allows, had found out many things; he had not only surveyed all that was visible on the face of the earth, but had gone into the bowels of it in search of hidden treasures. By carrying artificial light into the mineral regions, he had in a manner contracted the reign of darkness. Subterranean floods had yielded to his control. Leaving far behind him that part of his species who obtained bread by cultivating the surface, he had descended in search of the sparkling ore and the brilliant gems. He had trodden a path unoccupied by either bird or beast. By applying his skill to the massy rocks, though so deep as to form as it were the *roots of mountains*, he had piece by piece fairly overturned them. Being incommoded by waters, he had for the purpose of drawing them off, and for washing away

the rubbish, that the precious objects of his pursuit might become visible, made channels at the bottom of the mine like *rivers*; and, lest they should rise and overflow him, he had contrived by the use of machinery to diminish and thereby to confine them within proper bounds. In short, by his skill and perseverance he had brought forth the precious articles to light. See him walking upon the earth in triumph! Who can deny him their applause?

After all these deep and successful researches, however, one question remained unanswered—"Where shall wisdom be found; and where is the place of understanding?" The vein, or mine, where wisdom grows, was yet unexplored. The depths of providence were still beyond human reach. Industry could not discover it, nor all its precious treasures purchase it! You may search, not the earth only, but the ocean, and still the question will return, "Whence cometh wisdom; and where is the place of understanding?" It is hid from the eyes of all living, even from the most soaring minds. Death or futurity may throw some light upon it; but even that will be partial. A perfect comprehension of it is the prerogative of God only. He only who made all things can comprehend his own designs.

There is, however, a species of wisdom within the province of man; and let him attend to that as his own proper concern. Unto man he said, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

From the whole, we see there are three species of wisdom:—The first is the wisdom of this world, which is common among men;—the next is the wisdom peculiar to God, but to which men too frequently aspire;—and the last is the wisdom from above, which is proper to man.

With respect to the first, there is much to admire. The extent to which human ingenuity will go, in accomplishing worldly objects, is astonishing. The energies herein exerted are worthy of a better cause. What self-denial, what resolution, what contrivance, what application, what patience, what perseverance! There is scarcely a danger, but men will encounter it; or a difficulty, but they will surmount it. That which strength cannot effect at once, art and application will accomplish by degrees. But alas! the prize for which all these energies are exerted is perishing, and will shortly be of no account. "Where then is wisdom; and where is the place of understanding?" Surely it is not here!

With respect to the second, it is not Job's friends only that have intruded into things which they have not seen. "It is well," said a great writer, "for man to know the length of his tether." Our Saviour was

asked, "Whether there were few that should be saved?" But he refused a direct answer; and there are hundreds of questions started in divinity, which, I believe, Christ and his apostles would have treated in the same manner. I have seen attempts to ascertain *how* God exists in three persons,—*how* divine predestination consists with human agency and accountableness,—*how* a pure creature came to entertain the idea of casting off the government of his Creator; and many other things of the kind: but they always seemed to me to darken counsel with words without knowledge. We find the solution of no such question in the word of God; and we find Moses warning the Israelites that "secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever." We also hear David declaring, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child." Let vain men on this account go on to speak of the Scriptures as not adapted to "any high perfection in knowledge:"—let them charge the sacred writers, and even their Lord himself, with ignorance;\* but let not serious Christians aim to be wise above what is written. When we see a writer of this description discussing subjects too high for him, and concerning which the Scriptures are silent, however we may respect his character or his talents, we must needs say to him as Job does to the miner, "Where is wisdom; and where is the place of understanding?" It is beyond the limits of thy researches.

The third and last kind of wisdom is that which is proper to man. "Unto man he said, The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." It is practical, and not merely speculative. All speculative knowledge is either in itself injurious, or, through the corruption of the human heart, dangerous: but this directly tends to humble, and so to profit the soul. The very words are of a humbling nature: it is the language of a wise master to a weak but conceited servant, charging him to keep to that employment which he has set him about, and not to neglect it by interfering in what does not concern him. It is language that abases the pride of science; for in fearing the Lord, and departing from evil, the unlearned and learned stand upon the same ground. Science, it is true, is in many ways friendly to religion; but, to render it truly profitable, it is necessary that, amidst all its acquirements, a man should

\* Lindsey's Apology, Chap. II. Priestly on Necessity, p. 133.



“become a fool that he may be wise.” Finally: the language implies that man is so sunk and entangled in *evil* that there is work enough for his *understanding*, during the short space allotted him in this world, to *depart* from it. Instead of perplexing himself with things too high for him, let him ask, “Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way?” How is the love of evil to be conquered? What principle is that which will raise my soul from the bondage of corruption? Where is the good way, that I may walk in it, and find rest for my soul? “Here is wisdom, and here is the place of understanding,” at least, that which is proper to man.

INWARD WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT, OR  
GOD SPEAKING PEACE TO HIS PEOPLE.

Psal. lxxxv. 8, xxxv. 3.

THE meaning of these passages requires to be ascertained from the context. The former appears to have been written after the captivity, and, on account of the Jews having fallen into sad declensions, which had brought on fresh troubles. In the foregoing part of the Psalm, the writer acknowledges God's great goodness in their restoration; and on this grounds a plea that he would again turn them from their sins, and cause his anger to cease. And having offered up his petition, “Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation,” he sets himself as it were upon his watch-tower, to receive an answer, which his confidence in the divine goodness presumed would be an answer of peace. The word “shalom,” in the Old Testament, commonly signifies prosperity. This was the object for which he had been praying: and when he says, “God will speak peace unto his people,” he means, I take it, that he will bestow prosperity upon them. For God to speak peace is the same thing as to bestow it; he speaks, and it is done; he commands and it stands fast.

The meaning of the other passage is much the same. It is a prayer of David, that God would save him from his enemies; as if he should say, Speak but the word, “I am thy salvation,” and all my enemies will be disappointed.

Concerning believers of the present day, the question amounts to this: *In what form or manner does God communicate peace to our minds, and the knowledge of our interest in his salvation?*

There is no doubt but that true Christians do possess, though not without interruption, peace of mind, joy in the Holy Ghost, and a solid well-grounded persuasion of their interest in eternal life: and some have represented these enjoyments as conveyed to the heart by immediate revelation from heaven, or by the suggestion of some passage of Scripture to the mind, the import of which

seems to include the happy intelligence. Suppose, for example, a person to be under great dejection and fear respecting his interest in Christ, and while he is poring over his case the passage above alluded to is suggested to his mind, “I am thy salvation;” some would suppose this was no other than the voice of God speaking peace to his soul, and that for him to question the goodness of his state after this would be unbelief.

If this be God's way of manifesting himself to his people, then revelation is not perfect; but God is making new revelations, and revelations of new truths continually; for as to the interest that any individual has in spiritual blessings, be it ever so much a truth, it is nowhere directly revealed in the Scriptures: nor is there any possible way of proving it thence, except by *inference*. There is not a passage in the Bible that says, concerning any one of us, “I am thy salvation.” The Scripture speaks only of *characters*; and, if we answer to these characters, we can prove that the things promised belong to us, but not otherwise. I own that I consider all such suggestions, wherein it is not the truth contained in the passage itself, but a presumption of its being immediately sent from God to the party, that affords the comfort, as real enthusiasm, and as destitute of all foundation in the word of God. I do not deny that many godly people have been carried away by such things; but I have seen evils, more than a few, which have arisen from them.

Those persons who ground their evidences for heaven on impressions of Scripture on their minds are generally favored, as they suppose, with many other revelations, besides those which relate to their interest in eternal life. They are often *directed* as to present duty, and *informed* of future events. If in a state of hesitation as to the path of duty, they pray to the Lord; so far they do well. But in addition to this, instead of inquiring into the mind of God as revealed in his word, they expect some immediate suggestion from him. And if, while they are thinking of the conduct in question, such a passage as that occur to their minds, “This is the way, walk ye in it,” they immediately conclude that this is a direction from God to follow that particular course which at the time occupied the mind, and which generally if not always proves to be the course to which their hearts were previously inclined. By such means many have been deluded into great errors, to the dishonor of God and the ruin of their future peace.

By the same means others have been led to suppose themselves in the secret of God concerning *future events*. They have been praying, it may be, for the conversion of a favorite child, and some such passage as this

has been suggested to their minds, "I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Hence they have concluded that the child would some time be converted and saved. And this their confidence has been communicated till the child himself has heard of it; and, being willing to catch at any thing that might buoy up his vain hope, he has presumed upon a future conversion while living in a course of sin. At length, however, the parent has witnessed the death of the child, and that without any signs of a change. The consequence has been despondency, and calling in question his own personal religion. If, says he, this promise did not come from God, I have no reason to think any other did; and so all may be delusion.

This is not the worst. Godly persons are not the only characters who have passages of Scripture impressed upon their minds, and that "with power," as it is often termed. The most abandoned sinners, if they have been used to read and hear the word of God, can talk of such things as these. I have seldom known persons of this description but who have some such false hope, by which they quiet their minds amidst a career of iniquity. Twenty or thirty years ago, they will tell you, they were under strong convictions, and they had a promise; and have ever since had some hope that they should at last be saved, though they must confess that their life has been very far from what it should have been.

But the question will again be asked, *In what way does God speak peace to his people, or say unto a soul, I am thy salvation?*

If I were to answer, By bestowing gospel peace upon them, or enabling them to discern and approve the gospel way of salvation, it would be a just application of the passages where these expressions are found, and would accord with other Scriptures. The Lord directs poor sinners, saying, "Ask for the good old way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—Jer. vi. 16. Our Lord takes up this language, and applies the good old way to himself, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls."—Matt. xi. 28, 29. Thus it is by an approving view of God's way of salvation, such a view as leads us to walk in it, that we may obtain peace: and thus it is that God speaks peace to the soul, and says, "I am thy salvation."

It is very indifferent by what means we are brought to embrace the gospel way of salvation, if we do but cordially embrace it. It may be by silent reflection, by reading or hearing the word, or by some suitable part of Scripture occurring to the mind, by means of which the soul is led to see its lost condition and the only door of hope opened by

the gospel. There is such a harmony in divine truth that a proper view of any one branch of it will lead on to a discovery of others; and such a connection that we cannot cordially approve of a part, but that the whole will follow. And no sooner is the gospel in possession of the heart than joy and peace will ordinarily accompany it; for if we behold the glory of God's way of saving sinners, and approve of it, we must, in a greater or less degree, be conscious of it; and, knowing that the whole tenor of the New Testament promises eternal life to believers, we cannot but conclude ourselves interested in it. Believing on the Son of God, we are justified; and, being thus justified, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.—Rom. v. 1.

#### PASSAGES IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

CHAP. xii. 1, "Whoso loveth instruction loveth knowledge; but he that hateth reproof is brutish."

He and he only that loves the means, loves the end. The means of knowledge are "instruction" in what is right, and "reproof" for what is wrong. He who is an enemy to either of these means is an enemy to the end: and, whatever he may pretend to, he deserves not the name of a man, but of a "brute."

Ver. 3, "A man shall not be established by wickedness; but the root of the righteous shall not be moved."

Men are apt to think of gaining their ends by wicked means, but they shall not succeed. In the end their building shall fall; but righteousness will stand at last, when all is said and done.

Ver. 5, "The thoughts of the righteous are right; but the counsels of the wicked are deceit."

A righteous man, in taking counsel, does not merely consult what will be for his worldly interest, but whether the thing itself be right in the sight of God and man: and as to those who never take this into consideration, though they think they have advantage of an upright man, in that they are not scrupulously confined to rule as he is, yet it is all self-deception. They shall either be disappointed of their ends, or disappointed in them. "Do they not err that devise evil? But mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good."—Ch. xiv. 22.

Chap. xiii. 11, "Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished; but he that gathereth by labor shall increase."

Lightly come, say we, lightly go. What is ill-gotten is commonly ill-spent. Yea, not only wealth obtained by injustice, but that also which is obtained by mean and niggardly actions.

Ver. 14, "The law of the wise is a foun-

tain of life, to depart from the snares of death."

Place a wise man in the seat of government, and the "law" he enacts will not be such as shall be grievous to the people, but, rather such as shall be a blessing to them, and like a fence to guard the traveller from falling into a pit.

Ver. 19, "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul; but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil."

The accomplishment of desire is essential to happiness; this is only to be expected in the way of righteousness: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.

Chap. xiv. 2, "He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord: but he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him."

All our actions, in some respects, have God for their object. Real uprightness is fearing God; and perverseness, by disregarding his authority, is a contempt of God.

Ver. 6, "A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth."

The state and disposition of the heart determine our success in the pursuit of truth. If our inquiries be influenced by a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency, we shall stumble at every thing we meet with: but he who knows his own weakness, and conducts his inquiries with humility, shall find knowledge easy of attainment. "The meek will be guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way."—Psal. xxv. 9.

Ver. 7, "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge."

Silence is the best answer to some persons: disputing with them will be of no use.

Ver. 23, "In all labor there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury."

Tell me not of those who *talk* most, but of those who *do* most.

Chap. xxx. 24—28, "There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise. The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer: the conies\* are a feeble flock, yet make their houses in rocks: the locusts have no king, yet they go forth all of them by bands: the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces."

Man is here sent to four of the most diminutive parts of the creation, to learn wisdom from their instinctive sagacity. Each of them is "little, but exceeding wise." Vain man would be wise, but it cannot be. Ere he can be wise, he must become a fool. Man is naturally more diminutive in the sight of God than the smallest insect can be in our sight; and by sin has rendered himself of little account indeed in a moral view. Child of man! Know thine insignificance,

and follow the example of these little creatures, who are placed before thee to furnish thee with instruction.

Go to the *ants*, and know in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace, ere they be forever hid from thine eyes.

Go to the *rabbits*, and learn to trust not in thine own strength, but in the power of omnipotent grace.

Go to the *locusts*, which, without king or commander, preserve the strictest order; and be ashamed that the best laws, human or divine, are insufficient to prevent thy disorders, or preserve moral order in the world.

Go to the *spider*, and observe the slender curtains by which she is surrounded. Hail, rain, or wind, would sweep them all away; beasts of the field would tread them under foot; birds of the air would seize the inhabitant for their prey. But she avails herself of the abodes of the lord of the creation for a shelter, and even of the sumptuous buildings of the most exalted characters. Learn hence, feeble and despicable as thou art, to trust for safety where alone it can be found; aspire to the heaven of heavens, and lay hold of eternal life.

#### MEDIOCRITY IN WISDOM AND VIRTUE SATIRIZED.

Eccles. vii. 15—19.

THERE have been various opinions on the advice of the wise man, "Be not righteous overmuch," &c. Great numbers have produced it with a view to censure religious zeal, and in favor of a spirit of indifference. Others, who would abhor such an abuse of it, have yet thought it directed against *intemperate* zeal. Others have thought *righteousness* and *wisdom* here to mean a spirit of *self-righteousness*, and a being *wise in our own eyes*. Others have thought the verses to be a caution against *presumption* on the one hand and *despair* on the other. And some have considered the whole book as a dialogue between a libertine and a moral philosopher; and that the above passage is the language of the former. It is not my design to find fault with any except the *first*; though I acknowledge they have none of them afforded me satisfaction. The following paraphrase is submitted to the judgment of the intelligent reader.

Suppose Solomon to be addressing himself to a young man, which he frequently does, under the character of a *son*, not only in the Proverbs, but in this book also.—Chap. xi. 9; xii. 1, 12. And suppose verses 16 and 17 to be an *irony*, or a cutting *sarcasm* upon the *unrighteous* and *foolish* taste of the world.

Ver. 15, "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that

\* The word by some is rendered *mountain mice*.



perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness."

I have lived to see many strange things in my life time; things that have made me lose all liking to the present state. I have seen uprightness, instead of promoting a man in the esteem of those about him, only serve to bring him to ruin. I have also seen wickedness, instead of exposing a man to the loss of life or estate, often go unpunished, yea, and even be the means of his promotion.

Ver 16, "Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?"

My son, if you wish to go through the world with applause, hearken to me. You must not be very *righteous*, I assure you! nor yet very *wise*. A man whose conscience will stick at nothing will get promoted before you; and a vain, confident fool will gain the popular applause, while you, with your sterling but modest wisdom, will be utterly neglected. Be not overmuch wise nor righteous, my son: why should you ruin yourself?

Ver. 17, "Be not overmuch wicked; neither be thou foolish: why shouldst thou die before thy time?"

Only take care you be not *too much* wicked; for, however mankind are averse to tenderness of conscience, they do not like an *arrant* villain. If you play too much at that game, you may lose your life by it. Neither must you be *too much* of a *fool*; for however mankind are not fond of sterling wisdom, yet barefaced folly will not always go down with them; if you would please the world, and get honor among the generality of men, you must be neither a sterling wise man nor a stark fool.

As it is the distinguishing mark of an irony to close seriously, and as such a close gives it its edge and force, (See 1 Kings xxii, 15, 17; Eccles. xi. 9;) so now it is supposed the irony ends, and the serious style is resumed.

Ver. 18, "It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all."

As if he should say, But hearken, my son; another word before we part. Notice what I say to you, and abide by it. Let the world say what they will, and let things go as they may in the world, righteousness and wisdom shall be found best at last; and he that feareth God will not dare to sacrifice these excellences to obtain a few temporary honors: he will sooner live and die in obscurity.

Ver. 19, "Wisdom strengtheneth the wise, more than ten mighty men which are in the city."

A consciousness of his being in the right,

too, will wonderfully sustain his mind; far more than any popular applause could do, or even the rewards and honours of the great.

If the above be the sense of the passage, then, it may be observed, how foreign as well as foolish is that sense which some have put upon it, as if it were intended to recommend a kind of *mediocrity* of virtue and vice; whereas this is the very thing intended to be satirized! A sensualist might as well plead for his practices from chapter xi. 9, "Rejoice O young man in thy youth," &c., as a lukewarm professor use this passage to plead for his indifference.

THE ZEAL OF THE LORD OF HOSTS  
PLEGGED FOR THE FULFILMENT OF  
PROPHECY.

Isaiah ix. 7.

PROPHECY is with great propriety called "a light that shineth in a dark place." There is not only a general darkness attending the present state, under which the light of revelation is as a lamp to our feet; but a more particular one with respect to the events of futurity, into which the light of prophecy, and that only, can penetrate. We are not to indulge an idle curiosity to pry into things which God hath been pleased to conceal; but neither ought we to neglect those things which are not concealed, but rather to search them out. To the "sure word of prophecy we do well to take heed."

The context contains a glorious prediction of the coming and kingdom of the Messiah, a part of which we have already seen accomplished. We can now say in the language of history, what was then said only in the language of prophecy, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." We have seen the "government upon his shoulders," and acknowledged him under all those expressive names by which he is there described, "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."—There is one part of the prophecy, however, which yet remains to be fulfilled, and an important part too; so important as to interest the very heart of God. If *Louth's* version be just, "*the greaves of the armed warrior, and the garment rolled in much blood, shall be for a burning, even fuel for the fire,*" (and it certainly agrees with what follows of the government of the Prince of Peace,) this remains at present to be accomplished. Nor is this all: there is an *increase* in the government of the Messiah which has not yet been carried to its full extent. We have seen him sitting upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with judgment and with justice; but we have not yet seen judgment sent forth unto victory. Christ has yet to conquer a large portion of heathen superstition,

Mahomedan delusion, Popish corruption, Jewish obstinacy, and Deistical malignity.

But it is not my design to insist so much on the specific objects of prophecy, as on the ground of assurance that we possess of its being accomplished; much has already come to pass, and the zeal of the Lord of hosts is pledged for the fulfilment of what remains.

Zeal, as it respects the disposition of creatures, is an ardent affection of the mind. It comes from a word that signifies to *burn*. But this does not sufficiently distinguish it from other affections; for the same may be said of love and anger. Among other things, it is distinguished from these affections by its object. Love and anger commonly terminate on persons; but zeal on a thing or things. Zeal is that ardor of mind which prompts us to pursue a course or undertaking with earnestness and perseverance, and to encounter every difficulty that may stand in the way of attaining our object. To render it justifiable, it requires that the object be good; that it be a good proportioned in magnitude to the effort; and that it be itself not a mere momentary passion, but an abiding principle. Each of these ideas is included in the words of the apostle to the Galatians, "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing:" and each will apply to the zeal of God, as well as to that of creatures.

It may be questioned by some whether zeal is properly applied to the Divine Being, any more than anger and repentance. The reason why the latter, when applied to God, are interpreted figuratively, is, if I mistake not, that taken in their literal sense they, in their own nature, imply imperfection; but I know not that this can be said of zeal, any more than of love; and we are certainly not to conceive of God as void of pleasure or displeasure, or imagine that he is unconcerned with the affairs of his creatures. We might as well deprive him of existence as reduce him to a stock. We have the fullest evidence that his heart is deeply and invariably interested in his own cause; and it is fit it should; it is a cause which embraces every thing great and good, and therefore worthy of it.

The strength of zeal is estimated by the degree of *attention* which it excites. Where we see the thoughts absorbed in an object, the mind rejoicing in the contemplation of it, and other things pursued only in subserviency to it, we ascribe great zeal to the party. And thus it is, or nearly thus, that the Scriptures represent the Divine Being as engaged in the establishment of his own cause. It occupied his thoughts before the worlds were made. His infinite wisdom was exercised concerning it; "rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth; and its delights were with the sons of men." All his other

works have been pursued in subserviency to this. The work to be accomplished by Christ is that great work to which all others are preparatory; for all things were created not only *by him*, but *for him*.

The strength of zeal is estimated also by the *efforts used* and the *expense bestowed* in carrying it into execution. It was the pleasure of God to exert his power to the uttermost at any period, but to accomplish his designs by slow degrees, that creatures at every step might perceive and admire; yet, from the day that war was first declared against the kingdom of Satan, never did he lose sight of his grand object, which was to establish another kingdom upon its ruins, or, as the Scriptures express it, "to send forth judgment unto victory." For this he called Abraham, blessed and increased him, watched over his posterity, and made of them a great nation;—for this they were brought out of Egypt with a high hand, preserved in the wilderness, planted in Canaan, and every nation punished that set themselves to oppose them;—for this Jehovah condescended to become their legislator, gave them a body of laws, set up his worship amongst them, preserved them amidst the hatred of surrounding nations, and raised up his servants the prophets to bear testimony in their day, and to commit to writing the lively oracles of truth. If God interpose by a series of *miracles*, we may be assured it is for some great object, and something that lies near his heart. He would not turn the established laws of nature out of their course, for the accomplishment of little things. If the great exertions of Divine power in Egypt, in the wilderness, and through the whole history of Israel, had terminated in the events of those times,—if the Divine Being had no other object in view than taking part with one nation against a number of others,—we might well be surprised, and almost question, as some on this account have done, whether the religion of the Old Testament was a religion worthy of God. But if those divine interpositions, unimportant as some of their events, unconnected with other things, may appear, were so many parts of one great design, they were worthy of him who is great in council and mighty in working.

We have no reason to think the Divine Being would have made such *sacrifices*, as of Egypt, and the seven nations of Canaan, wicked as they were, but for the sake of some greater good that should result from it. To them it was a just punishment for their iniquity: but to the world, in its succeeding generations, as well as to Israel, it was a proceeding full of wisdom and mercy, and, while we speak of the *efforts* and *sacrifices* which the Lord hath made in carrying this great cause into execution, the labors and sufferings of his servants must come into account. Their tears have not escaped his

notice, and their blood has been precious in his sight; nor would he have suffered millions of them to have fallen in a contest the issue of which would not more than make amends for all. But why do I speak of the sacrifice of nations, or of the blood of martyrs? He hath given his only begotten Son, and given him to be made a sacrifice. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Now if such has been the zeal of Jehovah's mind in the fulfilment of this great cause: if it has occupied his thoughts before the worlds were made—if he rejoiced in the contemplation of its issue—if all his other works were pursued in subserviency to it—and if the greatest sacrifices have been made to accomplish it—may we not hence form a judgment of the force of that sacred pledge that is given us for every part of it being in due time carried into execution?

The zeal of the Lord of Hosts, under whose banner we fight, ought, undoubtedly, to stimulate ours. It is the distinguishing character of a Christian to be of one heart with God and with Christ: this was the object of our Saviour's intercessory prayer, that we all might be one. If he, who in righteousness doth judge and make war, is described as riding on a white horse, the armies of heaven must also follow him upon white horses. Can we conceive of any encouragement to christian activity equal to this? The zeal of prophets, apostles, and martyrs animates us: the efforts to spread the Gospel among all denominations of serious Christians provoke us; and the disinterested love of those who have left all to bear the name of Christ amongst the heathen excites in us a lively hope that some good fruits will follow; but what is all this to the zeal of the Lord of hosts? The great cause in which we are engaged lies nearer his heart than ours. Our little fires were kindled at his altar, and are fed by him continually. We are damped by difficulties and dismayed by repeated disappointments, but he is not dismayed. What are Hindoo castes, Otaheitan voluptuousness, African barbarism, Popish prejudice, Jewish obstinacy, or Deistical malignity? Who will set the briars and thorns against him in the day of battle! He will go through them; he will burn them up together.

Finally: It is a truth that ought to sink deep into our hearts, that though God is pleased to honor us with being instruments in promoting his cause in the world, yet it is not because he stands in need of us. His cause will go on whether we help or hinder. If we are wicked, we may perish in our wickedness, but we cannot impede his designs. If through weakness, fickleness, or unbelief, we go not up to possess the land; if missionary societies fail in their undertak-

ings, and missionaries themselves be discouraged through want of success; the work will nevertheless go on. Deliverance will arise. When our carcasses are dead in the wilderness, our children will renew the contest and succeed. The promise of Jehovah is pledged. The sacrifice of his Son will be rewarded. The souls under the altar will be heard.

#### THE BURDEN OF DUMAH.

Isa. xxi. 11—12.

IN offering an exposition of a difficult passage of Scripture, which has so much divided interpreters, it doubtless becomes us to be diffident; yet I hope no apology need be made for attempts to elucidate any part of the sacred oracles.

There are three distinct prophecies in this chapter, and they are all termed *burdens*, as containing heavy judgments. The first respects Babylon, called "the desert of the sea," whose overthrow by the Medes and Persians is predicted in the first ten verses; the next *Dumah*, Idumea, or Edom, inhabiting mount Seir; and the last Arabia.

The fall of Babylon by the Medes and Persians is announced under the form of a *watchman* stationed to discover approaching objects, with orders to declare what he saw, ver. 6—9. It was an event peculiarly interesting to Judah. Babylon was the floor on which Judah was to be threshed, till the refuse should be separated from the grain. The event which destroyed the one delivered the other. It was on account of this interest which the people of God had in the fall of this oppressive city that the Scriptures deign to notice it, as is intimated in that pathetic address in ver. 10, "O my threshing, and the corn of my floor: that which I have heard of the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you."

The fall of Babylon was interesting to other nations as well as Judah; particularly to the Idumeans or Edomites, who were reduced to servitude by its arms within a few years after the taking of Jerusalem. Now, seeing that Judah had received a favorable report, Edom must needs inquire of the watchman (like Pharaoh's baker of Joseph, after he had announced good tidings to the butler) whether there were nothing equally favorable for them. The answer is **NOTHING**; but, on the contrary, the lot of Judah's enemies, "a burden."

The revolution would indeed, for a time, excite the joy of the conquered nations: all the trees of the forest would triumph on that occasion; saying to Babylon, "Since thou art fallen, no feller is come up against us:" but the Edomites should meet with a disappointment. To them a change of government should be only a change of masters. The fair morning of their hopes



should issue in a long and dark night of dependency. In the day of Babylon's fall, according to the prayer of the captives, when every prisoner was lifting up his head in hope, Edom was remembered, as excepted from an act of grace, on account of his singular atrocities.—Psa. cxxxvii. 7—9.

The Edomites were very impatient under the Babylonish yoke, and very importunate in their inquiries after deliverance; reiterating the question, "What of the night? watchman, what of the night?" When will this dark and long captivity be ended? And, now that their hopes are repulsed by the watchman's answer, they are exceedingly unwilling to relinquish them. Loth to depart with an answer so ungrateful, they linger, and inquire again and again, in hopes that the sentence may be reversed. But they are told that all their lingering is in vain. "If ye will inquire, inquire ye, return, come" again; yet shall your answer be the same.

And what was the crime of the Edomites that should draw down upon them this heavy burden, this irresistible doom? *Their inveterate hatred of the people of God.* "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever."—Obad. x. Perhaps there was no nation whose treatment of Israel was so invariably spiteful, and whose enmity was accompanied with such aggravating circumstances. They were descended from Abraham and Isaac, and were treated by Israel, at the time they came out of Egypt, as brethren; but as then they returned evil for good (Numb. xx. 14—21,) so it was ever afterwards. Their conduct, on the melancholy occasion of Jerusalem's being taken by the Chaldeans, was infamous beyond every thing. They rejoiced in it, joined the plunderers, insulted their afflicted brethren, and stood in the cross ways to cut off, or deliver up, those of them that had escaped.—Obad. 10—16.

The passage affords a tremendous lesson to ungodly sinners, and especially to those who, having descended from pious parents, and possessed religious advantages, are, notwithstanding, distinguished by their enmity to true religion. The situation of the Edomites rendered it impossible for them to be so ignorant as other heathen nations of the God of Israel; and their hatred appears to have been proportioned to their knowledge. Such is the character of great numbers in the religious world. They have both seen and hated the truth. The consequence will be, if grace prevent not, they will flatter themselves a while with vain hopes; but, ere they are aware, their morning will be changed into endless night.

Edom was once addressed in the language of kindness and brotherly affection; but, having turned a deaf ear to this, all their

inquiries after deliverance are now utterly disregarded. Such will be the end of sinners. "When once the judge hath risen up, and shut the door, they may begin to knock, may inquire and return, and come again, but all will be vain: a night of everlasting darkness must be their portion.

The passage also, taken in its connection, holds up to us the different situation of the friends and enemies of God under public calamities. It is natural in such seasons for all to inquire, "What of the night? watchman, what of the night?" Each also may experience a portion of successive *light* and *darkness* in his lot. But the grand difference lies in what shall be the *issue of things*. God's people were threshed on the floor of Babylon; and, when purified, were presently restored. To them there arose light in darkness. Weeping continued for a night, but joy came in the morning. Not so with Edom: their night came last. Such will be the portion of God's enemies: they may wish for changes, in hope of their circumstances being bettered; but the principal thing wanting is a change in themselves. While strangers to this, the oracles of heaven prophecy no good concerning them. A morning may come; but the night cometh also.

## APPLICATION OF ABSOLUTE PROMISES.

Such as Isa. xliii. 25.

THE sense of this passage, like most others, requires to be ascertained from the context. God is addressing Jacob, or Israel, as a nation, and reminding them of their great depravity: whence he asserts that all the mercy exercised towards them must be free or unmerited. God often spared them as a nation, when he might utterly have destroyed them, and must have done so had he dealt with them according to their sins; and his thus remitting the punishment of their iniquity was a kind of national pardon.—Numb. xiv. 19, 20. Such a pardon was bestowed of God, for his "own name's sake;" or, as he often reminds them, out of regard to the covenant which he had made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and was extended equally to the godly and ungodly among them. To fulfil the promise which he had made to the patriarchs, of preserving their posterity in being as a nation, till Shiloh the Messiah should come, it was necessary that many such national remissions should be bestowed; though multitudes among them were uninterested in such a pardon as is connected with eternal life.

If the forementioned passage include any thing more than the above, if it comprehend such a forgiveness of sins as implies the special favor of God, it could belong to none but the godly among them. The truth taught in the passage will doubtless apply

to them, and to all other godly persons; namely, that the forgiveness of their sins is wholly owing to the free grace of God. It is not for any thing in us, but for his own name's sake, that he saveth and calleth us, forgiveth and accepteth us. As to naming this an "absolute promise," all promises of spiritual blessings are in this sense absolute, though made to characters of a certain description; yet it is not on account of any goodness in them, but for his own name's sake, that every blessing is conferred. Where promises are addressed to particular characters, as in 1 John i. 9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," they are designed to point out the subjects interested in them, and to exhibit encouragements to return to God. Where no character is described which is of a spiritual nature, as in the passage in question, the design is to point out the *cause* of salvation. But the Scriptures ought to be taken together, and not in detached sentences. No person has a warrant to conclude himself interested in a promise, wherein God merely teaches the cause of forgiveness, unless he possess that contrition which leads him to "confess and forsake his sins;" for this would be to have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness.—1 John i. 6; Prov. xxviii. 13.

Still it is inquired, What use may the people of God in all ages make of those promises and declarations of Scripture which were made to particular persons on special occasions? "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be"—"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms"—"I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee"—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee."—Deut. xxxiii. 25, 27; Josh. i. 5; Isa. xliii. 2.

I answer, examine the *truth* contained in each of the promises, and try whether it fairly applies to your particular case, as well as theirs to whom it was originally addressed. General truths, or truths of general use, are often delivered in Scripture to particular persons, and on special occasions. If the above passages were originally addressed to men considered as the people of God in the highest sense, that is, to the truly godly among the Israelites, they are equally applicable to the people of God in all ages of time, when placed in similar circumstances. Or if otherwise, if they had an immediate reference to God's providential care over Israel as a nation, still it is just to reason from the less to the greater. Dear as that nation was to God, yet "Israelites indeed," the spiritual children of Abraham, are still more so. That, therefore, which to them would contain only blessings of an earthly nature, to the others would include blessings spiritual, heavenly, and without end. There is nothing in any of these pas-

sages, that I recollect, but what in other parts of Scripture is abundantly promised to all the people of God in all ages of time. It is therefore consistent with the whole tenor of God's word that Christians, through patience and comfort of such promises of Holy Scripture, might have hope.

I shall add one thing which may afford assistance to some who are desirous of knowing whether they have an interest in the divine promises. If the blessing contained in any promise of a spiritual nature be such as to meet your desires; if you be willing to receive it in the way that God bestows it; if you would prefer this blessing, could you but obtain it, above any thing and every thing of a worldly nature, it is undoubtedly your own: for every one that thirsteth is welcome to the waters of life.

#### FINAL DESTRUCTION OF MYSTICAL BABYLON.

Isa. lxiii. 1—6.

It is not uncommon, I believe, to understand this sublime passage of the coming of the Messiah, to shed his blood for the salvation of his people;\* but it is evidently the design of the Holy Spirit to describe the apparel of the conqueror, not as red with his own blood, but with that of his enemies. The event described is not any personal appearance of the Messiah, but a tremendous carnage among the wicked, which he would accomplish by his providence, and which should issue in favor of his church. The dreadful overthrow of Jerusalem, and that of the Roman heathen empire, are each represented by "the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven;" each being a day of judgment, as it were, in miniature.—Luke xxi.; Rev. vi. 12—17. The objects of his vengeance are described under the name *Edom*, the ancient enemy of Israel, in much the same way as Rome is called *Babylon*, as being another Babylon to the church of God.

The period to which the prophecy refers may, I think, be collected with a good degree of certainty, partly from the context and partly from the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation of John, where many things appear to be borrowed from this passage. The foregoing chapter, namely, the sixty-second, is manifestly prophetic of glorious times yet to come; times when "the righteousness of the church shall go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth"—when she shall be "a crown of glory in the hand of her God"—when she shall be called Hephzi-bah, and her land Beulah;

\* This erroneous idea is countenanced by a mistake in some editions of Dr. Watts's Hymns (28, 1 B. line 20) where the pronoun "my" is substituted for *their*.

for the Lord will delight in her, and her land shall be married"—and when "God himself shall rejoice over her, as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride."

The last three verses seem to have an allusion to the taking of old Babylon, and to the consequent deliverance of the church from her captivity, in which Cyrus and his armies, though messengers of death to the former, were to the latter the harbingers of life and peace. And, while they should be "going through and through the gates," the friends of Zion are commanded to "prepare the way, and to lift up the standard." Analogous to this shall be the overthrow of mystical Babylon. Her gates, which have long been barred, must be thrown open. At their destruction shall enter to her, but salvation to those whom she has oppressed and persecuted: and, while this is going on by instruments that "mean not so," let the friends of Christ be active in their proper sphere, "preparing the way," removing obstructions, and "lifting up the standard" of evangelical truth. Lo, then "cometh the salvation of Zion: behold his reward is with him, and his work before him!" The issue is: the church shall become "a holy people, the redeemed of the Lord: and she shall be called, Sought out, a city not forsaken."

It is thus that the sublime passage under consideration is introduced. It is not enough to say, the salvation of Zion *will* come; but we are presented, as it were, with a sight of Him, glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength, declaring to his admiring people that the day of vengeance is in his heart, and the year of his redeemed, the jubilee of the church, *is come!*

Then follows a penitential confession of the Jewish church, which is supposed to be overwhelmed and melted into repentance by his great goodness and the multitude of his loving kindnesses towards them, amidst all their disobedience and rebellion against him. Hence it is not difficult to perceive that the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. But another source of evidence of the same thing may be taken from the nineteenth of the Revelation, where many things, as already noticed, are borrowed from this passage. As in Isaiah, so here, we see a glorious personage in warlike attire: "His name is Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. He is clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." The fowls of heaven are called together "to eat the flesh of kings, and of captains, and of mighty men, and of horses, and of them that sat on them, and of men both free and bond, small and great." The issue of this dreadful war is, that the

beast and the false prophet are taken, Satan is bound, and Christ reigns.

But little if any doubt, I think, can be entertained of the events in these two passages being the same, and of their being designed to describe the tremendous wars by which the great Head of the church accomplishes the ruin of Antichrist. "Behold, he cometh as a thief: blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

#### EZEKIEL'S VISIONS.

Ezek. i. and x.

THESE visions seem very obscure. Most expositors consider the "living creatures" to be angels: but they appear to be the same as the "four beasts," or living creatures, in Rev. v. 8, 9. And these are redeemed men; for they sung, "thou hast redeemed us." Others interpret them by the four beasts in the Revelation, understanding both of gospel ministers. But what relation had gospel ministers with the visions of Ezekiel, or the prophecies that follow? Probably the following observations may cast some light upon the subject.

1. It was not unusual for the prophets, when they first received their commission, to be favored with some extraordinary vision.—Isa. vi. ; Rev. I.

2. These visions had something in them suited to the occasion. The year that king Uzziah died, Isaiah had a vision of Jehovah "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." The great high priest of the church, "walking among the seven golden candlesticks," denoted the interest he took in the affairs of the church, to which the prophecies of the Revelation referred. We may therefore expect to find something in Ezekiel's visions suited to the state of things at that time.

3. They may therefore be understood in general as a representation of the God and King of Israel, with a glorious retinue, in a moveable position, as ready to take leave of Jerusalem. God had been used to "dwell between the cherubim" in the temple: this was the character under which he was often addressed.—Psal. lxxx. 1. The cherubim formed, as it were, the retinue or attendants of the God and King of Israel. While he *dwelt* in Zion, they were *stationary*; but now he was about to depart from his abode, and therefore his retinue are represented as in a moveable position, connected with a kind of wheel chariot, or moveable vehicle. This accords with the glory of God departing from the temple, and standing upon the threshold.—Ezek. x. 4. This also would render the exclamation "Oh wheel!" very affecting, as the sight of a chariot ready to



take away your dearest friend.—Ch. x. 13.

4. This retinue may perhaps be interpreted by a reference to the “living creatures” in the Revelation, who, as we have noticed, appear to be redeemed men. Who then amongst men were the attendants of God? The priests and prophets under the Old Testament, and evangelical ministers under the New. By the “living creatures” therefore, in Ezekiel, may be understood those servants of God who attended him in that day, of which the cherubim in the temple were emblematical; and, by those of John, the ministers of the gospel who attended him under that dispensation, and took the lead in the worship and progress of the church.

The *stationary* situation of the cherubim in the temple might afford a constant lesson to the servants of God. Their figure and position would point out to them their duty. And the *appearance* of them to Isaiah and Ezekiel in vision would impress them with a lively sense of the importance of that office they were going to assume.

Perhaps, after all, the retinue of the God and King of Israel included not only the priests and prophets, but the holy angels. The seraphim in Isaiah's vision seem most easily applied to them; and, an allusion to the stooping posture of the cherubim over the ark and mercy-seat in the temple, the angels are said to “look into” the things of the gospel.—1 Pet. i. 12.

#### DANIEL'S CONFLICT WITH THE PERSIAN COURT.

Dan. x. 13.

THIS vision is said to be *in the third year of Cyrus*, that is, two years after the proclamation for Judah's return.—Ezra i. That we may understand it, it is necessary to review the situation of persons and things at the time. Daniel himself did not return with the other captives into Judea, but remained in Persia till his death, which was in a few years. As they were still dependent on the Persian government, they needed a friend at court to counteract the machinations of enemies, which would certainly be at work against them; it was therefore wisely ordered that he should remain where he was. He would serve the interests of the church more by this than by going.

But, though absent from his brethren in body, he was present with them in spirit. The welfare of Jerusalem lay near his heart. Previously to the vision which he saw, he is said to have “mourned three full weeks.” What could be the cause of this mourning? The first four chapters of the book of Ezra, I conceive, will furnish an answer. It was the state of things in Judea, which was not unknown to Daniel, that afflicted him. His

eye and heart had followed Sheshbazzar and his goodly company in some such manner as ours have followed those disinterested servants of Christ who have gone forth to proclaim the word of life among the heathen. The pious Jews set out under favorable auspices: prophecy encouraged them, the royal proclamation was on their side, their brethren blessed and prayed for them, and the hand of God was with them. No sooner had they arrived at Jerusalem than they “set up the altar,” and prepared to rebuild the temple. In the *second year* of their coming to Jerusalem, that is, in the *third year* of Cyrus, things were in such a state of forwardness that the foundation of the Lord's house was laid; and though the old men, who had seen the glory of the former house, lamented the disparity, yet, upon the whole, it was a time of great joy. But alas, when all were filled with expectation of seeing the temple erected, the *adversaries of Judah* were suffered to retard the work! First, they endeavored to weaken the hands of the builders: and, when this could not be accomplished, they “hired counsellors” against them at the court of Persia; and, strange as it may seem, Cyrus himself appears to have been influenced by them in such a degree as to discourage the work which he had begun to patronize; for we are told that they frustrated the purposes of the builders *all the days of Cyrus, even until the reign of Darius* (Hystaspis,) *king of Persia*, a period of about fifteen years.

Now as this council, which operated in the Persian court and put a stop to the building of the temple, could not be unknown to Daniel, who was upon the spot, we may easily perceive the cause of his mourning “three full weeks, eating no pleasant bread,” and “setting his heart to chasten himself before his God.”—Ver. 2, 3, 12. Hence, also, we may understand the seasonableness of the visions which are recorded in the tenth and eleventh chapters, respecting the oppositions the church should meet with, and the help that should be afforded her.

After three weeks' mourning and chastening himself, the prophet, being by the river Hiddekel, saw a vision. A great personage appeared to him, who, by the description given of him (verses 5, 6,) could be no other than the Son of God.—See Rev. i. 13—15. At first he seems to have been awake, and heard the words which were spoken to him; but afterwards was cast into a deep sleep, with his face to the ground. While asleep, an angel, who seems to have accompanied this august personage, touched him, and set him upon his feet; and, as he stood trembling, thus addressed him:—“Fear not, Daniel; for, from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But

the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one-and-twenty days; but lo, Michael, the first of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days." It may appear strange that the heavenly messenger should be withstood by the prince of Persia, and detained for one-and-twenty days. But the language, I apprehend, is figurative and prophetic. Under the form of the prince of Persia opposing the angel, who was commissioned with words of peace to the prophet, is signified the opposition which should be made for a time by the Persian government to the rebuilding of the temple. The prince of Persia does not mean, perhaps, any one of its kings in particular, but the power or government of Persia, as in other parts of this prophecy a king is put for a kingdom or government.—Ch. vii. 17. The Persian government, which was heathen, was under the influence of the god of this world, and therefore had a natural tendency to oppose the kingdom of God. The conflict which is here described, between the angels and the power of Persia, represents the influence of invisible agents upon the counsels of princes. While Satan, by means of the Samaritans, was blowing up the envy, jealousy, and ambition of this court, and thereby provoking it to oppose the church, the holy angels were employed in counteracting these machinations. Without doubt it is in allusion to this language, and expressive of the same truth, that the papal persecutions carried on against the Christian church are described "as a war in heaven; Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon and his angels."—Rev. xii. And as, during the detention of the angel, the prophet "mourned and chafed himself;" so, during the obstruction of the work of God, the church should have to do the same. Finally: As the angel came at length to the prophet with words of peace and comfort, so the people of God, after a while, should be relieved from their affliction, and be permitted to resume their labors. And, with respect to more distant times, though exposed to various hardships and cruel persecutions, during the wars, intrigues, and struggles of the surrounding nations, to which they would be subject; yet Michael, their prince, would *stand up on their behalf*, and bring all things to a glorious issue.

From the whole, we see in this account, how much the holy angels are interested in the welfare of the church on earth, and the promotion of true religion. We know so little of the invisible world that we should not have supposed an angel could have said what he did to John: "I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." Though we might have

admitted that these glorious intelligences are "fellow servants," employed by the same Lord and Master, yet we could scarcely have imagined that they were employed about the *same work* as ourselves, the promotion of the gospel. The young man who was with Elisha would not have supposed that they were surrounded with "horses and chariots of fire," to protect them from the wrath of the Syrians; yet so it was. Assuredly it affords a source of great encouragement that, though principalities and powers are engaged against us, yet principalities and powers are also engaged for us; and that in all our efforts to promote the gospel they are our fellow-laborers. Who can tell how much we are indebted to their suggestions to the minds of leading characters for the warding off of persecutions, and the concessions which of late ages have been made to the rights of conscience. When we read accounts of the perils and hair-breadth escapes which those servants of Christ have experienced that are gone forth among the heathen, we tremble and rejoice. To us it often seems as if the continuance of their labors, and in some cases of their lives, had depended on the humor of individuals: but events which to us may appear merely casual may have been influenced by invisible agency. A single turn of thought in some leading character has given a favorable turn to their affairs; and that thought might be suggested by an angel, who was all intent on their preservation and the progress of their undertaking.

Nor is it merely from the ministry of angels that we are here encouraged: "Michael, our prince, standeth for us!" Whatever they effect, it is owing to his *holding with them in these things*. If, instead of fears and distrustful hesitations, we lived under the influence of these important truths, much more would be done for God than is done, and that which was done might be expected to be followed with a much greater blessing than that which we ordinarily perceive. We should think of nothing, in order to determine our conduct, but what is duty? and be always ready to die, if called to it, for the name of the Lord Jesus.

## THE ROYAL TRIBE.

Zech. x. 4.

"Out of him," namely, Judah. Judah had all along been a favored tribe, whence proceeded their governors, who were as "corner stones" in the building; as "nails," on which was suspended the glory of the nation; as "battle-bows" for annoying the enemy, and preserving order at בני signifies Isa. xxii. 23, 24. The word home.—See to oblige to perform work, or to pay money,

either by right or by power. Here it manifestly denotes a *legal exaction*, and therefore ought not to have been rendered "oppressor."

Out of Judah also should proceed the *Messiah*, the greatest of all rulers, in whom all these characters are united; and it seems to be of his reign that the passage speaks, and out of regard to him that God would visit his ancient flock, and have mercy upon them, and cause them to be as though he had not cast them off.

#### ON THE LATTER DAYS.

Mal. iii. 18.

THE conduct of God in the administration of his providence, however dark and mysterious it may have appeared at particular seasons, even in the eyes of his own people, has always been the result of infinite and unerring wisdom; and not the least event has at any time taken place, whether in the history of nations or that of individuals, which has not been designed of God to illustrate and promote the glory of his own name. His path indeed has often been in the sea, and his footsteps in the mighty waters; and men have been ready to exclaim in beholding the triumph of the ungodly, or the depression of those who feared the name of the Lord, "Surely, God seeth not, neither doth the God of Jacob regard;" but the event has shown, or assuredly will show ere long, that, as the ears of the Lord are always open to the cry of his people, so his face is uniformly set against all those who do wickedly. In the ages that are past the Lord in his dealings towards men has, for the most part, reserved the wicked for the day of wrath. In the present life they have hitherto been the most prosperous, and their success in unhallowed enterprises has oftentimes been ready to stumble the minds of the Lord's own dear children; but, when they went into the sanctuary and viewed their end—when God drew aside the veil, and showed them their misery in the eternal state—O! how were their minds impressed with solemn awe! how did they exclaim, "Surely Lord, thou didst set them in slippery places, and in a moment thou castedst them down into destruction: they are utterly consumed with terrors!" The ungodly, however mighty and exalted in power, now appear to them objects of the greatest pity. They perceive that their triumphing is but for a moment, and that, though for a while they may exult as princes, their latter end is that they perish forever. The firm persuasion of this truth has a suitable effect upon the minds of the people of God. It completely cures them of their envy of sinners, and they desire rather to suffer affliction for the name

of Jesus, than to enjoy those pleasures, if such they may be called, which are low and debasing in their nature, temporary and uncertain in their duration, and assuredly leading to destruction in their issue. But still, with regard to the bulk of men, the charm remains. Not only do the honors, riches, and pleasures of a present life attract their notice, but also the characters of those that enjoy them. These they behold living without God in the world, openly despising his authority, and casting all his commandments behind their backs; and, as sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of multitudes are fully set in them to join their evil and ungodly courses. One generation thus passeth away, and another succeeds in the same round of wickedness and carnal security, and God endureth with much long-suffering those vessels of wrath who are thus fitting themselves for signal and everlasting destruction.

But the long-suffering and forbearance of God appear to have their limits, even in a present life. There seems, from the predictions of the word of God, to be a time coming when such a distinction of character shall be made as shall serve to impress the minds of men with a solemn conviction that God will not be mocked, and when the discriminating nature of his judgments shall enable them to discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. This is not an inference drawn from a doubtful or solitary passage of Scripture. It appears to be predicted in explicit language by many of the prophets, and, if the writer do not mistake, some characters of the period are given so plainly as to enable them that believe to ascertain when it is drawing nigh. A reference to the prophets themselves will afford the best illustration of this remark. In the 2d chapter of Isaiah's prophecy, we read of God "arising to shake terribly the earth." "The day of the Lord," it is said, "shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and he shall be brought low; and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day; and the idols shall be utterly abolished." In the 34th chapter of the same book, it is said, "The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies;" and it is styled, "the day of the Lord's vengeance, the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion." It is abundantly manifest that the first prediction yet remains to be accomplished; and others of the prophets will equally show that the latter refers, nor to any period prior, but subsequent to the destruction of the Jewish state. In the 23d chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah, at verse 19, it is said, "Behold, a whirlwind of the Lord is gone forth in



fury, even a grievous whirlwind; it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked. The anger of the Lord shall not return till he have executed and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart. In the latter days" (a phrase uniformly applied to express the times of Christianity) "ye shall consider it perfectly." In the 30th chapter the same declaration is repeated; and, to mark the period, it is said, chap. xxxi. "At the same time will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people." The whole of the 25th chapter seems to be a prediction respecting the same time: at verse 30 it is said, "The Lord shall roar from on high; he shall shout against all the inhabitants of the earth. He hath a controversy with all nations. He will plead with all flesh, and will give them that are wicked to the sword. Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth." Daniel seems to point to the very same time, when he says, in chap. xii. of his prophecy, "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was, since there was a nation, even to that same time." That this has not yet taken place is plain from his immediately adding, "at that time thy people shall be delivered;" evidently referring to the return of the Jews in the last days.

It is in this awful manner, it would seem, that God means to arise and plead his own cause. It is in this awful manner that Messiah intends to arise and assert his right to universal empire, and to introduce his glorious and peaceful government among all the nations of the habitable earth. And what if he be already risen up? the inquiry is not only important, but it is the indispensable duty of every professing Christian, lest that denunciation should apply to him, "Because they regard not the operation of the Lord, therefore will he destroy them, and not build them up."

In connection with the passages formerly quoted, there is a very striking one in the book of the prophet Zephaniah, which states in the most unequivocal manner that the universal spread of truth and of righteousness shall be preceded or accompanied by universal judgment. In chap. iii. 8. "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey, for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger, for all the earth shall be devoured by the fire of my jealousy: For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord with one consent, from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of

my dispersed, shall bring mine offering." This passage serves as a key to the others, inasmuch as it shows that the period predicted shall be coincident with God's turning to the nations a pure language; and the others at the same time serve to show that, though the judgments of God shall be universal, yet they shall be discriminating—that they shall chiefly fall on the heads of the wicked. It is too plain that all the kingdoms of the earth have been guilty of much sin; and therefore all of them are to suffer exemplary punishment. This, it would appear, God intends to employ as a means of awakening men every where to call upon his name. If they refuse to repent and turn to the Lord, "they shall be devoured with the sword, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." The purpose of God, in regard to the period referred to, seems to be that men shall either be saved by the gospel or destroyed by judgments, and thus the earth shall be cleansed, in order to its becoming a quiet resting-place for the servants of Jesus: "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation." Our Lord uses similar language respecting the destruction of Jerusalem. Like many declarations in the prophecies, this may be considered as having both a primary and a plenary accomplishment. In both views, it may be capable of a consistent interpretation. The sufferings of the siege of Jerusalem may probably have been greater in *their nature* than any that ever have been or shall be; but, in respect of the *universality of their extent*, the judgments of God which shall be poured out in the last days may render the language of the prophecy equally and exclusively applicable in that sense. That this time has already passed will not be proved, until it be shown that all nations have already united in calling upon the Lord with one consent, as prophesied by Zephaniah. When, however, in obedience to the command of Christ, we mark the signs of the times—when we behold the Lord putting it into the hearts of his people to commiserate the state of the heathen, and messengers going forth to gather them unto Jesus—and when at the same time we mark the judgments of God extending from nation to nation—surely we discern enough to incite to holy watchfulness, lest the day of the Lord should come upon us at a moment when we are not aware. "Behold I come as a thief," says Jesus, "blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and men see his shame." Let sinners in Zion be afraid: let them seek the Lord now while he is to be found, and call upon him while he is near, lest suddenly wrath should come upon them to the uttermost.

## THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN FORCED.

Matt. xi. 12, 13.

THERE IS NO DOUBT, I think, that the question sent by John to Jesus—"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"—must have arisen from a misconception of the design of his appearance, probably of the same kind with that which occupied the mind of Christ's disciples, as to the nature of his kingdom. It has been a question whether John himself was the subject of this misconception, or some of his disciples, whom he personated. There is certainly an air of reproof contained in the answer, ver. 4—6. First: In its being *indirect*. Jesus would not say whether he was the Messiah or not; but left it for his works, and their correspondence with prophecy, to determine the question. Secondly: In its implying that his outward meanness had proved an occasion of offence. Whether it were John or his disciples, some must have been offended, and sinfully too, else such language would not have been used.

It may be thought that John himself, like the disciples of Christ, might be infected with the notion of the kingdom of Christ being a temporal kingdom; that, on his being cast into prison, he expected Christ would publicly assume his throne, and release him; and that hearing of nothing more than of his being followed up and down by a number of poor people, and by few if any of better condition, he was stumbled, and knew not what to make of things. But on reviewing the chapter, and comparing it with other things spoken of John, it seems more natural to think that the doubt belonged to his disciples. Two reasons may here be mentioned for this. First: There appears to have been a greater degree of gospel light in the mind of John than in any of Christ's disciples prior to his resurrection. They never seem to have understood the doctrine of his putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself till the thing was accomplished; but he pointed his disciples to the Saviour as the "Lamb of God that should take (or bear) away the sin of the world." And, when an attempt was made to excite his jealousy (John iii. 25, 26,) his answer contains an exhibition of the person and work of Christ, worthy of an evangelical minister. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." He was a burning and a shining light, while as yet darkness covered their minds. He was not allowed to enter into the gospel rest; but he had a Pisgah's view of it beyond any of his contemporaries. Secondly: Jesus, on the departure of the messengers, vindicated him before the multitudes, and that from being "a reed shaken with the wind," as the

message which had been sent by him would seem to represent him.

The chief design of our Lord, however, in this his vindication of John, was to establish his ministry, and former testimonies, and and by consequence his own Messiahship. These, by the message recently sent, were in danger of suffering in the esteem of the people. It is in respect of this his ministry, as the Messiah's harbinger, rather than of his personal qualities, that he is declared to be "more than a prophet," and yet "less than the least in the kingdom of heaven." Thus it is that Jesus continues magnifying his own spiritual kingdom, and describing the interest which it had already excited from the time that John had proclaimed it. The Pharisees and lawyers indeed refused to enter in, and did all they could to hinder others; but the common people and the publicans "justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John."—See Luke vii. 18—30. By comparing this passage with that in question, it is manifest that this was the *violence* which the kingdom of heaven suffered. As the two blind men, when rebuked by the multitude, and charged to hold their peace, cried the more a great deal, and pressed towards the Saviour, so the publicans and sinners were not to be deterred by the rebukes of their leaders; but, on hearing of the kingdom of God, "pressed into it."

To account for the mighty effects of John's ministry, on those who believed it, and to show the inexcusableness of those who disbelieved it, his preaching is contrasted with that of Moses and the prophets. They spake of things as *at a distance*, but he of things *as at hand*. There seems to be an elipsis in ver. 13, which requires to be supplied as follows. "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John," *but he did more than prophecy*. He declared that the Messiah was now among them, and that his kingdom was at hand. Hence, the door being opened, there was a pressing into it; it was taken in a manner by force.

## THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS.

Matt. xviii. 23, and following verses.

THE manifest design of the parable is to impress upon us the duty of forgiveness one to another, from the consideration of God's freely forgiving us. That in the parable, I imagine, which struck the querist\* as inconsistent with Calvinistic principles, was the supposition of a man being given up to the tormentors whose sins had been forgiven. Some expositors, in order to solve this difficulty, suppose the punishment to mean his being given up to *church* censures; others to temporal calamities, and the accusations

\* This article first appeared in the Evangelical Magazine, in reply to the inquiries of a correspondent.

of a guilty conscience. But it appears to me that this is altogether foreign from the design of Christ. Our Lord certainly meant to suggest to *all the professors of Christianity, all the subjects of his visible kingdom*, that unless they forgave men their trespasses they themselves should not be forgiven, but should be cast into endless torment. The true solution of the difficulty I take to be this: It is common with our Lord in his parables to address men *upon their own principles*: not according to what they were in fact, but what they were in profession and expectation. For example: "There is joy over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons *which need no repentance*.—The *whole* need not a physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the *righteous*, but sinners to repentance." Not that there were any among mankind who were *righteous, whole*, and *needed no repentance*, in fact, but merely on their own account. The *elder son* in the parable, in Luke xv., is doubtless intended to represent the scribes and pharisees, who at that time drew near and murmured at Christ's receiving sinners.—Ver. 1, 2. And yet this elder son is allowed to be very obedient (at least he is not contradicted in this matter) and to have a large interest in his father's inheritance; not because it was so in fact, but as reasoning with them upon their own principles.

But what is nearer still to the case in hand is the parable addressed to Simon the pharisee. Our Lord here supposes that Simon was a *little sinner*, and a *forgiven sinner*; and yet in fact he was neither. No set of men were greater sinners in reality than the Pharisees; and this man gave proof of his being in an impenitent and unforgiven state. But Christ reasoned with him upon his own principles; q. d. You reckon yourself a *little sinner*, and that what few failings you have will doubtless be forgiven you: well, be it so; this woman is a great sinner, and so accounts herself: I forgave her all her transgressions, and therefore you need not wonder at her conduct; her love to me is greater than yours, even allowing, for argument's sake, that your love is sincere.

Thus, in the parable under consideration, our Lord solemnly warns all the members of his visible kingdom, who professed to be the people of God, and who had their expectations of being forgiven of him, without determining whether their professions were sincere or their expectations well founded, that, if they forgave not men their trespasses, neither would his heavenly Father forgive them their trespasses. Whether they were sincere or not, made no difference as to the argument: If a person lays his account with being forgiven of God, and is unforgiving to his brother, his conduct is inconsistent and wicked; for, being under the

power of self-deception, his motive is the same as if it had been otherwise.

There are some subjects on which I feel myself incapable of throwing any fresh light. Where this is the case I think it my duty to decline them. Under this description I must reckon the questions of a correspondent who signs himself A BEREAN: and another who has addressed me under the signature of CANDIDUS, concerning *the decrees of God*. I feel difficulties upon those great subjects, on which, at present, I had rather pray than write.

#### ON THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

Luke xvi. 1—12.

It will not be expected that we should affix a distinct idea to every term in a parable. There are some parts of almost every composition of this kind which belong to what may be called the *drapery* of it; and, were we to aim at a minute explication of them, we should presently feel ourselves lost in mazes of folly and impertinence. The first and chief object in the exposition of parables is to find out the *leading design* of the speaker. The leading design in this parable is manifestly to expose the sin of *covetousness*. So it was understood by the pharisees, who, as the sacred writer observes, (ver. 14,) "were covetous," and who, "when they heard these things, derided him." They perceived the parable was aimed at a sin in which they lived; but, instead of being reprov'd and humbled, they affected, like the same kind of people in the present day, to carry it off with a high hand, and treated the reprover with derision.

To show the evil of the sin of covetousness, our Lord represents every man in the possession of worldly property as a *steward* under God, and intimates that a time will come when we must give account of our stewardship, and be no longer stewards. From the supposed case of one of the "children of this world," who, on being summoned to give account of his stewardship, took measures to ingratiate himself with his lord's tenants, our Saviour takes occasion to reprove the folly of avarice, and to enforce the practice of charity and liberality; by which that worldly property which had hitherto been unjustly detained from the necessitous, and which therefore was in danger of proving injurious to the souls of its possessors, might be turned to their everlasting advantage. "The children of this world," he observed, "are wiser in their generation than the children of light." The expedient supposed to be used by one of the former is introduced in order to shame the latter, and to provoke them to be as wise for their souls as the others are for their bodies.



The want of integrity in the unjust steward does not appear to consist in his giving back a part of the rents to his lord's tenants, but in his having embezzled and misapplied his property. The abatements which he is supposed to have made seem to have been, whatever might be his motive, but an exercise of justice towards those whom for his own private interest he had oppressed. In oppressing the tenants and defrauding his lord, the unjust steward fitly represents the conduct of those who at the same time withhold what is meet from the poor and from the Lord, appropriating what Providence puts into their hands to merely selfish purposes.

Worldly riches are called "the mammon of unrighteousness," not because it is unrighteous to be rich, nor, as I am inclined to think, on account of their having been *obtained* by unrighteous methods; but rather because of their being unrighteously *detained* from the poor and needy. Our riches may have been righteously obtained with respect to men, and yet unrighteously detained with respect to God, and with respect to the poor, who are his tenants, his representatives in this world. Such an unrighteous detention of our worldly wealth is tantamount to the conduct of the unjust steward, who "wasted his lord's goods." That which is not applied to the purposes for which it was entrusted in our hands is embezzled and misapplied in God's account. In this view the most covetous persons are the greatest wasters; and every one who possesses more than he ought, by having detained it from the poor and needy, is in possession of unrighteous mammon, is an unjust steward, and must shortly have to give account of his stewardship!

But, if the mere detention of our property beyond what is fit and right constitute it the mammon of unrighteousness, who then is innocent? Who that is in possession of wealth can wash his hands, and say, "I am clear in this matter; I owe nothing to religion, nothing to the poor?" Alas, every one must feel self-condemned! The prevalence of this sin may account for our Lord's speaking of riches in general, in ver. 11, as the unrighteous mammon. There is perhaps a part at least of every man's property that, if *all* had their dues, would not be his.

And what is to be done with this overplus, this unrighteous mammon? The answer is, Apply it to the uses to which it ought to have been applied before; not only communicate liberally of your substance to all those purposes for which you are entrusted with it, which ought to be your general course, but, like Zaccheus, pay up your arrears. This will be "making friends of," or *by*, "the mammon of unrighteousness; laying up treasure in heaven; laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time

to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life."

It is true, the mere communication of relief to the needy, if unaccompanied by love, will avail us nothing; and, even if it spring from love, there is nothing in it that can, strictly speaking, merit the kingdom of God; yet, God having graciously promised eternal life as the reward of those who give but a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ because he belongs to him, a compliance with the one affords a foundation to expect the other. As God graciously rewards even his own work in this world, so it will be in that to come: those who have sown sparingly here will reap sparingly hereafter; while those who have sown plentifully shall reap plentifully. We may as truly be said, by laying out ourselves for God, to lay up treasures in heaven, as if eternal life were literally the reward of human merit; and though when we have done all we are unprofitable servants, having done no more than was our duty to do, yet, through the superabounding goodness of God, we may be said by these means to make to ourselves friends, who will bear such witness in our favor as that we shall be received into everlasting habitations.

To enforce the exercise of liberality, our Lord holds up the disparity between earthly and heavenly riches; the one as *little*, the other as *much*; the one as *unrighteous, deceitful, or false* mammon, the other as the *true* riches; this as pertaining to *another* man, of which we are only stewards, that as being properly *our own*, an inalienable and eternal inheritance; seriously warning us, at the same time, that if we continue unfaithful in the one we can never expect to be put in possession of the other.

#### ON THE CASE OF THE CONVERTED THIEF.

Luke xxiii. 39—43.

It is an opinion entertained by some who imbibe what is called *rational* Christianity that character being formed by habits, and habits by a series of actions, sudden conversions are impossible. It would seem to be in support of this hypothesis that doubts have been suggested as to the previous character of the converted thief, as whether his crime might not consist in some affair of a political nature, which, being accounted seditious, affected his life; and whether he might not, upon the whole, have been a good character notwithstanding. There is nothing however, in the story, that countenances such a notion. He is called a *malefactor*, or *evil-doer*; and the term here rendered a *thief* signifies as much as a *robber*. It is the same word that is used of Barabbas, who was a *robber and murderer*. Besides, he condemns himself; who then shall go about to justify him?

Those who imbibe this opinion could have nothing to say to a condemned malefactor, unless it were to examine him as to the reality and heinousness of his crimes, hoping to find him less guilty than was alleged. If on inquiry they find he has been a bad character, they must give him up as to any change being effected in this life. The gospel which they preach will not reach his case. He must die, therefore, in his sins, and whither the Saviour is gone he cannot go!

Some that have not carried matters to this length have yet considered the conversion of bad characters as every thing but hopeless. They do not say it is impossible, but conceive it to be exceedingly improbable; as if the probability of a sinner's conversion depended on his previous character, and was influenced by it. Jesus, however, commissioned his disciples to "preach repentance and remission of sins, in his name, among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*," the crimes of whose inhabitants, in crucifying the Lord of glory, were such that, compared with them, those of ordinary malefactors are but little follies.

The doctrine of grace to the chief of sinners never seems to be *guarded* in the Scriptures in the manner we sometimes see it in human writings. The salvation of a great sinner is not there held up as a *singular instance*, which we are not to expect to see repeated; but rather as a proof that no sinner need despair on account of the magnitude of his sins.—"For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a *pattern* to them who should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life."

The way in which the Scriptures guard the doctrine of grace is not by limiting its operations, but by insisting upon its *effects*. They put no questions to a sinner coming to Jesus for mercy, as to the magnitude of his sins; but they declare without reserve that, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." On this principle let us carefully inspect the case of the converted thief, and apply it as we go along to cases in our own times.

First: He frankly *acknowledges his guilt and the justice of his condemnation*.—"We, indeed, justly;"—"we receive the due reward of our deeds." The sinner who palliates or prevaricates as to any part of his conduct is not a new creature, and therefore is not in Christ.

It is possible, however, that a convict may, through the fallibility of the most upright judge and jury, be condemned to die for a crime of which he is not guilty, although he has been guilty of many other crimes; while, therefore, he acknowledges the justice of God in his condemnation, he cannot in re-

spect of the proceedings of man say, with the dying thief, *I suffer justly*. Such a case as this may occur, and where it does it is doubtless right for the party to speak the truth. But, before he is entitled to credit, the credibility of the evidence against him requires to be carefully and impartially considered. Truth also is consistent, and very rarely devoid of evidenc. Before he is entitled to credit, in the denial of what has been legally proved against him, it should be considered also that he may have an *interest* in trying to persuade those about him of his innocence in respect of the crime for which he is condemned to suffer, as it is by this only that he can hope for an application being made on his behalf for the mitigation of his punishment. When a compassionate minister attends a convict in such circumstances, and hears him confess how great a sinner he has been in other things, though as to the crime for which he is about to suffer he is innocent, he may be induced to believe him, and this the convict will quickly perceive, and will go on by every means in his power to work up his feelings. The convict may even exaggerate his other crimes for the sake of producing a belief of his innocence of the crime for which he stands condemned. But it ought to be considered that, for the crimes which he confesses, he lies under no indictment, and therefore they do not affect his life: but, for the crime which he denies, he stands not only indicted but condemned:—this therefore affecting his life, he is under the strongest temptation that can be conceived to deny it. The sum is, that, when a person is found guilty by a humane judge and an impartial jury, it may be laid down as a *general rule* that he *is* guilty, and no professions of repentance while he continues to deny it can be sincere: and though there are *particular exceptions* to this rule, yet no convict ought to be considered as one of them on his own bare word, unaccompanied with evidence, especially when he is under the greatest possible temptation, though he were guilty, to wish to be thought innocent.

Secondly: The few things uttered by the dying thief had no bearing on his temporal interest, but were the *pure dictates of truth and righteousness*.—In condemning his own conduct, he justified his countrymen as to their treatment of *him*; yet at the same time he condemned them as to their treatment of Jesus. If, by the former, he might be supposed to conciliate them, and induce them to make interest for his being taken down from the cross, the latter would have a contrary effect. His words, therefore, *taken together*, must have arisen from a regard to what was true and right.

Thirdly: His repentance toward God was accompanied with "faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ."—The prayer that he offered



was that of faith, and, considering his circumstances, of great faith. A man of his habits cannot be supposed to have been much acquainted with the prophecies or the miracles of Christ. Excepting the general notion, which may be considered as common to every Jew, that the Messiah would come, he would probably know little or nothing of religion. It is not unlikely that, till he saw Jesus in the hands of the rulers, he knew nothing of him; and, now that he saw him, it was under every circumstance of weakness and disgrace: his enemies were triumphing over him, his friends had mostly forsaken him, public opinion was against him, and his very crucifixion was deemed inconsistent with his Messiahship. The lowliness of his condition from the beginning was a great stumbling-block to the Jews, and the circumstances of his death must render it more, especially to one who had never seen him but in this situation. Even those who had believed in him were made to doubt by his crucifixion. Yet under all these disadvantages he had the fullest conviction of his Messiahship, or he could not have offered the prayer which he did, "Lord remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" By the request to be remembered, he must have meant as much as if he had asked to be *saved*, which implies his belief in Jesus as the Saviour. Indeed he must have believed him to be the Saviour even of the chief of sinners, or he would not have hoped to be remembered by him. A self-righteous spectator would have cried shame on such a petition; and, had he himself been influenced by that spirit, he might have suppressed it, as being unworthy of so great a favor. He must also have believed that this Jesus, though now expiring upon the cross, would shortly be in possession of a kingdom in the heavenly world. In this again he was before the apostles, whose notions of an earthly kingdom blinded their minds. Finally, it would seem as if he believed that in that blessed kingdom Jesus would "make intercession for transgressors;" why else did he ask to be remembered by him? This is certain, that, if he had possessed the clearest views of the intercession of Christ, he could not have expressed himself better.

How full and appropriate was the term which his heart dictated. It is as if he had said, Think of me when it shall be well with thee.—He might have said, *ardon me, save me, bless me*; but the words "*remember me*" include them all. An interest in Christ's heart will comprehend an interest in all his benefits. Nor was the term less appropriate to the *condition* of the petitioner; an outcast from society, who will remember *him*? The public would think no more of him; his friends would be glad to forget him, as having disgraced the family; but there is one with whom he ventures to lodge a petition, "Lord, remember me!"

How shall we account for so large a portion of faith and spiritual understanding in one circumstanced as he was, and in so short a time? Without divine influence it cannot be accounted for, but with it that which he saw and heard was sufficient for every purpose. When led to the place of execution, he heard the answer of Jesus to the women who lamented him,—“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children: for behold the days are coming in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us: for, if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” He had also heard the prayer for his enemies, when they were nailing him to the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” To a heart which the Lord had opened, these sayings would be more than so many sermons. Nor was this all: he would gather from the very jeers of his enemies that Jesus professed to be Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of men. Even the impenitent thief knew this, and joined in reproaching him for it. The superscription written over him, “*This is the king of the Jews,*” was equal to saying, ‘This is the Messiah; and so contained a testimony for him, on which account the Jews wished to have it altered. He would also perceive the spirit of the sufferer and that of his persecutors. Altogether, he saw that he had *done nothing amiss*; and his mind, being open to conviction, would quickly admit the consequences—He must be what he professes to be, Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world.

From this conviction proceeded his petition to be remembered by him; and, considering the well-known character of Christ, it was not surprising that it should be heard and answered. He had declared in his discourses, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;” and he acted up to it.—“Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Of the reproaches that were cast upon him by his enemies he took no notice; but the prayer of the contrite and believing sinner arrested his attention. At a time when he was grappling with the powers of darkness, and sustaining the load of human guilt, we should have thought he might have been excused from attending to individual applications; but a sinner can never come to him in an unacceptable time. He gives him an answer of peace, and that without delay. There was a case in which he held the petitioner a while in suspense, alleging, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to the dogs;” but this was an urgent case. In a very little time the spark of life would be extinguished. The



word must be *nigh* him, or it will be unavailing. Had he been required to ascend to heaven or to descend into the deep for the blessing, it had been utterly out of reach. Had it been necessary for him to possess a set of virtuous habits, each acquired by a series of virtuous acts, the way had been too circuitous for him: but the word of faith was *nigh* him, and he laid hold of it; with his heart believing unto righteousness, and with his mouth making confession unto salvation.

As the request to be remembered included much, so did the answer. To be *with Christ in paradise*, not only supposes that his soul would exist when separated from the body, but intimates the forgiveness of his sins, and all that was necessary to salvation. It exceeds all that he asked or thought: he asked to be *remembered* by him; and is told he shall be *with him*: he asked to be remembered *at a future time*, he knew not when; and is assured that, *before the day should end*, they would be together in paradise. And, lest it should seem too much to be true, Jesus prefaced the assurance with the solemn asseveration, "Verily I say unto thee." The dying man, no doubt, believed him, and rejoiced in hope of eternal life.

But Fourthly: Though assured of being with Christ in paradise, *there is no mention of his making this a part of his confession, or telling the spectators that he was going to heaven*.—What was said on this subject was by Christ, and not by him. Is it unnatural to suppose that the circumstances under which he died would induce him to suppress things which might have been proper in other circumstances? Had he been a martyr to the truth, he might have declared, with great propriety, that, though they had cast him out, God would receive him; or had he died in his bed, like other righteous men, he might have said with an apostle, "If the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" but, dying as a malefactor, whatever were his hopes, or joys, he would not be forward to speak of them. If, in cases where men are "buffeted for their faults," the most exemplary patience loses its *glory and thankworthiness*, much more where they are executed for their crimes. It must appear to the dying thief, and I think to any true penitent in his situation, that the expressions of a lively hope would have *no glory*, but must rather appear incongruous and disgusting. In such circumstances, therefore, he would rather choose to steal out of the world in silence. Duty required him to acknowledge his sin, and he did so, without prevarication or reserve. Let the world think ill of his conduct; the more they do this, the better; but, as to their thinking well of his future state, he discovered no concern about it.

Besides, except his acknowledgment of the justice of his sentence, he had no claim to the credence of the spectators for the sincerity of his repentance. Unless his life had been prolonged, he could give no *proof* of it: what right then had he to expect to be credited as to his future happiness? The testimony of a single witness was not admitted in certain cases under the Mosaic law: whatever, therefore, such a witness might know, he would not be forward to utter, and still less to claim credit for the truth of that of which he could produce no legal proof: so the truly penitent convict, knowing that he has no such means of proving his sincerity as he would have if his life were prolonged, will not be eager in proclaiming it.

The above remarks are submitted to the serious consideration of those ministers or private Christians who are called to attend persons under sentence of death. Let the case of the dying thief have all its weight in encouraging us to use means for their conversion; but let us not hastily flatter ourselves, and still less the unhappy convict, that we have succeeded. If his supposed penitence be attended with an eagerness to proclaim his own sincerity, and his certain expectation of future happiness, it should be strongly suspected; and if with a denial of what has been clearly proved against him, or a disposition to palliate or prevaricate, utterly discredited.

The boasting language so common among convicts who profess to repent and believe the gospel, in our times, has caused some to ask whether the gallows was not the surest way to heaven.

There certainly are principles, apart from religion, which account for much that in such circumstances passes for conversion. Besides what has been observed under the first remark, of men being induced to profess repentance for their other sins while they deny that for which they are to suffer, in hope of saving their lives, there may be *strong feelings* respecting a future state, while yet there is no true repentance. When a man has received the sentence of death, and knows he must shortly stand before his Maker, is it surprising that *his heart fails him*? And if, when his character and condition are faithfully stated to him, *he weeps*, is it any wonder? I add, if when the hope of salvation by Jesus Christ is held up to him he catches at it with eagerness, as his only refuge against terror, and if a gleam of hope be thus kindled in his mind and he be encouraged to think well of his state, it does not require the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit to cause him to *weep for joy*. And this in the account of a good minister, whose desires are ardently drawn forth for his salvation, will render him an object of *hope*. But, after all, should the convict be pardoned, the minister, if he

be wise as well as good, will have many painful apprehensions lest the event that terminates his terrors should also terminate his religion!

If only one in ten of those for whom hope is entertained in the hour of terror should, on their lives being prolonged, prove truly religious characters, it is sufficient to encourage the utmost efforts for the conversion of such unhappy men, but not to justify our pronouncing on every one, who dies with apparent contrition, that he has gone to heaven.

#### JOHN'S TESTIMONY OF JESUS AS THE MESSIAH.

John iii. 22—36.

WHILE John and Jesus were both baptizing at a little distance from each other, there arose questions between some of the disciples of the former and the Jews about purifying. Whether they conceived of baptism as a mode of purifying and thought they had enough of this already, or whatever they thought, they were manifestly disposed to set John at variance with Jesus, by endeavoring to work upon his jealousies. Probably the objection was first made by the Jews to some of John's disciples; and they, being staggered by it, came with it to their master: "Rabbi," say they, "he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come unto him." If John had been under the influence of such principles as govern the greater part of mankind, this poison must have taken effect. Its import was nothing less than this: This Jesus whom you exalt is become your rival, and draws away your disciples after him, Can he be the Messiah?

John, instead of being fired with jealousy, feels indignant at the attempt to place him in competition with his Lord, and rejects the idea with great force of language. "A man," saith he, "can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven;" and be assured it was never given me from heaven to be a competitor with the Saviour of the world, ver. 28. "Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him," ver. 26. And, as to "all men coming to him," it is as it should be. Instead of undermining the proof of his Messiahship, it establishes it: for "he that hath the bride" (i. e. the people who believe in him) "is the bridegroom." Envy not, I beseech you, therefore for my sake. It is enough for me to be "the bridegroom's friend." I have seen him, and heard his voice, and this to me is joy unspeakable, ver. 29. That of which you complain is the course in which things will continue to move: "for he must increase and I decrease," ver. 30. Nor

ought any to desire it to be otherwise; for "he that cometh from above (as Jesus doth) is above all: he that is of the earth (as I am) is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all," and ought not, therefore, to be compared with a worm of the dust, ver. 31.

Having thus commended his person, he proceeds to commend his doctrine, and like an evangelical minister to exhibit him as the only author of salvation. He describes his testimony as different from all others, in that it consists of things which he had "seen and heard" in heaven, as being privy to all the divine counsels: whereas those who were of the earth could only believe and therefore speak. But, though he spoke as never man spoke, yet men in general rejected his testimony; those however who received it, as there were some that did (ver. 32,) in so doing not only did him just honor, but subscribed to the veracity of God in all the promises and prophecies of his word; while those who rejected it, however they might make their boast of God, treated his oracles as lies, and himself as a liar, ver. 33. The reason given for his thus identifying the testimony of Christ and the truth of God is that God had "sent him and he spake the very words of God;" and this not only as having been privy to all his counsels, but as partaking of his Spirit without measure, ver. 34.

He proceeds to warn them of the danger of being found fighting against God. "The Father," saith he, "loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands." Will you set yourselves against the mind and purpose of God? He is his chief delight. His heart is set on honoring him. To him he hath committed all the great concerns of his moral empire, that he may restore it to order, and carry into execution all his designs of mercy and judgment. Be ye therefore of God's mind, ver. 35. If ye believe on the Son, everlasting life is yours: if ye believe not the Son, you will never see life; but "the wrath of God" revealed from heaven against you, in all the curses of his righteous law, will be bound forever upon you!—ver. 36.

Let the reader seriously consider this testimony of John. Let him remember that it is as applicable to us in these days as it was to the parties immediately addressed. It is the same doctrine as that which our Lord himself delivered to Nicodemus, in verses 14—18, and is that word by which we shall be judged at the last day. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through



him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.\*

## ON THE TRIAL OF SPIRITS.

John iv. 1.

THE predicted enmity between the seed of the woman and of the serpent has been peculiarly fulfilled in the times of the gospel. No sooner was the Christian church established, by the preaching of the cross, than it began to be assailed by a flood of false doctrine. Christ had his ministers in every quarter, and Satan had his. It is in this way that the devil has wrought his greatest achievements. The persecutions of the first three centuries accomplished but little in his favor, but the corruptions of the fourth introduced a species of apostasy which has deluged the Christian world for more than a thousand years.

The design of God in permitting these things may surpass our comprehension: we are told, however, that "it must needs be that offences come," and that "there must be heresies among us, that they who are approved may be made manifest." The existence of such things, therefore, should neither vex nor surprise us, but merely excite in us that circumspection which is necessary in walking among pits and snares. Such was the temper of mind which the apostle John aimed to excite in the primitive Christians. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." If such caution was necessary for the primitive Christians, unless we could depend on the floods of false doctrine having of late ages subsided, or on our having better securities against them than those who were contemporary with the apostles, it must be necessary for us. As neither of these suppositions can be admitted, I may be allowed to apply the warning language of the apostle to our own times.

The *spirits* which are to be tried seem to refer not so much to persons as to things; things which are presented for belief, or *doctrines*. The "spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" appears to be the same thing as the doctrine that is opposed to that great truth.\* This doctrine may be called a *spirit*, not only as professing to come from divine inspiration, but on account of its *energies*. False doctrines are described as contagious winds,

that waft poison into the minds of men; a pestilence that walketh in darkness, insinuating its malignant influence in so insensible a manner that the work of death is effected ere the party is aware.

Beloved, believe not every doctrine that is proposed to you, whatever may be the pretensions or the confidence of the proposer. Error seldom or never goes abroad undisguised.

Believe not every doctrine that comes to you in a *rational* garb. There is nothing in true religion repugnant to sound reason; but a system that hangs upon subtle reasoning is not the gospel. There is no cause but what may be made to appear plausible by ingenious men; of this any one may satisfy himself who listens but a few hours to the speeches of the bar or the senate. For a doctrine to be of God, it must not only be conveyed in plain language, such as without any force put upon it naturally suggests the idea to a humble and intelligent reader, but must quadrate with the whole word of God, and be productive of effects similar to that of Christ and his apostles. The same divine oracle which teaches us to "incline our ear unto wisdom, and apply our heart to understanding," directs to "cry and lift up our voice for it, to trust in the Lord with all our heart, and not to lean to our *own* understanding."

Believe not every doctrine that comes to you in a *holy* garb. That the gospel is holy, and of a holy tendency, cannot be doubted by one who believes it: but holiness itself is capable in a degree of being assumed. The false teachers, who corrupted the Corinthians, found it necessary, in order to accomplish their ends, to "transform themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no marvel," saith Paul, "for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." It is no uncommon thing for the gospel to be undermined by a pretended zeal for morality. The pharisees were wont to be considered as almost the only friends to good works; alleging against Jesus that he kept company with *sinners*, and ate with them. Yet they were denounced as hypocrites. If an evangelical minister among us be called to contend for the purity, spirituality, and perpetual authority of the divine law, or for any particular branch of practical godliness; it is not unusual for others, who are very differently affected to evangelical truth, to claim kindred with him, and to wish to have it thought that all the suspicions that had been entertained of them were merely owing to their zeal for holiness. But there are few men who are farther off from the holiness of the New Testament than those who urge the duty to the neglect of the principles from which it rises. We must both "rebuke and exhort," but it must be with "all long-suffering and doctrine."

\* The three unclean spirits coming out of the mouth of the dragon, of the beast, and of the false prophet (Rev. xvi. 13,) may be no other than delusive and destructive principles.



Believe not every doctrine that comes to you in an *evangelical* garb. Nothing can be truly evangelical but it must be of God; but, under the pretence of this, some of the most pernicious errors have been introduced. That species of religion which by the professed adherence to faith "maketh void the law" is chiefly under the disguise of exalting grace. Of this kind was the religion of those of whom James writes, whose "faith was dead, being alone." Of this kind was the religion of those awful characters described by Peter and Jude. "Speaking great swelling words of vanity, alluring through the lusts of the flesh and much wantonness those who were clean escaped from them who live in error, promising them *liberty*, while they themselves were the servants of corruption." Finally: Of this nature appears to have been "the doctrine of the Nicolaitans," which led to unholy *deeds*, and which the Lord *hated*.

Believe no doctrine in matters of religion but what is of *God*. This is the criterion by which we are directed to try the spirits. For a doctrine to be of God, it must be expressive of *the mind of God as revealed in his word*. If we lose sight of this we shall soon be lost in the mazes of uncertainty. "We are of God," saith the apostle; "he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The doctrine of the apostles being itself of God was a test by which to try the spirits, and such it still continues. We see in their writings the very mind of God on all the great subjects pertaining to his character, government, and gospel. If they write of God, it is with the profoundest reverence, as of him who is "blessed for ever;" if of his law, it is "holy, just, and good;" if of sin, it is "exceeding sinful;" if of sinners, they are "under the curse;" if of Christ, "as concerning the flesh, he was of the seed of David;" but, as concerning his original nature, "the Son of God, over all, God blessed forever;" if of salvation, it is "of grace, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." Finally: If they describe the end for which Christ gave himself for us, it was that he might "redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This doctrine is of God; and he that knoweth God heareth it. But that which begets high thoughts of ourselves, low thoughts of God, light thoughts of sin, and mean thoughts of Christ, is not of God and it is at the hazard of our salvation to receive it.

Lastly: That which is of God will lead us to *side with God in the great controversy between him and his apostate creatures*. The spirit of apostacy has always been complaining of the ways of the Lord as *unequal*. His precepts are too rigid at least for a poor

fallen creature; his threatenings are too severe; it is hard to punish with everlasting destruction the errors of a few years: it had been hard if he had not sent his Son to save us; and is still hard if, after doing all we can, we must stand upon the same ground as the chief of sinners: surely he does not mean, after all, to punish unbelievers with eternal punishment.—Such are the workings of an apostate mind, and every false system of religion favors them. But that which is of God will take a different course. While it teaches us to seek the salvation of our fellow sinners, it will never suffer us to palliate or excuse their sin. Its language is, "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.—Thou art holy in all thy ways, and righteous in all thy works.—Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.—Thou shalt be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest.—If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?—God be merciful to me a sinner."

#### ON CHRIST'S WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET.

John xiii.

THIS significant action, so full of kindness and condescension on the part of our Saviour, is recorded for our example. Happy shall we be, if we truly copy it. Here is no affectation of humility, but humility itself; nor is it performed as a mere ceremony, but to teach us "in love to serve one another." Its being done at a time when "Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father," renders it additionally impressive. It was the same night in which he was betrayed; a night in which it might have been thought his own approaching trials would have engrossed his whole attention: yet then he was fully employed in behalf of others; setting an example of brotherly affection, ordaining a standing memorial of his death, fortifying, by a speech full of unparalleled consolation, the hearts of his disciples, and commending them to the care of God his father. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," not only in making his soul an offering for sin, but in every step that led on to that awful crisis.

Lying aside his garments, he took a towel, girded himself with it, poured the water into a basin, and went from one to another, performing the work of a menial servant. When it came to Peter's turn, his feelings revolted at the idea. "Lord," saith he, viewing his dignity on the one hand and his own insignificance on the other, "dost thou wash *my feet*?" Jesus answered, "What I do

thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter:" intimating that he had a reason for so doing which, though it might not be manifest at present, would at a future time be rendered plain. "Nay," saith Peter, almost indignantly, "thou shalt never wash my feet!" As though he had said,—This is too much, and what I can never submit to!

Jesus answered him, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." What! If he washed not his feet? No, his soul, from the pollution of sin. Transitions like this, from things natural to things spiritual, were usual with our Saviour. Thus, when he had healed a blind man, he took occasion to observe, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they who see not may see; and that they who see may be made blind." The answer in the present instance was to this effect,—Dost thou account it too great a stoop for me to wash thy feet? Let me tell thee, I must stoop lower than this, or woe be to thee! I must cleanse thee from a defilement much more loathsome than this, or thou canst have no part with me in my kingdom.

Peter, perceiving now that he spoke of the purifying of his soul from sin, suddenly changed his tone. "Lord," saith he, "not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." q. d. If this be thy meaning, I know that I need to be cleansed throughout.

Jesus saith unto him, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit; and ye are clean, but not all." As it is sufficient for persons who have bathed their bodies in the stream to wash off the defilement attached to their feet by walking on the shore, so they that have believed in Christ shall never come into condemnation, and need not the repetition of a passing from death to life, but merely an application for the pardon of their daily sins. Such was the character of all the disciples, except Judas, who, notwithstanding his profession, was yet in his sins.

From this interesting conversation, we are taught several important truths.

First: We may sin against Christ, under a show of modesty and reverence for his name. There is no doubt but that Peter's first objection sprang from these motives; and, had he yielded to the first answer, perhaps he had been blameless; but, to resist after he was assured that his Lord had a good reason for what he did, though he at present did not comprehend it, was setting up his own wisdom and will against his. Nor was this the first instance in which Peter was guilty of so doing. When our Saviour spoke of going up to Jerusalem, and of suffering many things, and being killed, and rising again the third day, he rebuked him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." In all this he "savoured not the things that were of God, but the things that were of men."

There is much of this spirit in our self-righteous objections to the grace of the gospel, and self-willed oppositions to Christ's revealed will. One pleads that salvation by mere grace is dishonorable to God's moral government: but let him know, from the example of Peter, that there may be a regard to Christ's honor which he doth not require at our hands; and that we should act much more becomingly by acquiescing in his will, than by obtruding our own conceits in opposition to it. Another alleges, It is too much for a sinner so unworthy as I am to hope for so great salvation.—But can you do with less? and is it the comparatively worthy that mercy delighteth to honor? True wisdom will fall in with that way of honoring God which is revealed in the gospel; and genuine modesty will not dispute with the Saviour, but humbly take him at his word. And the same spirit that receives his grace without hesitation will obey his precepts without delay; not asking why or wherefore the Lord requireth this, but accounting it our meat to do his will.

Secondly: A cordial and practical acquiescence in the way of salvation through the blood of Christ is necessary to a participation of his benefits. It may seem rather singular that Christ should suspend his blessing on his own act—"If I wash thee not," &c., but that act supposes the concurrence of the party. He stood ready to wash Peter, and stands ready to wash the foulest of sinners. If therefore they be not washed, it is owing to their preference of pollution, or their self-righteous objections to the way of being cleansed. To feel ourselves entirely polluted, and ready to perish—to despair of being cleansed by any thing that we can perform, or work ourselves up to—to place no dependence on prayers or tears, on our bitterest repentance or most unfeigned faith, considered as acts of holiness—and to repair, altogether vile as we are, to the blood of Jesus, as to a fountain set open for sin and for uncleanness—this is the hinge of true religion, without which we shall have no interest with him in his benefits, nor portion with him in his heavenly kingdom. If we come not to him as polluted sinners to be washed, our iniquities are still upon our head; and, if we die in this state, they will go down with us to the grave, rise with us at the resurrection, be found upon us at the judgment, and forever bar against us those gates through which nothing unclean can enter. In this case, so far as we are concerned, the Saviour might as well have never come into the world, nor have laid down his life: nay, better; for, if our filthiness be found upon us at the last day, it will be the bitterest of all aggravations that the kingdom of Christ has been nigh unto us.

Thirdly: Though the believer, who hath passed from death to life, shall never

come into condemnation; yet he standeth in need of continual cleansing from his daily defilements. The notion that it is inconsistent for a believer to pray for the pardon of his sins is contrary to the express directions of Christ, and to the example of the godly in all ages. It belongs to a "life of faith on the Son of God;" and without it, whatever self-flattering ideas we may entertain, we are dead while we live: and in whatever degree we come short of such a life, wearing away our transgressions by forgetfulness instead of washing them away by repeated application to the blood of the cross, we incur the displeasure of Christ and forsake our own mercies.

#### ON FINAL RESTITUTION.

Acts iii. 21.

OF all the sentiments advanced in the religious world, there are few perhaps that are likely to have a greater spread than that of *final and universal salvation, or the release of wicked men and devils, at some unknown period after the day of judgment*. It is not supposed that this sentiment is attended with such convincing evidence as must bear all before it: far from it; but it is a sentiment suited to the corrupt passions and prejudices of men; and we know the propensity of our minds to believe a thing to be as we would wish to have it.

It is one presumptive argument, however, against the sentiment referred to, that it is destitute of *real utility*. Admitting it to be true, of what use is it? Who are encouraged by it? Not the upright; they are safe without it. It is the ungodly sinner, if any. He is encouraged, it is true; not however to forsake his sins, or to flee to the remedy; but to conclude that he shall have peace at last, "though he walk after the imagination of his heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." If it be a truth, it seems to be of such a nature that the world would be much better without the knowledge of it than with it. On the other hand, admitting it to be an error, it must be allowed to be tremendous in its consequences. Nothing ought more to be dreaded than that which tends to deceive the souls of men, and that in matters of everlasting consequence!

The following thoughts are not offered as a discussion of the subject, but merely as what may throw some light upon one particular passage of Scripture upon which it is frequently grounded. This passage is in Acts iii. 21, "Jesus Christ—whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." On this passage I would offer the three following observations.

First: *The times of restitution cannot mean any time or times beyond those of the resurrec-*

*tion and the last judgment*. This is evident from the passage itself compared with various other Scriptures. The heavens have received Christ, and will retain him till the times of restitution of all things—but the whole tenor of Scripture declares that the heavens will not retain Christ beyond the times of the resurrection and the last judgment—therefore the times of restitution cannot be beyond that period.

Christ's being retained in the heavens till the times of the restitution of all things is said to have been "spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began." This, if applied to the kingdom of the Messiah terminating in the resurrection and the last judgment, is true; for from Enoch to Malachi this was a subject to which all the prophets bore witness. But if applied to some future period after the final judgment, when wicked men and devils shall be released, it is not true, the abettors of this notion themselves being judges. What evidence can they pretend to, supposing the thing itself were a truth, that God by the mouth of all his holy prophets said any thing about it? Much less that Christ should be retained in the heavens till the arrival of this supposed period. On the contrary, by the mouth of all his holy prophets he hath said just the reverse. He hath all along represented Christ's second coming as being immediately *before* and *in order to* the last judgment, and not *after* it.—Jude 14, 15. Job xix. 25, 26. Psa. l. 3, 4; xcvi. 13; xcvi. 9. Joel iii. 13.

Secondly: *The times of the resurrection and the last judgment are with peculiar propriety called the times of restitution of all things, because that is the period when the moral disorder of the creation shall come to an end*. By the introduction and prevalence of moral evil, every thing in creation has been disjointed and thrown into a state of anarchy and confusion. God's authority has been set aside, his just revenue of glory withheld, and even the *creatures*, which were all designed to promote righteousness, order, and happiness, are abused, and made to subvert the gratifications of brutal appetite. The sun emits his rays, and the clouds let fall their showers, the mountains abound with cattle, and the valleys with corn; and all to furnish man with what he subverts to the vilest purposes. All this is *unnatural* to the creation. The grand end of every being, intelligent or unintelligent, was to subvert the Creator's glory. If the creatures of God are made to promote the cause of iniquity, it is unnatural. It is a *vanity to which they are unwillingly*, as it were, *made subject*, and under which, as under a burden, "they groan and travail in pain," longing for the "glorious liberty of the sons of God," which shall arrive at the resurrection. The empire of sin shall then be utterly destroyed,



order fully restored, and peace and righteousness flow in their ancient channels.

But nothing of all this implies the restoration of wicked men and devils to their original state. If a rebellion break out in the dominions of an earthly king, which is carried to such a height that the laws are set aside, the royal authority disregarded, and all the productions of that part of his dominions appropriated to purposes of hostility; if after this the king should crush the conspiracy, reinstate himself upon his throne, and call the offenders to justice; if he should pardon some, punish others, and restore law, peace, and order, to his whole dominions; this might be termed a restitution of all things: but who would imagine that this implied the restitution of all the rebels to their ancient dignities and honors?

Thirdly: *The times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and the times of restitution of all things, appear to be the same; and a share in both is held up as a motive to repentance and conversion.* The apostle, in the text, says, "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And he shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you; whom the heavens must perceive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." This, if applied to the times of the resurrection and the last judgment, is all rational and beautiful; but if applied to some period after those times, when devils and wicked men shall be released, it is absurd and contradictory. Is it possible to suppose Peter's meaning should be to the following purpose:—Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when these times of refreshing and restitution shall come; though, after all, your sins shall then be blotted out, whether you repent and be converted or not?

THE HONOR CONFERRED ON CHRIST'S  
WEAKER DISCIPLES.

1 Cor. xii. 24.

AMONG other disorders in the church at Corinth, they were lifted up with their gifts. Hence this whole chapter is spent on the subject. Indeed the same spirit is noticed at the outset of the epistle (ch. i. 12,) where, though he mentions his own name, and those of Apollos, &c., as the idols of their admiration, yet it was only in a figure (ch. iv. 6,) that he might with a better grace pull them down. Probably the objects of their idolatry were neither Paul nor Apollos, but their own false teachers. In order to impress a true sense of things upon their minds, he

represents them under the form of a human body, composed of many members, insinuating that it was no less absurd for invidious distinctions and divisions to take place on account of different gifts than it would be for certain members of the body to be exalted, and the rest set at nought.

The apostle first addresses himself to the inferior members, who were in danger of being discouraged: "If the foot should say, Because I am not the hand I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" And, afterwards, to the superior members who were in danger of discouraging them: "And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Finally: he notices the peculiar honor which we confer upon those parts of the body which are least comely, or honorable: "And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor, and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness." And he intimates in the text that God does the same to his church. Consequently we ought to follow the example, giving more honor, rather than less, to the feeble members of Christ's body. What is this? *What is the peculiar honor which God has conferred on the less splendid members of the church, rather than the other?*

First: That which distinguishes the ordinary members of Christ's body is of far greater importance than that which distinguishes the extraordinary, or gifted ones. The one is *grace*, the other *gifts*. This idea is held up in the text. After speaking of apostles and prophets, and pastors and teachers, &c., he allows them to covet the best *gifts*. "Yet," says he, "show I unto you a more excellent way." And what was this but *charity*, or love? Hence he goes on to contrast gifts and tongues with charity in ch. xiii., giving the decided preference to the latter. Now this was *giving honor to the part that lacked*; making that which was common to Christians, even the meanest, of infinitely greater account than that which was possessed by a few of the gifted among them.

Secondly: The most gifted members of Christ's body, in a proper state of mind, when they have expressed their strongest desires, and the objects in which they have gloried, have never selected those things which were peculiar to them as gifted, but those which are possessed by good men in common. The highest object of David's desire was that which was possessed by the meanest good man. "*One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.*" That in which Paul gloried was not his

greatness, but his infirmity, and the "cross of Christ:" and that which he desired was to be "found in him, not having his own righteousness."

Thirdly: The greater is subordinate to the less, and not the less to the greater. Churches are not for ministers, but ministers for churches. The poor, the feeble, and the afflicted, are not ordained to honor a splendid orator, by attending upon him and admiring him: but the most accomplished orator, or even apostle, to be "their servant for Jesus' sake." As the eye and the hand are subservient to the body, so, "whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death, *all are yours.*" The greatest of all must be the servant of all: "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Fourthly: In their vocation God has conferred peculiar honor upon the poor, and the weak, and the feeble, in taking the generality of his people from among them. "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.—Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Fifthly: All the consolations and promises of God are addressed to us, not as gifted, but as gracious. God speaks encouraging words to both rich and poor; but mark the difference: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low; because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away." See also the beatitudes.

Sixthly: That which distinguishes the gifted members of Christ is only for time, and is found in hypocrites; but that which is common to the weak is "a well, springing up unto eternal life."—"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

This subject may be applied to the *suppression of vanity, and the removal of dependency.*

Gifts and knowledge puff men up now as well as formerly. A poor or feeble-minded

Christian is in danger of being overlooked, and men are valued by the splendor of their appearance or talents. Ministers also, of less splendid abilities, are often despised by those who have itching ears and curious minds. But these things ought not so to be. We have seen that God does not proceed on any such principle. If ye say, I am for this great man, and I for that, "Are ye not carnal?" And, if any one set himself above his brethren, let him know that he could not do without them. "The eye," beautiful and piercing as it is, "cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee." The greatest of Christian ministers, such as Paul, felt his need of his brethren. Hence he frequently intreats their *prayers* for him. The influence which the early attendance, lively attention, and affectionate reception of the word in common Christians has upon a minister's heart, is indescribable. O what a difference do we feel in preaching to a humble, spiritual, and affectionate congregation, to what we do when addressing a haughty, worldly, and unfeeling people! The uniform demeanor of serious Christians in life recommends the doctrines delivered from the pulpit; yea, it has been known to carry conviction where the gospel itself has been preached without effect. Listen, ye wives! "Be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they also may, without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives."

And as some are puffed up in these times, as well as formerly, so others are consequently cast down. Many a poor Christian, because he is poor, thinks himself a dry tree, of little or no use, like the strangers, or eunuchs (Isa. lvi.); and many a feeble-minded low-spirited Christian, whose words are few, feels the same. Yea, many a worthy minister of less splendid talents, being overlooked by others, feels his heart sink within him, and is as if he were not of the body. "But if the foot say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?" &c. Assuredly it is a necessary part of it. "Nay, much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary." And, as God has put more abundant honor upon the part which lacked, let them not be discouraged.

That one question, "Is it not of the body?" is full of meaning. It denotes that you are connected with Christ your head, and partakers of his fulness, even all that is common to the body. Particularly you have an interest in Christ's love: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." In his salvation: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body." In all that is communicated from him, you have a part: "But, speaking

the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love." Yea, you are necessary to his *relative* fulness, the fulness of him that filleth all in all: "Which is the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." If the least member were gone, it would not be a full, or perfect body.

## VINDICATION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

2 Cor. xii. 16.

THIS passage is so far from being friendly to the exercise of guile, that it is a manifest disavowal of it. It is an *irony*. The apostle does not describe what had actually been his conduct, but that of which he stood accused by the Corinthian teachers. They insinuate that he was a sly crafty man, going about "preaching, persuading, and catching people with guile." Paul acknowledges that he and his colleagues did indeed "persuade men," and could not do otherwise; for "the love of Christ constrained them."—Chap. v. 11, 14. But he indignantly repels the insinuation of its being from mercenary motives. "We have wronged no man," says he; "we have corrupted no man; we have defrauded no man."—vii. 2. Having denied the charge, he shows the *absurdity* of it. Mercenary men, who wish to draw people after them, have an *end* to answer: and what end, says Paul, could I have in view, in *persuading* you to embrace the gospel? Have I gained any thing by you? When I was with you, was I burdensome to you? No: nor, as things are, will I be burdensome. "Yet, *being crafty*," forsooth "I caught you with guile!"

Oh, said the accusers, he affected great disinterestedness at first, that he might the more easily take you in afterwards. He declined taking any thing with his own hands, with the intention of sending others to collect it for him at a more convenient season! "Did I then make a gain of you," replies the apostle, "by any of them whom I sent unto you? I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother: did Titus make a gain of you? Walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?"—Chap. xii. 17, 18.

Nothing is more evident than that "all guile and hypocrisy were laid aside" by the primitive ministers. "Our rejoicing is this," says the apostle, "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you ward."—Chap. i. 12.

## EVANGELICAL TRUTH THE GRAND OBJECT OF ANGELICAL RESEARCH.

1 Pet. i. 12.

IT is a truth allowed by all Christians that the dispensation under which we live affords us far greater advantages for spirituality and heavenly enjoyment than any other which preceded it. To us life and immortality are brought to light. The spirit that properly belongs to it is not a spirit of bondage, but of adoption; crying, "Abba, Father." The happiness attainable under it approaches nearer to that of the heavenly world; so nigh does its land border as it were upon it, that believers in the present state are said to be "come to mount Sion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of the just made perfect," &c. Yet it is not less true that the greater part of professing Christians live as though they stood upon no such ground, and possessed no such opportunities. We possess an Old-testament spirit amidst New-testament advantages. A promise is left us of entering into rest; but we seem, at least, to come short of it. How is this? Is it not owing, in a great degree, to the *neglect of the gospel*? Having assented to a system of doctrines, we fancy we know almost the whole that is to be known upon this subject, and have nothing more to do than to hold them fast against the errors of the times, and take heed that we do not dishonor them by inconsistency of conduct. Hence what is called religious conversation seldom turns upon the *gospel*, unless any part of it be called in question; but either upon our own want of spirituality, or the pleasures that we have formerly experienced, or perhaps upon the talents of this or that popular preacher.

When a company of Christians meet together, and feel a wish for improving conversation, let one of them take a bible and read, and, as he reads, let him frequently pause, and let any one who can make a remark, or ask a serious question, so as upon the whole to promote the understanding of what is read. This would draw off the attention from less profitable things; and the blessing of the Lord attending it would, ere we are aware, produce those holy pleasures which, while poring over our own barrenness, we shall sigh after in vain.

To comfort the primitive Christians, who were "in heaviness through manifold temptations," Peter took no other method than that of declaring unto them the glorious truths of the gospel, and the vast advantages which they had over all others of former ages, in possessing the knowledge of them. Three things in particular he holds up to their consideration: 1. That the prophets were ministering servants to us: "Not unto themselves, but unto us, did they minister things



which are now reported." They sowed that we might reap. 2. That the things which they foretold, and which we possess, were the objects of their own most intense research: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently; searching what, and what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." 3. That such is the excellence and glory of the gospel as not only to be the study of prophets, but of angels: "Which things the angels desire to look into."

It is generally supposed, I believe, that the phrase "look into"\* alludes to the cherubim which were placed bending over the mercy-seat, and looking as it were with intenseness at it. Thus Mary stooped, and looked into the sepulchre, in hope of discovering her Lord; and thus believers are described as *looking into* the perfect law of liberty, or the gospel of Christ.

In former ages, the angels employed their capacious powers on other themes. At first, the display of the divine perfections in creation furnished them with matter for praise and gladness. "The morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy." Afterwards, the providence of God, in the government of the world, enlarged their mental boundary. "One cried to another, saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory!" But since the coming of the Son of God in our nature, and the laying down of his life, they appear to have been so engaged on this subject as to be comparatively indifferent to every other. In the other works of God, they had seen sometimes one perfection glorified, and sometimes another; but here all unite their beams, and form one general blaze. These are the things, therefore, which now they "desire to look into."

The powers of angels are far superior to those of men. Their means of instruction also, and long experience of divine things, must render them far more capable of understanding the gospel than we. Yet, with all their advantages and discoveries, such is the fulness of the subject, that they are at an infinite distance from comprehending it: all that is said of them is that *they desire to look into it*.

Angels were doubtless acquainted with the general design of salvation, from its first discovery to man; but the particular way in which it should be accomplished appears to have been, in a great measure, hidden from them. It was a way so much above what any creature would have expected that though there were hints of it under the Old Testament, and some very plain intimations, yet it was far from being clearly comprehend-

ed. The prophets, as we have seen, did not fully understand their own prophecies, but diligently searched into the meaning of them: neither did the apostles, with all their advantages, prior to the event; neither did evil angels, with all their subtily; for, if Satan had known that from the death of Christ his cause would receive so deadly a wound, it is scarcely conceivable that he would have stirred up Judas and the Jewish rulers to accomplish it. He appears to have entertained a kind of forlorn hope, that, by getting him put to death in the most ignominious form, and by the only religious nation upon earth, he should be able to stamp everlasting infamy upon his name, and that all future generations would be ashamed to own him. The disappointment and unexpected shock that he and his adherents met with on this occasion seem plainly intimated by our Saviour's having "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them on his cross:" and, though the holy angels might be supposed to understand much more than the fallen ones, yet were they not equal to this subject till events made it manifest. Hence it is said "from the beginning of the world to have been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers it might be known by the church (that is, by the redemption of the church) the manifold wisdom of God." When the event transpired, therefore, it was like a flood of light bursting forth upon them. The resurrection of Christ filled all heaven with transport. Hence, perhaps, we may account for the question of the angel to Mary, "Woman, why weepest thou?" q. d. Did you but know all, you would not weep! It is not you that should weep now, but your adversaries!

The cross of Christ, instead of issuing in disgrace, is followed with glory. His friends learned to glory in it; yea, and to glory in nothing else: and well they might. It was glorious to see the powers of darkness stripped naked, as it were, to their shame; to see Satan foiled by the woman's seed, and his schemes exposed to the derision of the universe; to see him taken in his own net, and falling into the pit that himself had digged. It was glorious to contemplate the numerous and important bearings of this one great event. By this the divine displeasure against sin is manifested in stronger language than if the world had been made a sacrifice;—by this a way is opened for the consistent exercise of mercy to the chief of sinners;—by a believing view of this, peace arises in the mind, and at the same time purity in the heart;—for this he is crowned with glory and honor in the heavens, principalities and powers being made subject to him. This is the only hope of a lost world, the only medium of acceptance with God,

\* Πρὸς κλίπτα, to bend or stoop.

and the only admissible plea in our approaches before him. This it is which will put every grace in exercise in this world, and impart all the happiness in that to come of which created minds are susceptible.

These are a few of the bearings of the doctrine of the cross. Is it any wonder that angels should desire to look into it? Rather is it not matter of wonder and shame that we, who are more immediately interested in it than they, should be so far behind? How is it that we should be the last to bring back the king, who are his bone and his flesh! Our Redeemer took not upon him the nature of angels; yet they love him, and the gospel of salvation by him; and wherefore? They love God, and therefore rejoice in every thing that glorifies him in the highest;—they love men, and therefore rejoice in that which brings peace on earth and good-will to them;—they rejoice in every instance of the prosperity of Christ's kingdom, and in being themselves made subject to him. Had we but their love, with our interest, we should not only emulate but exceed their highest praise. While they, in innumerable myriads, were saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing," we should not only say, "Amen;" but add, "Thou art worthy; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation!"

#### REGENERATION BY THE WORD OF GOD.

I Pet. i. 23.

THE incorruptible "seed," by which, according to this passage, we are born again, alludes to the first principle, not in vegetables, but in animals; and what this is in generation the word of God is allowed to be in regeneration. This I apprehend is giving all the scope to the passage which can reasonably be desired.

That there is a divine influence in this change which is immediate, or without any instrument whatever, is supposed in a former communication;\* but I do not consider this as expressive of the *whole change* denoted by the term *regeneration*. I admit regeneration to be by the word of God, and that this truth is taught us by the passage in question, and also in James i. 18; nor does this concession appear to clash with the above position.

\* On the Power and Influence of Truth. See Vol. V.

When God created man, he breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul. And in procreation, unless we maintain that souls are generated by human instrumentality, there is an immediate divine agency, very similar to that in creation, and which is expressed by "forming the spirit of man within him." Now as this is consistent with man's being brought into existence by the instrumentality of man, why should not an immediate influence from Him who "quickeneth all things" be consistent with the instrumentality of the word in regeneration?

Regeneration has frequently been distinguished from conversion; and I have no doubt but the terms are of different signification, as are also the terms creation and resurrection, by which the same divine change is indicated. I am inclined to think that these terms are not designed to express the different stages of God's work upon the soul, but the same divine work under different ideas or representations. It has been said that regeneration expresses that part of the change wherein we are *passive*, and conversion that wherein we are *active*; but the idea of passivity, as well as activity, is included in conversion. God turns us ere we turn to him. Sinners are said to be converted, as well as to convert. On the other hand, the idea of activity, as well as passivity, is included in regeneration. Whatever may be said of the generation of an animal, we can form no conception of the change in the temper of a rational soul, or, as the Scriptures express it, of "renewing the spirit of our minds," without the mind being in exercise. It is passive with respect to the agency of the Holy Spirit in producing the change, so as to contribute nothing towards it; but the very nature of the change itself, being from a state of enmity to love, implies activity of mind. It does not therefore seem perfectly accurate to say we are first endued with spiritual life, and then we become active; no otherwise, at least, than as by the order of nature, seeing that activity is of the very essence of spiritual life.

Now, considering regeneration as expressive of that entire change by which we enter as it were a new moral world, and possess a new kind of being (and in this sense I think it is always to be understood in the New Testament,) it is as proper to say we are regenerated by the word of God, as it is to say that "Abraham begat Isaac;" though in Isaac's coming into the world he was the subject of a divine agency in which Abraham had no concern.

## EXPOSITION

OF

### PASSAGES APPARENTLY CONTRADICTORY.

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“And ye are not willing to come to me that ye might have life.”—John v. 40.

“No man can come to me except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.\*\*\* It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me.”

“Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not: and he said, Therefore said I unto you that no man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father.”—John vi. 44, 45, 64, 65.

ADMITTING the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, their harmony ought not to be called in question; yet it must be allowed by every considerate reader that there are *apparent* difficulties. Nor is it unlawful, but laudable, to wish to see those difficulties removed, and to aim at a perception of the particular beauty of God’s word, as well as a general persuasion of its harmony.

My thoughts on the above passages will be comprised in the seven following observations:—

First: *There is no way of obtaining eternal life but by Jesus Christ.* This observation is fully implied in the first passage, and I suppose may stand without any further confirmation.

Secondly: *They that enjoy eternal life must come to Christ for it.* Coming is not an act of the body, but of the mind and heart. It is a term which in the New Testament is commonly used as synonymous with *believing* in Christ. In common speech we frequently apply it to the yielding of a person’s mind who has heretofore been in a state of enmity or variance. When we see a change in his views of things, his proud spirit begin to subside, his prejudice give way, the high tone of his expressions lowered, and his heart inclining towards a reconciliation, we say, He is *coming*.

Thirdly: *It is the revealed will of Christ that every one who hears the gospel should come to him for life.* This position, I should think, is equally evident from the text in question as either of the above. Our Lord would not have complained of the Jews for not coming to him, nor have imputed it to the obstinacy of their *will*, if the contrary had not been their duty, as well as their highest interest. Every one who hears the gospel must either feel willing to be saved in God’s way, or unwilling, or neither the one nor the other. If we are willing, we are true believers; if unwilling, we are what the Scriptures style *disobedient*, like these Jews, and like them fall under the displeasure of Christ. But may we not be neutral? That a being positively unwilling to be saved in God’s way is sinful seems to be almost self-evident: but is there no such thing as a *medium*? To which I answer, If there be a medium between a being willing and unwilling, it must consist in that state of mind wherein a person feels *indifferent*; that is, neither *for* Christ nor *against* him. But this is declared to be impossible: “He that is not against us,” said Christ, “is on our side.” If a person could feel indifferent in this case, that indifference would be deemed disloyalty. As the curse fell upon Meroz for his *not* coming forth to the help of the Lord against the mighty, so an Anathema Maranatha is denounced against any man that loveth *not* our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. It is inconsistent with the perfections of God to allow any sinner who hears the gospel of Christ to feel either aversion or indifference towards him.

Fourthly: *The depravity of human nature is such that no man, of his own accord, will come to Christ for life.* This position, it may be objected, is not sufficiently evident from Christ’s words in the first of these pas-



sages; seeing it does not follow that because the Jews would not come to him therefore none else would. To this it is replied, Be it so; it is sufficiently evident from this passage, taken in connection with other Scriptures, and even with those two with which it is here attempted to be reconciled. To come to Christ for life is to feel the danger of our situation, and be in real earnest after escape; in such earnest as one that was fleeing to the city of refuge, with the avenger of blood in pursuit of him. But men are naturally at ease, or, if awakened by the alarms of providence or conscience, are disposed to fly to any refuge rather than Christ. To come to Christ for eternal life is to feel and acknowledge ourselves destitute of every claim on his favor, and worthy of eternal death; but this is too humiliating to human pride. To come to Christ for life, in short, is to give up our own righteousness, and be justified by his; our own wisdom, and be guided by his; and our own will, and be ruled by his: it is to receive him as our all in all: but man by nature is unwilling to part from his idols; he had rather hazard his soul's eternal welfare than give them up.

Fifthly: *The degree of this depravity is such as that, figuratively speaking, men cannot come to Christ for life.* It is not here supposed that they would come to Christ but cannot; nor that they could not come if they would. It is true, when the word *cannot* is used in its literal and proper sense—that is, when it is applied to a natural inability—this idea is always implied: “Abijah *could not* see, by reason of his age.”—“The king of Moab would have broken through the hosts of his enemies, but he *could not.*”—“The mariners rowed hard to bring the ship to land, but they *could not.*” In each of these cases there was properly a want of power, which denominated the parties unable, though they were, or might be supposed to be, ever so willing. But it is usual, both in Scripture and in common speech, to express the state of a person under the dominion of an exceedingly strong propensity by the terms *cannot, unable, &c.* “They that are in the flesh *cannot* please God.”—“Why do ye not understand my speech? Because ye *cannot* hear my word.”—“Having eyes full of adultery, and *cannot* cease from sin.”—“Joseph’s brethren *could not* speak peaceably to him.”—“How can ye, being evil, speak good things?”—“How can ye believe, who receive honor one of another?” Now, when the word is used in this sense, it would be a contradiction to suppose a willingness, or an incapacity in case of willingness, seeing it is the want of willingness wherein the incapacity consists.

That the term *cannot*, in John vi. 44, denotes the strength of evil propensities, and not any natural and excusable hindrance, is

evident from the *cure* here mentioned; namely, *the Fathers drawing.* When we are drawn by divine influence to come to Christ, it is a drawing of the *heart* towards that to which it was before averse; consequently it was *the aversion of the heart* wherein the inability consisted.

It has been usual with writers to express the difference between these two different kinds of inability by the terms *natural* and *moral.* To this it has been objected “that the Scripture knows of no such distinction.” If by this is meant that the Scripture does not expressly make such a distinction, it is true; but, if this be a proof that the Scripture knows nothing of the thing, it will at the same time prove that the Scripture knows nothing of the doctrines of the trinity, divine providence, the satisfaction of Christ, with many other acknowledged truths of the last importance. After all, terms are not worth disputing about, provided the ideas included under them are admitted. That the ideas in this case are scriptural is sufficiently evident from the forecited passages. Every person of common understanding, whether he will or not, must of necessity perceive a difference between the inability of the mariners recorded in Jonah and that of the adulterers mentioned by Peter; and that the one rendered the parties excusable, and the other constituted them the more highly culpable. Let this difference be but admitted, it matters not what terms are used, provided they do but sufficiently express it.

Sixthly: *A conviction of the righteousness of God’s government, of the spirituality and goodness of his law, the evil of sin, our lost condition by nature, and the justice of our condemnation, is necessary in order to our coming to Christ.* I think each of these ideas is included in the phrase “learned of the Father.” Without this, there can be no solid conviction of the need of a Saviour. The sinner will be whole in his own account; and *they that are whole need not a physician.* A knowledge of the Father, as the lawgiver of the world, must precede a hearty reception of Christ as a Saviour. It is “through the law we become dead to the law, that we may live unto God. The law is our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ.” It is therefore very unreasonable, as well as unscriptural, for any, under the pretence of knowing Christ, to decry the law of God, seeing it is by learning at that school we are prepared to come to Christ.

Lastly: *There is absolute necessity of a special divine agency in order to our coming to Christ.* “No man can come unto me except the Father, who sent me, draw him.” Those who deny the grace of God to be invincible in its operations, understand this, and other passages, of what is sometimes called, I think, moral influence; that is, such

influence as men may have upon the minds of each other in a way of persuasion. And so they suppose the sense of the text is, that no man can come to Christ unless he have the gospel preached unto him. But it ought to be considered that "drawing," in verse 44, is tantamount to having "learned of the Father, in verse 45, where it is declared that "every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto Christ." But it is not every one that hath been objectively instructed by the preaching of the gospel who comes to Christ: it must therefore be such an instruction and drawing as is peculiar to true believers; such a drawing as that whereon our coming certainly follows: and thus we believe "according to the working of his mighty power."

Upon the whole, we see from these passages taken together, first, if any man is lost, whom he has to blame for it—HIMSELF; secondly, if any man is saved, whom he has to praise for it—God.

"It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart."—Gen. vi. 6.

"The Lord is not a man that he should repent."—1 Sam. xv. 29.

THE seeming contradiction in these passages arises from the same term being used in the one metaphorically and in the other literally. It is literally true that repentance is not predicable of the divine nature, inasmuch as it implies mutability and imperfection in knowledge and wisdom, neither of which can be applied to the infinitely blessed God. But, in order to address himself impressively to us, he frequently personates a creature, or speaks to us after the manner of men. It may be doubted whether the displeasure of God against the wickedness of men could have been fully expressed in literal terms, or with any thing like the effect produced by metaphorical language. To evince this, I shall take the liberty to introduce a few brief expository notes which I have by me on the six preceding verses in Genesis:—This chapter gives us an account of the corruption which preceded the flood, and which moved an infinitely good and merciful Being to bring it upon the earth. We may notice,

1. The *occasion* of this corruption; viz. the increase of population: it was "when men began to multiply on the face of the earth" that they began to corrupt one another. Population is itself a good: but it often becomes the occasion of evil; because men, when numbers of them assemble together, excite and provoke one another to sin. Hence it is that sin commonly grows rankest in populous places. We are originally made to be helpers of one another: but sin perverts the course of things, and renders us tempters of one another. We draw and

are drawn into innumerable evils. "Oh, draw me not with the workers of iniquity!"

2. The first step towards this corrupt state of things was the mixing of the church and the world in marriages. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all whom they chose." The "sons of God" were those of the family of Seth, of whom we read lately that they "called upon the name of the Lord."—iv. 16. "The daughters of men" were of the race of Cain, whose parents, having gone forth "from the presence of the Lord," or turned their back on religion, were a kind of atheists. This was a conjunction between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, which must needs be unnatural and mischievous. The object of a good man's choice should be a "helpmeet." We need to be helped in our way to heaven, and not hindered and corrupted. Hence God forbid all such alliances with idolaters (Deut. vii. 3, 4;) and hence also Christian marriages were limited to those "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. vii. 39:) the examples which we have seen to the contrary have, by their lamentable effects, fully justified these restrictions. They corrupt and ruin many a promising character: and we see by this history that they were the first cause of the ruin of a world!

3. The great offence which God took at this conduct, and what grew out of it. "The Lord said, my Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." Had the sons of God kept themselves to themselves, and preserved their purity, God, it may be supposed, would have spared the world for their sakes: but they mingled together, and became one people. This he considered as a heinous crime. The name by which they are called is worthy of notice—*man*. Seeing the sons of God have become one people with the daughters of men, they have lost their honorable distinction, and are called by the common name of the species. The special notice taken of the conduct of professors, rather than of others, is likewise observable. *He* also, or *they* also, as some read it, namely, the sons of God, are *flesh*; viz. they, as well as others, are become corrupt. By the *Spirit of God* is meant the Holy Spirit in the prophets, by which he preached and contended with the wicked.—See Neh. ix. 30; 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. But now, seeing the professedly righteous, who should have stood firm, had, as it were, joined the standard of the enemy, God resolved to give them all up together, or to decline any farther strivings with them. "The ploughman will not plough all day to sow—bread-corn is bruised, because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen." Yet amidst all this displeasure there is great

long-suffering. "His days shall be a hundred and twenty years." God would wait that time ere he brought the flood upon them.—1 Pet. iii. 20. All this time God did *strive* or contend with them; but, that proving ineffectual, they were at last given up.

4. Observe the fruits of these unlawful mixtures; a sort of monstrous beings, whose figures were but emblems of their minds. They seem to have been fierce and cruel men. The word giants signifies *fellers*, or men who caused others to fall before them like trees before an axe. So far as respects character, this was the natural effect of such intermarriages: family religion is subverted; and the fear of God has a greater connection with a proper regard to man than many are willing to allow.

5. Observe the estimate which God makes of things. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Such is the case when the church is gone and lost in the world. There were some hopeful appearances when the "sons of God began to call upon the name of the Lord:" but now, a very few excepted, they are all gone. What a picture is here given of what the world naturally is! It is *evil*; without mixture—*only* evil: without cessation—*evil continually*: from the very fountain-head of action—"the thoughts of the heart:" and all this is not the exaggerated language of creatures—"God saw it!"

6. Notice the amazing displeasure of God against sin. "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and that he grieved him at his heart!"—Was ever such language uttered! What words, besides them, could convey to us such an idea of the evil of sin? It is true we are not to understand them literally: but they convey to us an idea that the sin of man is so heinous, and so mischievous, as to mar all the works of God, and to render them worse than if there were none. So that, if God had not counteracted it, there had better have been no world! Any created being, on seeing all his works thus perverted, would repent, and wish he had never made them. Oh, the exceedingly provoking nature of sin! What must be that grace which could give his only-begotten Son to die for it, and could find in his heart, for his sake, freely to forgive it! Be it our great concern that, like Noah in the ark, we may be found in him.

"I please all men in all things."—1 Cor. x. 33.

"If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."—Gal. i. 10.

THOUGH both these kinds of action are expressed by one term, to *please*, yet they

are exceedingly diverse; no less so than a conduct which has the glory of God and the good of mankind for its object, and one that originates and terminates in self. The former of these passages should be read in connection with what precedes and follows it: ver. 31—33, "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God; even as I please all men in all things; not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." Hence it appears plain that the *things* in which the apostle pleased all men require to be restricted to such things as tend to their "profit, that they may be saved." Whereas, the things in which, according to the latter passage, he could *not* please men and "yet be the servant of Christ," were of a contrary tendency. Such were the objects pursued by the false teachers whom he opposed, and who desired to make a fair show in the flesh, lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.—Ch. vi. 12.

The former is that sweet inoffensiveness of spirit which teaches us to lay aside all self-will and self-importance; that charity which "seeketh not her own," and "is not easily provoked;" it is that spirit, in short, which the same writer elsewhere recommends from the example of Christ himself: "We then, who are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.—Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me."

But the latter spirit referred to is that sordid compliance with the corruptions of human nature of which flatterers and deceivers have always availed themselves, not for the glory of God or the good of men, but for the promotion of their own selfish designs.

"While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest shall not cease."—Gen. viii. 22.

"There are five years in which there shall be neither earing nor harvest."—Gen. xlv. 6.

THE former of these passages contains a general truth or rule, which, as is common with general rules, has its particular exceptions. And yet it hardly amounts to an exception; for there never was a year since the flood in which there was no harvest *throughout the world*. To understand the promise of God's engaging never to afflict any particular nation, or number of nations, with famine, is to make it universal as to place, as well as uninterrupted in respect to time; and this would go to insure a harvest to the sluggard who refuses to sow.



"Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him."—Prov. xxvi. 4.

"Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit."—Prov. xxvi. 5.

A "FOOL," in the sense of Scripture, means a wicked man, or one who acts contrary to the wisdom that is from above, and who is supposed to utter his foolishness in speech or writing. Doubtless, there are different descriptions of these characters; and some may require to be answered, while others are best treated with silence. But the cases here seem to be one: both have respect to the same character, and both require to be answered. The whole difference lies in the *manner* in which the answer should be given. The terms "according to his folly," in the first instance, mean *in a foolish manner*, as is manifest from the reason given, "lest thou also be like unto him." But, in the second instance, they mean *in the manner which his folly requires*. This also is plain from the reason given, "lest he be wise in his own conceit." A foolish speech is not a rule for our imitation; nevertheless, our answer must be so framed by it as to meet and repel it.

Both these proverbs caution us against evils to which we are not a little addicted; the former, that of saying and doing to others as *they say and do to us*, rather than as *we would* they should say and do; the latter, that of suffering the cause of truth or justice to be decied, while we, from a love of ease, stand by as unconcerned spectators.

The former of these proverbs is exemplified in the answer of Moses to the rebellious Israelites; the latter in that of Job to his wife. It was a foolish speech which was addressed to the former: "Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?" Unhappily this provoked Moses to speak unadvisedly with his lips; saying, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" This was answering folly in a *foolish manner*, which he should not have done; and by which the servant of God became but too much like them whom he opposed. It was also a foolish saying of Job's wife, in the day of his distress; "Curse God and die!"—Job answered this speech, not in the *manner of it*, but in the *manner it required*. "What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"—In all the answers of our Saviour to the scribes and pharisees, we may perceive that he never lost the possession of his soul for a single moment; never answered in the *manner of his opponents*, so as to be "like unto them;" but neither did he decline to repel their folly, and so to abase their self-conceit.

"By the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified."—Gal. ii. 16.

"Was not Abraham, our Father, justified by works."—James ii. 21.

PAUL treats of the justification of the *ungodly*, or the way in which sinners are *accepted* of God, and made heirs of eternal life. James speaks of the justification of the *godly*, or in what way it becomes evident that a man is *approved* of God. The former is by the righteousness of Christ; the latter is by works. The former of these is that which justifies: the latter is that by which it appears that we are justified. The term justification, in the former of these passages, is taken in a primary sense: in the latter, it is taken in a secondary sense only, as in Matt. xi. 19, and in other places.

"I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me."—Exod. xx. 5.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son."—Ezek. xviii. 20.

NEITHER of these passages appears to be applicable to men as the individual subjects of God's moral government, and with respect to a future world, but merely as members of society in the present life. Nations, and other communities, as *such*, are considered in the divine administration as persons. That which is done by them at one period is visited upon them at another; as the history of the children of Israel and of all other nations evinces. The effects of the conduct of every generation not being confined to itself, but extending to their posterity, would, in proportion as they were possessed of natural affection, furnish a powerful motive to righteousness; and, to them who sinned, prove an aggravation of their punishment.

This part of divine providence was objected to in the times of Ezekiel as unjust. "The fathers," said they, "have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge: the ways of the Lord are not equal." To this objection two things were suggested in reply:—

1. That though it was so that the sins from the times of Manasseh fell upon that generation, yet there was no injustice in it; but, on the contrary, much mercy: for what they bore was no more than what *their own sins* deserved; and its not having been inflicted before was owing to divine forbearance. God might have punished *both their fathers and them*. Hence, "As I live, saith the Lord, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel."—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die!" Which is as if he had said, I will no more forbear with you as I have done, but will punish *both fa-*

ther and son, instead of the son only.—Ezek. xviii. 1—4.

2. That, if the sins of the fathers fell upon the children, it was not without the children having adopted and persisted in their fathers' crimes. The visiting of the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation, is only of them that hate him; that is, where the fathers hate him, and the children tread in the fathers' steps. If Judah in the times of Ezekiel had been righteous, they had not gone into captivity for what was done in the times of Manasseh.

“Arise, walk through the land, for I will give it unto thee.”—Gen. xiii. 17.

“And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, the field and the cave which was therein, and all the trees which were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession.”—Gen. xxiii. 17, 18.

“He gave him none inheritance in it, no not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him.”—Acts vii. 5.

THE first of these passages is the language of *promise*: the last intimates that the promise was not performed to Abraham, but reserved for his posterity. It is true he purchased a burying-ground of the sons of Heth, according to the second passage: but that could hardly be called ground to set his foot on, which expresses an idea different from that of a place to lay his bones in; and much less an inheritance of God's giving him to set his foot on. His having to purchase even a grave was rather a proof that he was considered as a stranger than of his being a native of the soil. An inheritance given of God he had not: that only was such which his posterity enjoyed without purchase, the inhabitants of the land being driven out before them.

“I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”—Gen. xxxii. 30.

“Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live.”—Exod. xxxiii. 20.

THE difference here seems to arise from the phrase “face of God.” In the one case it is expressive of *great familiarity*, compared with former visions and manifestations of the divine glory: in the other, of a *fulness of knowledge of this glory*, which is incompatible with our mortal state, if not with our capacity as creatures. What Jacob said of himself, that he had seen God “face to face,” is repeatedly spoken of Moses, and as that by which he stood distinguished from other prophets.—Deut. xxxiv. 10. Even in the same chapter wherein it is said he *could not see his face and live*, it is said that Jehovah spake unto him face to face.—Exod. xxxiii. 11, 20. He whom Jacob saw had at

least the appearance of a man, who conversed and wrestled with him till day-break. Yet, before they parted, he was convinced that he was more than man, even God; who on that, as on other occasions, assumed a visible and tangible form to commune with his servants, as a prelude of his future incarnation. The *face* which was seen on this occasion was human; though belonging to one that was divine. Jacob said, “I have seen God face to face.” Thus, also, that which was beheld by Moses is called “the similitude of Jehovah” (Numb. xii. 8) or a glorious divine appearance; of which, though we are unable to form an adequate idea, yet we may be certain that it came short of what he was afterwards told he “could not see and live.” Though, in comparison of other dark speeches and visions, it was seeing him face to face; yet, when compared with a *perfect* knowledge of the glory of God, it was but seeing what among creatures would be called the shadow, or at most the *back parts* of a great personage.

“The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, to say, Go number Israel and Judah.”—2 Sam. xxiv. 1.

“And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.”—1 Chron. xxi. 1.

THE English translators consider the pronoun *he* in the former of these passages as relating not to Jehovah, but to Satan, referring in the margin to the latter passage as a proof of it. But this seems to be a forced meaning; for not only is the name Jehovah placed as the immediate and only antecedent to the pronoun, but also a reason why he did it.

1. It is certain that God did not so move David to sin as either to partake of it, or to become his tempter; for “he cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man.” It was Satan that tempted David to sin, not Jehovah.

2. It is equally certain that the providence of God was concerned in this affair; and that, Israel having offended him, he determined in this way to punish them.

3. God is said to do that which is done upon the minds of men by the ordinary influence of second causes, which causes would not have been productive of such effects but for their depravity. The hardness of clay, no less than the softness of wax, is ascribed to the sun; yet the sun's producing this effect is entirely owing to the qualities of the object on which he shines. God hardened the heart of Pharaoh by so ordering things by his providence that considerations should present themselves to his mind, when placed under certain circumstances, which (he being righteously given up of God) would be certain to provoke his pride and resentment, and to determine him to run all risks, for the

sake of having his will. In other words, God led him into temptation; and there, in just judgment, left him to its influence.

With respect to David, it is probable his mind was previously lifted up with his great successes in war. It is after the relation of these that the story is introduced, both in Samuel and the Chronicles. The Lord therefore led him into temptation, and righteously left him in it; the certain issue of which was that which actually took place.

If it be observed that this is ascribing sin to God *indirectly*, though not directly, I answer, It is no otherwise ascribing it to God than as any man is willing to have it ascribed to himself. The conduct of a good father may, through the disaffection of a son, cause him to go on worse and worse. His threatenings may harden, and his kindest entreaties and promises excite nothing but contempt. What then? Is this to the father's dishonor? Certainly not. It were strange if God must cease from doing what is right, lest sinful men should be induced by it to become more sinful.

The best use for us to make of such a doctrine is, not curiously to pry into things too high for us, but when we pray, to say, "Our Father—lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!"

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."—Matt. vii. 7, 8.

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."—Luke xiii. 24.

SOME have supposed a difference in the latter passage between *seeking* and *striving*: as though it were not enough to seek, without striving, even to an agony. But this does not reconcile the two passages; for *seeking* in the one is connected with finding, whereas in the other it is not.

The distinction appears to lie in the time and nature of seeking. Seeking, in Matthew, refers to the application for mercy through Jesus Christ, in the present life: but, in Luke, it denotes that anxiety which the workers of iniquity will discover to be admitted into heaven at the last day. The *strait gate* in this latter passage does not mean an introduction to the kingdom of grace, but of glory; and *striving*, or agonizing, to enter in at it, does not describe an exercise of mind which is necessary to conversion, but to final salvation. The striving here exhorted to is the life's work of a Christian, in order that he may enter into the kingdom of heaven at last. All this is manifest from the context, which determines it to refer to what shall take place at the great day "when the master of the house is risen up, and hath

shut to the door, and sinners shall begin to stand without, to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto them, I know you not whence you are, depart from me all ye workers of iniquity."

There is therefore no contradiction whatever in these passages. Every one that seeketh mercy in the name of Jesus, while the door is open, succeeds: but he that seeketh it not till the door is shut will not succeed. "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me."

"Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips."—Prov. xvii. 2.

"I laboured more abundantly than they all.—In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles."—1 Cor. xv. 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

So near is the resemblance of good and evil, with respect to their outward expressions, that the one is very liable to be mistaken for the other. Vices pass for virtues, and virtues for vices. Thus indifference is taken for candor, bitterness for zeal, and carnal policy for prudence. The difference in these things may frequently lie, not in the expression or action, but merely in the  *motive*, which, being beyond human cognizance, occasions their being so often confounded.

It is thus that a just and necessary vindication of ourselves, when we have been unjustly accused, is liable to be construed into self-applause. That which was condemned by Solomon, and that which was practised by Paul, were far from being the same thing; yet they appear to be so with respect to the outward act or expression. A vain man speaks well of himself; and Paul speaks well of himself. Thus the branches intermingle. But trace them to their respective roots, and there you will find them distinct. The  *motive* in the one case is the desire of applause; in the other, justice to an injured character, and to the gospel which suffered in his reproaches.

The apostle, in defending himself, was aware how near he approached to the  *language* of a fool, that is, a man desirous of vain glory, and how liable what he had written was to be attributed to that motive. It is on this account that he obviates the charge which he knew his adversaries would allege. "Yes," says he, "I speak as a fool . . . but ye have *compelled* me." This was owing that, as to his  *words*, they might indeed be considered as vain glorying, if the  *occasion* were overlooked: but, if that were justly considered, it would be found that they ought rather to be ashamed than he, for having reduced him to the disagreeable necessity of speaking in his own behalf.



"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."—Matt. v. 16.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven."—Matt. vi. 1.

This is another of those cases in which the difference lies in the  *motive* . It is right to do that which men may see, and must see; but not  *for the sake of*  being seen by them.

There are, indeed, some duties, and such are prayer and the relief of the needy, in which a truly modest mind will avoid being seen; but in the general department of life no man can be hid, nor ought he to desire it. Only let his end be pure, namely, "to glorify his Father who is in heaven," and all will be right.

"Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it."—Matt. ix. 30.

"Jesus said unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them what great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."—Mark v. 19.

THE foregoing remarks may be of some use here. Our Saviour did not wish his miracles to be utterly unknown; for then God would not have been glorified, nor the end of establishing the truth of his Messiahship answered: but neither did he wish to make an ostentatious display of them. First: Because he had no desire of vain glory about him. Secondly: He did not wish to give any unnecessary provocation to his enemies, which might have hindered him in the execution of his work. Thirdly: Where there was no danger from enemies, yet such was the eagerness of the people to see his miracles that they flocked together from all parts of the country, thronging and hindering him in preaching the gospel. To the two former of these causes the injunction of secrecy seems to be attributed in Matt. xii. 13—20; and to the last in Mark i. 4, which is the case in question, as related by Mark. We are there informed that, owing to the leper having "blazed abroad the matter, Jesus could no more openly enter into the city; but was without in desert places," which was a serious injury to that work which his miracles were intended to subserve.

But in the country of the Gadarenes the case was different. He was there in no danger of being hindered from his great work by the thronging of the people: on the contrary, they were afraid, and "prayed him to depart out of their coasts;" and he did depart. In such circumstances let not the story of the destruction of the swine be the only one in circulation: let the deliverance of the poor demoniac also be told; and let him be the person who should tell it. Let him leave these people who wanted to get rid of the

Saviour, and go home to his friends, and tell how great things the Lord had done for him, and had had compassion upon him. Luke tells us that he published it throughout the whole city.—Chap. viii. 39.

"This is Elias, who was to come."—Matt. xi. 14.

"Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No."—John i. 21.

JOHN the Baptist was not literally the person of Elias; and it was proper for him to say he was not, in order to correct the gross notions of the Jews on that subject. Had he answered in the affirmative, and had they believed him, he would have confirmed them in a gross falsehood.

Yet John the Baptist was that Elias of whom the prophet Malachi spoke (ch. iv. 5;) that is, as Luke expresses it, he came "in the spirit and power of Elias" (ch. i. 17;) and so it was, as it were, another Elias.

"This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance."—Matt. xxi. 38.

"Which none of the princes of this world knew; for, had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."—1 Cor. ii. 8.

It is difficult to decide whether the Jewish rulers acted directly against the light of their consciences in crucifying the Lord of glory, or whether they did it ignorantly and in unbelief, as Saul persecuted the church. Several passages seem to favor the former of these hypotheses. They who took counsel to put Lazarus to death, because that through him many believed in Jesus (John xii. 10, 11)—and they who replied to Judas, "What is that to us? see thou to it (Matt. xxvii. 4)—do not seem to have acted ignorantly. The counsel of Caiaphas, to which the rest agreed, did not proceed upon the ground of Christ's being an impostor, but merely that of  *expediency* .—John xi. 50. That is,  *policy*  required that he should be made a sacrifice; for the Jewish church was in danger. With this agrees the former of the above passages; "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." With this also agrees the intimation that some of them had committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, which should never be forgiven, by ascribing his casting out devils to Beelzebub, the prince of devils, when in their consciences they knew better.—Matt. xii. 24—32. Finally: perhaps with this also agrees such language as the following:—"If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin."—"He that hateth me, hateth my Father also."—"If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin:

but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father."

On the other hand, there are several passages which seem to maintain the contrary. Among these, some have reckoned the latter of the above passages, namely, 1 Cor. ii. 8, "Had they known, &c." But I apprehend the term "known," in this passage, is put for that *spiritual* discernment which is peculiar to true Christians. The knowledge which the princes, or great ones, of this world, had not, is said to be revealed to believers by the Holy Spirit, which proves it to be spiritual. Had the murderers of our Lord been possessed of this, they would not, they could not, have crucified him. But, whatever light they had in their consciences, they were blind to the real glory of his character, and such is every unregenerate sinner.

But, though this passage be easily reconciled with the foregoing hypothesis, yet there are others more difficult; particularly the words of Peter in Acts iii. 17, and of Paul in Acts xiii. 27: "And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers"—"For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of their prophets, which are read every Sabbath-day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him."

I know of no way to reconcile these things but by supposing, what indeed is very probable, that there were some of each description; and that the former passages refer to the one and the latter to the other.

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"He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."—Luke i. 33.

"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power."—1 Cor. xv. 24.

WHEN the kingdom of Christ is said to have "no end," it may mean that it shall never be overturned or succeeded by any rival power, as all the kingdoms of this world have been, or shall be. Such is the interpretation given of the phrase in Dan. vii. 14, "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

But this need not be alleged in order to account for the phraseology, which will be found to be literally true. The end of which Paul speaks does not mean the end of Christ's kingdom, but of the world, and the things thereof. "The delivering up of the kingdom to the Father" will not put an *end* to it, but eternally establish it in a new and more glorious form. Christ shall not cease to reign, though the mode of his administration be different. As a divine person, he will al-

ways be one with the Father; and, though his mediatorial kingdom shall cease, yet the effects of it will remain forever. There will never be a period in duration in which the Redeemer of sinners will be thrown into the shade, or become of less account than he now is, or in which honor, and glory, and blessing, will cease to be ascribed to him, by the whole creation.

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"Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see."—Luke x. 23.

"Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."—John xx. 29.

THE former of these passages pronounces a blessing upon those who saw the fulfilment of what others have believed; the latter upon those who should believe the gospel upon the ground of their testimony, without having witnessed the facts with their own eyes. There is no contradiction in these blessings; for there is a wide difference between *requiring sight as the ground of faith*, which Thomas did, and *obtaining it as a completion of faith*, which those who saw the coming and kingdom of the Messiah did. The one was a species of unbelief, the other was faith terminating in vision.

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"If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true."—John v. 31.

"Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true."—John viii. 14.

OUR Lord, in one of these passages, expresses what was to be admitted as truth *in the account of men*; in the other, what his testimony was *in itself*. Admitting their laws or rules of evidence, his testimony would not have been credible; and, therefore, in the verses following he appeals to that of John the Baptist, and the works which he had wrought in his Father's name, which amounted to a testimony from the Father. But, though he in a manner gave up his own testimony, yielding himself to be tried even by their forms of evidence, yet would he not so far concede as to dishonor his character. He was in fact, whatever they might judge of him, the Amen, the faithful, and the true witness; and, as such, he taught many things, prefacing what he delivered with that peculiar and expressive phrase—"Verily, verily, I say unto you!"

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"Who through faith—obtained promises."—Heb. xi. 33.

"And those all—received not the promise."—Heb. xi. 39.

THE *promises* which were obtained by faith refer to those which were fulfilled during the Old-testament dispensation. It was promised to Abraham that he should have a son; to Israel, that they should possess the

land of Canaan for an inheritance; to David, that they should return from the Babylonish captivity, &c., and by faith each of them in due time obtained the promise.

But there was *one promise* which was of greater importance than all the rest; namely, the coming of the Messiah. In the faith of this the fathers lived and died; but they saw not its accomplishment. To see this was reserved for another generation. Hence the words of our Saviour to his disciples:—"Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

It is thus that God has wisely balanced the advantages of different ages. The fathers obtained much, but not all. In respect of the blessings of Messiah's kingdom, they sowed, and we reap; they labored, and we enter into their labors. Thus it is ordered that "they without us should not be made perfect." The fulfillments of our times must come in to answer the faith and complete the hopes of those who have gone before us.

"Jesus saith unto Mary, Touch me not: for I am not yet ascended to my Father."—John xx. 17.

"Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing."—John xx. 27.

It is manifest, from these and other passages, that the reason why Mary was forbidden to touch her risen Saviour was not because the thing itself was *impossible*. Indeed, if it had been so, the prohibition had been unnecessary; for we need not be forbidden to do that which cannot be done. There might, however, be an *impropriety* in her using the same freedoms with him in his immortal state as she had been wont to do in his mortal state. It might be proper to touch him at his own invitation, and so to answer an important end (see Luke xxiv. 39,) and yet improper to do so without it. By comparing the passage with Matt. xxviii. 9, 10, it appears that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who was with her *did touch him*; for they are said to have "held him by the feet and worshipped him." There is reason to think, therefore, that the words, "Touch me not," in John, were used merely to induce her to *desist* from what she was doing; and that on account of his having more important employment for her—"Go, tell my brethren!" This agrees with the reason given in John—"Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father," &c. This was as much as if he had said, "You need not be so unwilling to let go my feet, as though you should see me no more: I am not yet ascended: nor shall I ascend at present. Yet

do not imagine that I am raised to a mere mortal life, or am going to set up a temporal kingdom in this world. . . . No. . . . "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father: and unto my God, and your God."

"The Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law."—Rom. ii. 14.

"Among whom we all had our conversation in times past. . . . and were by nature the children of wrath even as others."—Eph. ii. 3.

THE term "nature" in these two passages is of very different signification. In the former it stands opposed to the written law of God, or the light of revelation. In the latter it is opposed to custom, education, or any thing merely accidental. In the one case, it is expressive of their want of external means; in the other of the inward disposition of their minds. The phrase "by nature," in the former, refers to the *rule* of action; but, in the latter, to the *cause* of it. All arguments, therefore, against the total depravity of human nature, or in favor of a natural disposition to virtue, drawn from the former of these passages, are entirely unfounded.

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike; Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."—Rom. xiv. 5.

"Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."—Gal. iv. 10, 11.

THE key to this apparent difficulty will be found in attending to the persons addressed. The Roman and Galatian churches were each composed of both Jews and Gentiles; but they are not addressed promiscuously; neither are they the same description of people who are addressed in both passages. Those who *regarded days* among the Romans were the *converted Jews*, who, having from their youth observed them as divine appointments, were with difficulty brought to lay them aside. And, as their attachment had its origin in a tender regard to divine authority, they were considered as *keeping the day unto the Lord*; and great tenderness was enjoined upon the Gentile converts towards them in that matter.

Those, on the other hand, who among the Galatians "observed days, and months, and times," were *converted Gentiles*, as is manifest from the context, which describes them as having, in their unconverted state, done "service to them which by nature were no gods."—Ver. 8. These, being perverted by certain judaizing teachers, were, contrary to the apostolical decision (Acts xv.) circumcised, and subjected themselves to the yoke of Jewish ceremonies. Nor was this all: they were brought to consider these things



as necessary to justification and salvation, which was subversive of the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.—Acts xv. 1; Gal. v. 4.

Considering these differences, the different language of the apostle is perfectly in character. Circumcision, and conformity to the laws of Moses, in *Jewish converts*, was held to be lawful. Even the apostle of the Gentiles himself to the Jews became a Jew, frequently, if not constantly, conforming to the Jewish laws; and writing to others he expresses himself on this wise: "Is any man called, being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not become circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but keeping of the commandments of God." But for *Gentiles*, who had no such things to be alleged in their favor, to go off from the liberty granted to them (Acts. xv.) and entangle themselves under a yoke of bondage—and not only so, but to make it a term of justification—was sufficient to excite a fear lest the labor which he had bestowed upon them was in vain.

"And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man."—Acts ix. 7.

"And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me."—Acts xxii. 9.

The statement in these two passages contains a variety, but no contrariety, the former observing that the men "heard a voice;" the latter, that "they heard not the voice of him that spoke" to Saul. They heard a sound which terrified them; but did not understand the meaning, which Saul did. The one says that they "saw the light;" the other that they "saw no man." In all this there is no inconsistency.

The reason why they are said to have "seen no man" is not to distinguish them from Saul; for neither did he see the personage who spoke to him; but to account for their terror, or their being struck speechless. It must have been overwhelming to their minds to have heard a voice, and yet to see no person near from whom it should proceed.

The difference upon the whole, however, between the case of these men and Saul was great, and strongly marks the difference between mere convictions and true conversion. The voice of the Lord was heard by both: but to the one it was a mere general and indistinct sound; to the other it was a word that entered into his soul. They "saw the light, and were afraid;" but that was all: he saw, and heard, and understood, and felt, and inquired "Who art thou, Lord?—Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Many *hear* the word in a general way, and *see*

enough to make them tremble; but then it is truly effectual when it is addressed to us as the voice of one that speaks to us from heaven; when it disarms us of our enmity to Christ, excites in us the desire of knowing him, and makes us willing, without hesitation or delay, to obey his commandments.

"God who is faithful, will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."—1 Cor. x. 13.

"We were pressed out of measure, above strength, inasmuch that we despaired even of life."—2 Cor. i. 8.

THE *ability* in the former of these passages, and the *strength* in the latter, are far from being the same. The one is expressive of that divine support which the Lord has promised to give to his servants under all their trials: the other of the power which we possess naturally as creatures. We may be tried beyond this, as all the martyrs have been, and yet not beyond the other. The outward man may perish, while the inward man is renewed day by day.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."—Gal. vi. 2.

"Every man shall bear his own burden."—Gal. vi. 5.

THE former is an exhortation to Christian sympathy under present afflictions: the latter is a declaration of the rule of future judgment, according to character. We may alleviate each other's sorrows in this life, but cannot stand in each other's place at the last day.

"The Lord is at hand."—Phil. iv. 5.

"Be not soon shaken in mind, nor troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand."—2—Thes. ii. 2.

EVERY thing with respect to degrees is what it is by comparison. Taking into consideration the whole of time, the coming of Christ was "at hand." There is reason to believe from this, and many other passages of the New Testament, that the sacred writers considered themselves as having passed the meridian of time, and entered into the afternoon of the world, as we may say. Such appears to be the import of the following, among other passages: "God hath in these *last days* spoken to us by his Son."—"Once in the *end of the world* hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."—"Upon whom the *ends of the world* are come."—"The coming of the Lord draweth nigh."—"Surely I come quickly."

But, taking into consideration only a single generation, the day of Christ was *not at hand*. The Thessalonians, though a very amiable people, were by some means mistaken on this subject, so as to expect that the end of the world would take place in their

life-time, or within a very few years. To correct this error, which might have been productive of very serious evils, was a principal design of the Second Epistle to that people.

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”—1 John i. 8.

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”—1 John iii. 9.

It appears that the word *sin*, in these passages, is of different significations. In the former it is to be taken properly, for any transgression of the law of God. If any man say, in this sense, he has no sin, he only proves himself to be deceived, and that he has yet to learn what is true religion.

But, in the latter, it seems, from the context, that the term is intended to denote the sin of *apostacy*. If we were to substitute the term *apostacy* for sin, from the sixth to the tenth verse, the meaning would be clear. Whoso abideth in him *apostatizeth* not: whosoever *apostatizeth* hath not seen him, neither known him.—He that is guilty of *apostacy* is of the devil; for the devil hath been an *apostate* from the beginning.—Whosoever is born of God doth not *apostatize*; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot *apostatize*, because he is born of God.

This sense of the latter passage perfectly agrees with what is said of the “sin unto death.”—v. 16—18. “There is a sin unto death . . . . . We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” It also agrees with ch. ii. 19: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for, if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us. But they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” Altogether, it affords what we might presume to call an incontestible proof of the certain perseverance of true believers.

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.”—2 Tim. iii. 12.

“When a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”—Prov. xvi. 7.

SOME consideration is required for the difference of *times*. It was the genius of the Old Testament, more than of the New, to connect obedience to God with temporal prosperity; and therefore that might be said under the one which would be less applicable under the other.

It is allowed, however, that this is not sufficient to solve the difficulty. There has always been the same radical enmity in general between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. He that was born after

the flesh, *then*, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit: and so it is *now*. And, by how much more spiritual the church at any time has been, by so much higher has the enmity arisen against them. It is also true under the gospel, as well as under the law, that where a man perseveres in righteousness and godliness, though he may have many enemies, yet their enmity shall frequently be prevented from hurting him, and even turned away from him into other channels. The truth seems to be, that neither of the above passages is to be taken *universally*. The peace possessed by those who please God does not extend so far as to exempt them from having enemies; and, though all godly men must in some form or other be persecuted, yet none are persecuted *at all times*. God has always given his people some seasons of rest. The former of these passages may, therefore, refer to the native enmity which true godliness is certain to excite, and the latter to the divine control over it. The rod of the wicked must be expected to fall, but not to *rest* upon the lot of the righteous. Man’s wrath shall be let loose in a degree; but farther than what is necessary for the praise of God it shall not go. It shall be suffered to shoot forth in measure; but God will debate with it. “He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind.”

“But meat commendeth us not to God,” &c.—1 Cor. viii. 8—13.

“The things which the gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and of the table of devils.”—1 Cor. x. 20, 21.

In the former of these passages the apostle presses the discontinuance of eating meats offered to idols as merely *inconvenient*; in the latter as absolutely *unlawful*. To account for this it may be proper to observe that eating part of the sacrifices of the city, which might be provided at the public expense, had been the custom in all former times; and it was probably thought a hardship to be forbidden it. Some of the members of the church at Corinth proceeded so far as to resume their old stations at these public feasts; and justified themselves on the ground that they were not so ignorant as not to be able to distinguish between idolatry and good eating and drinking; they did not *mean* by it to do any honor to the idol, but merely to partake of the repast. Yet by their example many weaker brethren, who still retained the prejudices of their heathen education, were actually drawn into a superstitious veneration of the idol.—The thing also was in itself wrong, as it was having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

To remedy this evil, the apostle first reasons with them *on their own principles*. Be it so, as if he had said, that there is no evil in it, and that you by your superior knowledge (thus satirising their vain pretences) can walk over these coals without being burnt; yet that is more than your weaker brethren can do. You make them sin, though you be sinless yourselves.—In this view he allows their conduct, for argument sake, to be lawful, but denies it to be *expedient*. But having thus proved the impropriety of their conduct, even upon their

own principles, he then proceeds to evince its utter *unlawfulness*; calling it “idolatry,” chap. x. 14, and proving it to be so on this general principle—that he who voluntarily associates with others in any act is a partaker of that act. On this ground, says he, it is that in the Lord’s supper we hold professed *communion* with Christ; that those who among the Jews ate of the sacrifices partook of the altar; and, upon this ground, you cannot eat and drink things offered to idols, without having fellowship with dæmons.



# SERMONS

AND

## SKETCHES OF SERMONS.

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### SERMON I.

[Preached at Nottingham before the Northamptonshire Association, June 2, 1784.]

#### THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF WALKING BY FAITH.

“We walk by faith, not by sight.”—2 Cor. v. 7.

MUCH is said concerning faith in the holy Scriptures, especially in the New Testament; and great stress is laid upon it, especially by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. This, I apprehend, is not very difficult to be accounted for. Ever since the fall of man, we have been entirely dependent upon the mercy of God, through a Mediator. We all lie at his discretion, and are beholden to his mere sovereign grace for all the happiness we enjoy. We have nothing on which we can rely for the possession or continuance of any good, but the word and will of God. The only life, therefore, proper for a fallen creature in our world, is a life of *faith*—to be constantly sensible of our dependence upon God, continually going to him, and receiving all from him, for the life that now is and that which is to come.

Believers, and they only, are brought to be of a spirit suitable to such a kind of life. The hearts of all others are too full of pride and self-sufficiency; but these are contented to be pensioners on the bounty of another, can willingly commit their all into Christ's hands, and venture their present and everlasting concerns upon his word. “The just shall live by faith.”

*Self-renunciation*, and *confidence in another*, are ideas which seem ever to accompany that of faith. The apostle speaks of being *justified* by faith; that is, not by our own righteousness, but by the righteousness of

another:—of *living* by faith; that is, not by our own earnings, so to speak, but by the generosity of another:—of *standing* by faith; that is, not upon our own legs, as we should say, but upon those of another: and here,—of *walking* by faith; which is as much as if he had said,—We walk, not trusting our own eyes, but the eyes of another: we are blind, and cannot guide ourselves; we must therefore rely upon God for direction and instruction. This, my brethren, is the life we must live, while in this world, and this the manner in which we must walk in our progress toward the heavenly state. Great is the wisdom and goodness of God in so ordering it; great glory hereby redounds to him, and great good accrues to us.

All I shall attempt will be to *explain the nature*, and *show the importance*, of the *Christian's walk by faith*. Both are necessary: the one that we may form just ideas of what we have to do; and the other that we may feel our hearts excited to do it. O may the same *Spirit* who indited the sacred passage breathe upon us, that these ends may be accomplished!

I. Let us inquire **WHAT IS INTENDED** by the sacred writer, when he says, “We walk by faith, not by sight.” Faith and sight, it is easy to see, here stand opposed: as, indeed, they do in many other parts of Scripture; especially in that remarkable definition of faith wherein the apostle to the Hebrews calls it “the evidence of things not seen.” But what *kind* of sight it is opposed to may deserve our attentive inquiry.

And here, before I proceed any farther, in order to make the way clear, I will advert to a notion which has been too generally received, but which appears to me unscriptural and pernicious: what I refer to is, that faith is to be considered as opposed to *spiritual* sight, or spiritual discernment. It

is true I never heard of any person, either in preaching, writing, or conversation, who said so in express words; but expressions are often used which convey the same idea. When the terms *faith* and *sense* are used, it is common with many to understand, by the latter, *sensible communion with God*. So it is common to hear a life of faith opposed to a life of *frames* and *feelings*. Those times in which we have the most spiritual *discernment* of God's glory, *sensible communion* with him, and *feel* our love most ardently drawn out to him, are thought to have the least of the exercise of faith. It is common to say,—There is no need for faith then; at those times we live by sense: but that when all our graces seem dead, and we can see no evidence from which to draw the favorable conclusion, then is the time to walk by faith. The meaning is, then is the time to believe all is well, and so rest easy, whether we have evidence that it is so or not.

Thus we have often heard several passages of Scripture applied, or rather miserably misapplied; for instance, that in the last chapter of Habakkuk: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." As if by the fig-tree not blossoming, &c., were meant the Christian graces not being in exercise; and that then was the time to walk by faith, to rejoice in the God of our salvation! That passage also concerning Abraham, "who, against hope, believed in hope," has been understood as if to be strong in faith, giving glory to God, like Abraham, was to maintain an unshaken persuasion of the goodness of our state, whether we have evidence or no evidence.

So also that passage in the fiftieth of Isaiah has been frequently brought for this purpose: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." As though a state of darkness there meant a state of mind wherein a person could *discern* no evidence whatever of his being a good man; and as though such were there encouraged to make themselves easy, and leave the matter with God, not doubting the goodness of their state. Our Lord's rebuke to Thomas has been understood in the same manner: "Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." As if a blessing should rest upon those who, destitute of all discernible evidence of their Christianity, nevertheless believe it with an unshaken confidence. If this is to walk by faith, then faith must stand opposed to *spiritual sight* or *spiritual discernment*.

I doubt not but there is such a thing as to live upon *frames*; which ought to be guarded against. If I imagine, for instance, that God changes as I change—that he admires me at one time, and not another—or that his great love, whence all my hope of salvation springs, rises and falls according to the state of my mind; this is, doubtless, to dishonor God, as it strikes at the immutability of his love. So, if I derive my chief consolation from reflecting upon what *I am*, instead of reflecting upon what *Christ* is, this is to dishonor Christ, and may very properly stand opposed to living by faith. But this is not the common idea of living upon frames. It has been usual with many to account that man to live upon frames who, when he is stupid and dark and carnal, cannot be confident about the safety of his state; and him to live by faith who can maintain his confidence in the worst of frames. Allow me, brethren, to offer three or four plain reasons against this notion of the subject.

1. Faith is the only *means* of spiritual discernment and communion with God; and therefore cannot be opposed to them. Our best frames are those in which faith is most in exercise; and our worst when it is the least. Faith is the eye of the mind. It is that by which we realize invisible and spiritual objects, and so have fellowship with God. Yes, it is by this grace that we "behold the glory of the Lord," and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the "Spirit of the Lord."

2. If faith is opposed to spiritual discernment and communion with God, then it must *work alone*; it must never act in conjunction with any of those graces wherein we *feel* our hearts go out to God; for this would be to confound faith and sense together. But this is contrary to fact. When we have most faith in exercise, we have most love, most hope, most joy; and so of all the graces; all sweetly act in harmony. Thus the Scriptures represent it as ever accompanied by other graces; especially by love, purity, and lowliness of heart. It is expressly said to "work by love;" and, it should seem, never works without it. It is also said to "purify the heart." The exercise of faith, therefore, and the exercise of holiness, can never be separated. Equally true is it that it is ever attended with "lowliness of heart." There are two instances of faith recorded which our Lord particularly commended, saying, he had not seen such great faith, no not in Israel: the one was the case of the woman of Canaan, and the other that of the Roman centurion; and both these were attended with great humility. The one was contented to be treated as a dog, and the other thought himself unworthy that Christ should come under his roof. A confidence unaccompanied with these, if it may be called faith at all, seems nearly to resemble what the apostle James

called "faith without works;" which he pronounced to be "dead, *being alone*."

3. If faith is to be understood in this sense, then it not only works without other graces, but *contrary to them*. The Scriptures encourage a spirit of self-examination and godly jealousy. These are modest and upright graces, and constitute much of the beauty of Christianity. "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," say the inspired writers; "try your own selves!"—"Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it."—"Let us pass the time of our sojourning here in fear." But always to be confident of the safety of our state, let the work of sanctification go on as it may, is not only unfriendly to such a spirit, but subversive of it. Hence it is common, with some, to call every degree of godly jealousy by the name of *unbelief*, and to impute it to the *enemy*; yea, to shun it, and cry out against it, as if it were itself a devil! This is not the most favorable symptom of an honest heart. Surely a heart truly upright would not wish to receive comfort itself, but upon solid evidence: and where it was taught to call such a fear by the name of *unbelief* I know not; I think I may say, it never came from the word of God. If the veracity of God were called in question, no doubt it would be unbelief; but the question, at those times, with a sincere mind, is not whether God will prove faithful in saving those that trust in him, but whether he be indeed the subject of that trust. His doubts do not respect God, but himself. Love and fear are the two great springs and guardians of right action. When love is in exercise, we do not stand in need of fear to stimulate or guide us; but, when we are not constrained by the former, it is well to be restrained by the latter.

4. Faith, in that case, must be *unsupported by evidence*. God's word affords us no warrant to conclude ourselves interested in his promises, and so in a state of safety, unless we bear the characters to which the promises are made. We have no right, for instance, to apply to ourselves that promise—"Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,"—unless we bear the character of the party there addressed. This is expressed in the foregoing verse, "But thou, Israel, art *my servant*," &c. If, from the real desire of our hearts, we yield not ourselves *servants* to God, no impression of this passage upon our minds can warrant us to conclude that God is indeed our God, or that we shall be strengthened, helped, or upholden by him. So also no man has any right to conclude himself interested in that promise, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, there-

fore with loving kindness have I drawn thee," unless he be so *drawn* from the love of sin, self, and the world, as to love God better than any of them. But, if we are to hold fast the confidence of our safety, whatever be the condition of our mind or the evils in our conduct, then we are, in that instance, to believe without evidence. If the work of sanctification be the only scriptural evidence of our interest in Christ, then, in proportion to that work increasing or declining, our evidence must be strong or weak. When we degenerate into carnality and indifference, it must, of course, diminish. To say, then, that those are the times in which we exercise most faith, is the same thing as to say we exercise most faith when we have least evidence; and, consequently, it must be a kind of faith, if it be faith at all, that is unsupported by evidence.\*

\* All true faith must have TRUTH for its foundation. That faith to which the Scriptures promise salvation is founded upon evidence; and that evidence is the TESTIMONY of God. Hence it is, with great propriety, by the apostle, defined the *belief of the truth*. This definition includes more than many seem to apprehend. To believe the truth in reality is cordially to credit the account which God has given of himself, of us, of sin, of Christ, of earth, of heaven, &c. Whoever thus realizes divine truth must, of necessity, feel its influence. The same apostle tells us that those who receive the word as *it is* find it *effectually* to work in them. Hence we are said to be *sanctified through the truth*, to know the truth, and to be *made free* by it. I cannot believe God to be that amiable and gracious being which his word represents him to be, without loving him. I cannot believe myself to be that vile and worthless being that God represents me to be, without abhorring myself in dust and ashes. If I really credit what God hath said of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it is impossible but that I should hate it, and perceive its dreadful demerit, and plainly see myself righteously condemned for being a subject of it. If I really believe the record that God has given of his Son, that is the same thing as to think of his excellences, in measure, as God thinks of them; and, in that case, I cannot but embrace him with all my heart, and venture my everlasting all upon his atonement. If, from my heart, I believe what God hath said of the vanity of this world, and the substantial bliss of that to come; if I realize the emptiness of all the enjoyments of the former, and the eternal weight of glory pertaining to the latter; I shall necessarily labor, not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life.

If this be a just notion of faith, then it will follow, 1. That all *unconverted men are truly, and in the most literal and proper sense of the word, UNBELIEVERS*. Whatever they may pretend, they do not realize what God has revealed of his character or their own, of the nature of sin and its dreadful demerit, of the excellence of Christ, of the vanity of this world, and the solid bliss of the next. Nor can this their unbelief be removed but by their becoming entirely new creatures, by a work of the almighty Spirit of God. 2. That a mere *cold assent to things, commonly called believing the doctrines of the gospel, unaccompanied with love to them, or a dependence on Christ for salvation, is very far from being true saving faith*. Let but the doctrines of the gospel be *really and heartily believed, as God has revealed them*, and, as before said, it will be impossible but that we should feel a determination to venture upon



There are but two cases, that I recollect, in the whole system of true Christian experience, which so much as seem to resemble this notion; and these are, in fact, essentially different from it. One is that of *the most eminent Christians having a general and well-grounded persuasion of their interest in Christ, even at those times wherein they may not experience such evident and sensible exercises of grace as they do at other times.* But then, it is to be observed, grace has more ways than one of being in exercise: the grace of love, for instance; sometimes it is exercised in the most tender and affectionate feelings of the heart towards Christ, longing to be with him, and to enjoy him, in the world to come; at other times, it works more in a way of serving him, and promoting his interest in the present world. This latter may not so sensibly strike the person himself as being an exercise of love; but perhaps other people may consider it superior evidence.

The industrious peasant, sitting in his evening chair, sees his children gathering round him, and courting his affections by a hundred little winning ways. He looks, and smiles, and loves. The next day he returns to his labor, and cheerfully bears the burden of the day, in order to provide for these his little ones, and promote their interest. During his day's labor, he may not feel his love operate in such sensible emotions as he did the evening before. Nay, he may be so attentive to other things as not immediately to have them in his thoughts. What then?

Christ alone for salvation, with all the proper effects of living faith. But persons may *profess* to believe those doctrines when they do not, or may believe them *partially*, but not as God has revealed them. Yea, a person may think these his professions to be true, and these his notions to be just, and yet be an infidel at heart. The Jews professed to believe Moses, and no doubt verily thought they did; but our Lord told them, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me." We are under a necessity, therefore, of concluding that, where these effects are not produced, the faith of such persons is, in a great degree, *pretended*, and not real: and, in that degree in which it is real, it is very *superficial*; it reaches only to the shell of truth, at farthest. The essence and glory of the gospel is by them neither discerned nor believed. 3. *That all that confidence which is unsupported by evidence, held fast by so many, is not faith, but presumption or delusion.* If faith is the belief of the truth, then whatever I believe ought to be a truth, and a truth supported by evidence, prior to, and independently of, my believing it. This is certainly the case respecting the excellence and all-sufficiency of Christ. He is what he is, whether I believe it or not. However I may disallow him, he is chosen of God, and precious. Whatever real excellence I at any time discern or believe to be in him, I only believe the truth, and what would have been the truth if I had never believed it. Faith, therefore, draws aside the veil, and discovers things in some measure *as they are*. So if that persuasion which I may have of my interest in Christ have any right to the name of faith, it must be a truth, and a truth capable of being proved by Scripture evidence at the time.

he loves his children: indeed he gives proof of it, by cheerfully enduring the toils of labor, and willingly denying himself of many a comfort, that they might share their part; and, were he to hear of their being injured or afflicted, he would quickly feel the returns of glowing affection, in as strong, and perhaps stronger, emotions than ever.

Thus the believer may have real love to God in exercise, exciting him to a cheerful and habitual discharge of duty, and a careful watch against evil, and yet feel little, or none, of that desirable tenderness of heart which, at other times, he experiences. He has grace in exercise, only it does not work in the same way as it does at some other times; and he in general enjoys a conscious satisfaction that the more he knows of God, his holy law, and glorious gospel, the more he loves them. During this, he may have an abiding satisfaction that things are right with him. But this is a very different thing from a person, at all events, maintaining the safety of his state; yea, and reckoning himself, in so doing, to be strong in faith, giving glory to God, while carnality governs his spirit, and folly debases his conversation.

The other case is when, on a failure of evidence from a reflection on *past* experiences, the believer has recourse to an *immediate application* to the Lord Jesus Christ, casting himself directly on his mercy, and relying on his word; seeing he has said "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." This case no doubt often occurs. The believer, through the prevalence of carnality, with some other causes, too often finds his evidences for glory so obscured that past experiences will afford but small consolation. At such a time, his mind is either easy and carnally disposed (in that case, a few painful fears will do him no harm,) or else his heart is depressed with perplexity and gloom, in which case nothing is better than immediately to go to Christ as a poor sinner for salvation. This is the shortest, and it is commonly the surest way. It is not best in such a state of mind to stand disputing whether we have believed or not: be that as it may, the door of mercy is still open, and the Redeemer still says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." It is best, therefore, to make a fresh venture of our souls upon him; that, if we have never before trusted in him, we may now.

This is no more than he has a *warrant* at any time to do, let things be as they may with him; for, though internal qualifications are necessary to our concluding ourselves *interested* in Christ, yet it is not so in respect of *application* to him. The perplexed soul need not stay, before he ventures, to inquire whether he be fit to come to Christ. It is not required that he should prove his saintship before he applies for mercy, though it is before he claims an interest in gospel bless-

ings. All that is necessary here is that he be sensible of his being a vile and lost sinner; and *that* is not to be considered as a *qualification, giving him a right to come*, but as a state of mind *essential to the act itself of coming*.

Many a Christian has found sweet rest to his soul by such a direct application to Christ; and surely it would be much better for Christians who go almost all their life in painful perplexity, lest they should be mistaken at last, if, instead of perpetually poring on past experiences, they were to practise more in this way. This would furnish them with present evidence, which is much the best, and what God best approves; for he loves to have us continue to exercise our graces, and not barely to remember that we have exercised them some time or other heretofore. This in some sort may be called walking by faith and not by sight; and, in this case, faith may in some sense be opposed to spiritual sight. It is opposed to that discernment which we sometimes have of being true Christians, from a review of past experiences. But then this is ever attended with *present spiritual discernment* of Christ's excellence, and a longing desire after interest in him; and herein essentially differs from what we have been opposing. Confidence in the one case is nothing else but carnal security, tending to make men easy without God: confidence in the other is an actual venture of the soul afresh on the Lord Jesus, encouraged by his gracious testimony. The subject of the one considers himself as an established saint; the other as a poor lost sinner, and deals with Christ for salvation, just as he did when he first applied to him. To the one we say, "Be not high-minded, but fear:" to the other, "Fear not, thou shalt not be ashamed; none ever trusted in him, and was confounded."

In what sense then do we walk by faith, and not by sight? I answer in general, Walking by faith is a GOING FORWARD IN THE WAYS OF GODLINESS AS INFLUENCED, NOT BY SENSIBLE, BUT BY INVISIBLE OBJECTS—OBJECTS OF THE REALITY OF WHICH WE HAVE NO EVIDENCE BUT THE TESTIMONY OF GOD. But perhaps faith may be considered as opposed to sight more particularly in *three* senses; namely, to corporal sight, to the discoveries of mere reason, and to ultimate vision.

1. To walk by faith is opposed to walking by *corporal sight*. In this sense we shall find it plentifully used in the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, concerning Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and others. Thus Abel, by faith, offered a more excellent offering than Cain. God had said in effect, once for all, that he would never speak nor be spoken to in a way of friendship by any of the human race, but through a mediator. This was intimated partly by man's being debar-

red from all access to the tree of life, partly by the promise of the woman's seed, and partly by the institution of sacrifices. Cain overlooked all these, and approached God without an *expiatory* sacrifice; as if there had been no breach between them, and so no need of an atonement. This was an instance of daring *unbelief*. Abel, on the contrary, took God at his word, perceived the evil of sin and the awful breach made by it, dared not to bring an offering without a victim for atonement, had respect to the promised Messiah, and thus, by faith in the *unseen* Lamb, offered a more excellent offering than Cain.

Thus also it is said of Noah, "By faith he, being warned of God of *things not seen* as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world," &c. No doubt the world were ready to despise Noah, while building his ark, as an enthusiast whose faculties were probably deranged, who put himself to a deal of trouble, and wanted to put other people to as much, merely through a notion that ran in his head that the world should be drowned. Why, was there any thing in the world that looked like it, or seemed to portend such an event? Nothing at all: all things seemed to continue as they were from the creation. What then could induce Noah to do as he did? Nothing but the testimony of God which he credited, and acted accordingly.

So also it is said of Abraham, when called to go into another country, "by faith he obeyed, and went out, *not knowing whither he went*." A pretty errand it would seem to his friends and neighbors! It is possible that some of these, observing him preparing for a journey, might inquire whither he was going.—Going? I am going to a land which *the Lord is to show me*.—And have you ever seen this land?—No: I neither know the country nor a step of the way to it.—A fine tale, indeed! but, seriously, what in the world can move you to such an undertaking?—I rely upon the *testimony of God*. He hath said, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, unto a land *that I will show thee*:" I take him at his word, and act accordingly.

These were cases in point for the apostle to quote. The Hebrews seemed hardly contented with an *unseen* High-priest, an *invisible* religion. They had been used to priests and sacrifices that they could hear, and see, and handle, with their bodily senses. Like their fathers by Moses, therefore, they were ready to say of Jesus,—We know not where he is gone; come, let us make us a captain, and return to Judaism.—Judaism! says the apostle—methinks true Judaism would condemn you. All your forefathers acted upon a principle which you seem about to abandon. They walked by faith,



not by sight. They lived, they died, in the faith, even in the faith of that very Messiah of whom you make so light.

In this sense, it is easy to see, faith and sight are to be taken in our Lord's rebuke to Thomas, when he says, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." It is as if he had said,—You think you have acted very prudently; but what must the Christian world do in after ages, if they act upon your principle? Christianity in the whole of it will depend upon testimony; whoever receives it after your death, yea, in your life-time, besides yourselves, must receive it upon your testimony. Blessed are they that shall cordially so receive it; and blessed had you been, Thomas, to have set them the example, by believing the testimony of your brethren.

2. Faith may be considered as opposed to the discoveries of *mere reason unassisted by revelation*. In this sense it seems to be used in reference to Sarah. "Through faith she received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." How Sarah should have a son was not only indiscernible by the corporal eye, but by an eye of reason; since it must be, if at all, entirely beside the common course of nature. She had nothing to rely upon in this case but the promise of God.

We do not suppose faith and *right reason* to be opposites: that be far from us. On the contrary, nothing is more evident than that Christianity is entirely a rational system; and it is its glory that it is so. We should never have been required to give a *reason* for the hope that is in us, if there had been no reason to be given. But, though nothing in revelation be contrary to *right reason*, yet there are many things which our reason could never have found out, had they not been made known by the Supreme Intelligence. The plan of redemption by Jesus Christ, in particular, contains a set of truths which the eye had never seen, nor the ear heard, nor had they entered the heart of man to conceive, had not God revealed them to us by his Spirit. For all the pleasure that we enjoy, brethren, in contemplating these glorious truths, we are wholly indebted to the testimony of God. Indeed, so far are they from being discoverable by mere reason, that every blessing contains in it abundantly more than men or angels could have asked or thought! It staggers our reason to receive it, even now it is told us. At every pause we must stand and wonder, saying, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord!"

Not only was our reason incapable of finding out many truths before they were revealed; but, even now they are revealed, they contain things above our comprehension. It is one thing to say that Scrip-

ture is contrary to *right reason*, and another thing to say it may exhibit truths too great for our reason to grasp.\* God must have told us nothing about his own existence and infinite perfections, if he had told us nothing but what we could fully comprehend. In this case, it becomes us to know our littleness, and to bow our understandings to the Supreme intelligence. It is the most rational thing in the world so to do. If God has said any thing, we ought to rest assured that so it is. In these cases, we ought to trust his eyes, so to speak, rather than our own, and be content to walk by faith, not by sight.

3. Faith may be considered as opposed to *ultimate vision*. The saints in glory are described as "seeing Christ as he is," as "knowing even as they are known," and as being citizens of a city where there shall be "no night," and where they shall need "no candle, neither light of the sun, nor light of the moon, for the Lord God shall be the light

\* May not the great disputes which have taken place concerning *faith* and *reason*, as if the one were opposite to the other, have arisen, in a great degree, from using the term *reason* without defining it? The word *reason*, like the word *understanding*, has two senses. 1. It signifies the *fitness of things*. So the apostles used it, when they said, "It is not *reason* that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables:" that is, it is not *fit* or *proper*. 2. It signifies our *power* or *capacity of reasoning*. So it is said of Nebuchadnezzar that his *reason* returned to him: that is, his *power* or *capacity of reasoning*. Now, it is easy to see that these are two essentially different ideas: the one is perfect and immutable, remaining always the same; the other is shattered and broken by sin, and liable to a thousand variations through blindness and prejudice. No divine truth can disagree with the former; but it may be both above and contrary to the latter.

If people were to talk, in matters of science and philosophy, as some have affected to talk in religion, they would be treated as fools, and deemed unworthy of attention. A philosopher, for instance, tells an unlettered countryman that it is generally thought that the earth turns round, every day, upon its own axis, and not the sun round the earth. The countryman replies, "I don't believe it." "Very likely," says the philosopher, "but why not?" "It is contrary to my *reason*." "Contrary to your reason! that may be; but I hope you do not think that every thing contrary to your reason is contrary to *right reason*!" Were men of the greatest understanding but to consider that there is a far greater disproportion between some truths respecting the existence of a God and their capacities than between any truths of human science and the capacity of the most ignorant rustic, they would be ashamed to disbelieve a truth because it is not according to their reason.

It is right, and stands commended in Scripture, to apply our hearts to *understanding*; but it is wrong, and stands condemned in Scripture, by the same pen, and in the same page, to *lean to our own understanding*. So, I apprehend, it is right to adhere to *right reason*, and to use all means to find out what it is; but it is wrong and presumptuous to set up our reason as a standard competent to decide what is truth, and what is error; for that is the same thing as supposing that our ideas of fitness and unfitness always accord with the real fitness of things.



thereof." Our knowledge of things there will be immediate and intuitive, and not, as it is here, through the medium of the word and ordinances. The sacred Scriptures are to us (with reverence be it spoken) like a letter from a distant friend; but, when we come face to face, *ink and paper shall be needed no more*. However, for the present, it is otherwise. We are yet in the body; and while such, as the apostle observes in the verse preceding the text, "we are absent from the Lord," and must be glad of these helps. Let us make much of this letter, and be thankful that we can walk by it through this world, as by a "light in a dark place," till we come to a better, where we shall no more walk by faith, but by sight.

Thus far I have dwelt chiefly upon the terms; but, that we may obtain a more comprehensive view of the *thing itself* (namely, of a Christian's walking by faith,) let us take a view of a few of those circumstances and situations through which he has to pass during the present life. It is in these that faith, as well as every other grace, is exercised. Allow me, then, to request your attention, brethren, to four or five observations on the subject.

1. There are many *dark seasons in God's providential dealings with us*, in which we can see no way of escape, nor find any source of comfort, but the *testimony of God*. God's friends are not distinguished in this world by an exemption from trying providences; he views that, methinks, as too trifling a badge of distinction. They shall be known by what is far more noble and advantageous; namely, by patience, obedience, submission, and divine support under them. Moreover, as we profess to be friends of God, and to trust the salvation of our souls, with all our concerns, in his hands, he sees it proper to prove the sincerity of our professions and the stability of our hearts. He brings us into such circumstances, therefore, as shall try us, whether we will confide in him or not.

Christ has told his followers, once for all, that "all power in heaven and earth is in his hands;" that he is "head over all things to the church;" that he "will surely do them good;" that, however things may seem, "all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;" that, as to temporal things, let them but "trust in the Lord, and do good, and they shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed;" and, as to eternal things, if they have a few light afflictions, they shall last but for "a moment," and shall "work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." These promises seem easy to be believed, when things are smooth and pleasing; and it is very natural for us, in a day of prosperity, to talk of these things, and try and comfort

those with them who are laboring in adversity. But the greatest trial is when it comes home to ourselves. Then it is well if we fall not under the reproof of Eliphaz, "Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees: but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled." Then, if ever, is the time for us to walk by faith, and not by sight.

We create to ourselves *darlings*, and place much of our happiness in their enjoyment. God not unfrequently takes these first away, as being most his rivals. If one child is more beloved than all the rest, if he must be clothed with a coat of many colors, the coat must quickly be returned without the owner; yes, the period must soon arrive when it shall be said, *Joseph is not!* These, with a few more strokes of the kind, will try Jacob's faith to the uttermost; and he will find it hard work to reconcile promises with providences. "Thou saidst I will surely do thee good:" but "all these things are against me." Ah, he fails! He fails, like Asaph in a similar condition, who could not see how God could be "good to Israel," when "waters of a full cup were wrung out to them." The Shunamitish woman will set us a better example than either the patriarch or the prophet. "Is it well?" said Elisha's servant, when her child lay dead in her house. She replied, "*It is well.*" This was, in effect, saying,—Whether I can see it, or not, I know he doth all things well.—This is believing when we cannot see, taking God at his word, against all the rebellion of sense and feeling. This is what Jacob should have done; but O that Jacob had failed alone! If to resemble him, in this instance, would constitute us Israelites, we should most of us be *Israelites indeed!*

We are often very thrifty in *devising plans* for futurity, and apt to promise ourselves great degrees of happiness, when they are accomplished. Here it is common for God to throw confusion upon our schemes, and cause things to run in a different channel from what we expected. Job, while in prosperity, sat, like a bird in her well-feathered nest, and thought within himself,—I shall live to enjoy numerous years of uninterrupted prosperity, to see children's children, and then go down to the grave in peace; or, as he himself afterwards, in the bitter hour of reflection, expressed it, "I said, I shall die in my nest, I shall multiply my days as the sand!" Well, so he did at last; but there was a melancholy chasm in his life, which he never expected. Such there are, more or less, in all our lives; and, in such situations, it is well if we do not think hard of our best friend. Some have been ready to ask, Is this love? Is this his doing who has said, I will surely do thee good? Yes, and you shall see it in the end,

as Asaph did; who, after he had been to God's sanctuary, and saw things as they were, went home, it seems, and penned the seventy-third Psalm, beginning it all in ecstasy, saying, "*Truly God is good to Israel!*" Christians, how criminal, how cruel, that he that never failed us at any time should be so mistrusted as he is! It should seem to suggest as if he were such a God that we cannot trust him out of sight!

How amiable is that spirit, how happy is that heart, that, in every situation, places unbounded confidence in JEHOVAN'S word! Such may be hedged up on every side, and encompassed, like Israel at the Red Sea, with seemingly insurmountable difficulties; yet, even here, they will follow Israel's example, they will cry unto God, and rely upon his mercy. If means can be used, they will use them; if not, they will "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." "Speak unto the children of Israel," said the Lord, "that they go forward." Go forward! they might have replied, what, leap at once into the jaws of destruction! But nothing of this. At first, indeed, their faith seemed to fail them, but they soon recovered themselves. "Speak unto the children of Israel," said the Lord, "that they go forward"—they went—a way was made in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters. Well may it be said, BY FAITH Israel passed through the Red Sea. Minds thus disposed might defy the united sources of worldly sorrow to render them unhappy. Let *poverty* stare them in the face, let pinching *want* stretch over them her miserable sceptre, they have been known, even here, by faith, to break forth into songs of praise. Thus sang good Habakkuk (and this evidently appears to be his situation, and not a state of *spiritual declension*;) "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Thus also sang the church, even in her captivity, when her country was laid waste, Jerusalem rased to the ground, and the temple burnt to ashes: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him!"

2. In all our approaches to, and fellowship with Christ, it is by *faith* in the account that God has given of him in his word. Christ's excellence, undertaking, and benefits, are the joy, and even the life of our souls, if we are true Christians. But what *evidence* have we of all or any of these? Yea, what evidence have we that there is, or ever was, such a person as Jesus Christ? or, if there was, that he was the Messiah, the Son of God? We neither saw him alive, nor die, rise again, nor ascend to heaven. We never saw the miracles he wrought, nor heard the

voice from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." We speak of his personal excellences, divine and human; of his love, zeal, righteousness, meekness, patience, &c.; but what know we of them? We rejoice in his being constituted our surety, to obey the law, and endure the curse in our stead; but how know we that so indeed it is? We glory in the imputation of his righteousness, and exult in the hope of being found in him, and being forever with him, faultless before his throne, to serve him day and night in his temple; but on what do we rely for all this? If our expectations are but just, truly they are noble; but, if groundless, extravagant. Are they, then, well founded? Yes, *the testimony of God* is the rock whereon they rest. He has told us by the mouth of his servants, the inspired writers, all that is necessary for us to know, of the character, conduct, and errand of his Son; of every office he sustained, and every end for which he came into the world. To all this he has added that "whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." So they have preached, and so we have believed. We have, through grace, ventured our everlasting ALL in his hands; nor is it in the hands of we know not whom: "we know whom we have trusted, and are persuaded that he is able to keep that which we have committed to him against that day." For, though none of these things are invisible to our mortal eye, yet, having evidence that God has said them, we are satisfied. We would as soon trust God's word as our own eyes. Thus we walk, like Moses, "as seeing him who is invisible;" and thus answer to that description, "Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see him not, yet, *believing*, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

In all our applications to Christ, we have to rely merely upon the testimony of God. Here is a poor, self-condemned sinner, who comes pressing through the crowd of discouraging apprehensions, that he may, so to speak, touch the hem of the Redeemer's garment and be made whole. As he approaches, one set of thoughts suggests, How can such a monster hope for mercy? Is it not doubtful whether there be efficacy enough in the blood of Christ itself to pardon such heinous crimes?—I know my crimes are heinous beyond expression, repels the burdened soul, and I should doubtless give up my case as desperate, but that I have heard of him that "he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." I will go, therefore; who can tell?—As he goes, other objections assail him, questioning whether Christ can *find in his heart* to accept of such a one?—I should think not, indeed, rejoins the poor man; but he has said, "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." I know, were I to con-

sult nothing but my feelings and only to fix my eyes on the enormity of my sin, I should utterly despair; but, encouraged by my word, I will go forward; I will walk by faith, not by sight: O, I hear him say, "Come unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden—and ye shall find rest unto your souls!" This, this is what I want! Depart from me, all ye that vex my soul; I will go in the strength of the Lord God!

3. We have to give up many present enjoyments, for Christ's sake, wherein we have no visible prospect of recompense, none of any kind, but what arises from the promise of God. Self-denial is one of the initial laws of Christ's kingdom. Far from enticing people into his service by promises of wealth, ease, and honor, he set out with this public declaration, "Whosoever will be my disciple must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." But who would enter upon these terms? Who would give up houses, lands, friends, and reputation, and expose himself to hardships, persecution, and death, for nothing? Yet many followed him, and that to the day of their death; yea, and upon these very terms too: "they left all and followed him." What then induced them? Did not they act irrationally? Prophets, apostles, and martyrs! what mean ye? Have ye no regard for yourselves? What! are you destitute of the feelings of men?—No such thing: we "have respect unto the recompense of reward."—Reward! what can that be? nothing surely below the sun, unless it were every thing the reverse of what is agreeable to human nature!—True; but our Lord has declared, "Whosoever shall forsake houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred-fold, and inherit everlasting life." We rely upon this, and this supports us.

God's friends, in all ages, have forsaken sensible for invisible enjoyments. Encouraged by considerations like these, Ruth forsook her father and her mother, and the land of her nativity, and came to a people whom she knew not. It was this that determined her to go forward, when, as Naomi told her, there were no earthly prospects before her. It was this that made her resolve not to go back with Orpah, but to cast in her lot with the friends of the God of Israel. "The Lord recompense thy work," said Boaz to her afterwards, "and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust!"

The same things influenced Moses, it seems, to refuse a crown. It has been thought that, in virtue of his adoption, he might have been king of Egypt; but that throne not only, like other thrones, exposed him that sat thereon to numberless snares, but probably was inaccessible to any but

those who would continue the system of idolatry and oppression. In that case Moses, in order to become king of Egypt, must have sacrificed a good conscience, despised a crown of glory that fadeth not away, and united in persecuting his own and the Lord's people. Moses seems fully to have weighed this matter. The result was, he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming even the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." He, therefore, freely leaves the life of a courtier; avows himself the friend of the poor despised captives; and dares to retire into Midian, to lead the life of an obscure shepherd. I say, he *dared* to retire; for it required a greater degree of courage thus to deny himself, than to stand in the forefront of a battle, or to face the mouth of a cannon! But "by faith he forsook Egypt, and went and lived a stranger in a strange land; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible;" yes, "he had respect unto the recompense of reward."

In short, through this, the holy tribes of martyrs, in all ages, loved not their lives unto the death. By faith in invisible realities, as the apostle to the Hebrews largely proves, they bore all manner of cruelties, not accepting deliverance itself upon dishonorable conditions; suffered all kinds of deaths with unremitting fortitude, and, in some sort, like their glorious Leader, triumphed over principalities and powers, when they fell.

Indeed, every man in the world may be said to walk either by faith or by sight. There is not only a giving up sensible for invisible enjoyments, by *actually parting with them*, but by *not sitting our hearts upon them*, as our chief good. This may be done where there is no call actually to give them up, and is done by all real Christians in the world. Men whose chief good consists in the profits, pleasures, or honors of this life, live by *sight*; they derive their life from objects before their eyes, having neither patience nor inclination to wait for a portion in the world to come. But good men, as well the rich as the poor, derive their life from above, and so live by faith: their "life is hid with Christ in God."

Perhaps here, as much as any where, is required the peculiar exercise of faith. For one actually divested of earthly good to look upward, and set his heart on things above, is faith; but for one still possessed of this—one on whom Providence smiles, prospering him in all he sets his hand to, blessing him with wife and children, houses and lands, in abundance—for him to exercise such a degree of indifference to all these as to derive his chief happiness from invisible realities, this is faith indeed! This seems to have been exemplified in Abraham, and other



patriarchs. Of him it is said, "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country." How is this? We do not wonder, that when he and Sarah went into Egypt, on account of a famine, he should consider himself a sojourner there; but how is it that he should do so in Canaan, the land of promise, his own estate, as it were? The next verse informs us: "for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." So Jacob, when before Pharaoh, called his whole life a *pilgrimage*, though the far greater part of it was spent in the land of promise; and "they that say such things," adds the apostle, "declare plainly that they seek a country." Though God had given them the good land, they would not make it their *chief* good. They could not be contented with this Canaan, but longed for another. Noble souls! bid them lift up their eyes eastward, and westward, and northward, and southward, and tell them all they can see is their own; still they will not live by sight, but by faith: "they will desire a better country, that is a heavenly."

4. There are many low and distressing seasons to which the *church of God* is subject, in which there is little or no *visible* ground of encouragement, scarcely any but what arises from the *promise of God*. The whole church of God, as individuals, has, in all ages, had its day of adversity set over against the day of prosperity. Israel, after their deliverance from Egypt and settlement in Canaan, enjoyed pretty much prosperity, especially in the days of David and Solomon. But afterwards, by a series of provocations, they procured to themselves the Babylonish captivity. At that melancholy period, those amongst them that feared the Lord must be supposed to be all in darkness. Jerusalem laid waste; the temple burnt with fire; Judah carried captive: ah, what becomes of God's interest in the world! The "foundations" of his visible kingdom seemed to be "laid in the holy mountains" round about Jerusalem; if these are destroyed, what can the righteous do? They had long sighed and cried for the idolatrous abominations of their countrymen, and prayed, and hoped, that mercy might be lengthened out: but now all seems over. For their idolatry, they must go, and have enough of idolaters: they that feared the Lord must also go with them. By the rivers of Babylon they must go and sit down. Those that had been used to sound the high praises of God in Zion must now hang their harps upon the willows, as having no use for them! Nor is this the worst; they must be taunted, and their God derided, by their insulting lords: "Come," said they, "sing us one of the songs of Zion:" as if they had said, Now see what your religion has availed you! This was your favorite employ, and these were the songs where-

with you addressed your Deity, in whom you confided to deliver you out of our hands: what think you now? Poor Zion! "She spreadeth forth her hands, but there is none to comfort her. The Lord hath commanded that her adversaries should be round about her:" her captive sons can only remember Jerusalem and weep! Alas, "how can they sing the Lord's song in a strange land!"

But is there no help from above? Is there no physician there? Yes, the God whom Babel derides, but Judah adores, looks down, and sees their affliction. To his disheartened friends, in this situation, he addresses himself, saying, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." As if he should say, For a season you must walk by faith, and not by sight; but, trust me, that season shall soon be over. Seventy years, and Babylon shall fall, and Judah return! By these declarations the church was encouraged in her captivity, and furnished with an answer to her insulting foes: yea, and, what is wonderful, breaks forth into one of the Lord's songs in a strange land! (Hearken, O Babel, to "one of the songs of Zion!") "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God?"

This is encouraging to us as *churches*, and as *ministers*. We have, in many cases, to walk in darkness, and have no light, and to go on in our ministrations, in a great degree, like the prophet Isaiah, lamenting that there are so few who have believed our report, so few to whom the arm of the Lord has been revealed. When death removes worthy characters, we must sometimes live, and lament to see their places unoccupied by others of the like character: and, what is worse, instead of increase by Christ's conquests, we must sometimes live to see a decrease by the conquests of the evil one! Many a faithful minister has had to preach, year after year, till, either by public scandals or private disgusts, many of his people have gone off, and walked no more with him. But let him then remember the testimony of God: "Him that honoreth me I will honor." Let him go on, and faithfully discharge his duty, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear: let him, and those that are with him, walk by faith, and not by sight. It often proves that, after such a night of weeping, comes a morning of rejoicing. Let us

not be discouraged; better breath than ours has been spent apparently in vain. Our Lord himself seemed to labor in vain, and to spend his strength for nought; but he comforted himself in this (herein leaving us an example,) "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength."

This may encourage and direct us in larger concerns; concerns which respect the *whole interest of Christ* in the world. If we compare the present state of things, or even the past, with the glorious prophecies of the word of God, we cannot think, surely, that all is yet accomplished. By these prophecies the Christian church is encouraged to look for great things at some period or other of her existence. She is taught to look for a time when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" when "a nation shall be born at once;" when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." But surely, for the present, though great things, upon the whole, have been done in the world, yet nothing like this has ever come to pass. Instead of the world being conquered, what a great part yet continues to stand out against him. Heathenism, Mahomedism, popery, and infidelity, how extensive still their influence! In all probability not a single country, city, town, village, or congregation, has ever yet been brought wholly to submit to Christ! Nay, is it not very rare to find, in any one of these, so many real friends as to make even a majority in his favor? May not the Christian church then, for the present, adopt that language, "We have been with child, we have as it were brought forth wind, we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen?" What then, shall we despair? God forbid! "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry;" and, meanwhile, "the just shall live by faith."

Let us take encouragement, in the present day of small things, by looking forward, and hoping for better days. Let this be attended with *earnest and united prayer* to him by whom Jacob must arise. A life of faith will ever be a life of prayer. O, brethren, let us pray much for an outpouring of God's Spirit upon our ministers and churches, and not upon those only of our own connection and denomination, but upon "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours!"

Our hope of a *better state, when this is over*, is built on faith in God's testimony. We have no sort of evidence, but this, that any

such state exists. We cannot see anything of the kind, or aught from which we can infer it. We cannot learn it from any of our senses. Reason itself could never have found it out. Reason might have taught us the idea of a *future state*, but not of a future state of *bliss*. Though much might be argued from the fitness of things, to prove that man is not made barely for the present life, yet nothing could thence be drawn to prove that *rebels* against the Supreme Being should live in a state of eternal felicity; no, for this we are wholly indebted to the *word of promise*. Hence faith is said to be "the *substance, ground, or foundation* of things hoped for." Supported by *that*, we sustain our heaviest losses; and, attracted by *these*, we come up out of great tribulations, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, till we shall overcome, and "sit down with him in his throne, as he also hath overcome, and is set down with his Father in his throne."

II. We will now add a few words on the *IMPORTANCE* of such a life. If, all things considered, it would have been best for us to have always *seen* our way before us,—to have been guided, so to speak, with our own eyes, and not to have implicitly followed the directions of God,—no doubt so it would have been ordered. But he who perfectly, and at once, saw the beginning and end of all things, judged otherwise. With the highest wisdom, no doubt, he formed the resolution, "the just shall live by faith." It may be impossible for us, in the present state, to find out all the reasons for this resolution; but two or three seem to present themselves to our view.

I. Such a life brings *great glory to God*. Confidence is universally a medium of honor. To confide in a fellow-creature puts honor upon him in the account of others, and affords a pleasure to himself; especially if he be a wise and upright character, as it gives him an opportunity of proving his wisdom and fidelity. Though the great God cannot be *made* more honorable than he *is*, by anything we can do, yet his honor may, by this, be made more *apparent*. We honor him, so far as we form just conceptions of him in our own minds, and act so as to give just representations of him to others. God is graciously pleased to declare that "he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy;" and why? surely, among other things, because it gives him occasion to display the glory of his grace. And, as he takes pleasure in those that hope in his mercy and rely upon it, so he takes pleasure in ordering things so that we may be put to the trial, whether we will rely on him or not. It was this which induced him to lead Israel through the wilderness, rather than by the ready road to Canaan. He knew they would be, *in fact*, dependent upon him, let them be where they would; but they would not be

sensible of that dependence, nor have so much opportunity of entirely trusting him, in any way as in this; and so it would not be so much for the glory of his great name. He therefore would lead a nation, with all their little ones, into an inhospitable desert, where was scarcely a morsel of meat to eat, and, in many places, not a drop of water to drink; "a land of deserts and of pits, of scorpions and fiery flying serpents:" here, if any where, they must be sensibly dependent on God. They must be fed and preserved immediately from heaven itself, and that by miracle, or all perish in a few days! Here God must appear to be what he was—here mercy and truth must appear to go with them indeed!

What an opportunity was afforded them to have walked these forty years by faith! what grounds for an entire confidence! but, alas, their faithless hearts perverted their way, and, in the end, proved their ruin! Ten times they tempted God in the desert, till at length he swore, concerning that generation, that, for their unbelief, they should die in the wilderness, and never enter his rest. Few, if any, besides Joshua and Caleb, would dare to trust him, notwithstanding all his wonders and all his mercies! They, however, for their part, took hold of his strength, and thought themselves *able*, having God on their side, to encounter any thing! Their spirit was to walk by faith, and not by sight; and herein it is easy to see how they glorified God.

O, brethren, let *the glory of God* lie near our hearts! Let it be dearer to us than our dearest delights! Herein consists the criterion of true love to him. Let us, after the noble example of Joshua and Caleb, "follow the Lord fully." Let us approve of every thing that tends to glorify him. Let us be reconciled to his conduct, who "suffers us to hunger, that we may know that man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." If he should bring us into hard and difficult situations, situations to an eye of sense impossible to be endured, let us remember that it is that he may give us an opportunity of glorifying him, by trusting him in the dark. The more difficult the trial, the more glory to him that bears us through, and the greater opportunity is afforded us for proving that we can indeed trust him with *all* our concerns—that we can trust him when we cannot see the end of his present dispensations.

Those very much dishonor God who profess to trust him for another world, but in the common difficulties of this are perpetually murmuring, peevish, and distrustful. How different was it with Abraham, in offering up his son Isaac. What, offer up Isaac! my son, my only son of promise! Why, is not the Messiah to spring out of his loins? What are to become of all the nations of the

earth, who are to be *blessed* in him? How natural and excusable might such questions have seemed! much more so than most of our objections to the divine conduct. Sense, in this case, had it been consulted, must have entered a thousand protests. But the *father of the faithful* consulted not with flesh and blood, not doubting but God knew what he was about, if he himself did not. (O that we may prove ourselves the *children* of faithful Abraham!) *Against hope*, in appearance, *he believed in hope* of divine all-sufficiency; fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able to perform, he stretched forth his obedient arm; nor had he recalled it, had not heaven interposed: he was "strong in faith, *giving glory to God.*"

2. It is productive of *great good to us*. The glory of God and the good of those that love him (thanks be to his name!) always go together. It is equally to their benefit as to his honor, for instance, to *lie low* before him, and feel their *entire dependence* upon him. It is essential to the real happiness of an intelligent creature to be in its *proper place*, and take a complacency in being so. But nothing tends more to cultivate these dispositions than God's determining that, at present, we should walk by faith, and not by sight. Faith, in the whole of it, tends more than a little to abase the fallen creature; and to *walk* by faith (which is as much as to acknowledge that we are blind, and must see with the eyes of another) is very humbling. The objects of our desire being frequently for a time withheld, and our being at such times reduced to situations wherein we can *see* no help and thus obliged to repose our trust in God, contribute more than a little to make us feel our dependence upon him. Agur saw that a constant fullness of this world was unfriendly to a spirit of entire dependence upon God; therefore he prayed, "Give me not riches; lest I be full and deny thee." Whatever tends to *humble* and *try* us tends to "do us good in the latter end."

Great and wonderful is the *consolation* that such a life affords. In all the vicissitudes of life and horrors of death, nothing can cheer and fortify the mind like this. By faith in an unseen world we can endure injuries without revenge, afflictions without fainting, and losses without despair. Let the nations of the earth dash, like potsherds, one against another; yea, let nature herself approach towards her final dissolution; let her groan as being ready to expire, and sink into her primitive nothing; still the believer lives! His all is not on board that vessel! His chief inheritance lies in another soil!

"His hand the good man fastens on the skies,  
And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl!"

3. It will *make vision the sweeter*. It affords a great pleasure, when we make a ven-



ture of any kind, to find ourselves at last not disappointed. If a considerate man embark his all on board a vessel, and himself with it, he may have a thousand fears, before he reaches the end of his voyage; yet should he, after numberless dangers, safely arrive, and find it not only answer, but far exceed his expectations, his joy will then be greater than if he had run no hazard at all. What he has gained will seem much sweeter than if it had fallen to him in a way that had cost him nothing. Thus believers venture their all in the hands of Christ, persuaded that he is able to keep that which they have committed to him against that day. To find at last that they have not confided in him in vain—yea, that their expectations are not only answered, but infinitely outdone—will surely enhance the bliss of heaven. The remembrance of our dangers, fears, and sorrows, will enable us to enjoy the heavenly state with a degree of happiness impossible to have been felt, if those dangers, fears, and sorrows had never existed.

My hearers! We all of us live either by faith or by sight; either upon things heavenly or things earthly. If on the former, let us go on, upon the word of God; everlasting glory is before us! But, if on the latter, alas, our store will be soon exhausted! All these dear delights are but the brood of time, a brood that will soon take to themselves wings, and, with her that cherished them, fly away. Oh, my hearers! is it not common for many of you to suppose that those who live by faith in the enjoyments of a world to come live upon mere imaginations? But are ye not mistaken? It is your enjoyments and not theirs that are imaginary. Pleasures, profits, honors, what are they? The whole form only a kind of *ideal* world, a sort of splendid *show*, like that in a dream, which, when you wake, all is gone! At most it is a *fashion*, and a fashion that *passeth* away. To grasp it is to grasp a shadow; and to feed upon it is to feed upon the wind. O that you may turn away your eyes from beholding these vanities, and look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the substantial realities beyond the grave, for your never-failing portion!

But if not, if you still prefer this world, with its enjoyments, to those which are heavenly, how just will it be for the Lord Jesus to say to you, at the last great day, *Depart!* Depart, you have had your reward! you have had your choice; what would you have? You never chose me for your portion: you, in effect, said, of me and my interest, "We will have no part in David, nor inheritance in the son of Jesse: see to thyself, David." Ah, now, see to thyself, sinner!

Christians, ministers, brethren, all of us! let us realise the subject. Let us pray, and preach, and hear, and do every thing we do

with eternity in view! Let us deal much with Christ and invisible realities. Let us, whenever called, freely deny ourselves for his sake, and trust him to make up the loss. Let us not faint under present difficulties, but consider them as opportunities afforded us to glorify God. Let us be ashamed that we derive our happiness so much from things below, and so little from things above. In one word, let us fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life!

## SERMON II.

[To the Rev. Robert Fawcner, at his ordination, at Thorn, Bedfordshire, Oct. 31, 1787.]

### THE QUALIFICATIONS AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER ILLUSTRATED BY THE CHARACTER AND SUCCESS OF BARNABAS.

"He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith; and much people was added to the Lord."—Acts xi. 24.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

It is a very important work to which you are this day set apart. I feel the difficulty of your situation. You need both counsel and encouragement; I wish I were better able to administer both. In what I may offer, I am persuaded you will allow me to be free; and understand me, not as assuming any authority or superiority over you, but only as saying that to you which I wish to consider as equally addressed to myself.

Out of a variety of topics that might afford a lesson for a Christian minister, my thoughts have turned, on this occasion, upon that of *example*. Example has a great influence upon the human mind: examples from Scripture especially, wherein characters the most illustrious in their day, for gifts, grace, and usefulness, are drawn with the pencil of inspiration, have an assimilating tendency. Viewing these, under a divine blessing, we form some just conceptions of the nature and importance of our work, are led to reflect upon our own defects, and feel the fire of holy emulation kindling in our bosoms.

The particular example, my brother, which I wish to recommend to your attention is that of Barnabas, that excellent servant of Christ and companion of the apostle Paul. You will find his character particularly given in the words I have just read.

Were we to examine the life of this great and good man, as related in other parts of Scripture, we should find the character here given him abundantly confirmed. He seems to have been one of that great company who, through the preaching of Peter and the other apostles, submitted to Christ soon after his ascension: and he gave early proof of his love to him, by selling his possessions, and

laying the price at the feet of the apostles for the support of his infant cause. As he loved Christ, so he loved his people. He appears to have possessed much of the tender and affectionate, on account of which he was called "Barnabas—a son of consolation." Assiduous in discovering and encouraging the first dawnings of God's work, he was the first person that introduced Saul into the company of the disciples. The next news that we hear of him is in the passage which I have selected. Tidings came to the ears of the church at Jerusalem of the word of the Lord being prosperous at Antioch, in Syria. The church at Jerusalem was the mother church, and felt a concern for others, like that of a tender mother towards her infant offspring. The young converts at Antioch wanted a nursing father; and who so proper to be sent as Barnabas? He goes; and, far from envying the success of others, who had labored before him, he "was glad to see the grace of God" so evidently appear; "and exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." As a preacher, he does not seem to have been equal to the apostle Paul; yet so far was he from caring about being eclipsed by Paul's superior abilities that he went in search of him, and brought him to Antioch, to assist him in the work of the Lord. It may well be said of such a character that he was a "good man, and full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith." O that we had more such ministers in the church at this day! O that we ourselves were like him! Might we not hope, if that were the case, that, according to God's usual manner of working, more people would be added to the Lord?

There are three things, we see, which are said of Barnabas in a way of commendation: he was "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith." Thus far he is held up for our example: a fourth is added, concerning the effects which followed: "and much people was added unto the Lord." This seems to be held up for our encouragement. Permit me, my dear brother, to request your candid attention, while I attempt to review these great qualities in Barnabas, and by every motive to enforce them upon you.

I. HE WAS A GOOD MAN. It were easy to prove the necessity of a person being a good man, in order to his properly engaging in the work of the ministry: Christ would not commit his sheep but to one that loved him. But on this remark I shall not enlarge. I have no reason to doubt, my brother, but that God has given you an understanding to know him that is true, and a heart to love him in sincerity; I trust, therefore, such an attempt, on this occasion, is needless. Nor does it appear to me to be the meaning of the evangelist. It is not barely meant of Barnabas that he was a re-

generate man, though that is implied; but it denotes that he was *eminently* good. We use the word so in common conversation. If we would describe one that more than ordinarily shines in piety, meekness, and kindness, we know not how to speak of him better than to say, with a degree of emphasis, He is a *good* man. After this eminence in goodness, brother, may it be your concern, and mine, daily to aspire!

Perhaps, indeed, we may have sometimes heard this epithet used with a sneer. Persons who take pleasure in treating others with contempt will frequently, with a kind of proud pity, speak in this manner: Aye, such a one is a *good* man; leaving it implied that goodness is but an indifferent qualification, unless it be accompanied with greatness. But these things ought not to be. The apostle Paul did not value himself upon those things wherein he differed from other Christians; but upon that which he possessed in common with them—charity, or christian love. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

My dear brother, *value the character of a good man in all the parts of your employment; and, above all, in those things which the world counts great and estimable.* More particularly,

1. Value it *at home in your family.* If you walk not closely with God there, you will be ill able to work for him elsewhere. You have lately become the head of a family. Whatever charge it shall please God, in the course of your life, to place under your care, I trust it will be your concern to recommend Christ and the gospel to them, walk circumspectly before them, constantly worship God with them, offer up secret prayer for them, and exercise a proper authority over them. There is a sort of religious gossiping which some ministers have indulged to their hurt; loitering about perpetually at the houses of their friends, and taking no delight in their own. Such conduct, in a minister and master of a family, must, of necessity, root out all family-order, and, to a great degree, family-worship; and, instead of endearing him to his friends, it only exposes him to their just censure. Perhaps they know not how to be so plain as to tell him of it at their own houses; but they will think the more, and speak of it, it is likely, to each other, when he is gone. I trust, my brother, that none of your domestic connections will have to say when you are gone, He was loose and careless in his conduct, or sour and churlish in his temper; but rather, *He was a good man.*

2. Value this character in your *private retirements*. Give yourself up to "the word of God, and to prayer." The apostle charged Timothy, saying, "Meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them;" or, "be thou in them." But this will never be, without a considerable share of the *good man*. Your heart can never be in those things which are foreign to its prevailing temper; and, if your heart is not in your work, it will be a poor lifeless business indeed. We need not fear exhausting the Bible, or dread a scarcity of divine subjects. If our hearts are but kept in unison with the spirit in which the Bible was written, every thing we meet with there will be interesting. The more we read, the more interesting it will appear; and the more we know, the more we shall perceive there is to be known. Beware also, brother, of neglecting secret *prayer*. The fire of devotion will go out if it be not kept alive by an habitual dealing with Christ. Conversing with men and things may brighten our gifts and parts; but it is conversing with God that must brighten our graces. Whatever ardor we may feel in our public work, if this is wanting, things cannot be right, nor can they in such a train come to a good issue.

3. Value it in your *public exercises*. It is hard going on in the work of the ministry, without a good degree of spirituality; and yet, considering the present state of human nature, we are in the greatest danger of the contrary. Allow me, brother, to mention two things in particular, each of which is directly opposite to that spirit which I am attempting to recommend. One is, an *assumed earnestness*, or *forced zeal*, in the pulpit, which many weak hearers may mistake for the enjoyment of God. But, though we may put on violent emotions—may smite with the hand, and stamp with the foot—if we are destitute of a genuine feeling sense of what we deliver, it will be discerned by judicious hearers, as well as by the Searcher of hearts, and will not fail to create disgust. If, on the contrary, we feel and realize the sentiments we deliver, emotions and actions will be the natural expressions of the heart; and this will give weight to the doctrines, exhortations, or reproofs which we inculcate; what we say will come with a kind of divine authority to the consciences, if not to the hearts of the hearers. The other is, being under the influence of *low and selfish motives* in the exercise of our work. This is a temptation against which we have especial reason to watch and pray. It is right, my brother, for you to be diligent in your public work; to be instant in season and out of season; to preach the gospel not only at Thorn, but in the surrounding villages, wherever a door is opened for you; but, while you are thus engaged, let it not

be from motives of policy, merely to increase your auditory, but from love to Christ and the souls of your fellow-sinners. It is this only that will endure reflection in a dying hour. The apostle Paul was charged by some of the Corinthian teachers with being *crafty* and with having *caught* the Corinthians *with guile*: but he could say, in reply to all such insinuations, in behalf of himself and his fellow-laborers, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world."

4. Value it in the *general tenor of your behaviour*. Cultivate a meek, modest, peaceful, and friendly temper. Be generous and humane. Prove by your spirit and conduct that you are a lover of all mankind. To men in general, but especially to the poor and the afflicted, be *pitiful*, be *courteous*. It is this, my brother, that will recommend the gospel you proclaim. Without this, could you preach with the eloquence of an angel, you may expect that no good end will be answered.

5. Prize the character of the good man *above worldly greatness*. It is not sinful for a minister, any more than another man, to possess property; but to aspire after it is unworthy of his sacred character. Greatness, unaccompanied with goodness, is valued as nothing by the great God. Kings and emperors, where that is wanting, are but great "beasts, horned beasts," pushing one at another. When Sennacherib vaunted against the church of God, that he would "enter the forest of her Carmel, and cut down her tall cedars," the daughter of Zion is commanded to *despise* him. God speaks of him as we should speak of a buffalo, or even of an ass: "I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest." Outward greatness, when accompanied with goodness, may be a great blessing; yet, even then, it is the latter and not the former that denominates the true worth of a character. Once more:—

6. Value it *above mental greatness*, or greatness in gifts and parts. It is not wrong to cultivate gifts; on the contrary, it is our duty so to do. But, desirable as these are, they are not to be compared with goodness. "Covet earnestly the best gifts," says the apostle, "and yet show I unto you a more excellent way:" viz. *charity, or love*. If we improve in gifts and not in grace, to say the least, it will be useless and perhaps dangerous both to ourselves and others. To improve in gifts, that we may be the better able to discharge our work, is laudable; but, if it be for the sake of popular applause, we may expect a blast. Hundreds of ministers have been ruined by indulging a thirst



for the character of the *great* man, while they have neglected the far superior character of the *good* man.

Another part of the character of Barnabas was that

II. HE WAS FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. The *Holy Spirit* sometimes denotes his extraordinary gifts, as in Acts xix., where the apostle Paul put the question to some believers in Christ whether they had received the Holy Spirit; but here it signifies his indwelling and ordinary operations, or what is elsewhere called "an unction from the Holy One." This, though more common than the other, is far more excellent. Its fruits, though less brilliant, are abundantly the most valuable. To be able to surmount a difficulty by Christian patience is a greater thing in the sight of God than to remove a mountain. Every work of God bears some mark of godhead, even a thistle, or a nettle; but there are some of his works which bear a peculiar likeness to his holy moral character: such were the minds of men and angels in their original state. This will serve to illustrate the subject in hand. The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit are a communication of his *power*; but in his dwelling in the saints, and the ordinary operations of his grace, he communicates his own *holy nature*; and this it was of which Barnabas was full. To be full of the Holy Spirit is to be full of the *dove*, as I may say; or full of those fruits of the Spirit mentioned by the apostle to the Galatians; namely, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness."

To be sure, the term *full* is not here to be understood in an unlimited sense; not in so ample a sense as when it is applied to Christ. He was filled with the Spirit *without* measure, but we *in* measure. The word is doubtless to be understood in a comparative sense, and denotes as much as that he was habitually under his holy influence. A person that is greatly under the influence of the love of this world is said to be *drunken* with its cares or pleasures. In allusion to something like this, the apostle exhorts that we "be not drunken with wine, wherein is excess; but *filled* with the Spirit." The word "filled," here, is very expressive; it denotes, I apprehend, being *overcome*, as it were, with the holy influences and fruits of the blessed Spirit. How necessary is all this, my brother, in your work! O how necessary is "an unction from the Holy One!"

I. It is this that will enable you to *enter into the spirit of the gospel, and preserve you from destructive errors concerning it*. Those who have an unction from the Holy One are said to "know all things; and the anointing which they have received abideth in them, and they need not that any man teach them, but as the same anointing teacheth them all things, and is truth, and is no lie." We

shall naturally fall in with the dictates of that spirit of which we are full. It is for want of this, in a great measure, that the Scriptures appear strange, and foreign, and difficult to be understood. He that is full of the Holy Spirit has the contents of the Bible written, as I may say, upon his heart; and thus its sacred pages are easy to be understood, as "wisdom is easy to him that understandeth."

It is no breach of charity to say that, if the professors of Christianity had more of the Holy Spirit of God in their hearts, there would be a greater harmony among them respecting the great truths which he has revealed. The rejection of such doctrines as the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the total depravity of mankind, the proper deity and atonement of Christ, justification by faith in his name, the freeness and sovereignty of grace, and the agency of the Holy Spirit, may easily be accounted for upon this principle. If we are destitute of the Holy Spirit, we are blind to the loveliness of the divine character, and destitute of any true love to God in our hearts; and, if destitute of this, we shall not be able to see the reasonableness of that law which requires love to him with all the heart; and then, of course, we shall think lightly of the nature of those offences committed against him; we shall be naturally disposed to palliate and excuse our want of love to him, yea, and even our positive violations of his law; it will seem hard, very hard indeed, for such little things as these to be punished with everlasting destruction. And now, all this admitted, we shall naturally be blind to the necessity and glory of salvation by Jesus Christ. If sin is so trifling an affair, it will seem a strange and incredible thing that God should become incarnate to atone for it: and hence we shall be very easily persuaded to consider Christ as only a good man who came into the world to set us a good example; or, at least, that he is not equal with the Father. The freeness and sovereignty of grace also, together with justification by imputed righteousness, will be a very strange sound in our ears. Like the Jews, we shall "go about to establish our own righteousness, and shall not submit to the righteousness of God." It will seem equally strange and incredible to be told that we are by nature utterly unfit for the kingdom of God; that, therefore, we *must* be born again; that we are so bad that we cannot even come to Christ for life, except the Father draw us; yea, and that our best doings, after all, are unworthy of God's notice. It will be no wonder if, instead of receiving these unwelcome and humiliating doctrines, we should coincide with those writers and preachers who think more favorably of our condition, and the condition of the world at large; who either deny eternal punishment to exist, or represent men

in general as being in little or no danger of it. And, having avowed these sentiments, it will then become necessary to compliment their abettors (including ourselves in the number) as persons of a more rational and liberal way of thinking than other people.

My dear brother, of all things, be this your prayer, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me!" If once we sink into such a way of performing our public work as not to depend on his enlightening and enlivening influences, we *may* go on, and probably *shall* go on, from one degree of evil to another. Knowing how to account for the operations of our own minds, without imputing them to a divine agency, we shall be inclined, in this manner, to account for the operations in the minds of others; and so, with numbers in the present age, may soon call in question even "whether there be any Holy Spirit."

2. Being full of the Holy Spirit will give a *holy tincture to your meditation and preaching*. There is such a thing as the mind being habitually under the influence of divine things, and retaining so much of a savor of Christ as that divine truths shall be viewed and expressed, as I may say, in their own language. Spiritual things will be spiritually discerned, and, if spiritually discerned, will be spiritually communicated. There is more in our *manner* of thinking and speaking upon divine truth than perhaps, at first sight, we are aware of. A great part of the phraseology of Scripture is by some accounted unfit to be addressed to a modern ear; and is, on this account, to a great degree laid aside, even by those who profess to be satisfied with the sentiments. Whatever may be said in defence of this practice, in a very few instances, such as those where words in a translation are become obsolete, or convey a different idea from what they did at the time of being translated, I am satisfied the practice in general is very pernicious. There are many sermons, that cannot fairly be charged with untruth, which yet have a tendency to lead off the mind from the simplicity of the gospel. If such scripture terms, for instance, as "holiness, godliness, grace, believers, saints, communion with God, &c., should be thrown aside as savoring too much of cant and enthusiasm, and such terms as *morality, virtue, religion, good men, happiness of mind, &c.*, substituted in their room, it will have an amazing effect upon the hearers. If such preaching is the gospel, it is the gospel heathenized, and will tend to heathenize the minds of those who deal in it. I do not mean to object to the use of these latter terms, in their place; they are some of them scriptural terms: what I object to is putting them in the place of others, when discoursing upon evangelical subjects. To be sure, there is a way of handling divine

subjects after this sort that is very clever and very ingenious; and a minister of such a stamp may commend himself, by his ingenuity, to many hearers: but, after all, God's truths are never so acceptable and savory to a *gracious* heart as when clothed in their own native phraseology. The more you are filled, my brother, with an unction from the Holy One, the greater relish you will possess for that savory manner of conveying truth which is so plentifully exemplified in the Holy Scriptures. Farther,

3. It is this that will make the doctrines you preach, and the duties you inculcate, seem *fitted in your lips*. I allude to a saying of the wise man: "The words of the wise are pleasant, if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips." It is expected that there should be an agreement between the character of the speaker and the things which are spoken. "Excellent speech becometh not a fool." Exhortations to holiness come with an ill grace from the lips of one who indulges himself in iniquity. The opposite of this is what I mean by the doctrines and duties of religion being *fitted in your lips*. It is this that will make your face shine, when you come forth in your public labors, like the face of Moses when he had been conversing with God in the holy mount.

4. It is this that will give a *spiritual savor to your conversation in your visits to your friends*. Though religious visits *may* be abused; yet you know, brother, the necessity there is for them, if you would ascertain the spiritual condition of those to whom you preach. There are many faults also that you may discover in individuals which it would be unhandsome, as well as unfriendly, to expose in a pointed manner in the pulpit, which nevertheless ought not to be passed by unnoticed. Here is work for your private visits; and, in proportion as you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you will possess a spirit of love and faithfulness, which is absolutely necessary to successful reproof. It is in our private visits also that we can be free with our people, and they with us. Questions may be asked and answered, difficulties solved, and the concerns of the soul discussed. Paul taught the Ephesians, not only publicly, but "from house to house." Now it is being full of the Holy Spirit that will give a spiritual savor to all this conversation. It will be as the holy anointing oil on Aaron's garments, which diffused a savor on all around him.

5. This will also teach you *how you ought to behave yourself in every department you are called to occupy*. It will serve instead of ten thousand rules; and all rules without it will be of no account. This it is that will teach you to be of a meek, mild, peaceful, humble spirit. It will make such a spirit be

natural to you. "As touching brotherly love," said the apostle to the Thessalonians, "ye need not that I write unto you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

6. In short, it is this that will denominate you *the man of God*. Such was Barnabas, and such, my brother, was your predecessor, whose memory is dear to many of us;\* and such, according to all that I have heard, was his predecessor, whose memory is equally dear to many here present.† Each, in his day, was a burning and shining light; but they shine here no more. May you, my brother, and each of us, be followers of them, as they also were of Christ!

Another part of the character of Barnabas is,

III. HE WAS FULL OF FAITH. It may be difficult to ascertain with precision the real meaning and extent of this term; but, I should think, in this connection it includes, at least, the three following ideas:—having the mind occupied with divine sentiment; being rooted and grounded in the truth of the gospel, and daily living upon it. The first of these ideas distinguished him from those characters whose minds are void of principle; the next, from such as are always hovering upon the borders of scepticism; and the last, from those who, though they have no manner of doubts about the truth of the doctrines of the gospel, yet scarcely ever, if at all, feel their vital influence upon their hearts and lives. Let us review each of these a little more particularly.

1. His mind was *well occupied, or stored, with divine sentiment*. How necessary is this to a gospel minister! It is to be feared that many young men have rushed into the work of the Lord without any decided principles of their own; yea, and have not only begun in such a state of mind, but have continued so all through their lives. Alas! what can the churches expect from such characters? What can such a void produce? How can we feed others with knowledge and understanding if we ourselves are destitute of them? To say the least, such ministers will be but "unprofitable servants." But this is not all; a minister that is not inured to think for himself is constantly exposed to every false sentiment, or system, that happens to be presented to him. We sometimes hear of a person *changing his sentiments*; and, doubtless, in many cases it is just and right he should change them: but there are cases in which that mode of speaking is very improper; for, in reality, some persons have no sentiments of their own to change; they have only changed the sentiments of some one great man for those of another.

\* The Rev. David Evans.

† The Rev. William Butfield.

2. He had a *firm persuasion of the truth of that gospel which he preached to others*. He was rooted and grounded in the gospel. The great controversy of that day was whether the gospel was true; whether Jesus was the Messiah; whether he, who so lately expired on the cross, was the Son of God; and whether his death was the way to obtain eternal life. There were great temptations for a person who should view things through a medium of sense to think otherwise. The popular opinion went against it. To the Jews it was a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. Those who adhered to the gospel, thereby exposed themselves to cruel persecutions. But Barnabas "was full of faith;" he was decidedly on the Lord's side; he "believed on the Son of God;" and had the "witness" of the truth of his gospel "within himself."

Preaching the gospel is bearing a *testimony* for God; but we shall never be able to do this to any good purpose, if we be always hesitating and indulging a sceptical disposition. There is no need of a dogmatical over-bearing temper: but there is need of being rooted and grounded in the truths of God. "Be not carried about," said the apostle to the Hebrews, "with strange doctrines: it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." But he elsewhere condemns the character of those who are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

3. That gospel which he preached to others *he himself lived upon*. "The word preached," we are told, "did not profit some, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it." This will equally hold good in the case of the preacher as of the hearer. If we mix not faith with the doctrine we deliver, it will not profit us. Whatever abilities we may possess, and of whatever use we may be made to others, unless we can say, in some sort, with the apostle John, "That which we have seen with our eyes, and looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life—that declare we unto you," our own souls may, notwithstanding, everlastingly perish! This is a very serious matter, and well deserves our attention as ministers. Professors in the age of Barnabas might be under greater temptations than we are to question whether Jesus was the true Messiah; but we are under greater temptations than they were of resting in a mere implicit assent to the Christian religion, without realizing and living upon its important truths.

The studying of divine truth as *preachers* rather than as *Christians*, or, in other words, studying it for the sake of finding out something to say to others, without so much as thinking of profiting our own souls, is a temptation to which we are more than ordinarily exposed. If we studied divine truths



as Christians, our being constantly engaged in the service of God would be friendly to our growth in grace. We should be "like trees planted by the rivers of waters, that bring forth fruit in their season," and all that we did would be likely to "prosper." But, if we study it only as preachers, it will be the reverse. Our being conversant with the Bible will be like surgeons and soldiers being conversant with the shedding of human blood, till they lose all sensibility concerning it. I believe it is a fact that, where a preacher is wicked, he is generally the most hardened against conviction of any character whatever. Happy will it be for us if, like Barnabas, we are "full of faith" in that Saviour whom we recommend—in that gospel which it is our employment to proclaim.

IV. We now come to the last part of the subject, which is held up by way of encouragement: **AND MUCH PEOPLE WAS ADDED UNTO THE LORD.** When our ministry is blessed to the conversion of sinners, to the bringing them off from their connection with sin and self, to a vital union with Christ; when our congregations are filled, not merely with professors of religion, but with sound believers; when such believers come forward and offer themselves willingly for communion, saying, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you; then it may be said that "much people is added unto the Lord." The connection between such additions, and eminency in grace and holiness in a minister, deserves our serious attention.

I think it may be laid down as a rule, which both Scripture and experience will confirm, that *eminent spirituality in a minister is usually attended with eminent usefulness.* I do not mean to say our usefulness depends upon our spirituality as an effect depends upon its cause; nor yet that it is always in proportion to it. God is a sovereign; and frequently sees proper to convince us of it, in variously bestowing his blessing on the means of grace. But yet he is not wanting in giving encouragement to what he approves, wherever it is found. Our want of usefulness is often to be ascribed to our want of spirituality, much oftener than to our want of talents. God has frequently been known to succeed men of inferior abilities, when they have been eminent for holiness, while he has blasted others of much superior talents, when that quality has been wanting. Hundreds of ministers, who, on account of their gifts, have promised to be shining characters, have proved the reverse; and all owing to such things as pride, unwatchfulness, carnality, and levity.

Eminency in grace, my brother, will contribute to your success in three ways:—

1. It will fire your soul with *holy love to Christ and the souls of men*; and such a spirit is usually attended with success. I believe you will find that, in almost all the great works which God has wrought, in any period of time, he has honored men of this character, by making them his instruments. In the midst of a sore calamity upon the murmuring Israelites, when God was inclined to show mercy, it was by the means of his servant Aaron running with a censor of fire in his hand, and standing between the living and the dead! The great reformation that was brought about in the days of Hezekiah was by the instrumentality of a man "who wrought that which was good and right and truth before the Lord his God;" and then it follows, "and in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, *he did it with all his heart and prospered.*"

There was another great reformation in the Jewish church, about the time of their return from Babylon. One of the chief instruments in this work was Ezra, "a ready scribe in the law of his God"—a man who had "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments"—a man who "fasted and prayed at the river Ahava," previously to his great undertaking—a man who was afterwards "sorely astonished, and in heaviness, and would eat no meat, nor drink water, but fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God, on account of the transgressions of the people." Another great instrument in this work was Nehemiah, a man that devoted himself wholly to the service of God and his people, laboring night and day, and was not to be seduced by the intrigues of God's adversaries, nor yet intimidated by their threatenings; but persevered in his work till it was finished, closing his labors with this solemn prayer and appeal, "Think upon me, O my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people."

Time would fail me to speak of all the great souls, both inspired and uninspired, whom the King of kings has delighted to honor: of Paul, and Peter, and their companions; of Wickliff, and Luther, and Calvin, and many others at the reformation; of Elliot, and Edwards, and Brainerd, and Whitefield, and hundreds more whose names are held in deserved esteem in the church of God. These were men of God; men who had great grace, as well as gifts; whose hearts burned in love to Christ and the souls of men. They looked upon their hearers as their Lord had done upon Jerusalem, and wept over them. In this manner they delivered their messages; "and much people were added unto the Lord."

2. Eminency in grace will *direct your ends to the glory of God, and the welfare of men's souls*; and, where this is the case, it is usually attended with a blessing. These are ends which God himself pursues; and, if we pursue the same, we are "laborers together with God," and may hope for his blessing to attend our labors; but, if we pursue separate and selfish ends, we walk contrary to God, and may expect God to walk contrary to us. Whatever apparent success may attend the labors of a man whose ends are evil, all is to be suspected: either the success is not genuine, or, if it be, it is not in a way of blessing upon him, nor shall it turn out, at last, to his account. It must be an inexpressible satisfaction, brother, to be able to say as the primitive ministers and apostles did: "James, a servant of God—Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ—We seek not yours, but you."

3. Eminency in grace will enable you to *bear prosperity in your ministry without being lifted up with it; and so contribute towards it*. It is written of Christ, in prophecy, "He shall build the temple of the Lord, and shall bear the glory." He does bear it indeed; but to bear glory without being elated is no easy thing for us. I am often afraid lest this should be one considerable reason why most of us have no more real success in our work than we have; perhaps it is not safe for us to be much owned of God; perhaps we have not grace enough to bear prosperity.

My dear brother, permit me to conclude with a word or two of serious advice. First, "Watch over your own soul, as well as the souls of your people. Do not forget that ministers are peculiarly liable, while they keep the vineyard of others, to neglect their own. Farther, "Know your own weakness, and depend upon Christ's all-sufficiency." Your work is great, your trials may be many; but let not your heart be discouraged. Remember what was said to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness;" and the reflection which he makes upon it, "When I am weak, then am I strong." Finally, *Be often looking to the end of your course, and viewing yourself as giving an account of your stewardship*. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and give account of the deeds done in the body. Perhaps there is no thought more solemn than this, more suitable to be kept in view in all our undertakings, more awakening in a thoughtless hour, or more cheering to an upright heart.

I have only to request, my dear brother, that you will excuse the freedom of this plain address. I have not spoken so much to instruct you in things which you know not, as to remind and impress you with things which you already know. The Lord

bless you, and grant that the solemnities of this day may ever be remembered with satisfaction, both by you and your people!

### SERMON III.

[Preached at a Ministers' Meeting, held at Clipstone, April 27, 1791.]

THE INSTANCES, THE EVIL NATURE, AND THE DANGEROUS TENDENCY OF DELAY, IN THE CONCERNS OF RELIGION.

"Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built."—Hag. i. 2.

WHEN the children of Judah were delivered from their captivity, and allowed, by the proclamation of Cyrus, to return to their own land, one of the principal things which attracted their attention was the rebuilding of the house of God, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians. This was a work which Cyrus himself enjoined, and upon which the hearts of the people were fixed. It was not, however, to be accomplished at once; and, as the worship of God was a matter of immediate and indispensable concern, they set up an *altar*, on which to offer sacrifices and offerings, till such time as the temple should be built.

In the second year after their return, the foundation of the Lord's house was laid: but opposition being made to it, by the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, the work ceased all the days of Cyrus, until the reign of Darius, commonly distinguished by the name of Darius-Hystaspis. During this period, which seems to have been about fourteen years, the people sunk into a spirit of indifference. At first they desisted from necessity; but afterwards, their attention being turned to the building and ornamenting of houses for themselves, they seemed very well contented that the house of the Lord should lie waste. For this their temper and conduct the land was smitten with barrenness; so that both the vintage and the harvest failed them. God also raised up Haggai and Zechariah to go and remonstrate against their supineness; and the efforts of these two prophets were the means of stirring up the people to resume the work.

The argument which the people used against building the house of God was that *the time was not come*. It is possible they waited for a counter order from the Persian court; if so, they might have waited long enough. A work of that nature ought to have been prosecuted of their own accord; at least they should have tried. It did not follow, because they were hindered once, that therefore they should never succeed. Or perhaps they meant to plead their present weakness and poverty. Something like this

seems to be implied in the 4th verse, where they are reminded that they had strength enough to build and ornament houses for themselves. It looks as if they wished to build, and lay by fortunes for themselves and their families, and *then*, at some *future* time, they might contribute for the building of the house of God.

There is something of this procrastinating spirit that runs through a great part of our life, and is of great detriment to us in the work of God. We know of many things that should be done, and cannot in conscience directly oppose them; but still we find excuses for our inactivity. While we admit that many things should be done which are not done, we are apt to quiet ourselves with the thought that they need not be done *just now*: "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built."

In discoursing to you upon the subject, brethren, I shall take notice of a few of the most remarkable cases in which this spirit is discovered; and then endeavor to show its evil nature and dangerous tendency.

I. IN RESPECT TO THE CASES, OR INSTANCES, IN WHICH IT IS DISCOVERED. A small degree of observation on mankind, and of reflection upon the workings of our own hearts, will furnish us with many of these; and convince us of its great influence on every description of men, in almost all their religious concerns.

1. It is by this plea that *a great part of mankind are constantly deceiving themselves in respect to a serious attention to the concerns of their souls*. These are, doubtless, of the last importance; and there are times in which most men not only acknowledge this truth, but, in some sort, feel the force of it. This is the case, especially, with those who have had a religious education, and have been used to attend upon the preaching of the gospel. They hear from the pulpit that men *must* be born again, *must* be converted, and become as little children, or never enter into the kingdom of God. Or the same things are impressed upon them by some threatening affliction or alarming providence. They feel themselves at those times very unhappy; and it is not unusual for them to resolve upon a sacrifice of their former sins, and a serious and close attention in future to the affairs of their souls. They think, while under these impressions, they *will* consider their ways, they *will* enter their closets and shut to the door, and pray to the Lord that he would have mercy upon them; but, alas! no sooner do they retire from the house of God, or recover from their affliction, than the impression begins to subside, and then matters of this sort become less welcome to the mind. They *must* not be utterly rejected; but are let alone for the present. As conscience becomes less alarmed, and

danger is viewed at a greater distance, the sinner, by degrees, recovers himself from his fright, and dismisses his religious concern, in some such manner as Felix did his reprover, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee."

It is thus with the ardent *youth*; in the hour of serious reflection, he feels that religion is of importance; but his heart, still averse from what his conscience recommends, rises against the thought of sacrificing the prime of life to the gloomy duties of prayer and self-denial. He does not resolve *never* to attend to these things; but the *time* does not seem to be come. He hopes that the Almighty will excuse him a *few years*, at least, and impute his excesses to youthful folly and imbecility. It is thus with the *man of business*: there are times in which he is obliged to retire from the hurry of life; and, at those times, thoughts of another life may arrest his attention. Conscience at those intervals may smite him for his living without prayer, without reflection, without God in all his thoughts; and what is his remedy? Does he lament his sin, and implore mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ; No, nor so much as promise to forsake it *immediately*: but *this* he promises, that when *this* busy time is over, and *that* favorite point is gained, and *those* intricate affairs are terminated, *then* it shall be otherwise. It is thus with persons in *single life*: they will be better when they get settled in the world. It is thus with the *encumbered parent*: she looks forward to the time when her family shall get off her hands. It is thus with the *drunkard* and the *debauchee*: wearied in their own way, they intend to lead a new life as soon as they can but shake off their old connections. In short, it is thus with great numbers in all our towns, and villages, and congregations: they put off the great concern to *another time*, and think they may venture at least a little longer, till all is over with them, and a dying hour just awakens them, like the virgins in the parable, to bitter reflection on their own fatal folly.

2. This plea not only affects the unconverted, but *prevents us all from undertaking any great or good work for the cause of Christ, or the good of mankind*. We see many things that should be done; but there are difficulties in the way, and we wait for the removal of these difficulties. We are very apt to indulge a kind of prudent caution (as we call it,) which foresees and magnifies difficulties beyond what they really are. It is granted there may be such things in the way of an undertaking as may render it impracticable; and, in that case, it is our duty for the present to stand still: but it becomes us to beware lest we account that impracticable which only requires such a



degree of exertion as we are not inclined to give it. Perhaps the work requires *expense*; and Covetousness says, Wait a little longer, till I have gained so and so in trade, till I have rendered my circumstances respectable, and settled my children comfortably in the world. But is not this like ceiling our own houses, while the house of God lies waste? Perhaps it requires *concurrence*; and we wait for every body to be of a mind, which is never to be expected. He who through a dread of opposition and reproach desists from known duty is in danger of being found among the "fearful, the unbelieving, and the abominable."

Had Luther and his contemporaries acted upon this principle, they had never gone about the glorious work of the Reformation. When he saw the abominations of popery, he might have said, *These things ought not to be; but what can I do?* If the chief priests and rulers in different nations would but unite, something might be effected; but what can *I* do, an individual, and a poor man? I may render myself an object of persecution, or, which is worse, of universal contempt; and what good end will be answered by it? Had Luther reasoned thus—had he fancied that, because princes and prelates were not the first to engage in the good work, therefore the time was not come to build the house of the Lord—the house of the Lord, for any thing he had done, might have lain waste to this day.

Instead of waiting for the removal of difficulties, we ought, in many cases, to consider them as purposely laid in our way, in order to try the sincerity of our religion. He who had all power in heaven and earth could not only have sent forth his apostles into all the world, but have so ordered it that all the world should treat them with kindness, and aid them in their mission; but, instead of that, he told them to lay their accounts with persecution and the loss of all things. This was no doubt to try their sincerity; and the difficulties laid in our way are equally designed to try ours.

Let it be considered whether it is not owing to this principle that so few and so feeble efforts have been made for the propagation of the gospel in the world. When the Lord Jesus commissioned his apostles, he commanded them to go and teach "all nations," to preach the gospel to "every creature;" and that notwithstanding the difficulties and oppositions that would lie in the way. The apostles executed their commission with assiduity and fidelity; but, since their days, we seem to sit down half contented that the greater part of the world should still remain in ignorance and idolatry. Some noble efforts have indeed been made; but they are small in number, when compared with the magnitude of the object. And why is it so? Are the souls of men

of less value than heretofore? No. Is Christianity less true or less important than in former ages? This will not be pretended. Are there no opportunities for societies, or individuals, in Christian nations, to convey the gospel to the heathens? This cannot be pleaded so long as opportunities are found to trade with them, yea, and (what is a disgrace to the name of Christians,) to buy them, and sell them, and treat them with worse than savage barbarity! We have opportunities in abundance: the improvement of navigation, and the maritime and commercial turn of this country, furnish us with these; and it deserves to be considered whether this is not a circumstance that renders it a duty peculiarly binding on us.

The truth is, if I am not mistaken, we wait for we know not what; we seem to think "the time is not come, the time for the Spirit to be poured down from on high." We *pray* for the conversion and salvation of the world, and yet *neglect the ordinary means* by which those ends have been used to be accomplished. It pleased God, heretofore, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believed; and there is reason to think it will still please God to work by that distinguished means. Ought we not then at least to try by some means to convey more of the good news of salvation to the world around us than has hitherto been conveyed? The encouragement to the heathen is still in force, "*Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*;" but 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?"

Let it be farther considered whether it is not owing to this principle that so few and so feeble efforts are made for the propagation of the gospel *in places within our reach*. There are many dark places in our own land—places where priests and people, it is to be feared, are alike destitute of true religion, "*all looking to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter*." Were every friend of Jesus Christ to avail himself of that liberty which the laws of his country allow him, and embrace every opportunity for the dissemination of evangelical principles, what effects might we hope to see? Were every true minister of the gospel to make a point of preaching as often as possible in the villages within his reach; and did those private Christians who are situated in such villages open their doors for preaching, and recommend the gospel by a holy and affectionate behavior, might we not hope to see the wilderness become as a fruitful field? Surely, in these matters, we are too negligent. And, when we do preach to the unconverted, we do not feel as if we

were to do any good. We are as if we knew not how to get at the hearts and consciences of people. We cast the net, without so much as expecting a draught. We are as those who cannot find their hands in the day of battle, who go forth not like men accustomed to conquest, but rather like those inured to defeat. Whence arises all this? Is it not owing, at least a considerable degree of it, to a notion we have that *the time is not come* for any thing considerable to be effected?

3. It is this plea that keeps many from a *public profession of religion by a practical acknowledgment of Christ*. Christ requires of his followers that they confess his name before men; that they be baptized, and commemorate his dying love in the ordinance of the supper. Yet there are many who consider themselves as Christians, and are considered so by others, who still live in the neglect of these ordinances. I speak not now of those who consider themselves as having been baptized in their infancy, but of such as admit the immersion of believers to be the only true baptism, and yet do not practise it, nor hold communion with any particular church of Christ. It is painful to think there should be a description of professed Christians who live in the neglect of Christ's commands. What can be the motives of such neglect? Probably they are various: there is one, however, that must have fallen under your observation; that is, *the want of some powerful impression upon the mind, impelling them, as it were, to a compliance*. Many persons wait for something of this sort; and, because they go from year to year without it, conclude that *the time is not come*; or that it is not the mind of God that *they* should comply with those ordinances; at least, that they should comply with them *at present*. Impressions, it is allowed, are desirable, provided it be truth or duty that is impressed; otherwise they deserve no regard: but, be they as desirable as they may, the want of them can never justify our living in the neglect of known duty. Nor are they at all adapted to show us *what is duty*, but merely to excite to the performance of that which may be proved to be duty without them. We might as well wait for impressions, and conclude, from the want of them, that the time is not come for the performance of other duties as those of baptism and the Lord's supper.

Some are kept from a public profession of Christ's name by mere mercenary motives. They have relations and friends that would be offended. The fear of being disinherited, or injured, in some sort, as to worldly circumstances, has made many a person keep his principles to himself, till such time as the party whose displeasure he fears shall be removed out of the way. This is wicked; as it amounts to a denial of Christ be-

fore men, and will, no doubt, expose the party, if he die without repentance for it, to be denied by Christ before his Father at the last day. "Lord," said one, "I will follow thee, but let me first go and bury my father"—"Let me first go and bid them farewell who are at home," says another: "Jesus answered, Let the dead bury their dead, follow thou me."—"No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

4. It is this plea that keeps us from a *thorough self-examination and self-denial*. The importance of being right in the sight of God, and our liability to err, even in the greatest of all concerns, render a close and frequent inquiry into our spiritual state absolutely necessary. It is a dangerous, as well as an uncomfortable life, to be always in suspense; not knowing what nor where we are, nor whither we are going. There are seasons, too, in which we feel the importance of such an inquiry, and think we *will* go about it, we *will* search and try our ways, and turn from our sins, and walk more closely with God. Such thoughts will occur when we hear matters urged home upon us from the pulpit, or when some affecting event draws off our attention from the present world, and causes us to reflect upon ourselves for our inordinate anxiety after it. We think of living otherwise than we have done; but, when we come to put our thoughts into execution, we find a number of difficulties in the way, which too often deter us, at least *for the present*.—Here is an undertaking that must first be accomplished, before I can *have time*; here is also a troublesome affair that I must get through, before I can be *composed*; and then here are such temptations that I know not how to get over *just now*: if I wait a little longer, perhaps they may be removed.—Alas! alas! thus we befool ourselves; thus we defer it to another time, till the impressions on our minds are effaced, and then we are less able to attend to those things than we were at first. As one who puts off the examination of his accounts, and the retrenchment of his expenses, till, all on a sudden, he is involved in a bankruptcy; so do multitudes, in the religious world, neglect a close inspection into the concerns of their souls, till, at length, either a departure from some of the great principles of the gospel, or some foul and open fall, is the consequence.

5. It is this principle that keeps us from *preparedness for death, and thus being ready when our Lord shall come*. There is nothing that Christ has more forcibly enjoined than this duty: "Be ye also ready, for at such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."—"What I say unto you I say unto all, watch." Why do we not immediately feel the force of these charges, and betake ourselves to habitual watchfulness and

prayer, and self-denial, and walking with God? Why are we not as men who wait for the coming of their Lord? Is it not from a secret thought that *the time is not come*? We know we must die, but we consider it as something at a distance; and thus, imagining that our Lord delayeth his coming, we delay to prepare to meet him, so that when he cometh, he findeth us in confusion. Instead of our loins being girt, and our lights burning, we are engaged in a number of plans and pursuits, to the neglect of those things which, notwithstanding the necessary avocations of life, ought always to engross our supreme attention.

Let us next proceed to consider

## II. THE EVIL NATURE AND DANGEROUS TENDENCY OF THIS PROCRASTINATING TEMPER.

I need not say much to prove to you that it is a sin. The conscience of every one of you will assist me in that part of the work. It is proper, however, in order that you may feel it the more forcibly, that you should consider wherein its evil nature consists.

1. It is *contrary to the tenor of all God's commandments*. All through the Scriptures we are required to attend to divine things immediately, and without delay. "Work while it is called to-day; the night cometh when no man can work."—"To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."—"While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

God not only requires us, in general, to do what we do quickly, but calls us to serve him particularly *under those temptations or afflictions* which we find placed in our way. The terms of discipleship are, "Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow me." He does not call upon us to follow him barely when there are no troubles nor difficulties to encounter, nor allow us, when those difficulties occur, to wait a fairer opportunity; but to take our cross, as it were, upon our shoulders, and *so* follow him. It would be of use for us to consider every situation as a post in which God has placed us, and *in which* he calls upon us to serve and glorify him. If we are poor, we are required to glorify God by contentment; if afflicted, by patience; if bereaved, by submission; if persecuted, by firmness; if injured, by forgiveness; or, if tempted, by denying ourselves for his sake. Nor can these duties be performed at other times; to put them off, therefore, to another opportunity, is the same thing, in effect, as refusing to comply with them at all.

2. To put off things to another time *implies a lurking dislike to the things themselves*. We do not ordinarily do so, except in things

wherein we have no delight. Whatever our hearts are set upon, we are for losing no time till it is accomplished. If the people of Judah had "had a mind to work," as is said of them on another occasion, they would not have pleaded that the time was not come. Sinful delay, therefore, arises from *alienation of heart from God*; than which nothing can be more offensive in his sight.

But, farther, it is not only a sin, but a sin of *dangerous tendency*. This is manifest by the effects it produces. Precious time is thereby murdered, and valuable opportunities lost, and lost beyond recall!

That there are opportunities possessed, both by saints and sinners, is plain from the Scriptures. The former might do abundantly more for God than they do, and might enjoy much more of God and heaven than they actually enjoy; and no doubt it would be so, were it not for that idle, delaying temper, of which we have spoken. Like the Israelites, we are slothful to go up to possess the good land. Many are the opportunities, both of doing and enjoying good, that have already passed by. O! what Christians might we have been before now, had we but availed ourselves of all those advantages which the gospel dispensation and the free exercise of our religion afford us!

Sinners also, as long as life lasts, have opportunity of escaping from the wrath to come. Hence, they are exhorted to "seek the Lord while he may be found," and to "call upon him while he is near." Hence, also, there is a "door" represented as being, at present, "open;" which "the master of the house will," one day, "rise up and shut." The "fountain" is described as being, at present, "open for sin and for uncleanness;" but there is a period approaching when it shall be said, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still!" It seems scarcely in the power of language to express the danger of delay in terms more forcible and impressive than those which are used in the above passages. Nor is there anything in the idea that clashes with the scripture doctrine of *decrees*. All allow that men have opportunity, in natural things, to do what they do not, and to obtain what they obtain not; and if this can be made to consist with a universal providence, which "performeth the things that are appointed for us," why should not the other be allowed to consist with the purposes of him who does nothing without a plan, but "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will?" A price is in the hands of those who have no heart to get wisdom.

O thoughtless sinner! trifle no longer with the murder of time; time, so short and uncertain in its duration; the morning of your existence; the mould in which you receive an impression for eternity; the only period in which the Son of man has power to forgive sins! Should the remaining part



of your life pass away in the same careless manner as that has which has already elapsed, what bitter reflection must needs follow! How cutting it must be to look back on all the means of salvation as gone forever; the harvest past, the summer ended, and you not saved!

Suppose a company, at the time of low water, should take an excursion upon the sands near the sea-shore: suppose yourself of the company: suppose that, on a presumption of the tide's not returning at present, you should all fall asleep: suppose all the company, except yourself, to awake out of their sleep, and, finding their danger, endeavor to *awake* you, and to persuade you to flee with them for your life: but you, like the sluggard, are for "a little more sleep, and a little more slumber:" the consequence is, your companions escape, but you are left behind to perish in the waters, which, regardless of all your cries, rise and overwhelm you! What a situation would this be! How would you curse that love of sleep that made you refuse to be awaked—that delaying temper that wanted to indulge a little longer! But what is this situation compared with that of a lost soul? There will come a period when the bottom of the ocean would be deemed a refuge; when, to be crushed under falling rocks and mountains, instead of being viewed with terror as heretofore, will be earnestly desired! Yes, desired, but desired in vain! The sinner who has "neglected the great salvation" will not be able to "escape," nor hide himself "from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne," nor from "the wrath of the Lamb!"

My dear hearers! Consider your condition without delay. God says to you, *To-day*, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. *To-day* may be the only day you have to live. Go home, enter the closet, and shut to the door; confess your sins; implore mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ; "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!"

#### SERMON IV.

[Preached at Kettering, at the funeral of Mr. Beeby Wallis, April, 1792.]

#### THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE DEAD WHO DIE IN THE LORD.

"And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."—Rev. xiv. 13.

It is usual with us, on the death of our friends, to improve the mournful event by a

sermon on the occasion. I feel a difficulty, in the present instance, on account of my near and intimate connection with the deceased. However, as well as I can, I will endeavor to comply with the general expectation.

Our dear deceased friend made no mention of any particular part of Scripture which he would wish to have improved; I have, therefore, selected the above, as being the most suitable to the present occasion of any that has occurred to my thoughts. The original design of the passage seems to have been to support the afflicted followers of Christ in times of persecution. Nothing could be better adapted to arm the holy martyrs against the terrors of death than the sentiment here exhibited. It does not seem, however, to be applicable to martyrs only; but is rather to be considered as a general truth, which, though applied to a particular case, is not to be confined to that case, but extended to every other particular comprehended within the general design. A few introductory observations may throw some light upon the text, and lead us on to the principal subjects on which I mean to discourse.

First: Let us observe the character described—those "who die in the Lord." The Scriptures make frequent mention of believers, as being united to Christ, or one with him. If we be true believers in Christ, we shall feel a union of heart with him; our principles, affections, and pursuits, will, in a measure, be the same as his: his cause will be our cause, his people our people, his service our delight, and the gospel of salvation through his death our daily bread. The union between Christ and his people is frequently compared to the marriage union: as they who were twain become "one flesh, so they who are joined to the Lord are one spirit;" and as in that case there is not only a mental but a legal union, each becoming interested in the persons and possessions of the other, so in this we, with all we have, are Christ's, and Christ, with all he has, is ours. Hence the language of the apostle: "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Hence, also, arises the desirableness of being "found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." A union like this will render us blessed even in death; death itself shall not be able to dissolve it, but shall rather introduce us to the full enjoyment of him whom our soul loveth.

It is farther supposed, of those who die in the Lord, that they have abounded in *good works*; for it could not otherwise have been said that they should *follow them*. Those

whose only hope and reliance for acceptance with God have been upon Jesus Christ, and who have, therefore, disclaimed all dependence upon their own works, have often been charged with being enemies to morality; or, at least, it has been said that their principles, if pursued to their just consequences, would render them so: but I trust the practice of these persons, in all ages, has not been such as to justify the charge. Perhaps, on the contrary, if we could survey the spirit and manners of mankind with an impartial eye, we might find that they who thus believed in Jesus were the most careful to maintain good works. Yea, and if we would search the Scriptures with an unprejudiced mind, we should find that, without a union with Christ, it were a vain thing to expect good works (truly so called)—as vain as to expect fruit from a branch that should be separate from the vine.

Secondly: The blessedness of the dead who die in the Lord was declared by a *voice from heaven*. If the apostle had hearkened to the general voice of mankind, he would have heard a very different sound. The world reckons him blessed that liveth—that liveth in prosperity. So natural is this to man, that we all feel a kind of pity for our departed friends; but surely pity is never more unnecessary: the voice from heaven, whatever be the voice from earth, pronounces, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”

Thirdly: The apostle was commanded to *write it*. A mere voice passeth away, but a writing endureth. In this we see God’s tender regard for his faithful servants, not merely in that age, but for ages to come.

Fourthly: Their blessedness is declared to be *from henceforth*. I do not see how this can be understood as referring to the time of the Spirit’s speaking; for that would imply that, before that time, those who died in the Lord were not blessed. It seems, I think, plainly to refer to the *time of their departure from the body*, and is one of the many passages of Scripture in which we are taught the doctrine of a separate state.

Lastly: The blessedness which awaits those who die in the Lord consists partly in a *rest from their labors*, and partly in a *glorious reward*, expressed by *their works following them*.

It is on this last observation I shall principally enlarge, in this discourse, as the most important ideas of the text seem to be here included. Let us first take a view of the heavenly state under the ideas here given, and then consider the uses that such a prospect is adapted to promote.

I. LET US VIEW THE HEAVENLY STATE UNDER THE IDEAS OF A REST FROM LABOR AND A REWARD FOR IT. The term *labor* does not convey the idea of simple exercise; for we shall never cease from that,

but rather increase it. The inhabitants of heaven are more active than ever they were upon earth. They are represented as “serving God day and night in his temple;” yea, and as though all our services in this world were unworthy of the name, it is said, “There his servants shall serve him.” Nor is the *rest* here spoken of to be understood of a mere cessation from exercise in the grave; for that would afford no *blessedness*. The term *labor* conveys the idea of *painful exercise, weariness, or fatigue*. The same word is used in 2 Cor. xi. 27, where the apostle speaks of being in *weariness and painfulness*.

A great part of the Christian life consists in *an opposition*. He that would gain the heavenly prize must oppose “the course of this world,”—must strive against the stream of false principles and wicked practices, against the evil customs and manners of the age and place in which he lives. It has been observed that mankind go through the world in a body; that they draw one another on, in their principles and manners; that, like the drops of water which compose a tide, they acquire strength and influence by their number; and that whatever general direction they take, that is, for the time being, “the course of this world.” Like the tide, it is ever rolling, though not in the same direction. In former ages, it was a course of pagan idolatry; in later ages, of popish superstition and cruelty; and, in the present age, it is a course of infidelity and profaneness. To oppose this current is labor.

It was no small matter for the glorious tribes of martyrs, in every age, to hold fast the faith of the gospel. They had not only to encounter their adversaries, but their own natural feelings. They were men, and men of like passions with ourselves. They had wives, and children, and friends, and the various endearing ties of human nature; each of which would cry in their ears, *Spare thyself!* Think, brethren, what labor it must have been for them to encounter the hardships and cruelties to which a faithful adherence to God exposed them! Nor is it any small matter to set ourselves against the *temptations* of the world. There is a fashion in every thing, even in religion; and it requires fortitude of mind to withstand its influence, and to adhere to the dictates of Scripture, let them be stigmatized as they may. Nor does it require less fortitude to withstand the current of evil customs, by which we may be certain, in many cases, to expose ourselves to scorn and contempt. These things, I say, are labor; labor from which those who die in the Lord are at rest. The course of this world has no longer any influence on them; they are arrived in the desired haven, where neither tide nor tempest can affect them.

Again: Our services for God, in the present state, may very properly be called labor, on account of the *natural infirmities and afflictions* which here attend us, *especially in the last stages of life*. The most active Christian, whose delight in his Lord's work has been such as to render it its own reward, will soon find the years draw nigh in which he shall say, I have no pleasure in them. It is then that the strength is labor and sorrow. It is then that the spirit is often willing when the flesh is weak. Our dear deceased friend experienced much of this, during the last few years of his life. Reading and prayer, and every other religious duty, was a labor; but the tabernacle in which he groaned is now dissolved—he is now at rest from his labors.

Once more: The greatest and most grievous struggle of all is owing to *our own native depravity*. It is this that forms the most dangerous stream against which we have to strive. We may withdraw ourselves from the world, but not from this; this will accompany us in all our retirements, and in all our efforts. He that is contented to serve the Lord with mere bodily exercise may feel no manner of difficulty from this quarter; but he that would worship God in spirit and in truth, that would meditate, pray, praise, preach, or hear, as he ought, will find it the great burden of his life. A mind prone to forget God, and wander in forbidden paths; a heart unaffected with the great things of God, flying off from him, and fixing upon things that do not profit; these are matters which made an apostle exclaim, "O wretched man that I am!" It is these which render our life a labor. To be at rest from these is heaven indeed!

But another idea afforded us of the heavenly state is that of a *reward*. Those who die in the Lord, not only rest from their labors, but "their works do follow them." It has been a common observation on this passage, and for aught I know a just one, that their works are not said to *go before them* as a ground of justification, but to *follow them* as witnesses in their favor. I apprehend, however, they will not only follow them as witnesses, but will have place among the intermediate causes of their felicity. It is true, they will constitute no part of our *title* to eternal life; that is the "free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" but, a title to admission being thus conferred, they will contribute to augment our bliss. The Scriptures every where teach us that the services and sufferings of the faithful shall meet with a divine *reward*; which, though not of debt, but of grace, is nevertheless a reward; which it could not be if what was enjoyed in the life to come had no relation to what was done in the present life.

God will reward his servants, at the last day, with his public approbation before an

assembled world. "The king shall say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Nor shall their works stop here, but shall follow them into the heavenly state itself, and furnish matter of joyful recollection forever, affording a kind of measure according to which their reward in heaven will be conferred. The whole current of Scripture appears, to me, to teach us that there will be degrees of happiness, as well as of misery, in the future state; and that those who have served the Lord with the greatest fidelity and zeal in this world will enjoy the greatest portion of mental bliss in the world to come. If the *labors* which we here endure have a tendency to meeten us for the heavenly *rest*—if present bitters will render future sweet the sweeter—and if it is thus that our "light affliction, which is but for a moment, *worketh for us* a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"—it must then follow that there will be some *proportion* between our present labors and our future enjoyments. I mean, it cannot be supposed that those who have labored but little for God will enjoy an equal portion of felicity with those who have labored much.

Upon no other principle, that I can see, can we understand those passages of Scripture which exhort us to "lay up treasure in heaven;" to "lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come;" which encourage us under reproaches and persecutions for the name of Christ, saying, "Great is your reward in heaven;" and which warn us, saying, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."—"He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly; but he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." We see, here, that laying out ourselves for God is laying up treasure in heaven, and that everlasting life is a harvest that will grow out of the seed sown to the Spirit.

Some serious people have demurred upon this subject, lest it should affect the doctrine of salvation by grace, and encourage boasting. Indeed, if those works which follow us into the heavenly state were to be ascribed to us as their first cause, and were considered as the proper meritorious ground of



our reward, there would be weight in the objection; but if it be the Lord who has wrought all our works in us, and if the reward with which he is pleased to crown them be a matter of grace and not of debt, where then is boasting? It is only God's graciously rewarding his own work. If ten thousand crowns were placed upon the Christian's head, he would cast them immediately at his Redeemer's feet, saying, "Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name give glory!"

It is through the intimate union between Christ and believers that they are not only accepted in him, but what they do for Christ is accepted also, and rewarded for his sake. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." We are not only "accepted in the beloved," but our "sacrifices" become "acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." As there is no sin so great but God, for Christ's sake, can forgive it; no blessing so great but he can bestow it; so there is no service so small, if done from love to him, but he will reward it. "A cup of cold water, given to a disciple," because he belongs to him, will insure "a disciple's reward."

God's graciously connecting blessings with the obedience of his people serves to show, not only his love to his Son, and to them, but also his love to holiness and righteousness. A father may design to give an inheritance to his child, and various other accommodations; he may design also to fit him, as much as may be, for the enjoyment of what he has to bestow upon him. On this principle, he will connect almost every gift or favor that he confers with some act of filial duty. It is easy to see, in this case, that the father does not consider these things as the child's due upon the footing of merit; for all that he did was simply his duty: but love to his child induced him to give; and love to diligence, obedience, and good order, induced him to give it in such a manner. It is thus that God gives grace and glory. It is thus that, in this life, *finding* is connected with *seeking*, *forgiveness* with *confession*, and *salvation* with *believing*; and, in the life to come, eternal glory with suffering, warring, and overcoming. It is thus that God displays, at the same time, the freeness of his grace and his love of righteousness and good order. Grace reigns in a way of righteousness through the whole system of salvation. Those that are saved shall be sufficiently convinced it is all of grace; while, on the other hand, all shall see the equity and fitness of the divine proceedings, in judging every man according to his works.

But I proceed to consider

II. THE USES THAT THIS TWO-FOLD IDEA OF THE HEAVENLY STATE IS ADAPTED TO PROMOTE. All divine truth has a tendency to do us good, and the sentiments taught us

in this passage are adapted to our present situation.

1. A rest for those who die in the Lord may reconcile us to the loss of our dearest Christian friends, seeing they are gone to the possession of it, and are henceforth blessed. When our Lord Jesus was about to leave the world, and his disciples were overmuch dejected at the thought of his going, he told them, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said I go to the Father, for my Father is greater than I;" which is as if he had said, The glory and happiness which my Father possesses, and which I go to possess with him, is greater than any thing I can here enjoy; if, therefore, ye loved me in a proper manner, instead of weeping at my departure, surely ye would rejoice at it. If the love that we bear to our Christian friends were but properly directed, if our minds were but capacious enough to take all things into consideration, we should mingle joy with all our mourning on their account.

2. A rest before us may reconcile us who are left behind to all the labors and pains and weariness of life. We need not tire, or want to sit down here; there will be time enough to rest us by and by. Nor need we be discouraged with all the trials of the present state. What though it were "in weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness," that we had to pass the remainder of our days? What though bonds and afflictions should abide us? The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. The rest that remains will make us like, Joseph, "forget all our toil, and all our father's house;" so forget it, at least, as never to think of it any more but with joy and thankfulness.

3. The glorious reward before us may stimulate us to work for God with all our might while life continues. It is affecting to consider what we are doing in this life as the seed of an eternal harvest. Let us keep this thought habitually in view. There is a way of turning the ills of life into good, yea, an everlasting good. Every temptation to evil that accosts us is a price put into our hands; it affords us an opportunity of proving our love to God, by denying ourselves in that instance for his sake. The same may be said of afflictions; they afford us an opportunity for the exercise of patience and acquiescence in the will of God; and what a harvest of joy such things may issue in, it is beyond our capacity to conceive. Perhaps, it was under some such views as these that the primitive Christians were used to "rejoice in tribulation," and were exhorted to "count it all joy, when they fell into divers temptations."

4. If our works will follow us, we have reason to tremble as well as rejoice. The

works of those who die *out of Christ*, as well as the others, will follow them. Their life is a seed-time, and they also will receive a harvest. All men have their opportunities, their temptations and their afflictions; and they will work in some way, either as a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death; either as an eternal weight of glory, or of infamy and misery.

But what shall I say in immediate reference to the present melancholy occasion? I wish I could say something that might have a tendency to comfort those that mourn. We have all sustained a heavy loss. The town has lost one that sought its welfare; the poor have lost a benefactor; the church of which he was a member and an officer has lost one the study of whose life it was to promote its prosperity; those who had the pleasure of an intimate acquaintance with him have lost a steady, faithful, and judicious friend; and you, my friend, the partner of his life, you have sustained a heavier loss than any of us. But let us try and consider that the loss is not so great but it might have been greater. We have not to sorrow as those that have no hope. Our grief is confined to ourselves. We have no cause to weep on his account. This is a thought which, though frequently mentioned on such occasions as these, yet can never be sufficiently realized. To bury a Christian friend is nothing in comparison of burying those relations of whose piety we have no well-grounded satisfaction. Add to this, the mercy of God in not taking him away in the prime of life, and health, and usefulness. Had he been removed ten or twelve, or even five or six years ago, the stroke had been much more felt by all his connections than it is now.

I have often admired the wisdom and mercy of God in these things. We see the threatening hand of God laid upon one of our dearest friends and relatives; at first we think we can never endure the loss; but the affliction continues; meanwhile, the weight which he sustained in society is gradually removed, and falls by degrees upon his friends about him; life becomes a burden to himself; at length, the very same principle that made it appear impossible for us to endure a separation renders us incapable of praying or even wishing for his continuance; and thus the burden, that we could scarcely have known how to bear, becomes tolerable, by being gradually let down as it were upon our shoulders.

Our dear friend has left many relations behind him; most of whom I suppose may at this time be present. \* My dear friends, I have often heard him express his anxiety for several of you, both as to your temporal and spiritual welfare. Some of you may have been apt to consider him as an enviable character on account of his wealth; but, be

assured, he was much more enviable on account of his piety: you need not wish so much to live like him as a gentleman as to live and die like him as a Christian.

But, I suppose, it will be expected that I should say something more particularly of the deceased himself. I have commonly declined saying much on this head; and I still think that, generally speaking, it is right to do so, because the generality of characters, even of good men, have nothing in them very remarkable or worthy of being held up for our imitation. But, for this very reason, I think in some cases it would be wrong to omit it. Perhaps no human writings have had a better effect than the *lives* of eminently holy men. When, therefore, any such characters appear among us, I think it is right to collect as much information respecting them as we can, that the remembrance of them may be of general use.

So far as education and parental example could influence, our deceased friend might be said to have known the holy Scriptures from a child. His family, for generations past, have walked in the ways of piety. His great-grandfather, Mr. William Wallis, was the founder and first minister of the church of which you and I are members. He founded it in 1696. His grandfather, Mr. Thomas Wallis, succeeded in the same office. It was in his time that the late Dr. Gill, and the late Mr. Brine, were both called to the ministry. He died in 1726, and his funeral sermon is said, as in the present instance, to have been preached in this place,\* on account of the number of people who attended it. His father, Mr. William Wallis, though not a minister as his predecessors had been, was a very respectable member of the same community. When he died, which was in 1757, his son, our deceased friend, was but twenty-two years of age. From his earliest years he was under strong convictions of the truth and importance of religion; but the most remarkable impression of this sort was made at the death of his father. It was then, as he said, that he went and prayed to God, and thought within himself—O that I had but an interest in Christ; and felt all the world, and all its enjoyments, to be mere vanity without it!

At the time of his father's death, he had a brother, Mr. Joseph Wallis, about twelve years of age. The amiable piety of that young man is said to have appeared at an early period; but, to the great grief of his friends, especially of his brother, he was removed by the small-pox, in the nineteenth year of his age.

In the year 1763, at the age of twenty-eight, Mr. Wallis became a member of the same Christian community in which his pre-

\* The independent meeting-house, kindly granted on this occasion.—E. v.

decessors had lived and died. About five years after, he was chosen to the office of a *deacon*; an office which he has filled with honor and satisfaction for twenty-four years. It was a great blessing to the church, especially when for the space of five years they were destitute of a minister, that he was invested with this office, and was then in the prime of life and usefulness. It will long be remembered with what meekness of wisdom he presided in the church, during that uncomfortable interval; and how, notwithstanding all the disadvantages of such a situation, they were not only preserved in peace, but gradually increased till a minister was settled among them.

God endued him with a sound understanding and a solid judgment. His knowledge was extensive, and his observations on men and things, ripened by long experience, were just and accurate. He had a quick sense of right and wrong, of propriety and impropriety, which rendered his counsel of great esteem in cases of difficulty.

To this was added a spirit of *activity*. Though, during the greater part of his life, he was out of trade, yet his head and hands were always full with the concerns of others, either those of private individuals, with which he was entrusted, or matters of public utility. He would rise by five in the morning, in summer, and be as diligent all the day as if he had to obtain his bread by the sweat of the brow.

But, perhaps, one of the most prominent features of his character was *sincerity, or integrity of heart*. This was a temper of mind that ran through all his concerns. In a cause of righteousness, he possessed a severity which rendered it almost impossible for treachery to stand before him. He was prudent, but his prudence never degenerated into low policy, or any thing that deserved the name of subtily. If motives of mere prudence were proposed to him, he would hesitate, nor would he accede till he had thought whether the measure was *right*. If he could but satisfy himself on that head, he would be regardless of consequences, or of popular opinion. Even in his contributions, one might perceive his love of righteousness. Though an economist from principle, he had nothing of the niggard: only convince him that a cause was *right* (and that was easily done, if it was so,) and he would engage in it with all his heart, nor think much of any expense. "I wish to do what is *right*," he would say, "and leave consequences." He was a standing example of the falsehood of that system which teaches that "flattery is essential to politeness." If to behave in such a manner as to gain the esteem of all descriptions of men be politeness, he was polite; yet he hated flattery. He would neither flatter nor be flattered by others. The true secret by which he obtained esteem was an

unaffected modesty, mingled with kindness and goodness.

He possessed a peculiar *decision* of character. His judgment was generally formed with slow deliberation; but, having once made up his mind, it was not easily altered. He was decisive in the principles he embraced. He held nothing with a loose hand. He observed to me, a few weeks before he died, when mentioning what he conceived to have been his great defect in religion, that it was not a wavering disposition. "I have not," said he, "been tossed about with every wind of doctrine." He has sometimes ingenuously confessed that he thought himself more in danger of erring by a prejudiced attachment to received principles than by the contrary. He was equally decisive in matters of *practice*. He scarcely ever engaged in any thing with indifference. What his hand found him to do, he did it with his might. Having formed his judgment that such a matter was *right*, he would pursue it with indefatigable industry, patience, and perseverance; he would wade through difficulties that would have discouraged most men; nor was he ever satisfied till he had accomplished his end.

There are few men that have possessed a greater degree of genuine *humility*. It is often seen, where persons of affluence unite with a Christian community, they consider themselves as doing great honor to it, and expect great homage in return. But this every one that knew him can bear witness was not his spirit. It was not natural to him to assume the airs of a Diotrophes, or to avail himself of the influence which his circumstances and situation afforded him to lord it over God's heritage. He was sometimes warm and sanguine; but that was not frequent, and never but when he considered himself as engaged in the cause of truth and righteousness.

To this may be added, there was a vein of *serious godliness* that ran through his life. It is true, he was often dejected in his own mind, lest he should be found wanting at last; so much so as to give considerable pain to his friends. "There is something in religion," he would say, "with which I fear I have been all my life unacquainted." This dejection I attribute, in a great degree, to constitution. There are few characters that have discovered a greater fear of God, a greater acquiescence in the way of salvation through a crucified Saviour, or a greater concern to spend his life in doing good. That which would have hurt the pride of many a rich man, namely, to unite with the poor and illiterate as his brethren, was no mortification to him; on the contrary, he lately said, "I reckon it the greatest honor of my life to have been employed in promoting the interest of Christ."

There is one circumstance more which I



cannot omit. About a week before he died, he requested that a few of his Christian friends might come and see him, and pray with him. Five of us went. When there, he told us he did not wish us to pray for his life; he considered it as the will of God that he should die; and he added, "His will be done! But pray," said he, "that if there are any sins of which I have been guilty, and have not yet repented, any sins for which God has any controversy with me, that he would give me a proper sense of them before I die. Or, if not, that I might enjoy the light of his countenance in death." We were all exceedingly affected. After praying with him about an hour, he gathered up what little strength he had, and addressed himself to us with a kind of solemn farewell. He reminded us of the difficulties we had been brought through as a church, expressed his satisfaction in leaving us in so comfortable a situation, recommended us to love one another, and solemnly commended us to the blessing of God! Surely I shall never forget this tender parting! But I have done. He would have invited others of his friends, whom he equally loved, but his strength began to fail him; and in a few days, after a long series of afflictions, which he bore with great patience, calmness, and resignation to God, he fell asleep.

### SERMON V.

[Preached before the Baptist Association at St. Albans, June 1, 1796.]

#### THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF A DEEP AND INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."—Heb. v. 12—14.

THERE is nothing in which the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of Satan are more opposed than that the one is characterized by light and the other by darkness. The cause of falsehood is itself a dark cause, and requires darkness to cover it: but truth is light, and cometh to the light, that it may be made manifest. Knowledge is every where encouraged in the Bible; our best interests are interwoven with it; and the spirituality of our minds, and the real enjoyment of our lives, depend upon its increase. "Grace and peace are multiplied through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." Nor is it necessary for our own sakes only, but

for the sake of others. It is a great encouragement to Christian ministers when those whom they teach possess a good understanding in the things of God. Indeed, none but those who are engaged in the work of teaching can tell how much the ardor of the mind is damped by the contrary. The truth of this remark is exemplified in the writer of this epistle. In the verses immediately preceding the text, you perceive him highly interested in his subject, and proceeding in a glorious career of reasoning; when, all on a sudden, he is stopped. He had many things to say of his Lord and master; but which were "hard to be understood," seeing those to whom he wrote were "dull of hearing." It is on this occasion that he introduces the passage now before us, in which his object is to shame and provoke them, by comparing them with those who as to years were men, but as to knowledge children; and who, instead of having made advances in science, needed to be taught the alphabet over again. There are some things supposed and included in the passage which require a little previous attention.

First: It is here supposed that *all divine knowledge is to be derived from the oracles of God*. It is a proper term by which the sacred Scriptures are here denominated, strongly expressive of their divine inspiration and infallibility: in them God speaks; and to them it becomes us to hearken. We may learn other things from other quarters; and things, too, that may subvert the knowledge of God; but the knowledge of God itself must here be sought, for here only it can be found.

Much has been said on faith and reason, and the question has often been agitated whether the one, in any instance, can be contrary to the other. In the solution of this question, it is necessary, in the first place, to determine what is meant by reason. There is a great difference between *reason* and *reasoning*. Nothing which God reveals can contradict the former; but this is more than can be said of the latter. It is impossible for God to reveal any thing repugnant to what is fit and right; but that which is fit and right in one man's estimation is preposterous and absurd in the esteem of another, which clearly proves that reason, as it exists in depraved creatures, is not a proper standard of truth; and hence arises the necessity of another and a better standard, "the oracles of God." By studying these, a good man will gain more understanding than his teachers, if they live in the neglect of them.

Secondly: It is supposed that *the oracles of God include a system of divine truth*.—They contain the *first principles*, or rudiments, of religion—the simple truths of the gospel, which require little or no investigation in order to their being understood;

these are called "*milk*." They also contain the "deep things of God," things beyond the reach of a slight and cursory observation, and which require, if we would properly enter into them, close and repeated attention: this is "strong meat." Those doctrines which the apostle enumerates in the following chapter, as things which he should "leave, and go on unto perfection," have been thought to refer to the leading principles of Judaism: and it may be so; for Judaism itself contained the first principles of Christianity: it was introductory to it; or, as it is elsewhere expressed, it was "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ."

Thirdly: It is intimated that *Christians should not rest satisfied in having attained to a knowledge of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, but should go on unto perfection*; not only so as to obtain satisfaction for themselves, but that they may be able to *teach others*. It is true *all are not to be teachers by office*; but, in one form or other, all should aspire to communicate the knowledge of Christ. Every Christian is required to be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear: and if all the members of our churches did but possess this readiness, besides the advantages that would accrue to themselves and others, there would be less scarcity than there is of able and evangelical ministers.

The leading sentiment which runs through the passage, and comprises the whole, is **THE IMPORTANCE OF A DEEP AND INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH**. To this subject, brethren, permit me to call your attention. In discoursing upon it, I shall first inquire wherein it consists, and then endeavor to show the importance of it.

I. Let us inquire **WHAT A DEEP AND INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF DIVINE TRUTH INCLUDES**. That the oracles of God contain deep things requires but little proof. The character of God, our own depravity, and that great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, &c., are deep and interesting subjects. The prophets had to *search* into the meaning of their own prophecies. The riches of Christ, with which the apostles were entrusted, were denominated "unsearchable;" and even the highest orders of created intelligences are described as "looking" into these things for their farther improvement.

It may seem presuming for any person, in the present imperfect state, to determine on subjects of such magnitude; or to talk of a deep and intimate knowledge of things which surpass the comprehension of the most exalted creatures. And if these terms were used either *absolutely*, to express the real conformity of our ideas of divine things to the full extent of the things themselves, or even *comparatively*, if the comparison respected saints on earth and

saints in heaven, it would be presumption. But it is only in reference to one another in the present state that these terms are intended to apply. Compared with heavenly inhabitants, all of us are babes: even an inspired apostle was no more. "When I was a child," said he, "I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but, when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." There are such degrees, however, among good men in this life as that, compared with each other, some may be said to possess only a superficial knowledge of divine truth, and others a more deep and intimate acquaintance with it.

It is the importance of the latter of these that I wish to have impressed upon your minds. To attain it, the following, among other things, require our attention:—

1. *Though we must not stop at first principles, yet we must be well grounded in them*. No person can drink deeply into any science without being well acquainted with its rudiments; these are the foundation on which the whole structure rests. The first principles of the oracles of God, as specified by our apostle, are "repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." Whatever may be meant by some of these terms, whether they refer to things peculiar to Judaism, or to the early times of Christianity, it is clear, from Scripture and the nature of things, that others of them are expressive of principles which, in every age, are of the first importance. Though the apostle speaks of *leaving* them, yet he does not mean that we should give them up, or treat them with indifference, but *go on unto perfection*; as a builder leaves his foundation when he raises his walls, and advances toward the completion of his building.

*Repentance* was the first lesson inculcated by John the Baptist, and Christ, and the apostles; and that not merely on profligate sinners, but on scribes and pharisees. All that they had hitherto learned required, as it were, to be unlearned; and all that they had done to be undone, and utterly relinquished.

The knowledge which carnal men acquire of divine things puffs them up; and, while they think they understand great things, they know nothing as they ought to know it. All the works, too, which have been wrought during a state of unregeneracy, are "dead works;" and instead of being, in any degree, pleasing to God, require to be lamented with shame and self-abhorrence. Repentance is a kind of self-emptying work; it includes a renunciation, not only of those



things for which our own consciences at the time condemned us, but of what we have been in the habit of reckoning wisdom and righteousness. Hence the propriety of the order in which the Scriptures place it with regard to faith—"Repent and believe the gospel." Renounce your own ways, and embrace his. "He that will be wise must first become a fool, that he may be wise."

"*Faith toward God,*" or a believing view of the being and glory of the divine character, is reckoned almost among the first principles of the doctrines of Christ. If we have just ideas of this very important subject, we have the key to the whole system of gospel truth. He who beholds the glory of the divine holiness will, in that glass, perceive his own polluted and perishing condition; and, when properly impressed with a sense of these things, he will naturally embrace the doctrine of a Saviour, yea, and of a *great one*. Salvation by mere grace, through the atonement of Jesus, will appear the very object of his soul's desire. And, with these principles in his heart, other Scripture doctrines will appear true, interesting, and harmonious. There are but few erroneous sentiments in the Christian world which may not be traced to a spirit of self-admiration (which is the opposite of repentance,) or to false conceptions of the divine character.

To these the apostle adds, "*the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment;*" or the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments of endless duration. These are principles which, indeed, occupy almost an ultimate place in the sacred system; yet, as every other important truth respecting man proceeds upon the supposition of their reality, they may properly enough be reckoned among the first principles of the oracles of God. If these principles were given up to the infidel, the spirit of whose creed amounts to this, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" or if the latter of them were given up to the universalist, who, though he admits of a judgment to come, yet not of an *eternal* one, we should soon find the whole fabric of truth falling to the ground.

2. *We must not content ourselves with knowing what is truth, but must be acquainted with the evidence on which it rests.* Christians are required to be always ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear: and this supposes, not only that every part of religion admits of a rational defence, but that it is necessary for Christians to study, that they may be able to defend it; or, at least, to feel the ground on which they rest their hope.

The truths contained in the oracles of God may be distinguished into two kinds: those which approve themselves to our ideas of wisdom or fitness; and those which utterly

surpass our understanding, but which require to be believed as matters of pure revelation. The former chiefly respect the counsels and works of God, which are exhibited to our understanding, that God in them may be made manifest: the latter more commonly respect the being and inconceivable glories of the Godhead, the reality of which we are concerned to know, but on their mode or manner are forbidden to gaze.

It is exceedingly desirable to trace the wisdom and harmony of evangelical truth: it is a source of enjoyment, superior perhaps to any thing with which we are acquainted. All the "works of God are honorable and glorious, and sought out by all them that have pleasure therein;" but redemption is his *great* work, wherein appears "glory to himself in the highest, and on earth, peace, and good will to men: here, therefore, must needs be the highest enjoyment. Prior to the revelation of redemption, the holy angels shouted for joy over the works of *nature*; but, having witnessed the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, they "desired to look into (other) things." Nothing tends more to establish the mind and to interest the heart in any truth than a perception that it is adapted at once to express the glory of the divine character and to meet the necessities of guilty creatures. The more we think of truth, therefore, in this way, the more we shall be "rooted and grounded" in it.

But what *reason* have we to give for embracing those doctrines which we consider as above reason, of the fitness of which we consequently pretend to have no ideas? We answer, they are contained in the oracles of God. Nothing is more reasonable than to give implicit credit to Him who cannot lie. On this ground, we believe that "there are three who bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one." If God had revealed nothing but what would have come within the limits of our understanding, he must have told us little or nothing at all of his self-existence, eternity, and infinity; for we have no positive ideas of any of these things. Yet the revelation of such truths may be as necessary as those which approach nearer to our comprehension. The latter afford food for *knowledge*; the former teach us *humility*, and furnish matter for *faith*.

3. *We must learn truth immediately from the oracles of God.* Many religious people appear to be contented with seeing truth in the light in which some great and good man has placed it: but, if ever we enter into the gospel to purpose, it must be by reading the word of God for ourselves, and by praying and meditating upon its sacred contents. It is "in God's light that we must see light." By conversing with the sacred writers, we



shall gradually imbibe their sentiments, and be insensibly assimilated into the same spirit.

The writings of great and good men are not to be despised, any more than their preaching; only let them not be treated as oracular. The best of men, in this imperfect state, view things *partially*; and therefore are in danger of laying an improper stress upon some parts of Scripture, to the neglect of other parts of equal, and sometimes of superior importance. Now, where this is the case, imitation becomes dangerous. It is rarely known but that an original suffers in the hands of a copyist: if, therefore, the former be imperfect, what may be expected of the latter? We all come far short of truth and righteousness, let our model be ever so perfect; but, if this be imperfect, we shall possess not only our own faults, but those of another.

If, as ministers, we go about to depict either the character of a bad man, or of a good man, a state of unregeneracy or a work of grace; and, instead of drawing from real life, only copy from some accounts which we have read or heard of these matters, we shall neither convince the sinner nor meet the case of the believer; all, to say the least, will be foreign and uninteresting.

If we adopt the principles of fallible men, without searching the Scriptures for ourselves, and inquiring whether or not these things be so, they will not, even allowing them to be on the side of truth, avail us, as if we had learned them from a higher authority. Our faith, in this case, will stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God. There is a savor in truth, when drawn from the words which the Holy Spirit teaches, which is lost, or at least diminished, if it pass under the conceptions and expressions of men. Nor will it avail us when most needed; for he who receives his creed from men may deliver it up to men again. Truth learned only at second-hand will be to us what Saul's armor was to David; we shall be at a loss how to use it in the day of trial.

4. If we would possess a deep and intimate acquaintance with divine truth, *we must view it in its various connections in the great system of redemption.* Systematic divinity, or the studying of truth in a systematic form, has been of late years much decried. It has become almost general to consider it as the mark of a contracted mind, and the grand obstruction to free inquiry. If we imbibe a *false* system, indeed, there is no doubt but it will prove injurious; if it be true in part, but very *defective*, it may impede our progress in divine knowledge; or if, in order to retain a system, we torture the Scriptures to make them accord with it, we shall pervert the truth instead of preserving it. These are things which make against false, defec-

tive, and anti-scriptural systems of faith; but not in the least against *system itself*. The best criterion of a good system is its agreement with the holy Scriptures. That view of things, whether we have any of us fully attained it or not, which admits the most natural meaning to be put upon every part of God's word, is the right system of religious truth. And he whose belief consists of a number of positions arranged in such a connection as to constitute a consistent whole, but who from a sense of his imperfections, and a remembrance of past errors, holds himself ready to add or retrench, as evidence shall require, is in a far more advantageous track for the attainment of truth, and a real enlargement of mind, than he who thinks without a system.

To be without system is nearly the same thing as to be without principle. Whatever principles we may have, while they continue in this disorganized state, they will answer but little purpose in the religious life. Like a tumultuous assembly in the day of battle, they may exist; but it will be without order, energy, or end.

No man could deery systematic knowledge, in any thing but religion, without subjecting himself to the ridicule of thinking men. A *philosopher*, for instance, would expose himself to contempt, who instead of improving facts which had fallen under his observation, that he might discover the general laws by which they are governed—and instead of tracing things to their first principles, and pursuing them to their just consequences—should inveigh against all general laws, all system, all connection and dependence, and all uniform design in the variety of creation. What should we say of a *husbandman* who refused to arrange his observations under the respective branches of business to which they naturally belonged; who had no general scheme or plan of proceeding, but left the work of every day to the day itself, without forethought, contrivance, or design? Or what opinion should we form of a *merchant* or a *tradesman* who should exclude systematic knowledge from his affairs? He is constantly employed in buying and selling; but he must have no general system whereby to conduct either the one or the other; none for the regulation of his books; none for the assortment of his articles: all must be free, lest he sink into formality, and, by being in the habit of doing things in order, should contract a narrowness of mind!

But is the Bible written upon systematic principles; does it contain a system, or does it encourage us to form one? By the Bible being written on systematic principles, I suppose, is meant a systematic arrangement of its contents; and there is no doubt but the contrary of this is true. But then the same might be said of the *book of nature*.

Though the different species of animals, vegetables, minerals, &c., are capable of being arranged under their respective *genera*, and so reduced to a system; yet, in their actual position in creation, they assume no such appearance. It is wisely contrived, both in nature and Scripture, that the objects of each should be scattered in lovely variety; but, amidst all this variety, an observant eye will perceive unity, order, arrangement, and fulness of design.

God, in all his works, has proceeded on system: there is a beautiful connection and harmony in every thing which he has wrought. We sometimes speak of a system of nature, a system of providence, and a system of redemption; and, as smaller systems are often included in greater, the language is not improper: in reality, however, they are all but one system; one grand piece of machinery, each part of which has a dependence on the other, and all together form one glorious whole. Now, if God proceeds on system, it may be expected that the Scriptures, being a transcript of his mind, should contain a system; and, if we would study them to purpose, it must be so as to discover what that system is.

I never recollect to have heard any objection to systematic divinity with regard to *prætie*. Let a Christian, utterly unacquainted with human writings, take his Bible, with a view to learn the mind of God upon any given subject, suppose it to be the duty of parents: he will naturally collect all the passages in the sacred writings which relate to that subject, arrange them in order, and from the whole, thus taken together, regulate his conduct. For this no one will think of blaming him: yet this would be acting systematically.

Let him do the same with respect to every other duty, and he will be in possession of a body, or system, of practical divinity. And why should he stop here? why not collect the mind of God, from the whole of Scripture taken together, upon things to be *believed*, as well as things to be performed?

If the apostles had not considered divine truth in a systematic form, how came the writer of this epistle to speak of the "first principles" of the oracles of God? This language supposes, as before observed, a scheme or system of faith; and, if such a form of considering truth were disadvantageous to Christians, how came he to censure the Hebrews for their want of progress in it? In his Epistle to the Romans, also, we read of the *proportion*, or *analogy*, of faith; which certainly supposes that the gospel is one proportionate or consistent whole.

Could a system of divinity be written, in which every sacred truth or duty should have a place assigned it, and such a place, both as to order and importance, as properly belonged to it, not invading the province of

other truths or duties, but on the contrary subserving them, and itself appearing to the greatest advantage among them,—such a performance would answer to what the apostle means by "the proportion of faith." But can we expect a work answering to this description from an uninspired pen? Perhaps not. The materials for such a model exist, however, in the Holy Scriptures; and, though we cannot collect and arrange them to perfection, let us, as in all other things, "press towards the mark."

Let that system of religion which we embrace be but in the main the right one, and, so far from contracting the mind, it is easy to perceive that it will abundantly enlarge it.

For example: let the fact of Joseph's being sold into Egypt be viewed without its connection with God's designs, and it will appear a melancholy instance of human depravity: we shall see nothing very remarkable in it; and it will seem calculated only to afford a disgusting picture of family jealousies and intrigues, enough to break the heart of an aged parent. But let the same fact be viewed systematically, as a link in a chain, or as a part of a whole, and it will assume a very different appearance. Thus viewed, it is an event pregnant with glory. He must needs go down into Egypt, that such people might be preserved alive; that Jacob's family might follow him; that they might there be preserved for a season, till, in due time, having become a great nation, they should be led forth with a high hand; that they might be placed in Canaan, and might set up the worship of the true God; that the Messiah might be born among them; and that his kingdom might be extended over the whole earth. Without a system, the patriarch reflected, "All these things are against me:" but with a system, or rather with only the discovery of a very small part of it, he exclaimed, "It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go down, and see him before I die."

In addition to this event in providence, let us offer a few examples in matters of *doctrine*.

Would you contemplate the great *evil of sin*, you must view it in its connections, tendencies, and consequences. For a poor finite creature, whose life is but a vapor, to gratify a vicious inclination may appear a trifle: but when its tendencies and mischievous consequences are taken into the account, it wears a different aspect. Jeroboam "said in his heart, if this people go up to sacrifice at Jerusalem, then shall the kingdom return unto David." Hence he set up idolatry; and hence the nation was corrupted more and more, till at length it was given up to utter destruction. Considering ourselves as links in the great chain of moral government, every transgression is of vast



importance, because it affects the whole system. If the government of God be once violated, an example is set, which, if followed, would ruin the universe.

Farther: If we contemplate *the death of Christ* without any relation to system, we shall only see a suffering person at Jerusalem, and feel that pity and disgust which is ordinarily excited by injustice and cruelty. But let us view it as connected with the moral government of God—as a glorious expedient to secure its honors—“a propitiation” wherein “God declared his righteousness for the remission of sins”—and we shall have a new set of feelings. While the apostles continued to view this event unconnectedly, their minds were contracted, and sorrow filled their hearts; but, when their eyes were opened to see it in its connections and consequences, their sorrow was turned into joy. Those very persons who, but a few weeks before, could not bear to think of their Lord’s departure; after they had witnessed his ascension to glory, “returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and continued daily in the temple, praising and blessing God.”

Once more: If we view the doctrine of *election* as unconnected with other things, it may appear to us to be a kind of fondness without reason or wisdom. A charge of caprice would, hereby, be brought against the Almighty; and professors, like the carnal Jews, on account of the distinguishing favors conferred on their nation, would be fostered in self-conceit. But, if it be considered in connection with the great system of religious truth, it will appear in a very different light. It will represent the Divine Being in his true character; not as acting without design, and subjecting himself to endless disappointments; but as accomplishing all his works in pursuance of an eternal purpose. And as salvation, from first to last, is of mere grace, and every son and daughter of Adam is absolutely at the divine discretion, it tends powerfully to impress this idea both upon saints and sinners. While it leads the former to acknowledge that by the grace of God they are what they are, it teaches the latter to relinquish their vain hopes, and to fall into the arms of sovereign mercy.

As the righteousness of God’s elect is not the ground of their election, so neither is their felicity its ultimate end. God righteously hides the things of the gospel from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes, because “so it seemeth good in his sight:” it tends most to display the glory of his character, and to promote the general good of creation. These things, if properly considered, are of a humbling tendency.

If the Jews had considered that they were not chosen, or put in possession of the good

land, “for their righteousness, or for the uprightness of their hearts:” and that, though it was an instance of great love to them, yet it was not ultimately for their sake, or to accomplish their happiness, but that God “might fulfil his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” in whom, and in whose seed, “all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; and if they had considered the salvation of the world as the end of their national existence, and themselves as *God’s witnesses* till the times of reformation, instead of valuing themselves and despising others, they would have reckoned themselves “their servants for (Jehovah’s) sake.”

In short, by considering principles in their various connections, *far greater advances will be made in divine knowledge than by any other means.* The discovery of one important truth will lead on to a hundred more. Let a Christian but realize, for example, the glory of the divine character as the moral governor of the world; and he will at once perceive the equity and goodness of the moral law, which requires us to love him with all the heart. In this glass he will see his own depravity; and, possessed of these views, the grace of the gospel will appear to him to be grace indeed. Every blessing it contains will be endearing, and the medium through which all is conveyed superlatively precious. A train of thought like this has frequently proved more interesting than the labors of those who, having discovered a vein of silver or gold, dig deeply into the bowels of the enriching mine.

Having considered a few of the means necessary for the attainment of a deep and intimate knowledge of truth, I shall

II. Attempt to establish THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH A KNOWLEDGE.

As the powers of created beings are limited, and no one can expect to understand every thing, it is the province of wisdom to select those kinds of knowledge, as the objects of our pursuit, which are most valuable and of the greatest utility. There are some depths, of which it is our honor and felicity to be ignorant; and, even in things which are lawful, we may, in numberless instances, very well be excused, if not in wholly neglecting, yet in possessing only a general acquaintance with them. But divine truth requires not only to be known, but *well known*: it is not only necessary that we have sentiments, and right sentiments, but that we enter *deeply* into them. Every thing pertaining to God is great, and requires all our powers. In whatever we indulge indifference, there is no room for it here; God requires not only all our “heart,” but all our “mind and strength.”

The importance of a deep and intimate acquaintance with divine truth will more particularly appear from the following considerations:—



1. A neglect of God's word is represented as a *heinous sin*. But we shall not be able to escape this sin, if we content ourselves with a superficial acquaintance with truth. Revelation, in every stage, demands our serious attention; but the revelation of eternal life through Jesus Christ requires attention in the highest degree. This is that *great salvation* which we are charged not to neglect. The dignity of its author, its sublime and interesting nature, with the accumulated evidence which God has condescended to afford us of its divine original, combine to require of us the most careful and cordial examination into its contents. A neglect of this is either total or partial: the former would denominate us unbelievers, and expose us to utter destruction; the latter, though it may exist in sincere Christians, is nevertheless a sin, and a sin more than a little offensive to the God of all truth.

To be contented with a superficial acquaintance with divine things implies *disrespect to Him who has revealed them*. A letter from a distant friend, to whom we are cordially attached, is viewed and reviewed, and every sentence of it carefully inspected, and on many occasions committed to memory. Why should not the word of God be productive of the same effects? Indeed it is; for, in proportion as we love God, his word will *dwell richly in us*. It will be our bosom companion, to which we shall have recourse on every occasion; especially in seasons of leisure, when the mind, like a spring from which a pressure is removed, rises to its natural position. Hence the following language: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might: and these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

To be contented with a superficial acquaintance with divine things implies also a *want of affection to the things themselves*. A will, or testament, in which we were deeply interested, would be procured with eagerness, and read with avidity; and, if any difficulty remained as to the meaning of a particular passage, we should have no rest till, by some means or other, we had obtained a solution of it. I need not apply this remark. Nothing is more evident than that whatever is uppermost in our affections will form the grand current of our thoughts. And, where our thoughts are directed to a subject with intenseness and perseverance, it will become familiar to us; and, unless it be owing to the want of natural capacity or any other necessary means, we shall of course enter deeply into it.

I have been much struck with the ardent

affection which David discovered to the holy Scriptures, and every part of their sacred contents. The whole 119th Psalm is a continued encomium upon them. There we have such language as the following: "O how I love thy law! My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage. The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver." Now, all the Scriptures which were then extant amounted to little more than the writings of Moses. What additions have we since enjoyed! Besides the Book of Psalms, and prophecies which followed, we have the whole New Testament, "full of grace and truth," wherein the invisible God has, as it were, rendered himself visible. "Him whom no man had seen at any time, the only begotten Son, who dwelt in his bosom, hath declared." How is it that such a price should be in our hands to get wisdom, and yet that we should have so little heart for it?

2. The word of God is represented as a *means of sanctification*. But no effect of this kind can be produced beyond the degree in which we imbibe it. One great object of our Lord's intercession with the Father, on our behalf, was, "that we might be sanctified through the truth, *even by his word which is truth*." The gospel is continually held up, not only as a "doctrine according to godliness," but as having a powerful influence in producing it. "It teacheth us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." It "worketh effectually in those who believe." It was by the doctrine of the cross that the world became crucified to the apostle, and he unto the world. So universal and so manifest were the effects of divine truth upon the practice of the primitive Christians, that the sacred writers could appeal to fact, on their behalf, that they, and they only, were successful combatants against the world's temptations: "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Now, in order that the gospel may be productive of these effects, it is necessary that it be understood. Without this, how should it interest or affect the heart? We must *believe* the truth ere it will work effectually: we must *know* it, or it will not make us free. That we may serve God acceptably, and with godly fear we must have *grace*; and grace is multiplied "through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord."

Knowledge and affection have a mutual influence on each other. That the love of truth will prompt us to labor after a more perfect acquaintance with its contents has been already observed: and that such an acquaintance will promote an increasing love

of truth, in return, is equally evident. We cannot love an unknown gospel, any more than an unknown God. Affection is fed by knowledge, being thereby furnished with grounds, or reasons, for its operations. By the expansion of the mind the heart is supplied with objects which fill it with delight. It is thus that it becomes enlarged, and that we feel ourselves sweetly induced to "run in the way of the divine commandments."

How was it that the apostle became dead to the world, by the cross of Christ? I suppose, on much the same principle that of the light of the stars is eclipsed by that of the sun; or that a man, having drunk old wine, ceases to desire new, for he saith the old is better. It is by drinking deeply into religion that we become disaffected to carnal objects.

3. The word of God is represented as *the great source of Christian enjoyment*. But no effect of this kind can be produced, any farther than we imbibe the truth. The same way in which divine truth operates as a medium of sanctification, it becomes a source of enjoyment; namely, by interesting and affecting the heart. That which, by its superior lustre, eclipses the pleasures of sense, and crucifies us to the world, at the same time kindles a joy in the heart which is unspeakable and full of glory. The habitual joy which was possessed by the apostles and primitive Christians chiefly arose from a knowledge and belief of the gospel. It was "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord" that induced the apostle to "count all things but loss." Those in whom "the word of Christ dwelt richly, in all wisdom," were supposed to be so enlivened by it that it became natural to them to "teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts to the Lord." The object for which the apostle "bowed his knees to the Father of glory," in behalf of the Ephesians, was, that, by means of a *comprehensive* knowledge of the "breadth and length and depth and height of the" redeeming "love of Christ, they might be filled with all the fulness of God." The wells of salvation are deep; and he that lacketh knowledge is as one that has nothing to draw with.

The prejudice of many Christians against doctrinal preaching, as being, in their esteem, *dry and uninteresting*—and the preference given that which is more descriptive of their feelings, and therefore termed *experimental*,—is worthy of attention. If the doctrine which we preach be not the undiluted gospel of Christ, it will indeed be dry; or if, instead of entering into the spirit of truth, we are employed in a fruitless discussion of terms, or things on which the Scriptures forbear to decide, it must needs be uninteresting and even disgusting to a holy mind. But if the pure gospel of Jesus, well understood by the preacher, and com-

municated from the fulness of his heart, do not interest us, there must be some lamentable disorder in the state of our minds. If the manna that comes down from heaven be loathed, it is a sign that things are not with us as they ought to be. The doctrine of Moses, and surely much more that of Jesus, dropped as the rain, and distilled as the dew upon the tender herb."

Christian *experience* (or what is generally understood by that term, the painful and pleasurable feelings of good men) will be found, if genuine, to arise from the influence of truth upon the mind. If we be strangers to the glory of God's moral character, and the great evil of sin, we shall be strangers to all the feelings of godly sorrow on account of it. And what ground is there for *joy and peace*, but *in believing*? Take away the deity and atonement of Christ, and they are annihilated. To this may be added, Give up the doctrines of the resurrection and a future life, and what becomes of hope? From these instances, out of many others, you will easily perceive that doctrinal and experimental preaching are not so remote from each other as some persons have imagined; and that to extol the latter, at the expense of the former, is to act like him who wishes the fountain to be destroyed, because he prefers the stream.

4. *It is a great object in the Christian life, according to our capacities and opportunities, to diffuse the light of the gospel around us.* But we cannot communicate any thing beyond the degree in which we possess it. The communication of gospel truth is not confined to ministers. Every Christian moves in a sphere of some extent; and is expected so to occupy it as to embrace every occasion which may offer to make known the way of eternal life to those about him. The primitive churches were schools of heavenly instruction, as the words of the text, to go no farther, plainly intimate; and the apostle reproves some of their members for having made no greater proficiency. Though it would be in vain for every one to aspire at being a public teacher of Christianity, yet, as has been already observed, every one should be concerned that he may be able to "give a reason for the hope that is in him," and to teach the good and the right way to those with whom he is immediately connected. The duties of a parent and a master include in them the instruction of those who are committed to their care. Many opportunities arise in which Christians might communicate the knowledge of Christ to their neighbors; those in a state of servitude, to their fellow-servants; and provided it were done on proper occasions, and according to the apostolic rule, "in meekness and fear," persons in inferior stations might suggest a useful hint even to their superiors.

When the family of Elimelech went to



sojourn in Moab, they carried their religion with them; so recommending the God of Israel to those with whom they formed connections that one of them was induced to leave her country, her kindred, and her gods, and to put her trust under the shadow of his wings. And even a "little maid" of the land of Israel, who had been carried captive into Syria, by speaking to her mistress, on a favorable opportunity, was instrumental in her master's being healed of his leprosy, and his being brought to acknowledge and adore the true God. Such cases are recorded to encourage us to communicate the good knowledge of God on all proper occasions: but, in order to do this, we must first possess it, and that in a greater degree than is sufficient barely to denominate us Christians.

Perhaps one of the most favorable opportunities for Christians to suggest important truth to their neighbors and connections is when any of them are under a threatening affliction. To visit them at such a time would be kindly taken: even the worst of characters are commonly accessible when they apprehend eternity to be drawing nigh. You may then freely converse and pray with them; and, if your circumstances will admit and theirs require it, a communication of your worldly substance would convince them of your good-will, give weight to your instructions, and correspond with the conduct of him who went about doing good to the bodies and souls of men. But such a practice requires an intimate acquaintance with divine truth. It is an important matter to converse with men who are just on the borders of an eternal world: it requires not only tenderness, faithfulness, and prudence; but an *ability* to expose those false refuges, and detect those delusive hopes, to which, at such seasons, they are generally disposed to fly; and to direct them to the "only name under heaven, given among men, whereby they must be saved."

5. *In times of apostasy from the truth, Christians are exhorted to be steadfast.* But a steadfast adherence to truth requires that we be rooted and grounded in it. The wisdom of God sees meet, in order to prove mankind, and especially his professing people, to suffer other gospels, besides the true one, to obtain footing among us. I am aware that it is become customary, in these times, to make a jest of heresy, and to deride, as illiberal, narrow-minded bigots, all those who consider any religious sentiments as endangering the salvation of men. But I hope we shall not, on this account, be deterred from such an attachment to truth as the Scriptures encourage. It is granted that the term heresy has been wretchedly abused, and that it becomes Christians to beware of applying it to every departure from even truth itself: yet there is such a thing in be-

ing. There were heresies in the apostles' times; and it was predicted that there should, in after times, be persons who would bring in even "damnable heresies." Let no one be startled at the use of these terms: I did not coin them, and am not accountable for them; but, seeing they occupy a place in the Holy Scriptures, I think myself concerned to understand them. Whatever difficulty there may be in ascertaining their precise object, they, undoubtedly, teach us that men's souls may be destroyed by mental, as well as by sensual lusts, even the souls of professing Christians; for the words are not intended to describe open infidels, but such as should bear the Christian name, yea, and who should be teachers of Christianity.

The circulation of doctrines pleasing to corrupt nature will prove men to be what they are. They are the fan in Christ's hand, by which he will thoroughly purge his floor. That light-minded professors of religion should be carried away with them is no more a matter of surprise than that chaff should be carried away with the wind: but how is it that those of whom we would hope better things are often shaken?

If a minister, in almost any congregation, should relinquish truth, and fall into the grossest errors, unless he had so conducted himself as to have gained little or no esteem among the people, he is seldom known to go off alone: sometimes half a congregation, and sometimes more, have been known to follow him, or, at least, to be greatly unbinged for a considerable time. If a writer start up, in almost any connection, let his performance be ever so weak or extravagant, yet, if he possess but a sufficient quantity of overbearing assurance, he will have his admirers; and some serious people, too, will be in danger of being turned aside. How are these things to be accounted for? I conceive the principal reason is that Christians content themselves with a superficial knowledge of divine things. Great numbers, from a dislike to controversy, will never take pains to understand the difference between one set of religious principles and another. They have no desire to enable themselves to distinguish between true and false reasonings. They are too apt to take it for granted that what they have imbibed is truth, and that nothing can be advanced, with the least color of reason, for the contrary: when, therefore, an argument appears with a little plausibility on its face, it has only to obtain a reading, or a hearing, and their assent is gained. Brethren, let shame, if nothing else, provoke us, that we "henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine." Let us be concerned, not obstinately to adhere to our present sentiments, be they what they may, but to know the mind of God in his word: and, knowing it, let us steadfastly adhere to it.



The present age seems to be an age of trial. Not only is the gospel corrupted by those who bear the Christian name, but, of late, you well know, it has been openly assailed. The most direct and daring opposition has been made to the very name of Christianity. I am not going to alarm you with any idea that *the church is in danger*: no, my brethren; the church of which we, I trust, are members, and of which Christ, and Christ alone, is the head, is not in danger: it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Neither are my apprehensions excited concerning those who are true members of the church: these trying blasts, though they may affect them for a season, will ultimately cause them to take deeper root. Nevertheless, it becomes us to feel for the souls of men, especially for the rising generation; and to warn even good men that they be not unarmed in the evil day.

The human heart has ever been averse from the gospel of Christ, but the turn or temper of the present age is peculiarly in favor of infidelity. In much the same manner as in former ages men were violently attached to a persecuting superstition, they are now verging to the opposite extreme, and are in danger of throwing off all religion. Our temptations, and those which will attend our posterity after us, are likely, therefore, to be widely different from what they have hitherto been. Hitherto nominal Christianity has been no reproach; but reproach has attached itself to the other side. The case, in this respect, may soon be altered. Men grow bold in avowing their contempt of Christianity; and many among the dissipated part of the youth are following their example. Now, if characters of this description should spring up in sufficient numbers, not only to keep each other in countenance, but to turn the tide of reproach against Christians, as a company of wrong-headed enthusiasts, we shall soon see which side the mass of mankind will take. Their characters being loose and profligate, they have long felt themselves condemned by the gospel; and this is a matter that does not sit very easy upon them. Nothing has kept them from rejecting it before, but the disgrace that would follow upon their becoming open infidels: whenever, therefore, this disgrace shall be removed, we may expect them to go off in great companies. The slightest observation of human nature must convince us that the greater part of mankind, even in religious matters, are governed by fashion: they go with "the course of this world." So great an influence has the tide of public opinion upon them, that, even where it is not altogether agreeable to their own views and inclinations, they are, nevertheless, frequently carried away by it; if it be thus where public opinion

and private inclination are at variance, it must, of course, be much more so in those cases wherein they are agreed. This will be like a union of the wind and tide: and the vessel which is carried along by such a joint influence can scarcely have any thing left to impede its progress.

The great influence which a certain popular pamphlet has had upon men's minds is not so much owing to the work itself (though it possesses all the agreeableness to a depraved heart which wit and malignity can give it) as to the bias of the present generation in favor of the principles which it contains. Of this the author himself seems to have been sufficiently aware, by the title which he has thought to give his performance,—*The Age of Reason*.

It is not unlikely that almost all our religious controversies will soon be reduced to one, upon which the great body of men will divide. Is Christianity true or false? Is there a God? Is there a heaven and a hell? or is it all a fiction? Agitated by these important questions, the greater part of the inhabitants of Europe, and perhaps of America, including our own posterity, may rank either as real Christians or as open infidels.

What shall we say to these things? Ought they to depress us? We ought, undoubtedly, to feel for the welfare of men's souls, and cannot but feel for those who are more intimately connected with us; but upon any other principle I know not that they ought to have any such effect upon us. God is upon his throne: his church is upon a rock: whatever "hour of temptation may be coming upon the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth, those who hold fast the word of his patience will be kept through it."—"All things work together for good to them that love God." With these views Christians may rejoice, and rejoice always.

While we rejoice, however, we must rejoice with trembling: and, while we confide in God, must be diffident of ourselves. Let us not presume on our own firmness, but "put on the whole armor of God, that we may withstand in the evil day." The first thing required in this divine accoutrement is, that "our loins be girt about with truth:" but truth will not prove as a girdle to our loins in the day of battle, except we be deeply and intimately acquainted with it.

O ye sons and daughters of carelessness, who are called Christians, but have no root in yourselves, what aspect do these things wear towards you? The time seems drawing nigh that will prove you to be what you are! Hitherto there has been "an outer-court" for you, and you have worshipped in it. You have long had a form of godliness, but have been without the power. You have ranked with the friends of truth, but have never received it in love, that you might be saved. You have kept up the profession

of something that has been called Christianity, without feeling yourselves under any necessity to proceed farther: but now your outer-court will, probably, be taken away, and you will feel yourselves impelled, as it were, either to *come in*, and be Christians in reality, or to *go out*, and take your portion with the unbelieving and the abominable.

### SERMON VI.

[Preached at the Circus, Edinburgh, Oct. 13, 1799.]

#### THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF REWARDS.

“Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”—Gal. vi. 7, 8.

COMMON subjects, my brethren, are the most important, and need to be most inculcated. We are apt to think we have heard enough of them, and can expect but little, if any, farther improvement from them. But such imaginations are founded in mistake. Though, generally speaking, we assent to the important truth which is here suggested, yet there are but few of us who feel its force, or properly act under its influence.

The solemn warning here given is not unnecessary. Perhaps there is nothing to which depraved creatures are more addicted, though nothing be more dangerous, than *self-deception*. It is from this predilection in favor of something that shall prophecy good concerning them that the truth is disrelieved, and those doctrines and systems of religion which flatter their pride and cherish their security are so eagerly imbibed. The human heart loves to be soothed. The pleasing sounds *peace, peace*, though there be no peace, will be gratefully received. But let us not be our own enemies. To impose upon ourselves is all that we can do: “God is not mocked.” When all is said and done, “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Some men venture to hope that *there is no hereafter*, no harvest to follow: or that, though they persist in sowing to the flesh, yet they shall not of the flesh reap corruption: but this is a most forlorn hope. Unhappy men! Every thing around you proves that there is a God; and something within you, in spite of all your efforts to stifle its remonstrances, tells you that you are accountable to him, and must give an account before him. To you the words that I have read are particularly addressed: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Others, who admit a future state, yet hope to escape the just reward of their evil deeds,

from an idea which they entertain of the *general mercy of God*. It is true, God is merciful; but his mercy is not connivance. He is merciful; but it is only through a mediator: while, therefore, you neglect his salvation, there is no mercy for you. You confess not your iniquity upon the head of the substitute; therefore it will be found upon your own head. Your religion is no better than that of Cain, who brought an offering without a sacrifice: the Lord will not accept it. He is merciful; but it is to men of a broken and a contrite spirit. Of others, he says, “He that made them will not have mercy upon them; and he that formed them will show them no favor.” O ye formalists! ye heathens under a Christian name! the passage that I have read looks hard at you: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Others have derived a hope from the performance of certain *superstitious rites*, or from the *bestowment of a portion of their wealth on some religious object*. Much of this kind of delusion has been practised in Popish countries. Men who have lived a life of injustice, or debauchery, or both, have hoped to balance accounts with the Almighty by performing a journey to the tomb of some departed saint, by building a church, or by endowing an hospital. It were well if this kind of self-deception were confined to Popish countries: but, alas! it is natural to unrenewed minds, of all nations and religions, to substitute ceremony in the place of judgment, mercy, and the love of God; and to hope to escape the divine displeasure by the works of their own hands. Are there any of this description here? We shall have a collection, this evening, for the printing of the New Testament in the Bengalee language. If I only wished for your money, I might say, Give, whatever be your motive! No; I am not so concerned for the salvation of the heathen as to be regardless of that of my own countrymen! I ask not a penny from such a motive: and, moreover, I solemnly warn you that, if you give all your substance in this way, it will avail you nothing. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Finally: Others flatter themselves that their iniquity will not find them out, seeing “Christ has died.” And true it is with regard to all who believe in him, and who “sow to the spirit,” that they will not be dealt with according to their deserts, but according to the merits of him in whom they have believed. Of this we shall have occasion to speak more particularly hereafter. At present, let it suffice to observe that unbelievers, who continue to “sow to the flesh,” have no interest in his mercy. There might as well have been no Saviour, nay,



better, so far as their future happiness is concerned, than a Saviour not believed in, loved, nor obeyed. Iniquity, unlamented, will inevitably be our ruin. It is as true as though Christ had never died that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

It is a very serious and impressive truth which is here held up, THAT ALL WHICH IS DONE IN THIS LIFE IS PREPARATORY TO ANOTHER; OR THAT THE SORROWS AND JOYS OF A FUTURE WORLD BEAR A RELATION TO WHAT IS WROUGHT IN THIS, SIMILAR TO THAT WHICH THE HARVEST BEARS TO THE SEED SOWN. This is the subject to which I wish to call your serious attention, and surely I may presume that such an attention will not be withheld.

1. Let us begin on the subject of sowing TO THE FLESH, and observe the relation which the future punishment of the wicked will bear to it.

The fruit which arises from sowing to the flesh is termed "corruption." It does not consist in the destruction of being, but of well-being; in the blasting of peace, joy, and hope; and consequently in the enduring of tribulation, anguish, and everlasting despair.

This dreadful harvest will all originate in the sin which has been committed in the present life. Even here we see enough to convince us of its destructive tendency. We see intemperance followed with disease, idleness with rags, pride with scorn, and indifference to evangelical truth with the *belief of a lie*. We see nations desolated by wars, neighborhoods and families rendered miserable by contentions, and the minds of individuals sinking under the various loads of guilt, remorse, and despair. Great is the misery of man upon him. Yet this is but the "blade" proceeding from this deadly seed; or at most the "ear:" the "full corn in the ear" is reserved for another state.

The scriptural representations of the wrath to come convey the idea, not of torture inflicted by mere power, nor of punishment without respect to desert, but of bitter "weepings and wailings," in reflecting on the deeds done in the body. The punishment of the adulterer is described as a "bed,"—a bed of devouring fire; the deceiver will find himself deceived; he that loved cursing, it shall come upon him, as oil into his bones; and they who continued to say unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," God will say unto them, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity: I never knew you."

Future misery will greatly consist in *reflection*. Abraham said to the rich man, "Son, remember!" If the memory could be obliterated, there is reason to think hell would be extinguished: but it must remain.

There are four things in particular per-

taining to sin which will continue to be the objects of reflection, and which therefore must prove the seeds of future misery.

1. *The character of the Being against whom it has been committed.* If God had been wanting in justice or goodness; if his law had been, what some have profanely said of it,—a taskmaster, requiring brick without straw; if compliance with his will had been inconsistent with real happiness; if his invitations had been insincere; or if his promises had in any instances been broken; if his threatenings had borne no proportion to the evil of the offence; or if in condemning the sinner he had availed himself of being stronger than he; his wrath might possibly have been endured. We can bear an unjust punishment better than a just one. The displeasure of a malignant being, however it may injure us, does not bereave us of inward peace: it is the frown of *goodness* that is intolerable. To have incurred the displeasure of a God whose nature is LOVE, must furnish reflections which cannot be endured.

2. *The folly of it.* There are few things in the present state which sting the mind with keener sensations than the recollection that we have ruined ourselves by our own foolishness.

If we see a man eager in pursuing trifles, while he neglects things of the greatest importance; anxious to shun imaginary evils, and heedlessly plunging himself into real ones; all attention to present indulgences, but regardless of his future interests; averse from what is his duty, and busying himself in things for which he is utterly incompetent, and which, therefore, he should commit to another, in fine, studying to displease his best friend, and to gratify his worst enemy; we should without hesitation pronounce him a foolish man, and forget his ruin. Yet all this is the constant practice of every unconverted sinner; and, if he persist in his folly, the recollection of it in a future state must overwhelm him with "shame and everlasting contempt."

3. *The aggravating circumstances which attend it.* The same actions committed in different circumstances possess very different degrees of guilt. The heathens in pursuing their immoralities are without excuse; but those who are guilty of the same things amidst the blaze of gospel light are much more so. The profligate conduct of those young people whose parents have set them the example is heinous: but what is it in comparison of that which is against example, and in spite of all the tears, prayers, and remonstrances of their godly relations? And what is that rejection of the gospel in the most ignorant part of the community in comparison of that which is accompanied with much hearing, reading, and reflection?

O my hearers! A large proportion of



the sin committed among us is of this description: it is against light, and against love. Wisdom crieth in our streets, and understanding putteth forth her voice. The melting invitations and solemn warnings of God are frequently sounded in our ears. If we should perish, therefore, ours will not be the lot of common sinners; our reflections will be similar to those of Chorazin and Bethsaida, whose inhabitants are represented as more guilty than those of Sodom and Gomorrah. To reject the gospel, whether it be by a preference of gross indulgences, a fondness for refined speculations, or an attachment to our own righteousness, is to incur "the wrath of the Lamb," which is held up to us as the most dreadful of all wra<sup>th</sup>—as that from which unbelievers would be glad to be hid, though it were by being crushed beneath falling rocks, or buried in oblivion at the bottom of the mountains.

4. That in sin which will furnish matter for still further reflection will be *its effects on others connecte<sup>d</sup> with us*. It is a very affecting consideration that we are so linked together in society that we almost necessarily communicate our dispositions one to another. We draw, and are drawn, in both good and evil. If we go to heaven, we are commonly instrumental in drawing some others along with us; and it is the same if we go to hell. If a sinner, when he has destroyed his own soul, could say, I have injured myself only, his reflections would be very different from what they will be.

The influence of an evil word or action, in a way of example, may surpass all calculation. It may occupy the attention of the sinner only for the moment; but, being communicated to another, it may take root in him and bring forth fruit a hundred-fold. He also may communicate it to his connections, and they to theirs; and thus it may go on to increase from generation to generation. In this world no competent idea can be formed of these effects; but they will be manifest in the next, and must needs prove a source of bitter reflection.

What sensations must arise in the minds of those whose lives have been spent in practising the abominable arts of seduction; whose words, looks, and gestures, like a pestilence that walketh in darkness, conveyed the poison of their hearts, and spread wide-wasting ruin among the unguarded youth. There they will be "cast into a bed, and those who have committed adultery with them?"

See there too the ungodly parent, compassed about and loaded with execrations by his ungodly offspring, whom he has led on by his foul example, till both have fallen into perdition!

Nor is this all: there also will be seen the "blind leader of the blind, both fallen into the ditch;" the deluded preacher with his

deluded hearers; each of whom during life, were employed in deceiving the other. The mask is now stripped off. Now it appears to what issue all his soothing flatteries led; and what was his real character at the time, notwithstanding the decency of his outward demeanor. Now it is manifest that he who led not the sheep of Christ into the true pasture "entered not in by the door himself." Ah! now the blood of souls crieth for vengeance! Methinks I see the prodigate part of his auditory, who died before him, surprised at his approach. That we, say they, who have lived in pleasure, and in wantonness, should come to this place, is no wonder; but . . . "art thou also become like one of us?"

I proceed

II. To offer some remarks on sowing to the Spirit; or to point out the relation that subsists between what is done for Christ in this life and the joys of the life to come.

Before I attempt to establish this part of the subject, it will be proper to form a clear and scriptural idea of it.

The relation between sowing to the Spirit and everlasting life is as real as that between sowing to the flesh and everlasting death: it does not follow, however, that it is in all respects the same. The one is a relation of *due desert*; but the other is not so. The Scriptures, while they represent death as the proper "wages" of sin, have decided that eternal life is "the gift of God," through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The leading principles necessary to a clear understanding of this subject may be stated under the following particulars:—

1. *Nothing performe<sup>d</sup> by a creature, however pure, can properly merit everlasting life.* To merit at the hand of God would be to lay him under an obligation; and this would be the same thing as becoming profitable to him: but we are taught, when we have done all, to acknowledge that we are "unprofitable servants, having done no more than was our duty to do."

2. *God may freely lay himself under an obligation to reward the obedience of a holy creature with everlasting life; and his so doing may be fit and worthy of him.* This fitness, however, arises not from the proportion between the service and the reward, but from such a conduct being adapted to express to creation in general the love which the Creator bears to righteousness, and to give encouragement to the performance of it. Such was the promise made to our first parents; which, had they continued obedient, would have entitled them to the reward.

3. *Man having sinned, the promised good is forfeit<sup>e<sup>d</sup></sup>; and death becomes the only reward of which he is worthy.* "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

The law is become "weak through the flesh," like a just judge, who is incapable of acquitting a criminal, or of awarding life to a character who deserves to die.

4. *God having designs of mercy, notwithstanding, towards rebellious creatures, sent forth his Son to obey and suffer in their place; resolving to bestow eternal life on all that believe in him, as the reward of his undertaking.* So well pleased was the Father with the obedience and sacrifice of Christ, that he not only set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, and made him head over all principalities and powers, and every name that is named; but gave him the full desire of his heart, the salvation of his people. Hence all spiritual blessings are said to be given us "in him," "through him," or "for his sake." "By means of his death" we receive the promise of "eternal inheritance:" and our salvation is considered as "the travail of his soul," which it was promised him he should "see, and be satisfied." Mercy shown to a sinner in this way is, in effect, saying, Not for your sakes do I this, be it known unto you! (be ashamed and confounded, O apostate creature!) but to do honor to the interposition of my Son. Him will I hear!

5. *God not only accepts of all who believe in his Son, for his sake, but their services also become acceptable and rewardable, through the same medium.* If our works, while unbelievers, had any thing truly good in them, which they have not, still it were impossible that they should be acceptable to God. "It does not consist with the honor of the majesty of the King of heaven and earth," as a great writer expresses it, "to accept of any thing from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law, till that condemnation be removed." But, being "accepted in the beloved," our works are accepted likewise. "The Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering."—"He worketh in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ."—"Ye are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Being "accepted in the beloved," our services become impregnated, as it were, with his worthiness; our petitions are offered with the "much incense" of his intercession; and both are treated, in a sort, as though they were his. God in blessing and rewarding Abraham's posterity, is represented as blessing and rewarding him. "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee—and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies."—Accordingly, though it be said of Caleb, "because

he followed the Lord fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it; yet it was no less a fulfilment of the promise to Abraham than of that to him. In like manner, in approving the services of believers, God approves of the obedience and sacrifice of his Son, of which they are the fruits; and, in rewarding them, continues to reward him, or to express his well-pleasèdness in his mediation.

This, brethren, I take to be, for substance, the *Christian doctrine of rewards*. I am persuaded it excludes boasting, and at the same time affords the greatest possible encouragement to be "constant, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord."

On this ground I proceed to establish the position with which I set out, *That the joys of futurity will bear a relation to what is done for Christ in the present life similar to that between the seed and the harvest.*

The same peace and joy in God which primarily arises from the mediation of Christ may arise, in a secondary sense, from the fruits of it in our own souls. We know by experience, as well as by Scripture testimony, that it is thus in the present world: hence that "great peace" which they enjoy who love the divine law; and that "satisfaction" which a good man is said to possess "from himself;" and what good reason can be given why that which has been a source of peace and satisfaction here should not be the same hereafter? If future rewards interfered with the grace of God, or the merit of Christ, present ones must do the same: for a difference in place or condition makes no difference as to the nature of things. Besides this, the Scriptures expressly teach us that the heavenly inheritance is "treasure laid up on earth," the "crown" of the faithful, and the "reward" of those who have been hated, persecuted, and falsely accused for their Redeemer's sake. The same apostle who teaches that salvation is of "grace," and "not of works," and that we are "accepted in the beloved," assures us that he "labored,—that he might be accepted of the Lord:" for, he adds, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad." The addresses to the seven Asiatic churches abound with the same sentiments. Eternal life, under various forms of expression, is there promised as the reward of those who should *overcome*.

This doctrine will receive farther confirmation if we consider *wherein the nature of heavenly felicity consists*. There can be no doubt but that an essential part of it will consist in the *divine approbation*; and this, not merely on account of what we shall then be, but of what we have been and

\* President Edwards's "Sermons on Justification."

the present world. So far as we are indebted to the Spirit, so far we shall reap the reward of God; and this will be that that will infinitely exceed all our merits. We are assured that for those who are faithful to the Lord, and are concerned for his glory in times of general declension, "a remembrance is written;" and, from the account given us by our Lord, it appears, that its contents will be published in the presence of an assembled world. "The King will say unto those at his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father."—"I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me."

Another essential part of the heavenly felicity will consist in "ascribing glory to God and the Lamb." It will be a source of joy unspeakable to perceive the abundance of glory which will redound to the best of beings from all the works of his hands. But, if we rejoice that God is glorified, we cannot but rejoice in the recollection that we have been instrumental in glorifying him. It belongs to the nature of love to rejoice in an opportunity of expressing itself; and, when those opportunities have occurred, to rejoice in the recollection of them. We are told that when David was anointed king in Hebron "there was joy in Israel." Undoubtedly it must have afforded pleasure to all who had believed that God had appointed him to that office, and had felt interested for him during his affliction, to see him crowned by the unanimous consent of the tribes, whoever were the instruments of raising him to the throne: but it must give peculiar joy to those worthies who, at an early period, had cast in their lot with him, and fought by his side through all his difficulties. And, as they would feel a special interest in his exaltation, so special honors were conferred on them under his government. It is, I apprehend, in allusion to this piece of sacred story, that our Lord speaks in the manner he does to his apostles: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me: that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The satisfaction of the apostle Paul, in having "fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith," did not consist in a pharisaical self complacency; but in a consciousness of having, in some good measure, lived to his glory who died for him, and rose again; and the same consciousness that rendered him happy, while in the prospect of his crown, must render him still more so in the possession of it.

It has been noticed that one great source

of future misery to the sinner will be the *effects* which his sin has produced upon others; and much the same may be observed concerning the righteous. We already perceive the tendency which a holy, upright, and benevolent conduct has to work conviction in the minds of men: but in the world to come the seed will have actually produced its fruits; and, God being thereby glorified, the hearts of those who have contributed towards it must be filled with grateful satisfaction.

We can form no competent ideas, at present, of the effects of good, any more than of evil. What we do of either is merely the kindling of a fire; how far it may burn we cannot tell, and, generally speaking, our minds are but little occupied about it. Who can calculate the effects of a modest testimony borne to truth; of an importunate prayer for its success; of a disinterested act of self-denial; of a willing contribution; of a seasonable reproof; of a wholesome council; of even a sigh of pity, or a tear of sympathy? Each or any of these exercises may be the means, in the Lord's hand, of producing that in the bosoms of individuals which may be communicated to their connections, and from them to theirs, to the end of time.

The gospel dispensation also is accompanied with peculiar encouragements for such exercises: it is that period in which the Messiah receives of "the travail of his soul;" and, consequently, that in which his servants may warrantably hope for the greatest success. Under his reign, we have the promise of the Spirit being "poured upon us from on high," and of various other blessings resulting from it: particularly, that "the wilderness shall become a fruitful field;" that it shall be so fertile that what has been before reckoned a "fruitful field" shall, in comparison with it, "be counted for a forest;" that "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness, and assurance forever;" and, finally, that the labors of the Lord's servants, during these happy times, shall be like that of the husbandman who "sows beside all waters," or who cultivates a rich and well-watered soil. It is also during the Messiah's reign that we are warranted to expect great things to arise from small beginnings. "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains, the fruit whereof shall shake like Lebanon."

The influence of these effects on our present and future happiness is clearly intimated by our Lord, where he represents the prophets as "sowing" and the apostles as "reaping," or "entering into their labors."—"He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice



together." The reapers in Christ's harvest receive wages in the enjoyments which accompany their toils in the present life: they "gather fruit unto life eternal" in the effects of them contributing to enhance the blessedness of heaven: and this blessedness is not confined to those who have been the most successful in their day, but extends to others, who have prepared the way before them. According to this representation, Isaiah and Jeremiah, who sowed in tears, will reap in joy; "rejoicing together" with Peter and Paul and John, and all the New Testament ministers; viewing, in their successes, the happy fruits of their own disregarded labors.

In this view, the labors of Paul and his companions must be considered as extending, in their effects, to the very end of time. All the true religion that has blessed the different parts of the earth, within the last seventeen hundred years, has arisen from their labors; and all the souls which have ascended to glory, or shall yet ascend, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, shall bless the Lord of the harvest for sending them. When we see these heroic worthies sowing the seed of life, reproached in one city, imprisoned in another, and stoned in another, we think it discouraging work. All that they could accomplish was but little, in comparison of the multitudes of men who inhabited the earth: and that little must be at great expense. It was a handful of corn cast upon the top of a mountain—a most unpromising soil. They, indeed, saw that the hand of the Lord was with them; but, probably, they had no conception of the extent to which the effects of their labors would reach. If Paul and Silas rejoiced and sang praises in the prison of Philippi, what would have been their joy could they have foreseen that myriads of myriads in this European quarter of the world would receive the testimony which they should leave behind them, and follow them to glory?

But all these effects are manifest to them in the heavenly world. There they see the harvest which had arisen from the handful of corn, waving before the wind, like the trees of the vast and conspicuous forest of Mount Libanus. Every hour, if I may so speak, souls are arriving at those happy regions, who hail them as their spiritual fathers, and who shall be their crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord.

The joy of the apostles will not prevent later laborers from possessing the immediate fruit of their toils, any more than that of the prophets will prevent them from possessing theirs: "both they that sow and they that reap will rejoice together."

Nor is this encouraging truth to be confined to the apostles, or to men of eminence. He who received but two talents had the approbation of his Lord, equally with him who

had received five. The reward, as promised in the gospel, will not be so much according to the talents we possess as the use we make of them; nor so much in respect of our success as of our fidelity. Many a servant of Christ has spent the greater part of his life with but little apparent success. His charge, it may be, was small at the beginning, and he has not been able to enlarge it. He has witnessed but few appearances of a divine change in his congregation; and some of those who, for a time, afforded him hope, have turned back. Under such circumstances, his heart has often sunk within him; often has he sighed in secret, and thought within himself, I am a vessel in which the Lord taketh no pleasure! But if, under all this, he be faithful to his trust, and preserve a single eye to the glory of God, his labors will not be lost. The seed which he has sown may spring up after his decease; or he may have prepared the way for another more successful; and, when all shall meet in a future state, he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together.

Neither is this subject to be confined to ministers. As in Christ's harvest there is employment for every description of laborers, so there is reason to believe that every thing done for him is productive of some good effect; and will, in some way, glorify his name, which cannot but yield a joyful satisfaction to those who love him. How grateful are the recollections of a godly parent, when, upon his dying bed, he is able to say to his children,—I have taught you the good and the right way; the things which you have heard and seen in me do; and the God of peace shall be with you.—And, though he may not in this world witness those effects which would have rejoiced his heart, yet his labor will not be lost. He may, at the last, be able to present them, saying, "Here am I, and the children which the Lord hath given me." Or, if some should not be gathered, yet his judgment is with the Lord, and his work with his God.

What a satisfaction must be enjoyed by those who have willingly contributed, in any form, to so glorious a cause as that of Christ—a cause which he founded by the shedding of his blood—a cause to which all the tribes of martyrs cheerfully sacrificed their lives—a cause, in fine, by the prevalence of which the name of God is glorified, and the salvation of our fellow-sinners accomplished!

I close with a few reflections.

1. We learn, from this subject, *how to estimate the importance of our present conduct.* We are fearfully made, but still more fearfully situated. Every thing we do is a seed of futurity, and is daily ripening into heaven or hell. It is here we receive the stamp or impression for the whole of our existence. Is it possible that, with a proper sense of this truth, we should trifle with time, or

lavish its precious moments in idleness or folly?

2. By this also we may *estimate the folly of hypocrisy*. All the labor of a man to appear what he is not is making preparation for his own confusion. What should we think of a husbandman who sows cockle instead of barley; and who having, by early rising and performing his labor in the dark, deceived his neighbors, should congratulate himself on his ingenuity? Foolish man! we should say, of what account is it to his neighbor, in comparison of what it is to himself? It will soon appear what he has been doing!

3. Let us never forget that, *whatever encouragements are afforded us, they are altogether of grace, and through a Mediator*. There is no room for pharisaical pride; and, if such a spirit be at the root of our labors, it will prove "as rottenness, and the blossom shall go up as dust."

Do any inquire, what they must do, that they may work the works of God? The answer is, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." This is the first and chief concern, without which all others will be of no account. While you either openly reject Christianity, or imbibe another gospel, which is not the gospel of Christ, the curse of the Almighty is upon your head, and all your works are no other than "sowing to the flesh." Come off without farther delay; come off from that fatal ground. Renounce thy self-dependences, and submit to the righteousness of God; then every thing will be in its proper place. The curse shall no longer be upon thee, nor upon anything which thou doest. The Lord will rejoice over thee to do thee good. Thou mayest "eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works."

### SERMON VII.

[Preached at the Annual Meeting of the Bedford Union, May 6, 1801.]

#### GOD'S APPROBATION OF OUR LABORS NECESSARY TO THE HOPE OF SUCCESS.

"If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us."—Numb. xiv. 8.

You recollect, my brethren, that when the children of Israel were going up to possess the land which the Lord their God had promised them, they were directed to send spies before them, who should search out the land, and report whether it was good or bad, and whether the inhabitants were strong or weak, few or many. The greater part of these spies proved unfaithful. They brought an evil report of the good land; depreciating its value, magnifying the difficulties of obtaining it, and thus spreading despondency

over the hearts of the people. The effect was that, instead of persevering in the undertaking, they were for returning to Egypt.

There were two out of the number, however, who were of another spirit, and whose report was different from that of their companions. "The land," said they, which we passed through to search it, is an exceedingly good land, which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them; fear them not." These worthies stood alone in their testimony, and the people had well nigh stoned them for it; but the Lord honored them: for, of all the generations which came out of Egypt, they only inherited the promise.

Considering the object of the present meeting, you will probably suppose that my thoughts have been employed in drawing a parallel between the undertaking of Israel to subdue the Canaanites and take possession of their land in the name of Jehovah, and our undertakings to subdue to the obedience of Christ the hearts of his enemies, both at home and abroad, and in this manner take possession of the world for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is true they have: and, in discoursing upon the subject, I shall first attempt to justify the application by tracing the analogy between the two cases, and then consider the proviso on which we are given to expect success.

I. I shall attempt to justify the application of the subject, by tracing the ANALOGY BETWEEN THE UNDERTAKING OF ISRAEL AND THE EFFORTS OF CHRISTIANS TO DISSEMINATE THE GOSPEL.

It is allowed that the imagination, unaccompanied with judgment, will often find resemblances which the sacred writers would have disavowed, as beneath them; and far be it from me to imitate so puerile and unwarrantable a method of treating the oracles of God: but it appears to me that the gift of the holy land to Abraham and his posterity was really *designed* to prefigure the gift of all nations to the Messiah for his inheritance, and that thus it is represented in the Scriptures. It is said, in the seventy-second Psalm, "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." This promise, I suppose, had immediate reference to the kingdom of Solomon, and signified that, during his reign, the whole extent of country included in the original promise to Abraham should be actually possessed: but, in a more remote sense, it refers to a greater son of David than Solomon. This is manifest from several passages in the psalm, which are inapplicable to any one but the Messiah. It is his kingdom only which shall "continue as long as the sun and the moon endure, throughout all generations:" Him shall "all nations

serve," and to him shall "all kings bow down; men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed." Now, considering the promise before-mentioned in this light, it signifies that, like as Israel, during the reign of Solomon, inherited the utmost extent of country promised to them, so the church, during the reign of the Messiah, should possess the utmost extent of country promised to him, which is the whole world, or "the uttermost parts of the earth." In the joyful prospect of these times, the Psalm concludes: "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name forever, AND LET THE WHOLE EARTH BE FILLED WITH HIS GLORY. AMEN, AND AMEN!"

The taking possession of Canaan, and the setting up of the true worship of God in it, not only prefigured the kingdom of the Messiah, but were preparatory to it—the foundation of the gospel structure. The carnal Jews, at the coming of our Saviour, it is true, did not enter into these views; and even his own disciples were much in the dark; but the ancient Israelites understood and felt them. "God be merciful unto us," said they, "and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us"—Wherefore? That *they* might be a holy and happy people? Doubtless this was a part of their desire; but not the whole. They prayed to be blessed, that they might be blessings to the world; that "God's way might be known," through them, "upon earth, and his saving health among all nations; that "the people might praise him," yea, that "all the people might praise him, and all the ends of the earth fear before him." Canaan was a country situated in the centre of the world, and therefore adapted to be the spot on which Jehovah should set up his standard for the subjugation of the world to himself. Hence the little leaven should diffuse its influence through the earth, till the whole were leavened. Such appears to have been the design of God in bestowing it upon the posterity of Abraham, and such are the effects which have been actually, though gradually, produced. "Out of Zion" has gone forth "the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

There are several points of dissimilarity, I allow, between the undertaking of the Israelites and that of Christians to disseminate the gospel; but, whatever differences there are, they are altogether in our favor. They went forth armed with the temporal sword; we with the sword of the Spirit: their commission was to destroy men's lives; ours to save their souls: cities, and fields, and vineyards, and olive-yards, were their reward; our hope and joy, and crown, are sinners rescued from destruction, standing in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his

coming. Finally: The people whom they encountered were appointed by the Lord of the universe to utter destruction, as the just demerit of their crimes; and, though some submitted and were spared, yet the invaders were not given to hope, or directed to wait, for a change of this kind in the body of the people; but were commanded to drive them out, and take their place. It is not so with us: we live under a dispensation of mercy: go where we will, we have glad tidings of great joy to communicate. They, having no hopes of the people, might have said, We seek not you, but yours: but our hopes terminate on the people; we therefore can say, "We seek not yours, but you."

There are several important points, however, in which the undertakings are similar. The following have occurred to me as the most remarkable:

1. The *ultimate object* of the one was to overturn the kingdom of Satan, and to establish the knowledge and worship of the true God: and the same is true of the other. The world, at that time, not a nation exempted, was under the dominion of Satan, enveloped in idolatry, and the abominations which always accompany it; so that, if God had not selected a people for himself, and, after having taught them to fear and obey him, giving them a possession among the nations, he had had no people, nor name, nor worship, upon the face of the earth. And what is the state of mankind at present? Not altogether so deplorable: but, whatever difference there may be, it is owing to that divine revelation which God communicated to Israel, and, by them, to the gentile nations. In heathen countries the god of this world reigns uncontrolled. The children of men, from generation to generation, are led captive by him at his will. Much the same may be said of those countries which are overspread by Mahomedism. Nor is it materially otherwise where the corruptions of popery maintain their sway. And even in our own country, where the Scriptures are read in the native language, there are but few who pay any serious attention to them. Is it not evident, to an impartial spectator, that the great body of the people are practical atheists, living without hope, and without God in the world? The number of worshippers, including even the laxest and most inattentive, in all our cities, and I fear in most of our towns and villages, is few, when compared with those who attend upon no worship at all. In the earlier times of the Reformation, whatever defects might exist with respect to church-government and discipline, the doctrine of salvation by the cross of Christ was much more generally preached and believed than at present. Since the great principles of evangelical truth (alike clearly stated in the Articles of the Established Church and in the catechisms and con-



fessions of Dissenters) have been relinquished, and a species of heathen morality substituted in their place, the nation has been almost heathenized. If the Lord had not left us a seed of faithful men, some in the establishment and some out of it, whose object it has been to propagate the common salvation, and to inculcate the holy practice which becomes it, surely we had, ere now, been as Sodom. Or if, like a certain great nation near home, we had revoked the laws in favor of religious liberty, and massacred, silenced, or banished the faithful witnesses of Christ, surely, like them, we had been lost in the gulf of infidelity.

2. In invading the country of the Canaanites, Israel went forth by *divine authority*; and the same authority attends our invasion of the empire of sin and Satan. Nothing short of an express commandment could have justified a people in destroying or subjugating another people, whatever might be their moral character: but the Creator of the world had an indisputable right to dispose of any part of it, and to punish transgressors in what manner he pleased. And, though the gospel is far from being injurious to the temporal interests of mankind, yet the opposition to it has been as fierce and as decided as if it had been aimed to rob them of every thing necessary to their happiness. The servants of Christ have been taught to expect opposition, and all the evils which a world lying in wickedness, and hating to have their repose disturbed, can inflict upon them. And though, by the kind hand of God, whose influence governs all human counsels, they have had their seasons of peace and rest, yet the enmity has been much the same. The truly zealous and faithful laborers in Christ's harvest have generally, even in the most favorable periods, had to encounter a large portion of reproach and misrepresentation. And what but the *authority of heaven* should induce us to expose ourselves to such inconveniences? We have our feelings as well as other men; and it would doubtless be agreeable to us to possess the good opinion of all about us. We have no ill will to those who preach even what we account "another gospel and not the gospel of Christ," whether in or out of the establishment; and, if we had, we have so much good will to ourselves, that, if consistently with the love of Christ and the souls of men we could hold our peace, we should probably be inclined to do so, and employ ourselves in something less offensive, and more adapted to promote our temporal interests. But the *command of Christ* is not to be trifled with. He to whom we must shortly give account of the use we have made of every talent committed to us has said, "Go, TEACH ALL NATIONS—PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE!" If we have any authority from Christ to preach at

all (which I shall not here inquire,) we are, doubtless, warranted and obliged, by this commission, to embrace any opening, in any part of the earth, within our reach, for the imparting of the word of life to them that are without it. The primitive ministers went every where preaching the gospel, and gave no less offence to its enemies, even among the established teachers of religion, than we give; and were by them reproached as *ignorant* men no less than we are. Yet they persevered in their work, and endured the consequences. If we be ministers of Jesus Christ, we ought to follow their example. It is true, there are some things of an *extraordinary* kind in which we cannot follow them; but the work of spreading the gospel is ordinary, and not confined to a single age. Had not Christ's commission been binding to the latest posterity, it would not have been added, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!"

The Israelites went forth, not only by *divine authority*, but *under a divine promise*; and the same is true of Christian ministers. God spoke unto Abraham, saying, "I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." This, in substance, was often repeated to the patriarchs; so often that the country was thence denominated *the land of promise*. This it was that supported the faith of Caleb and Joshua. It was not in a dependence on their numbers, or their prowess, that they said, "We are well able;" but on the arm of Him who had spoken in his holiness. Nor do those who labor in the Lord's service, in the present times, whether at home or abroad (for I consider the work as one,) go forth with less encouragement. The Father has promised his Son that "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;" that he will "divide him a portion with the great," and that "he shall divide the spoil with the strong." *Travail*, in a figurative sense, commonly signifies grievous affliction issuing in a great and important good. Such was the suffering of our Lord, and such must be the effect arising out of it. *A portion with the great* may refer to the territories of the great ones of this world; such as the Alexanders and the Cæsars, who, in their day, grasped a large extent of empire: but the kingdom of Christ shall be greater than the greatest of them. The *division of the spoil* implies a victory, and denotes, in this place, that Christ shall triumph over all the false religion and irreligion in the world. And, as the Father's word is given to his Son, so the word of the Son is given unto us. He that said, "Go, teach all nations," added, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." These declarations afford equal ground for confidence

with those which supported a Caleb and a Joshua.

4. The promise to Israel was *gradually* fulfilled; and the same is observable of that which is made to Christ and his people. It was almost five hundred years, from the time that God entered into covenant with Abraham, before his posterity were permitted to set foot upon the land, as possessors of it; and nearly five hundred years more elapsed before their possession was completed. And, in establishing the kingdom of his Son, God has proceeded in a similar manner. The accession of the Gentiles was promised to Noah, under the form of Japheth being *persuaded to dwell in the tents of Shem*: but more than two thousand years roll on before any thing very considerable is accomplished. At length, the Messiah comes; and, like Joshua by Canaan, takes possession of the heathen world. At first, it seems to have bowed before his word; and, as we should have thought, promised fair to be subdued in a little time. But every new generation that was born, being corrupt from their birth, furnished a body of new recruits to Satan's army: and as the Canaanites, after the first onset in the times of Joshua, gathered strength, and struggled successfully against that generation of Israelites which succeeded him and forsook the God of their fathers; so, as the church degenerated, the world despised it. Its doctrine, worship, and spirit, being corrupted, from being a formidable enemy, the greater part of it becomes a convenient ally, and is employed in subduing the other part, who hold fast the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Thus the war is lengthened out: and now, after a lapse of eighteen hundred years, we see not all things yet put under him. On the contrary, when reviewing our labors, it often seems to us that "we have wrought no deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen." But let us not despair: *we see Jesus* upon his throne; and as the Canaanites were ultimately driven out, and the kingdom of Israel extended from sea to sea, so assuredly it shall be with the kingdom of Christ.

The great disposer of events has, for wise ends, so ordered it that the progress of things shall be gradual. He designs by this, among other things, to try the faith and patience of sincere people, and to manifest the hypocrisy of others. Hereby scope is afforded both for faith and unbelief. If, like Caleb and Joshua, we be for going forward, we shall want encouragement: but if, like the others, we be weary of waiting and our hearts turn back again, we shall not want a handle, or plea, by which to excuse ourselves. God loves that both persons and things should appear to be what they are.

5. The promise was not accomplished at last, but *by means of ardent, deadly, and*

*persevering struggles*; and such must be the efforts of the church of Christ, ere she will gain the victory over the spiritual wickedness with which she has to contend. The Canaanites would not give up any thing but at the point of the sword. Hence the faint-hearted, the indolent, and the weak in faith, were for compromising matters with them. The same spirit which magnified difficulties at a distance, which spoke of cities as "great, and walled up to heaven," and of "the sons of Anak being there," was for stopping short when they had gained footing in the land, and for "making leagues" with the residue of the people. Thus it has long been in the Christian church: the gospel having obtained a footing in the western nations, we have acted as though we were willing that Satan should enjoy the other parts without molestation. Every heathen and Mahomedan country has seemed to be a city walled up to heaven, and the inhabitants terrible to us as the sons of Anak. And, even in our native country, an evangelical ministry having obtained a kind of establishment in some places, we have long acted as if we thought the rest were to be given up by consent, and left to perish without any means being used for their salvation! If God means to save any of them, it seems, he must bring them under the gospel, or the gospel, in some miraculous manner, to them: whereas the command of the Saviour is that we *go*, and preach it to every creature. All that Israel gained was by dint of sword. It was at the expense of many lives, yea, many thousands of lives, that they at last came to the full possession of the land, and that the promises of God were fulfilled towards them. The same may be said of the establishment of Christ's kingdom. It was by ardent and persevering struggles that the gospel was introduced into the various nations, cities, and towns where it now is; and, in many instances, at the expense of life. Thousands of lives were sacrificed to this great object in the times of the apostles; and, were I to say millions in succeeding ages, I should probably be within the compass of truth. But we have been so long inured to act under the shadow of civil protection, and without any serious inconvenience to our temporal interests, that we are startled at difficulties which the ancient Christians would have met with fortitude. They put their lives in their hands, "standing in jeopardy every hour:" and though we cannot be sufficiently thankful, both to God and the legislature of our country, for the protection we enjoy, yet we must not make this the condition of our activity for Christ. "He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap." If ever God prosper us, in any great degree, it will be in the exercise of that spirit by which the martyrs obtained a good report.



The above particulars may suffice to show the analogy between the two cases: the object aimed at, the authority acted upon, the promise confided in, its gradual accomplishment, and the means by which this accomplishment is effected, are the same in both: I hope, therefore, the application of the one to the other may be considered as justified.

II. Let us consider THE PROVISION WHICH WE ARE WARRANTED TO HOPE FOR SUCCESS. "If the Lord *delight in us*, then he will bring us into the land, and give it us.

The term *delight* does not express that divine love to our souls which is the source of our salvation, but a complacency in our character and labors. Thus it is to be understood in the speech of David, when fleeing from the conspiracy of Absalom: "If he say, I have no delight in thee, here I am: let him do with me as seemeth him good!" He could not mean by this, If God have no love to my soul, I submit to be forever separated from him; for such submission is not required of any who live under a dispensation of mercy: but, if he approve not of me as the head of his people, here I am; let him take my life away as it pleaseth him. The amount is that, if we would hope to succeed in God's work, our character and undertakings must be such as he approves.

1. The *object* which we pursue must be simply the cause of God, unmixed with worldly policy, or party interest. It has been insinuated that, under the color of disseminating evangelical doctrine, we seek to gain over the common people, and so to obtain, it should seem, an ascendancy in government.\* If it be so, we may be assured

\*To this effect were the insinuations of Professor Robison, concerning the efforts of Mr. Robert Hall and his friends, in a proposed mission to Hindoostan. The modest and dignified manner in which that gentleman repelled the accusation, and even forced his accuser to retract it, may be seen in his late excellent pamphlet on that subject. The bishop of Rochester, in a late address to his clergy, after representing the Socinians as aiming at this object, adds as follows: "Still the operations of the enemy are going on—still going on by stratagem—the stratagem still a pretence of reformation; but the reformation the very reverse of what was before attempted. Instead of divesting religion of its mysteries, and reducing it to a mere philosophy in speculation and to a mere morality in practice, the plan is now to affect great zeal for orthodoxy; to make great pretensions to an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit's influence; to alienate the minds of the people from the established clergy, by representing them as sordid worldlings, without any concern about the souls of men, indifferent to the religion which they ought to teach and to which the laity are attached, and destitute of the Spirit of God. In many parts of the kingdom new conventicles have been opened, in great number; and congregations formed of one kind now not what denomination?"

If the religion of Jesus must be reproached, it is best that it should be done in some such manner as this. Had the bishop of Rochester preserved any regard to candor or moderation, he might have been believed; as it is, it may be presumed there can be but little danger of it. None, except those who are

the Lord will take no delight in us. The work, in this case, must be altogether of man, and will come to nothing; yea, and to nothing let it come. The desire and prayer of my heart is that all such undertakings, if such there be, may perish! The kingdom of Christ will never prosper in those hands which make it only the secondary object of their pursuit, even though the first were lawful; and much less when it is made to subserve that which is itself sinful. But, if the divine glory be the object of our labors, the work is of God; God himself will delight in us, and every attempt to oppose it will be found to be fighting against God.

There is another way in which, I apprehend, we are in much more danger of erring: I mean, by an improper attachment to *party*

as deeply prejudiced as himself, can, for a moment, imagine that the late attempts for disseminating evangelical doctrine are the operations of a political scheme, carried on by infidels in disguise. A very small acquaintance with men and things must convince any one that the *persons concerned in this work are not the same* as those who affected to reform the church by reducing the mysteries of the gospel to "a mere philosophy in speculation and to a mere morality in practice." Men of that description were never possessed of zeal enough for such kind of work. We might as soon expect to see bishop Horsley himself turn village-preacher as them.

In repelling such language as the above, it is difficult to keep clear of the acrimony by which it is dictated. Suffice it to say, I am conscious that no such plan or design ever occupied my mind for a moment: nor am I acquainted with any person of whom I have ground to suspect any such thing. I know persons who are, as I believe, sinfully prejudiced against government, and of whose spirit and conversation I seldom fail to express my dislike: but I know not an individual whom I have any reason to think engages in village-preaching with so mean and base an end as that which is suggested by this prelate.

The picture which is drawn of the clergy is, doubtless, unpleasant; and, if applied to the serious part of them, far from just: whence it was taken is best known to the writer. I am inclined to think, however, that though he has represented it as the language of village-preachers he would be unable to prove such charges against them. There may be violent individuals engaged in village-preaching, who may take pleasure in exposing the immoralities of the clergy: and, if they have half the bitterness on the one side which this writer discovers on the other, they are unworthy of being so employed. Whatever grounds there may be for such charges against numbers of the clergy, the body of those who have been employed in preaching or reading printed sermons in the villages have never thought of preferring them, but have confined their attention to the preaching of Jesus Christ.

I have no scruple, however, in saying, if reducing religion to "a mere philosophy in speculation, and a mere morality in practice," be subverting it, it is subverted by great numbers in the church of England, as well as out of it. And, where this is the case, it is the bounden duty of the friends of evangelical truth to labor to introduce it, regardless of the wrath of its adversaries.

The suppression of "conventicles," I doubt not, would be very agreeable to some men: but I have too much confidence in the good sense of the legislature to suppose that it will suffer its counsels to be swayed by a few violent churchmen.



*interest.* I am far from thinking it a sin to be of a party. Every good man ought to rank with that denomination which, in his judgment, approaches nearest to the mind of Christ: but this is very different from having our labors directed to the promotion of a party, *as such.* If so, we shall see little or no excellence in whatever is done by others, and feel little or no pleasure in the success which God is pleased to give them: but, while this is our spirit, whatever be our zeal, we are serving ourselves rather than Christ, and may be certain the Lord will not delight in us to do us good. The only spirit in which the Lord takes pleasure is that which induces us to labor to promote *his* cause, and to rejoice in the prosperity of all denominations *so far so they promote it.*

2. The *doctrine* we teach must be that of Jesus Christ and him crucified. The person and work of Christ have ever been the corner-stone of the christian fabric: take away his divinity and atonement, and all will go to ruins. This is the doctrine taught by the apostles, and which God, in all ages, has delighted to honor. It would be found, I believe, on inquiry, that in those times wherein this doctrine has been most cordially embraced the church has been most prosperous, and that almost every declension has been accompanied by a neglect of it. This was the doctrine by which the Reformation was effected; and to what is the Reformation come in those communities where it is rejected? This was the leading theme of the Puritans and Nonconformists; and what are their descendants become who have renounced it? Many of them rank with infidels, and many who retain the form of Christianity deny the power thereof.

If it be alleged that the church of Rome retains this doctrine amidst its great apostacy, and some Protestant churches do the same, which, notwithstanding, have exceedingly degenerated; I answer, it is one thing for a community to retain doctrines in its decrees and articles, and another for ministers to preach them with faith and love in their ordinary labors. Divine truth requires to be written, not merely with ink and paper, but by the Spirit of God, upon the fleshly tables of the heart. If the church of Rome had retained the doctrine of Christ's divinity to any purpose, its members would have worshipped him, and not have turned aside to the adoration of saints and relics; and, if his atoning blood and only mediation between God and man had been properly regarded, we had never heard of mediators, pardons, and penances of another kind.

Christ crucified is the central point, in which all the lines of evangelical truth meet and are united. There is not a doctrine in the Scriptures but what bears an important relation to it. Would we understand the glory of the divine character and govern-

ment? It is seen in perfection *in the face of Jesus Christ.* Would we learn the evil of sin, and our perishing condition as sinners? Each is manifested in his sufferings. All the blessings of grace and glory are given us in him, and for his sake. Practical religion finds its most powerful motives in his dying love. That doctrine of which Christ is not the sum and substance is not the gospel; and that morality which has no relation to him, and which is not enforced on evangelical principles, is not Christian, but heathen.

I do not mean to be the apologist for that fastidious disposition apparent in some hearers, who require that every sermon shall have Christ for its immediate theme, and denominate every thing else legal preaching. His sacred name ought not to be unnaturally forced into our discourses, nor the Holy Scriptures turned into allegory for the sake of introducing it: but, in order to preach Christ, there is no need of this. If all scripture doctrines and duties bear a relation to him, we have only to keep that relation in view, and to urge practical religion upon those principles. If I leave out Christ in a sermon, and allege that the subject did not admit of his being introduced, I fear it will only prove that my thoughts have not been cast in an evangelical mould, I might as well say there is a village which has no road to the metropolis, as that there is a scripture doctrine or duty which has no relation to the person and work of Christ. Neither can I justly allege that such a way of preaching would cramp the powers of my soul, and confine me to four or five points in divinity: we may give the utmost scope to our minds, and yet, like the apostle, determine to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified. There is breadth, and length, and depth, and height sufficient in his love to occupy our powers, even though they were ten thousand times larger than they are.

In all our labors, brethren, in the church or in the world, in our native country or among the heathen, be this our principal theme. In this case, and not otherwise, the Lord will delight in us, will bring us into the land, and give it us for a possession.

3. The *motive* of our undertakings must be pure. God cannot possibly take pleasure in the labors of the *sordid* or the *vain.* Indeed, I do not perceive how, in the greater part of our labors, we can suspect ourselves, or be suspected, of acting from a regard to our worldly advantage. In attempting to carry the gospel among the heathen we certainly can have no such motive, as every part of the work requires the sacrifice of interest, and that without the most distant prospect of its being restored. And, even in carrying what we believe to be evangelical doctrine into the villages of our native coun-

try, it is commonly at the expense of both ease and interest. In those labors, however, that are within the vicinity of our respective congregations, in which success may contribute to our temporal advantage, it becomes us to watch over our own hearts. If such a motive should lie concealed among the springs of action, it may procure a blast upon our undertakings. The Lord will have no delight in such preaching; and without him we can do nothing. Or, if avarice have no place in us, yet, should we be stimulated by the desire of applause, it will be equally offensive to a holy God. The idea of being a missionary, abroad or at home, may feed the vanity of some minds; and, indeed, there is no man that is proof against such temptations. We have all reason to watch and pray. There is a "woe" hanging over the "idol shepherd; the sword will be upon his arm, and upon his right eye!" I have no suspicion of any one, but merely wish every one to suspect himself. If we secretly wish to appear great among our brethren, to magnify ourselves or our party, or to figure away in the religious world, as persons of extraordinary zeal, all is naked to the eyes of him with whom we have to do, and depend upon it, he will have no delight in us. But, if our eye be single, our whole body shall be full of light. Those that honor God shall be honored of him; and, however he may prove them for a time, they shall find, in the end, that their labor has not been in vain in the Lord.

4. We must go forth in all our labors as little children, *sensible of our own insufficiency, and depending only upon God.* The first city which Israel besieged, on their passing over Jordan, was won without striking a single blow, but merely walking round it, and sounding their trumpets, according to the command of the Lord. This was doubtless meant to teach them a lesson, at the outset of the war, not to lean upon their strength, or numbers, or valor; but upon the arm of Jehovah. This lesson was ordinarily repeated throughout their generations, whenever led to battle by godly men: instead of filling them with ideas of their own sufficiency (which is the universal practice of worldly men who have had the command of armies,) they taught them to distrust themselves and to rely upon their God. This is the spirit by which true religion is distinguished; and in this spirit we must go forth to subdue the hearts of sinners, or the Lord will have no delight in us, but leave us to fight our battles alone. Thus that eminent man of God, from whose pulpit I now address you, represents the four captains, and their ten thousands, after besieging Mansoul without effect, as presenting their petition to Shaddai for assistance. The more self-annihilation we possess the more likely we are to be useful to the souls of

men. God has "respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off."

5. We must persevere in the work of the Lord to the end. When Israel came out of Egypt, I suppose, they all intended to go forward, and to possess the land: but, when difficulties arose, the great body of them fainted, and were for going back. When an undertaking is new and plausible, many come forward to engage in it: but a time comes when the first flush of spirits subsides, when great and seemingly insurmountable difficulties present themselves, and when success appears to be much further off than at the beginning: this is the time for the trial of faith. A few such seasons will commonly thin the ranks of Christian professors; but blessed are they that endure temptation. Those who "followed the Lord fully" were brought into the land. It is possible that our motives may be pure at the onset, and yet, through the strength of temptation, we may be turned aside. The Lord speaks well of the church of Ephesus, as having, for a time, "borne, and had patience, and for his name's sake had labored, and not fainted:" yet it follows, "Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." This is an example for us to shun. Another follows, namely, the church at Thyatira, for our imitation: "I know thy works, and thy charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works, and the last to be more than the first."

6. We must exercise a *lively faith* in the power and promise of God. I reserve this remark to the last, because it contains the spirit of the passage, and is a matter of the highest importance. It was owing to unbelief that the body of the people drew back, and to faith that Joshua and Caleb were for pressing forward. Nor is there any thing of greater importance to the Christian ministry, especially to those engaged in extraordinary labors. He that endeavors to extend the limits of Christ's kingdom resembles a navigator who engages in a voyage of discovery: he is exposed to ills and dangers which cannot be foreseen nor provided against. Carrying a doctrine to which all his hearers have a natural and deep-rooted aversion, the difficulties he has to encounter are as islands of ice near the poles, or as rocks in unknown seas; but faith in the power and promise of God is sufficient for all his wants.

Confidence is agreeable to a generous character, while suspicion thrusts a sword into his heart. The former is honorable to him, affording him opportunity of carrying his kind intentions into execution: the latter dishonors him, and lays him under a sort of incapacity of doing good to the party. A generous character will feel impelled by a principle of honor to keep pace with the ex-

pectations of those who confide in his goodness and veracity. Nor is this confined to the concerns of men. There is something greatly resembling it in the dealings of God with us. The Lord has magnified his *word* more than all his name; and, as faith corresponds with the word, he has bestowed greater honor upon this grace than upon any other. Hence we find such language as the following:—"O how great is thy goodness which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men.—Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established: believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.—The Lord taketh pleasure in them that hope in his mercy." Under the New Testament still more is said of this important principle. In almost all the miracles of our Saviour, he made a point of answering to the faith of the parties, or of those that brought them; and, where this was wanting, he is represented as under a kind of incapacity to help them. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.—According to your faith be it unto you.—Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.—He could there do no mighty works—because of their unbelief." Nor was this principle honored merely in miraculous cases: our Saviour taught his disciples to cherish high expectations from the divine mercy and faithfulness in their ordinary approaches to a throne of grace. "Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye shall receive them, and ye shall have them."

In recommending a strong and lively faith, I do not mean to encourage that species of confidence which has no foundation in the divine promise. This is not faith but fancy, or the mere workings of the imagination. Those who, many ages since, engaged in what were called the *holy wars*, desirous of driving out the Turks from Jerusalem, were not wanting in confidence; but the promise of God was not the ground on which it rested. It was not faith, therefore, but presumption. It was not thus with Israel in going up against the Canaanites; nor is it thus with those who labor to extend the spiritual kingdom of Christ. The promise of God is here fully engaged. "He hath sworn by himself, the word is gone out of his mouth in righteousness, and shall not return." Many passages might be produced in proof that, before the end of time, the kingdom of the Messiah shall be universal. I shall select a few:—"The stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.—I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should

serve him—And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.—Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like a little leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the *whole* was leavened.—The seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." These are the true sayings of God. Surely they afford ground for a strong and lively faith in every effort to disseminate the gospel.

God has not only dealt largely in promises, but has given us abundance of examples of their fulfilment. A large part of Scripture prophecy has already been converted into history. "Unto us a child is actually born; unto us a son is given; the government is upon his shoulder; his name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." But the same authority which foretold this has added, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." There is also a peculiar pledge given for its fulfilment: "The zeal of the Lord of Hosts," it is declared, "shall perform this!" Zeal is a fervid affection of the mind, that prompts us to pursue an object with earnestness and perseverance, and to encounter every difficulty that may stand in the way of its accomplishment. From such a spirit, even in men, much is to be expected. Yet what is the zeal of creatures? Always feeble, often misguided, disproportionate, or declining. But conceive of it as possessing the heart of the omnipotent God. What an overwhelming thought! The establishment of Christ's kingdom deeply interests him: his thoughts are upon it; all his plans include it; and all that is going on in the world, from generation to generation, is made to subserve it. We draw some encouragement from the zeal of creatures in God's cause. When his servants take pleasure in the stones of Zion, and favor the dust thereof, we consider it a hopeful symptom that the Lord is about to arise and have mercy upon it. The importunity and liberality of Christians, the diligence of ministers, and the cries of the souls from under the altar for the fall of Babylon, may, severally, have their influence: but the zeal of the Lord of Hosts surpasses all. Here is solid rock for faith to rest upon.

Unbelievers may deride every attempt to turn sinners from the errors of their way; and even believers, while viewing things through sensible mediums, may discover insurmountable difficulties.—The people will



not believe us nor hearken to our voice: the prejudices of men are almost insuperable in our native country: and if we go abroad they are worse: these *casts*, this *voluptuousness*, this *savage ferocity*, this *treachery* of character. . . . How can we hope to overcome such obstacles as these?—But all this is only a repetition of the objections of the unbelieving Israelites: “The people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are great, and walled up to heaven: and moreover we saw the children of Auak there!” If we can believe. . . . “all things are possible to him that believeth.”

Past instances of mercy furnished the church with matter of prayer: “Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord! Awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old! Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?” And why should we not apply the past operations of grace to a similar purpose? That arm is not grown weary which subdued Jewish malignity in the days of Pentecost, and overturned Heathen idolatry by the doctrine of the cross.

I think I may add, there is reason to hope that the time when these things shall be accomplished cannot be far off. I have no desire to deal in uncertain conjectures. The prophecies were not designed to make us prophets, nor to gratify an idle curiosity. They contain enough, however, to strengthen our faith, and invigorate our zeal. If we carefully examine the Scriptures, though we may not be able to fix times with any certainty, yet we may obtain satisfaction that the day is not *very distant* when the kingdom of Christ shall be universal. The New-testament writers, in their times, made use of language which strongly indicates that time itself was far advanced. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh.—Behold the judge standeth at the door.—The end of all things is at hand.—He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly!” These, and such like passages, I should think, cannot mean less than that in those days they had passed the meridian of time, and entered, as it were, into the afternoon of the world. And now, after a lapse of eighteen hundred years, what else can be expected but that things are fast approaching to their final issue? But it is not merely on general grounds that the conclusion rests. The prophet Daniel, in his seventh chapter, describes the successive establishment and overthrow of four great governments, which should each in its day, rule the greater part of the world. He also speaks of the last of these governments as issuing in ten branches, and describes another, which he calls “a little horn,” as rising from among them. The dominion of this last government was to continue “until a time, times, and the dividing of time.” After this “the judgment should set, and

they should take away its dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end.” And then it immediately follows, “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.” There are many things in the prophecies which are hard to be understood: but this seems to be very clear. There can be no doubt of the four great governments being the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. Now these have successively appeared upon the stage, and are gone into perdition. The division of the Roman empire into a number of smaller governments, such as continue in Europe to this day, and, among them, exercise a dominion over the rest of the world equal to what was formerly exercised by the Romans, is doubtless signified by the “ten horns” of the fourth beast. Nor can we be at a loss to know what that government is which is signified by a “little horn,” which rose up from among the ten horns, which speaketh “great words against the Most High, and wearth out the saints of the Most High.” We have seen its rise, felt its reign, and in part rejoiced in its overthrow. The period alluded to, as the term of its existence, is manifestly the same as that which John, in the Revelation, calls “forty and two months, or one thousand two hundred and sixty days,” during which “the holy city should be trodden under foot, the witnesses prophecy in sack-cloth,” and the true church have her abode “in the wilderness,” in a manner resembling the state of things in Jerusalem, in the times of Antiochus. More than a thousand of these prophetic days or years, must have already elapsed. The period itself must be drawing towards a close: and, when this is closed, there is an end to every species of Satanic government. That which follows is given to the Son of Man, and to the people of the saints of the Most High. The amount is, We are under the last form of the reign of darkness, and that form is fast dissolving. Surely, the day of the church’s redemption draweth nigh!

And, while these views afford a joyful prospect to the church of Christ, there is nothing in them which can furnish any just ground of alarm to civil government. There is no reason to imagine that the church of Christ will ever become a political community, exercising dominion over others; but that Christian principles will pervade and rule the governments of the earth. However God may overrule the tumultuous revolutions of these times, to the making way for his kingdom, his kingdom itself will be entirely different: the wind, the earthquake, and the fire may go before it, but the thing itself will be as a still small voice. It will not come with *observation*, or outward show. The banners that will be displayed will not

## SERMON VIII.

be those of sedition and tumult, but of truth and peace. It will be a renovation in the hearts of men; a revolution in both rulers and subjects, from the slavery of sin to the love of both God and man: and this, as it must produce the establishment of peace and good order, cannot be an object of dread to any who are well disposed. It is not impossible that we may live to see things of which at present we have scarcely any conception: but, whether we do or not, Jesus lives and his kingdom must increase. And what if, while we are scaling the walls of the enemy, we should a few of us lose our lives? We must die in some way; and can we desire to die in a better cause? Probably many of the Israelites who went up to possess the land with Joshua perished in the attempt; yet this was no objection to a perseverance in the cause. In carrying the glad tidings of eternal life to Jews and Gentiles, Stephen and James, with many others, fell sacrifices at an early period: yet no one was discouraged on this account, but rather stimulated to follow their example.

I close with a few words by way of reflection. It becomes us to inquire, each one seriously for himself, whether the little success which we have already experienced may not be owing to this cause—There may be something about us on account of which God does not delight in us. I mean no reflection upon any; but let each one examine himself.—What is the secret spring of my zeal? Is the doctrine I preach truly evangelical? Let me not take this matter for granted; but examine whether it quadrates with the Scriptures. If half my time be taken up in beating off the rough edges of certain passages, to make them square with my principles, I am not in the gospel scheme. If one part of Scripture requires to be passed over, lest I should appear inconsistent, I am not sound in the faith, in God's account, but have imbibed some false system instead of the gospel; and, while this is the case, I have no reason to expect that he will delight in me, so as to make me a blessing.

Finally: Whether we possess the land or not, it *will be possessed*. Though some of the Israelites perished in the wilderness, that did not overturn the counsels of God: the next generation entered into his rest. And though there should be so much selfishness, false doctrine, unbelief, or inactivity, about us, as that God should take no delight in us, and refuse to give us the land, yet our children may possess it. God's word will be accomplished. Deliverance will arise to the church of God, whether we do ourselves the honor of serving it or not. But why do I thus speak? Surely it is the desire of many in this country, and of many in this assembly, to be active, and so to act as to be approved of God.

[To the Baptist Church at Cannon Street, Birmingham, at the ordination of Rev. Thomas Morgan to the Pastoral Office. June 23, 1802.]

## THE OBEDIENCE OF CHURCHES TO THEIR PASTORS EXPLAINED AND ENFORCED.

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give an account: that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.”—Heb. xiii. 17.

It is not usual, I believe, for ministers in their ordinary labors to dwell upon the obligations of the people of their charge towards them. They feel, probably, that on such a subject they might be suspected of partiality to themselves; and if such a suspicion were indulged, however just and proper their admonitions might be, they would be but of little use, and might operate to their disadvantage. Nor is it a subject that a humble and holy man would ordinarily choose, even though there were no danger of misconception: he had rather inspire in his people the love of Christ and of one another, hoping that, if this prevailed, it would constrain them to whatever was proper towards himself. It does not follow, however, that this species of Christian duty ought *never* to be insisted on: the glory of God, the success of the church, and the spiritual advantage of individuals will be found to be involved in it. No man could more strenuously renounce an undue assumption of power than the apostle Paul: in many instances, he forbore to insist upon the authority that Christ had given him; yet, when addressing the churches in the behalf of others, he uniformly insists upon the treatment which private members owe to their pastors, as well as upon other relative duties. To this I may add, if there be any one time in which an exhortation on this subject is peculiarly seasonable, it is when the relation between pastor and people is publicly solemnized. I shall, therefore, proceed to *explain* and *enforce* the exhortation which I have read to you.

I. Let us endeavor to ascertain WHEREIN CONSISTS THAT OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION WHICH IS REQUIRED OF A PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR PASTOR. The very terms *rule*, *obey*, and *submit*, may be grating in the ears of some; and true it is that there have been great abuses of these things: a great deal of priestly domination has been exercised in the name of Christ. Yet there must be *rule* in the church of Christ as well as in other societies. Without this, it would not be a body, growing up unto him in all things which is the head, even Christ; but a number of scattered bones. Or, if all aspired to rule and guidance, the question of the apostle would here be applicable—“If the whole were an eye, where were the



hearing? But now hath God set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." Christian ministers are called *overseers*, as having the oversight of the flock, and the principal direction of its concerns.

The church of Christ, however, is not subject to a despotic government. Ministers are forbidden to "lord it over God's heritage." The power that was given them, and all other officers, ordinary or extraordinary, was for edification, and not for destruction. There are three things which are necessary in order that the authority of a pastor be legitimate and unobjectionable: namely, that he be freely chosen by the church; that the standard by which he rules be not his own will, but the will of Christ; and that the things which he urges on others be equally binding on himself.

First: It is necessary that your pastor be *freely chosen by you* to his sacred office. If he had imposed upon you by any human authority, against or without your own consent, I should not be able to prove, from the Scriptures, that you were bound to *obey*, or *submit* to him. Should it be alleged that pastors are represented as the "gifts of God," and such as the "Holy Spirit hath made overseers;" I should answer, True; but the Holy Spirit performs this work, not immediately, but mediately, by inclining the hearts of his people to choose them. No one, indeed, pretends that it is done immediately. Human choice is, in all cases, concerned; and the only question is, whether it be by that of the people, or of some one, or more, that shall choose on their behalf. The primitive churches elected their own officers. The apostles ordained them; but it was by the suffrage of the people. The power of *election* was with them; and with them it continued during the purest ages of the church. If the primitive pastors had been chosen by the apostles, it had also been their province to have rejected or silenced them, as occasion should require; but, when false teachers arose among the Corinthians and the Galatians, we do not find these churches, not even the purest part of them, applying to the apostle, but the apostle to them, for their removal. The false teachers of the primitive times ingratiated themselves with the people, and despised the apostles: an incontestable proof this, to every one acquainted with human nature, where the powers of election and rejection lay. If your pastor, I say again, had been imposed upon you by any human authority, against or without your own consent, I should not be able to prove, from the Scriptures, that you were bound to obey, or submit to him. But it is not so. You have heard him and known him; and from an observation of his spirit and conduct, and an experience of the advantages of his ministry, you have chosen him to watch over you in the Lord.

Secondly: *The rule* to which you are required to yield obedience and subjection is *not his will, but the will of Christ*. Pastors are that to a church which the executive powers, or magistrates, of a free country are to the state—the organs of the law. Submission to them is submission to the law. If your pastor teach any other doctrine, or inculcate any other duties, than what Christ has left on record, obey him not; but, while urging these, it is at your peril to resist him; for, resisting him, you resist him that sent him. It is in this view, as teaching *divine* truth and enforcing *divine* commands, that the servants of God, in all ages, have been invested with *divine* authority. Of the sons of Levi, it was said, they shall teach Jacob "thy judgments;" and Israel "thy law;" and, upon this ground, it was added, "Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hand: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." Here lay the sin of Korah and his company, of Elymas the sorcerer, and of Alexander the coppersmith: they each, by resisting the servants of God in the proper execution of their work, resisted God, and brought upon themselves the sorest of judgments.

Thirdly: The things which he urges upon you are *equally binding upon himself*. When he exhibits to you the only name given under heaven, among men, by which you can be saved, and charges you, on pain of eternal damnation, not to neglect it, remember his own soul also is at stake. And, when he exhorts and warns you, if he himself should privately pursue a contrary course, he seals his own destruction.

There are, it is true, those who lade men with heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, to which they themselves will not put one of their fingers; these, however, are not the commands of Christ. Instead of being the commands of Christ, which are not grievous, except to unholy men, these are merely human traditions: but, though they were allowed to be otherwise, the inconsistent conduct of ministers would not exempt either them or you from obligation. Should we enforce the will of Christ upon you, while living in the neglect of it ourselves, woe be unto us! Yet this will fall upon our own heads. If we be wicked, depose us from our office; but, while we are in it, let not the word of the Lord be disregarded on our account.

Let me point out *a few particulars*, brethren, in which it is your duty and interest to *obey* him whom you have chosen to have the rule over you, and to submit yourselves.

1. With respect to *his public ministry*. Do not fly in the face of plain dealing from the pulpit. Good sense, as well as the fear of God, will, I trust, preserve your pastor from dealing in personal reflections, or any thing designed to offend; but do not be un-



willing that he should come close to cases and consciences. You may as well have no minister, as one that never makes you feel. I hope the house of God will continue to be to you what it has been—a rest in times of trouble, a house of consolation; but do not go with a desire merely to be comforted. Go, as well, to learn your failings and defects, and in hope of having them corrected. It is not the mere hearer, but the *doer* of the word, that is blessed in his work. I hope you will always exercise your judgments as to what you hear, and compare it with the oracles of God; but, if you attend preaching *merely as judges of its orthodoxy*, you will derive no advantage to yourselves, and may do much harm to others. It is the humble Christian, who hears that he may be instructed, corrected, and quickened in the ways of God, who will obtain that consolation which the gospel affords.

2. With respect to *his private visits*. You do not expect him to visit you in the character of a saunterer, but of a pastor; and, if so, it becomes you to be open to a free exchange of sentiments on your best interests. No minister is always alike prepared for profitable conversation, and some much less so than others; but, if he perceive in you a desire after it, it will be much more easily introduced. Be free to communicate your cases to him. It will assist him in his preaching more than a library of expositors; and if, while you are conversing with him, he should be directed to impart to you the mind of Christ, as suited to your particular case, do not treat it lightly, but submit yourselves to it.

3. In *presiding in your occasional assemblies*. When you meet together as a Christian church, for the adjustment of your concerns, he is entitled to your respect. Every society places so much authority in its president as shall be necessary to check disorderly individuals, and to preserve a proper decorum. It will doubtless become him, especially while he is a young man, to be gentle and temperate in the exercise of authority: and it will no less become you to submit to it. When churches enter into disputes with heat and bitterness—when all are speakers, and respect is paid to no one more than to another—they debase themselves below the character even of civilized societies.

4. In the *private reproofs* which he may have occasion to administer. You do not wish that your pastor should deal in personal reflections from the pulpit; yet there are cases in which reproof requires to be personal; he must, therefore, if he discharge his duty, be free and faithful in telling you of what he sees amiss in you. It has long appeared to me that there are some species of faults in individual members which are not proper objects of church censure, but of pas-

toral admonition; such as spiritual declensions, hesitating on important truths, neglect of religious duties, worldly anxiety, and the early approaches to any evil course. A faithful pastor, with an eye of watchful tenderness, will perceive the first symptoms of spiritual disorder, and, by a timely hint, will counteract its operations; whereas, if nothing be said or done till the case requires the censure of the church, the party may be excluded, but is seldom recovered. You may easily suppose this to be a self-denying work for your pastor; he had much rather visit you with a smile of affectionate congratulation: yet it may be of the first importance to you and to the church. Do not render this disagreeable part of his work more disagreeable by an irritable and resentful disposition; but receive reproofs with candor. "Correction may be grievous to him that forsaketh the way; but he that hateth reproof shall die."

II. Let us observe THE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS BY WHICH THIS OBEDIENCE AND SUBMISSION ARE ENFORCED. These you will perceive are partly taken from the regard you bear to yourselves—"they watch for your souls;" partly from your sympathy with them—"that they may do it with joy, and not with grief;" and even that part which seems to respect their comfort, ultimately concerns your own; for, if they discharge their work with grief, "that will be unprofitable for you." Give us your serious and candid attention, brethren, while we review these important motives.

1. Your pastor "watches for your souls." Your salvation, let me presume, will be his great concern; and, while pursuing this, you may well be expected to concur with him, and submit yourselves to him in the Lord. You would submit to a surgeon who was performing an operation to save your life; or to a counsellor who should offer you his advice for the security of your property; or to a commander who should lead you forth to save your country: but these are inferior objects, when compared with your soul. Observe the force of every term.

They "watch." The word literally signifies to *keep awake*. Here it denotes vigilance. Ministers are as watchmen on the walls or in the streets of a city, by whose care and fidelity the inhabitants enjoy security. Their work is to rise early, to sit up late, and to eat the bread of care; for so it is that God giveth his beloved sleep. Aware of your temptations and dangers, he must be continually on the watch that he may be ready to give the alarm. He may be thinking, and caring, and praying for you, when you think but little of him, and perhaps, in some instances, when you think but little of yourselves. Do not hinder him, but help him in his work.

They watch for you. Recollect that you are watched on all sides, but not in this manner. Satan watches you; but it is that he may seize his opportunity to destroy you. He watches you as a wolf does a sheep-fold; but your pastor, as a faithful shepherd, to protect and save you. The world also will watch you, and that with the eye of an enemy, waiting for your halting; but he with the tender solicitude of a father, to do you good. Do not oppose him in this his important work.

They watch for your *souls*. If your pastor were stationed to watch over your health, property, or life, and should discharge his trust with skill and fidelity, you would think him worthy of your esteem; but it is not for these things that he is principally concerned. He would doubtless be happy to do you good in any way; but neither of these employments is his peculiar province. You employ other persons to watch for you in such matters. Nothing less than your immortal interests must engage his attention. He watches for that compared with which kingdoms and empires are but trifles; for that which, if gained, all is gained; and which if lost, all is lost, and lost forever. Do not resist him in his work but concur with him.

They watch as those that must give account. How important a station! There is an account for every one to give of himself; but a pastor has not only to do this in common with his people, but must also give account of them. At his hands the chief Shepherd will require it. And what will be the account of your pastor? Will he be able to say, concerning you, "Here I am, and the children whom the Lord hath given me?" O that he might! But it is much to be feared that some of you who are this day committed to his charge will in that day be missing! And what account will he then have to give? Will he not have to say, Lord, some of them have neglected thy word; some have resisted it; some have reproached me for preaching it; some have deserted it and turned aside after lying vanities; some, who have continued, have not received the love of the truth, that they might be saved: hearing, they have heard, and not understood; seeing, they have seen, and not perceived; their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed? And what if, when interrogated, he should not be able to acquit himself? What if it should prove that he did not warn you, nor seek after you, nor care for you? Ah, then you will perish, and your blood will be required at his hand! Who, alas! who is sufficient for these things? At all events, for your own sake, and for his sake, do not hinder him in his work. Woe unto him if he preach not the gospel; and woe unto you if you oppose him in it! Do not object to his dealing faithfully, both in and out

of the pulpit, so that it be aimed for your good. Do not hinder him in the work of reproof, by siding with transgressors. In short, if you have any regard to your own souls, or the souls of others, obey the counsels of heaven, which are communicated to you through his ministry, and submit yourselves.

2. The discharge of this his work will be either *joy* or *grief*, according to the spirit of the people among whom he labors. You do not wish, I dare say, to grieve and distress a servant of Christ. Better would it be never to have chosen him, than to break his heart; yet such things are!

If, in his *public preaching*, he have a zealous, modest, attentive, wise, and affectionate people, constant and early in attending, candid and tender-hearted in hearing, and desirous of obtaining some spiritual advantage from all they hear, you cannot conceive what *joy* it will afford him. He will pray for you, and preach to you with abundantly the more interest. And, this being the case, it may contribute not a little to the success of his labors; for God works not only by the word preached, but by the effects of it in the spirit of believers. The apostle supposes that some, on whom the word itself had no influence, might yet be won by the chaste conversation of the godly females. But if he have a slothful, selfish, cold-hearted, cavilling, conceited, and contentious audience, what a source of *grief* must it be to him! The meekest of men was overcome by such a people, and tempted to wish that God would *kill him out of hand*, rather than continue to cause him thus to see his *wretchedness*.

If, in *adjusting the concerns of the church*, every individual consider that others have understanding as well as himself, and have the same right to be heard and regarded; if all strive to act in concert, and never oppose a measure from humor, but merely from conscience, or a persuasion that it is wrong; such things to a pastor must needs be a source of *joy*. But, if pride and self-will prevail, they will produce confusion and every evil work; and this, if he have any regard to religion or to you, will be the *grief* of his soul.

If the *deacons* whom you have chosen to be helpers in the truth be wise, faithful, active, and tender-hearted, ready to stand by their pastor in every right cause, willing to impart the counsel of maturer years, and careful to preserve the purity and peace of the church, his duties will be discharged with *joy*. But, if they mind earthly things, and leave all to him, or, though they should be active, yet if it be with the spirit of a Diotrophes, instead of diminishing his load, they will increase it, and render his work a daily *grief*.

If, in the *exercise of discipline*, there be a

unity of heart, a willingness to follow God's word, whoever may be affected by it—if, like the tribe of Levi, you in such matters "know not your father, nor your mother, nor acknowledge your brethren, nor know your own children; but observe God's word, and keep his covenant"—this, to an upright man, will be a source of *joy* and solid satisfaction. But if, whenever a censure requires to be inflicted, no unanimity can be obtained—if regard be had to friends and family connections, to the setting aside of Christ's revealed will—nothing will be done with effect. The zeal of a few will be attributed to prejudice; and the person concerned, instead of being convinced and humbled, will be hardened in his sin. Thus the work of the ministry will be a burden of *grief*.

Finally: If you be a spiritual, affectionate, and peaceable *people*, your pastor will perform his work with *joy*: but if you be carnal and contentious—if there be whisperings, swellings, tumults, party attachments, jealousies, antipathies, scandals—alas! he may sow, but it will be among thorns; he may preach, but it will be with a *heavy heart*.

3. You cannot cause the work of your pastor to be grievous but *at your own expense*: it will be "unprofitable for you." It is to no purpose that you have a pastor ordained over you in the Lord, unless his ministry be *profitable* to you. Everything, therefore, which promotes this end should be carefully cherished; and everything that hinders it, as carefully avoided. But profit under a ministry greatly depends, under God, upon *mutual attachment*. I do not mean to commend that fondness and partiality that would render you the devotees of a man, or incapacitate you for hearing any other preaching than his. They that cannot edify save under one minister give sufficient proof that they do not truly edify under him. But there is an attachment between a pastor and a people that is highly necessary; as, without it, attendance on public worship would, in a great measure, cease to be an enjoyment. This attachment, my brethren, should begin with you, and be cherished by a course of kind and faithful treatment; delicately meeting his wants, gradually inspiring his confidence, tenderly participating in his afflictions, and I may add, if occasion require it, affectionately suggesting to him his faults and defects. By these means, he will insensibly be attached to you, in return; and will prefer preaching at home to all his occasional labors in other places. By an acquaintance with your cases, his preaching will be seasonable and savory, proceeding from the fulness of his heart. Of such words it may well be said, *How good they are!* But I need not enlarge upon these things to you. Never, perhaps, were they more fully exemplified, than in the person of your late affectionate and beloved pastor. You

loved him for the truth's sake that dwelt in him; and he, on the other hand, was not only willing to impart unto you the gospel of God, but his own soul also, because ye were dear unto him. May the same spirit be cherished between you and your present pastor!

Love is the grand secret to make you all happy. Love, however, is a tender plant; a slight blast of unkindness will greatly injure it. If you grieve him through inadvertency, come to an early explanation. If unkindness be repeated, his attachment to you will be weakened, and then yours to him will be the same. This will be followed by various misunderstandings, slights, distances, and offences, the issue of which may be a rooted antipathy; and, when this enters, all profit under a ministry is at an end. If he could preach like an angel, all were in vain, so far as relates to your advantage.

From these remarks, you see and feel, my brethren, that, if your pastor performs his work with *grief*, it will be at your expense; or that every kind of treatment that wounds his spirit undermines your own welfare. Study, therefore, by all means, to render it his *joy*, which will turn to your account: study, by a constant discharge of kind offices, to endear yourselves and your families to him; by an inviting intimacy in spiritual things, to know and be known by him; and by a holy, humble, and uniform conduct in the world and in the church, to enable him to look the enemies of religion in the face, while he proclaims its holy efficacy.

The reward of a true pastor is in the people of his charge, in their sanctification and salvation. What else is his hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Do not withhold from the laborer his hire! You may be his hope, without being his joy: and his hope and joy for a season, without being his crown of rejoicing in the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming: but need I say that this will be unprofitable for you? If he have a full reward of his labor, you must be his hope, and joy, and crown. Brethren, consider what I have said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things.

## SERMON IX.

[Delivered at Kettering, in 1803, at a time of threatened invasion.]

### CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM; OR THE DUTY OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR COUNTRY.

"And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."—Jer. xxix. 7.

In the course of human events, cases may be expected to occur in which a serious mind



may be at a loss with respect to the path of duty. Presuming, my brethren, that such may be the situation of some of you, at this momentous crisis—a crisis in which your country, menaced by an unprincipled, powerful, and malignant foe, calls upon you to arm in its defence—I take the liberty of freely imparting to you my sentiments on the subject.

When a part of the Jewish people were carried captives to Babylon, ten years, or thereabouts, before the entire ruin of the city and temple, they must have felt much at a loss in determining upon what was duty. Though Jeconiah, their king, was carried captive with them, yet the government was still continued under Zedekiah; and there were not wanting prophets, such as they were, who encouraged in them the hopes of a speedy return. To settle their minds on this subject, Jeremiah, the prophet, addressed the following letter to them, in the name of the Lord:—"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon, Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished: and seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

I do not suppose that the case of these people corresponds exactly with ours; but the difference is of such a nature as to heighten our obligations. They were in a foreign land; a land where there was nothing to excite their attachment, but everything to provoke their dislike. They had enjoyed all the advantages of freedom and independence, but were now reduced to a state of slavery. Nor were they enslaved only: to injury was added insult. They that led them captive required of them mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" Revenge, in such circumstances, must have seemed natural; and if a foreign invader, like Cyrus had placed an army before their walls, it had been excusable, one would have thought, not only to have wished him success, but, if an opportunity had offered, to have joined an insurrection in aid of him: yet nothing like this is allowed. When Cyrus actually took this great city, it does not appear that the Jews did anything to assist him. Their duty was to seek the welfare of the city, and to pray to the Lord for it, leaving it to the great disposer of all events to deliver them in his own time; and this not merely as being right, but wise: "In their peace ye shall have peace."

Now, if such was the duty of men in their circumstances, can there be any doubt with respect to ours? Ought we not to seek the good of our native land; the land of our fathers' sepulchres; a land where we are protected by mild and wholesome laws, administered under a paternal prince; a land where civil and religious freedom are enjoyed in a higher degree than in any other country in Europe; a land, where God has been known for many centuries as a refuge; a land, in fine, where there are greater opportunities for propagating the gospel, both at home and abroad, than in any other nation under heaven? Need I add to this that the invader was to them a deliverer; but to us, beyond all doubt, would be a destroyer?

Our object, this evening, will be partly to inquire into the duty of religious people towards their country, and partly to consider the motive by which it is enforced.

I. INQUIRE INTO THE DUTY OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR COUNTRY.—Though, as Christians, we are not of the world, and ought not to be conformed to it; yet, being in it, we are under various obligations to those about us. As husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, &c., we cannot be insensible that others have a claim upon us, as well as we upon them; and it is the same as members of a community united under one civil government. If we were rulers, our country would have a serious claim upon us as rulers; and, as we are subjects, it has a serious claim upon us as subjects. The manner in which we discharge these relative duties contributes not a little to the formation of our character, both in the sight of God and man.

The directions given to the Jewish captives were comprised in two things; "seeking the peace of the city," and "praying to the Lord for it." These directions are very comprehensive; and apply to us, as we have seen, much more forcibly than they did to the people to whom they were immediately addressed. Let us inquire, more particularly, what is included in them.

*Seek the peace of the city.* The term here rendered *peace* (שָׁלוֹם) signifies not merely an exemption from wars and insurrections, but prosperity in general. It amounts, therefore, to saying, Seek the *good*, or *welfare*, of the city. Such, brethren, is the conduct required of us, as men and as Christians. We ought to be patriots, or lovers of our country.

To prevent mistakes, however, it is proper to observe that the patriotism required of us is not that love of our country which clashes with universal benevolence, or which seeks its prosperity at the expense of the general happiness of mankind. Such was the patriotism of Greece and Rome; and such is that of all others where Christian principle is not

allowed to direct it. Such, I am ashamed to say, is that with which some have advocated the cause of *negro slavery*. It is necessary, forsooth, to the wealth of this country! No: if my country cannot prosper but at the expense of justice, humanity, and the happiness of mankind, let it be unprosperous! But this is not the case. Righteousness will be found to exalt a nation, and so to be true wisdom. The prosperity which we are directed to seek in behalf of our country involves no ill to any one, except to those who shall attempt its overthrow. Let those who fear not God, nor regard man, engage in schemes of aggrandisement, and let sordid parasites pray for their success. Our concern is to cultivate that patriotism which harmonizes with good will to men. Oh my country, I will lament thy faults! Yet, with all thy faults, I will seek thy good; not only as a Briton, but as a Christian: "for my brethren and companions' sakes, I will say, Peace be within thee; because of the house of the Lord my God, I will seek thy good!"

If we seek the good of our country, we shall certainly do nothing, and join in nothing, that tends to disturb its peace, or hinder its welfare. Whoever engages in plots and conspiracies to overturn its constitution, we shall not. Whoever deals in inflammatory speeches, or in any manner sows the seeds of discontent and disaffection, we shall not. Whoever labors to depreciate its governors, supreme or subordinate, in a manner tending to bring government itself into contempt, we shall not. Even in cases wherein we may be compelled to disapprove of measures, we shall either be silent or express our disapprobation with respect and with regret. A dutiful son may see a fault in a father; but he will not take pleasure in exposing him. He that can employ his wit in degrading magistrates is not their friend, but their enemy; and he that is an enemy to magistrates is not far from being an enemy to magistracy, and, of course, to his country. A good man may be aggrieved; and, being so, may complain. Paul did so at Philippi. But the character of a *complainer* belongs only to those who *walk after their own lusts*.

If we seek the good of our country, we shall do every thing in our power to promote its welfare. We shall not think it sufficient that we do it no harm, or that we stand still as neutrals, in its difficulties. If, indeed, our spirits be tainted with disaffection, we shall be apt to think we do great things by standing aloof from conspiracies, and refraining from inflammatory speeches; but this is no more than may be accomplished by the greatest traitor in the land, merely as a matter of prudence. It becomes Christians to bear positive good will to their country, and to its government, considered as *government*, irrespective of the political party

which may have the ascendancy. We may have our preferences, and that without blame: but they ought never to prevent a cheerful obedience to the laws, a respectful demeanor towards those who frame, and those who execute them, or a ready co-operation in every measure which the being or well-being of the nation may require. The civil power, whatever political party is uppermost, while it maintains the great ends of government, ought, at all times, to be able to reckon upon religious people as its cordial friends: and, if such we be, we shall be willing, in times of difficulty, to sacrifice private interest to public good; shall contribute of our substance without murmuring; and, in cases of imminent danger, shall be willing to expose *even our lives* in its defence.

As the last of these particulars is a subject which deeply interests us at the present juncture, I shall be excused if I endeavor to establish the grounds on which I conceive its obligation to rest.

We know that the *father* of the *faithful*, who was only a sojourner in the land of Canaan when his kinsman Lot with his family were taken captives by a body of plunderers, armed his trained servants, pursued the victors, and bravely recovered the spoil. It was on this occasion that Melchizedek blessed him, saying, "Blessed be Abraham of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand!"

Perhaps it will be said, This was antecedent to the times of the New Testament: Jesus taught his disciples not to resist evil; and, when Peter drew his sword, he ordered him to put it up again; saying, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

You know, my brethren, I have always deprecated war, as one of the greatest calamities: but it does not follow, hence, that I must consider it *in all cases*, unlawful.

Christianity, I allow, is a religion of peace; and whenever it universally prevails, in the spirit and power of it, wars will be unknown. But so will every other species of injustice: yet, while the world is as it is, some kind of resistance to injustice is necessary, though it may at some future time become unnecessary. If our Saviour's command that we resist not evil be taken literally and universally, it must have been wrong for Paul to have remonstrated against the magistrates at Philippi; and he himself would not have reproved the person who smote him at the judgment-seat.

I allow that the sword is the last weapon to which we should have recourse. As *individuals*, it may be lawful, by this instrument, to defend ourselves or our families against the attacks of an assassin: but,



perhaps, this is the only case in which it is so; and even there, if it were possible to disarm and confine the party, it were much rather to be chosen than in that manner to take away his life. Christianity does not allow us, in any case, to retaliate from a principle of revenge. In ordinary injuries it teaches patience and forbearance. If an adversary "smite us on the one cheek," we had better "turn to him the other also," than go about to revenge our own wrongs. The laws of honor, as acted upon in high life, are certainly in direct opposition to the laws of Christ; and various retaliating maxims, ordinarily practised among men, will no doubt be found among the works of the flesh.

And if, *as nations*, we were to act on Christian principles, we should never engage in war but for our own defence; nor for that, till every method of avoiding it had been tried in vain.

Once more: It is allowed that Christians, *as such*, are not permitted to have recourse to the sword, for the purpose of defending themselves against persecution for the gospel's sake. No weapon is admissible in this warfare, but *truth*, whatever be the consequence. We may remonstrate, as Paul did at Philippi, and our Lord himself, when unjustly smitten; but it appears to me that this is all. When Peter drew his sword, it was with a desire to rescue his master from the persecuting hands of his enemies, in the same spirit as when he opposed his going up to Jerusalem; in both which instances he was in the wrong: and the saying of our Saviour, that "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword," has commonly been verified, in this sense of it.

I believe it will be found that, when Christians have resorted to the sword in order to resist persecution for the gospel's sake, as did the Albigenses, the Bohemians, the French Protestants, and some others, within the last six hundred years, the issue has commonly been, that they have *perished* by it; that is, they have been overcome by their enemies, and exterminated: whereas, in cases where their only weapons have been "the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony, loving not their lives unto death," they have overcome. Like Israel in Egypt, the more they have been afflicted, the more they have increased.

But none of these things prove it unlawful to take up arms *as members of civil society, when called upon to do so for the defence of our country*. The ground on which our Saviour refused to let his servants *fight* for him, that he should not be delivered into the hands of the Jews, was, that his was a kingdom "not of this world;" plainly intimating that, if his kingdom had been of this world, a contrary line of conduct had been proper. Now, this is what every other kingdom is:

it is right, therefore, according to our Lord's reasoning, that the subjects of all civil states should, *as such*, when required, fight in defence of them.

Has not Christianity, I ask, in the most decided manner recognized civil government, by requiring Christians to be subject to it? Has it not expressly authorized the legal use of the sword? Christians are warned that the magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain;" and that he is "the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." But if it be right for the magistrate to bear the sword, and to use it upon evil-doers within the realm, it cannot be wrong to use it in repelling invaders from without: and, if it be right on the part of the magistrate, it is right that the subject should assist him in it; for, otherwise, his power would be merely nominal, and he would indeed "bear the sword in vain."

We have not been used, in things of a civil and moral nature, to consider one law as made for the religious part of a nation and another for the irreligious. Whatever is the duty of one, allowing for different talents and situations in life, is the duty of all. If, therefore, it be not binding upon the former to unite in every necessary measure for the support of civil government, neither is it upon the latter: and, if it be binding upon neither, it must follow that civil government itself ought not to be supported, and that the whole world should be left to become a prey to anarchy or despotism.

Farther: If the use of arms were, of itself, and in all cases, inconsistent with Christianity, *it were a sin to be a soldier*: but nothing like this is held out to us in the New Testament. On the contrary, we there read of two believing *centurions*; and neither of them was reproved on account of his office, or required to relinquish it. We also read of publicans and *soldiers* who came to John to be baptized, each asking, "What shall we do?" The answer to both proceeds on the same principle: they are warned against the *abuses* of their respective employments; but the employments themselves are tacitly allowed to be lawful. To the one he said, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you:" to the other, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." If either of these occupations had been in itself sinful, or inconsistent with that kingdom which it was John's grand object to announce, and into the faith of which his disciples were baptized, he ought, on this occasion, to have said so, or, at least, not to have said that which implies the contrary.

If it be objected that the sinfulness of war would not lie so much at the door of the centurions and soldiers as of the government by whose authority it was proclaimed and



executed, I allow there is considerable force in this: but yet, if the thing itself were necessarily, and in all cases, sinful, every party voluntarily concerned in it must have been a partaker of the guilt, though it were in different degrees.

But granting, it may be said, that war is not, in itself, necessarily sinful; yet it becomes so by the injustice with which it is commonly undertaken and conducted. It is no part of my design to become the apologist of injustice, on whatever scale it may be practised. But, if wars be allowed to be generally undertaken and conducted without a regard to justice, it does not follow that they are *always* so; and still less that war itself is sinful. In ascertaining the justice or injustice of war, we have nothing to do with the *motives* of those who engage in it. The question is, Whether it be *in itself* unjust? If it appeared so to me, I should think it my duty to stand aloof from it as far as possible.

There is one thing, however, that requires to be noticed. Before we condemn any measure as unjust, we ought to be in possession of the means of forming a just judgment concerning it.

If a difference arise only between two families, or two individuals, though every person in the neighborhood may be talking and giving his opinion upon it; yet it is easy to perceive that no one of them is competent to pronounce upon the justice or injustice of either side, till he has acquainted himself with all the circumstances of the case, by patiently hearing it on both sides. How much less, then, are we able to judge of the differences of nations, which are generally not a little complex, both in their origin and bearings; and of which we know but little, but through the channel of newspapers and vague reports! It is disgusting to hear people, whom no one would think of employing to decide upon a common difference between two neighbors, take upon them to pronounce, with the utmost freedom, upon the justice or injustice of national differences. Where those who are constitutionally appointed to judge in such matters have decided in favor of war, however painful it may be to my feelings, as a friend of mankind, I consider it my duty to submit, and to think well of their decision, till, by a careful and impartial examination of the grounds of the contest, I am compelled to think otherwise.

After all, there may be cases in which injustice may wear so prominent a feature that every thinking and impartial mind shall be capable of perceiving it; and, where it does so, the public sense of it will and ought to be expressed. In the *present instance*, however, there seems to be no ground of hesitation. In arming to resist a threatened invasion, we merely act on the defensive; and

not to resist an enemy, whose ambition, under the pretence of *liberating mankind*, has carried desolation wherever he has gone, were to prove ourselves unworthy of the blessings we enjoy. Without taking upon me to decide on the original grounds of the difference, the question at issue with us is, *Is it right that any one nation should seek absolutely to ruin another, and that other not be warranted, and even obliged, to resist it?* That such is the object of the enemy, at this time, cannot be reasonably doubted. If my country were engaged in an attempt to ruin France, as a nation, it would be a wicked undertaking; and, if I were fully convinced of it, I should both hope and pray that they might be disappointed. Surely, then, I may be equally interested in behalf of my native land!

But there is *another* duty which we owe to our country; which is, That we *pray to the Lord for it*. It is supposed that religious people are a praying people. The godly Israelites, when carried into Babylon, were banished from temple-worship; but they still had access to their God. The devotional practice of Daniel was well known among the great men of that city, and proved the occasion of a conspiracy against his life. King Darius knew so much of the character of the Jews as to request an interest in their prayers, in behalf of himself and his sons. My brethren, your country claims an interest in yours; and I trust that, if no such claim were preferred, you would, of your own accord, remember it.

You are aware that *all our dependence, as a nation, is upon God*; and, therefore, should importune his assistance. After all the struggles for power, you know that in his sight all the inhabitants of the world are reputed as nothing: he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Indeed this has been acknowledged, and at times sensibly felt, by irreligious characters; but, in general, the great body of a nation, it is to be feared, think but little about it. Their dependence is upon an arm of flesh. It may be said, without uncharitableness, of many of our commanders, both by sea and land, as was said of Cyrus, *God hath girded them, though they have not known him*. But by how much you perceive a want of prayer and dependence on God in your countrymen, by so much more should you be concerned, as much as in you lies, to supply the defect. "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

You are also aware, in some measure, of the *load of guilt that lies upon your country*; and should therefore supplicate mercy on its behalf. I acknowledge myself to have much greater fear from this quarter than from the boasting menaces of a vain man.

If our iniquities provoke not the Lord to deliver us into his hand, his schemes and devices will come to nothing. When I think, among other things, of the detestable traffic before alluded to, in which we have taken so conspicuous a part, and have shed so much innocent blood, I tremble! When we have fasted and prayed, I have seemed to hear the voice of God, saying unto us, "Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke!" Yet, peradventure, for his own name's sake, or from a regard to his own cause, which is here singularly protected, the Lord may hearken to our prayers, and save us from deserved ruin. We know that Sodom itself would have been spared if *ten* righteous men could have been found in her. I proceed to consider

II. THE MOTIVE BY WHICH THESE DUTIES ARE ENFORCED: "In the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

The Lord hath so wisely and mercifully interwoven the interests of mankind as to furnish motives to innumerable acts of justice and kindness. We cannot injure others, nor even refrain from doing them good, without injuring ourselves.

The interests of individuals and families are closely connected with those of a country. If the latter prosper, generally speaking, so do the former; and, if the one be ruined, so must the other. It is impossible to describe, or to conceive beforehand, with any degree of accuracy, the miseries which the success of a foreign enemy, such as we have to deal with, must occasion to private families. To say nothing of the loss of property among the higher and middle classes of people (which must be severely felt, as plunder will, undoubtedly, be the grand stimulus of an invading army,) who can calculate the loss of lives? Who can contemplate, without horror, the indecent excesses of a victorious, unprincipled, and brutal soldiery? Let not the poorest man say, I have nothing to lose. Yes, if men of opulence lose their property, you will lose your employment. You have also a cottage, and perhaps a wife and family, with whom, amidst all your hardships, you live in love: and would it be nothing to you to see your wife and daughters abused, and you yourself unable to protect them, or even to remonstrate, but at the hazard of being thrust through with the bayonet? If no other considerations will induce us to protect our country, and pray to the Lord for it, our own individual and domestic comfort might suffice.

To this may be added, our interests as *Christians*, no less than as men and as families, are interwoven with the well-being of our country. If *Christians*, while they are in the world, are, as has been already noticed, under various relative obligations, it is

not without their receiving, in return, various relative advantages. What those advantages are we should know to our grief, were we once to lose them. So long have we enjoyed religious liberty, in this country, that I fear we are become too insensible of its value. At present we worship God without interruption. What we might be permitted to do under a government which manifestly hates Christianity, and tolerates it even at home only as a matter of policy, we know not. This, however, is well known, that a large proportion of those unprincipled men, in our own country, who have been laboring to overturn its constitution, have a deep-rooted enmity to the religion of Jesus. May the Lord preserve us, and every part of the united kingdom, from their machinations!

Some among us, to whatever extremities we may be reduced, will be incapable of bearing arms; but they may assist by their property, and in various other ways: even the hands of the aged poor, like those of Moses, may be lifted up in *prayer*; while their countrymen, and it may be their own children, are occupying the post of danger. I know it is the intention of several whom I now address freely to offer their services at this important period. Should you, dear young people, be called forth in the arduous contest, you will expect an interest in our prayers. Yes, and you will have it. Every one of us, every parent, wife, or Christian friend, if they can pray for any thing, will importune the Lord of Hosts to cover your heads in the day of battle!

Finally: It affords satisfaction to my mind to be persuaded that you will avail yourselves of the liberty granted to you of *declining to learn your exercise on the Lord's day*. Were you called to resist the *landing of the enemy* on that day, or any other work of *necessity*, you would not object to it; but, in other cases, I trust, you will. "*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.*"

## SERMON X.

[Delivered in the Jews' Chapel, Church Street, Spitalfields, Nov. 19, 1809.]

### JESUS THE TRUE MESSIAH.

"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.—Psa. xl. 6—8.

THOUGH I have preached the gospel between thirty and forty years, yet I do not recollect to have ever entered a pulpit with such feelings as at present. In respect of the *subject*, I feel it an honor to plead the

cause of my Lord and Saviour; but I am not without apprehensions lest it should suffer through my manner of pleading it. I must therefore entreat that, if any thing which may be delivered should be found to be improper, you would impute it, not to the cause, but the imperfection of the advocate. I have also some peculiar feelings on account of the *audience*, part of which, I am given to understand, are of the house of Israel. I cannot help recalling to mind the debt we owe to that distinguished people. They have been treated with both cruelty and contempt by men professing Christianity; but surely not by Christians! To them, under God, we are indebted for a Bible, for a Saviour, and for all that we know of the one living and true God. Who, then, will not join me in the language of the apostle—"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved?"

The passage on which I shall found what I have to offer is in the 40th Psalm, the 6th, 7th, and 8th verses:—

"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

No Christian can doubt whether the passage relates to the Messiah, seeing it is expressly applied to him in the New Testament; and, if a Jew should raise an objection, he will find it difficult, if not impossible, to give a fair exposition of it on any other principle. Who else, with propriety, could use the language here used? Certainly David could not. Whether the Messiah, therefore, be already come, as we believe, or be yet to come, as the body of the Jewish nation believes, it must be of his coming that the prophet speaks. The question at issue between them and us is, not whether the Scriptures predict and characterize the Messiah, but whether these predictions and characters be fulfilled in Jesus.

That we may be able to judge of this question, let it be observed, that there are three characters held up in the passage I have read, as distinguishing the Messiah's coming: viz. That the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Mosaic law would thence be superseded; that the great body of Scripture prophecy would be accomplished; and that the will of God would be perfectly fulfilled.

Let us calmly and candidly try the question at issue by these characters.

1. It is intimated that, whenever the Messiah should come, THE SACRIFICES AND CEREMONIES OF THE MOSAIC LAW WERE TO BE SUPERSEDED BY HIM. "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire:—then said I, Lo, I come." I am aware that modern

Jewish writers contend for the perpetuity of the ceremonial as well as of the moral law; but in this they are opposed both by Scripture and by fact.

As to *Scripture*, it is not confined to the passage I have read, nor to a few others: it is common for the sacred writers of the Old Testament to speak of sacrifices and ceremonies in a depreciating strain, such as would not, I presume, have been used had they been regarded for their own sake, or designed to continue always. Such is the language of the following passages: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.—Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings: they have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds; for every beast of the field is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, and drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.—Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.—To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, nor of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?—Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, ye heap up your burnt-offerings with your sacrifices, and eat the flesh. But, when I brought your fathers out of Egypt, I spake not unto them of burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but this I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.—And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

Such, O! ye children of Israel, is the language of your own Scriptures. The covenant that was made with your fathers at Mount Sinai was never designed to be perpetual, but to be abolished at the coming of Messiah, as is manifest from the words of the prophet: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a *new* covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that



I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt (which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord;) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquities, and will remember their sins no more."

From this passage, a New-testament writer argues (and do you answer it if you can,) "In that he saith a *new* covenant, he hath made the first *old*. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." And, respecting their sins and iniquities being "remembered no more," Where remission of these is, "*there is no more offering for sin.*"

Is it not then in perfect harmony with the tenor of your Scriptures that Messiah, when described as coming into the world, should say, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire: mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required: then said I, Lo, I come:" plainly intimating that he would come to accomplish that which could not be accomplished by sacrifice and offerings; and that as these were but the scaffolding of his temple, when that should be reared, these should of course be taken down.

But I have asserted that, in maintaining the perpetuity of the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, your writers are not only opposed by Scripture, but by *fact*. Whether Messiah the prince be come or not, sacrifice and oblation have ceased. We believe they *virtually* ceased when Jesus offered himself a sacrifice, and in a few years after they *actually* ceased. Those of your nation who believed in Jesus, voluntarily, though gradually, ceased to offer them; and those who did not believe in him were compelled to desist, by the destruction of their city and temple. You may adhere to a few of your ancient ceremonies; but it can only be like gathering round the ashes of the system: the substance of it is consumed. "The sacrifices of the holy temple," as one of your writers acknowledges, "have ceased."

The amount is, Whether Jesus be the Messiah, or not, his appearance in the world had this character pertaining to it, that it was the period in which the sacrifice and the oblation actually ceased. And it is worthy of your serious inquiry whether these things *can* be accomplished in any other than Jesus. Should Messiah the prince

come at some future period, as your nation expects, how are the sacrifice and the oblation to cease on his appearance, when they have already ceased nearly eighteen hundred years? If therefore he be not come, he can never come so as to answer this part of the Scripture account of him.

II. It is suggested that, whenever Messiah should come, THE GREAT BODY OF SCRIPTURE PROPHECY SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN HIM: "In the volume of the book it is written of me." That the prophetic writings abound in the predictions of the Messiah, no Jew will deny: the only question is, Are they fulfilled in Jesus? You know (I speak to them who read the Bible) that "the seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent." You know that God promised Abraham, saying, In *thy seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. You know that Jacob, when blessing the tribe of Judah, predicted the coming of *Shiloh*, unto whom the gathering of the people should be. You know that Moses spoke of a *prophet* whom the Lord your God should raise up from the midst of you, like unto him, to whom you were to hearken, on pain of incurring the divine displeasure. You know that the Messiah is prophetically described in the Psalms, and the prophets, under a great variety of forms; particularly as the *anointed* of the Lord—the King—the Lord of David, to whom Jehovah spoke—the "child born," whose name should be called "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace"—the "rod out of the stem of Jesse"—"God's servant, whom he upholds; his *elect*, in whom his soul delighteth"—"him whom *man despiseth*, and whom the nation abhorreth"—"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"—"the Lord our righteousness"—"Messiah the prince"—"the branch"—"the messenger of the covenant," &c. Thus it was that in the volume of the book it was written of him. Whoever proves to be the Messiah, your fathers rejoiced in the faith of him.

In trying the question, whether the prophecies be fulfilled in Jesus, it will be necessary, for the sake of perspicuity, to class them under different heads, such as time, place, family, &c.

1. The *time* when Messiah should come is clearly marked out in prophecy. It was said by Jacob, when blessing the tribes, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, *until Shiloh come*; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." All this was true in respect of Jesus. Till he came, though the ten tribes were scattered, Judah continued a people, and retained the government; but, soon after his death, they were dispersed among the nations, and have been so ever since. "Kings and princes," says one of your own writers, "we have none." If

therefore, Shiloh be not come, he can never come within the limits of time marked out by this prophecy.

Again: It is clearly intimated, in the prophecy of Haggai, for the encouragement of the builders of the second temple, that the Messiah should come *during the standing of that temple*, and that the honor that should be done it by his presence would more than balance its inferiority, in other respects, to the first. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations; and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts." All this was literally fulfilled in Jesus. But soon after his death the second temple was reduced to ashes: if, therefore, Jesus was not the Messiah, it is impossible that this prophecy should ever be accomplished.

Again: The prophet Daniel was informed by the angel Gabriel as follows: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks: and threescore and two weeks, the street shall be built again, and the wall even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst (or half part) of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

That there should be some difficulty in fixing the dates and other minute particulars, in this prophecy, is no more than may be said of many others, which yet, upon the whole, are clear and decisive. The prediction of the seventy years' captivity was not understood by Daniel till he had studied the subject with attention: and, though he made out the number of years, and concluded that they were *about* fulfilled, yet he does not appear to have discovered the exact time of their being so. Nevertheless, the prophecy of seventy years was undoubtedly

fulfilled in the Babylonish captivity; and this of seventy weeks of years is as certainly fulfilled in the appearance and death of Jesus. Whether or not Christian writers agree as to the exact time when these seventy sabbatical weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, began, thus much is certain, that they must have been fulfilled *about* the time that Jesus appeared and suffered, or they never can be fulfilled. Such was the effect of this and other prophecies upon the minds of the Jewish nation that about that time there was a general expectation of the Messiah's appearance. Hence, though your fathers rejected Jesus, yet they soon after believed in *Barchocab*, and crowned him as their Messiah; which involved them in a war with the Romans, wherein they are said to have had a thousand cities and fortresses destroyed, and to have lost more than *five hundred and eighty thousand men!* The predicted events which were to be accomplished at the close of these weeks, namely, "finishing transgression, making an end of sins, making reconciliation for iniquity, bringing in everlasting righteousness, sealing up the vision and prophecy, and anointing the Most Holy," are in perfect harmony with the New-testament history of Jesus; and, though unbelief may blind the minds of your nation to some of them, yet the sealing up of the vision and prophecy is a matter so notorious that one would think it were impossible to deny it. Jesus foretold the destruction of your city and temple by the Romans; and his apostles foretold things relating to the Christian church; but from that time your nation has been, not only "without a king, without a prince, and without a sacrifice," but *without a prophet.*

Moreover, it is predicted by Daniel that, shortly after the Messiah should be cut off, the people of the prince that should come would destroy the city and the sanctuary, and that the end thereof should be desolation. And is it not fact, that, about forty years after the death of Jesus, both your city and sanctuary were destroyed by the Romans; and that such a flood of desolation and misery attended it as was unexampled in your history, or that of any other nation?

Taking the whole together, it behoves you to consider whether, if this prophecy be not fulfilled in Jesus, it can ever be fulfilled; and whether it be possible to ascertain the fulfilment of any prophecy.

2. The *place* where Messiah should be born, and where he should principally impart his doctrine, is determined. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Speaking of Galilee of the nations, in connection with the



birth of the child whose name should be called "the mighty God," it is said, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." These prophecies were literally and manifestly fulfilled in Jesus; and it is scarcely credible that they can be fulfilled in any other.

3. The *house or family*, from whom Messiah should descend, is clearly ascertained. So much is said of his descending from David that I need not refer to particular proofs; and the rather as no Jew will deny it. The genealogies of Matthew and Luke, whatever varieties there are between them, agree in tracing his pedigree to David. And though in both it is traced in the name of Joseph, yet this appears to be only in conformity to the Jewish custom of tracing no pedigree in the name of a female. The father of Joseph, as mentioned by Luke, seems to have been his father by marriage only; so that it was, in reality, Mary's pedigree that is traced by Luke, though under her husband's name; and this being the *natural* line of descent, and that of Matthew the *legal* one, by which as a king he would have inherited the crown, there is no inconsistency between them.

But, whatever supposed difficulties may at this distance of time attend the genealogies, it is remarkable that no objection appears to have been made to them in the early ages of Christianity; when had they been incorrect, they might easily have been disproved by the public registries which were then in being. Could the Jews in the time of Jesus have disproved his being of the seed of David, his Messiahship would at once have fallen to the ground; and for this they could not be wanting in inclination. Had there, moreover, been any doubt on the subject, the emperor Domitian, in searching after those who were of the seed of David, would not have ordered the relations of Jesus before him, who, when interrogated, did not deny but that they were descended from him.\*

Finally: If the genealogy of Jesus be called in question by the modern Jews, how are they to prove the Messiah, whenever he shall come, to have descended from David; since, if I am not mistaken, they have now no certain genealogies left among them?

4. The *kind of miracles* that Messiah should perform is specified. Isaiah, speaking of the coming of God to save his people, says, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert." That such mira-

cles were performed by Jesus, his enemies themselves bore witness, in that they ascribed them to his connection with Beelzebub. When his Messiahship was questioned, he could say in the presence of many witnesses, "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." The miracles of Jesus were distinguished by their benevolence. They were all works of mercy, as well as of power; and this accorded with the character given of the Messiah in the seventy-second Psalm, that he "should deliver the needy when he cried; the poor also, and him that had no helper." Hence, the blind cried out, "Son of David, have MERCY on us."

5. It was predicted of the Messiah that he should, as a king, be distinguished by his *LOWLINESS*, entering into Jerusalem, not in a chariot of state, but upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass." To fulfil this prophecy, it was necessary that the Messiah should descend from parents in low circumstances, and that the leading people of the land should not accompany him. Had they believed in him, and introduced him as a king, it must have been in another fashion. But it was reserved for the common people and the children to fulfil the prophet's words, by shouting, "Hosanna, to the Son of David; blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

6. It is predicted of the Messiah that he should suffer and die by the hands of wicked men. "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom *man despiseth*, to him whom *the nation abhorreth*.—As many were astonished at thee (his face was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men,) so shall he sprinkle many nations.—He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.—The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a Lamb to the slaughter; and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison, and from judgment, and who shall declare his generation?"

\* Euseb. Hist. b. 3. ch. 20.



for he was *cut off out of the land of the living*; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. It pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.—The Messiah shall be cut off; but not for himself.\*

The attempts that have been made to explain away these prophecies, especially the fifty-third of Isaiah, and to make it apply to Israel as a nation, are marks of a desperate cause.\*

Is it not marvellous that the enemies of Jesus should so exactly fulfil the Scriptures in reproaching and crucifying him; using the very speeches, and inflicting the very cruelties, which it was foretold they would? "He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.—They parted my garments, and for my vesture they did cast lots—They gave me gall to eat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink—They pierced my hands and my feet." These things were not true of the writers: but they were true of Jesus: in him, therefore, they were fulfilled.

7. It was foretold that the Messiah, after being cut off out of the land of the living and laid in the grave, *should rise from the dead*. Nothing less can be implied by all the promises made to him as the reward of his sufferings: for, if he had continued under the power of death, how should he have seen his seed, or prolonged his days? If his kingdom had been that of a mortal man, how could it continue as long as the sun and moon? How was he to see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, unless he survived that travail? But, more than this, it is foretold that he should rise from the dead at so early a period as not to "see corruption." The argument of Peter from this passage has never been answered. David said, "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption:" but David did see corruption; he refers to him, therefore, of whom it is witnessed that he saw no corruption.

Lastly: It was foretold that *the great body of the Jewish nation would not believe in him; and that he would set up his kingdom among the Gentiles*. Such is evidently the meaning of the prophets complaint, "Who hath believed our report?" and of the Messiah's words, in another part of the same prophe-

\* If, as Mr. D. Levi would have it, the sufferer be Israel personified, and this nation, on account of its injuries, may be said to have borne the iniquities of the whole world, how comes it to be said—"for the transgressions of MY PEOPLE was he stricken?" Does the character of *my people* belong to the world, as distinguished from Israel? or is the sufferer and the people for whom he suffered the same?

cies—"Then I said, I have labored in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth."

Your writers complain of ours for interpreting the promises to Israel *spiritually*, and the threatenings *literally*; and tell us that they are not greatly obliged to us for it. But this is misrepresentation. Our writers neither interpret *all* the promises to Israel *spiritually*, nor *all* the threatenings *literally*. They expect your return, and that at no very distant period, to your own land; for, besides many Old-testament prophecies to this effect, he that said concerning the inhabitants of Judea and Jerusalem, "They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles"—added, "*until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.*" And, in regard of the *threatenings*, the heaviest of them all is that which is expressed by Isaiah (ch. vi. 9—12), "Go, tell this people, hear ye, indeed, but understand not; and see ye, indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. Then, said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate."

This awful judgment was indeed to issue in *temporal* calamities; but the judgment itself is *spiritual*; a judgment, the nature of which prevents your feeling it, but which is a greater evil than all your other punishments put together.

Such are some of the evidences from which we conclude that Jesus is the true Messiah. Time, place, family, miracles, character, sufferings, resurrection, and rejection by his own countrymen—all are fulfilled in him. Never was such a body of prophecy given and accomplished in any other case. If you still shut your eyes upon the light, you must abide the consequence: for our parts, we feel the ground upon which we stand, when we say, "We know that the Son of God is come."

III. It is declared that, when the Messiah should come, **THE WILL OF GOD WOULD BE PERFECTLY FULFILLED BY HIM**—"I delight

to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Agreeably to this, the Messiah is denominated *God's servant, whom he would uphold—in whom he would be glorified—and who should bring Jacob again to him.*

The will of God sometimes denotes what he approves and sometimes what he appoints. The former is the rule of our conduct, the latter of his own; and both we affirm to have been fulfilled by Jesus.

In respect of the divine *precepts*, his whole life was in perfect conformity to them. All his actions were governed by love. Your fathers were challenged to convince him of sin; and you are challenged to do the same. Yet your nation reckons him an impostor! Was there ever *such* an impostor? Nay, was there ever such a character seen among men? Should the account given of him by the evangelists be objected to, we might answer from ROUSSEAU,—“The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality, contained in the Gospels, the marks of whose truth are so striking and invincible that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.”\*

When a sinful creature is said to have the law of God in his heart, it is said to be *written* there, or *put* in him by the Spirit of God; but of the Messiah it is said to be within him. His heart never existed without the impression, and therefore needed not to have it *put* in him. Such was Jesus, and such the spirit that he manifested throughout his life. Let the character, besides him, be named, who dares to rest the truth of his pretensions on his being found to be “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.”

But it was not merely to fulfil the divine precepts that the Messiah was to come, but to execute his *purpose* in saving lost sinners. Even his obedience to the law was subservient to this, or he could not have been “The Lord our righteousness.” He was God’s servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, to give light to the Gentiles, and to be his salvation to the ends of the earth. In accomplishing this, it behoved him to endure the penalty, as well as obey the precepts, of the law. His soul must be “made an offering for sin;” he must be “cut off out of the land of the living—cut off, but not for himself;” and this that he might make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness.

Such was the doctrine of the ancient Israelites, and such is that of the New Testament. If it be true, let me entreat you to consider the consequences. While you hold fast the traditions of later ages, you have renounced the religion and the God of your *ancient* fa-

thers; and, in doing this, have rejected the only way of salvation. If the things which I have attempted to establish be true, your fathers crucified the Lord of glory; and you, by approving the deed, make it your own. Moreover, if they be true, Jesus Christ will one day come in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see him; and they also who pierced him shall wail because of him! Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds.

We doubt not but the time will come when your nation shall look on him whom their fathers pierced, and shall mourn as one that mourneth for an only son; but, if it be not so with you, it is the more affecting. To see at the last judgment, not only Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, but millions of your own unborn posterity, sitting down in the kingdom of God, and ye yourselves cast out, is inexpressibly affecting!

I have lately looked into some of the modern Jewish writings. It would be going beyond my limits to attempt an answer to many of their objections to the gospel; but I will touch upon a few, which struck me in the course of reading.

They find many things spoken in prophecy of the reign of the Messiah, which are not as yet fulfilled in Jesus; such as the cessation of wars, the restoration of the Jewish nation, &c. &c., and argue hence that Jesus is not the Messiah. But it is not said that these effects should *immediately* follow on his appearing. On the contrary, there was to be an *increase* of his government; yea, a *continued* increase. Jesus may be the Messiah, and his reign may be begun; while yet, seeing it is not ended, there may be many things at present unfulfilled. The kingdom of the Messiah was to continue as long as the sun and moon. It was to be *set up* during the reign of the fourth monarchy; but was itself to survive it, and to stand forever.

But they object that the doctrine taught by Jesus was *not of a pacific tendency*—that, on the contrary, it was, by his own confession, adapted to produce division and discord—“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth, but a sword: for I am come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” These words, however (as a child in just reasoning would perceive,) do not express what the gospel is in its own nature; but what it would *occasion*, through the hatred of its enemies. They describe not the bitterness of believers against unbelievers, but of unbelievers against believers, for the gospel’s sake. The good works of Abel excited the hatred of Cain; but ought Abel to be reproached on this account? The message of peace sent by Heczekiah to the rem-

\* Works, Vol. V. pp. 215—218.

nant of the ten tribes, inviting them to come up to the passover at Jerusalem, occasioned the same bitter contempt among the idolaters as the gospel does among the unbelievers of your nation: yet surely it was a pacific message notwithstanding, and ought to have been differently received. We might as well reproach the God of Israel for his messages to Pharaoh having hardened his heart; yea, for his laws given at Sinai having been the occasion of all the wickedness of your fathers; for, if he had given them no laws, they had not been guilty of transgressing them!

They farther object, with their fathers, that Jesus pretended to be *the Son of God*, and so was guilty of blasphemy. But, if he were the Messiah, he *was* the Son of God. Did not God, in the second Psalm, address him as his Son? are not the kings and judges of the earth admonished to submit to him under that character?

Much has been said of your believing in one God: and who requires you to believe in more than one? If you infer hence that there can be no plurality of persons in the Godhead, you contradict your own Scriptures as well as ours. Who made the heavens and the earth? Did not *Elohim*? And did he not say, "Let us make man," &c.? Who wrestled with Jacob? And who appeared to Moses in the bush? Was it not *Jehovah*? Yet he is represented in both cases as the Angel or "Messenger of *Jehovah*."

Some of the *precepts* of Jesus are objected to as being impracticable, and Christians accused of hypocrisy for pretending to respect them, while none of them act up to them; that is, "when they are smitten on one cheek, they do not offer the other."\* But this is perverseness. Jesus did not mean it literally; nor did he so exemplify it when smitten before Pilate. Nor do the Jews so understand their own commandments. If they do, however, it will follow that they break the sixth commandment in every malfactor whose execution they promote, and even in the killing of animals for food. The manifest design of the precept is to prohibit all private retaliation and revenge; and to teach us that we ought rather to suffer insult than to render evil for evil. This may be a hard lesson for a proud spirit; but it is a true exposition of that law which requires us to *love our neighbor as ourselves*; which is inconsistent with every feeling of *malice*, whatever provocations may have been received.

But this is not all; the very agony of Jesus in the garden provokes the malignity of these writers. The anguish of his soul on that occasion is ascribed to *pusillanimity*!

Have they a right then, when judging of his conduct, to take it for granted that he was not the Messiah, and that his death was like that of another man? Certainly they have not. The objection, if it has any force, is this—His want of fortitude is inconsistent with his being the Messiah. To this we answer, supposing him to be the Messiah, there was nothing inconsistent in any of those fears and sorrows which he expressed. For, if he were the Messiah, he must, according to prophecy, have suffered immediately from the hand of God, as well as from man. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him—It pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief." But, if the agony in the garden was of this description, there was no want of fortitude in it. So far as the wrath of man was concerned, Jesus feared it not. He endured the cross, and even despised the shame: but, under the hand of God, he both feared and felt; and I never understood before that it was pusillanimous to fear or feel, under the hand of the Almighty! But we need not marvel; for he who, in the language of prophecy, complained of having *gall given him for meat, and vinegar for drink*, added, "*They persecute him whom thou hast smitten!*"

All these objections prove the truth of what was said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again (or, to speak in Jewish language, except he be *circumcised in heart*,) he cannot see the kingdom of God." The gospel is a system that cannot be received by a mind blinded by prejudice, or a heart hardened in sin. He that receives it must repent, as well as believe. It is in hope that God, peradventure, may give some of you repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, that these addresses are made to you. And though some may make light of them, and even mock, as the idolaters did at Hezekiah's messengers, yet we will deliver our messages, that, if you perish, your blood may not be required at our hands.

O! ye children of Israel, our hearts' desire, and prayer to God for you, is that you may be saved! Consider, we intreat you, whether you have not forsaken the religion of your forefathers; whether the psalms of David express the feelings of your hearts; whether, if you really loved the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you would not believe in Jesus; whether, if you had just views of your own law, you would not despair of being accepted of God by the works of it; whether your rejection of Jesus be not owing to your insensibility as to your need of a Saviour; whether, if you really believed the Old Testament, you would not believe the New; finally, whether the bitter malignity, which is so frequently discovered against Jesus and his followers, be consistent with true religion.

But I shall conclude with a few words to

\* R. Tobias Goodman's Address to the Committee of the London Society, p. 25.



professing *Christians*. I can perceive, by what I have seen of the Jewish writings, how much they avail themselves of our disorders and divisions, to justify their unbelief. Let those who name the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Let us beware of valuing ourselves on the name, while we are destitute of the thing. We may yield a sort of assent to the doctrine just delivered, while yet it brings forth no good fruit in us. These are the things that rivet Jews in their unbelief. They have no right, indeed, to intrrench themselves in prejudice against the Lord Jesus on account of our disorders: he is not more accountable for them than the God of Israel was for the disorders of their forefathers. But, though it be wrong in them, it is more so in those who furnish them with occasion of offence. There is a woe upon the world because of offences, seeing they stumble and fall over them: but there is a heavier woe on them through whom they come.

"He that *winneth* souls is wise." I hope all the measures that are taken for the conversion of the Jews will be of a winning nature. If they be malignant and abusive, they must not be opposed by the same weapons. "The servants of the Lord must not strive, as for mastery; but, be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." Whatever is done, for children or adults, I trust it will be in an open, candid way, like that of our Saviour, who did good to the bodies of men, as a means of attracting their attention, and conciliating their affection to the word of everlasting life.

## SERMON XI.

[Delivered on a Lord's-day Evening, in a Country Village.]

SOLITARY REFLECTION; OR THE SINNER DIRECTED TO LOOK INTO HIMSELF FOR CONVICTION.

"Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."—Psa. iv. 4.

You are assembled together, my dear hearers, that you may learn something concerning your everlasting welfare. I am glad to meet you; and shall be happy to communicate any thing that I understand on this important subject. I pray God to bless it for your good! You have heard many sermons preached, and yet, perhaps, have been but little profited; and you may hear many more to as little purpose. Religion consists not merely in hearing sermons; nor in going away, and talking how you like

or dislike the preacher. Religion is not found among noise, and clamor, and dispute. It does not consist in either applauding or censuring men. If ever you hear to any purpose, it will make you forget the preacher, and think only of yourselves. You will be like a smitten deer, which, unable to keep pace with the herd, retires to the thicket and bleeds alone. This is the effect that I long to see produced in you. It is for the purpose of impressing this upon your minds that I have read the above passage, and wish to discourse to you upon it. In doing this, all I shall attempt will be to *explain* and *enforce* the admonition. Let us attempt

I. TO EXPLAIN THE MEANING OF IT. The persons admonished in this psalm were men who set themselves against David, and persecuted him without a cause; accusing him, perhaps, to king Saul: and, what greatly aggravates their guilt, they are said to have *turned his glory into shame*; that is, they reproached him on account of his religion, which was his highest honor. There are such scoffers in the world now: and, as these wicked men opposed David, so they oppose our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David according to the flesh. And by how much Christ is superior to David, by so much greater is the wickedness of those who mock at his gospel and people than the other. They were, many of them, men of property; *their corn and their wine*, it seems, *increased*; and it is likely that some of them were people in high life, who had access even to the king. But all this would not screen them from the displeasure of God. Even kings and judges themselves must submit to the Son, or perish from the way.

And, if riches will not profit in the day of wrath, neither will poverty. It is true, the Scriptures wear a favorable aspect towards the poor. Jesus preached the gospel to them; and God is often represented as threatening and punishing those that oppress them: but, if a man be wicked as well as poor (as it is well known great numbers are,) his poverty will excite no pity; he must bear his iniquity.

Presumptuous and thoughtless sinners are admonished to "stand in awe, and sin not; to commune with their own hearts upon their bed, and be still." Bold as any of you may be in sin, there is one above you, who will call you to an account: pause, therefore, and think what you are about. To commune with our hearts means much the same as to ponder the matter over with ourselves. It is said of the adulteress that, "lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them." She leads on her thoughtless admirers, from one degree of sin to another, in quick succession; just as a person who should wish to lose you in a wood, and there murder you, would lead you on, under some

fair pretence, from path to path, through one winding direction after another, never suffering you to stand still and pause, lest you should turn back and effect your escape. Thus it is with sinners: they are hurried on, by delusion, from sin to sin, from company to company, and from one course of evil to another, while the enemy of their souls is doing every thing in his power to secure his dominion over them.

That which the adulteress most dreaded was *thought*, close and serious thought: and this it is which the enemy of your souls most dreads. It is by pondering the path of life, if at all, that you must escape the snare. If sinners are saved, it is *from their sins*. Their souls must be converted to the love of Christ; and the ordinary way that God takes to convert them is, by convincing them of sin, which is never effected but by their being brought to close and serious thought. It was by "thinking of his ways" that David "turned his feet to God's testimonies."

The *place and time* particularly recommended for this exercise is, *upon your bed, at night*. If there be any time more favorable to reflection than others, it must be that in which you are free from all intruding company, and interruptions from without. Then, when you have retired from the world, and the world from you; when the hurry of business is withdrawn; when the tumult of the soul subsides, and is succeeded by a solemn stillness; when the darkness which surrounds you prevents the interference of sensible objects, and invites the mental eye to look inward; then commune with your own heart; take a reckoning with your soul; inquire what course you are in, and whither it will lead you!

It might be well to examine the *actions* of your life: but, as the heart is the spring-head of action, the state of your *heart* must be the chief object of your inquiry. As to actions, they are neither good nor evil, but as they are the expressions of the heart. Were you to kill a fellow-creature, you know, there would be no evil in it provided it was by mere accident and not from any malicious design, criminal passion, or careless neglect: and if you did ever so much good to your neighbor, yet, if it were by accident and not from design, there would be no goodness in it. It is the disposition of our hearts that denominates our characters in the sight of God. In all your communings, therefore, commune with your *hearts*.

Perhaps you will say, I find great difficulty in collecting my thoughts, and fixing them upon those things which are of the greatest importance: when I would think, I scarcely know what to think about. Well; give me leave, then, to suggest a few plain questions, which I would earnestly recommend you to put home to your own soul.

First: *Does my heart choose and follow after those things which my conscience tells me are right?* I can assure you that with many this is not the case. Their consciences tell them that they ought to fear God, to keep holy the Sabbath-day, to read and hear the word of God, and to perform various other duties; but their hearts are at variance with all these things. Their consciences tell them that they ought not to swear, lie, steal, get intoxicated, cheat their creditors, and ruin their families; but their hearts, nevertheless, are set upon these and many other such wicked courses; and they will pursue them, at all events. Is this the case with any of you? It is a miserable life to have the heart and conscience at variance. You are sensible it is so; and therefore, if any of you are of this description, you labor, I dare say, to lull conscience asleep, that you may enjoy the desires of your heart without interruption from its remonstrances. But this is a desperate way of going on. Conscience will not always sleep; and when it does awake, which perhaps may be upon a death-bed, its voice will be more terrible than thunder, and its accusations more painful than the sting of a scorpion. Did you never see a wicked man upon a dying bed? Perhaps not: possibly you cannot bear such sights, and therefore shun them. There are persons, however, who have; and, witnessing his agony, have longed to alleviate it. The guilt, the fear, and the horror, which have appeared in his eyes; the bitter regret that has preyed upon his dying heart; and the forebodings of everlasting misery that seemed to have seized his soul, have wrung their hearts with anguish: but all they could do was to drop an unavailing tear. Given up to the hardness of his heart, even the doctrine of salvation by the blood of the Lamb has had no effect upon him, and he has died in all the misery of despair. O that this may not be your end! Yet, if such be your life, and you persist in it, there is no reason to expect but that it will.

But it is possible that you may not sustain this character. Your heart and conscience may not be at such variance as to give you any considerable pain. If so, let me recommend a second question: *Is my conscience instructed and formed by the word of God?* Though you may be certain that you are in a wrong course if you live in the violation of conscience, yet you cannot always conclude that you are in a right one when you do not violate it, because conscience itself may err. Saul was conscientious in persecuting the followers of Christ; yet he was one of the *chief of sinners* for so doing. You may ask, What can a man do but follow that which he thinks to be right? True; but it becomes him to compare his thoughts with the word of God: for we are easily persuaded to think favorably of that conduct

which suits our inclination; and, where this is the case, the error of the conscience, instead of excusing the evil conduct, becomes itself an evil.

The consciences of many people tell them that, if they take care of their families, pay every man his due, and attend public worship once or twice a week, this is all that can reasonably be expected at their hands. And I have heard this Scripture passage brought in proof of it, "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" But (to say nothing of the love of mercy towards our fellow-creatures) to walk humbly with God is a very different thing from the above exercises.

A man's conscience may be easy, and he may persuade himself that he is in the way to life, while, in fact, he is as far from it as the old Pharisees, against whom the heaviest woes of damnation were denounced. The case of such people seems to be worse, on some accounts, than that of the openly profane: these, acting in opposition to their own consciences, as well as to God, a faithful warning sometimes takes hold of their fears; but those, deluded by vain hope, consider all such warnings as inapplicable to them. Both are steering the same course; but the one is impeded by wind and tide, while the other is aided by the current of a perverted conscience. Do not forget to inquire, Is my conscience instructed and formed by the word of God? Perhaps you have not been in the habit of reading that sacred book, or of having it read to you. The neglect of it may occasion your eternal overthrow.

But let me recommend a third question: *Have any, or all my pursuits, whether after natural or sinful enjoyments, ever yet afforded me satisfaction?* The answer to this question is of importance; because, if they never have, there is no reason to conclude they ever will: and, if so, what have you been pursuing all this time? You have spent thirty, forty, fifty, or more years in the world, and, by a thousand different methods, have been seeking satisfaction; yet you have not found it. You thought, when you were young, to have found it in forbidden pleasures, and perhaps you gave a loose to appetite and desire; but you were disappointed. Guilt, infamy, and misery, were the fruits of those excesses. Your own heart will tell you this, if you ask it. Since that time, having felt the effects of your former folly, it may be, you have turned your attention to other things: you have settled; and now your object has been to raise yourself in the world. Saving money has seemed the one thing needful to render you happy. Perhaps you have saved a little of this article; and are you happy? Ask your own heart, and it will tell you. No, you want to

save a little more. Poor man! you are unhappy; and unhappy in this course you will be. Can you tell the reason? You have been trying to satisfy yourself with *that which is not bread*. Do you not know that God has created you with desires which it is not in the power of the whole creation to satisfy? Alexander and Caesar, those mighty monarchs, who each in his day conquered the world, were as far off from happiness as you are. The one is said to have wept because there was not another world to conquer; and the other to have exclaimed, when in the full possession of empire, "Is this all?"

If you inquire wherefore has God planted desires in your natures that it is not in the power of creation to satisfy. I answer, that you might be led to seek satisfaction where it is to be found. There is much meaning, and merciful meaning too, in those divine expostulations: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Harken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." Again: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink!" And again: "Thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."

A fourth question I would recommend is this: *Will the course I am in do to die with?* If it will, pursue it with all your might; but first be well satisfied that it will. There is no way of answering this question but by comparing your character with the word of God. There you will find our Lord declaring to his disciples, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.—Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." And again, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Do you understand these things by experience? Did you ever seriously think about them? They are subjects of no little importance. Some men, and even some preachers, may tell you that all this signifies nothing more than your being baptized, or at



most, living a sober regular life: but it is at your peril to believe them against the solemn declarations of Christ. Nicodemus, a master in Israel, was ignorant of these things. Other teachers now may be the same; and, if blind themselves, no wonder that they lead others equally blind till both fall into the ditch. But, as you value your souls, remember who it is that has said, "Ye must be born again."

If you have never experienced this change, you are at present strangers to yourselves, to God, to Christ, and to the way of life; exposed to the curse of almighty God; and, dying in your present state, must perish forever.

One question more let me recommend, and I will conclude this part of the subject: *If I should die in an unconverted state, and perish forever, can I endure the wrath of an offended God?* If you can, why then let every man help his neighbor, and every one say to his brother, Be of good courage, laugh at death, set judgment at defiance, and make a jest of an hereafter . . . . but, if not, pause and think. . . .

Who can forbear remarking the cowardice of wicked men? how, even in this world, these bold spirits are cut down with a little affliction! Those who trifle most with hell, and whose lips are so full of damnation it becomes in their mouths a mere matter of bravado, how do they sink under the first touch of God's indignation! Gaal and his company could eat and drink and curse Abimelech, at a distance; but, when Abimelech draws near, lo! they are covered with dismay.

Oh profane character! Can thine hands be strong, and thine heart endure in the day that he shall deal with thee? If you cannot tell how to endure the sufferings of life, what will you do in the hour of death? How, especially, will you grapple with the bitter pains of eternal death? "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with horses? and, if in the land of peace wherein thou trustedst they wearied thee, how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?" Such, or nearly such, my hearers, will be your own reflections, if upon your bed you commune with your own hearts to any good purpose.

But I proceed

II. TO ENFORCE THE SUBJECT BY CONSIDERING THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF A SERIOUS COMPLIANCE WITH IT. There is nothing more dreaded by unconverted sinners than solitary reflection, and, therefore, nothing more necessary. They are like a person whose affairs are going to ruin, and who feels a strong reluctance to enter into a thorough examination of his accounts. And wherefore? Because such an examination would destroy his present peace, and he would be under the necessity of making a

full stop. To avoid this, he puts far from him the evil day, and cherishes a vain hope that things are not so bad as they appear. But, as in this case the longer a thorough examination is deferred the deeper he sinks, so it is in the other. Let me request your attention to a few observations on this part of the subject.

1. There are things that you have *doubted*, or acted as if you doubted, which, if you would but retire and converse with your own heart, you would find to be true. You have acted but in too many instances as though you doubted whether you were accountable and immortal creatures, and as though an agreeable subsistence in the present world were the only thing that should concern you. But, if you be not accountable to him that made you, how is it that sin, which is unknown to every creature but yourself, should nevertheless be accompanied with remorse? Is there not a tribunal erected within your own bosom, that forebodes a judgment to come? If there were no hereafter, why that dread of death, and fearful looking-for of judgment, in the hour of threatening affliction? Oh sinner! you shall not be able to plead ignorance at the bar of heaven: your own heart, depraved as it is, will bear witness against you.

2. There are things to which you are apt to *object* in God's dealings with you, which, were you to commune with your own hearts, would be found to be unobjectionable. If you are told of the strictness of God's holy law, and that nothing short of "truth in the inward parts" can answer to its requirements, you think it hard, and feel disposed to complain of the grievousness of his yoke: but ask your own hearts, would *you* be contented with any thing less from a fellow-creature?

Perhaps you are a parent or a master; and what if your children or servants were, through fear, ever so assiduous, if you knew they had no love for you, would you be satisfied? Or perhaps you are a husband. If the partner of your life were alienated from you and attached to another, though through fear of your displeasure she were studious to the utmost to oblige you in her outward deportment, would this satisfy you? Would you not disdain to accept of her services unless you could have her heart with them? You must know that this is the truth. Out of your own mouth, therefore, will the Lord judge you.

Again: If you are told of God's awful threatenings against sin, your spirit rises against him, and you are ready to accuse him of cruelty: but ask your own heart if you would spare one that had treated you as you have treated him. If you had a son, and, with all the tenderness of a father, nursed him, fed him, clothed him, and instructed him; and if, when he arrived at

years of maturity, instead of behaving towards you with filial obedience and gratitude, he should prove undutiful, malignant, false, and do all he could to ruin you and your family, would you not give him up to his evil course, and let him take the consequences of his behavior? Or should you from paternal pity be disposed to pass over his transgressions; and should a common friend, with your approbation, intercede on his behalf, entreating him to beg your pardon, assuring him of your readiness to forgive the past; if, in addition to his former crimes, he continued to despise the overtures of mercy, what would you do with him? Or should he, when overwhelmed with troubles of his own procuring, affect to be sorry for what he had done, and write to you in the strain of humble confession, praying you to deliver him this once, and vowing how different his conduct should be towards you in future; if, as soon as his troubles had subsided, he were to return again to his former courses; what would you do with him? Alas, all this, and a thousand times more, have you done against the best of fathers, the God "in whose hands your breath is, and whose are all your ways!" "Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?"

3. One reason of your *knowing so little of your heart-sins* is your communing so little with your hearts. You go on in a hurry of business, and the state and temper of your heart is overlooked; and, being naturally disposed to flatter yourself, you imagine it to be much better than it is. You may be governed by the love of this world, yea, and be very covetous; so much so, that all who know you may perceive it; and yet you do not perceive it yourself, but are ready to be offended with any person who tells you of it. You think yourself as good as your neighbors, and flatter yourself that your sin is not so very great. It is true, say you, I have my failings, as all men have, but, thank God, I never was guilty of such things as many are. So said the Pharisee in the parable, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men;" and so said the wicked priests, in the days of Malachi, "What have we spoken so much against thee?" O! my hearers, commune with your hearts, and you will find them to be very different from your present thoughts of them.

There is one thing in particular which perhaps never struck your attention—your *total want of love to God*. This is the sin of your nature, and the fruitful parent of all other sins. God requires the whole heart; as indeed he justly may, for he is worthy of it; but you have no heart to give him. It is pre-occupied, and that with such things as are contrary to God. All your actual sins

are but little, compared with this. They have been committed only at different times; but this is a tide, deep and large, that flows without cessation or interruption. Those are the fruits; but this is the poisonous root from which they spring. If you loved God, you could not love the world, and the things of the world, as you do. You could not blaspheme his name, neglect his worship, or trample on his laws; and all with unconcern. Neither could you feel towards your neighbor as you do in many instances. All bitterness, and wrath, and malice, and evil speaking; all envy towards them that are above you, and pride, oppression, and unfeeling treatment, towards them that are beneath you; all arise from a want of the love of God: for he that loveth God will love his brother also.

All unconverted sinners, I believe, retain a good opinion of their hearts, however they may differ in expressing it, which is evidently owing to their ignorance of its deceitfulness and desperate wickedness. Some make no secret of it. It is true, say they, I now and then swear, when in a passion, and get too much liquor once in a while; but I *mean* no evil: my *heart* is good. Others, who have been brought up under evangelical preaching, are ashamed of this language, and would despise the ignorance of the person who should use it. They will not deny in words that their hearts are bad; howbeit they mean not so. By *heart* they understand they know not what, something distinct from *intention, disposition, or desire*. Therefore they are sometimes heard to say, It is true, I am not converted; but I *desire* to be so. I cannot say I love Christ; but I *wish* I did. This is the same thing as saying, My heart is good. If I be not a converted man, it is not my fault. I am willing at any time, if God would but convert me.—But all this is false and delusive. If you were willing to return to God, by Jesus Christ, there is nothing in heaven or earth that stands in your way. The truth is, you love your sins too well to part with them for Christ or heaven; and have no desires after conversion *for its own sake*, but merely as a something which, at times, you think you could *submit to*, rather than suffer eternal damnation. Whoever neglects to commune with his own heart, it is necessary for *you*, that you may know your true character; of which, with all your advantages, you are hitherto totally ignorant.

Even in the concerns of men with men, there is much blindness to their own motives, and deception in forming a judgment of their own conduct, which is owing to a want of looking into themselves. A thousand things are defended by persons in company, which, were they to retire alone and commune with their own hearts, they would be obliged to condemn. In how many instances

have contentions been cherished, and half a neighborhood either brought in as witnesses, or in some way implicated in the contest, which might all have been decided in a quarter of an hour, if the party had only retired alone, and asked himself this question: Have I done to my neighbor what I should have wished him, in like circumstances, to have done to me?

4. There are things on account of which you may *value yourselves*, and of which you may *make a righteousness*, that, if you were to retire alone, would be found of a very opposite nature. It is possible, you may have been in the habit of reading a chapter in the Bible once a week, or oftener, in your family; of frequenting public worship; of giving away something to people who are poorer than yourself; and of shunning public houses and riotous assemblies. It is possible, likewise, that you may consider this as the way to heaven, and hence lay your account with being happy in the world to come. But, if you look into your heart, you may find that the motives which have influenced you have been such as God can never approve; and, if so, instead of justifying, they will serve only to condemn you. If you have read the Scriptures, or gone to a place of worship, merely from custom, and not from any love you had to these things; if you have relieved the poor out of pride, rather than pure compassion; and if that which has preserved you from the grossest vices has been rather a regard to your interest, health, or character, than any concern for the honor of God; can such things be acceptable in his sight?

But if your motives were ever so pure, and your good deeds ever so many, yet having broken the holy, just, and good laws of God, you cannot be justified by any thing which you can do. If you commune with your heart to any good purpose, you will never think of being saved by the works of your own hands; but feel the necessity of a Saviour, and of a great one. The doctrine of salvation by the death of Jesus will be glad tidings to your soul. Finally: you will, as you are exhorted in the verse following the text, "offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." In other words, with a broken and a contrite spirit, you will approach the God against whom you have sinned; mourn over your unprovoked offences, as one mourneth for an only son; and be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born: and this without thinking of either your prayers or tears as being any thing, or of any account; but placing all your hope and help in him who, "when we were without strength, in due time died for the ungodly." To him be glory for ever! Amen.

## SERMON XII.

ADVICE TO THE DEJECTED; OR THE SOUL DIRECTED TO LOOK OUT OF ITSELF FOR CONSOLATION.

"How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?"—Psa. xiii. 2.

WE have, in a former discourse, considered the importance of looking into our own hearts; but that counsel is not applicable in all cases. There is such a thing as to pore on our guilt and wretchedness, to the overlooking of our highest mercies. Though it be proper to know our own hearts, for the purpose of conviction, yet, if we expect consolation from this quarter, we shall find ourselves sadly disappointed.

Such, for a time, appears to have been the case of David. He seems to have been in great distress; and, as is common in such cases, his thoughts turned inward, casting in his mind what he should do, and what would be the end of things. While thus exercised, he had "sorrow in his heart daily:" but, betaking himself to God for relief, he succeeded; trusting in his mercy, his heart rejoiced in his salvation."

There are many persons who, when in trouble, imitate David in the former part of this experience: I wish we may imitate him in the latter. In discoursing on the subject, I shall first notice the disconsolate situation of the psalmist, with the remedy to which he repaired under it; and then inquire to what cases it is applicable among us, and whether the same remedy be not equally adapted to our relief as to his.

I. Let us notice THE DISCONSOLATE SITUATION OF THE PSALMIST, WITH THE REMEDY TO WHICH HE REPAIRED UNDER IT. The psalm is probably one of those mournful songs which he composed during his persecution by Saul; but, like most others, though it begins in complaint, it ends in triumph. We may be certain he was pressed with great *difficulties*; for we do not take counsel with ourselves or others, but in such cases. The particulars of his situation may be collected from the different parts of the psalm.

1. *He was sorely persecuted.* This was a mysterious providence. God had anointed him to the throne, and brought him into public life; it might have been expected, therefore, that he would have made his way plain before him: yet, in following what must to him manifestly appear the leading of the divine guide, he brings upon himself a flood of evils. Though nothing was further from his intention than to use any means to dethrone his sovereign; yet Saul is jealous, and his dependants are stirred up, by envy and malice, to compass the ruin of



the innocent. Let not those who are candidates for an immortal crown be surprised, if their path to glory be covered with snares and pits: it is through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom.

2. *The Lord seemed to prosper his persecutors, and not him: his enemy was exalted over him.* This seems more mysterious still. Is the God of Israel then a man, that he should lie; or the son of man, that he should repent? Does he use lightness? Or the things which he purposes, does he purpose according to the flesh; that with him there should be yea, yea, and nay, nay? Far be it from him. Yet, if we were to judge by appearances, we might, at times, be tempted to draw such conclusions.

3. *His most intimate acquaintance seem to have forsaken him.* In cases of difficulty, we usually advise with our friends, if we have any. If we are driven to take counsel with ourselves, therefore, it may be presumed that we are bereft of that consolation. A sympathizing, wise, and faithful friend, in a time of difficulty, is a great blessing. In times of prosperity, many will profess a regard to us; but, if persecution for Christ's sake should overtake us, we may expect some to stand aloof, who now court our acquaintance. This has been the lot of men of whom the world was not worthy; and it was no small part of their affliction that they had to suffer *by themselves*. Let us not complain of such things, however. Our Lord himself was forsaken by lover and friend. He took three of his most beloved disciples to accompany him in the hour of his sufferings; but they fell asleep, and left him to agonize alone.

4. *To these temporal distresses were added others of a spiritual nature: the Lord hid his face from him: and, to him, it appeared as though he had forgotten him.* If under his outward troubles he could have enjoyed inward peace; if he could have poured out his heart with freedom in secret; if, though banished from the sanctuary, yet looking towards that house, and calling upon the Lord, he had heard him from heaven his dwelling-place, his load had been supportable: but to have to say with Job, "Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him!" This gives a double weight to the affliction. But, here also, we have no reason to complain. David has been before us; and what is more, David's Lord. Jesus was persecuted; his enemies were exalted over him; his friends were scattered from him; and, to fill up the bitter cup, his God forsook him. This was the sorrow of sorrows. He speaks as one that could have borne any thing else: "My God, my God, . . . why hast thou forsaken me?"

5. *All this was not for a few days only; but for a long time.* "How long wilt thou forget me? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul?" The intenseness of the affliction renders it trying to our fortitude; but it is by the continuance of it that patience is put to the test. It is not under the sharpest, but the longest trials, that we are most in danger of fainting. In the former case, the soul collects all its strength, and feels in earnest to call in help from above; but, in the latter, the mind relaxes and sinks into despondency. When Job was accosted with evil tidings, in quick succession, he bore it with becoming fortitude: but, when he could see no end to his troubles, he sunk under them.

These were some of the particulars which made up the load of David; and under which he is said to have taken counsel in his soul. The phrase seems to be expressive of great restlessness of spirit, a poring over his misery, a casting in his mind what he should do, and what would be the end of these things. Perhaps, if we had been secreted near him, we should have seen him walking by himself, now looking upwards, then downwards, weeping as he went, or sighing under a load that would not suffer him to weep; sometimes sinking into torpid silence, and sometimes interrogating himself on his future conduct:—What shall I do? Which way shall I take? Shall I go backward, or forward; or shall I stand still? Shall I try any other means; or shall I despair?

From this tumult of the mind, we are certain he obtained relief; for, towards the close of the psalm, he deals in the language of triumph: "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me." Nor are we left to guess in what manner his soul was delivered from this state of dejection: "I have trusted," says he, "in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." Hence we may gather that the way in which he obtained relief was by *ceasing to take counsel in his soul, and by looking out of himself, and trusting in the mercy of God.*

This remedy was competent to the removal of all his complaints. What is it that mercy, divine mercy, mercy through a Mediator, mercy connected with omnipotence and veracity, cannot effect? Was he persecuted? By trusting in this, he would cease to fear what man could do unto him. Was the hand of Providence apparently against him? That might be, and yet all in the end work together for good. Did his friends forsake him? The compassion of his best friend would more than make up this loss. But did he also hide his face from him? Still he could do no better than apply to the mercy-seat, and supplicate his return. Finally, was all this complicated load of trials of long continuance? After waiting patiently for the Lord, he would hear him,

would bring him out of the horrible pit, set his feet upon a rock, establish his goings, and put a new song into his mouth. Such, indeed, was the issue of his present trials, which is recorded for the encouragement of others, who shall be in like circumstances.

II. Let us inquire TO WHAT CASES THE SUBJECT IS APPLICABLE AMONG US, AND WHETHER THE SAME REMEDY BE NOT EQUALLY ADAPTED TO OUR RELIEF AS TO THAT OF DAVID. The Holy Spirit has drawn the likeness of man in all situations, that we might find our case, and learn instruction. If we barely read the Scriptures as a description of the concerns of persons who lived a long time ago, and make no application of them to ourselves, we shall miss the great end for which they were given us. The case of the psalmist appears to me to correspond with that of three descriptions of people.

1. *Persons who sink into dependency under the adverse providences of God.* God has poured a portion of sorrow into the cup of human life. Property, connections, friends, children, and every other avenue of natural enjoyment, become, at one time or other, inlets to grief; and if, in these seasons of adversity, the attention be turned inward, rather than directed to the Father of mercies, we shall be in danger of sinking under them.

We have seen men who, under the smiles of providence, have been cheerful and amiable, when disappointments and losses have overtaken them, sink into sullen dejection, and never more lift up their heads. In some instances, it has issued in suicide. It is a dangerous thing to take counsel in our souls, to the neglect of the counsel of God. We have seen others wretched beyond expression, owing to unhappy connections. In the formation of them, religion has been overlooked, and even genuine affection, for the sake of advantages of a worldly nature. The consequence has been, on the one side, neglect, dislike, strife, cruelty, and infidelity; on the other, disappointment, jealousy, unavailing reflection, a broken spirit, a fixed melancholy, and every thing but absolute despair. Oh, with what desire could I draw off the attention of such broken hearts from things below to things above; from taking counsel in their souls, to trusting in the mercy of God, in Christ Jesus! Many a wounded spirit has, by this means, been healed, and rendered happy for life; besides being prevented from plunging, in the agony of desperation, into the gulf of eternal ruin.

We have seen even religious characters inordinately depressed with troubles. The loss of some darling object, the confounding of some favorite scheme, or the rising of some apparently insurmountable difficulty, has overwhelmed the heart. In such circumstances the mind is apt to nurse its melancholy, trying to live, as it were, on dying

elements; but it is not thus that we shall either glorify God or gain relief. Jesus hath said, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." From troubles of some kind there is no exemption in the present state; but it does not become the followers of Christ to indulge in *heart-troubles* for little things; and such are all our worldly sorrows, "*light afflictions* which are but for a moment." The true Christian life is, to be inordinately "careful for nothing; but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God." It is thus that "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." It is by ceasing to take counsel in our souls, and trusting in God's mercy, that our sorrow, like that of David, will be turned into joy and triumph. Our way may be covered with darkness, so much so that we cannot see where the next step will place us; but we have a Leader who sees through all, and who has promised to *guide us with his eye*. Things may so work as to confound our calculations; but, if all work together for good, this is sufficient. What are our afflictions, too, in comparison of the glory that awaits us? Paul had his afflictions, as well as we, far greater indeed than ours have been; and he also *took counsel* under them; but not *with himself*: he took into his account the hope that was set before him: "I reckon," says he, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." It is while we thus "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," that our "afflictions" appear "*light*" and "*momentary*," and "work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

2. The case of the psalmist corresponds with that of *persons who, at the outset of their religious concern, are encompassed with darkness and long-continued dejection*. There are some who are no sooner brought to entertain a just sense of the nature and demerits of sin than they are led to embrace the gospel-way of salvation, and find rest to their souls: but it is not so with all. Some are known to continue, for a long time, in a state of dark suspense. They have too deep a sense of sin to be able to enjoy the pleasures of this world; and are too much in the dark concerning its forgiveness to be able to imbibe the joys of another. Hence their days are spent in solitude and dejection: they search for peace, but it is far from them: they *take counsel in their soul, and have sorrow in their hearts daily*.

Various things contribute to promote this state of mind. In some it may be owing to circumstances *without* them. Perhaps, like David, they had no friend to whom they

could open their minds; or, if they had, it might have been to persons who were either total strangers to these things, or who were unskilful in the word of righteousness. Such also may have been the kind of preaching they have heard that nothing suitable to their case has been ordinarily, if ever, delivered. If the preacher be of such a description as to content himself with moral harangues; if, instead of exhibiting the Saviour of sinners, he have nothing to say to a wounded spirit, unless it be to advise him to forsake his vices, and be better; or if his object be rather to improve the manners of men, and render them decent members of society, than to renew their hearts; the tendency of his preaching will be either to establish the hearer in pharisaical presumption or sink him into despondency.

Or, should the preacher be of another description—should he hold forth a kind of Mahometan predestination, be averse from the free invitations of the gospel to sinners as sinners, and employ himself in persuading his hearers that no one has any warrant to come to Jesus for eternal life but the regenerate—the effects will be much the same. The awakened sinner will either take up with some enthusiastic impression, imagine himself a favorite of heaven, *trusting that he is righteous, and despising others*; or, having no consciousness that he is regenerate, be deterred from approaching the Saviour, and so sink into despondency.

Could I gain access to such a character, I would proclaim in his ear the *MERCY of God to sinners*, the all-sufficiency and willingness of Jesus to save all who are willing to be saved by him and the free invitations of the gospel, as a sufficient warrant for him, or any other sinner, to trust his immortal interests in his hands. O ye that labor and are heavy laden, come to Jesus, “and ye shall find rest unto your souls!” Do not dream of first ascertaining your election, or regeneration, and of approaching the Saviour as a favorite of heaven; it is only by believing in him, as a perishing sinner, that you can obtain an evidence of these things. It is by the gospel coming to us, not in word only, but in power, that our election of God is known, and our regeneration ascertained.

In others, such dejection may be owing to something *within* them. It may arise from a kind of propensity to think on things which are against them, rather than on those which are in their favor; viewing only the dark side of the cloud; dwelling on the magnitude of their guilt, their unworthiness of mercy, and the little success they have had in praying and striving to enter in. This propensity is often fed by an idea that it would be presumption, in such sinners as they are, to admit the consolation of the gospel; and that it is abundantly more be-

coming them to stand aloof in darkness and misery. But this is not Christian humility. It is a spurious kind of modesty, the principle of which is nearly akin to that voluntary humility and self-denial that induces men to abstain from that which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving. Notwithstanding the modest and humble appearance which these objections assume, they will be found to be no better than a *species of self-righteous pride*, opposed to the humiliating gospel of Christ. When you object, for instance, that you are *unworthy* of such great and unspeakable blessings as the gospel reveals, and, therefore, that it would be presumption in you to accept of them; what is this but saying that, before you can have any warrant to receive these blessings, you must be *worthy* of them, at least somewhat more so than you are at present? And, probably, you hope in time to become so. But this is the very essence of self-righteousness, and directly opposite to the gospel of Christ. Christ came into the world to seek and save them that are *lost*. He came into the world to save *sinners*, even the chief of sinners. He has no mercy to bestow on sinners, but as undeserving. If any man think himself deserving of his grace, his answer is, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” The very meaning of the word *grace*, of which the Scriptures speak so largely, is *FREE FAVOR TO THE UNWORTHY*: unworthiness, therefore, can be no ground of objection. If there be any bar in your way, it is your conceit of some kind of worthiness being necessary to recommend you to the grace of the Saviour: and take heed lest you perish under this delusion, after the example of apostate Israel, “who followed after the law of righteousness, but never attained it: and wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumble at that stumbling-stone.”

If such should not be the end of things with you, yet, to say the least, so long as this self-righteous spirit possesses you, you will be a miserable creature, and never be able to find rest unto your soul: and it certainly behoves you to take heed lest this should not be the worst. The question is not whether the blessings of pardon, justification, and eternal life, be too great for our deserts. Are they beyond our wants? Can we do with less? If they are not too great for our necessities, nor too great for the ever-blessed God, through the mediation of his Son, to bestow, who are we that we should hesitate to accept of them? If he present to us the cup of salvation, shall we not drink it? True humility, instead of making objections, would answer, “Be it unto thy servant according to thy word.”

We are assured, by him that cannot lie, that if we “inquire for the good old way,”



the way in which all the faithful have gone from age to age, "and walk in it, we shall find rest unto our souls." We know, also, who it was that applied the walking in this *good old way* to faith in his name, obedience to his authority, and conformity to his example; saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Hence we may certainly conclude that, if we do not find rest unto our souls, it must be owing to our not coming to him as a Saviour, or not yielding to his authority as a king, or not learning to copy after his example: and, if we comply not with the first, in vain do we flatter ourselves with conformity to the last. We shall never "work the works of God," till we "believe in him whom he hath sent."

An unwillingness to be saved, ruled, and modelled according to the mind of Christ, is generally the last thing of which sinners are apt to suspect themselves. They think they are willing and even desirous to be saved in his way, and to become his people; and that the only question is, whether Christ be willing to save them: whereas all such thoughts are founded in error. "We are not straitened in him, but in our own bowels." If we can so believe in him as to relinquish every false system of religion, and every false ground of hope, falling into the arms of free *mercy*, as the chief of sinners; and if we can so yield ourselves up to him as to be willing to have our ear bored as it were to the door-posts of his house, and to serve him forever, there is no obstruction in heaven or in earth to our salvation.

O disconsolate and desponding sinner! Thou hast been reading, thinking, hearing, praying, striving, and yet thou art never the nearer; no peace, no rest to thy soul, nor ascendancy over thy sins. Like the beast in the mire, all thy striving serves but to sink thee deeper. Let me ask thee a few questions: Understandest thou what thou redest? The disciples were as dark and as sorrowful as thou art till they *understood the Scriptures*. Do thy thoughts accord with God's thoughts as they are revealed in the Scriptures? God's thoughts are as much above those of man as the heavens are higher than the earth. Let me entreat thee particularly to consider whether thy prayers have been offered up *in the name of Jesus*, or with an eye to his mediation? Perhaps hitherto thou hast "asked nothing in his name; ask, and thou shalt receive, that thy joy may be full." Remember this, too, it is he himself who invites thee to do so. "The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit:" follow his example. Here, in the gospel of

free grace, in exchange for thy horrible situation, is a *rock* for thy feet, and a *new song* for thy mouth. It is in vain for thee to think of overcoming thy sins, any more than of obtaining forgiveness in any other way. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Cease then from taking counsel in thy soul, trust in the mercy of God through a Mediator, and thy heart shall rejoice in his salvation.

3. The case of the psalmist is applicable to *persons who during the greater part of their religious profession live under habitual fear lest they should not at last prove real Christians*. This description of professing Christians, of which there is a considerable number among us, seems to have been scarcely known in the primitive ages. In those times they appear to have been generally conscious of being what they professed to be—believers in the Son of God; and, knowing that such had the promise of eternal life, they did not ordinarily doubt upon the subject. It was possible, however, at that time as well as this, for the mind to be in doubt of its own sincerity. They had hypocrites and self-deceivers as well as we; hence, in describing the graces of the Spirit, the sacred writer speaks of "faith unfeigned," and of "love without dissimulation." And, as the denouncing of a hypocrite among the apostles caused each one to inquire, "Lord, is it I?" so, doubtless, the most upright character would be subject to occasional fears, lest he should be found deceiving his own soul. This seems to be the kind of *fear* which the apostle describes as cast out by *perfect love*: and, as the love of the primitive Christians greatly abounded, their fears and doubts with regard to their own sincerity were consequently but few.

One great cause, I apprehend, of the prevalence of such fears in sincere people of the present age is the great degree in which the attention is turned inward, and the small degree in which it is directed to the things of God as revealed in the Scriptures; or, to use the language of the text, *the taking counsel in their souls*.

I do not mean to discourage all remembrance of past experiences. The members of the church at Sardis are admonished to remember "how they had received and heard;" and David, under great dejection of mind, resolved to "remember the Lord from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill Mizar." Much less do I mean to countenance the notions of such writers and preachers as cry down all evidences of grace, all marks and signs of internal christianity taken from the work of sanctification in the soul. Far be this from me. I am persuaded that, for any man to reject evidences of personal religion drawn from this quarter, he must fall very little short of re-

jecting his Bible.\* But, though sanctification is the evidence of an interest in spiritual blessings, yet it is not so much by remembering our past religious experience that we shall obtain satisfaction as by renewed exercises of grace. The apostle in the forecited passages, when describing the means by which we are to come at the knowledge of our personal religion, makes no mention of things past, but of things present, of which the mind is supposed to be conscious at the time. "Hereby," saith he, "we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."—"Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."—"We know that we have passed from death unto life," not because we *have loved*, but "because we *love* the brethren." And, if satisfaction be attainable only by the renewed exercises of grace, our object is to ascertain the method best adapted to promote such exercises, which I am persuaded will be found to be a looking out of ourselves to the truths and consolations revealed in the Scriptures.

To attempt to ascertain the reality of our religion by a remembrance of past experiences of grace is attempting what in most cases must needs be, to say the least, extremely difficult, and, if accomplished, would be of no use. The mind is not formed for such a remembrance of its own ideas and sensations as this would require. It is true those impressions which are singularly striking will often be remembered at a distant period, but not in that clear and lively manner in which they are felt at the time. It is only a *general* recollection of things that is ordinarily retained: to be employed, therefore, in raking over our past feelings, in order to discover whether we be real Christians, is almost a hopeless undertaking. If it were otherwise, and we could clearly gain the object of our research, still it has no tendency to glorify God. The way to glorify him is to "bring forth much fruit," and not merely to remember that we did bring forth fruit some twenty or thirty years ago. Those examples which the Scriptures afford of persons recurring to past experiences were not for the purpose of ascertaining their own sincerity, but for the regaining of those sensations which at former periods they had possessed. The reason why the churches of Ephesus and Sardis were admonished to remember their first love was that they might recover it; and the object of David, in his recollection of past times, was not so much that he might determine what was the nature of his experiences at those times as that he might regain his confidence in God. "I will remember thee,"

saith he, "from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites from the hill Mizar." God was the object he sought; and the remembrance of what he had formerly experienced of his goodness and faithfulness was the *means* he used to find him. Allowing, therefore, that the remembrance of past sensations may afford us satisfaction as to the reality of our personal religion, yet it is no otherwise than as *reviving* those sensations, by which they become renewed exercises of grace. If we can recollect those things which at a former period endeared the Lord Jesus Christ and his religion to us, and so recover our affection towards them, such a recollection will be profitable, and serve to strengthen our evidences of interest in them. But if we think of gaining satisfaction on this subject by a mere remembrance of past affections, without any consciousness of present ones, we shall be disappointed, or, which is worse, if we imagine that we have gained our object, it will prove in the end that "a deceived heart hath turned us aside."

If we would wish to discover whether there were any particles of steel in a large quantity of rubbish, it would not be the wisest way to search for them, and, especially in the dark, but to hold a large and efficacious magnet over it. And this, if it be there, is the way to discover true religion in our souls. The truths and promises of God are to a principle of religion in the mind that which the magnet is to the steel; if there be any in us, the proper exhibition of the gospel will ordinarily draw it forth.

If it be a matter of doubt with you whether you be truly converted, far be it from me to endeavor to persuade you that you are so. Your doubts may be well-founded, for aught I can tell: and, supposing they should be so, the door of mercy is still open. If you have obtained mercy, the same way is open for your obtaining it again: and, if not, there is no reason why you should not obtain it now. The consolations I have to recommend are addressed to you, not as converted, nor as unconverted; not as elect, nor as non-elect, but as *sinner*s: and this character, I suppose, you have no doubt of sustaining. All the blessings of the gospel are freely presented for acceptance to sinners. Sinners, whatever may have been their character, have a complete warrant to receive them; yea, it is their duty to do so, and their great sin if they do not. Nothing but ignorance, unbelief, self-righteous pride, or some such evil state of mind, prevents it. The gospel-supper is provided; all things are ready; and the king's servants are commissioned to persuade, and, as it were, compel them to come in. If you accept this invitation, all are yours. I ask not whether you be willing to be saved in God's way, in order to determine your right to accept

\* See especially 1 John ii. 3, 5; iii. 14, 18—21, 24.

spiritual blessings—the message sent you in the gospel determines this—but in order to ascertain your interest in them. If you cordially believe the gospel, you have the promise of eternal life. If its blessings suit your desires, they are all your own. If, for example, it does not offend you, but accords with your very heart, to sue for mercy as the chief of sinners; if you be willing to occupy that place which the gospel assigns you, which is *the dust*; and to ascribe to Jesus that which God has assigned to him, “power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing;” if you can unreluctantly give up all claim to life on the footing of your own worthiness, and desire nothing so much as to be found in Christ, not having your own righteousness; if the salvation you seek be a deliverance from the dominion of sin, as well as from its damning power; finally, if the heaven you desire be that which the Scriptures reveal, a state of pure and holy enjoyment, there can be no just cause to doubt of your interest in these things. To imagine that you believe all that God has revealed concerning his Son, and that “with all your heart, receiving the love of the truth that you may be saved,” and yet that something else is wanting to denominate you believers, is to imagine that believing is not believing.

Read the holy Scriptures, pray to the Fountain of light for understanding, attend the preaching of the word; and all this not with the immediate view of determining what you are, but what Christ is: and, if you find in him that in which your whole soul acquiesces, this, without your searching after it, will determine the question as to your personal interest in him.

### SERMON XIII.

#### THE PRAYER OF FAITH, EXEMPLIFIED IN THE WOMAN OF CANAAN.

“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me! But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.”—Matt. xv. 21—28.

WHEN John the Baptist sent a message to Jesus, saying, “Art thou he that should

come, or do we look for another,” Jesus gave an indirect answer, an answer containing a reproof. Whether John himself, retaining like the apostles the notion of a temporal kingdom, and therefore expecting on his being put in prison that a great revolution would follow in favor of the Messiah, and hearing of nothing but companies of poor people repairing to him to be healed of their infirmities, began to hesitate whether he might not have been mistaken; or whether he only personated some of his disciples; somebody appears to have been stumbled at the simplicity of Christ’s appearance. Hence the indirect answer of Jesus: “Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.—And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.” To be encompassed by crowds of afflicted people supplicating for mercy, and employed in relieving them, was sustaining a character, though far from what the world calls splendid, yet truly great, and worthy of the Messiah. The short account of this poor woman is more profitable to be read than a long and minute history of military exploits.

In endeavoring to improve this brief story, we will notice who the petitioner was—what was her errand—and the repeated applications which were made, with the repeated repulses, but ultimate success, that she met with.

I. Let us observe WHO THE PETITIONER WAS. She is said to be “a woman of Canaan.” Mark says she was “a Greek;” but the term, in this and some other connections, seems to denote only that she was a Gentile, and not that she came from the country called Greece; for, in the same passage, she is said to have been “a Syrophenician by nation.”

She was a Gentile; one of the first-fruits of that harvest of Gentiles that was shortly to be gathered in. Our Lord, though he was sent, as he said, “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” yet extended his mercy to individuals of other nations: and it is worthy of notice that those few who were gathered at this early period are highly commended for the eminence of their faith. Like the first-fruits of the earth, they were the best. It might still be said, on a review of things among us, that such faith as that of the woman of Canaan and the Roman centurion is rarely to be found in Israel.

Farther: She was not only a Gentile, but one of those Gentiles who were under a *peculiar curse*. She appears to have been one of the descendants of the ancient Canaanites; many of whom, when driven from their own country, settled on the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. We know the curse to



which that people were devoted, even from the days of their ancestor Canaan, the son of Ham. We know also that Joshua was commanded not to spare them, and that Israel was forbidden to make leagues with them. This curse, however, came upon them for their being an exceedingly wicked people. The abominations of which they were guilty, and which were nursed by their idolatry as by a parent sin, are given as the reason why the land vomited out its inhabitants, and why Israel must form no alliances with them, lest they should learn their ways. There was no time in which the God of Israel refused even a Canaanite who repented and embraced his word. Of this, Rahab the harlot, Uriah the Hittite, Ornan the Jebusite, and others, were examples. The door of mercy has ever been open to faith: and though it seemed, in this instance, to be shut, it was only to prove the party, and to induce her to plead with greater importunity.

II. Let us notice HER ERRAND. It was not her own case, but a case which she had made her own; that of her young daughter. She pleaded it, however, as if it were her own—"Have mercy on me! Lord help me! From this part of the subject we may learn

1. *That, in our approaches to Christ, it becomes us to go not for ourselves only, but for others around us, and to make their cases ours.* He to whom the application was made could not but approve of this principle; for it was that on which he himself was acting at the time. He took the cause of perishing sinners, and made it his own. "He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows." A spirit of sympathy is the very spirit of Christ, which they that are joined to him must needs possess.

2. *That it behoves us, more especially, to carry the cases of our children to the Lord, and to make them our own.* It may be, they are too young to understand or feel their own malady, or to know where help is to be had; in this case, surely, it is our proper business to personate them before the Lord: or, it may be, their minds are blinded, and their hearts hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, so as to have no desire to pray for themselves; and then we can do no less than carry their case to him who alone is able to help. What less, and in many instances what more, can an afflicted parent do for an ungodly child? It is true we have no ground to expect the salvation of our children, while they continue hardened; but Jesus is "exalted to give repentance and remission of sins;" and, while we present our supplication in a way of submission to his will, he will not be offended with us. It was the practice of holy Job to offer sacrifices for his children; and it seems to be a part of God's plan frequently to bless the children at the intercession of the parent,

and thus to express his approbation of something which they have done for him. "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus," said Paul, "for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain."

III. Let us remark THE REPEATED APPLICATIONS, THE REPEATED REPULSES, AND THE ULTIMATE SUCCESS WHICH CROWNED THE WHOLE. Here were no fewer than four applications; three of which were made by the woman herself, and one by the disciples, on her behalf. Three out of the four failed; but the fourth succeeded. Let us examine them, and the success they met with, distinctly.

The *first* was made by the woman, and is described as follows:—"She cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." We might remark the brevity, the fulness, and the earnestness of this petition; but there is one thing which our Lord himself afterwards noticed, and which therefore is particularly deserving of our attention: it was the *prayer of faith*. She *believed*, and confessed him to be the Messiah. Her addressing him under the character of "Lord," and as "the son of David," amounted to this. It was a principle universally acknowledged among the Jews that the Lord, or king Messiah, should be of the seed of David. To address him, therefore, under this character, was confessing him to be the Christ. This was the appellation under which he was more than once invoked by certain blind men; and, in every instance, the same idea was meant to be conveyed. These poor people did not address our Saviour in a way of unmeaning complaisance: they understood that the Messiah, "the son of David," was to be distinguished by the exercise of *mercy*: hence they continually associated these ideas. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David!"—Jesus, thou *son of David, have mercy on us!*" And this is the very character given to the Messiah in the Old Testament, especially in the seventy-second Psalm. "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." Thus they had heard, thus they believed, and thus their faith wrought in a way of effectual prayer.

But whence had this woman, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenants of promise, this wisdom? Providence had placed her on the borders of the Holy Land, and she appears to have profited by it. The true religion, contained in the oracles of God, had its influence not only on Israel, but on many individuals in the neighboring nations. It was foretold that they who dwelt *under his shadow* should return; and here we see it accomplished. Probably this poor Canaanite had often gone into the Jewish synagogue to hear the read-

ing of the law and the prophets; and, while many of those who read them gained only a superficial acquaintance with them, she understood them to purpose. One would almost think she must lately have heard the seventy-second Psalm read at one of these assemblies, and have made up her petition out of the passage forecited. "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper;"—then why not me? I will go, and turn this prophecy into a prayer; "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou son of David!" It is good to have our residence near to the means of grace, and to have a heart to make use of them. It is good to grow upon the banks of this river of the water of life. It is pleasant, also, to think of the good effects of the true religion among the posterity of Abraham. It is thus we see the fulfilment of the promise to that faithful man, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing."

But, while these things afford pleasure to us, they must, methinks, have been very provoking to the Jews; and happy had it been for them if they had been provoked to a godly jealousy. Many among them were far behind these strangers in knowledge and in faith, though they enjoyed very superior advantages. The Saviour was continually among them, crying, and calling at their gates, and at the entering in of their cities; yet they generally disregarded him: whereas, in this case, he only took an occasional journey, and that in secret (for, when he entered into a house, "he would have no man know it;") yet here this poor woman found him out, and presented her supplication. How true is that saying of our Lord, "The last shall be first, and the first last!" and how often do we still see persons of inferior advantages enter into the kingdom of God before others who have possessed the greatest abundance of means!

But what treatment did she receive from our Saviour on this her first application? "He answered her not a word." Who would have expected this? Does it accord with his usual conduct? In what instance had he been known to refuse such an application? It was very mysterious, and very discouraging. Is his ear heavy, then, that it cannot hear? or his arm shortened, that it cannot save?—"Answered her not a word!" Who could understand this as any other than a repulse? If the faith of the petitioner had been weak, she might have concluded that he would not answer her because he could not help her. If her heart had been cold, she might have gone away, as many do after having *said* their prayers, contented without the blessing. If her spirit had been haughty, she must and would have resented it, and have asked no more. In short, had she been any thing but what she was—great in faith, in love, and humility—she

would have turned away. And here we may see the wisdom of our Saviour's conduct: had he immediately granted her request, we had seen little or nothing of the exercise of these graces. But let us proceed.

Here is a *second* application made on her behalf; and this is by the disciples: they "came and besought him to send her away." I hope they meant that he would grant her petition. One might have expected something considerable from the intercession of the twelve apostles. He had consented to go and heal the centurion's servant at the request of the Jewish elders: and surely his own disciples must have an interest with him equal to theirs. If the poor woman knew of their becoming her advocates, it is natural to suppose her expectations must have been raised: and this it is likely she did; for, while they were speaking, she seems to have held her peace. Neither need they have been at a loss for a precedent; for, though she was a heathen, yet they had lately witnessed his kind attention to a Roman centurion: and, had they pleaded this, he might have shown mercy at their request. But to what does their intercession amount? Alas, it is mean and pitiful: it does not appear to have a spice of benevolence in it, but to have been merely the effect of self-love: "Send her away," said they, "for she crieth after us." O disciples! And does the voice of prayer trouble you? How little at present do you resemble your Master! We never read of *his* being troubled with the cry of the poor and needy. And this is all you have to urge, is it? Your charity amounts to just so much as that of some wealthy persons, who give a poor man a penny, not out of compassion, but in order to get rid of him!

What is the answer to this miserable petition? Our Lord takes no notice of the mercenary nature of the plea; and this was like *himself*: amidst the numerous faults of his disciples, he often exercised a dignified forbearance towards them. But what answer did he make? "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was true that his commission was especially directed to Israel; and, previously to his resurrection, he even forbade his disciples to go "in the way of the Gentiles:" nor is it any wonder that he should avail himself of this general truth still to withhold his favor, rather than grant it at such a request as this. The motive which they had urged was not likely to work upon him.

But think how it must affect the poor petitioner. Silence was discouraging; but this must have been more so. That might be imputed to other causes: she might suppose he was considering of her request; and, though he had said nothing in her favor, yet he had said nothing against her: this, however, is not only giving her a denial,



but giving the *reason* of it; which would seem to render it irrevocable. To an eye of sense, it would now seem to be a lost case. It is not so, however, to an eye of faith.

Let us proceed to the *third* application. The disciples had been poor advocates. Make way for her, and let her plead her own cause: she can do it best. It is not one, nor two repulses, that will silence the prayer of faith; nor will aught else, so long as Jesus lives, and the invitations and promises of his word continue unrevoked. It was written, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper:" and the efficacy of this declaration must be tried again. "Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me!"

Observe, she prefaces her petition with an *act of worship*. She had before acknowledged him as David's son; now she approaches him as his Lord. Prostrate at his feet, she adores him, and renews her supplication. It is short, yet very full. It has only three words, but more than three ideas, and these full of importance. She here, in effect, tells him that her case is urgent; that she is truly helpless; that no help is to be expected from any other quarter; that she is persuaded of his being able to save to the uttermost; and that it belongs to his character, as Messiah, to help those that have no helper. Though a Canaanite, assuredly she possesses the spirit of an Israelite: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

If there be such a thing as holy violence, or taking the kingdom of heaven, as it were, by force, surely this is it; and, knowing the character of Christ, we should have concluded that this petition *must* be successful. But "Jesus answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." What imperfect judges are we of times and seasons! Just now we should have supposed her cause was gained, and yet it was not so; and now we should have been ready enough to conclude it was lost, and yet it is not so. Let us learn to wait patiently for the Lord, and neither conclude, when we enjoy great fervor and freedom in our approaches to him, that our prayers must be answered immediately or not at all; nor, when thrown back into darkness and discouragement, that now there is no hope. Had this poor woman rested her expectation on her own feelings, or on any thing short of the Lord's own word, she had fainted in this trying moment. What a crowd of thoughts might she at this time have cherished; hard thoughts, proud thoughts, and despairing thoughts!—And is this the Messiah, of whom such glorious things are spoken? Is this the compassion that he is to exercise "to the poor, and to them that have

no helper?" No mercy, no help for a stranger, even though prostrate at his feet; and, as if it were not enough to refuse his assistance, he must call me a dog! I will ask no more: whatever be my lot, I will bear it!—Such might have been her reflections, and such her conduct; but she was a believer, and faith operates in a different way.

Yet what could our Saviour mean by such language? Did he really intend to countenance that contemptuous spirit with which the carnal Jews treated the Gentiles? Surely not. Did he feel towards this poor stranger as his words would seem to indicate? No: his roughness, like that of Joseph towards his brethren, was assumed for the purpose of trying her; and she endures the trial with singular perseverance. She neither resents being called a dog, nor despairs on account of it; but is resolved still to follow up her suit. Yet what new plea can she find to offer?

Let us hear the *fourth* and last application: "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Most admirable! Such an instance of spiritual ingenuity, of holy and humble acumen, was perhaps never known before, nor since. Now the conflict is at an end; the victory is gained; the kingdom of heaven is taken by the prayer of faith. Jesus, like Joseph, can restrain himself no longer, but appears in his true character: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt!" Let us review this charming crisis, and mark the ground from which this last and successful plea proceeded. *It was the ground on which the Lord had placed her.* He intimated that she was a dog, unworthy of the children's bread; she readily admitted it, and as a dog presented her petition. Here, then, is the grand secret how to succeed in our approaches for mercy. We must stand upon that ground where the Scripture places us, and thence present our petition. Does the Lord tell us in his word that we are guilty, unworthy, ungodly, deserving of eternal death? On this ground we must take our stand, and plead for that mercy which is provided for characters of this description. All applications for mercy, on any other ground, will be unsuccessful.

The last answer of Jesus, as well as the last prayer of the woman, is worthy of special notice. There are three things remarkable in it; the recommendation of her faith, the granting of her desire, and the affectionate manner in which both were addressed to her.

"Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith!" This accords with his general practice. The blessings of healing, as well as those of a more spiritual nature, were ordinarily suspended on believing, and, when obtained, were ascribed to it. Hence such language as this: "If thou



canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.—Thy faith hath saved thee.—Thy faith hath made thee whole.” Did our Lord, by this language, mean to give away the honor of salvation from himself? No: it is not used for the purpose of transferring honor to us, but for giving encouragement to faith. Neither is there any opposition of interests between Christ and faith: those who are saved by faith are saved by Christ; for it is of the nature of faith to go out of itself, and draw all from him. Christ’s power and grace operate as the cause of our salvation: faith as the means of it; yet, being a means absolutely necessary for *the bringing of Christ and the soul together*, as well as for the promotion of all other graces, it is constantly held up as the one thing needful.

Perhaps, if we had commended the Canaanitish woman, we should have admired her great importunity and great humility; but our Lord passes over these, taking notice only of her faith: and wherefore? Because faith was the root, or principle, from which the others sprang, and by which they were kept alive.

Our Lord often commended the faith of believers; but I recollect only *two instances in which he speaks of it as being great*; and they are both of them Gentiles: one is the Roman centurion; and the other the woman of whom we are discoursing. There doubtless was an eminency, or peculiar strength, in the faith of each of them; but that which more than any thing rendered it great in our Lord’s account was its being exercised under such *great disadvantages*. To Israel pertained the *promises*. If Gentiles partook of the root and fatness of the olive-tree, it was by being grafted into it, *contrary to nature*. Yet, amidst these disadvantages, they abounded in faith, which, for the degree of it, was not to be found in Israel. Thus we are often provoked to jealousy. Persons whose religious advantages have been small, compared with ours, are nevertheless before us in faith, and love, and heavenly-mindedness. Thus it is that the pride of man is stained, and no flesh suffered to glory in the divine presence.

Having commended her faith, our Saviour proceeds to *grant her desire*: “Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” The Lord does not excite a willing mind, with a view finally to cross it; or an earnestness of desire, in order to disappoint it: such willingness and such desire, therefore, are indicative of his designs. Christ only can satisfy the desires of the mind; and Christians are the only men in the world whose desires are satisfied. Cæsar, in the full possession of empire, is said to have exclaimed, “Is this all?” And such is the disappointment that every sinner will meet with who sets his heart on any thing but Christ. It is not in

the power of the whole creation to say to an immortal, guilty creature, “Be it unto thee even as thou wilt:” but Jesus hath the words of eternal life.

The *tender and affectionate manner* in which our Saviour commended the faith, and fulfilled the desire, of the poor petitioner, is deserving also of remark. It is introduced with an interjection, *O woman!* In the lips of a speaker abounding in affection, such words signify but little: but Jesus never affected to feel when he did not. Whenever, therefore, an interjection is seen in his speeches, we may be certain he felt. He felt *compassion* towards her, on account of her affliction; but chiefly *admiration* and *delight*, on witnessing the peculiar energy of her faith. Thus he  *marvelled* at the Roman centurion. The genuine and especially the eminent exercises of grace are, more than any thing, the delight of Christ’s heart. In looking at the poor and contrite spirit, he overlooks heaven and earth.

It may be rather surprising to us that our Saviour should hold this poor woman so long in suspense: but, if he had not, her graces would not have been so apparent, and the exercise of them so grateful to him. And thus we may account for many of the afflictions through which the Lord brings his servants. If tribulation work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and if, in his esteem, the exercise of these graces be of greater account than our present ease, it is not surprising that he should prefer the former to the latter: and this consideration should reconcile us to those providences which, for a time, hold us in painful suspense.

From the whole we may remark that *genuine, yea, great grace, may be exercised in respect of temporal mercies*. It was not for the salvation of her soul, or the soul of her daughter, that this poor woman was so importunate; but for the removal of an affliction. Yet, such was the grace which was exercised in it, that there is no doubt of her being eternally saved. The exercise of spirituality is not confined to the seeking of spiritual blessings. We may serve the Lord in our daily avocations: and it is essential to true religion that we do so. Such prayer may be offered, and such faith exercised, in respect of our daily bread, as have the promise of everlasting life.

Finally: If our Saviour suffered himself to be overcome by one who sought for a temporal blessing, *much more will he accept of those who come to him for such as are spiritual and eternal*. His promises are much stronger in the one case than in the other. Though there were several general intimations that the Messiah would exercise compassion towards the bodies as well as the souls of men; and the numerous miracles which he wrought afforded full proof of his

readiness to do good in every way; yet he nowhere bound himself; that I recollect, to heal *all* that came to him. I believe he never sent away an individual without a cure: but still he seems to have reserved to himself a kind of discretionary power to do so. But, in matters of everlasting moment, the word is gone out of his lips, "Him that cometh unto me, I will *in no wise* cast out." Here, every one that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, we are assured by the keeper of the gate, it shall be opened. If any man, therefore, be hereafter shut out of the kingdom of heaven, it will appear, in the end, that he sought not after it in the present life; or, at least, that he sought it not by faith.

We shall all be importunate, sooner or later: but importunity will one day be un-availing! Many will then seek to enter in, and shall not be able. Yea, they will cry earnestly, saying, "Lord, Lord, open unto us.—We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say,—Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." O my hearers! let us agonize to enter in at the strait gate. All the zeal and earnestness which we may feel in other things is spending our money for that which is not bread, and our labor for that which satisfieth not. Incline your ear, and come unto Him; hear, and your souls shall live; and he will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

#### SERMON XIV.

##### THE FUTURE PERFECTION OF THE CHURCH CONTRASTED WITH ITS PRESENT IMPERFECTIONS.

"Christ—loved the church, and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish."—Eph. v. 25—27.

It is a distinguishing feature in the apostolic writings that motives to the most ordinary duties are derived from the doctrine of the cross. Who but an apostle would have thought of enforcing affection in a husband to a wife from the love of Christ to his church? We are, undoubtedly, hereby taught to act, in the common affairs of life, from Christian principle: and I am inclined to think that our personal Christianity is more manifested in this way than in any other. It is not by a holiness put on on religious occasions, as we put on our Lord's-day dress, that we shall prove ourselves to be Christians; but by that which is habitual, and which, without our so much as designing it, will spontaneously appear in our language and behavior. If the apostle's heart had

not been full of Christ, he would have thought of other motives than this: but this, being uppermost, presented itself on all occasions. We may be thankful that it was so on this, especially; for we are hereby furnished with a most interesting and affecting view of the salvation of sinners—a salvation originating in the love of Christ, and terminating in their being presented to him without spot, and blameless.

Three things require our attention: namely, the character of the church, when the designs of mercy shall be fulfilled upon her—the causes to which it is ascribed—and the honor for which it is intended to prepare her.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH, WHEN THE DESIGNS OF MERCY SHALL BE FULFILLED UPON HER;—"A glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy, and without blemish." We are at no loss to perceive the meaning of the term *church*, in this connection. It manifestly expresses the whole assembly of the saved, elsewhere called "the church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven." It is denominated *glorious*, through the glory which Christ shall have put upon it; and which, it is intimated, will consist in a freedom from every imperfection, and the consummation of purity, or holy beauty.

In the description here given the apostle has, no doubt, an eye to the church in its different states, as *fallen*, as *renewed*, and as *perfected*. In the first it is supposed to have been defiled, so as to need *sanctifying and cleansing*: and, even in the second, to have many things which diminish its beauty; such as *spots and wrinkles*: but, in the last, it shall be a "*glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*;" or, speaking more literally, "*holy, and without blemish*."

Our ideas of a state of perfection are very defective. An apostle acknowledged, "We know not what we shall be." Indeed it is, at present, but very partially revealed; and, if it were otherwise, our minds, naturally weak and greatly enfeebled by the remains of indwelling sin, would be unable to sustain a direct view of it. We can better conceive what it is *not* than what it is. The apostle himself writes as if he could not fully conceive of the immaculate state of the church: but he could say what it would *not* be, or that it would be *without* those spots and wrinkles which at present attended it, and greatly impaired its beauty! As this, then, was the apostle's manner of contemplating the future glory of the church, let it be ours.

I shall not attempt to compare the church perfected with what it was antecedently to its being sanctified and cleansed, in virtue of Christ's having given himself for it (for, in that view, it admits of no comparison;) but with what it is at present, notwithstanding; that is, the subject of many imperfections.

*Spots* suppose a loveliness of character upon the whole, though in themselves they are unlovely. They could not, with propriety, have been attributed to the church, while she remained un sanctified; for then she was altogether polluted. The same may be said of *imperfections*. It is improper to attribute them to unconverted sinners. Such characters will often acknowledge themselves to have their imperfections; but, in truth, they thereby pay themselves a compliment which does not belong to them. Imperfection supposes the mind to be engaged in the pursuit of perfection, though it has not, as yet, attained it. Spots and imperfections, then, are properly attributed to the church in its present state; indicating a general loveliness of character, though they are in themselves unlovely. Whatever has tended to deface it, or to detract from its holy beauty, that is to be reckoned among its spots.

How much, then, in the first place, has the beauty of Christ's church been defaced by *false doctrines*, and by the strifes and divisions which have followed upon them. While we are of the apostle's mind, determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified, we shall not be in danger of deviating very wildly from the truth, in any of its branches: but, if we lose sight of this polestar, we shall soon fall upon the rocks of error. Paul and his fellow-apostles, inspired as they were, could not maintain the purity of all the churches. The number of worldly men who obtrude themselves upon the church, some in the character of members and others in that of ministers, together with the tendency to err which is found even in believers themselves, too easily accounts for the same things in that and every succeeding age. When the gospel was addressed to the Jews, many of them believed; but, among their leaders, there were men whose minds were not subdued to the obedience of Christ. Christianity, said they, is very good, so far as it goes; but it is *defective*. It grates with our feelings, who have been used to so much religious pomp. Circumcision, and a few of our decent ceremonies, would complete it. So also, when the gospel was addressed to the learned Greeks, some of them believed; but among them were men who wanted to supply some of its supposed defects. Christianity, said they, is good, so far as it goes; but it wants a little philosophy to be added to it, and the whole to be cast into a philosophical mould; and then it will be respectable, and worthy of being the religion of the whole human race.

But what said the apostle to the churches in respect of these proposals? Hear him: "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you

through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the *fulness* of the Godhead bodily. And ye are *complete* in him, which is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are *circumcised* with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it. *Let no man therefore judge you* in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Christ. *Let no man beguile you of your reward*, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind; and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

Had the church of Christ adhered to this counsel, it had been free from many spots which have since defaced it: but it has not. In every age there have been men of corrupt minds, who have followed the example of these *Judaizing* and *philosophizing* teachers, in their attempts to render the doctrine of Christ more *complete*, that is, more congenial to the wishes of their own hearts: and the church has, in too many instances, been carried away by them. Some have degraded the dignity of Christ, and thereby undermined his sacrifice; others have disowned the freeness of his grace; and others have turned it into licentiousness. Behold, how, at this day, the beauty of the church is marred by these antichristian principles, and the strifes which ensue upon them! One denomination, or society, sees the spots upon the face of another, and is employed in exposing them, instead of removing those upon its own; while the impartial eye must perceive that deviations from the simplicity of the gospel are, in different degrees, to be found in all.

Blessed be God, who hath given us to expect a day when the church shall be freed from all this deformity; when the watchmen shall see eye to eye; when the people of God, now divided into parties, shall be of one heart and of one soul; when neither discordance nor defect shall attend their re-



searches; and when we shall all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ!

How much also has the beauty of Christ's church been defaced by *superstitious* and *unscriptural worship*. The method of *completing* Christianity, by the addition of a number of decent ceremonies, first practised by the Judaizing teachers, has been acted over and over again. The introduction of such things in the first three centuries made way for the grand papal apostacy; and spots of this kind remain upon the faces of many Protestant communities to this day. The nearer we approach to the simplicity of primitive worship the better. The meretricious ornaments of man's invention may adorn the mother of harlots, but they are blemishes to the bride of Christ. They are the *wood, hay, and stubble* of the building, which later builders have laid upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and which, when the day shall come that shall declare every man's work, of what sort it is, will be burnt up.

Finally: The beauty of Christ's church has been greatly defaced by the *impure lives* of great numbers of its members. I do not now refer to the immoral practices of all that have been called Christians; as a large proportion of them cannot be said to have deserved the name. I refer to those only who have either been Christians indeed, or, at least, received and treated as such by those who were so. The evils which have prevailed among them have been great, and still furnish matter of shame and grief in all the churches. The primitive churches themselves, some more especially, had many spots of this description. And it is worthy of notice that those who most departed from the doctrine of Christ, such as the Corinthians, the Galatians, and the Hebrews, were most faulty in matters of practice. The evil communications of some of their teachers tended to corrupt good manners. The same causes continue also to produce the same effects. Those congregations where the pure doctrine of the cross is relinquished, whether it be in favor of what is called morality on the one hand or high notions of orthodoxy on the other, are commonly distinguished by the laxity of their conduct. Many of the former, by a conformity to the genteel vices of the world, have nearly lost all pretensions to Christianity; and many of the latter, by their opposition to practical preaching, and neglect of Christian discipline, have been offensive to common decency. Nor is this all: even the purest communities have their spots. Individuals are chargeable with things for which the good ways of God are evil spoken of; and they that have been enabled to maintain a fair character in the eyes of men, have,

nevertheless, much alienation of heart, and many faults to acknowledge and bewail before God.

We are given, however, to believe that it will not be thus always. The church will not only see better days, before the end of time, but, ere she is presented to her Lord, shall be entirely purified: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things which offend, and them which do iniquity: then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

Another term by which the present imperfections of the church are expressed is that of *wrinkles*. These, as well as spots, are inconsistent with perfect beauty. They are signs of the decay of life, and health, and vigor: hence they are the ordinary symptoms of old age, or of an enfeebled constitution. Surely a more appropriate term could not have been chosen for expressing those *spiritual declensions to which the church, in its present state, is continually subject*. The church at Ephesus, during her *first love*, resembled a virgin in the bloom of youthful beauty; but when she left it, and, with it, her *first works*, she became as a woman bowed down by age, and covered with wrinkles. In this church we see what the church in general is, compared with what it was in the primitive ages; what Protestants are, compared with what they were at the Reformation; what Protestant Dissenters are, compared with the Puritans and Nonconformists; and what many congregational churches are, compared with what they have been at certain periods. I need not enlarge on these particulars: your own reflections are sufficient to convince you that great numbers of each description are in a wrinkled or decayed state. There is indeed, in us, a strong and perpetual tendency to declension. Things which have formerly been interesting and impressive will, if we do not habitually walk with God, lose their influence. We shall read of the zeal of the apostles, of the martyrs, and of other Christian worthies; but we shall not feel it. On the contrary, we shall seem to be reading of men whom we cannot but admire, but whom we know not how to imitate.

How cheering is the thought that the time is coming when these spots and wrinkles will be no more; but the church, and every individual member of it, shall be "holy, and without blemish!"

Holy beauty, in every stage and degree of it, is lovely. The character given to that generation of the Israelites which grew up in the wilderness, and which, warned by the crimes and punishments of its predecessors, clave in great numbers to the Lord, is charming: "Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after

me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, said the Lord." It was then that Balaam endeavored in vain to curse them; and that, instead of cursing, he was constrained to bless them. Like an old debauchee, awed by the dignity of virtue, he was compelled to desist, and even to admire the object which he could not imitate: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel.—Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" Such, I may say, was the youthful beauty of the Jewish church; and that of the Christian church was still greater. To read the Acts of the Apostles, and to see the faith, the love, the zeal, the disinterestedness, the diligence, and the patience of the first disciples, is very affecting. It was then that they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers; that great grace was upon them all; and that, having believed in Jesus, they rejoiced in being thought worthy to suffer for his name. But, lovely as both the Jewish and Christian churches were, neither of them could vie with the church made perfect. The disparity between the highest degrees of holiness and a state of sinless perfection is inconceivable. The deliverance of the captives from mere temporal thralldom, and which was only the *effect* of sin, was so overcoming, that they were *like those that dream*, scarcely believing themselves to be what and where they were: but for the church of God, in full remembrance of its foul revolts, to feel itself *holy, and without blemish*, is an idea too great for sinful creatures to comprehend.

If any imagine that this language is too strong, and that sinless perfection, or what is near to it, has been attained by many in the present life, I would recommend them to consider that to be *holy, and without blemish*, is different according to the different kinds and degrees of light in which it is viewed. A vessel may be clean if viewed in a dim light, and very foul if viewed in a clear one. Thus a *character* may be *holy, and without blemish*, if viewed only in the light of selfish partiality, or even by the partiality of friendship; nay, if he be a recluse, the prejudice of an enemy may not be able to detect his faults: but place him before the tribunal of God, set his secret sins in the light of *his* countenance, and the decision will be different. To be presented *holy and without blemish*, is to be so *in his sight*. Such is the idea conveyed by the words of Jude: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless *before the presence of his glory*, with exceeding joy." To be faultless in the

presence of an earthly judge, especially of one distinguished by his penetration and impartiality, is no small matter: but to be so in the presence of *him* to whom all things are known, implies a change far surpassing every thing experienced among mortals.

The low ideas which some persons entertain of sinless perfection may be owing, in part, to their considering it chiefly in a *negative* point of view. Feeling, it may be, very little positive desire after their evil courses, they begin to think they have not sinned for such a length of time, and consequently are now nearly, if not altogether, perfect. But perfection does not consist merely in a cessation from evil (which is no more than may be ascribed to animals,) but in the love of God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and of our neighbors as ourselves. The state to which the church shall be brought, before she is presented to her Lord, is that of being not only "without blemish," but "*holy and without blemish.*"

In that perfect state, we shall be unreservedly *devoted to the Lord*. No more shall the mind be betrayed, by the illusive reasonings of men, to listen to God-dishonoring principles: no more shall it lose sight of Christ, in the maze of its own researches. The blandishments of the world shall no more seduce the heart; nor hope, nor fear, nor shame, divert the feet from the path of rectitude. No more shall slothfulness, or any kind of sinful indulgence, unnerve the soul in its labors for God. No more shall the flesh lust against the spirit, nor the spirit have to struggle with the flesh. No more shall our half-hearted services render it doubtful, to ourselves or others, on whose side we are. In a word,—there the Lord's "*servants shall serve him.*"

The multitude, in that perfect state, will also, *in respect of each other*, be of one heart and of one soul. No discordant sentiments divide them; no unkindnesses grieve them; no bitter strifes interrupt their harmony; no slights, misunderstandings, misconstructions, hard thoughts, or cutting words, have place among them; no giving or taking offence; no opposition of interests; no selfishness; no envies, jealousies, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: all is sweet peace and love. Bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, with all malice, are forever put away from among them. In him that loved and gave himself for them, all hearts are one.

This leads us to consider

II. THE CAUSES TO WHICH ALL THIS IS ASCRIBED: Christ "loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." I think it not improbable that the apostle may allude to the parable concerning the Jewish church, in the six-

teenth chapter of Ezekiel. The substance of it is this:—A female infant, the fruit, perhaps, of an illicit connection (whose wretched parent, in order to hide her shame, had left it in the fields,) was discovered by a humane prince, who happened to be passing that way at the time. He looked at the perishing babe, and pitied it. I will save thy life, said he; and, as thou art fatherless and motherless, I will be both father and mother to thee, and thou shalt be mine.—He then washed and clothed her; and, taking her to his palace, gave her an education suited to his intentions, which in fact were, at a proper time, to marry her. On her arriving at years of maturity, he carried his design into execution; she became his wife, and the crown royal was placed upon her head.

Look at this representation, and at his conduct who “loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish.” Look, I say, at both these representations, and judge if the one has not some reference to the other.

There are three things to which the salvation of the church is here ascribed; namely, the *love* of Christ—the *sacrifice* of Christ—and the *word* of Christ.

1. For the accomplishment of so great a deliverance, it was necessary that Christ should *LOVE the church*. The thought of this is overwhelming. His wisdom and power and majesty may induce us to admire and adore him; but to think of his *loving* sinful men excites amazement.

There are several properties pertaining to the love of Christ which require to be taken into the account, if we would form anything like a just view of it. Love may be founded upon *character*. Christ himself speaks of loving his disciples on this account: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” But that of which we are discoursing could not be founded upon anything of this kind; for its object is supposed to be altogether polluted. He loved his church, and gave himself for it, not because it was sanctified and cleansed, or in view of its being so; but “that he *might* sanctify and cleanse it.” Again, love towards an unworthy object is, commonly, no other than *general benevolence*. Such was that compassion which our Saviour felt when he wept over Jerusalem; and such that *good will towards men* of which his being born into the world was an expression. God’s giving his only-begotten Son to be made a sacrifice, and declaring that “whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life,” was a

great expression of divine goodness towards sinners, whether they believe and be saved or not. But the love which Christ is said to have borne to the church was *discriminating* and *effectual* to its salvation. The church is supposed to have been given him of the Father, to be unto him as a bride to a husband, and, ultimately, the reward of his undertaking. The love of Christ, therefore, in this connection, can be no other than *electing* love; and the passage may be considered as parallel with that at the beginning of the epistle, “He hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love.”

2. For the accomplishment of the church’s redemption, it was necessary that Christ should *give himself a sacrifice*. In this way his love must operate, or be ineffectual. We are now, my brethren, upon the most interesting part of the most interesting subject that was ever presented to men or angels. It was this on which Paul wrote so feelingly: “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who *loved me, and gave himself for me*.” It was this that furnished John with his affecting doxology: “Unto him that *loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood*,—to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” It is this that furnishes the church in heaven with its “new song:” “Thou art worthy—for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

But wherefore must our Redeemer give himself for us? Would nothing short of life suffice? Nothing. We, as transgressors, being justly exposed to eternal death, must have borne our iniquity, had he not offered himself as a substitute in our place, life for life. Some who profess to believe in the atonement have hesitated, from I know not what kind of modesty, to maintain the *necessity* of it in order to forgiveness; alleging that it does not become us to say what God could or could not have done. But does it become us, when he has, in effect, declared anything to be inconsistent with his perfections, to question whether it might not, nevertheless, be admissible? Why did not the cup pass from him, when, with strong crying and tears to God, he besought that *IF IT WERE POSSIBLE*, it might do so? It is true, “it *pleased* the Lord to bruise him;” but, surely, not without a necessity for it! If mercy could have been manifested consistently with justice, without his suffering, surely the cup would have passed from him! Whoever had been given up to be made a curse, God would have spared his own Son! But “it *became* him for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through



sufferings." To give up the *necessity* of atonement is half giving up the thing itself: and the half which remains will have but little effect on our hearts, or on the tenor of our labors.

The connection in which the death of Christ is here introduced, namely, as being *for his church*, or, which is the same thing, for his elect people, teaches us that all which he did and suffered was with a view to their salvation. The invitations of the gospel, it is true, are addressed to sinners, as sinners; and I believe it to be equally true that such invitations are founded on the *sufficiency* of Christ's atonement for the pardon of all the sins of the whole world, were they to believe in him; but if we will allow the Scriptures to speak out on all occasions, and form our principles by them, taken as a whole, we must conclude that it was his *intention, design, or purpose*, to save those, and only those, by it, who were given to him of the Father. In other words, it never was his intention to impart faith, and other succeeding benefits, to any other than his elect: "Whom he did predestinate them he also called." We are saved and called, "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began."

I am aware that many objections might here be raised; but I am also aware that they all rest upon the principle that *divine predestination and human agency cannot be consistent, unless they appear to us to be so*. This I do not believe. It did not belong to Moses to explain *how* the message of peace to Pharaoh and Sihon were consistent with the purpose of God to destroy them: but I suppose he believed they were so, because the same Being (who could not do wrong) ordered the former and declared the latter. Neither does it belong to me to show *how*, with respect to the persons who shall be ultimately benefited by the death of Christ, a limitation of design is consistent with universal invitations: but I believe it to be so, because he that has ordered the one has, in effect, declared the other. Vain men may ask, "Why then doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" But if, instead of "replying against God," they were to throw themselves at the feet of sovereign mercy, and seek forgiveness in the name of Jesus, it would turn to a better account.

3. For the accomplishment of the church's salvation it requires that it should be sanctified and cleansed by faith in the *word* of God. The latter of these terms frequently denotes the removal of sin, as to its condemning as well as its defiling influence. The blood of Christ operates in both ways; and the faith of him, in different respects, both justifies and sanctifies. As the process,

however, seems principally to refer to the *meeting* of the church, by a gradual increase of holy beauty, the terms *sanctify* and *cleanse* may, in this place, convey much the same idea. It never was the Lord's design to save his people in their sins, but from them. Sanctification, therefore, is an essential branch of salvation. The word, especially the word of the gospel, truly believed, is the laver in which the sinner is washed from his uncleanness. He may have, heretofore, yielded a traditional assent to it, and remained a slave to his lusts notwithstanding: but when, being convinced of sin by a view of the divine law, he receives it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, it worketh *effectually in him*. He may have made many attempts at cleansing himself while under the power of unbelief; but everything of this kind was ineffectual, and left him fouler in the sight of God than it found him. And well it might; for it was going, as it were, to Abana and Pharpar, in contempt of the waters of Jordan. Till, therefore, the sinner, renewed in the spirit of his mind, is brought to relinquish all confidence, except in Christ, his attempts at holiness are but wearying himself with very vanity.

There is, it is observable, a marked *connection* in this as well as in many other passages between the sacrifice of Christ and the sanctification of his people. He "gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it." Had not Christ laid down his life, there had been no holiness among the fallen sons of Adam, no gospel-laver in which to wash, nor any such thing as sanctification of the Spirit; all had continued in their uncleanness. It had been as inconsistent with the perfections of God to have given his Holy Spirit to a sinner as to have pardoned his sins, or bestowed upon him any other spiritual blessing. But having sacrificed his life, and that under a promise, the effectual grace of God not only may be imparted consistently with justice, but the communication of it is rendered certain, inasmuch as it is a part of the promised reward. Hence, it is represented as the *fruit, or effect*, of his death. Believers are the *seed* which he was to see; the *travail* of his soul, which should yield him a satisfaction, like that of a mother who "remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world!"

It is on this principle that our Lord, in view of the unbelief of the Jewish nation, thus speaks in prophecy: "I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with Jehovah, and my work with my God." As if he should say, Whether Israel be gathered or not, I shall be rewarded. My work is before God, the judge of all, who will not suffer it to fall to the ground. If

Israel be lost, their loss will be to themselves; it shall be more than made up to me, from among the Gentiles.

To render manifest this *connection*, it was ordered, in the divine counsels, that an extraordinary measure of the Holy Spirit should be poured out immediately after the sacrifice was offered: and, lest the cause of it should be overlooked, our Saviour expressly declared that, if he went not away, the Comforter would not come: but that, if he went, he would send him: and that he should convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This was the appointed time for great numbers of the Jews to be convinced of their unbelief, as well as for the Gentiles to be converted, and given to Christ, as the reward of his death. Things were thus connected in order of time, that they might appear to be connected in order of nature; or that one might appear to be, what it actually was, the effect of the other.

Add to this, The death of Christ is not only a procuring cause of sanctification, but, as a doctrine, it operates to the producing of it. Hence, the same effects are ascribed to the washing of water by the word, and to the blood of the Lamb. The atonement offered was that in *virtue* of which we are sanctified; and the atonement preached and believed is the *means* of its accomplishment: "We are sanctified by faith that is in him."

I proceed to notice

III. THE HONOR FOR WHICH THIS GRACE TOWARDS THE CHURCH IS INTENDED TO PREPARE IT: "That he might present it to himself." There is no doubt but the term here alludes to the presenting of an espoused virgin to her husband. Under this imagery, the Scriptures are wont to represent the different joyful advances of the church towards perfection. As the destruction of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of the heathen empire of Rome, are described in language applicable to the last judgment, intimating that they would be, to the parties concerned, days of judgment in miniature; so the different advances of the church towards perfection are described in language applicable to a state of perfection itself. Thus the conversion of sinners is represented as an espousal of them to one husband, that they might be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ. The conversion of the Gentiles to Christ is also thus described: "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house. So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord, and worship thou him.—The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee. With gladness and rejoicing

shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace." Under the same imagery seem to be represented the great conversions to Christ in the latter day. Immediately after the fall of Babylon, the voice of a great multitude is heard in heaven, saying, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the *marriage* of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the *marriage-supper* of the Lamb.—These are the true sayings of God."

On each of these occasions there is a partial presentation of the church to Christ; and all are preparatory to that universal and perfect one which shall take place at the end of time.

But there seems to be something singular in the idea of Christ's *presenting the church to himself*. The office of presenting the bride, we should suppose, properly belongs to her parent. But how if she had no parent, and, like the orphan before described, was cast out, without an eye to pity or a hand to help her? In this case the bridegroom must himself be her father and perform the office of a father throughout, even to the presenting of her to himself. If such be the allusion, it represents in an affecting light our forlorn condition as under the fall; and teaches us that in every stage of our salvation we must remember it, in order to heighten our love to Christ.

The perfection of bliss that will succeed to this presentation is beyond all our present conceptions. Suffice it to say that Christ will be the sum and substance of it. We have already noticed the glory of the church as being freed from her spots and blemishes; but this, though a great blessing, is chiefly negative. Besides this, there is a positive source of enjoyment in an uninterrupted and endless communion with her Lord and Saviour. To be able to comprehend the breadth, and length, and height of the love of Christ, and so to be filled with all the fulness of God, is the mark on which saints on earth are directed to keep their eye; but to attain it is reserved for saints in heaven. Nor shall they so comprehend it as to leave no room for continued researches: for how shall they perfectly know that which "passeth knowledge?"

Finally: It is observable that under the figure of being admitted to a marriage-feast, or excluded from it, we see what will shortly be the test of us all: "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.—And they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut." If there

be any thing of importance in this world, it is to be *ready* when the Lord cometh; not by such preparations as those to which sinners are apt to flee when their fears are alarmed, but by believing in the Son of God, and keeping his commandments. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Look off from every other dependence, and put your trust in him. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.—Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord.—Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching!"

### SERMON XV.

#### THE GOSPEL THE ONLY EFFECTUAL MEANS OF PRODUCING UNIVERSAL PEACE AMONG MANKIND.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.—Mal. iv. 5, 6.

MALACHI, the last of the Old-testament prophets, lived in an age of great degeneracy, and much of his prophecy is taken up in bearing testimony against it. The last two chapters, however, inform us of a remnant who feared the Lord and thought upon his name. Partly for their encouragement, and partly for the awakening of the careless, he introduces the coming of the Messiah, and intimates that the very next prophet who should be sent would be his harbinger.

That we may understand the passage first read, I shall offer a few observations upon it.

1. John the Baptist is here called "Elijah the prophet" because he would be as it were another Elijah; resembling him not only in his austerity and general appearance, but in the spirit and power with which he preached: "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

2. The coming of Christ is called "that great and terrible day of the Lord." This may seem to disagree with the general current of prophecy. It is common for the prophets to represent this great event as a source of unusual joy, and to call not men only, but the very inanimate creation, to join in it. The truth is, the same event

which afforded joy to those who received him brought desolation and destruction to those who received him not. It is in this light that the prophet represents it in chap. iii. 2. "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" And the fact was that for the rejection of him such tribulations came upon the Jewish nation as were not since the beginning of the world to that time, and would never be again. This was the "day" referred to in ver. 1, which should "burn as an oven;" when all the proud, and all that should do wickedly, would be stubble; the day that should burn them up, and leave them neither root nor branch.

3. It is intimated that previously to the ministry of John there would be great dissensions and bitter animosities among the Jewish people; parents at variance with their children, and children with their parents: altogether producing such a state of society that, if there had been no change for the better, the land might have been smitten with a curse sooner than it was. Subjugated by the Romans, one part of the nation, for the sake of private interest, sided with them and accepted places under them, by which they became odious in the eyes of the other. Some became soldiers under the Roman standard, and treated their brethren with violence; others became publicans, or farmers of the public taxes, entering deeply into a system of oppression. A spirit of selfishness pervaded all ranks and orders of men, prompting those on one side to deeds of oppression and those on the other to discontent and bitter antipathies. Besides this, they were divided into a number of religious sects, which bore the most inveterate hatred to each other, and were all far off from truth and godliness.

4. It is predicted that John's ministry should have a conciliating influence, turning men's hearts one to another, and so tending to avert the curse which hung over them. Such were actually the effects of it. Nor were they accomplished by a mere interference between the parties, or by laboring to produce a mere outward reformation; but by first turning them to God, through Jesus Christ. Hence Luke, in quoting the words of Malachi, connects the turning of the hearts of the fathers to the children with the turning of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and the making ready a people prepared for the Lord. John's errand was to call sinners to repentance, adding, withal, that they should believe in him that should come after him. And, wherever this effect was produced, a new bond of union existed, and former antipathies were forgotten. The exhortations also which he gave to those who repented and applied for baptism were such as struck at every species of selfishness, and tended to promote peace and



unanimity among men. He called for "fruits meet for repentance."—"The people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." Such repentance, and such fruits, so far as they prevailed, must produce the most happy effect upon the country, and tend to avert the curse. Those believed through the ministry of John, Christ, or of the apostles, were as the salt of the land; and it might be for their sakes their punishment was deferred till forty years after they had crucified the Lord of glory. When God had gathered a people among them, the remnant grew worse and worse, till, in the end, the curse overtook them. Previously to that "great and terrible day of the Lord," it was predicted that all their other crimes they would add to the most bitter persecution of Christ's disciples. "The brother," said our Lord, "I will deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and the children shall put their parents to death, and the children shall put to death." Such was the fact. "The Jews killed the Lord Jesus and their prophets," they persecuted his followers, and that with a rage which not only dishonoured God, but rendered them odious to him.

In short, we see that so far as the curse was received it tended to heal the world, and to retard the day of evil. It is easy to perceive that the same causes, applied to the world in general, would be productive of the same effects; or that the curse is the only effectual means of healing the divisions among mankind, and so of averting the curse which hangs over us into the future.

That we may see the evidence and importance of this truth, it will be proper to take a view of the divisions which have obtained among men, with their causes and tendency; and the inefficacy of all human means for removing them; and of the efficacy of the gospel for this great purpose.

I. Let us take a view of THE DISSENSIONS WHICH HAVE OBTAINED AMONG MEN, WITH THEIR CAUSES AND TENDENCY. The state of the Jewish people in the times of John was but an epitome of human nature, as sunk into a gulf of depravity. From the fall of man to this day the earth has been a scene of discord. Jealousies and antipathies rendered the first-born child of Adam a murderer; and, prior to the flood, "the

earth was corrupt before God, and—filled with violence." Whether war was then reduced to a system, as it has been since, we are not told; but, if not, it might be owing to the world not being yet divided into nations. The springs of domestic and social life were poisoned; the tender ties of blood and affinity violated; and quarrels, intrigues, oppressions, robberies, and murders, pervaded the abodes of man.

When that generation was swept away, and a new world arose from the family of Noah, it might have been expected that the example which had been so recently exhibited would have had some effect; but in a little time the same things were acted over again. The story of Nimrod, though brief, affords a specimen of what has been going on in the world ever since. What is the history of nations, but an account of a succession of mighty hunters and their adherents, each of whom, in his day, caused terror in the land of the living? The earth has been a kind of theatre, in which one part of mankind, being trained and furnished with weapons, have been employed to destroy another; and this, in a great measure, for the gratification of the spectators!

Nor is this spirit of discord confined to nations. It pervades, in different degrees, every department of society, civil or religious. If the heavenly plant decay in any connection, or among any people, this weed will presently spring up in its place. No sooner did the church at Corinth become degenerate in their principles and conduct, than there were divisions among them. And, when the Galatians had corrupted the doctrine of Christ, they required to be warned against "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife," &c., and to be told that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Whence is it that this evil spirit proceeds? Doomed as men are to innumerable evils during their short residence upon earth, and to death as the issue, one would think it might excite a sympathy towards each other as fellow-sufferers, and a concern to mitigate, rather than to increase, the miseries of their situation. And when such things are viewed generally and abstractedly there are few men who would not admit so much as this, and wonder, indeed, that the world cannot live in peace. But when particular cases occur, and the general good is thought to clash with private interest, all these reasonings evaporate like smoke, and the lusts which war in the members bear down every thing before them. The root of the evil lies in our having forsaken God, and become alienated from him. It was the law of our creation, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself:" and there is a closer connection between these

different branches of the law than we are apt to suppose. If we love God, we shall love our brother also. For a man to *fear God* was sufficient to ensure a just, kind, and humane treatment of his fellow men. But, if we cease to love *him*, we shall not be able to love one another, unless it be for our own sake. It is the love of ourselves only that, in this case, governs us: and this is a principle which, not being subordinate to the love of God, is of the essence of sin, and tends, in its own nature, to fill the world with discord. Men form connections, some on a small, and some on a larger scale; but, where self-love is the motive, every thing is expected to be done for their own honor, interest, or happiness; and, the same thing being expected on the other side, there is no place for concord.

If two persons bear an affectionate good will to each other as children of the same family, and each seek the good of the other from the pleasure of doing him good, and without so much as thinking that it is to issue in his own advantage, it *will* issue in his own advantage; and that to a far greater degree than if he had directly sought it: for God has so constituted things that in seeking another's good we shall find our own. If parents and children, husbands and wives, feel only for themselves, they will resemble men in a famine, in which "no man spareth his brother:" one snatches on the right hand, and is hungry: another eats on the left hand, and is not satisfied. But if they feel one for another—if, like the widow of Zarephath by Elijah, each one be willing to divide his morsel, that morsel becomes seven times more sweet, and God often blesses and increases it till the return of plenty.

These remarks are equally applicable to nations as to individuals and families. It is owing to self-love having taken place of the love of God, that treaties of alliance and commerce are so frequently broken. While each party seeks nothing but its own interest, and requires that of the other to give place to it, it is impossible that concord should be of any continuance. If such leagues be not at once dissolved, it is merely in consideration of the one party hoping to gain, *notwithstanding* the selfishness of the other, or fearing that greater evils will result from the breach than from the fulfilment of the treaty. But unions on so frigid a principle are unworthy of the name.

It is not difficult to perceive what must be the *tendency* of such a state of things. Nothing can better express it than the words of the Lord by the prophet, "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Where the love of God has no place, and self-love is the ruling principle in every department of society, every thing is ripening for destruction. If the whole earth were in this state, it would be as the barren fig-tree, and

Heaven would say, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" It were better that there should be no world than such a world as this.

II. Consider THE INEFFICACY OF ALL HUMAN MEANS FOR THE REMOVAL OF THESE EVILS. The miseries produced in the earth by discord are so serious that it is become the necessary study of the thinking part of mankind to counteract them. Had the love of God ruled in the heart, this had been the cement of the world. Had men been ten thousand times more numerous than they are, this would have bound them all together: but, this principle being extinct, others of a very inferior nature must be substituted in its place. It is partly by softening the asperities of human nature, and partly by cultivating its most pacific principles, that any thing is effected: but, though these means may diminish the evil, yet they cannot produce any thing like a radical cure. Let us instance in a few particulars:—

First, Great things have been done by *education*. By a course of discipline in early life mankind are taught to avoid all rude and provoking language, and to carry it courteously and respectfully to all about them. Even harsh things, if expressed in soft and gentle terms, will, in a good degree, lose their harshness, and tend to disarm the party of resentment. "A soft answer turneth away wrath, while grievous words stir up anger." Herein consists the difference between barbarous and civilized society; a difference for which there is great cause for thankfulness. But, after all, the change which is hereby effected is nearly confined to the surface of things: the real temper of the heart is much the same. The grand study in this science is appearance. The most bitter and malignant speeches are uttered without shame by those who reckon themselves gentlemen; and murder itself is patronized by the laws of honor. It were a difficult question to determine which would be the least friendly to human happiness, for the whole world to be sunk into the lowest state of barbarism or raised to these haughty and atheistical notions of honor. Assuredly, this is not the way in which universal peace will be produced on earth.

Another principle to which great things also are ascribed is a *union of interests*. It is an undoubted fact that God, in his providence, has so interwoven the interests of mankind that they cannot subsist without each other. We talk proudly of independence; but we are all dependent, both upon God and one another. What would any individual be, if left alone? What would a family be, if separated from all other families? What would cities be without the country, or the country without cities? Nay, what would nations be, if shut out from all intercourse with other nations? These con-



siderations ought, no doubt, to induce mankind, of all ranks, degrees, and situations, to study the things which make for peace; and to say that they actually have no influence in promoting concord would be saying what is manifestly untrue. To this principle we are indebted for the stifling of thousands of quarrels, which would otherwise burst forth, and render society intolerable. To this also we are indebted for the suppression of a very large portion of religious hatred. Considering the enmity of wicked men against serious Christians, instead of being surprised at its breaking out so much as it does, we have more reason to be surprised that it breaks out no more. Had not God so bound mankind together that they cannot obtain their own ends without being civil and kind to others, where there is one instance of bitter persecution, we might expect a hundred; and the same may be said of every other species of malevolence.

But, though such a constitution of things furnishes matter for thankfulness, yet it is utterly inadequate to the producing of peace on earth, and good will to men. Stifled animosity is very different from love: the good understanding which arises from it is not peace, but the mere suspension of hostilities for the sake of convenience. It has been said that the only thing necessary to produce universal peace is that mankind be enlightened to know their true interests. Certain it is that, if our true interests were known and pursued, we should seek the good of mankind in all that we have to do with them: but sin, operating in a way of selfishness, blinds the mind, and prompts men to seek their own interest, in opposition to that of others. Such also is the strength of corrupt propensity in men that in many cases, which must appear to be injurious to themselves as well as others, they will frequently give way to it, whatever be the consequence, and even ruin themselves for the sake of ruining their neighbors. It is not, therefore, on this ground that we can rationally build our hope of any essential amelioration of the state of mankind.

Let us examine a third principle; namely, *government*. This is, doubtless, an important blessing to mankind. It is among the means by which God, in his providence, preserves the world in some degree of order. The peace of the governed, so far as it respects one another, is hereby in a measure secured. If a nation were, for one week, or half that time, without law, they would learn, by woful experience, the value of living under it. The most oppressive governments are preferable to a state of anarchy. It may be on this account that even that of Nero afforded no exception to the general doctrine of government being ordained of God for good. But, though or-

der may be produced by human laws and regulations, yet it is chiefly confined to the exterior of human action. And, with respect to that, it extends only to a single territory: between one country and another there is no paramount authority to settle their differences. What are termed the laws of nations have but little influence when one nation possesses the means of setting them at defiance. It is in vain to deny that the most effective law in the world is *power*; and, as power is constantly varying, the world in one part or other is constantly in a state of warfare. Great conquerors call themselves "*benefactors*," and require to be called so, even by the conquered; and, what is worse, are admired and praised for their exploits in the page of history.

But the hopes which have been entertained of peace pervading the earth by means of government have arisen, not from the thing itself, but from *certain forms of it*. There is, no doubt, a difference as to these. That form of government, be it what it may, which contributes most to the administration of substantial justice in a country, and cuts off the motives to war in respect of other countries, is the best: but while men are corrupt, selfish, and ambitious, and possess the means of extending their power, they will never be in want of a plea for disturbing the repose of mankind. To expect them, under such circumstances, to be restrained by forms of their own creating, is expecting too much, and indicates but a slender acquaintance with human nature. A form that should leave no scope for the propensities of a people would be borne away before them in a little time. To banish wars from the earth, therefore, it is necessary to banish selfishness, ambition, and other corrupt affections, which produce them. Even allowing a nation and its government to be, upon the whole, justly and peaceably disposed; yet as cases will be always occurring in which its interests will clash with those of other nations, and in which amicable discussion, through the partiality which each side feels for its own cause, falls to produce mutual satisfaction, the consequence will often be a recourse to arms. The principles on which wars are undertaken are, in many instances, the same as those by which two individuals are prompted to fight a duel. They *may* have no desire to fight, nor to kill each other; but the *laws of honor* require them to act as they do! So long, therefore, as these laws, to the exclusion of the laws of God, continue to rule the higher orders of mankind, it is impossible but that wars and fightings will come.

But if education, interest, and government, fail to produce the desired effect; yet is there no other principle, whose influence



shall extend more to the heart, by which it may be accomplished? If there be, it must be *kindred, or relationship*. This, I acknowledge, has done great things. By the tender and endearing ties of blood and affinity the asperities of human nature are greatly softened, and God has, in a manner, bound us together. Hence, perhaps, arise the practicability of mankind dwelling together in families? By alliances of this sort, a good understanding is frequently kept up in neighborhoods, and sometimes between great nations. Though a natural affection, is in itself mere animal attachment, and has nothing morally good in it, yet to be without it argues the perfection of depravity. Nothing short of an habitually wicked heart can extinguish it. If this principle be overcome, there seems to be nothing left in human nature that can withstand the tide of corruption. It is, therefore, with peculiar force and propriety that God, by the prophet, represents the depravity of the Jewish nation as having set the hearts of the fathers against their children, and the hearts of the children against their fathers; and, having reached this height, as being incurable by any thing short of a divine interposition.

Strong as are the ties of blood and affinity, yet there are two reasons why universal peace can never be expected to proceed from them. One is, their influence extends only to a small part of mankind. It is true, we are all akin as creatures, and as having sprung from one common ancestor: this, however, is a consideration that has but little weight among the bulk of mankind. It is only towards *near* relations that the attachment in question is felt. The other is, that, even with respect to that part of mankind who are nearly related to each other, there is in general no such attachment as to overbalance the selfish affections.

The sum is, there is not a principle in human nature from which any rational expectation can be formed of the world ever becoming materially different from what it is. It may be more enlightened; but this will present no sufficient barrier against the tide of corrupt passions, which bears along its stream the educated part of mankind, no less than the uneducated. Man may shift and change into a thousand forms, and may promise himself peace in each of them; but he will not find it. He may attribute his misery to circumstances, and flatter himself that, if *they* were different, all would be well: the cause, however, is in himself, and is, therefore, sure to accompany him in every situation and condition. He may "change the place, but will keep the pain." If there were no hope from a higher quarter, the world would be shut up under sin, and have nothing to expect, but to be smitten with the curse.

III. Consider THE EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL FOR THE DIFFUSION OF UNIVERSAL PEACE. That which was wrought among the Jews by the preaching of John furnished a specimen of what should be wrought in the world at large by the same means. They who had been disobedient were turned to the wisdom of the just. Repenting of their sins, they believed in the Messiah as at hand; and, being thus reconciled to God, they became reconciled to one another; loving and being loved, forgiving and being forgiven.

In ascribing these effects to the gospel, we only ascribe to it that which, in its own nature, it is evidently adapted to produce—that which it actually has produced, so far as it has been cordially received—and that which the tenor of scripture prophecy gives us to expect.

1. *The gospel is, in its own nature, evidently adapted to produce peace on earth, and good will to men.* It may, indeed, be the occasion of contention and bitterness, in unbelievers; but this is not its proper effect: it is accidental to it, and reflects no more dishonor upon it than the good works of its Author, which occasioned his being stoned by the Jews, reflected upon him.

We have seen already that the root of all the discord in the world is found in mankind having *forsaken God*: that, therefore, which is the means of bringing them back to God, and that only, will restore concord. It is thus that the root of bitterness is plucked up, and love, the plant of paradise, substituted in its place. We have seen that "wars and fightings" proceed from the "lusts" which war in our members: that, therefore, which teaches us to mortify these lusts, removes the causes, and, by so doing, removes the effects. Pride, self-will, and the love of money, are the great sources of those calamities which, in all ages, have deluged the world with misery: but, if we believe the gospel, they will be in a good measure dried up, and then the current which has been fed by them cease to flow. "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."

The gospel is a system *in direct opposition to selfishness*. It not only enforces a benevolent disposition, but is fraught with principles adapted to promote it. It furnishes the mind with a new set of views and feelings, both toward God and toward man. It tells us of one who, when all other means failed, said, "Lo, I come—to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart;" of one who laid down his life for us, even when we were yet enemies. Now, to imbibe this doctrine is to become, in a measure, of the same mind. He that is born of God possesses the spirit of a little child. "Old things

are passed away, and all things are become new." Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as a new-born babe he desireth the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby.

The gospel also furnishes us with a *centre*, or *bond of union*. Devoid of this, men are like grains of sand, without any principle of adhesion, and must therefore, of necessity, be divided and scattered. The physical strength of a nation is of small account in a time of danger, if they have no standard to repair to, and no leader and commander in whom they can place confidence. But a wise and patriotic prince will hold a people together, and induce them to love their country and one another the better for his sake. Such is our Redeemer, and such the love of one another which love to him inspires. Yea, more, it teaches us to love all mankind, from a hope that they may become his friends.

Now, if such sentiments and feelings were universal, or if only the greater part of mankind possessed them, the world, from being a wilderness, would become a paradise. "Instead of the thorn," would come up "the fir-tree; and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree: and it would be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that should not be cut off."

2. *The gospel, so far as it has been cordially received, has actually produced these effects.* I say, *cordially* received; for it has met with a kind of reception that is not cordial, and to call which *believing* we must understand the term in a very restricted and partial sense. We have been asked, by unbelievers, "How is it, if Christianity be that pacific system which it professes to be, that Christian nations do not live in peace?" We answer, 1. Because a very large proportion of the people who inhabit those nations are Christians only in name. When any question arises between serious Christians and avowed unbelievers, persons of this description commonly prove themselves to be one in heart with the latter, and ought therefore to be classed with them. 2. Because those who believe the doctrine which they profess, and are real Christians, yet do not always act consistently with their profession. These things certainly furnish occasion for the unbelieving part of the world, who seek occasion to stumble at the gospel: hence a woe is pronounced on the world because of offenses, or stumbling-blocks, and a still heavier one on those by whom the offence cometh. Yet, notwithstanding these deductions, Christianity has wrought enough to establish its pacific character. We could tell of myriads who from being persecutors and injurious, like Saul of Tarsus, no sooner embraced the gospel than they became other men; seeking the good of all around

them, even of their worst enemies. We could appeal to the pacific spirit and conduct of thousands in our own times, who, influenced by the same principles, seek, by every means in their power, to heal the divisions and alleviate the miseries of mankind.

If the Christians scattered over bleeding Europe could have healed her, she would have been healed before now. They, as well as other men, may have been engaged in the wars; and, when called for in defence of their country, it may have been their duty so to do: but they have surely hailed the return of peace; and that not for their own sakes only, but from good will to men.

Why should unbelievers load Christianity with the persecutions, intrigues, and unjust wars, which have been carried on in Christendom; when, if they were disposed to judge righteously, they must allow, not only that the same things existed, and were accompanied with much more ferocity, under the heathen governments; but that what has existed since is not to be ascribed to Christianity, but to the want of it? It was not till the gospel was corrupted, and in a manner lost, among those who called themselves *the church* that such things occurred. Instead, therefore, of their proving any thing against the pure and peaceful nature of genuine Christianity, they furnish an argument in its favor. The immoralities in the churches at Corinth and in Galatia, when they had corrupted the gospel, were a proof of its moral, rather than of its immoral, tendency. Is it to Christ or to Antichrist that the blood which has been shed for the last twelve hundred years, on account of religion, ought to be imputed? Have the atrocities committed by Europeans on the shores of Africa, and in other parts of the world, been owing to Christianity, or to the want of it? Let truth and conscience give the answer.

3. *The tenor of scripture prophecy gives us to expect far greater effects than those which have yet been produced.* The world, like an abandoned sinner, may go on till it is "wearied in the greatness of its way;" but, if we believe in God and his prophets, we must conclude that it will not be so always. It was one great end of Christ's coming into the world, to "set judgment in the earth;" and though he have to encounter great opposition, yet shall he "not fail nor be discouraged," till it be accomplished. The present disorders of the world will assuredly issue in a peaceful and happy state of things. Of this the following, among many other passages, it is presumed, afford ample proof:—

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.—And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall



dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious.—The jealousy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the enmity of Judah shall be no more: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.—The greaves of the armed warrior in conflict, and the garment rolled in much blood, shall be for a burning, even fuel for the fire.\*—For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called . . . *The Prince of Peace*. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever: the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.—In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.—God be merciful unto us, and bless us: and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.—And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.—As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and

bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and shall be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off."

There are some who, by refining on the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, have concluded that things will always continue much the same as they are now; and that to understand these prophecies as denoting a general spread of the gospel over the various nations of the earth would be holding with national establishments of religion, and symbolizing with the Jews in their expectation of a worldly kingdom! If these persons be capable of deriving happiness from such opinions, we need not envy them, nor can we be surprised at their feeling no more interest in the conversion of sinners and taking no more pains to accomplish it than they have hitherto done. If there be any symbolizing with the carnal Jews on either side, it would seem to consist in that selfish spirit which would confine the gospel to those who already possess it, "forbidding us," in a manner, "to speak to the Gentiles, that they may be saved." I have no wish to decide how far the mind of a Christian may be perverted by the infatuating influence of hypothesis, nor how far he may be suffered to pervert the word of God in supporting it; but of this I am satisfied that such notions are in their very essence antichristian.

Taking the foregoing passages in their simple and obvious meaning, they manifestly predict things which hitherto have had no accomplishment, or at most only a partial one. The earth has not yet been "full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." God's "saving health" has not yet been so "known among all nations" as for *all the people* to form a kind of chorus in his praise. It is not as yet that Christ, at the head of a spiritual kingdom, "judges" and "governs the nations upon earth." The time is not yet arrived for "swords to be beaten into plough-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks." "The garment rolled in blood" has not yet become "a burning, even fuel for the fire." Christ's reign seems not as yet to have assumed the character of a glorious rest: hitherto, it has borne a greater resemblance to that of David, who was engaged in continual wars, than to that of Solomon, to whom the Lord gave rest on every side, and who was therefore employed in building a temple for his name. It is said

\* Lowth's Isaiah.



of the promises made to Abraham and his posterity, that "The Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers: and they possessed it, and dwelt therein: and that "the Lord gave them rest round about, according unto all that he swore unto their fathers."—"There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel: all came to pass." But, if things continue much the same as they now are to the end of time, I do not perceive how this language could apply to the promises made to Christ and the church. In this case, the prophets must have dealt largely in hyperbole, and their words, when reduced to meaning, amount to little in comparison of what they would seem to convey.

It is farther observable from the foregoing prophecies that whatever evils may precede the triumph of the gospel, yet the thing itself will take place without bloodshed, treachery, intrigue, tumult, or parade. The overturning of those governments which set themselves against the preaching of it may be necessary to prepare the way; and this may be accomplished by wicked men and wicked means: but this will be only as the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, to the still small voice. The noise of hammers and axes, though necessary in preparing for the temple, was not to be heard in the building of it. The kingdoms of this world are commonly founded either in violence or in deceit, and often in both; but that of "the Prince of Peace" will correspond with his character: justice and judgment will be the basis of his throne. He himself hath "done no violence," neither was "any deceit in his mouth;" and, however he may turn such measures in his enemies to the advantage of his cause, he will never allow his servants to have recourse to them. The *peace* produced by other conquerors is merely the effect of fear. It is the stillness of the oppressed, who dare not complain, lest their oppression should be increased: but the peace promised under the reign of Christ is ascribed to the earth being "filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." His conquests are those of the heart. His subjects will be such from conviction and choice.

The kingdoms of this world are introduced and supported by parade: but it will not be so with the kingdom of Christ. This, as he told the Pharisees, came "not by observation," or outward show; neither should they say, "Lo, here, or lo, there;" for it was already among them. And thus we may conclude it will come, when it shall fill the whole earth. Men shall not be able to point to this place or that and say, Lo, it is here, or lo, it is there; for before they are aware it shall be among them. Worldly men may at the time be pursuing their schemes with such earnestness as to think no more of it

than Festus did "of one Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive:" but, while they are pursuing their schemes, God will have so pursued him as that they shall find themselves surrounded by it in every direction, and as unable to stop its progress as the Jewish rulers were, when they complained of the apostles for having "filled Jerusalem with their doctrine." In this silent and imperceptible way the gospel continued to operate in the early ages, when it was left to its own evidence and the power of the Holy Spirit to recommend it. In the days of Tertullian, that is, in less than two hundred years after the death of Christ, that apologist could tell the Roman senate that it had overspread their empire. "Your cities, islands, forts, towns, and assemblies; your very camps, wards, companies, palace, senate, forum, all," said he, "swarm with Christians." Yet all appears to have been conducted without violence or tumult, save that which was found among unbelievers.

We read of the stone cut out of the mountain breaking in pieces the great monarchies of the earth; of the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; of his judging the people righteously, and governing the nations upon earth; and of the kingdom under the whole heaven being given to the people of the saints of the Most High. But it does not follow that governments will be destroyed *as governments*, but merely as *idolatrous* or *antichristian governments*. We have no reason to think that Christ will abolish civil authorities and set up a government of his own in their stead. His kingdom never was and never will be of this world. If the government of nations, as well as that of lesser societies, be conducted on CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES, then will Christ reign; then will the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and then may the nations be glad and sing for joy. These principles existing in the hearts of governors and governed would shortly burst the bands of oppression, still the tumults of the people, and cause wars to cease unto the ends of the earth. The demon of discord might then be addressed in the language of the psalmist: "O thou enemy! destructions are come to a perpetual end; and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them. But the Lord shall endure forever; he hath prepared his throne for judgment."

And now, things being reduced to this peaceful state, instead of the earth being *smitten with a curse*, we are given to expect that it will be loaded with blessings: "Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our own God, shall bless us."—"And all the ends of the earth shall fear him." Nor do I see any objection to the "increase" here predicted being literally understood.

It is a fact that, from the day that man departed from God, the earth was cursed with barrenness, in comparison of what it was before; and it is not unnatural to suppose that, when the greater part of men shall have returned to him, this curse may be in a manner removed. At present the system of depravity which prevails among men renders it *unnecessary*. Sin counteracts the tendency to "increase and multiply" with which we were created. The world is in a manner depopulated by selfishness, intemperance, and war; a great part of it inhabited by wild beasts and other noxious creatures. But, when men shall know the Lord, and these wide-wasting evils shall subside, population will increase; and he that sends men will amply provide for them: "In that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground; and I will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle, out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies: I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.—And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel."

Moreover, at present, the system of depravity which prevails among men would render any considerable increase of earthly fulness exceedingly *dangerous*. There appears to be as much wisdom and goodness as there is justice in the sentence passed on men, to eat bread by the sweat of their faces. Were there no necessity for hard labor, every day might be taken up in riot and debauchery. The deeds of the people of Sodom and of the Canaanites might be repeated. The bacchanalian revels which are seen at some of our contested elections (where men can indulge free of expense) afford a specimen of what might be expected, if God, while men are what they are, were to cause the earth to yield her increase. It would be nothing less than furnishing them with the means of being seven times more wicked. But, when men shall know the Lord, the danger will have subsided; and then he will take pleasure in pouring forth his blessings upon them; and then, instead of those blessings being abused, as heretofore, they shall tend to recommend the gospel: "God, even our own God shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

Once more: As peace among men will be followed with a blessing on the earth, so peace among Christians will be followed with a blessing on the means of grace. The de-

pravity which has hitherto prevailed in the world has, in too great a measure, extended to the church, and wrought much in a way of destroying its fruitfulness. Corruptions have produced divisions, envies, jealousies, and almost every evil work. Hence the blessing of God has been, in a great measure, withheld. We read of great things among the apostles and primitive Christians, and now and then hear of a minister and a people, who, approaching somewhat near to their doctrine and spirit, are honored with a portion of their success: but, in general, we are as "when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat," though our souls desire the first-ripe fruit. Now, as the carnal notions, envies, and petty discords of the apostles ceased from the time of their Lord's resurrection, and as "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul," so will it be with the whole church of Christ when the Spirit shall be poured out from on high. And then "the earth shall yield her increase," in a still higher sense. Not only every nation and city, but every town, if not every village, will furnish a church of Christ, "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit." Then will God, even their own God, bless them, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him. The people of God will be of good comfort, will be of one mind, will live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with them!

From the whole, we may conclude,

1. It becomes Christians to set their hearts much on the spread of the gospel; to pray for it; labor for it; contribute of their substance for it; and to rest all their hopes of the amelioration of the state of mankind upon it. Political men may place their hopes on political changes; but Christians should always remember that "peace on earth and good will to men" connect with "glory to God in the highest;" and that they are reserved to grace the triumphs of the Prince of Peace.

2. It is of infinite importance for us to repent and believe the gospel. So long as any of us are unbelievers, we are under the curse; and the whole career of our life tends to draw down the curse of Heaven upon us, and upon the earth on which we dwell. We have heard much of the conversion of the Jews and heathens; but of what account will either be to us, if we ourselves be not converted? All the great and good things which the Lord has promised, either in this world or that which is to come, will, if we be unbelievers, only aggravate our misery.

3. Sinners, even the greatest of sinners, have every encouragement to repent and believe in Jesus. The invitation of Moses to Hobab is the same, for substance, as Christ's servants are now warranted to ad-

dress to every one they meet: "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

## SERMON XVI.

### THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST THE TURNING POINT OF SALVATION.

"He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."—John i. 10—12.

AMONG the numerous self-deceiving notions which are cherished in the minds of men is that of their being willing to return to God at any time, provided they had opportunity and the means of doing so. In accounting for their own impotence and perseverance in sin, they will impute it to their situation, their temptations, their callings, their connections, or to anything but their evil hearts. Some have even learned to speak evil of their hearts, while it is manifest that they mean to include, under that term, nothing pertaining to intention, desire, or design, but something that exists and operates in them against their inclination. Hence, you will often hear them acknowledge themselves to be unconverted, and at the same time express how willing and desirous they are of being converted, if it would but please God to put forth his power in their favor. The word of God, however, speaks a different language; while it ascribes all that is good to grace only, it lays the evil at the sinner's own door.

A great number of instances might be alleged from the Scriptures in proof of this truth; but the greatest proof of all is the manner in which Christ himself was treated, when he appeared upon earth. The evangelist, having introduced him to his reader in all the glory of divinity, describes in plaintive language the neglect and contempt he met with, both from the world in general, and from his own nation in particular. Let us examine these complaints.

"He was in the world." It has often been objected, If the religion of Christ has a claim on the world, why has not the world had more of an opportunity to hear it? It might be the design of the evangelist to obviate this objection. His being "in the world" does not seem to refer so much to his personal presence among men, in the days of his flesh, as to those manifestations of him which, from the beginning of the world, had furnished them with the means of knowing him, and which, therefore, rendered their ignorance inexcusable. He had been revealed, at the outset of the world, as

the Woman's Seed, who should bruise the head of the serpent. Sacrifices were appointed to prefigure his atonement; which, though perverted, were never discontinued, even among the heathen. The selection of the seed of Abraham, and their miraculous settlement in Canaan, must have attracted universal attention; and, as the Messiah was a prominent feature of their religion, he was, in a manner, proclaimed through every nation. The effect produced on the mariners, when Jonah told them that he was a Hebrew, and feared JEHOVAH, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land, shows very plainly that the displays of omnipotence, in behalf of Israel, were not unknown to the surrounding nations. That, also, which was soon after produced on the Ninevites, when they learned that he was a Hebrew prophet, sent of God, evinces the same thing. And, if they were not ignorant of God's judgments, they were not destitute of the means of inquiring after the true religion. Nay, more, the expectation of the promised Messiah was, for a long time before he appeared, very general among the nations. Had they, therefore, possessed any portion of a right spirit, or any desire after the true God, they would have been as inquisitive as were the wise men of the east, and as desirous as they were of paying him homage.

Not only was he in the world, so as to render their ignorance of him inexcusable, but "*the world*" itself "*was made by him.*" Though, as to the state of their minds, they were far from him, yet he was not far from every one of them; for in him they lived and moved and had their being. When he became incarnate, it was nothing less than their Creator in very deed dwelling with them upon the earth. Such an event ought to have excited universal inquiry, and to have induced all men every where to repent.

But, though he was in the world, and the world was made by him, yet "*the world knew him not!*" Full of their own schemes and pursuits, they thought nothing of him. The Roman governors, in hearing the accusations of the Jews against Paul, and his defences, had great opportunities of knowing the truth; but the ignorance and contempt expressed by Festus, in his report of the matter to Agrippa, show the inefficacy of all means, unless accompanied with the mighty power of God. The Jews "brought none accusation of such things as he supposed; but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive!"

But this is not the heaviest complaint: "*He came unto his own and his own received him not.*" How appropriate are the terms here used! He *was* in the world, and therefore within the reach of inquiry. But to the seed of Abraham he *came*, knocking, as it



were, at their door for admission; but "*they received him not.*" The world are accused of ignorance; but they of unbelief: for *receiving him not*, though a merely negative form of speech, yet is expressive of a positive refusal of him. Instead of welcoming the heavenly visitant, they drove him from their door, and even banished him from the earth. Who would have supposed that a people whose believing ancestors had been earnestly expecting the Messiah for a succession of ages would have rejected him when he came among them? Yet so it was: and if Jews or Deists of the present day ask, "How could these things be?" we answer, It was foretold by their own prophets that he should possess neither form nor comeliness in their eyes, and that when they should see him there would be no beauty that they should desire him.

The consideration of their being *his own* people, the children of Abraham his friend, added to their sin, and to his affliction. It was this which he so pathetically lamented, when he "beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

Grievous, however, as this treatment was to our blessed Lord, he was not utterly disregarded. Though the world in general knew him not, and though the great body of his own nation rejected him: yet there was "a remnant according to the election of grace," partly Jews and partly Gentiles, who received him: and whether they had been previously distinguished by their sobriety, or by their profligacy; whether they came in companies, as under Peter's sermon, or as individuals, like her who wept and washed his feet or him who sought mercy when expiring by his side on the cross; all were received by him, and raised to the highest dignity: "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name." And thus, though Israel was not gathered, yet Christ was glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and had a people given him from among the heathen.

I need not say that the treatment which our Saviour received is the same, for substance, in all ages. There is a world that still knows him not, and many who though possessed of the means of grace yet receive him not: and, blessed be God! there are also many, both Jews and Gentiles, who still receive him, and are still blessed with the privilege of being adopted into his heavenly family.

That we may understand and feel the importance of the subject, I shall first inquire, what is supposed and included in receiving Christ? Secondly, consider the great privilege annexed to it; and, lastly, observe the wisdom of God in rendering the reception

of Christ the great turning point of salvation.

1. Let us inquire WHAT IS SUPPOSED AND INCLUDED IN RECEIVING CHRIST? The phrase is supposed to be equivalent with "believing on his name." To receive Christ is to believe in him; and to believe in Christ is to receive him. There are some slight shades of difference between these and some other terms which are used to express faith in Christ; such as *believing, trusting, receiving, &c.*, but they must be the same in substance, or they would not be used in the New Testament as convertible terms. Believing seems to respect Christ as exhibited in the gospel-testimony; trusting as revealed with promise; and receiving supposes him to be God's free gift, presented to us for acceptance in the invitations of the gospel; but, as I said, all come to the same issue. He that believeth the testimony, trusteth the promise, and receiveth the gift; and the whole is necessary to an interest in his benefits, whether pardon, justification, adoption, or any other spiritual blessing.

If we were inquiring into the nature of believing, it might be necessary to examine the testimony; if of trusting, we must ascertain wherein consists the promise; and so, if we would form just conceptions of receiving Christ, we must observe what is said of the gift of him; for each is the standard of the other, and will be found to correspond with it: "So we preached, and so ye believed."

Considering Christ, then, as the gift of God, it is necessary to observe that he is the *first* and *chief* of all his gifts, and that for his sake all others are bestowed; "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not *with him* freely give us all things?" Other gifts may be so great that nothing in this world can be compared with them: this, however, is the greatest. It is great for God to forbear with us; greater to forgive us; and greater still to accept and crown us with eternal life: but all this is supposed to be small, in comparison of the gift of his own Son; and therefore it is argued that, having bestowed the greater, we may trust him for the less. But if God first give Christ, and with him all things freely, we must first receive Christ, and with him all things freely. The first exercise of faith, therefore, does not consist in receiving the benefits resulting from his death, or in a persuasion of our sins being forgiven, but in receiving Christ; and having received him, we *with him* receive an interest in those benefits. Hence the propriety of such language as this: "He that *hath* the Son hath life; and he that *hath not* the Son of God hath not life."

It is on this principle that union with Christ is represented as the foundation of an interest in his benefits, as it is in the fol-

lowing passages: "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us *wisdom*, and *righteousness*, and *sanctification*, and *redemption*.—There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them that are in Christ Jesus.—That I may be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." It is thus in the marriage-union, to which that of believers with Christ is compared. As she that is joined to a husband becomes interested in all that he possesses, so they that are joined to Christ are, by the gracious constitution of the gospel, interested in all that he possesses. He is heir of all things, and they are joint-heirs with him. The sum is, that receiving Christ is the great turning point of salvation, or that by which we obtain a revealed interest in all the blessings of the gospel.

But, more particularly, to receive Christ presupposes a sense of sin, and of our exposedness to the just displeasure of God. It is a great error to hold up a sense of sin as a qualification which gives us a warrant to receive the Saviour, and so to consider the invitations of the gospel as addressed to sensible sinners only, as this must necessarily teach men to reckon themselves the favorites of God while yet they are in a state of unbelief. But it is no less an error to suppose that any sinner will receive the Saviour without perceiving and feeling his need of him. It is one thing to require a sense of sin as a qualification that gives a warrant to receive the Saviour, and another to plead for it as necessary, in the nature of things, to a compliance with that warrant. What is the reason that Christ is rejected and the gospel made light of, by the great body of mankind? Is it not, as the Scriptures represent it, because they are whole in their own eyes, and therefore think they need no physician? While men are righteous in their own esteem, the gospel must appear to be a strange doctrine, and the dwelling so much upon Christ, in the ministry of the word, a strange conduct. How is it that the doctrine of salvation by grace, through the atonement of the Son of God, should be so generally opposed, even by nominal Christians? The reason is the same. Sin is considered as a light thing, a mere frailty, or imperfection, unfortunately attached to human nature: and, while this is the case, there appears to be no need of a mediator, or at least not of one that is divine, and who, to atone for sin, should be required to assume humanity and render his life a sacrifice. Hence it is necessary to be convinced of sin in order to receive the Saviour.

Much of this conviction may respect only our guilt and danger, and so have nothing spiritually good in it: but in those who, in the end, receive the Saviour, it is not wholly

so. There is such a thing as *spiritual conviction*, or conviction which involves in it an abhorrence of sin and of ourselves on account of it. Such is that sense of its intrinsically evil nature, or, as the Scriptures speak, of its *exceeding sinfulness*, which is produced by a just view of the spirituality and equity of the divine law. And such is that repentance towards God which is represented as necessary to faith in Christ, and as included in it. We may be convinced of our guilt and danger by an enlightened conscience only, and may be very sorry for our sin, in reference to its consequences: but this, though it may be used to prepare the way of the Lord, yet will neither divest the sinner of his self-righteous spirit, nor render him willing to come to Christ, that he may have life: and, instead of issuing in his receiving him, may end in his destruction. A sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, on the other hand, tends, in its own nature, to kill a self-righteous spirit, and to induce the sinner to embrace the gospel. It is impossible to have a just sense of the evil of sin, and, at the same time, to object to the way of salvation by grace, through a mediator.

Again, to receive Christ implies the renunciation of every thing which stands in opposition to him, or comes in competition with him. Viewing Christ as a guest, he stands at the door, and knocks; and why is it kept barred against him? Because the sinner has a variety of other guests already in his house, and is aware that, if he enter, they must be dismissed; and, being reluctant to part with them, he cannot find in his heart, at least for the present, to welcome the heavenly visitant. These guests are not only darling sins, but corrupt principles, flesh-pleasing schemes, and a spirit of self-righteous pride. With these Christ cannot associate. If we receive him, we must reject them; and that not as being forced to it for the sake of escaping the wrath of God, but with all our hearts. Many, considering the necessity of the thing, would willingly receive Christ, so that they might retain what is most dear to them; but, this being inadmissible, they, like him who was nearest of kin to Ruth, decline it, lest they should mar their own inheritance.

It was not so with Moses. He had to *refuse* as well as *choose*; and, for the sake of Christ, yea, for the *reproach* of Christ, he did refuse even the prospect of a crown. Paul had great advantages by birth, and had acquired many more by application; but, when they came in competition with Christ, all this gain was counted loss. Nor did he ever repent the sacrifice, but, towards the close of life, declared, saying, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the

loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him."

Moreover, to receive Christ is expressive of the exercise, not of one faculty only, but of *all the powers of the soul*. If it were merely an exercise of the understanding, as distinguished from the will and affections, it would not be properly opposed to a *rejection* of him, which is manifestly the idea suggested by the term "received him not." As unbelief includes more than an error in judgment, even an aversion of the heart from Christ and the way of salvation by his death; so faith includes more than an accurate notion of things, even a cordial acceptance of him and the way of salvation by him. Nothing short of this can, with any propriety, be considered as *receiving* him, or as having the promise of eternal life.

Finally: To receive Christ requires not only to be by all in us, but to have respect to *all in him*. If we receive Christ as the gift of God, we must receive him for all the purposes for which he is given. These purposes may be distinguished, and one may come in order after another; but they must not be separated. Were it possible to receive him as an atoning sacrifice without yielding ourselves up to his authority, or to yield ourselves up to his authority without relying on his sacrifice, each would be vain; and, could both of them be united without sitting at his feet as little children, to be instructed in his will, it were still in vain. The invitation of our Lord, in the eleventh chapter of Matthew, shows both the order and connection of these things: "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The first concern of a sinner is to *come* to Christ as the *Saviour* of the lost: but, at what time he does this, he must also take his yoke upon him as his *Lord* and *Lawgiver*. Nor is this all: he must take him for his *example*; learning his spirit, and following his steps.

II. Consider the PRIVILEGE ANNEXED TO RECEIVING CHRIST: "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." The relation of sons seems to be ascribed to believers, in the text and context, on two accounts; viz. their *regeneration* and their *adoption*. The one is expressed in verse 13: "Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." This consists in a re-impression of the divine image, and is introduced to account for some having received Christ, while others received him not. The other is denominated a "power," or *privilege*, and belongs to our restoration to the divine favor,

It was a high honor, conferred on our species from the beginning, for God to call himself their father; an honor extended, as it would seem, to no other part of the lower creation. "His tender mercies," indeed, "are over all his works;" but man was created in his image: "In the image of God created he him." Men, therefore, are ranked among the children of the Most High. Nor was it a mere name: the love of the Creator was truly that of a father. We see this expressed in the strongest manner even in the punishment of the wicked; as though it were against the grain of his native goodness, and as though nothing but a conduct exceedingly offensive could have induced him to do what he did. Such are the ideas in the following passages: "And the Lord said, I will destroy man, *whom I have created*, from the face of the earth."—"He that *made them* will not have mercy on them, and *he that formed them* will show them no favor." And though it sometimes appears as if sin had, in a manner, extinguished his paternal goodness, yet, in exercising mercy through his Son, he still calls to remembrance the original relation: "I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls *which I have made*." What an evil and bitter thing, then, must sin be, to have induced so good a God to disown us as *aliens*, and to require that, if we be again admitted into his family, it shall be by *adoption*—a proceeding to which men have recourse when they wish to favor children that are not their own!

The kindness of God toward Israel is described as an *adoption*. Their deplorable condition in Egypt is represented by that of a helpless infant, left to perish in the open field in the day that it was born, and the favor conferred upon them by the kindness of a benevolent stranger, who, passing at the time, had compassion on it, and adopted it as his own. This, however, though an act of grace, and through a mediator, yet was only a shadow of that blessing which is bestowed on them who believe in Jesus Christ. It separated them from other nations, and conferred on them distinguished privileges, but it ascertained no inheritance beyond the grave. This, on the contrary, not only puts us among the children, but gives us "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." The depth of alienation and disgrace from which it takes us, with the height of glory to which it raises us, accounts for that strong language which is more than once used in describing it: "But I said, How shall I put thee among the children?—Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

The *adoption of children* is reckoned among those spiritual blessings wherewith the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus



Christ hath blessed them that believe in him, having predestinated them to it by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. With all other spiritual blessings, its bestowment is in consequence of our *having been* predestinated to it; but the thing itself, like justification, is a blessing of time, and follows on believing. It were absurd to speak of our being predestinated to that which was, in itself, eternal. The privilege itself is held up as an inducement to forsake the family of Satan, and be separated from them: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,—and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

But the connection between receiving Christ and having power to become the sons of God is designed to mark not only the order of time, but that of nature; or to show the influence of the one upon the other: we "are all the children of God *by faith in Christ Jesus.*" This is exactly the same language as is used of our justification: and the blessing is obtained in the same way; not in reward of the act of believing, but out of respect to him in whom we believe. He that believeth on the Son is joined or united to him, and, as such, by the constitution of the covenant of grace, becomes interested in all its benefits. It is thus that we are justified by faith, and it is thus that we are adopted. Christ, in reward of his obedience unto death, is appointed "heir of all things;" and we, receiving him, are received into God's family for his sake, and become "joint-heirs" with him. Such is the delightful harmony of the gospel, and such the way in which "the adoption of children" is "by Jesus Christ to himself;"—"to the praise of the glory of his grace."

Regeneration gives us a new nature; and adoption adds to it a *new name*, even that of sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Nor is it a mere name; for the richest blessings both in this world and that which is to come are attached to it. Of these we may reckon the following as the principal:—

1. *Access to God as our own God and Father.* During our unbelief, whatever were our necessities or troubles, we had no access to God. Though under the pangs of woe we might cry for mercy, yet it was unavailing. How should it be otherwise, when we set at nought the only name by which a sinner can be introduced, and his cause obtain a hearing? But, believing in Jesus, we draw near to God, and God to us. The term  $\tau\epsilon\tau\alpha\rho\alpha\chi\epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ , rendered *access*, in Ephes. iii. 12, signifies as much as *introduction manu-duction*, or a *being taken by the hand*, as one who is introduced to the king by a third person; teaching us that we cannot be admitted to the divine presence by ourselves. While obedient we had free access to our Creator;

but, having sinned, the door is shut upon us, and not a child of Adam can see his face, but as introduced by the Mediator. As Job's friends, whose folly had offended the Divine Majesty, were required to bring their offerings to Job, that he as a mediator might present them and pray for the offenders, so it is with us in drawing near to God. All our offerings must be presented by the great and gracious Intercessor. Him will God accept. Coming in his name, we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. The spirit which is congenial with the gospel dispensation is not that of bondage, that we should be held in slavish fear, but that of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father; and, if we do not actually possess it, it is because we are wanting to ourselves.

A promise is left us of entering into rest, of which if we seem to come short, it is owing to unbelief. Did we but act up to our privileges, guilt would not lie rankling on our consciences, in the manner it often does, nor would care corrode our peace, nor morbid melancholy eat up our enjoyments. Having God for our father, we should confess our sins to him, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son would cleanse us from all sin; we should cast all our care on him who careth for us; we should be inordinately "careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let our requests be made known unto God;" and the effect would be, that "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, would keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

2. *Access to all the ordinances of God's house, and to the fellowship of his people.* From being "strangers and foreigners," we become "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The church of God is here described as a *city* and as a *household*. As a city, God is a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her, blessing her provision, and satisfying her poor with bread. To be made free of this city is no small favor. As a household, God is the father of it; and as many as receive Christ receive power to become its members, and to share in all the privileges of the family. There are believers no doubt whose situation does not admit of these social advantages, and others who are prevented by something amiss in the state of their own minds from embracing them; but such do not excel in spirituality or in usefulness. It is as being planted in the house of the Lord that we may hope to flourish in the courts of our God.

3. *A part in the first resurrection.* The resurrection of the saints is called "the manifestation of the sons of God;" "the glorious liberty of the children of God;" "the adoption;" "the redemption of our body." It is the grand jubilee of the church,

and even of the creation. Till then the former as well as the latter will be held under a degree of bondage, as being yet subject to the effects of sin: but then Christ's promise shall be fulfilled, "I will raise them up at the last day;" and the deliverance of the saints will be the signal for that of the creation, which during the apostacy has been *unwillingly compelled* to subserve its Creator's enemies, and which is therefore represented as waiting for and earnestly expecting the moment of deliverance. The last enemy being then destroyed, the war will be ended: death will be swallowed up in victory.

4. *An interest in the eternal inheritance.* The natural inference from this divine relation is this: "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." With such thoughts our minds are overwhelmed, and no wonder; for an inspired apostle had no adequate conception of it: "Beloved," says he, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Such are the leading privileges included in the power of becoming the sons of God, which are sufficient to show that though many reject the Saviour, yet it is not for want of kindness on his part towards those who accept of him.

III. Let us observe THE WISDOM OF GOD IN RENDERING THE RECEPTION OF CHRIST THE TURNING POINT OF SALVATION. When a person who neither understands nor believes the gospel way of salvation thinks on the subject it must appear to him a strange thing that so much should be made of Christ in the New Testament, and of faith in him. He has no conception of it, or of the reason why it should be so. It was thus that the gospel was "unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness; to them that believed, however, it was "the power of God, and the wisdom of God." There are three things in particular in which the wisdom of God appears in this adjustment of things.

1. *It accords with the leading design of God in the gospel; namely, to glorify his character and government in the salvation of sinners.* Receiving Christ, as we have seen already, is the corresponding idea to his being given, and that which answers to it, as the loops and taches of the tabernacle answered to each other. If the gift of Christ, on God's part, was necessary to secure the honor of his character and government in showing mercy, the receiving of him, on our part, must also be necessary, as belonging to the same proceeding. Without this, the gift would not answer its end. Hence, though God, through the propitiation of his

Son, is *just and a justifier*; yet it is of him only that *believeth in Jesus*.

If, instead of receiving Christ as God's free gift, and eternal life with him, we had received favor irrespective of him, God, so far as we can conceive, must have compromised his honor. To show favor to a sinner in the way he wishes, that is, in reward of what he calls his good works, would be consenting to vacate his throne at the desire of a rebel. It would be agreeing not only to pass over his past disobedience, and so to render null and void his own precepts, warnings, and threatenings, but to accept, in future, of just such obedience, and such a degree of it, as it suited his inclination to yield: "Offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts."

But, in receiving Christ, we acquiesce in the whole system of salvation by his death, as glorifying the character and government of God: we subscribe to the great evil of sin, and to the justice of our condemnation on account of it; we become of the same mind with Christ, and, in our measure, stand affected as he does toward God and man, and sin and righteousness. That law which *was* within his heart is *written* in ours.—Thus it is that God and his government are glorified, not only by the gift of Christ to be a sacrifice, but in the reception of him, as such, by the believing sinner.

2. *It secures the honors of grace.* If, instead of receiving Christ as God's free gift, and eternal life through him, we had received favor irrespective of him, we should have considered ourselves as having whereof to glory. It would have appeared to us, as it does and must appear to every one that hopes to be saved without an atonement, that the Almighty has no right to expect perfect obedience from imperfect creatures; that there is no such great evil in sin as that it should deserve everlasting punishment; that if God were to be strict to mark iniquity, according to the threatenings of the Bible, he would be unjust; and, therefore, that in showing mercy he only makes just allowance for the frailties of his creatures, and acts as a good being must needs act. Thus it is that the very idea of grace is excluded, and the sinner feels himself on terms with his Creator. But in receiving Christ, and salvation through his death, these imaginations are cast down, and all such high thoughts subdued to the obedience of Christ. He that has been disputing with his Maker for a number of years at once finds the ground sink under him, all his arguments answered, and himself reduced to the character of a supplicant at the feet of his offended Sovereign.

It is as hard a thing for a proud and carnal heart to receive Christ, and salvation by grace through him, as it is to keep the whole

law. If, therefore, we expect the good news of the gospel to consist in something more suited to the inclinations, and not merely to the condition of sinners, we shall be disappointed. It is said of a certain character, who some years since was banished from this country or attempting to revolutionize it after the example of France, that he was offered a free pardon if he would only acknowledge his fault and petition the throne; but *he could not do it!* Such is the inability of men to receive the Saviour; and herein consists the damning sin of unbelief.

If our spirit were brought down to our situation, as sinners, the most humiliating truths of the gospel, instead of offending us, would appear to be right, and wise, and glorious. We should feel that the dust was our proper place; or rather, if we had our deserts, the pit of perdition. We should consider ourselves as lying at the absolute discretion of God: instead of being stumbled at such an assertion of the divine sovereignty as that addressed to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," we should cordially subscribe it, and supplicate mercy only on that principle. And, when we had obtained it, we should never think of having made ourselves to differ, but freely acknowledge that it is by the grace of God that we are what we are. Our minds would be in perfect unison with the language of the apostle to Timothy: "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began."

3. *It provides for the interests of holiness.* In receiving Christ, and salvation through him, we receive a doctrine that strikes at the very root of depravity. "The Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil:" he, therefore, that receives him must thenceforth be at variance with them. We are not only justified, but sanctified, by the faith that is in him. The doctrine of the cross, while it gives peace to the conscience, purifies the heart. There is not a principle in it but what, if felt and acted upon, would cause the world to be dead to us and us unto the world. The objections, therefore, that are made to this doctrine, as being unfriendly to holiness, have no foundation in the doctrine itself, whatever may be seen in the lives of some that profess it.

From the whole: *The first concern of a sinner is to receive the Saviour.* It ought to be no question whether he *may* receive him; since the gospel is addressed to every creature, and its invitations to the "stout-hearted and far from righteousness." The only question is whether he be *willing* to receive him. To a spectator, unacquainted with the

depravity of human nature, it must be beyond measure surprising that this should be a question; and, indeed, few men can be convinced that it is: yet, if it were not, there would be no difficulty in receiving him. "Why do ye not understand my speech? because ye cannot hear my word:" that is, because ye are averse from it. But no man will be able to excuse this his aversion, which is itself sin. The Judge of all the earth makes no allowance for it, nor for its not having been removed by divine grace. Grace is never represented in the Scriptures as necessary to our accountability; but as a free gift, which God might justly withhold. It is deemed sufficient to justify the condemnation of sinners that they *were averse* from the gospel and government of Christ: "Take these mine enemies, that *would not* that I should reign over them, and slay them before me."

Should it be objected that these principles must tend to drive a sinner to despair; I answer by asking, What sinner? Not him whose desires are toward the Saviour; not him whose prayer is, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned:" if any, it must be him who has no desire after God; and, even in his case, the despair is not absolute, but merely on supposition of his continuing in that state of mind. But this, to him, is most necessary; for, till a sinner despair of obtaining mercy in the way he is in, he will never fall at the feet of sovereign grace, and so will never be saved. As he that would be wise must first become a fool that he may be wise; so he that layeth hold of the hope set before him in the gospel must first relinquish his hopes from every other quarter.

## SERMON XVII.

### ON JUSTIFICATION.

"Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."—Romans iii. 24.

THE doctrine expressed in this passage runs through the epistle, and constitutes the scope of it. It is taught in many other parts of Scripture, but here it is established by a connected body of evidence. Both heathens and Jews are proved to be under sin, and, consequently, incapable of being justified, by a righteous God, on the ground of their own obedience. As to the former, they were wicked in the extreme. If any thing could have been alleged in excuse of them, it had been their *ignorance*; but even this failed. They had means of knowledge sufficient to render them "without excuse;" but having neglected them, and cast off God, God gave them up to their own corrupt affections and propensities; so that even the philosophic Greeks and Romans were "full



of all ungodliness and unrighteousness, holding," or rather, withholding, "the truth," which they understood above the common people, "in unrighteousness." But, if heathens could not be justified, yet did not they who had the oracles of God stand on higher ground? Not so; for those very oracles describe men as "all gone out of the way," as having become "unprofitable," as none of them "doing good, no, not one;" and what revelation says it says of them who were under the light of it. Israel, therefore, was a part of the corrupt mass. The sum is, "Every mouth is stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.—By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified in his sight."

These sentiments, contained in the first three chapters of the epistle, make way for the following interesting statement: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

I call this an *interesting* statement; for, of all the questions that can occupy the human mind, there is none of greater importance than that which relates to the way of acceptance with God. We learn from our own consciences, as well as from the Scriptures, that we are accountable creatures; but how we shall stand before the holy Lord God is a question that overwhelms us. If there were no hope from the gospel, we must despair. We must appear before the judgment-seat, but it would be only to be convicted and condemned. The doctrine, therefore, that shows a way in which God can be just, and yet a justifier, must be interesting beyond expression. This is, in substance, the good news to be proclaimed to every creature.

Justification by grace has been thought by some to be inconsistent with justification through the atonement and righteousness of Christ. Yet it is here expressly said to be of grace; and, as though that were not enough, *freely* by grace: nor is the sacred writer less express concerning its meritorious cause than concerning its source or origin: it was not only of free grace, but "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

In every kind of justification in which

justice is regarded there is some ground, or reason, for the proceeding. In ordinary cases, among men, this ground, or reason, is found in the character of the prisoner. He is considered as innocent, and therefore is acquitted. In the justification of a sinner by the Judge of all, it is "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." That which innocence is to the one, the redemption of Christ is to the other: it is his *righteousness*, or that in consideration of which, being imputed to him, he is justified.

In discoursing upon this great subject, I shall endeavor to ascertain the meaning of the term—to give proof of the doctrine—and to show the consistency of its being of free grace, and yet through the redemption of Jesus Christ.

I. LET US ENDEAVOR TO ASCERTAIN THE MEANING OF THE TERM JUSTIFICATION. Many errors on this important subject may be expected to have arisen from the want of a clear view of the thing itself. Till we understand what justification is, we cannot affirm or deny any thing concerning it, but with great uncertainty.

It is not the making a person righteous by an inherent change from sin to righteousness, this is *sanctification*; which, though no less necessary than the other, yet is distinguished from it: Christ "is made unto us righteousness, and sanctification." The term is forensic, referring to the proceedings in a court of judicature, and stands opposed to *condemnation*. This is evident from many passages of Scripture, particularly the following: "He that *justifieth* the wicked, and he that *condemneth* the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord.—The judgment was by one to *condemnation*; but the free gift is of many offences unto *justification*.—There is therefore now no *condemnation* to them that are in Christ Jesus.—It is God that *justifieth*: who is he that *condemneth*?—He that believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into *condemnation*; but is passed from death unto life." If a prisoner who stands charged with a crime be convicted of it, he is *condemned*: if otherwise, he is acquitted, or *justified*.

But though it be true that the term is forensic, and stands opposed to condemnation, yet, as in most other instances in which the proceedings of God allude to those of men, they are *not in all respects alike*. He that is justified in an earthly court (unless it be for want of evidence, which cannot possibly apply in this case) is considered as being really innocent; and his justification is no other than an act of justice done to him. He is acquitted, because he appears to *deserve* acquittal. This, however, is not the justification of the gospel, which is "of grace, through the redemption of Jesus Christ." Justification, in the former case, in propor-

tion as it confers honor on the justified, reflects dishonor on his accusers; while, in the latter the justice of every charge is admitted, and no dishonor reflected on any party except himself. Justification among men is opposed not only to condemnation but even to *pardon*; for, in order to this, the prisoner must be found guilty, whereas, in justification, he is acquitted as innocent. But gospel-justification, though distinguishable from pardon, yet is not opposed to it. On the contrary, pardon is an essential branch of it. Pardon, it is true, only removes the curse due to sin, while justification confers the blessing of eternal life; but, without the former, we could not possess the latter. He that is justified requires to be pardoned, and he that is pardoned is also justified. Hence a *blessing* is pronounced on him whose iniquities are forgiven; hence also the apostle argues from the non-imputation of sin to the imputation of righteousness: considering the blessedness of him to whom God imputeth not sin as a description of the blessedness of him to whom he imputeth righteousness without works. Finally: justification, at a human bar, prevents condemnation; but gospel justification finds the sinner *under* condemnation, and delivers him from it. It is described as a "passing from death to life."

From these dissimilarities, and others which I doubt not might be pointed out, it must be evident, to every thinking mind, that though there are certain points of likeness, sufficient to account for the use of the term, yet we are not to learn the scripture doctrine of justification from what is so called in the judicial proceedings of human courts, and, in various particulars, cannot safely reason from one to the other. The principal points of likeness respect not the *grounds* of the proceeding, but the *effects* of it. Believing in Jesus, we are united to him; and, being so, are treated by the Judge of all as one with him; his obedience unto death is imputed to us, or reckoned as ours: and we, for his sake, are delivered from condemnation as though we had been innocent, and entitled to eternal life as though we had been perfectly obedient.

But let us farther inquire, *What is gospel justification?* Alluding to justification in a court of judicature, it has been common to speak of it as a *sentence*. This sentence has been considered, by some divines, as passing—first, in the mind of God from eternity; secondly, on Christ and the elect considered in him when he rose from the dead; thirdly, in the conscience of a sinner on his believing. Justification *by faith*, in the view of these divines, denotes either justification by Christ the object of faith, or the manifestation to the soul of what previously existed in the mind of God.

Others, who have been far from holding

with justification as a decree in the divine mind, have yet seemed to consider it as a manifestation, impression, or persuasion in the human mind. They have spoken of themselves and others as being justified under such a sermon, or at such an hour: when all that they appear to mean is that at such a time they had a strong impression, or persuasion, that they were justified.

In respect to the first of these statements, it is true that justification, and every other spiritual blessing, was included in that *purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*; but, as the *actual bestowment* of other blessings supposes the existence of the party, so does justification. Christ was "raised again *for* our justification, in the same sense as he died for the pardon of our sins. Pardon and justification were *virtually* obtained by his death and resurrection; and to this may be added, our glorification was obtained by his ascension; for we were not only "quickened together with him," and "raised up together," but made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." But as this does not prove that we were, thenceforth, *actually* glorified, neither does the other prove that we were actually pardoned or justified.

Whatever justification be, the Scriptures represent it as taking place on our *believing* in Christ. It is not any thing that belongs to *predestination*, but something that intervenes between that and glorification. "Whom he did *predestinate*, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also *justified*: and whom he justified, them he also *glorified*. That which the Scriptures call justification is by faith in Jesus Christ; and is sometimes spoken of as future, which it could not be if it were before our actual existence. For example: "Seeing it is one God who *shall* justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.—Now it was not written for Abraham's sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it *shall* be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.—The Scripture *foreseeing* that God *would* justify the heathen through faith," &c. If justification were God's decree finally to acquit, condemnation must be his decree finally to condemn. But every unbeliever, whether elect or non-elect, is under condemnation, as the Scriptures abundantly teach: condemnation, therefore, cannot be God's decree finally to condemn. Saul of Tarsus, while an unbeliever, was under condemnation, yet God had "not appointed him to wrath, but to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ." The sum is, that neither condemnation nor justification consists in the secret purpose of God, but in his will as revealed, or declared, as by a sentence in open court.

And, as justification is not a purpose in

the divine mind, neither is it a *manifestation to, an impression on, or a persuasion of, the human mind*. That there are *manifestations* to believers, is admitted. God *manifests* himself unto them as he does not unto the world. The things of God, which are hidden from the wise and prudent, are *revealed* to them. But these are not things which were previously locked up in the divine purposes, but things which were already revealed in the Scriptures, and which were previously hidden from them, as they still are from unbelievers, by their own criminal blindness. God does not reveal his secret counsels to men, otherwise than by fulfilling them. To pretend to a revelation, or manifestation, of that which is not contained in the Scriptures, is pretending to be inspired in the same extraordinary manner as were the prophets and apostles.

If justification consist in a manifestation, impression, or persuasion, that we are justified, condemnation must be a like impression, or persuasion, that we are condemned: but this is not true. The Jews who opposed Christ were under condemnation; yet, so far from being impressed, or persuaded, of any such thing, they had no doubt but God was their father. Believers in Jesus, on the other hand, may, at times, be impressed with strong apprehensions of divine wrath, while yet they are not exposed to it. Neither justification, therefore, nor condemnation, consists in a persuasion of the mind that we are under the one or the other. Besides, to make a thing consist in a persuasion of the truth of that thing is a palpable absurdity. There can be no well-grounded persuasion of the truth of any thing, unless it be true and evident antecedently to our being persuaded of it.

Justification is a relative change, not *in, or upon,* but *concerning* us. It relates to our standing with respect to God, the law-giver and judge of all. It is "passing from death to life," in respect of the law: as when the sentence against a malefactor is not only remitted, but he is, withal, raised to honor and dignity. It is our standing acquitted by the *revealed will of God declared in the Gospel*. As "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven" in the curses of his law, so "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith," in the declarations of the gospel. It is in this *revelation* of the mind of God in his word, I conceive, that the *sentence* both of condemnation and justification consists. He whom the Scriptures bless is blessed; and he whom they curse is cursed.

As transgressors of the holy, just, and good law of God, we are all, by nature, children of wrath. All the threatenings of God are in full force against us, and, were we to die in that condition, we must perish everlastingly. This is to be under *condemnation*. But condemnation, awful as it is, is not damnation. The sentence is not executed, nor is it irrevocable: "God so loved the

world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Hence, the sinner stands in a new relation to God as a law-giver. He is no longer "under the law, with respect to its condemning power, but "under grace." As the manslayer, on having entered the city of refuge, was, by a special constitution of mercy, secure from the avenger of blood; so the sinner, having "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him," is, by the gracious constitution of the gospel, secured from the curse. All those threatenings which belonged to him heretofore no longer stand against him; but are reckoned, by the Judge of all, as having been executed on Jesus his substitute, who was "made a curse for us." On the other hand, all the blessings and promises in the book of God belong to him, and, die when he may, eternal life is his portion. This is that state into which every believer is translated, on his becoming a believer; and herein, I conceive, consists the blessing of justification.

There are a few points pertaining to the subject which yet require illustration; namely, What it is in the redemption of Christ to which the Scriptures ascribe its *efficacy*—What is the concern of *faith* in justification, and why it is ascribed to this grace, rather than to any other—Finally, Whether justification includes the pardon of our sins, *past, present, and to come*.

1. Let us inquire, *What it is, in the redemption of Christ, to which the Scriptures ascribe its EFFICACY*. Justification is ascribed to his *blood*, and to his *obedience*. By the blood of Christ is meant the shedding of his blood, or the laying down of his life; and, by his obedience, all that conformity to the will of God which led to this great crisis. He was "obedient unto death." By the death of Christ sin is said to be "purged," or *expiated*; and sinners to be "redeemed," "reconciled," and "cleansed from all sin;" and by his obedience many are said to be "made righteous." This his obedience unto death was more than the *means* of salvation: it was the *procuring cause* of it. Salvation was the effect of the "travail of his soul." We may be instruments in saving one another; but Christ was "the *author* of eternal salvation."\* The principle of substitution, or of one standing in the place of others, being admitted by the Sovereign of the universe, he endured that which *in its effect on the divine government was equivalent*

\* The redemption of Christ may, indeed, be considered as a *means*, or *medium*, in respect of the *first cause*. Thus, in the text, it stands distinguished from grace: *that* is the source whence it sprang; *this* the medium through which it flows. The redemption of Christ is not the *cause* of the Father's grace; but that in *consideration* of which it is exercised.



to the everlasting punishment of a world, and did that which it was worthy of God to reward with eternal glory, not only on himself, but on all those on whose behalf he should intercede. What is there, then, in this his obedience unto death, that should render it capable of producing such important effects? To this question the Scriptures make answer, as follows: We are "redeemed—with the precious blood of Christ.—The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.—Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself" expiated "our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." If there be any meaning in language, the efficacy of the sufferings and work of Christ is here ascribed to the dignity of his person; and that dignity amounts to nothing short of his proper Deity. The Scriptures often ascribe the miracles of Christ, the strength by which he was borne up in his sufferings, and his resurrection from the dead, to the power of the Father: for, being "in the form of a servant," it was fit that he should be supplied, and supported, and vindicated, by HIM whose servant he was; but when the *value*, or *virtue*, of his interposition is spoken of, it is ascribed to the intrinsic glory of his person, as the Son of God. We inquire,

2. *What is the concern of FAITH in justification, and why it is ascribed to this grace, rather than to any other.* Were we to conceive of the gospel as a new "remedial law," and of faith as the first principle of obedience constituting the condition of it, or that which God graciously consented to accept as the term of justification, instead of a perfect conformity to the old law, we should be greatly beside the gospel plan. The gospel plan of justification excludes *boasting*, and that as excluding *works*: but justification, on this principle, excludes not works, but merely works of a certain description. There *is*, on this principle, a law that can give life; and righteousness, after all, is by law. If we are justified by any doings of our own, whatever they are, we have *whereof to glory*. Whether we call them legal or evangelical, if they be the *consideration* on which we are forgiven and accepted, we are not justified *freely by grace*, and *boasting* is not excluded.

It is said to be "of faith that it might be by grace." There must, therefore, be something in the nature of faith which peculiarly corresponds with the free grace of the gospel; something which looks out of self, and receives the free gifts of heaven as being what they are—pure undeserved favor. We need not reduce it to a mere exercise of the intellectual faculty, in which there is nothing holy; but, whatever holiness there is in it, it is not this, but the obedience of Christ,

that constitutes our justifying righteousness. Whatever other properties the magnet may possess, it is as pointing invariably to the north that it guides the mariner; and, whatever other properties faith may possess, it is as receiving Christ and bringing us into union with him, that it justifies.

In order to be interested in justification, and other blessings arising from the obedience and death of Christ, we must first be interested in *Christ himself*: for it is as *having the Son* that we "have everlasting life." The benefits of Christ's obedience unto death require to be received in the same order as that in which they are given. As God first *gives* HIM, so we must first *receive* HIM, and with him *all things freely*. Many would wish for the benefits of Christ's death, who yet have no desire after Christ. Like him that was nearest of kin to the family of Elimelech, they would, on various accounts, be pleased with the inheritance; but when it is understood that, in order to possess it, they must take *him* with all that pertains to him, and that this would mar their present inheritance, they give it up.

Thus it is that justification is ascribed to faith, because it is by faith that we receive Christ; and thus it is by *faith only*, and not by any other grace. Faith is peculiarly a *receiving* grace, which none other is. Were we said to be justified by repentance, by love, or by any other grace, it would convey to us the idea of something good in us being the *consideration* on which the blessing was bestowed; but justification by faith conveys no such idea. On the contrary, it leads the mind directly to Christ, in the same manner as saying of a person that he lives by *begging* leads to the idea of his living on *what he freely receives*.

It is thus that justification stands connected, in the Scriptures, with *union* with Christ: "Of him are ye *in* Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us—righteousness."—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are *in* Christ Jesus."—"That I may be found *in* him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." From these and other passages, we perceive that faith justifies, not in a way of merit, not on account of any thing in itself, be it what it may, but as uniting us to Christ. It is that which the act of marriage is on the part of a female: by it she becomes one with her husband, and (whatever might be her former poverty) legally interested in all that he possesses. Having him, she has all that is his. Thus it is that, Christ being "heir of all things," believers in him become "heirs of God," not in their own right, but as "joint-heirs with him." And as, in the marriage union, the wealth which an indigent female might derive from the opulence of her hus-

band would not be in *reward* of her having received him, so neither is justification the reward of faith, but of the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Great things are ascribed to faith, in a way of *healing*. Many of the miraculous cures performed by our Lord are ascribed to the faith of the parties. The *virtue*, however, proceeded not from faith, but from him. It is the same in justification. By faith we receive the benefit: but the benefit arises not from faith, but from Christ. Hence the same thing which is ascribed in some places to faith is in others ascribed to the obedience, death, and resurrection of Christ.

3. We inquire, *Whether justification includes the pardon of our sins, past, present, and to come.* That it includes the pardon of sin has been proved already from Rom. iv. 6, 7; and, seeing it is promised of him that believeth that he "shall not come into condemnation," it must, in some way, secure the pardon of all his sins, and the possession of eternal life. Yet, to speak of sins as being pardoned before they are repented of, or even committed, is not only to maintain that on which the Scriptures are silent, but to contradict the current language of their testimony. If all our sins, past, present, and to come, were *actually* forgiven, either when Christ laid down his life, or even on our first believing, why did David speak of "confessing his transgression," and of God "forgiving his iniquity?" Why did Solomon teach us that "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall find mercy?" Why did our Lord direct us, in our daily prayers, to say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors?" and why add, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses?" Finally, why did the apostle John teach us that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness?"

Nor is it sufficient to understand this language of *manifestation* of forgiveness to the mind. Forgiveness is not opposed to merely withholding the comforts of religion, but to *laying our sins to our charge*. The parable of the servant who took his fellow-servant by the throat, and was delivered by his lord to the tormentors, is thus applied by our Lord, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." 'This, undoubtedly, means more than withholding a sense of forgiveness in the present life. Nor is there anything in all this inconsistent with the certain perseverance of true believers, or with the promise that they "shall not come into condemnation." The truth taught us in this promise is not that if, after believing in Christ, we live in sin and die without repentance,

we shall, nevertheless, escape condemnation; but that provision is made, on behalf of believers, that they shall *not live in sin*; and, when they sin, that they shall *not die without repentance*, but return to God, and so obtain forgiveness. The promise of non-condemnation includes that of repentance and perseverance: "I will put my law in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me."

We may think that, if the Lord has appointed us to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ, whatever be our conduct, he will never threaten us with anything beyond a severe chastisement: but Christ did not act in this manner towards his disciples. He not only gave the unforgiving to expect no forgiveness at the hand of God, but enforced the giving up of that which "caused them to offend," though it were as dear as a right hand or a right eye, on pain of being "cast into hell-fire!" He allowed no one, while in an evil course, to take it for granted that he was, nevertheless, a good man; but pointed him to the end whither that course, if persisted in, would lead him. Warnings are as necessary, in some circumstances, as encouragements are in others: and their being enforced on pain of eternal destruction may be the appointed means of saving us from it.

## SERMON XVIII.

### ON JUSTIFICATION.

"Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."—Romans iii. 24.

HAVING shown what I conceive to be meant by justification, I proceed to the next head of discourse; namely,

II. TO OFFER EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE DOCTRINE; OR TO PROVE THAT WE ARE NOT JUSTIFIED BY ANY WORKS OF OUR OWN, BUT OF FREE GRACE, THROUGH THE REDEMPTION OF JESUS CHRIST. There are but two ways in which creatures can be justified before God: one is by works, the other by grace. If we had been obedient to the holy, just, and good law of our Creator, that obedience would have been our *righteousness*, and we should have been justified on the ground of it: for "the man that doeth these things shall live by them." But, having all sinned, we have come short of the glory of God. Instead of gaining his favor, we stand exposed to his righteous curse; "for thus it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them."

We need not, on this subject, inquire into the *degrees* of evil, or whether we have gone greater lengths in sin than other men; for, if we had only broken *one* of God's

righteous commandments, that were an everlasting bar to our justification. As well might a murderer plead in arrest of judgment that he had killed only *one* man. The number of our sins will, doubtless, heighten the degrees of punishment; but it is the nature of them that insures condemnation. Nor does this disprove the equity of the law; for we cannot break a single precept without contemning the divine authority, which at once destroys the principle of obedience to every other. We may not actually go into all other sins: but it is not *the love of God* that restrains us; it is interest, or fear, or regard to our own reputation, that holds us back. On this principle, he who offendeth but in one point is said to be guilty of all: "For *he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.* Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet, if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law." But, if a single offence be an everlasting bar to justification by our own works, what ground can there be to hope for it, when our whole lives have been one continued series of revolt?

We are all transgressors, and, as such, under the curse. Here, too, we might have been left to perish. God was not obliged, in justice or in honor, to interpose in behalf of a seed of evil doers. The law by which we stand condemned, being *holy, just, and good*, might have been executed, and no reproach would have attached to the divine character. Having sided with Satan against God, we might justly have had our portion with him and his angels. All who were not themselves implicated, and disaffected to the divine government, would have said, "*True and righteous are thy judgments, O Lord.*" And we ourselves, at the last judgment, should not have been able to open our mouths against it.

And now that "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins," has interposed and revealed a way in which he can be "just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus," shall it be objected to by us? Shall man, lying as he does under the dominion of sin, and the righteous condemnation of heaven on account of it—shall man take state to himself, and be ever aspiring to be justified on the ground of at least his comparative righteousness? Such, however, is the fact. When the first-born son of fallen Adam brought his offering, he came as though he had never sinned; bringing no sacrifice, and yet entertaining high expectations of success. Hence, when the signal of acceptance was withheld, his countenance fell. Thus it is that millions are bringing their offerings to this day, overlooking "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." All the false religions that have existed, or do now exist, in

the world are so many modifications of a self-righteous spirit, so many devices to appease the conscience and propitiate the Deity.

Nor is it confined to heathens, Mahomedans, and Jews: there are professing Christians who are very explicit in avowing their dependence upon their own works.\* Where the divinity and atonement of Christ are disavowed, this is no more than may be expected. But neither is it confined to such. Many who profess to believe these doctrines, yet seem to consider the grand object of the death of Christ to have been that he might obtain for us that repentance, faith, and sincere obedience should be accepted as the ground of justification, instead of sinless perfection.†

Many, who in consequence of being educated under a gospel-ministry disavow in words all dependence on their own works, are nevertheless manifestly under the influence of a self-righteous spirit. They do not confess their faults one to another, but justify themselves as far as possible, and, wherein they fail in this, will invent so many pleas and excuses as shall extenuate the sin to little or nothing. They are not self-diffident nor humble, but the contrary, trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others, just as the Pharisee did the publican. They "thank God" for being what they are; and so did the Pharisee: but, as words in the one case signified nothing, neither do they in the other.

To this may be added, it is not an unusual thing for those who have been awakened to a serious concern about salvation to overlook the Saviour, and to build their hopes on the consideration of the *tears they have shed, the prayers they have offered, and the pains they have taken* in religion. But if it

\* "When will Christians permit themselves to believe that the same conduct which gains them the approbation of good men here will secure the favor of heaven hereafter?" MRS. BARBAULD.

† Repentance and a good life are of themselves sufficient to recommend us to the divine favor."

DR. PRIESTLEY.

"The practice of virtue is always represented as the *only means* of attaining happiness, both here and hereafter."

MR. BELSHAM.

† This seems to be the idea of Bishop BUTLER. "The doctrine of the gospel," he says, "appears to be, not only that Christ taught the efficacy of repentance, but rendered it of the efficacy which it is, by what he did and suffered for us: that he obtained for us the benefit of having our repentance accepted unto eternal life: not only that he revealed to sinners that they were in a capacity of salvation, and how they might obtain it; but, moreover, that he put them into this capacity of salvation, by what he did and suffered for them; put us into a capacity of escaping future punishment, and obtaining future happiness." *Analogy, Part II. Chap. 5, p. 205.*—Christ, it seems, was no otherwise our Saviour than as enabling us to save ourselves. †



should prove that all confidences of this sort are only a refined species of self-righteous hope, and that the first substantial relief of a sinner arises from a belief of the gospel-way of salvation, the consequences may be no less fatal than if they had never wept nor prayed, nor taken any pains in religion.

One thing is certain: we must be justified wholly of grace, or wholly of works; for there is no medium: "If by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if," on the other hand, "it be of works, then is it no more of grace: otherwise work is no more work." Taking it for granted that what God has revealed in his word is the only sure ground on which to rest a matter of such high importance, I shall state what appears to me the scripture evidence for the first of these methods of justification under the following particulars:—

1. *The righteousness of God does not admit of a sinner's being justified on the ground of his own doings.* It belongs to the righteousness or justice of God to do justice to his own character. But to pardon and accept of sinners, on account of any thing done by them, were to fly in the face of his own law and government; and, if any thing could cause both them and him to be treated with contempt, this proceeding must do it. "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.—Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins.—For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." If these passages do not convey the idea of its being inconsistent with the righteous character of God to pardon and accept of sinners in consideration of their own doings, I can conceive of no determinate idea conveyed by them. If it was becoming the divine perfections to bring sinners to glory through a suffering Saviour, it would have been unbecoming those perfections to have brought them to glory in virtue of their own doings. If Christ were set forth to be a propitiation that God might declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, his righteousness would not have been declared in the remission of sins without it. Finally: If ignorance of God's righteousness were the reason of the non-submission of the Jews to the gospel way of justification, there must have been in that truth something directly opposed to justification in any other way, and which, had it been properly understood, would have cut up all hopes from every other quarter. It was in this

way that Paul, when the righteous law of God appeared to him in its true light, "died" as to all hopes of being accepted of God by the works of it. It was "through the law" that he became "dead to the law," that he might live unto God.

2. *The Scriptures in a great variety of language exclude all works performed by sinful creatures as the ground of acceptance with God.* In proof of this, the following passages are very express: "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man that doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,—If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.—By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.—Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.—If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory.—Now to him that worketh is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.—Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.—Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.—As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.—But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God it is evident: for the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them.—Christ is become of no effect unto you: whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace.—Not of works, lest any man should boast.—Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,—that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

Distinctions have been made on this subject between the works of the *ceremonial* and those of the *moral* law; also between the works of the *law* and those of the *gospel*;

as though it were not the design of the Scriptures to exclude moral duties from being grounds of justification, but merely those which are ceremonial; or, if it were, yet not the evangelical duties of repentance, faith, and sincere obedience. But, whatever differences there may be between these things, they are all *works*; and all works of man are excluded from justification. If the foregoing passages be considered in their connections they will be found to respect all obedience, of every kind, which is performed by men, be it ceremonial or moral, or what it may. They teach a justification by a righteousness *received*, in opposition to a righteousness *done*, or *performed*, and which leaves no room for boasting. If we were justified by faith itself, considered as a duty of ours, or if the Law-giver had respect to any conformity to God in us, as the cause, or reason, of the sentence, there would be no meaning in such language as this: "To him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

The language of the apostle to the Galatians goes not only to exclude obedience to the ceremonial and the moral law, but *obedience to law in general*, as the ground of justification. The reason given why the law is not against the promises, or why it cannot furnish an objection to the free grace of the gospel, is this: "If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." This is equal to saying, the patient was given up as incurable by law, before the promised grace of the gospel took him in hand: whatever, therefore, is done by the latter cannot be objected to by the former. The terms νόμος and ἐκ νόμου, law and by the law, in Gal. iii. 21, as observed by Dr. Guise, show it, according to Mr. Locke's rule of interpretation, to relate to law in general, or to any or every law. But, if the works of every law be excluded, all distinctions between ceremonial and moral, or between moral and evangelical, are of no account.

3. *Being justified freely by grace is itself directly opposed to being justified by works.* The term *grace* denotes *free favor to the unworthy*. If God had been obliged, in justice or in honor, to have done what he has done—if the law by which we were condemned were too strict, or the penalty annexed to it too severe—if Christ, and the offer of salvation through him, were a compensation given us on account of the injury we received from our connection with our first parents—that which is called *grace* would not be *grace*, but *debt*. There is just so much *grace* in the gospel as there is justice in the law, and no more. The opposition between *grace* and *works*, in this important concern, is so clear in itself, and so plainly marked by the apostle, that one can scarcely con-

ceive how it can be honestly mistaken: "If it be by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace."

But, strong as the term *grace* is, the apostle adds to its force. As though it were not enough for him to affirm that we are justified by grace, he says we are justified *freely* by his grace. There is, doubtless, a redundancy in the expression; but the design of it is to strengthen the thought. Thus, when he would forcibly express his idea of future glory, he uses a kind of tautology for the purpose, calling it a "*far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*." We are not only justified without any desert on our part, but contrary to it. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are his thoughts, in the forgiveness of sin, higher than our thoughts, and his ways than our ways. They who are justified are said to receive *abundance of grace*, or grace abounding over all the boundings of sin. Sin reigns over our species, subjugating them all to death; but grace conquers the conqueror, reigning through righteousness to eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

4. *The terms used relative to gospel justification render it evident that it is not our own righteousness that is imputed to us, but the righteousness of another.* "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."—"Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But he that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."—"David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God *imputeth* righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not *impute* sin." The terms *imputed* and *counted*, in this connection, are manifestly used to express, not that just reckoning of righteousness to the righteous which gives to every man his due, but the gracious reckoning of righteousness to the unrighteous, as though he were righteous. When the uncircumcised Gentile kept the law, his uncircumcision was *counted* for circumcision: not that it really was such, but it was graciously reckoned, in the divine administration, as if it were. When Paul, writing to Philemon concerning Onesimus, says, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account," he did not mean that he should treat him according to his deserts, but that he should forgive and accept him, for his sake.

When *faith* is said to be counted for righteousness, it is as relating to Christ. The faith by which Abraham was justified had immediate relation to him as the promised seed; and it is easy to perceive, in the New-testament accounts of justifying faith, a marked attention to the same thing. "Abra-



ham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."—"By *him* all that believe are justified from all things."—"That God might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." "It is evident," says President Edwards,\* "that the subject of justification is looked upon as destitute of any righteousness in himself, by that expression, 'It is counted, or imputed, to him for righteousness.' The phrase, as the apostle uses it here (Rom. iv. 5) and in the context, manifestly imports that God, of his sovereign grace, is pleased, in his dealings with the sinner, to take and regard that which indeed is not righteousness, and in one that has no righteousness, so that the consequence shall be the same as if he had righteousness; and which may be from the respect that it bears to something which is indeed righteous. It is as if he had said, *As to him that works*, there is no need of any gracious *reckoning*, or *counting* it for righteousness, and causing the reward to follow as if it were a righteousness: for, if he has works, he has that which is a righteousness in itself, to which the reward properly belongs."

5. *The rewards promised in the Scriptures to good works suppose the parties to be believers in Christ: and so, being accepted in him, their works also are accepted, and rewarded for his sake.* That good works have the promise of salvation is beyond dispute. Nothing that God approves shall go unrewarded. The least expression of faith and love, even the giving of a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ *because he belongs to him*, will insure everlasting life. But neither this nor any other good work can be a ground of justification, inasmuch as it is *subsequent* to it. For works to have any influence on this blessing, they require to precede it: but works before faith are never acknowledged by the Scriptures to be good. It was testified of Enoch that he *pleased God*; whence the apostle to the Hebrews infers that he was a believer, inasmuch as "without faith it is impossible to please God." "It does not consist with the honor of the Majesty of the King of heaven and earth to accept of any thing from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law, till that condemnation be removed." † The Lord had respect "first to Abel," and "then to his offering." Even those works which are the expressions of faith and love

have so much sinful imperfection attached to them that they require to be presented by an intercessor on our behalf. The most spiritual sacrifices are no otherwise acceptable to God than by *Jesus Christ*.

Perhaps I ought not to conclude this part of the subject without noticing the apparent opposition between Paul and James; the one teaching that "we are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;" the other that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." The words are, doubtless, apparently opposite; and so are those of Solomon, when he directs us, in one proverb, *not to answer, and, in the next, to answer a fool according to his folly*. In reconciling these apparently opposite counsels, we are led, by the reasons given for each, to understand the terms as used in different senses; the former, as directing us not to answer a fool *in a foolish manner*, for this would make us *like unto him*; the latter, to answer him *in a way suited to expose his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit*. In like manner the terms *faith* and *justification* were used by Paul and James in a different sense. By *faith*, Paul meant that which worketh by love, and is productive of good fruits; but James speaks of a faith which is *dead, being alone*. By *justification*, Paul means the acceptance of a sinner before God; but James refers to his being approved of God as a true Christian. "Both these apostles bring the case of Abraham in illustration of their principles; but then, it is to be observed, they refer to different periods and circumstances in the life of that patriarch. Paul, in the first instance, says of Abraham, that he was justified by faith, while yet uncircumcised: this was his justification *in the sight of God*, and was without any consideration of his works. James refers to a period some years subsequent to this, when, in the offering up of his son, he was justified by works also; that is, his faith was shown to be genuine by its fruits. Paul therefore refers to the acceptance of a sinner; James to the approbation of a saint." †

Supported by this body of Scripture evidence, as well as by the experience we have had of the holy and happy influence of the doctrine, I trust we shall continue unmoved in our adherence to it. Let others boast of the efficacy of their own virtues, we, with the apostle, will "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord;" will "count all things but dung, that we may win Christ, and be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

\* Sermon on Justification, p. 9.

† President Edwards's Sermon on Justification.

‡ The word "Justification" is used in this sense Matt. xiii. 37; 1 Cor. iv. 4. See Williams's Vindication against Belsham, pp. 145, 146.



## SERMON XIX.

## ON JUSTIFICATION.

“Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”—Romans iii. 24.

HAVING endeavored to explain and establish the doctrine of justification, it remains for me,

III. TO SHOW THE CONSISTENCY OF ITS BEING OF FREE GRACE, AND YET THROUGH THE REDEMPTION OF JESUS CHRIST. This is a subject of the last importance. Almost every thing pertaining to the way of salvation is affected by it. The principal reason alleged by those who reject the doctrine of atonement is its inconsistency with grace. God needed nothing, they say, but his own goodness, to induce him to show mercy; or, if he did, it is not of grace, seeing a price is paid to obtain it. The question, however, does not respect the first moving cause of mercy, but the manner of showing it. The friends of the doctrine of atonement allow that the sacrifice of Christ was not the cause, but the effect, of the Father's love. They do not scruple to admit that his love was sufficient to have pardoned sinners without an atonement, provided it had been consistent with the righteousness of his character and government. “It is not the *sentiment*, but the *expression of love*,” that requires an atonement. David was not wanting in love to his son Absalom; for *his soul longed to go forth to him*; but he felt for his honor, as the head of a family and a nation, which, had he admitted him immediately into his presence, would have been compromised, and the crime of murder connived at. Hence, for a time, he must be kept at a distance, and, when introduced, it must be by a mediator. This statement, which has been made, in substance, by our writers repeatedly, has seldom, if ever, been fairly met by writers on the other side. I never recollect, at least, to have seen or heard any thing like a fair answer to it.

It is remarkable, too, that those who make this objection never appear to regard the doctrine of grace, but for the purpose of making void the atonement. On all other occasions grace is virtually disowned, and works are every thing; but here it is magnified, in much the same manner as the Father is honored, as the object of worship, to the exclusion of the Son.

Cases may be supposed, I acknowledge, in which the ideas of grace and atonement would be inconsistent. First: *If the atonement were made by the offender himself enduring the full penalty of the law*, his deliverance would be a matter of right, and there would be no grace in it. But, as in a case of murder, it is not in the sinner's power to

make atonement for himself, so as to survive his punishment. The punishment threatened against sin is everlasting, which admits of no period when the penalty shall have been endured. No man, therefore, can, by any length of suffering, redeem his own soul.

Secondly: *If the sufferings of another could avail for the offender, and he himself were to provide the substitute*, his deliverance might be a matter of right, and there might be no grace in it. But neither of these suppositions can exist in the case before us. Strict distributive justice could not admit of the innocent suffering for the guilty, even though the innocent were willing. Its language is, *Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book*. But, if it could, the guilty party could not find a substitute either able or willing to stand in his place.

Thirdly: *If God himself should both consent to accept of a substitute, and actually provide one, yet if the acts and deeds of sinners be considered as literally becoming his, and his theirs, whatever grace there might be in the acceptance and provision of the substitute, there would be no place for the FORGIVENESS of the sinner, and justification would be merely an act of justice*. If Christ, in having our sins imputed to him, became a sinner, and, as some have said, the greatest of all sinners, then, in his sufferings, he was only treated according to his desert: and that desert, belonging to him, could no longer belong to us: so that had we been in existence, and known of it, we might, from that moment, have claimed our deliverance as a matter of right. And if we, in having the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, become that which he was, namely, meritorious, or deserving of eternal life, then might we disown the character of supplicants, and approach the Judge of all in language suited to those who had always pleased him. But neither can this be. The acts and deeds of one may affect others, but can, in no case, become actually theirs, or be so transferred as to render that justice which would otherwise have been of grace. The imputation of our sins to Christ, and of his righteousness to us, does not consist in a transfer of either the one or the other, except in their effects. Christ suffered, not because he *was*, but merely *as if he had been*, the sinner: notwithstanding the imputation of sin to him, he died “the just for the unjust.” On the other hand, we are justified, not because we *are*, but *as though we were* righteous; for the worthiness belongs to him, and not to us.

Finally: *If justification through the redemption of Christ were considered as not only consistent with justice, but required by it, it must, I think, be allowed that every idea of grace is excluded*. That favor toward creatures which justice requires must

needs be their due; which leaves no room for grace. It is only of God's *essential* justice, however, that this is true, and not of his covenant righteousness, which relates to his own free engagements. God, having pledged his word, would be "*unrighteous* to forget the work and labor of love of his believing people; and thus it is that, "If we confess our sins, he is *faithful and just* to forgive us our sins." The righteous fulfillment of engagements, made in a way of grace, is not opposed to it; but that which is required by *essential* justice is.

This representation of things cannot, in any wise, depreciate the *merit* of Christ: for, be this what it may, it is not *ours*, and cannot, therefore, constitute any *claim on our behalf*, but in *virtue of God's free promises*, which, being made in grace, continue such in all their fulfillments.

It is enough if the justification of sinners be *consistent with justice*; and this renders the whole in harmony with grace. Such was the value of Christ's blood-shedding, as, in regard of its effects on the divine government, to be equivalent to our being everlastingly punished; and such the merit of his obedience as to be worthy of all that God has bestowed on us in reward of it: yet, as there is no transfer but of the *effects*, it does not, in the least, interfere with grace.

If the principles on which the doctrine of atonement proceeds be carefully considered, they will not only be found consistent with grace, but will rank among the strongest evidences in favor of it.

In proof of this, let the following observations be duly considered:—

1. *It is common among men, in showing kindness to the unworthy, to do it out of regard to one that is worthy; which kindness is nevertheless considered as a matter of free favor.* You had a friend whom you loved as your own soul. He died, and left an only son. The son proves a dissolute, worthless character, and reduces himself to beggary. Still he is the son of your friend, and you wish to show him kindness. If your kindness be unaccompanied with an explanation of your motives, he may think you have no dislike to his vices.—Young man, say you, therefore, I am sorry it is not in my power to be your friend from a respect to your own character: but I knew and loved your father, and what I do for you is *for his sake!*—Here is an exercise of both justice and grace; justice to the memory of the worthy, and grace in the relief of the unworthy. The worthiness of the father is imputed to the son, inasmuch as, in consequence of it, he is treated as though he were himself worthy; but it makes no difference as to his real character or deserts, nor in any wise renders what is done to him less a matter of grace than if it had not been done in consi-

deration of his father's worthiness. If Onesimus were forgiven by Philemon, at the intercession of Paul (as there is no reason to doubt that he was,) he would not, on that account, think of its being less an act of grace.

2. *God, in his dealings with mankind, has frequently proceeded upon the same principle, bestowing blessings on the unworthy, out of respect to one that was worthy; which blessings, nevertheless, have been of pure grace.* God promised the posterity of Noah exemption from a future flood: but, knowing that they would utterly corrupt themselves, his covenant was primarily made with *him*. It was thus in the blessings promised to the posterity of Abraham. The Lord, knowing that they would be very corrupt, spoke thus to Abraham himself: "As for me, behold, my covenant is *with thee*, and thou shalt be a father of many nations." Hence, in a great number of instances wherein mercy was shown to the rebellious Israelites, they were reminded that it was "not for their sakes," but on account of the covenant made with their father Abraham, and renewed with Isaac and Jacob. Thus, also, in the covenant made with David, God blessed his posterity for his sake, saying, "My covenant shall stand fast *with him*." And, when the heart of Solomon was turned away from the Lord God of Israel, he was told, that, if the Lord did not rend the kingdom utterly from him, it would not be for his sake, but for David his servant's sake and for Jerusalem's sake, which he had chosen. In these instances, there was a display of both justice and grace, and the righteousness of the fathers was, as I may say, imputed to the children, inasmuch as, in consequence of it, they were treated as if they themselves were righteous; but it makes no difference as to their deserts, nor in any wise renders what was done to them less a matter of grace than if it had proceeded merely from the divine goodness, and without any consideration of the righteousness of their fathers. So far from this, the very language, "Not for your sakes do I this,—be it known unto you,—but for my holy name's sake,—and for the covenant that I made with your fathers," would tend, more than any thing, to humble them, and to impress them with the idea that what they had was altogether of grace.

If it be objected that in these cases, though the blessing was of grace to the party receiving it, yet it was in reward of the party for whose sake it was given: I answer, It is in respect of the party receiving, and him only, that it is called grace; and this is sufficient for its being so denominated. It is of what justification is *to us*, and not what it is *to Christ*, that the apostle speaks. It is enough if it be of grace to us, and if God's bestowing it upon us out of



respect to the worthiness of his Son do not diminish that grace, but, on the contrary, augment it.

But it may be said that, in these cases, there was no example of the innocent suffering for the guilty; no atonement; no redemption of the parties by a sacrifice offered in their stead. We therefore proceed to observe,

3. *God, in the appointment of animal sacrifices (though they were only shadows of good things to come,) sanctified the principle of sin being expiated by the sufferings of a substitute, and yet represented the sinner as FREELY FORGIVEN.* The process of the burnt-offering is thus described: "If his offering be a burnt-sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will" (or, as Ainsworth renders it, *for acceptance*) "at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering: and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him," &c. The current language concerning these sacrifices is, "And the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin that he hath committed, and it shall be forgiven him. In all these transactions there was *justice and grace*; justice in requiring a sacrifice, and grace in forgiving the transgressor. There was also *imputation*: the sin of the party was imputed to the appointed victim, which was reckoned as though it were the sinner, and treated as such in the divine administration. The atonement made by the sacrifice was, on the other hand, imputed to him that offered it; that is, it was reckoned to his account, and he was treated accordingly. This is clear from what is said of one the flesh of whose offering was neglected to be eaten before the third day according to appointment: "It shall not be *accepted*, neither shall it be *imputed* unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity;" implying that, if offered according to the divine appointment, it was accepted for him, and imputed to him, and he should not bear his iniquity.

In all these substitutional sacrifices, atonement did not operate to the diminution of grace; they were not such a payment of the sinner's debt as that he should be entitled to deliverance as a matter of claim; since the issue of all was, "And his sins shall be *forgiven* him." On the contrary, every thing was calculated to magnify the grace of God, and to humble the sinner in the dust before him. Of this tendency, particularly, was his having to lay his hand upon the head of the sacrifice, confessing his sin, and acknowledging, in effect, that, if he had been treated according to his deserts, he himself must have been the victim.

The doctrine of sacrifices receives an in-

teresting illustration from the case of Job and his three friends: "And it was so, that, after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz, the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept; lest I deal with you after your folly."

We see here that the three friends could not be justified on the ground of their own conduct. They must either be accepted through a sacrifice and intercessor, or be dealt with according to their folly. And this sacrifice and intercession, instead of making void the grace of the transaction, goes to establish it. It must have been not a little humiliating to Eliphaz and his companions to be given to understand that all their zeal for God had been folly, and required an atonement; that the Lord would not receive a petition at their hands; that the sacrifices must be brought to Job, and offered up in his presence; and that, after all their contumelious language to him, they must owe their acceptance to his intercession. Had they been forgiven without this process, their sin must have appeared light, and the grace of God in its forgiveness have been diminished, in their apprehension, in comparison of what it was.

4. *The New Testament, while it represents the interposition of Christ as necessary for the consistent exercise of mercy, ascribes the whole of our salvation, nevertheless, to the free grace of God.* I need not prove this position by a number of references. The doctrine of the New Testament on this subject is summarily comprehended in the verses following the text, which contain the apostle's explanation of his own words. Having stated that we are "justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," he adds, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare I say at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

"Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation." We see here in what "the redemption of Christ," by which we are justified, consisted. He himself was made an expiatory sacrifice, through which God might be propitious to sinners, without any dishonest or attaching to his character.

"Through faith in his blood." In order to an Israelite being benefited by the appointed sacrifices, it was necessary for him, or for the priest on his behalf, to put his hands upon the head of the animal, and there



to make confession of sins. Hence the offerers of sacrifices are denominated "the comers thereunto." And thus it is necessary to our deriving benefit from the propitiation of Christ that we should believe in him.

"To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins." The first thing necessary in our justification is the remission of sin. The grand impediment to this was, that it would reflect upon the "righteousness" of God; representing either his precepts and threatenings as too rigid to be put in execution, or his mercy as being mere connivance. Hence, when a great act of mercy was to be shown, it became necessary to preface it by a declaration or demonstration of righteousness. God, by making his beloved Son a sacrifice, practically declared or demonstrated, in the presence of the universe, his determination to maintain the honor of his government, and his utter abhorrence of sin. Having done this, he can now forgive the believing sinner, without any suspicion of connivance attaching to his character.

"Sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." The propitiation of Christ was not only necessary in behalf of believers under the times of the gospel, but of those in former ages. Those who had offered sacrifices were not forgiven in virtue of them but of this. On the ground of Christ's undertaking to become a propitiation in the fulness of time, the "forbearance of God" was exercised towards them. And, now that his righteousness is declared, he can be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Supposing the foregoing comments to be the substance of the apostle's meaning, what is there in any part of it which renders void, or in any wise diminishes, the free grace of God? Does the declaration or demonstration of his righteousness "for the remission of sins" render it no remission? Would it have been more of a favor for God to have pardoned sin without any regard to righteousness than with it? Is there any thing in the whole proceeding that puts the sinner in possession of a claim on the ground of essential justice, or which warrants him to hope for an interest in its blessed results, without coming to the Saviour as guilty and unworthy?

There is nothing in the New Testament which represents the death of Christ as superseding the necessity of repentance, confession, and humble supplication, or as investing the believer with any other claim of spiritual blessings than that which arises from the free promise of God through his dear Son. We never read there of "suing out our right," nor of mercy being a matter of demand since Christ has paid the debt. All is in the language of supplication in the name of Christ.

The *intercession of Christ* himself on our

behalf proceeds upon the same principle. It would not otherwise be *intercession*. "Grace," as Dr. Goodwin observes, "requires to be applied for in a way of *entreaty* and *intercession*."\*

Those who plead for the intercession of Christ in a way of *authority*, or *demand*, ground it on his sacrifice and merits; which, being of infinite worth, must, they suppose, entitle him to ask favors for his people in this manner. That God in love to his dear Son should reward this voluntary obedience unto death with the bestowment of eternal salvation on them that believe in him, and even lay himself under *obligation* to do so, is perfectly consistent with its being of grace; but obligation of this kind furnishes no ground for *demand*, nor does it appear from the Scriptures that the Majesty of Heaven and earth was ever so approached. In the gospel way of salvation, grace and justice meet or are *combined* in the same thing. Grace, through the righteousness of Jesus, "reigns" not in one or two stages, but in every stage, "unto eternal life;" but, on the principle of salvation being an object of demand, it must, in some stages of it, become a matter of mere justice: it might be grace to provide the deliverer, but there would be none in the deliverance itself.

However worthy Christ was to receive power, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing, yet, when pleading for *sinner*s, it required to be in the language of *intercession*. His worthiness is that indeed on account of which we are treated *as if we were* worthy, but it does not render us meritorious. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us; but it is only in its *effects* that it is transferred, or, indeed, transferrable. The sum is, there is nothing in the atonement or justifying righteousness of Christ that in any wise supersedes the necessity of our being freely forgiven, or freely blessed.

I conclude with a few reflections on the whole subject:—

First: If the doctrine here stated and defended be true, there is in *the nature of sin*

\* The words of our Lord in John xvii. 24, "Father, I will," &c., have been thought to convey a different idea:—

"With cries and tears he offered up  
His humble suit below;  
But with *authority* he asks,  
Enthron'd in glory now.

For all that come to God by him,  
Salvation he *demand*s;  
Points to their names upon his breast,  
And spreads his wounded hands."

TOPLADY.

This petition, however, was offered up when our Lord was upon earth; and his intercession in heaven is called *prayer*: "I will *pray* the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." "The verb rendered *will*," says Dr. Campbell, "is the same which in Matt. xii. 38, and Mark x. 35, is rendered *would*, and ought to have been so rendered here, as it implies request, not command.

something much more offensive to God than is generally supposed. Is it conceivable that God, whose nature is love, would have *curst* the work of his hands for a matter of small account? He does not delight in cursing: he afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men. Yet every transgressor of his law is declared to be accursed. All the curses in the book of God stand against him: in his basket, and in his store; in the city, and in the field; in his going out, and in his coming in; and in all that he setteth his hand unto. Nor is it confined to the present life, but includes everlasting punishment. Is it conceivable that God would have made his Son a sacrifice, or that the Lord of glory would have come into the world for this purpose, if sin had not been an evil and a bitter thing? If it were no more than men in general conceive it to be, assuredly so much would not have been made of it. It is upon light thoughts of sin that a disbelief of justification through the blood-shedding of Christ is grafted; but, let us think of it as lightly as we may, if God thinks otherwise we shall be in the wrong; for "the judgment of God is according to truth."

Secondly: If this doctrine be true, the danger of our being lost arises, not from the magnitude of our sin, be it what it may, but from a *self-righteous rejection of the only way of acceptance with God*. Let the nature or degrees of sin be what they may, there is no reason on that account to despair of salvation. On the contrary, there is the utmost encouragement for the most guilty and unworthy to return to God by Jesus Christ. Every bar in the way of acceptance which respected the government of God is removed. God can be just, and yet the justifier of the believer in Jesus. More glory redounds to him, even to his justice, from salvation than from damnation. Nor is there any cause to doubt the willingness of God to show mercy. He is, indeed, unwilling to show mercy to those who seek it in any other way than Christ, or, rather, is determined they shall not find it; but every one that seeketh in his name findeth. There is one great and overwhelming fact that answers all objections: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The pardon of sin and acceptance with God are blessings of such magnitude that nothing in this world is to be compared with them; yet these are less than what has been given already; for the argument of the apostle is from the greater to the less. If we be willing to receive Christ, and with him all things freely, there is nothing to hinder it. If the door of mercy be shut upon us, it is a *self-righteous spirit* that shuts it. Look at a self-justifying spirit in respect of faults committed between man and man. Persons of very ordinary capacity in other things will here

be ingenious to admiration in framing excuses. They who seem scarcely able to speak on other subjects will be quite eloquent in defending themselves; dwelling on circumstances that make in their favor, keeping out of sight what makes against them, alleging their good intentions, even in things which in themselves cannot be justified; and shunning, as one would shun the road to death, a frank acknowledgment of their sin, and an humble petition for mercy. Of the same nature is a self-righteous spirit in respect of sin committed against God; and this it is that shuts the door of mercy. If a convict, under a just sentence of death, be assured from authority that, if he confess his guilt and petition for mercy, he will be forgiven, and if instead of making such confession and supplication he either pleads *not guilty*, or at least insists upon his *comparative* innocence, or upon some circumstance which may *entitle* him to mercy, should we not say of such a man, He shuts the door of mercy on himself? He dies not on account of the magnitude of his crime, but of his pride and obstinacy. His original crime is still indeed the formal cause of his punishment, but it is owing to his self-justifying spirit that it was finally laid to his charge. And thus it is that the Scriptures ascribe the loss of the soul to unbelief: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but *the wrath of God abideth on him*."—Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone."

It is remarkable that, in drawing a conclusion from the doctrine of absolute sovereignty, in which the apostle had taught that God had "mercy on whom he would have mercy," he ascribes the failure of the Jews, not to their non-election, but to their unbelief.

Finally: Though justification be of "grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus," yet without good works we can give no proof of our being justified. The whole argument of the apostle, in the sixth chapter of this epistle, teaches that believers cannot live in sin, being dead to it, and alive to God. Those who are in Christ Jesus, to whom there is now no condemnation, are said to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." We need not wish for stronger evidence in favor of the doctrine of free justification than that which is furnished by the objections which are answered by the apostle. No other notion of justification than that which is of grace, through Christ, would admit of such objections as he encounters: no other doctrine, therefore, can justly pretend to be apostolical.



It follows, however, that while we contend for the doctrine, it concerns us so to walk as not to furnish its adversaries with a handle for reproaching it as unfriendly to a life of holiness. The law of God, though not the medium of life, is nevertheless the rule of conduct; and though we are justified by *faith* alone, yet good works are necessary to prove it to be genuine. Thus it is that faith is *shown* and *made perfect* by works. All who profess to believe the doctrine do not live under its influence; and they who do are exposed to other influences. Whatever peace of mind, therefore, it may be adapted to produce, it furnishes no ground for carnal or presumptuous security.

## SERMON XX.

### THE BELIEVER'S REVIEW OF HIS PAST AND PRESENT STATE.

"But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."  
—Ephes. ii. 13.

It is common to speak of our country, in respect of its high state of civilization and cultivation, as a garden. But, to know what civilization and cultivation have done for us, we must know what we were in former ages, when the island was little better than a wilderness, and its inhabitants a race of barbarians.

Thus, if we would understand what Christianity has done for us, we must acquaint ourselves with the condition in which we were, while subject to pagan darkness and superstition. It is thus that the apostle, in writing to the Ephesians, teaches them the value of the blessings and privileges of the gospel, by directing their attention to the state in which they were before it reached them.

At the beginning of the chapter, they are reminded of their state as sinners in *common with other sinners*: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all (Jews as well as Gentiles) had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." But, in addition to this, the apostle reminds them of their *peculiar condition as heathens*: "Remember that ye, being in time past Gentiles in the flesh,—that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." This being, in some respects, the

greatest remove from God at which men could place themselves, they are emphatically said to have been "*far off*." Sinners, among the Jews, were subjectively distant from God; but they were so both subjectively and objectively, as being destitute of the most important means of knowing him.

In discoursing upon the subject, we shall first observe that state of distance which is peculiar to heathens; secondly, that which is common to heathens and all other sinners; and, thirdly, the way in which they are recovered, and brought nigh.

I. Let us observe THAT STATE OF DISTANCE WHICH IS PECULIAR TO HEATHENS. This is far from being an uninteresting subject to us. At the time this epistle was written, our fathers were in this very state; and, had not the gospel been brought to us by those who had heard and believed it, we had been in the same state at this day. Instead of being met together, as we now are, to worship the living God through the mediation of his Son, we had been assembled to adore stocks and stones; instead of singing the high praises of Jehovah, nothing had been heard in our cities, towns, and villages, but the vociferations of idolatry; instead of the gratifying sights arising from the institutions of humanity and benevolence, we should have been witnesses, and perhaps more than witnesses, of the offering up of human sacrifices!

The description given of this state by the apostle, in verses 11, 12, is very affecting: "At that time ye were *without Christ*." The only way in which Christ could be known was by revelation; and the only people to whom a revelation was made was Israel. To them pertained the oracles of God, and the covenants of promise. Being, therefore, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, they must needs be strangers from the covenants of promise, and so, of course, be without Christ. And being without Christ, they had *no hope*, either of their sins being forgiven, or of a blessing hereafter. And though they daily partook of the bounties of Providence, yet, being without Christ, and without hope, they were without God in the world!

Such was the state of the heathen world at the coming of Christ. The science of Egypt, Chaldea, Greece, and Rome, had discovered much, as to things pertaining to the present life; but, in respect of an hereafter, all was enveloped in gross darkness. The far greater part did not think of it, and they that did, knew but just enough to make them miserable. They were aware that, like all others, they must die; and knowing that they had not lived and acted, even to each other, as they ought, their consciences foreboded a state in which they would be called to account; but what it would be they knew not.



The following lines might be written by a pensive infidel of modern times; but they would have fitted the lips of a pagan:

“Distrust and darkness of a future state  
Make poor mankind so fearful of his fate:  
Death of itself is nothing; but we fear  
To be we know not what, we know not where.”

Such, or nearly such, must have been the reflections of the most serious among the heathen; and, as to the rest, they were buried in all manner of wickedness. It is of the nature of idolatry to efface and obliterate from the mind all just thoughts of God and true religion, and to substitute in their place vain imaginations and vile affections. Instead of a holy, just, and good Being presiding over the universe, imaginary deities are set up, whose office it is to preside over particular countries and concerns; and this in a manner suited to the inclinations of their worshippers, entering into all their prejudices, and patronizing their most favorite vices.

There is a marked connection between impiety and obscenity, or the casting off of the knowledge and worship of God and being given up to the basest practices towards one another. “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth!” If they dishonor him by transferring his glory to an idol, he will give them up in turn to dishonor their own bodies. If they change the truth of God the creator, who is blessed forever, into the practical lie of worshipping that as God which is not God, for this cause they shall be given up to vile affections. As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a mind void of judgment, and to the practice of every thing obscene, unnatural, unjust, malignant, false, and cruel; not only to wallow like filthy beasts in the mire, but to prefer the society of such as their friends and companions! If any doubt whether this picture be not overcharged, let faithful witnesses be heard, and they will report the same things of heathen countries at this day.

We hear, from men calling themselves Christians, but who in fact are infidels, flattering accounts of heathen virtue, and labored attempts to prove the virtuous tendency of the system. Idols, instead of being competitors with the true God, are represented as connected with him; as though it were a matter of indifference to whom the worship is presented, Jehovah, Jove, or Baal; all is received as a tribute paid to the common Father of all. Such are the sentiments taught by one of our poets; and such are the principles of so large a part of our countrymen that, if Britons do not christianize India, India may be expected soon to heathenize Britain! Shall we, in complaisance to infidels, throw away our Bibles, and listen to their pleas for the most sottish stupidity that ever dis-

graced human nature? The voice of reason, and (thank God!) the voice of Britain, answer, No! We ourselves were sometimes darkness; but, if we have been made light in the Lord, let us walk as children of the light.

We proceed to observe,

II. THAT STATE OF DISTANCE WHICH IS COMMON TO HEATHENS AND ALL OTHER SINNERS. We have seen already that there is a state, described at the beginning of the chapter, which refers not to what the Ephesians were by education, by custom, or by any other circumstances attending their former life, but to what they were *by nature*. It was in respect of this that the apostle reckoned himself and his countrymen, notwithstanding their living under the light of revelation, among them; and in this respect we also, notwithstanding our living under the light of the gospel, must be reckoned with them: “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

The apostle does not tell the Ephesians from whom, or from what, they were “far off,” the reason of which might be that there was no one word that would convey the fulness of the sentiment. He might have said, Ye were far off from happiness; this had been true: or far off from peace; this had been true: or far off from righteousness; this had been true: or far off from hope; this also had been true: he might mean to comprehend them all, and, therefore, made use of general terms. If any word, more comprehensive than the rest, had been used, it must have been far off from God. This is the last term, in the preceding description, to which the words “far off” refer: “without Christ—having no hope; and *without God* in the world!”

There is a natural distance from God which necessarily belongs to us, and to the loftiest archangel, as creatures. But this distance is not removed by *the blood of Christ*. The enjoyments of heaven itself will not remove or diminish it. It is not of this, therefore, that the apostle writes; but of that moral distance from God which belongs to us as sinners. There is nothing sinful in being far off from God in the former sense; but to be far off in our thoughts of him, affections towards him, and desires after him, is of the essence of sin. This is alienation of heart, which stamps the character: for what a man’s heart is, that is he. If a subject be so full of disaffection to his rightful prince that he has no feeling of respect towards him, no mind to please him, nor to think, or read, or hear, any thing in his praise, this were alienation of heart: and, if all this were without cause, we should say, of such a man, that he did not deserve

to live under a government to which he was so wickedly disaffected. Yet this is the state of mind of sinners towards the blessed God. They call not upon his name; but rise in the morning, and retire at evening; as if there were no God, and no hereafter; as if they had no soul to be saved or lost: but, like the animals that surround them, were made to eat, drink, and sleep, for a few years, and then to die, and be no more! The things of God do not occupy their minds; and, unless they conceive of his character as very different from what the Scriptures represent it, they do not like to think of him, nor to speak of him, nor to hear others speak of him, or of any thing pertaining to him as revealed in the Bible. The serious mention of his name strikes a damp upon their spirits, and often puts an end to a conversation. They have no delight in reading his word, and never make it their study to do any thing because he requires it. What is all this but practically saying to God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?"

We have not to go into the heathen world in search of such characters as these: they are found in all our cities, towns, villages, and congregations, and in almost all our families. We may call ourselves Christians, and yet be without Christ; and we may declaim against atheism, and yet live without God in the world.

But, though all sinners are far off from God, yet some are farther off than others. Every sinner has gone so far from God that he will never return of his own accord. The ways of sin are our *own ways*; we find them without any difficulty, but never return till the good Shepherd finds us, and brings us home. But some are farther off than others. As sin obtains in different degrees, so does the distance at which it places us from God. The Scriptures represent some persons as in a more hopeless state than others; and the same person is farther off at one period of life than at another. Sin being progressive, the longer any one lives in it without repentance, the farther off he necessarily is from God. Every sinner *going on still in his trespasses* is getting more and more hardened, and farther from the hearing of the calls of conscience and of God.

Shall I mention a few cases of persons whom the Scriptures represent as farthest from God? You may expect me to name the *profligate*, who is at open war with God; who breaks the sabbath, wallows in intemperance and debauchery, and laughs at all serious religion. And true it is that such characters are at an awful distance from God: yet many who have been thus far off have been made nigh by the blood of Christ. Such were some of the Corinthians, and such have been some of us.

There is a case more hopeless than this,

namely, that of the *self-righteous*. Of the Pharisees, who were *righteous in their own eyes, and despised others*, it is said, that "publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven before them." When some of them came to John, he called them "a generation of vipers," and asked, with surprise, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Our Lord asked them, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" as though they were so fast bound by the chains of spiritual pride as to render their deliverance next to impossible.

Reprove a drunkard or a debauchee, and you will have his conscience on your side. Converse with him seriously on temperance, righteousness, and judgment to come, and he will tremble. But he that is pure in his own eyes, and yet not cleansed from his filthiness, his very *mind and conscience are defiled*. Thinking highly of himself, and of his doings, he will resent every thing said to him which calls in question the goodness of his state. He flatters himself that he is at peace with God, and does not choose to be disturbed in his repose. Talk to him of Christ Jesus having come into the world to save *sinners*, even the chief of sinners, and it will either appear to him a strange doctrine, or, if he comprehend your design, it is likely he will feel himself insulted. He says, in his heart, Am I, after all the pain that I have taken, to be placed on a footing with the worst of characters? If so, where is the justice of God?—Thus the gospel seems a hard saying, and he cannot hear it. A sinner, in such a state of mind, is farther from God, and more hopeless, than the profligate whom he despises: "The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Yet, even from this distance, some have been made nigh by the blood of Christ. Of this the apostle himself was an example, as were also the great company of the priests, who were obedient to the faith.

But there is another case which may be reckoned still more hopeless, and the party still farther off from God. This is where a person has sat under the preaching of the gospel for a number of years, but who, living still in his sins, at length becomes *past feeling*. Such characters, I fear, are not very uncommon in our congregations. Should there be one such present at this time, let me reason with him:—Thirty or forty years ago, it may be, you heard the gospel, and felt, and wept under it. Some of your fellow-worshippers, observing the tears which fell from your eyes, conceived a



hope that the heart of stone was taken away, and a heart of flesh imparted. But these convictions wore off; and, by degrees, the most pungent things might be delivered in your hearing without leaving any impression on your mind. The case was this: Under your convictions, you desisted from your evil courses: but, as the former subsided, you returned to the latter. At first you indulged in lesser sins; then in greater; till, at length, your whole study was, not how you should avoid sin, but how you should indulge in it and yet conceal it: and, it may be, you have succeeded in both, to a great degree; living in uncleanness, or drunkenness, or in some other sin, and yet concealing it from the world, and filling up your place in the house of God. And now you can hear the most awful threatenings, and the most melting expostulations, unmoved. Your heart is become callous and insensible. Conscience itself is seared, as with a hot iron. In a word, you are *past feeling*. Many have perished in this state, and many, doubtless, will perish: yet, even from this state of distance, some have been made nigh by the blood of Christ: "If from *thence* thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul.—For the Lord thy God is a merciful God."

Thus far we have considered the distance of sinners from God merely in respect of their alienation of heart from him; but we must not confine it to this: as men have wickedly departed from God, God has righteously withdrawn from them; and thus the distance, being mutual, is increased. While man continued obedient, his Creator admitted him to near communion with him, as is intimated by his walking in the garden in the cool of the day; but, when he transgressed his commandment, he withdrew his favor, thrust him out of paradise, and placed a guard about the tree of life, rendering it inaccessible.

Had there been no provision of mercy through the promised seed, there could have been no more communion between God and man, any more than between God and the fallen angels. Men might have dragged out a guilty and miserable existence in the world, but they must have lived and died under the curse.\* Whatever had

\* Some have thought that the death threatened in Gen. ii. 17 was merely corporal, and that, if it had been executed, man would have been immediately struck out of existence. But the death there threatened, whatever it was, "passed upon all men," which implies the existence of all men, and which would have been prevented if Adam had at that time been reduced to a state of non-existence, or had even been banished from the world. The original constitution of things must, therefore, have provided for the existence of every individual that has since been born into the world; and this whether man should stand or fall. The death

been bestowed upon them, it would have been in wrath, in like manner as riches are given some men to their hurt. Whatever had been their troubles, they would have no God to repair to under them; and, whatever their prospects, the hope of a blessed hereafter would have made no part of them.

This awful state of distance from God is *still* the condition of the unbelieving and the ungodly. The interposition of Christ avails not in behalf of them. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Being without Christ, they are without hope, and without God in the world. Every thing they do is evil; every thing they possess is cursed; and every hour they live in that state of mind adds to their guilt and misery. As "all things work together for good to them that love God, so all things work together for evil to them that love him not. Under all their calamities and troubles, they have no God on whom to cast their cares, and, in death, have nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment. The very messengers of mercy are charged, on their peril, to say to the wicked, "It shall be ill with him."

How tremendously awful, then, is the condition of the unbelieving and the ungodly! There is one way of escape, and but one: and is it possible that this can be disregarded; and that men can live easy and unconcerned, with the curse of God over their heads? Surely this must be owing to a disbelief of the divine *threatenings*, as well as of the doctrine of the gospel. But take heed "lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven!" In this terrible condition the gospel finds us. To *this door*

here threatened, doubtless, included that of the body, and which God might execute at pleasure: the day he should eat he would be dead in law; but it also included the loss of the divine favor, and an exposedness to his wrath. If it were not so, the redemption of Christ would not be properly opposed to it, which it frequently is. Rom. v. 12—21. It must be to this sentence that the apostle refers in Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;" or Christ's being "once offered to bear the sins of many," and his "coming a second time without sin unto salvation," would not have been introduced as antidotes to the evils: but, if the sentence included both *death* and *judgment*, it must be more than corporal death.



of hope we shall now direct your attention, by considering,

III. THE WAY IN WHICH SINNERS ARE RECOVERED AND BROUGHT NIGH TO GOD. It is "in Christ Jesus," and "by the blood of Christ." In Christ we possess all. It is as being "in Christ Jesus" that we possess all spiritual blessings; and by the shedding of his blood they were obtained.

The blood of Christ may be considered in three views: as shed upon the cross—as proclaimed by the preaching of the gospel—and as believed in for salvation by the perishing sinner. These, being united, bring near those who were once far off.

1. *By the blood of Christ, as shed upon the cross, atonement was made, sin was expiated, and a way opened for God to draw near to the sinner, and the sinner to God.* In punishing transgressors, displeasure is expressed against transgression. In substitutionary sacrifices, displeasure was expressed against transgression; but, withal, mercy to the transgressor: the former, as signifying that thus the offerer deserved to have been treated; the latter, as accepting a substitute in his stead. In the sacrifice of Christ, both these sentiments were expressed in the highest degree: "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (or by a sacrifice for sin) *condemned sin in the flesh.*"—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" In proportion as God's own Son was dear to him, and, as possessed of divine dignity, estimable by him, such were the hatred of sin and the love to sinners manifested in smiting him.

If mercy had been exercised to men without such an expression of displeasure against their sin, it must have appeared to the creation to be connivance, and the character of God must have sunk in their estimation. He must have appeared to be very strict indeed in his precepts, and severe in his threatenings; but as lax in enforcing them as though he had known from the beginning that they would not bear to be acted upon. The fallen angels, in particular, must have felt that it could not be *justice* that consigned them to hopeless perdition; for justice is impartial. If the Creator could connive at sin in one instance, he could in another. Thus the bands of moral government had been broken, and the cords which held creation together cast away.

But, by the atonement of Christ, a way is opened for the consistent exercise of mercy. There was a kind of atonement made by the vengeance taken on the old world; also by that on the Benjamites, as recorded in the last chapters of Judges. Each of these events served to express the divine displeasure against sin, and each made way for the exercise of mercy: the one toward Noah

and his posterity; and the other toward the remnant that had taken refuge in the rock Rimmon. Thus, in the death of Christ, though he died "the just for the unjust," yet God herein expressed his displeasure against sin, and, having done this, could be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." There is now no bar, in respect of the government of God, why any sinner should not, on returning to him in the name of his Son, find mercy. On this ground, sinners, without distinction, are actually invited to come unto him and be saved. The only bar that remains is a spirit of pride and unbelief. If they can believe in Jesus, receiving salvation as God's free gift through him, "all things are possible to him that believeth."

When, on visiting a dying man, I hear him talk of having made his peace with God, I tremble for him. If our peace be made with God, it is by the blood of the cross. What are our confessions, or prayers, or tears? Can they heal the awful breach? If so, God would have spared his own Son, and not have delivered him up to be made a sacrifice. It had then been possible for the cup to pass from him, and it would, no doubt, have passed from him. If without the shedding of blood there be no remission, and if it were impossible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sin, the consequence is that either Christ must be the sacrifice or we must die in our sins and perish. *He* hath made peace by the blood of his cross: it is not for us to assume to be peace-makers, but to accept of his mediation.

2. *The blood of Christ, as proclaimed in the preaching of the gospel, is the appointed means of bringing sinners near to God.* It is the doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ that is, by way of eminency, called *the gospel*. It was this doctrine which Christ commissioned his disciples to preach to every creature: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be *preached in his name among all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem!" This doctrine is *good news* to every creature; and that whether it be received or rejected. It is good news that a way is opened, by the death of Christ, for any sinner to return to God and be saved; and that, if any sinner walk therein, he shall be saved. It is the ministry of reconciliation, in which the servants of Christ, as though God did beseech by them, pray men in Christ's stead, saying, "Be ye reconciled to God." Its being made light of by the greater part of men does not alter its nature; and this they shall know another day. God brings near his righteousness, even to them that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness. "Into whatsoever city ye enter," said our Lord, "and they receive you, eat such

things as are set before you; and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, *the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.* But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that *the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.* But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city."

3. *By the doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ we are actually brought nigh.* As the prodigal was brought home to his father's house and family, so we are brought home to God. It is thus that we become actually reconciled to God. "If when we were enemies," says the apostle, "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." The term *reconciled* is, here, manifestly used in different senses. In the former instance, it refers to the making of atonement: in the latter, to our believing acquiescence in it: or, as it is expressed in the following verse, to our "receiving the atonement." It is in this way that our sins are forgiven; that we are justified, or accepted, in the Beloved; that we are invested with the privilege of being the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty; that God is our God, and we his people, by a new and better covenant; that we have access to him as our heavenly Father, and to all the ordinances and privileges of his house: finally, it is as believing in him that died and rose again that we live in hope of eternal life.

There is a term used by the apostle, in Ephes. iii. 12, which conveys a very expressive idea, not only of the nearness to which believers are admitted by the faith of Christ, and which is denoted by the term "access," but of their being *introduced* by him, as by one *taking them by the hand*, and presenting them to the King.\* We could not be admitted into the divine presence by ourselves; but our Mediator, taking us as it were by the hand, presents us to God. It is thus that we are "accepted in the Beloved" on our first believing, and, in all our approaches to the throne of grace, have access to God.

To conclude: If we have been made nigh, it becomes us, not only to be thankful for so great a favor, but to feel a deep and anxious concern for others who at present are far off. Whether we consider the state of heathens, of Mahomedans, or of our own unbelieving countrymen, they have each a claim on our compassion. And, if Christ withheld not his blood to bring us nigh, it surely is not for us to withhold any labor or expense in carrying his gracious designs into execution.

\* Πιστευσαμεν, Introduction, manuduction, or being led by the hand.

## SERMON XXI.

## THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF LOVE TO GOD.

"Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God."—Joshua xiii. 11.

IT is an interesting account that we have of the last days of Joshua. He is very anxious that, when he should cease to be their leader, Israel should cleave unto the Lord. To make as deep an impression upon their minds as possible, he first called for the elders and leading men among them, and delivered a serious charge to them: after this, he gathered all the tribes together before the Lord in Shechem, where he solemnly rehearsed the dealings of the Lord with them, and bound them, by every consideration that he could suggest, not to forsake him, and go after the idols of the heathen. It is in this connection that he introduces the words of the text, "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves that ye love the Lord your God;" intimating that in order to be obedient to the Lord, and secure against idolatrous departures from him, it was necessary, not merely to own him as their God, but to be cordially attached to his name and government. The word rendered "yourselves" in the text is, in the margin, rendered *your souls*; denoting that it is not a superficial inspection of the conduct that is meant, but a looking to our inmost motives, seeing to it that we love the Lord from our very hearts.

This is a charge that would well befit the lips of any servant of God before he leaves the world, and be well suited to the conduct of any people. If our hearts be right with God, all is right; if not, all is wrong.

In discoursing upon the subject, we shall offer a few remarks on the nature of love, and of love to God in particular—consider the importance of it in characterizing the whole of our religion—the danger of declining from it—and the means to be used in promoting it.

I. Let us offer a few remarks on THE NATURE OF LOVE, AND OF LOVE TO GOD IN PARTICULAR. That we may perceive the extent of the precept, it is necessary that we understand a few of the different ways in which love operates.

1. Observe, then, in the first place, that *love operates differently according to the condition of its object.* If directed to one that is miserable, it works in a way of pity and sympathy; if to one that is in necessity, it will impart to his relief; but if to one greatly our superior, as to a kind and benevolent sovereign, for instance, then it will operate in the way of honor, complacency, gratitude, and obedience. I need not say that God is



not subject to either misery or want, and, therefore, that our love to him cannot operate in the way of pity towards him, or by communicating to his necessities. The ways in which love to God operates are those of honor, complacency, gratitude, and obedience.

2. *Love operates differently according to the condition of the subject of it.* If no offence has existed between the parties, it is peace and amity; but, if otherwise, it will operate in the way of regret, repentance, and a desire of reconciliation. Man, in his original state, was admitted to commune with his Creator; and love, during his continuance in that state, operated in a way of grateful adoration. But, if a spark of love be kindled in the breast of a fallen creature, it will work in a way of sorrow for sin, and a desire to return to God, as the prodigal did to his father. Moreover, in an innocent creature, love to God would operate in a way of delight and praise; but in a fallen creature, under the preaching of the gospel, it will induce him to embrace the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. Hence the want of faith in Christ is alleged in proof of the want of love to God: "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you: I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not."

3. *A complacency in the divine character still enters into the essence of love.* There may be affections where this is not; but there can be no true love to God. We may be greatly affected by an apprehension that our sins are forgiven us; and this merely from self-love: but such affections will not abide. Many who joined in singing praise to the Lord, on their deliverance at the Red Sea, soon forgot his works; for their hearts were not right with God. Genuine love to God has respect not merely to his benefits, but to his name, nature, or character, as revealed in the Scriptures. As he that hateth not sin *as sin* has no real hatred to it; so he that loveth not God *as God* has no real love to him. True love to God, for the gift of his Son and salvation through his death, does not merely respect the benefits we receive, but the holy, just, and honorable way in which those benefits are conferred. He that is affected only by the consideration of his own safety, regardless of the way in which it is obtained, cannot be said to love God. Whether God be just or unjust is, to such a person, a matter of indifference, so that he justifies *him*. The love of God will lead us to prize that way of salvation which, in making provision for our necessities, secures the divine glory.

II. Let us observe THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS PRINCIPLE AS CHARACTERIZING THE WHOLE OF OUR RELIGION. Love is not so much a particular grace as a property pertaining to all the graces. It is to our graces that which the holiness of God is to his mor-

al attributes, pervading and characterizing the whole. Indeed, it is holiness itself: if the law be the standard of holiness, that which is the fulfilling of the law, which love is said to be, must comprehend the whole of it. Observe particularly—

1. *It is the love of God which distinguishes true religion from all counterfeits, and from the effects of merely natural principles.* It is this that distinguishes repentance from repentance, faith from faith, and fear from fear. Each of these graces has its counterfeit. Wherein consisted the difference between the repentance of Judas and that of Peter? The one was mere remorse of conscience; the other proceeded from love to him whom he had denied. Wherein consisted the difference between the belief of those rulers who, because of the pharisees, did not confess the Saviour, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, and that which was to the saving of the soul? The one was a conviction which forced itself upon them, while their hearts were averse from it; the other was "receiving the love of the truth, that they might be saved." And wherein consists the difference between the fear that has torment and godly fear? Is it not that the one is void of love and the other is not so? Perfect love casteth out the former, but promoteth the latter.

So much as we have of the love of God, so much we have of true religion, and no more. The love that we bear to our fellow-Christians, to the law, to the gospel, and even to Christ himself, is the love of God. We see in our brethren the image of God, and love it; in the law of God, a glorious transcript of his mind, and love it; in the gospel, a more glorious transcript of his mind, and love it more; and, in the person and work of Christ, the very image of the invisible God, and our hearts are united to him. In loving each of these objects, we love God.

2. *It is the love of God that keeps every thing in a state of moral order.* Under its influence, every thing will be done in subserviency to his glory, and every thing taken well at his hand. If God be loved first, he will be sought first. We shall not think of excusing ourselves in the neglect of our duty, by alleging that we could not find time for it: we commonly find time for things on which our hearts are fixed. It is by the love of God that all our actions are directed to his glory. Unbelievers cannot understand how this is. Whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, it is merely for their own gratification, and they cannot conceive of any other end to be answered. Yet it is easy to perceive how men can make every thing subservient to that which their hearts are set upon, whether it be their interest, or the gratification of their desires. Love to a fellow-creature will render every thing we do subservient to the object. All the labors and



journeys of a loving head of a family are directed to their comfort; and all the busy cares of an affectionate wife to the honor and happiness of her husband. If then God be the supreme object of our love, whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we shall do all to his glory.

It is thus that the common concerns of life are converted into religion, and that we shall serve the Lord even in our worldly avocations: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." It is in *abusing* the world, by giving it that place in our hearts which belongs to God, that it retards us in our progress to heaven. If, instead of this, we could *use* it, it would be useful to us even for another life, furnishing us with matter for daily prayer and praise, and thus assisting us in our progress.

If we love God, we shall take every thing well at his hand, and so be reconciled to all his dispensations towards us, whether they be good or evil. We can bear almost any thing from one whom we love; especially when we know that it is accompanied with wisdom, and directed by goodness. When, in the day of Israel's calamity, their enemies asked, "Where is now their God?" it was sufficient to answer, "Our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." It was love that dictated those memorable sayings of Job, during the early part of his trials; "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!—Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" It was this that reconciled David, when driven from his throne by the rebellion of his own son: "Here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." And, when cursed by an enemy, viewing it as the Lord's hand stretched out against him, he submitted: "The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David!"

3. *It is the love of God that is the great preservation from error.* If, indeed, the truth of God were a matter of mere speculation, and we might take for granted the sincerity and impartiality of our inquiries, error would then be innocent, and the love of God would be no more of a preservative from it than it is from a mistake in reckoning a sum in arithmetic. But if divine truth be of a practical nature, and be so clearly revealed that no unprejudiced mind can materially misunderstand, and still less disbelieve it, error is not innocent, and the great preservative from falling into it is the love of God. Such is manifestly the import of the following passages: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.—Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.—If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth

God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.—We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." If it be objected that good men err; that to ascribe their errors to prejudice, and the want of love to God, is uncandid; we answer, No good man is free from prejudice, nor does he love God as he ought. To ascribe the errors of others to the same causes to which we ascribe our own, supposing us to be in error, cannot be uncandid. If we loved God as we ought, there would be no prejudice hanging about our minds, and we should imbibe the truth, as angels imbibe it, desiring above all things to look into it. And, if we loved him more than we do, we should be more secure than we are from the seducing influence of error. Hence it is that the *anointing* of the Holy Spirit is represented as teaching us all things, and causing us to abide in the truth. Hence, also, those who have apostatized from the truth are described as not having cordially believed it, but as taking pleasure in unrighteousness.

4. *It is the love of God which is the grand spring of evangelical obedience.* Respect to ourselves, and regard to our present interests, will produce a correctness of conduct sufficient to excite the respect of those around us; but this is not religion. There is no true religion without the love of God; and if, as has been already stated, the love of the law, of the gospel, of our fellow-creatures and fellow-christians, and even of Christ himself, be only the love of God ramified, it must follow that without this we shall not be able to exercise the others, but be merely *lovers of our own selves*. If we take heed to this, we shall have but little else to take heed to, as every duty will become our delight and be cheerfully discharged as a matter of course. Hence, we see the force of the wise man's precept, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Look well to the fountain, or the streams will in vain be expected to be pure. To watch our words and actions to the neglect of our hearts will be unavailing.

III. Let us consider THE DANGER WE ARE IN OF DECLINING FROM THE LOVE OF GOD. The serious tone of caution with which the precept is delivered is expressive of this sentiment: it is only in cases of great danger that we are charged to take good heed.

The love of God is a plant of heavenly extraction; but, being planted in an unfriendly soil, it requires to be well guarded and watered. We are not only surrounded with objects which attract our affections, and operate as rivals to the blessed God, but have

a propensity to depart from him. Whether we consider ourselves as individuals or as societies, this will be found to be the case.

In the early stages of the Christian life, love is frequently ardent. The first believing views of the grace of the gospel furnish matter of joyful surprise; and a flow of grateful affection is the natural consequence: "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live." At this season we can scarcely conceive it possible to forget him who hath done such great things for us; but, if twenty years of cares and temptations pass over us without producing this effect, it will be happy for us.

In declining from our first love we are seldom sensible of it till some of its effects appear, as neglecting the more spiritual exercises of religion, or contenting ourselves with attending to them as a matter of form without enjoying God in them, or trifling with those sins from which we should heretofore have started back with horror. Our friends often perceive it, and feel concerned on account of it, before we are aware of it ourselves; and happy is it for us if by their timely admonitions, or by any other means, we are awakened from our lethargy and saved from some greater fall, to the dishonor of God and the wounding of our future peace.

I have heard this departure from our first love spoken of as a matter of course, or as that which must be expected. Nay, I have heard it compared to the time when Isaac was *wearied*, at which Abraham made a feast! Some old religious professors, who have become sufficiently cold and carnal themselves, will thus endeavor to reconcile young Christians to the same state of mind; telling them, with a cunning sort of smile, that they are at present on the mount of enjoyment, but must expect to come down. And true it is that love, though it may become deeper and better grounded, may not always operate with such *tenderness of feeling* as it did at first. A change in the constitution from an advance in years will account for this. Many things relating to the present world which in our youth will produce tears will not have this effect as we advance in life, though they may still lie with weight upon our minds. But to confound this with religious declensions, coldness, and carnality, and to endeavor to reconcile young Christians to it, is erroneous and mischievous. So did not the apostles in their intercourse with young Christians. When Barnabas visited the young Christians at Antioch, he "saw the grace of God, and was glad;" and, instead of leading them to expect a state of declension to follow this their first love, he "exhorted them all that with purpose of heart they would *cleave*

unto the Lord." The great Head of the church had somewhat against the Ephesians, because they had left their first love.

There is no necessity in the nature of things for the abatement of our love, or zeal, or joy. The considerations which formerly excited these feelings have not lost their force. It is as true and as important as ever that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and that he is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him:" and, excepting what the first impression derived from its novelty, would, if we had not declined in love, be as interesting to us. So far from our regard for these and other truths being diminished, there is ground for its being increased. Our first views of Christ and his gospel were very defective; if we follow on to know the Lord, we shall know him in a much greater degree. "The path of the just," if scripturally pursued, will be "as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day." This was the course which the apostles pursued toward the Christians of their times: "And thus I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.—We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth.—Beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." The apostle himself did not relax as he drew toward the end of his course, but forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth unto those that were before, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

To decline in our love is practically saying that we were once more spiritually-minded, more tender in conscience, and more devoted to God, than was necessary; that we have not found the religion of Jesus so interesting as we expected, and, therefore, have been obliged to have recourse for happiness to our former pursuits; and that what our old companions told us at the outset, that our zeal would soon abate and that we should return again to them, was true. "O, my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me!"

If we be in danger of declining as individuals, we are not less so as *societies*. Societies being composed of individuals, a number of backsliding individuals will soon diffuse their spirit and produce a backsliding people. It was to a people that the words of Joshua were addressed. That generation of Israelites who went up with him into Canaan were distinguished by their love to God. They had seen his judgments upon



their unbelieving fathers, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and had learned wisdom. It was of them that the Lord spoke by Jeremiah, saying, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase." But the very next generation relapsed into idolatry: "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over-lived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord that he had done for Israel." But when they were gathered to their fathers "there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel." Even before the death of their venerable leader, the young people had begun to tamper with idolatry. It was on this account that he assembled the tribes in Shechem, and so solemnly put it to them to choose on that day whom they would serve; and that when they answered, "God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods," he added, "Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is a holy God: he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." This was telling them that they could not serve the Lord and Baalim. Stung with this suggestion, they answered, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord." Then said Joshua, "Put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the Lord God of Israel!"

This interesting account furnishes a picture of human nature. The same things have been acted over again in the world. Religion has rarely been preserved in its purity for many generations. Such is the tendency to degenerate, that the greatest and most important reformations have commonly begun to decline, when they who have been principally engaged in them have been gathered to their fathers.

Even the apostles themselves, inspired as they were, could not preserve the churches which they had raised from degeneracy. The Lord had many things against those seven in Asia to which the Apocalypse was addressed. We know also that the great body of professing Christians in a few centuries were carried away by the antichristian apostacy; that the descendants of the reformers have mostly renounced their principles; and that the same is true of the descendants of the puritans and non-conformists. Each of these cases furnishes a loud call to us to take good heed unto ourselves that we love the Lord our God.

IV. Let us conclude with a FEW DIRECTIONS AS TO THE MEANS OF PROMOTING THE LOVE OF GOD. It has been observed already that love is a tender plant, requiring to be both guarded and watered. It will not

thrive among the weeds of worldly lusts. We cannot serve the Lord in this way; if we would serve him we must put away our idols and incline our hearts unto the Lord God of Israel. Beware of *the love of the world*. He that loveth the world, the love of God is not in him. Beware of living in the indulgence of *any sin*: any habitual sin is inconsistent with the love of God. It was on this principle that holy David, after declaring the omniscience and omnipresence of God, invoked his scrutiny: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Wicked actions have been found in good men, who have lamented them, and been forgiven; but a wicked way is inconsistent with a state of grace, vitiating the very principle of religion, and turning the whole into hypocrisy. Transgression of this nature must lead to perdition. It is an affecting consideration how many professors of religion have been found, either before or soon after they have left the world, to have lived in private drunkenness, concealed lewdness, or undetected fraud!

But it is not merely by avoiding those things which are inconsistent with the love of God that we shall promote it; we must also attend to those that cherish it. It is by being conversant with the mind of God, as revealed in his word; by drawing near to him in private prayer; by associating with the most spiritual of his people; by thinking upon his name, especially as displayed in the person and work of Christ, that the love of God will be cherished. As our minds are insensibly assimilated by the books we read and the company we keep, so will it be in reading the book of God and associating with his people; and, as the glory of God is manifested in the highest degree in the face of Jesus Christ, this is the principal theme for our meditation. It is by our repairing to the cross that the love of God will be kept alive, and renewed when ready to expire.

## SERMON XXII.

### CONFORMITY TO THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

"Being made conformable unto his death."—Phil. iii. 10.

THE death of Christ is a subject of so much importance in Christianity as to be essential to it. Without this, the sacrifices and prophecies of the Old Testament would be nearly void of meaning, and the other great facts recorded in the New Testament divested of importance. It is not so much a member of the body of christian doctrine as the life-blood that runs through the whole of it. The doctrine of the cross is the christian doctrine. In determining "not to know any thing—save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,"



the apostle did not mean to contract his researches, or to confine his ministry to a monotonous repetition of a favorite point, to the neglect of other things: on the contrary, he shunned not to declare "the whole counsel of God." The doctrine of "Christ, and him crucified," comprehended this: it contained a scope which, inspired as he was, surpassed his powers: and well it might, for angels could not comprehend it, but are described as merely desiring to look into it. There is not an important truth, but what is presupposed by it, included in it, or arises out of it; nor any part of practical religion, but what hangs upon it.

It was from this doctrine that the New Testament writers fetched their most powerful motives. Do they recommend *humility*? It is thus: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Do they enforce an unreserved *devotedness to God*? It is thus: "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." If they would provoke Christians to *brotherly love*, it is from the same consideration: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Do they urge a *forgiving spirit*? It is thus: "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Do they recommend *benevolence to the poor*? It is from this: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.—Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" Finally: The common duties of *domestic life* are enforced from this principle: "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."

It is in immediate relation to this great principle that both the ordinances of baptism and the supper appear to have been instituted. As many as were baptized, were baptized into Christ's death; and, in eating the bread and drinking the wine, they were directed to do it in remembrance of him. It was a wonderful instance of condescending love in the Lord Jesus to desire to be remembered by us. Had we requested, in the language of the converted thief, to be remembered by him, there had been nothing surprising in it: but it is of the nature of dying love to desire to live in the remem-

brance of those who are dear to us. It was not, however, on his own account, but on ours, that he left this dying request. He knew that to remember him would answer every case that could occur. If afflicted, this would be our solace; if persecuted, the consideration of him that had endured such contradiction of sinners would prevent our being weary and faint in our minds; if guilty, this would point out the way of forgiveness; or, if tempted to turn aside, this would bind us to his name and cause.

It was by a believing view of this great subject that the apostle, at the first, counted all his former privileges and attainments *loss*; and though, in consequence of renouncing Judaism, he had exchanged all his earthly prospects for hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, and perils, and bitter persecutions, yet, after thirty years' experience, he does not repent, but, in a tone of heavenly triumph, adds, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith!"

A mind thus imbued with the sacred theme, we should think, must have known much of Christ already, and, compared with us, he must; yet, after all that he had thought, and preached, and written, he makes nothing of his attainments, but adopts the language of one that had, in a manner, every thing to learn: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

The last of these vehement desires seems to be explanatory of some, if not all, that precede it. That is, he would know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, as "*being* made conformable unto his death."

The sentiment here conveyed appears to be, *That the death of Christ, is a model to which Christians must aspire to be conformed.* This sentiment we shall endeavor to illustrate and confirm.

There are other models beside the death of Christ; but they are included in this. The *law of God* is that to which we must be conformed. If we be born from above, it is "written in our hearts." But, as one great end of Christ's death was to honor the divine law, not only in its precept but its penalty, a conformity to the one must include a conformity to the other. The *character of God* also is represented as a model to which believers are conformed. The new man is created "*after God, in righteousness and true holiness:*" but, as in the death of Christ

God was glorified in the highest, a conformity to this must be a conformity to the divine character. The *lives of holy men* are also held up for our imitation; but, as this is only in proportion as they are followers of Christ, a conformity to him includes all that is required of us respecting them.

We shall consider the death of Christ in four views: namely, in respect of the principles on which it proceeded—the motives by which it was induced—the spirit with which it was endured—and the ends which it accomplished. Under each of these views we shall find things to which we must be conformed. Observe—

1. THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE DEATH OF CHRIST PROCEEDED. In them we shall find a standard by which to form our principles, and shall be able to judge whether they be of God.

1. The death of Christ presupposes *that we deserved to die*. A sense of this truth is at the foundation of all true religion; it requires, therefore, that we be made conformable to it. God, in the gift of his Son to die, judged us to have been worthy of death; Christ, in giving himself to die, evinced himself to be of the same mind; and such must be our mind, or we can have no interest in the glorious results. Until we see and feel that God is in the right, that we are in the wrong, and that if he had cast us off forever it had been no more than we deserved, we shall be strangers to repentance, and as incapable of believing in Christ for salvation as he that is whole is of appreciating the value of a physician.

2. The death of Christ presupposes *that sin is exceedingly sinful*. If it were a matter of small account, it may be presumed that the Father would not have made so much of it as to give his Son to be made a sacrifice to atone for it; and that the Son of God would not have laid down his life for that purpose. The curses of the law, and the judgments inflicted at different times on sinners, furnish strong proof of the malignant nature of sin; especially when the native goodness of God is taken into consideration: but the blood of the cross furnishes much stronger. It was a great thing for the Creator to destroy the work of his hands, and it is so represented: "The Lord said, I will destroy man, *whom I have created*, from the face of the earth." But to smite his beloved Son was greater. To be made conformable to this principle, we must not conceive of sin as the *weakness, or frailty*, of human nature, a mere *imperfection* which a good God must needs overlook. Neither must we give heed to those systems of religion which are founded upon these depreciating notions, which, however they may flatter us for the present, will, in the end, assuredly deceive us.

3. The death of Christ presupposes *that*

*there was nothing, in all our doings or sufferings, that could furnish a ground of salvation, or a single consideration for which we might be forgiven*. Had it been otherwise, Christ would not have died. Men have ever been busily employed in endeavors to propitiate the Deity; some by ceremonial observances, and some by moral: but, instead of accomplishing the object, they have only made the case worse. Even those services which were of divine appointment became, in their hands, offensive; God was weary of their offerings. Christ is represented as taking the work out of their hands: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come!" They were, indeed, required as duties for the time, but not for the purpose of making atonement. Not tears, nor prayers, nor alms, nor any other of our doings, will avail as terms of acceptance with God. If we are conformed to the death of Christ, we shall know and feel this to be the case, and shall seek salvation by grace only, through the Mediator. If we are not conformed to the death of Christ in this respect, we have no reason to expect any interest in it.

4. The death of Christ presupposes *that, for mercy to be exercised in a way consistent with the honor of God, it required to be through a sacrifice of infinite value*. When the apostle declares that "it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins," he plainly intimates that the inherent value of the sacrifice was of essential importance as to its effect. If it were impossible for animal sacrifices to atone for sin, it must be on account of their insufficiency to demonstrate either the hatred of God to sin or his love to sinners: but the same reason would apply to the sacrifice of Christ, if he were merely a creature. Hence, those who deny his divinity, with perfect consistency deny also his atonement. But, on the principles of his divinity, his sufferings were of infinite value; and to this the Scriptures ascribe their efficacy. A careful reader of the New Testament will perceive that, in exhibiting the *value and efficacy* of his death, it connects it with the inherent dignity of his person: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had *by himself purged our sins*, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."—"We have a *great high priest* that is passed into the heavens, *Jesus the Son of God*."—"The blood of Jesus Christ, *his Son*, cleanseth us from all sin."

The result is that, to be made conformable to the death of Christ, we must think highly of it, and not reduce it to the death of a mere martyr. It is a serious thing to

make light of the Saviour, and of the work of salvation: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy (or common) thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!"

Let us observe

II. THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THE DEATH OF CHRIST WAS INDUCED. In these we shall find a blessed example to imitate. They may all be summed up in *love*; love to God and men; love, great, disinterested, and unparalleled.

There never was such an example of the "love of God" as that which is furnished by the obedience and death of Christ. It was his meat and drink to do the will of his Father. He did not know his nearest relations, but as doing his Father's will. When the bitter cup was presented to him, he said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." What was this but exposing his breast, as we should say, to the sword of justice; consenting to be made a sacrifice, that God might be glorified in the salvation of sinners? It was love, working in a way of grief, that caused that affecting exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He could endure the cross, and even despise the shame; he could bear to be betrayed, denied, and forsaken by his own disciples: but to be forsaken of God wounded him beyond any thing. O to be made conformable to his death in these things; to love God, so as to account it our meat and drink to do his will; so as to reckon his friends our friends, and his cause our cause; to be willing to do any thing, or suffer any thing, for his name's sake; and to feel the withholding of his favor our severest loss!

As there never was such love to God as that which was manifested by Christ, so neither was there ever such *love to men*. "He loved us, and gave *himself* for us—loved us, and washed us from our sins in *his own blood*." The love of creatures is ordinarily founded on something lovely in the object; but Christ died for us while we were yet enemies. To be made conformable to his death in this is to bear good will to men, to seek their present and everlasting welfare in every way that is within our power: and this notwithstanding the unloveliness of their character and conduct:

"Love them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." Unbelievers, who know no principle superior to self-love, have represented this precept of our Lord as unnatural and extravagant. Yet they themselves are daily partaking of his bounty, who causeth his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and his rain to descend on the just and on the unjust. If they were the children of that Being whom they acknowledge, they would, in some degree, resemble him. Such was the example of Jesus, and such must be ours, if we be made conformable to him.

Let us observe

III. THE SPIRIT WITH WHICH THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF CHRIST WERE ENDURED. In this we shall find a model for our spirit. The Lord Jesus was possessed of all the original passions of human nature; as love, joy, sorrow, grief, anger, indignation, &c. When reproached and injured, he felt it; his "enduring the cross, and despising the shame," was not owing to his being insensible to either, but to "the joy set before him." The purity of his nature did not extinguish its passions, but rendered them subordinate to the will of his Father. With the greatest sensibility to reproach and injury, he was meek and lowly of heart. Under all the reproaches and false accusations that were preferred against him on his trial, he preserved a dignified silence: not a word was uttered tending to save his life: but, when questioned on the truth of his Messiahship, he, with equal dignity and firmness, avowed it, though he knew the avowal would cost him his life. Nor did the contradiction and abuse which he received from his executioners extinguish his compassion toward them: while they were nailing him to the cross he prayed, saying, "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do."

If we observe the spirit of the apostles, we shall find them to have made him their pattern: "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things, unto this day." There appears to have been a holy emulation in the apostle Paul to be a follower of his Lord, even unto death. In all that befel him, he kept his eye on Christ: "If we suffer, we shall also reign *with him*."—"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed, *always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus*, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh."



Such was that conformity to the death of Christ, after which he panted with the most vehement desire. Nothing was further from his thoughts than partaking with him in the work of redemption; but, so far as fellowship in his sufferings was admissible, it was the object of his most ardent desire. O to be thus made like him and like his faithful followers!

We proceed to observe

IV. THE ENDS WHICH THE DEATH OF CHRIST ACCOMPLISHED. In them, though there is much which is peculiar to himself, yet there is also much in which we are made conformable to him.

Did he *satisfy divine justice*, and thereby open the way of salvation? Certainly, it is not for us to attempt any thing like this; but, by believing in him, we *acquiesce* in what he has done and suffered, and so are made conformable to it. Nor is this confined to our first believing: the more we know of Christ, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship, of his sufferings, the more we are, in this way, made conformable to his death. The death of Christ will give the impression to the very enjoyment of heaven. "The Lamb that was slain" will be the theme of the song forever.

Was he "manifested to destroy the works of the devil?" If we be made conformable to his death, we also shall wage war with them. If we live in sin, we are *of the devil*, and must needs be at variance with the death of Christ; sparing that which he was manifested in human nature to destroy. The finished work of Christ upon the cross did not supersede the necessity of our being active in overcoming evil. We must set our feet upon the necks of these spiritual enemies, taking a part in their destruction. Neither did it supersede the necessity of our active perseverance in the use of all means by which we may disengage our souls from the entanglements of sin, praying and struggling from under its dominion, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. It is thus that we have to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," which, instead of superseding the death of Christ, is being made conformable to it. From his having died *for sin*, we are exhorted to die *to it*, and to live unto God. We cannot enter into the end of Christ's death, which was to make an end of sin, unless we become dead to sin: nor into his resurrection, without rising with him into newness of life.

In waging war with sin, it is necessary to begin with ourselves, but not to end there. If we be made conformable to the death of Christ, we shall be adverse to sin wherever we find it; avoiding all participation in it through complaisance or worldly interest, and uniting to promote sobriety, righteousness, and godliness in its place.

Finally: Christ died "*to save sinners*;" and, if we be made conformable to his death, we also shall seek their salvation. Some of the first thoughts which occur to a believer's mind, on having found rest for his own soul, respect the salvation of his kindred and acquaintance; and the direction given to one who had obtained mercy gives countenance to such thoughts and desires: "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

It is not for ministers only to take an interest in the salvation of men: the army of the Lamb is composed of the whole body of Christians. Every disciple of Jesus should consider himself as a missionary. All, indeed, are not apostles, nor evangelists, nor preachers; but all must be engaged in serving the Lord: some by preaching, some by contributing of their substance, and all by prayer and recommending the Saviour by a holy conversation.

The death of Christ stands connected, in the divine promise, with the salvation of sinners. This is "the travail of his soul," which he was to see, and be satisfied; the "joy set before him," in view of which he endured the cross, and despised the shame. To be made conformable unto his death, therefore, we must combine that which God has combined with it. It is a high honor conferred on us to be instruments in thus saving our fellow-sinners, and in thus crowning our Redeemer: nor will it be less advantageous to us, since he has said, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

## SERMON XXIII.

### THE LIFE OF CHRIST THE SECURITY AND FELICITY OF HIS CHURCH.

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."—Rev. i. 18.

SOME of the most important writings in the church of Christ have been occasioned by the persecutions of its enemies. The Psalms of David, in which a good man will find all the devout feelings of his heart portrayed, were mostly occasioned by the oppositions of the wicked. Many of Paul's epistles were written from prison; and this book, which contains a system of prophecy from the ascension of Christ to the end of time, was communicated to the beloved disciple when in a state of banishment. Thus it is that the wrath of man is made to praise God: so much of it as would not answer this end is restrained.

Some of the most distinguished prophets

under the Old Testament were introduced to their work by an extraordinary and impressive vision. It was thus with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; and thus it was with the writer of this book. They beheld the glory of Jehovah in a manner suitable to the dispensation under which they lived: he, being under a new dispensation, of which Christ was exalted to be the head, saw his glory both divine and human; as the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, and as the Son of Man walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

On seeing him, the apostle fell at his feet as dead. He on whose bosom he could formerly lean with all the familiarity of a friend is now possessed of a glory too great to be sustained by a mortal man. But yet how sweetly is this awful grandeur tempered with gentleness and goodness: "He laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

The force and beauty of the passage will appear to advantage, if we observe the circumstances of the church and of the apostle at the time. It is supposed to be about the year 95, under the persecution of Domitian. The church, at that time, was under a dark cloud. Great numbers of the first Christians and the first ministers would now have finished their course; many would be cut off by the persecution; all the apostles were dead, excepting John, and he was banished. To an eye of sense it would appear as if the cause must be crushed. How cheering, in such circumstances, must it have been to be told, "I am he that liveth!" The Assyrian invasion, in the time of Hezekiah, filled the breadth of Immanuel's land; but, while Jerusalem was preserved, the head was above water, and the body politic, though overflowed even to the neck, would yet live. Much more would the church in the midst of persecution. While Christ her head lived she could not die.

It was on the Lord's day that the apostle was favored with this extraordinary vision, the day in which he had risen from the dead; which circumstance would add force to what he said of himself as having been dead, but as being now alive. It was the day also in which, as far as their persecuted state would admit, the churches were assembled for Christian worship; and while they, doubtless, remembered the venerable apostle in their prayers, the Lord, by him, remembered and provided for them.

There is a charming circumlocution in the passage, which surprises and overwhelms the mind. The Lord might have said, as on a former occasion, "Be not afraid, it is I;" but he describes himself in language full of the richest consolation: "I am he that liveth,

and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death!"

Let us observe the characters which our Lord assumes—consider them as a ground of security to the church—and conclude with a few reflections.

I. Let us observe THE CHARACTERS WHICH OUR LORD ASSUMES. The words contain four positions: viz. that he liveth—that he liveth who was dead—that he liveth for evermore—and that he has the keys of hell and of death.

1. He saith, "I am he that liveth." It is a truth that Christ liveth, and always did and will live as "the first and the last;" but the life here spoken of, being that which succeeded to his death, was possessed in the same nature as that in which he died. It was the life which commenced at his resurrection; when, being raised from the dead, he dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him." It consists not merely in existence, but in that "blessing, and honor, and glory," which he received as the reward of his humiliation. It is the possession of that "joy that was set before him," in the prospect of which "he endured the cross, and despised the shame."

There appears to be something more in the words, "I am he that liveth," than if it had been said *I live*; for this had been true of millions as well as of Christ, whereas that which is spoken is something peculiar to him. Paul says of himself, "I live;" but, when he had said it, he, in a manner, recalled his words, adding, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Christ is not only possessed of life himself, but communicates it to others: his life involves that of the church, and of every individual believer in him. In his life they live, and will live for evermore.

In the life of Christ we trace the execution of the great designs of his death. It is as *living* that he intercedes "for us at the right hand of God." "If," says the apostle Paul, "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his *life*." We see here three distinct stages in the work of Christ. First: By his death he made atonement for us: this is expressed by his having "reconciled us to God," or restored us to his favor as the lawgiver and judge of the world. Secondly: By his word and Spirit we are subdued to the obedience of faith, so as, of enemies, to become friends: this is expressed by our "*being reconciled*," or brought into a state of actual peace and friendship with God. Thirdly: By his "*life*," he saves us: this is that branch of salvation which is effected by his intercession, and which is denominated saving us "to the uttermost." From the first two, the apostle argues the

last, as from what Christ did for us when enemies to what he will do for us now that we are friends, and from his having begun the work to his carrying it on to perfection.

In the *life* of Christ we trace all the important blessings of his reign. The promise of the "sure mercies of David" is alleged by the apostle as a proof of the resurrection of Christ. But how does this appear? By "the sure mercies of David," as promised in the 55th of Isaiah, there is doubtless a reference to the covenant made with David, "ordered in all things and sure," and which contained all his salvation, and all his desire. But this covenant was to be fulfilled in the everlasting kingdom of Christ. "The sure mercies of David," therefore are the blessings of Messiah's kingdom, the bestowment of which implies his resurrection; for, if death had continued to have dominion over him, no such kingdom could have existed. The sum is that, in saying to his servant John "I am he that liveth," he furnished one of the richest sources of consolation to the church in its state of tribulation.

2. He speaks of his life as succeeding to his death: "I am he that liveth *and was dead.*" This part of the description would remove all doubts, if any existed, as to who he was. The disparity between his present appearance and what he was when the apostle saw and conversed with him in the flesh must be exceedingly great, and might tend to stagger his belief in his being the same person: but this speech, whatever doubts he felt, would at once remove them. Yes; it is my Lord himself, and not another. It is he whom I saw expire upon the cross!

The connection between the death of Christ on earth and his succeeding life in glory renders each of them more interesting. There is great joy derived from the consideration of salvation through the *death* of Christ. It is the burden of the heavenly song. But this would be no joy, were it not for the consideration of his life. What if we could all have obtained salvation; yet, if it must have been at the expense of the everlasting blessedness of our deliverer, who could have enjoyed it? What would the feast be, if the Lord of the feast were not there? Though, in enduring the death of the cross, he had "spoiled principalities and powers," and "made a show of them openly;" yet, if he had not lived to enjoy his triumphs, what would they have been to the redeemed, and even to the angelic world? If the King's Son had been lost, the victory of that day would have been turned into mourning. If it had been possible for him to be holden of death, the loss to the moral empire of God must have exceeded the gain, and the saved themselves must have been ashamed to appear in heaven at the expense of the general good!

But we are not called to so painful a trial. Our salvation, expensive as it was, was not at this expense. *He was dead, but he liveth!* "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!"

And as the life of Christ adds to the joy arising from his death, so the death of Christ adds to the joy arising from his life. "There is great joy as we have seen derived from his life, but it would not be what it is if this his life had not succeeded his death. The life of Isaac was dear to Abraham before he attempted to offer him up a sacrifice; but it would be much more so when he had received him *as from the dead.*—The life of Joseph was dear to Jacob when he dwelt with him in the vale of Hebron; but it would be much more so after his having in a manner buried him. If Christ had never divested himself of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, it would not have been to us that which it will be. The very angels, though he died not for them, nor for any of their species, yet honor him as "the Lamb that was slain." And, as to the redeemed themselves, their song is sweeter still: "Thou art worthy," say they, "for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth."

3. He describes himself not only as "he that liveth, and was dead," but as being "*alive for evermore.*" He was raised, not only to life, but to an immortal life. "He dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him." This cheering truth arises from the *perfection* of his sacrifice. The sacrifices under the law could not take away sin, but were mere shadows of good things to come, and therefore required to be often repeated; but the sacrifice of Christ was "*once for all.*" The Scriptures lay great stress upon the term *once*, as applied to the sacrifice of Christ: it is used no less than six times in this connection: "Christ being raised from the dead," saith the apostle, "dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him;" and thus he accounts for it,— "For in that he died, he died unto sin *once*; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." A transient suffering in so divine a person was sufficient to expiate that which would have subjected us to everlasting punishment, and to lay the foundation of a permanent life with God, both for himself and for all those who believe in him. Such was the value of his sacrifice, that its influence will continue forever. Even when the work of mediation shall be perfected, and the kingdom as mediatorial be "delivered up to the Father, that God may be all in all," Christ



will live, and be the life of the church forever. In that state where "there will be no temple," "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" are said to be "the temple thereof;" and the reason given for there being no need of the sun, nor of the moon, is, that "the glory of God will lighten it, and the Lamb will be the light thereof."

The "Amen" which follows this part of the description seems to be added by the apostle, and designed to express the satisfaction that he felt in the life of Christ. The words, "O king, live forever," as addressed to an Asiatic sovereign, could only express the wish of the party that his life might be continued; and that in most cases was mere flattery: but here is neither flattery nor hyperbole. The Lord declares that he lives forever, and the apostle adds to it his cordial "Amen!"

4. He declares the authority with which he is invested: "And *have the keys of hell and of death.*" By "hell and death," I understand the powers of the invisible world, which, in reward of his humiliation and death, were put under his control. "God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.—Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him." Hell, with all its machinations, can do no more than he permits; and death with all its terrors comes and goes at his bidding.

But why are hell and death *only* mentioned as subjected to Christ? Does not his empire extend to the church as well as to the world, and to the visible as well as to the invisible powers? Certainly it does: all power in heaven and earth is given to him: but there was a fitness in his here mentioning that part only of his empire which was hostile to the church, and that kind of hostility which at the time threatened to destroy it. Persecution is the storming work of hell and of death on the strongholds of Zion. Hell furnishes the plan, and death carries it into execution. Men, indeed, have a concern in what is done against the church; but it is as agents of the wicked one: the visible world, therefore, may be overlooked as being influenced by the invisible. To control an army it is sufficient to control those that influence its movements.

II. LET US CONSIDER THESE INTERESTING CHARACTERS AS A SOURCE OF SECURITY AND FELICITY TO THE CHURCH.—The existence of the church in this depra-

ved world is one of the wonders of providence. It is a vessel living in a tempestuous sea; a bush on fire, yet not consumed. If we reflect on the enmity of the wicked against the righteous, their great superiority over them, the attempts that have been made to exterminate them, the frequent diminution of their number by defection and death,—their existence, and especially their increase, must be wonderful, and can no otherwise be accounted for but that Christ liveth.

When they were few in number, and wandered as strangers from one nation to another, he suffered no man to hurt them; "he reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." In Egypt he saw their affliction, and came down to deliver them. Of Jerusalem the enemy said, "Raze it, raze it to the foundation;" but the Lord remembered it, and destroyed its destroyer. Under the Persian dominion, the captives were restored to their own land; yet even then the enemy intrigued against them; so that for one-and-twenty years the building of the temple was hindered, and the prayers of the prophet Daniel were unanswered. Thus it was, I conceive, that "the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood" the angel for "one-and-twenty days:" but lo, Michael the chief prince stood with him and helped him.\*

Under the gospel dispensation, as the church became more spiritual, the hatred increased; and, as religion was henceforth more of a personal than a national concern, such was the opposition directed against it. But still the great Head of the church lived. The persecution which raged at the time of this prophecy was the second of ten cruel persecutions from the heathen emperors; and though, after this, the government became professedly Christian, yet such were the corruptions which entered in at this door, that in a little time that which was called the christian church became an antichristian harlot, persecuting the servants of Jesus

\* Dan. x. 13. 21. Prideaux reckons, from the first interruption of the Jews in rebuilding the temple to the last sentence of Darius in their favor, only *twenty years*; namely, from the third year of Cyrus to the eighth of Darius Hystaspis; but from Dan. x. 1—4, it appears, that though the opposition openly commenced in the third year, yet it had been at work in the second. It was within three days of the beginning of the third year that the prophet began to mourn: if one cause of this mourning, therefore, was the obstruction to the work of God at Jerusalem, it must have begun in the second year; which makes it twenty-one years, corresponding with the *three full weeks* of the prophet's mourning, and with the *one-and-twenty days* of the angel's detention, according to the usual prophetic reckoning, a day for a year.

with a cruelty equal, if not superior, to that of heathens. These floods filled the breadth of Immanuel's land, reaching even to the neck; but, the church's Head being above water, she has survived them all.

Often have we seen, in our smaller circles, the cause of God reduced to a low condition; sometimes by the falling away of characters who seemed to be pillars, and sometimes by the removal of great and good men by death. But under all this it is our comfort, the Lord liveth—the government is on his shoulder.

Finally: The life of Christ involves not only the security of the church on earth, but its felicity in heaven. The members being united with the head, their life is bound up with his life. Even in the present world, if one says, "I live," he must recollect himself, with the apostle, and add, "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:" but, if it be so in respect of spiritual life in this world, it will be so as to eternal life in the world to come. Every thing which our Lord did and suffered was for us; and every degree of glory that he possesses in reward of it is for us: for us he became incarnate, died, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and liveth at the right hand of God. "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

From the whole we see, First, that the way to everlasting life, is to believe in Jesus. The way of life, according to the tenor of the first covenant, was "The man which doeth these things shall live by them:" but the way of life to a sinner is, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." It is as believing in the Son of God that we are interested in him, and, having him, have everlasting life. We have, in the life of Christ, the greatest possible encouragement to believe in him and be saved; for it is as ever living to make intercession for us that he is able to save to the uttermost all those that come unto God by him.

O my hearers! this is the hinge on which our salvation or damnation turns. To refuse him in favor of your own righteousness, or of any other idol, is to refuse life; and to hate him is to love death. The question put to the house of Israel is no less applicable to you than it was to them, "Why will ye die?" Those who believe not in him are as unwilling to come to him that they may have life as the house of Israel were to cast away their transgressions. God has no more pleasure in the death of him that dieth eternally than he had in the death of those who perished under some temporal calamity; nor is the one any more at variance with the doctrine of election than the other was with

the doctrine of decrees in general, or of God's doing all things after the counsel of his own will.\*

Secondly: The same truth, like the cloud in the wilderness, wears a bright side to believers, and a dark side to unbelievers. The life of Christ will be the death of his enemies. To behold him coming in the clouds of heaven, invested with the keys of hell and of death, must fill their hearts with dismay. The same power that has so often shut the door of destruction against his servants, so as to forbid their entrance, will shut it upon his enemies, so as to leave no hope of escape.

## SERMON XXIV.

### CHRISTIANITY THE ANTIDOTE TO PRESUMPTION AND DESPAIR.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And, if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."—1 John ii. 1.

WHEN our Saviour ascended up on high, his disciples, who were looking stedfastly toward heaven after him, were thus accosted by the angels, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." It might seem, by this language, that whatever our Lord might do for us in the intermediate period, it was not for us to be made acquainted with it. And it has been suggested that we are ignorant not only of "the place where he resides, but of the occupations in which he is engaged."† There is, indeed, nothing revealed on these subjects to gratify curiosity; but much to satisfy faith. If we know not God, we may be expected to think lightly of sin, and meanly of the Saviour; and if, in consequence of this, we disown his atonement, and perceive no need of his intercession and advocateship with the Father, there will be nothing surprising in it. With such a state of mind we might have lived at the time when "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory," and have

\* The doctrine of *free will*, as opposed to that of *free grace*, is not that, in doing good, we act according to our choice, and require to be exhorted to it, and warned against the contrary; this is manifestly scriptural and proper: but that it is owing to our free will that we are disposed to choose the good and refuse the evil; if not to the exclusion of divine grace, yet to the rendering it effectual by properly improving it, and so to *making ourselves to differ*.

† Mr. Belsham's Review of Mr. Wilberforce's Treatise, p. 85.



been no more interested by any of these events than were the unbelieving part of the Jewish nation. But, if we entertain just sentiments of the moral character and government of God, we shall perceive the evil of sin and the need of a divine Saviour, shall consider his atonement as the only ground of a sinner's hope, and his intercession and advocateship with the Father as necessary to our being saved to the uttermost.

To satisfy ourselves that such were the sentiments of the apostles, it is sufficient candidly to read their writings. If their authority be rejected, so it must be; but it is vain to attempt to disguise their meaning. And, before we reject their authority, it will be well to consider the force of their testimony concerning themselves and their doctrine: "We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." They were either what they professed to be, or presumptuous impostors; and what they said of hearing their doctrine as a test of being *of God* was either true, or they were false witnesses of God; and, as all that we know of Christ is from their writings and those of the evangelists, if theirs be false witness, Christianity itself has nothing to authenticate it.

"My little children," said the venerable apostle, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." This is the bearing of all my writings, as well as of all my other labors. Yet, while I warn you against sin, knowing that there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good, and sinneth not, let me remind you that "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Such is the doctrine of the apostle, *an antidote both to presumption and despair*. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear it.

Let us observe

I. THE GENERAL CHARGE WHICH CHRISTIANITY GIVES TO ITS ADHERENTS: "These things write I unto you that ye sin not." This is to repress *presumption*. This is the bearing not only of the writings of John, but of the whole Scriptures: this is the object at which every doctrine and every precept aims.

It may be thought, and has sometimes been said, that "all religions tend to make men better," and, therefore, that this property of the apostle's doctrine has nothing peculiar in it. But this is a gratuitous assumption. All religions do not tend to make men better; but, many of them, much worse. Nay, so far is this assumption from being true, that Christianity is the only religion that, strictly speaking, is opposed to sin. That men of all religions have paid some attention to morals is true; but, in doing so, they have not been influenced so much by their religion as by the necessity which all

men feel of maintaining somewhat of a correct conduct towards one another. As to sin against God, there is no religion but that of the Bible that pays any regard to it. And even Christianity itself, in so far as it is corrupted, loses this property. Every system of religion may be known by this whether it be of God or not. If it delight in calling sin by extenuating names—or represent repentance and good works as sufficient to atone for it—or prescribe ceremonial remedies for allaying the remorse which it produces—it makes light of sin, and is not of God. Every doctrine and precept in the Bible makes much of sin; and this is as much a distinguishing peculiarity of the true religion as any principle that can be named.

Some doctrines are directly of a *warning* nature. Are we taught, for instance, the omniscience and omnipresence of God?—What can be more pungent than such sentiments as these? "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me."—"Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there;—if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." Every sentiment here saith to us, "Sin not." Are we taught the *holiness* of God?—It is that we may be holy: "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"—"Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins." Such is the object of all the divine *precepts* and *threatenings*. Let us seriously read the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and ask ourselves, What could induce the kindest and best of beings thus strictly to enjoin his will, and thus to scatter his curses against the breach of it? Finally: Such is the object of all the accounts of *justice and judgments* as executed on transgressors. The histories of the flood, of the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, of the plagues of Egypt and the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red sea, of the punishments on the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness, of the destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, first by the Chaldeans and afterwards by the Romans, all speak one language; all are written to us that we "sin not."

There is another set of scripture truths



which are of a *consolatory* nature; yet they are aimed at the same thing. For what purpose was the Son of God manifested in human nature? Was it not that he might "destroy the works of the devil?" To what are we elected? That we should "be holy, and without blame before him in love." To what are we predestinated? That we might "be conformed to the image of his Son." Why did he give himself for us, but that he "might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works?" Why are we called out of a "state of darkness into his marvelous light, but that we might walk as children of light?" Of what use are the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the Scriptures? Is it not that, having them, we should "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God?" That is not Christianity that does not operate in this way. He that sinneth habitually is of the devil, and hath not seen or known God. Wicked men seek a system of religion which may consist with their lusts; and God, in righteous judgment, often suffers them to find it; but it is not the gospel: the language of the gospel is, "These things are written to you, that ye sin not!"

The Scriptures guard the doctrine of grace, not indeed by limiting its operations to lesser sinners, but by insisting on its mortifying and sanctifying effects. The apostle Paul, notwithstanding all that he had written on justification by faith, exempts none from condemnation, but those that were "in Christ Jesus;" and admits none to be "in Christ Jesus," but those who "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He still declared, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." There is a *universality* pertaining to true holiness which distinguishes it from all that is spurious. We must be "holy in *all manner of conversation*," or there is no real holiness in us. A single "wicked way" will lead to destruction. The certain perseverance of the saints is not that a person, having once believed, whether he depart from God or not, shall be finally saved: but that, God having put his fear in his heart, he shall not be suffered wholly to depart from him. If any man, therefore, depart utterly from God, he ought to conclude that the fear of God was not in him. If the blossom go up as the dust, the root was rottenness. If, in times of temptation, we fall away, it is because we have "no root in ourselves." "If," says the apostle John, "they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Even our *partial* departures from God must render our state doubtful. When the Galatians doubted the gospel, the apostle stood in

doubt of them; declaring he was afraid of them, lest he had "bestowed upon them labor in vain." And had they judged according to evidence, as he did, they must have stood in doubt of themselves. To represent, as some do, that doubts and fears of this kind are the temptations of Satan, or the workings of unbelief, and require to be resisted, as that which is dishonorable to God, is to promote the most dangerous delusion, and to bring the blood of souls upon their own heads. The things which they call the temptations of Satan may be found to be the dictates of an awakened conscience, which they endeavor to lull asleep. Doubts of the goodness or veracity of God, or of the all-sufficiency or willingness of the Saviour to receive those that come to him, are, indeed, dishonorable to God; but doubts of our own sincerity, founded upon our departures in heart and conduct from him, are so far from being sinful that they are necessary to awaken us to self-examination. Thus the Corinthians, who had sunk into many and great evils, were called upon, not to hold fast the persuasion that, notwithstanding this, their state was safe; but to "examine themselves whether they were in the faith, and to prove their own-selves;" and assured that, except indeed they were reprobates, or disapproved of God, *Jesus Christ was in them*—that is, by his word and Spirit, bringing forth fruit.

We proceed to observe

II. THE SPECIFIC PROVISION FOR THEIR FAULTS AND FAILINGS:—"And, if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." This is to prevent *despair*.

It is here supposed that, though it is the habitual aim of true Christians not to sin, yet, in this world, they are not free from it. Some have fallen into grievous sins, as we too well know, from Scripture, observation, and, in many instances, from painful experience. Others, who have not fallen so as either to disgrace themselves or the name of Christ, yet have much sin wherewith to reproach themselves, in deeds, or words, or unlawful desires. The petition in the Lord's prayer, "forgive us our trespasses," shows that we sin, and need forgiveness, as often as we need our daily bread. If any man imagine himself to have arrived to sinless perfection, he must be wofully blind to the spirituality of the divine law, and to the extent of his obligations. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

Farther: It is here suggested that, whatever be our sin, yet, if we confess it with a contrite heart, and believe in Jesus who died for sinners, and rose from the dead, and ascended to the Father, he will be our advocate, and our sins shall be forgiven for his sake. It was in this way that David

was forgiven. It is true, Christ had not then died, nor risen, nor ascended to be the advocate with the Father; but his penitential prayer shows that he believed in him according to the light that he possessed, which might be much greater than we imagine. His prayer to be purged with hyssop, doubtless, alluded to the purgations under the law, by dipping a bunch of hyssop in blood, and sprinkling it upon the unclean: but, as none of these ceremonial cleansings were admissible in cases of adultery or murder, he cannot be understood as speaking literally. He must, therefore, have believed in a purgation of which this was only a shadow.

It was in this way that the Israelites were forgiven, when praying with their hands spread towards the temple. It was not to the building that they directed their prayer, but to Him who dwelt therein, between the cherubim, upon the *mercy-seat*. It was to the Lord God of Israel, as thus dwelling upon the *mercy-seat*, that Jonah, at the last extremity, looked and lived: "Then I said, I am east out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."

In this way, whatever sins we have committed, we must seek for mercy; and, for our encouragement, we are assured of an "advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

But here we must be a little more particular. Here are three parties concerned; the Father, the criminal who has sinned against him, and the Advocate who undertakes his cause. The *Father*, in this case, sustains the character of a Judge: "God the Judge of all." The *criminal* is supposed to stand before the judgment-seat; not, however, in an impenitent state of mind, but like Job when he said, "Behold I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.—I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" Or like David when he said, "I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest!" Here comes in the *Advocate*. The sinner could not be heard for himself, nor pardoned in his own name: but, believing in Christ, *he* undertakes to plead his cause. He had said himself, in effect, Do not condemn me!—To this the Advocate adds, Do not condemn him!

On this part of the subject, we must be still more particular. An advocate, especially one that undertakes the cause of sinners, requires to have an interest with the Judge; to be interested for the sinner; while pleading for him, not to palliate, but condemn his

sin; to be fully acquainted with his case; and to have something to plead that shall effectually overbalance his unworthiness. Let us inquire, whether all these qualifications be not found in our "Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

1. *He has the highest interest in the favor of the Judge.* For why? He is his only-begotten Son, who dwelleth in his bosom, and who never offended him at any time, but always did that which was pleasing in his sight. So well pleased was the Father with his obedience unto death, that he highly exalted him, giving him "a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." Well might he say, when on earth, "I knew that thou hearest me always:" for he had, in prophecy, invited him to prefer his request: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Who can doubt the success of a cause in the hands of such an advocate?

2. *He is deeply interested in favor of the sinner.* If we had to be tried before an earthly tribunal, and wished to engage an advocate, we should certainly prefer one that would so identify himself with us as to be deeply interested in the issue. When, at Horeb, Moses pleaded for Israel to be forgiven, he requested to die rather than not succeed: "Oh," said he, "this people have sinned a great sin,—yet now, if thou wilt, forgive their sin; and, if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written!" This was the true spirit of an advocate; and he succeeded. But our Advocate has gone further than *requesting* to die: he actually died for us; and his death "is the propitiation for our sins," on which his advocateship is founded.

3. *While pleading for sinners, he does not palliate, but condemns their sin.* If Moses had attempted to apologize for Israel's idolatry, his interposition must have been rejected. And, if it had been possible for Christ himself to have been an advocate for sin, he could not have been heard. But he was no less averse from sin than the Judge himself. If he was made "in the likeness" of sinful flesh, yet was there no participation of it. Though he descended, and lived among sinners, yet, in respect of character, he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate" from them. While advocating their cause, it was in his own proper character of "Jesus Christ the righteous." It was because of his proceeding on these just and honorable principles that the Father approved and honored him: "Thou lovest righteousness



and hatest iniquity: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

4. *He is perfectly acquainted with the case of those whose cause he undertakes.* There are cases which, if the advocate had known all, he would not have undertaken; and which, for want of his being in possession of the whole truth, fail in his hands. But our Advocate knows the worst of us. He needs not that any should testify of man; for he knows what is in man. When Simon the pharisee saw a woman that was a sinner standing at the feet of Jesus, washing them with her tears, wiping them with the hairs of her head, kissing them, and anointing them with ointment, and all this without receiving any repulse from him, he suspected that he was *deceived*, and concluded in his own mind that he could not be that prophet that should come into the world. Had he known her true character, he supposed, he would not have permitted her to touch him! To convince Simon that he was not ignorant of her character, he, by answering his private thoughts, proved himself to be fully acquainted with *his*; and proceeded to plead the cause of the penitent sinner, though her sins were many, and to justify himself in receiving and forgiving her.

Our Advocate not only knows all our sins, but *all our wants*; and therefore knows how to provide for them. If previous to the prayer for Peter, it had been referred to him what should be asked on his behalf, having no suspicion of any peculiar temptation being at hand, he might not have been able to say what it was that he most needed. But his Advocate, knowing the temptation that awaited him, framed his plea on his behalf accordingly: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

5. *Though he finds no worthiness in the sinner, on which to ground his pleas, but the greatest unworthiness, yet he has that to plead which effectually overbalances it.* It is remarkable that, in that admirable speech of Judah on behalf of Benjamin, he did not fetch his pleas from the innocence of the young man, nor from the possibility of the cup being in his sack without his knowledge, nor from the smallness of his offence; but from his father's love to him, and his own engagement to bring him back, and set him before him! I need not say that on this principle our Advocate has proceeded. The charges against Benjamin were mysterious and doubtful, yet, as Judah could not prove his innocence, he admitted his guilt. But our guilt is beyond doubt; in pleading our cause, the Advocate is supposed to rest it on the propitiation in consideration of which our unworthiness is passed over, and our

sins are forgiven. The connection of things is often signified by the order of time in which they occur. Thus the out-pouring of the Spirit, that it might appear to be what it was, a fruit of the death of Christ, followed immediately after it: and thus, on his having died, and risen from the dead, his followers are directed to pray in his name. His directing us to pray in his name conveys the same idea, as to the meritorious cause of forgiveness, as his being our Advocate with the Father on the ground of his propitiation.

From the whole: *We are directed to commit our cause to Christ.* We have a cause pending, which, if lost, all is lost with us, and that forever. We shall not be able to plead it ourselves; for every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Nor can any one in heaven or earth, besides the Saviour, be heard on our behalf. If we believe in him we have everlasting life; but, if not, we shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on us.

We are also directed, by this subject, *how to obtain relief under the distress to which our numerous sins subject us as we pass through life.* We all have recourse to some expedient or other to relieve our consciences, when oppressed with guilt. Some endeavor to lose the recollection of it among the cares, company, or amusements of the world; others have recourse to ceremonial observances, and are very strict in some things, hoping thereby to obtain forgiveness for others; on some the death and advocateship of Christ have the effect to render them unconcerned, and even to embolden them in their sins. Painful as our burdens are, we had better retain them than get relief in any of these methods. The only way is to come unto God in the spirit of Job, or of David, before referred to, seeking mercy through the propitiation. Thus, while we plead, Do not condemn me, our Advocate will take it up, and add, Do not condemn him!

Finally: From the all-sufficiency of the propitiation *there is no room for despair.* When Jonah was cast into the sea, and swallowed by the fish, still retaining his consciousness, he concluded that all was over with him: "I said I am cast out of thy sight; yet," even in this condition, the thought occurred, "I will look again toward thy holy temple." His body was confined, but his mind could glance a thought toward the mercy-seat, whence he had heretofore received relief. He looked and lived. Let this be our determination, whatever be our circumstances or condition. Jesus is "able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."



## SERMON XXV.

## THE SORROW ATTENDING WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE.

“And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow.”—Eccles. i. 17, 18.

WE have in this book an estimate of human life. Most of the things that are seen under the sun here pass under review; and each, as it passes, is inscribed with vanity.

It may be thought, from the pensive strain of the writer, to be an effusion of melancholy, rather than the result of mature reflection; but it should be considered that no man had greater capacity and opportunity for forming a just judgment; that the book was written at the most mature period of life; and, what is more, that it was written under divine inspiration.

As *wisdom and knowledge*, in the writings of Solomon, commonly include true religion, so *madness and folly* seem here to be used for irreligion. He studied the nature and effects of both good and evil.

In ascribing “vanity and vexation of spirit” to almost everything that passed before him, he does not mean that they were in themselves evil, or of little or no value; but that every good had its alloy, or something attached to it which subtracted from it. Thus it was even with *wisdom and knowledge*. It is because these were not only good in themselves, but ranked high in the scale of what is estimable, that they are introduced. If the best things pertaining to human life have their alloy, the same must be said of the rest.

In discoursing on the subject, we shall endeavor to show the justness of the remark, and to draw some conclusions from it.

I. LET US ENDEAVOR TO SHOW THE JUSTNESS OF THE REMARK, OR ITS AGREEMENT WITH UNIVERSAL EXPERIENCE. Knowledge may be distinguished, by its objects, into three parts, or branches: the knowledge of men and things about us—the knowledge of ourselves—and the knowledge of God. Each of these is good, and the practical use of it is wisdom; but each has its alloy, subtracting from the enjoyment which it would otherwise afford.

First: Let us try the justness of the remark in respect of *the knowledge of men and things about us*. None can deny that the thing itself is good and valuable, and the want of it to be regretted as an evil: “That the soul be without knowledge it is not good.” It is this which distinguishes men from brutes, and raises some men much higher in the scale of being than others. Minds thus qualified are susceptible of much greater

enjoyments than others, and are able to do much more good in their generation than others. The greatest and best things that have been done in the world have been done, in general, not by the ignorant, but by men of understanding. Yet, with all its advantages, there is that attached to it which increaseth sorrow.

1. He that knows the most of mankind will see the most of their *faults and defects*, and so be compelled, upon the whole, to think the worst of them; and this, to a good man, must needs be a source of sorrow. I would by no means wish to cherish a spirit of misanthropy. I remember, in a speech delivered in a very respectable assembly, meeting with this sentiment: “I think well of man, but ill of men.” On the contrary, I should say, I think ill of man, but well of men, till I see cause to think otherwise. Scripture, observation, and experience, concur to justify me in thinking ill of human nature; but as, in our world, there is, through the grace and goodness of God, a good number of upright and benevolent characters, it becomes me to hope the best of every man I meet, till I am obliged, by his conduct or conversation, to form a different judgment; and this I feel to be a principle at a much greater remove from misanthropy than the other.

There are cases in which the more we know of men the more we shall see reason to esteem them; but this is not true of mankind in general. The longer we live, and the more we are acquainted with them, the more evil we shall see in them. The characters of the greater part of men will not bear scrutinizing. If we look but a little below the surface, whether it be in high life or low life, or even in middle life, we shall see enough to sicken our hearts. Many a favorable opinion, formed under the philanthropic feelings of youth, has been obliged to give way to observation and experience; and many a pleasing dream, into which we have fallen from reading books, has disappeared when we came to read men.

2. He that knows the most of mankind will know most of their *miseries*; and, if he be a man of feeling, this must be another source of sorrow. Who can make himself acquainted with the privations and hardships of the afflicted poor without participating of their sorrows? This may be a reason why some who are in opulent circumstances decline visiting them. They seem to count the cost, not merely what it will require to supply their pecuniary wants, but what they shall lose by a diminution of their pleasure.

If, in addition to the state of the afflicted poor of our own country, we knew the miseries of *slavery*, would it not increase our sorrow? Who, that has only acquainted himself with the facts which have been established during the late parliamentary

discussions on the African slave trade, can forbear weeping over the miseries which the avarice of one part of mankind brings upon another? And if, in addition to this, we knew the miseries of *war*, must it not still more increase our sorrow? We hear of great battles, on which depend the fate of kingdoms, and rejoice or are sorrowful as they affect the interests of our country; but, did we know all the individual misery produced by the most glorious victory, how different would be our feelings! Did we hear the cries of the wounded, and the groans of the dying; could we know the state of mind in which they died; were we acquainted with the near relations of the dead, the widows and orphans that they have left behind them; alas, were we in the midst of them, we might be reduced to the necessity of trying to get away, and to forget them!

If, leaving these scenes of woe, we turn our eyes to the abodes of *ease and opulence*, we shall not find things as we might expect. How often are men envied, when, if we knew all, we should pity them! We form our estimates of human happiness more by appearances than by realities. We little think how many things are necessary to make us happy, any one of which, if wanting, will render all the rest of little or no account. What are riches, and honors, and amusements, to one whose life hangs in doubt, from some threatening disorder which he feels to be preying upon his vitals; or to a mind smitten with melancholy, or corroded with remorse; or to one whose peace is destroyed by domestic feuds, jealousies, or intrigues?

3. He that knows most of the *sentiments* of mankind on everlasting subjects will, if he be a believer in divine relation, know most of *their devious and destructive tendency*; and this must be a source of sorrow. There is what is called charity that excites no sorrow on this account; but viewing all religions as nearly alike, all leading to one happy end, it renders the subjects of it quite easy and unconcerned. But *Christian* charity is another thing. It bears good will to all mankind, but does not think lightly of their alienation from God. He that should doubt whether the sentence passed against a number of traitors was ever designed to be executed, and should persuade them into his way of thinking, might call himself a charitable man; but should boast of his own happiness, and the happiness he produced in others; and insist upon it that, by entertaining such views, he did more honor to the government than they who yielded to the gloomy apprehensions of an execution; but if, after all, his opinions should prove *false*, and be found to have originated in his own disloyalty, would not his charity be considered as cruel, deceitful, and destructive? The only difference between this and the charity in question is,

that the one goes to destroy men's lives, and the other their souls! *Genuine* charity would have endeavoured to convince them of their guilt, and to persuade them to sue for mercy to their justly offended sovereign. He that can view whole nations of men, who, from time immemorial, have lived "without Christ, having no hope, and without God in the world," and not feel a wish to burst their chains, of whatever religion he may profess to be, must himself be in the same state.

To read the *controversies* of former ages, and those of the present age, *even in the Christian world*, must be depressing to a serious mind. He is either perplexed, and tempted to indulge in scepticism, or, if he feels his own ground, still he must perceive great numbers wandering in the paths of error; and who, unless God give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, will continue to wander, notwithstanding all that can be said or written to reclaim them. They that have done the most towards bending the mind of man to that of Christ, and inculcating just sentiments of religion, will find, after all their labor, much remaining undone; so much, both of the devious and the defective, that he may retire with the words of the wise man, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered!"

4. He that knows most of the *religious world* will see the most of its *faults and imperfections*; and this is another source of sorrow. Among his friends, he will find some will prove false, and others fickle; and, what is worse, many turning their back on Christ, and "walking no more with him." The longer we live in Christian society, and the closer we are connected with it, the more jealousies, envies, evil surmisings, whisperings, and backbitings, we shall discover. Those Christians who have to travel to hear the gospel, and only see their fellow-Christians once in a week, are apt to consider themselves as under great disadvantages; and, in some respects, they certainly are so; but, in others, the advantage may be on their side. They do not hear so many sermons, but, having to travel, they may be more likely to profit by those which they do hear. They miss much social intercourse; but they also stand aloof from the evils which frequently attend it. On looking round the place on a Lord's-day, they see their Christian friends, as we say, in their best dress; knowing just enough to love them and pray for them, and to part with them with affectionate regret; while those who are acquainted with their faults, as well as their excellences, know to the increase of their sorrow.

Once more: He that knows most of the *things of this world* will feel the greatest portion of *disappointment* from them; and this will be a source of sorrow. Riches, honors, and pleasures, promise much, and, while in-



experienced, we may hope much; but a thorough trial will convince us that happiness is not in them. Even knowledge itself, the treasure of the mind, is not only attained with great labor, but is attended with much painful disappointment. He that makes the greatest researches, as Mr. Poole observes, often finds himself deceived with knowledge falsely so called; often mistakes error for truth, and is perplexed with manifold doubts, from which ignorant men are free.

Secondly: Let us try the justness of the remark in respect of *the knowledge of ourselves*. Self-knowledge is, doubtless, good and of great importance. Without it, whatever else we know, it will turn to but little account: yet this also is accompanied with sorrow. He that knows the most of himself sees most of his own faults and defects. It was by comparing his own mind with the word of God that David exclaimed, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins." The more we know of ourselves, the worse we shall think of ourselves. We know but little of ourselves at the outset of the christian life. We see evils in others, and are shocked at them, and are ready to suppose ourselves incapable of any such things; but, as the Lord led Israel through the wilderness to humble them, and to prove them, and to know what was in their heart, so he deals with us. We have seen rich men high-minded, and may have thought, if God should give us wealth, how humble and generous we would be with it: we have seen poor men full of envy and discontent, and may have thought, were we in their situation, we would not repine: we have seen men fall in the hour of temptation, and may have joined in heaping censures upon them. If it please God to try us in these ways, it may be to humble us; and the knowledge that we gain may be accompanied with not a little sorrow.

Thirdly: Let us try the justness of the remark in respect of *the knowledge of God*. No one can suppose but this, in itself, is good, and a source of the highest enjoyment; yet it is no less true that he that increaseth in it increaseth in sorrow.

The more we know of God, the more we shall perceive *our contrariety to him*. If, like Joshua the high-priest, we were clothed with filthy garments, yet, while surrounded with darkness, and in company with others like ourselves, we should be, in a manner, insensible of it; but if brought to the light, and introduced to one who was clothed in white raiment, we should feel the disparity. It is thus that not only those who are strangers to divine revelation, but those who read it without believing it, have no just sense of sin. It was thus that sin, "by the commandment," became to the apostle Paul exceedingly sinful; and that the prophet Isaiah, on behold-

ing the glory of God, exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"

Beside this, the knowledge of God draws upon us the *hatred*, and frequently the *persecutions, of wicked men*; which, though we may be supported under them, yet, in themselves, must needs be sources of sorrow: "I have given them thy word," said our Lord, in committing his disciples to the Father, "and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

I add, The knowledge of God will, in some cases, draw upon us *the envy of false brethren*. If a good man engage in the work of God from the purest principles, and, by the divine blessing on his diligence and perseverance, make such progress in useful knowledge as to draw upon himself a portion of public admiration, he may be expected soon to become an object of envy. Men shall rise up who will do their utmost to depreciate and eclipse him. "I considered all travail, and every right work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbor. This is also vanity and vexation of spirit."

II. LET US DRAW SOME CONCLUSIONS FROM THE SUBJECT. If things be so, some may think we had better be without knowledge, and be contented to live and die in ignorance. This is not the consequence, however, which the writer wished to have drawn from what he wrote. He says, "That the soul be without knowledge it is not good;" and "wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness." He must, therefore, have judged that, whatever disadvantages attended wisdom and knowledge, the advantages arising from them were far greater. Much of the sorrow arising from a knowledge of ourselves and of God is to be desired, rather than dreaded; and, as to that which arises from a knowledge of the evils of the world, and even of the church, it is best to know the truth, though it may give us pain. That exemption from sorrow which arises from ignorance is seldom enviable. To know the evils that are to be found among men is necessary, not only to enable us to guard against them, but to know how to deal with them in religious concerns. If we be ignorant of their faults and defects, we shall be at a loss to carry conviction to their minds, and so to make them feel the need of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. So, to be ignorant of the faults and defects of men professing religion, must be injurious both to them and to ourselves. Without knowing the truth concerning them, we cannot reprove them, and so cannot reclaim them. If those of the house of Chloe had not written to Paul on the state of things at Corinth, it would have saved him much sor-



row, but then what had been the state of the Corinthians? To all appearance they were in the way to ruin; and so a tribe, as it were, would soon have been lacking in Israel. And, as to ourselves, by knowing in a certain degree the evils that are to be found, even in the church of Christ, we are better prepared to meet them, and less in danger of being stumbled, or tempted to think the worse of religion, on account of them. By knowing things, in some good degree, as they are, we are enabled to make up our minds. Thus it is that the falls, and even the falling away of some, while it causes pain, yet does not shake our faith. We learn to think well of religion, let those who profess it prove what they may: "Let God be true and every man a liar!" And, in knowing the faults and defects even of sincere Christians, we are not led to think ill of them as Christians, or lightly of christian communion. If a true friend of his country could say,

"England, with all thy faults, I love thee still!"

much more will a true friend of the church of Christ consider Christians, with all their faults, as the excellent of the earth; better than the best of worldly men! And, if we love them, it will be in our hearts to live and die with them! Nor is it unnecessary that we should be acquainted with the *miseries* of mankind, whatever sorrow they may occasion: otherwise we cannot sympathize with them, nor relieve them, nor pray for them, nor feel so great an anxiety for the coming of that kingdom whose healing influence shall remove their sorrows.

Three things, however, are taught us by this subject:—

First: *To be moderate in our expectations, as to things pertaining to this life.* If "vexation of spirit" be attached to wisdom and knowledge, what can be expected from less valuable objects? We need but little, nor that little long. The trial made by the wise man, of mirth and pleasure, of building and planting, of the gathering together of silver and gold, &c., is doubtless recorded to teach us that substantial good is not to be found in them. The consequence drawn by the apostle from the brevity of life is designed to moderate both our attachments and our sorrows. "The time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion (or scenery) of this world passeth away."

It may seem, to some, that if we were to feel and act up to this precept it would deprive us of half our enjoyments; but this is a mistake. To be moderate in our expecta-

tions is to increase our enjoyment, while the contrary diminishes it. Expectation, raised beyond what truth will support, must be disappointed; and disappointment will imbitter that which, if enjoyed in moderation, would have been sweet: "Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure, and trouble therewith."

Secondly: We are taught, hereby, *to seek the favor of God as the crowning blessing to all our enjoyments.* The vexation of spirit which belongs to the portion of a good man is not as that which attends the wicked. The one is accompanied with a blessing, the other with a curse: "God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom and knowledge and joy: but to the sinner he giveth travail, to gather, and to heap up, that he may give to him that is good before God." After all the particulars enumerated in the blessing of Joseph, as the precious things of heaven, the dew, and the deep that coucheth beneath, the precious fruits brought forth by the sun and the precious things put forth by the moon, the chief things of the ancient mountains, the precious things of the lasting hills, the precious things of the earth, and the fullness thereof, the crowning blessing follows—"and the good will of him that dwelt in the bush!" If this be wanting, all the rest will be unsatisfying. If this be on our heads, our sorrows, whatever they be, will be turned into joy.

Thirdly: We are taught, hereby, *to aspire after a state in which good will be enjoyed without any mixture of evil as a subtraction from it.* If our wisdom be that of which the fear of the Lord is the beginning, and the object of our knowledge be the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, we shall soon reach that state of holiness and blessedness that is without alloy. "Wisdom, and knowledge, and joy," will then be given us, and all the sources of sorrow which have been enumerated will be dried up. The more we know of the inhabitants of that world, the better we shall think of them, and the more we shall love them. Among all the nations of the saved we shall not find one whose character will not bear scrutinizing. If every heart were as naked to us as ours now are to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, we should find nothing in them but love. No hypocrisies will be there, nor envies, nor jealousies, nor hard thoughts, nor evil surmises, to embitter the cup of joy. No surrounding miseries shall damp our bliss; no error shall throw a mist over our minds, or lead us aside from God. And, what is still more, no imperfections shall mar our services, nor indwelling sins pollute our souls. To this blessed state may we, by all the sorrows of the present life, be led unremittingly to bend our course!

## SERMON XXVI.

## THE MAGNITUDE OF THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope: because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now: and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”—Rom. viii. 18—23.

THREE is, in this part of the epistle, a richness of sentiment and a vast compass of thought. The apostle, having established the great doctrine of justification by faith, dwells here on things connected with it; some of which are designed to guard it against abuse, and others to show its great importance. “There is, therefore, now no condemnation,” says he, “to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.—If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.—As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Having thus entered on the privileges of believers, the sacred writer is borne away, as by a mighty tide, with the greatness of his theme. “Heirs of God!” what an inheritance! Such is the tenor of the covenant of grace: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”—“Joint-heirs with Christ!” what a title! We possess the inheritance not in our own right, but in that of Christ; who, being “heir of all things,” looketh down on his conflicting servants, and saith, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” It is true, we must suffer awhile; but, if it be “with him,” we shall be glorified together.

By “the glory to be revealed in us” is meant, not that glory which we shall receive at death, but the consummation of it at the resurrection. It is the same as that which, in the following verses, is called “the manifestation of the sons of God”—“the glorious liberty of the children of God”—“the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” It is “that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” for which Christians are taught to look; that *grace* in pursuit of which we are exhorted to “gird up the loins of our minds, to be sober, and hope to the end,” and which

is to be “brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

On this great inheritance, to which the sons of God are heirs, the apostle enlarges in the words of the text. It is an object of such magnitude, says he, that all the sufferings of the present life are not worthy to be compared with it; of such magnitude as to interest the whole creation; and, finally, of such magnitude that our highest enjoyments do not satisfy us, but we groan earnestly after the full possession of it. To review these three great points is all that I shall attempt.

I. SUCH IS THE MAGNITUDE OF THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED IN US THAT THE SUFFERINGS OF THE PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH IT. In speaking of these opposites, the apostle, as by a kind of spiritual arithmetic, seems to place them in opposite columns. The amount of the column of sufferings, if viewed by itself, would appear great. Much evil attends us, both as men and as good men. The misery of man is great upon him; and great are the afflictions which have been endured by the faithful for Christ's sake. For his sake they have been “killed all the day long,” and “accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” He who entered on this reckoning could not have made light of the sufferings of this present time, for want of an experimental acquaintance with them. In answer to those who depreciated his ministry, he could say, “Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?” Yet the same person assures us that he reckons the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. They may be heavy and tedious, when viewed by themselves; but, weighed against a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, they are light and momentary.

It is thus that, in the subject before us, he considers our sufferings as confined to “this present time.” The short duration of suffering ordinarily renders it tolerable, even



though, for a time, it may be acute; and, if succeeded by lasting enjoyment, we consider it unmanly to make much of it; and if it be in the service of a beloved sovereign, and in support of a cause of great importance, and which lies near the heart, it is usually treated as a matter of still less account. Thus it was that the apostle reckoned his sufferings not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us.

To say of two things that one of them is not to be compared with the other is a strong mode of expression. It is in this way that the great God expresses his infinite superiority to the most exalted creatures: "Who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto Jehovah?" So, when two things of an opposite nature come in succession, and the latter so entirely prevails over the former as to obliterate it, or in a manner to efface the remembrance of it, it may be said of the one that it is not to be compared with the other. Thus the joy that followed the resurrection of Christ was to the sorrow that preceded it: "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Such also will be the joy of the heavenly inheritance that it will efface from our remembrance the few years of sorrow which have preceded it; so efface them, at least, that we shall never think of them with regret, but as a foil to heighten our bliss.

II. SUCH IS THE MAGNITUDE OF THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED IN US AT THE RESURRECTION THAT ITS INFLUENCE EXTENDS TO THE WHOLE CREATION. This I take to be generally expressed in the 19th verse: "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." That which follows, in verses 20—22, explains and accounts for it, by showing how the creatures were brought into a state of bondage by the sin of man, and how they shall be liberated from it when he is liberated: "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

The "creature"—the "whole creation"—and "every creature," are the same thing,

and denote, I apprehend, not man, but every creature around him which has been brought under the influence of his revolt. As, when Achan sinned, all that pertained to him suffered; so, when our first parents sinned, the whole creation, in so far as it was connected with man, partook of the effects. This appears to be meant by the creatures being "made subject to vanity," and coming under "the bondage of corruption."

The creation was brought into this state of bondage, "not willingly," as was the case with man, but by the sovereign will of the Creator. He could have stopped the machinery of the material world, and at once have put an end to rebellion; but he thought fit to order the laws of nature to keep their course; and, as to the abuse that man would make of them, he should be called to account for that another day.

The bondage of the creatures, however, was not to be perpetual: he who subjected them to it, subjected them "in hope, because the creature itself also," as well as the sons of God, shall be delivered from its thralldom, and, as it were, participate with them in their glorious liberty. The redemption of our bodies will be the signal of its emancipation from under the effects of sin, and the birthday, as it were, of a new creation. As by man's apostasy every thing connected with him became, in some way, subservient to evil; so, by the deliverance of the sons of God at the resurrection, they shall be delivered from this servitude, and the whole creation, according to the natural order of things, shall serve and praise the Lord.

But we must inquire more particularly into this "bondage" of the creatures, and into their deliverance from it.

It is true that the ground was literally cursed for man's sake, so as spontaneously to bring forth briars and thorns, rather than fruits; the animals also have literally been subjected to great misery and cruelty; but it is not of a literal bondage, I conceive, that the apostle speaks; nor of a literal deliverance, as some have imagined, by the resurrection of animals; nor of a literal groaning after it. The whole appears to be what rhetoricians call a *prospopeia*, or a figure of speech in which sentiments and language are given to things as though they were persons. Thus, on the invasion of Sennacherib, the earth is said to mourn and Lebanon to be ashamed; and thus, at the coming of the Messiah, the heavens are called upon to rejoice, and the earth to be glad, the sea to roar, the floods to clap their hands, and the trees of the wood to rejoice.

When God created the heavens and the earth, every thing was made according to its nature and capacity to show forth his glory. Thus "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth



speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." Thus also heaven and earth are called upon to praise their Maker: "Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heaven of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.—Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps: fire and hail; snow and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling his word; mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars; beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl." Such was the natural order of things established by the Creator: every thing, consciously or unconsciously, furnished its tribute of praise to Him who is over all blessed forever?

But, by the entrance of sin into the world, the creatures became subservient to it; as, when a rebellion breaks out in an empire, the resources of the country being seized by the rebels are turned to the support of their cause, and against their rightful owner; so every thing which God had created for the accommodation of man, or in any way rendered subservient to his comfort, was turned aside from its original design, perverted to the purposes of corruption. The Lord complains of the corn, and wine, and oil, and flax, and wool, which he had given to Israel, being prostituted to Baal; and threatens to recover them. Who can count the sacrifices and offerings which have been made of God's creatures to Jupiter, Mars, Venus, Bacchus, and other abominations of the west; or to Bramah, Vishnu, Seeb, Dhoorga, Juggernaut, and other abominations of the east? And, though gross idolatry has in many nations been dispelled by the light of the gospel, yet still the bounties of providence furnished for the accommodation of man are made to serve his lusts. The sun cannot emit his illuminating and fructifying beams but to furnish food for the corrupt propensities of man. The clouds cannot pour down their showers, but the effects of them are made subservient to sin. Rich soils and fruitful seasons become the hot-beds of vice, on which, as in Sodom, men become ripe for destruction at an earlier period than ordinary.

The creatures have not only been subjected to the vanity of serving the idols and lusts of men, but have themselves been turned into gods, and worshipped to the exclusion of the Creator, who is blessed forever! There is scarcely a creature in heaven or on earth, but what has been thus drawn into the service of *corruption*. Not only the sun, and moon, and stars; but gold, and silver, and brass, and wood, and stone, and birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things! And though the light of the gospel has driven this species of stupidity out of Europe (which the science of Greece and Rome did

not so much as diminish,) yet it is in no want of advocates among her degenerate sons. And they that would be ashamed to plead the cause of gross idolatry, yet in a manner idolize the works of God, by opposing them to his word. The sweet singer of Israel, after celebrating the former, held up the latter as greatly exceeding them. With him the light of nature and that of revelation were in harmony; but unbelievers place them at variance. Nature with them occupies the place of God, and the light imparted by it is admired at the expense of his word. They have no objection to acknowledge a Supreme Being as the author of the machinery of nature, provided he would give up his moral government over them; but the Scriptures are full of hard sayings which they cannot hear! The works of God are silent preachers: in their mouth there is no reproof but what a hard heart can misconstrue into the approbation of the Creator, understanding his bounties as rewards conferred on his virtuous creatures: this, therefore, is the only preaching which many will hear.

In these and a thousand other ways the creatures of God have been subjected to vanity. Had they been possessed of intelligence, they would from the first have risen up against us, rather than have submitted to such bondage. Yes; rather than have been thus forced into the service of sin by the rebel man, they would have conspired together to destroy him from the face of the earth. The sun would have scorched him; the moon with her sickly rays would have smitten him; the stars in their courses would have fought against him; air, earth, fire, water, birds, beasts, and even the stones, would have conspired to rid creation of the being, who, by rebelling against the Creator, had filled it with disorder and misery. And though the creatures are not possessed of intelligence, yet, from a kind of instinctive tendency to vindicate the cause of God and righteousness, they are naturally at war with rebellious man. Were it not so, there would be no need of a covenant to be made on our behalf with the beasts of the field, the fowls of heaven, the creeping things of the ground, and even with the stones.

God in his infinite wisdom saw fit to subject the creatures to this vanity for a season, contrary as it was to their nature; but it is only for a season, and therefore is said to be *in hope*; in the end they that have abused them will, except they repent, be punished, and they themselves be liberated from their hateful yoke. Thus for a season he subjected the seed of Abraham his own servants to serve the Egyptians; but "that nation," says he, "whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterward shall they come out with great substance."

The time fixed for the deliverance of the

creatures from the bondage of corruption is that of "the manifestation of the sons of God." Hence, they are in a manner identified with them: "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God;" looking for it as for their own deliverance. The redemption of our bodies from the grave will be the destruction of the last enemy, or, in respect of believers, the termination of the effects of sin; and, as the thralldom of the creatures commenced with the commencement of sin, it is fit that it should terminate with its termination. Thus our resurrection will be the signal of emancipation to the creatures, and their emancipation will magnify the glory that shall be revealed in us. Heaven, earth, and seas, and all that in them is, will no longer be worshipped in the place of God, nor compelled to minister to his enemies; but, in that renovated state "wherewith righteousness," shall exist but to praise and glorify their Creator.

The terms used to express the tendency of the creatures towards this great crisis are very strong. Nature is personified and represented as upon the utmost stretch of expectation; as groaning and travailing in pain to be delivered. Assuredly that must be a most important object, the accomplishment of which thus interests the whole creation. This object is "the glory that shall be revealed in us—the manifestation of the sons of God—the glorious liberty of the children of God;" and thus it is that the apostle establishes his position—That such is the magnitude of the inheritance of believers that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with it.

But we must not dismiss this part of the subject without noticing more particularly these descriptions of the heavenly inheritance—"the glory to be revealed in us—the manifestation of the sons of God"—and "the glorious liberty of the children of God." They all refer to the perfecting of salvation through the death of Christ, which is the greatest display of the glory of God that ever has or will be made. This is the last of that series of events which have been carrying on from the beginning of the world, and to the accomplishment of which they have all been subordinate.

"*The glory that shall be revealed in us.*"—There will, doubtless, be a flood of light and joy that will then open to our admiring minds; but the words seem rather to denote the manifestation of the divine glory in our salvation than barely its being revealed to us. Thus the Lord Jesus will "come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." The great Physician will appear with his recovered millions, and, in the presence of an assembled universe, will present them to the Father. Thus the glory of God will be revealed to the universe

in our salvation. All his glorious perfections will be manifested in such a light as they never were by any other of his works, nor by this till it was completed. And that which is revealed to the universe is us will not be less, but more, of an enjoyment to us, than if it had been revealed to us only. The joy of the returned captives was not diminished, but increased, by the surrounding nations saying, "The Lord hath done great things for them!"

"*The manifestation of the sons of God.*"—The foregoing description of the heavenly inheritance had respect to God's manifesting his glory; this to his manifesting ours. We have been familiar with the terms "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty;" but who has been able to comprehend the magnitude of the blessing? Even an inspired apostle was overwhelmed in thinking of it, and confessed his ignorance: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.—Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is!" Then the importance of being "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," will be apparent.

The sons of God have here been but little known. Not being distinguished by any thing pertaining to circumstances, or outward condition, and that which has distinguished them being of a still and unostentatious nature, they have generally passed through the world without attracting much of its notice, unless it were to despise and persecute them. If they have been acknowledged as pious men, and have escaped the persecutions and reproaches of the wicked, yet, being mostly poor, and undistinguished by brilliancy of talent, they have ordinarily been considered as beneath attention. But, at that day, the Judge of heaven and earth will distinguish them as the sheep that he will place at his right hand, and as the blessed of his Father, whom he will welcome to the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world; while those who have despised and persecuted them shall be sentenced to everlasting punishment.

"*The glorious liberty of the children of God.*"—The children of God have possessed a glorious liberty from their first believing in Christ. The Son then made them free, and they were free indeed! And when the earthly house of their tabernacle is dissolved, and they are received among "the spirits of just men made perfect," this is a liberty more glorious. But, while their bodies are imprisoned in the grave, the deliverance is not complete. They are, as yet, under thralldom. The promise of Christ to raise us up at the last day is yet unful-



filled. They have been delivered from the dominion of sin, and from the existence of it in their minds; but not from its effects. It is reserved for the second coming of Christ, when he will come "without sin *unto salvation*," to accomplish this. This is the destruction of the *last enemy*; this, therefore, puts an end to the war. In the account of Christ's second coming, there appears to be an allusion to the blowing of the trumpet of jubilee, and the liberation of the captives: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the *trump* of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." The resurrection, then, will be to believers a *jubilee*, a day of deliverance. The account of it by the same apostle, in the 15th chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, gives us the triumphant song which believers shall sing, standing over the graves in which they have been so long imprisoned: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" This is the glorious liberty of the children of God, in which the whole creation shall participate.

III. SUCH IS THE MAGNITUDE OF THE GLORY TO BE REVEALED IN US AT THE RESURRECTION THAT THOSE CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE POSSESSED THE HIGHEST ENJOYMENTS IN THIS WORLD WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH THEM, BUT GROANED WITHIN THEMSELVES, WAITING FOR THE POSSESSION OF IT. "And not only they (the creatures) but ourselves also,—even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

By "we ourselves" I understand the apostle to mean, not believers in general, but those believers in his own times, who, with himself, possessed so large a measure of grace and peace as habitually to rejoice in the Lord. If we read the first chapters of the Acts of the apostles, we shall perceive a mighty tide of joy in the minds of these Christians: "And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people." They did not merely rejoice *notwithstanding* the persecutions which they met with, but *in* them: "They departed from the presence of the council (where they had been *beaten*) rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." These good men seem to have found heaven upon earth. They had "the first-fruits of the Spirit," or those rich communications of

the Holy Spirit which, as the first-fruits under the law were the best of the kind, showed what might be expected under the gospel dispensation. The Holy Spirit was imparted to them, not only in a greater degree than usual, but under the peculiar character of the "Spirit of adoption," by which they were admitted to near communion with God, as children with a father. Nor was this confined to the day of Pentecost, and the times immediately succeeding: forty years after this, Peter could say of the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet, believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:" and this, too, at a time when the fiery trial of persecution was coming or come upon them.

But, notwithstanding the spiritual enjoyment possessed by these Christians, they looked forward with earnest desire for the coming of the day of God; not only as those who hasted towards it, but by their hopes and prayers would seem to hasten its approach. Such are the accounts given of them in the New Testament: "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to *wait for his Son from heaven*, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."—"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly; Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus."

The enjoyments of the first Christians, instead of abating their desire for the coming of their Lord, appear to have heightened it. The more they possessed of the first-fruits, the more they desired the lump. The fruits of Canaan, brought into the wilderness, were not designed to satisfy Israel, but rather to excite them to go up and possess the land.

It is this ardent desire that is expressed by the terms "groaning within ourselves." The groaning of the creation was in a figure, but this is real. These are those "groanings which cannot be uttered" (verse 26,) and which the Spirit of God excited in the way of hope and patience and prayer.

The terms by which the resurrection of believers is expressed, namely, "the adoption," and "the redemption of our body," serve to heighten our ideas of the glorious event. It is observable that the apostle, throughout this description, makes use of what may be called old terms in a new sense. "The glorious liberty of the children of God" was, as we have seen, enjoyed by them, in one sense, from the day that they believed in Jesus; but, in describing this event, a new sense is put upon the same words. The idea of adoption also had long been familiarized to Christians by the apostolic writings; but, as used here, it has a new meaning attached to it. From the day



they received the Saviour, they received power to become the sons of God; the Lord Almighty, as by a judicial act and deed, put them among his children: but still, the body being doomed to die because of sin, till this dishonor is wiped away there is something wanting to complete the execution of the deed. Our vile body must be changed, and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, ere we can be actually and fully introduced into the heavenly family. We must put on immortality, before we shall be fit company for immortals. We must be made equal to the angels, ere we can associate with angels. Finally: To be completely "the children of God," we must be "the children of the resurrection."

The disparity between Old and New-testament believers was such that the former were represented as children in a state of minority, kept under tutors and governors till the time appointed of the Father; while the latter are supposed to be come to the possession of their inheritance (Gal. iv. 1—6:) how much greater, then, must be the disparity between believers in a mortal, and in an immortal state: both are adopted into the family of God; but the one in a much higher sense than the other.

Similar observations might be made on the term *redemption*, as here applied to the resurrection of the body. This term was familiarized to Christians by the apostolic writings. They had "redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" but here the word is used in a new sense, denoting the last act of deliverance, even that of the body, from under the thralldom of death and the imprisonment of the grave. It is in reference to this last act of deliverance that Christ is said to be "made unto us—redemption." The redemption of our souls by his blood preceded his being made unto us wisdom, or righteousness, or sanctification; but the redemption of our body, as being the last act of deliverance, succeeds them. The body is a part of Christ's purchase as really as the soul. It is on this principle that the Corinthians were dissuaded from polluting it by fornication: "Ye are not your own, but bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." The resurrection of the body, therefore, is the recovery of the last part of the Redeemer's purchase, signified by that expressive sentence, so often repeated, "I will raise it up at the last day."

This is the glory that shall be revealed in us, with which the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared; this is the great crisis of creation, to which all that precedes it tends, as to its last end; and

the result to which believers, who have possessed the richest communications of grace in this life, look with earnest expectation.

To conclude: We see here *what a glorious hope the gospel sets before us*. In point of magnitude, crowns and kingdoms are but baubles when compared with it; yet it is not for crowns and kingdoms that the bulk of mankind set at nought the heavenly prize, but for things of still less account. Thirty pieces of silver were, in one case, reckoned of more account than Christ; and, in another, a mess of pottage! "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."

Farther: We here see *what encouragement there is to pray and labor for the promotion of Christ's spiritual kingdom in the world*. The glory to be revealed at the resurrection is not to be considered as a solitary event; but rather as the consummation of a series of events which shall have preceded it. Christ, we are told, "must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." The reign of Christ, therefore, is now making progress towards this great crisis; and, as it proceeds, it produces, in a degree, the same effects as it will when perfected. As, in proportion to the prevalence of the cause of corruption, the creatures of God are subjected to the vanity of supporting it; so, in proportion as the gospel prevails, and men are freed from the dominion of sin by believing in Christ, the creatures also are emancipated with them: from that time they are used to the glory of God and not abused to support the cause of his enemies. Thus, in promoting the cause of Christ, we contribute to the deliverance of the creation.

Finally: We must not forget that *the possession of all this glory stands connected with justification by faith in Jesus Christ*. The whole is an inference arising from this doctrine. Whom he thus "justified, them he also glorified." It is a very serious question on what ground we rest our acceptance with God. It was at this doctrine that the Jewish nation stumbled and fell. Let their fall be our warning. "The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone."

## SERMON XXVII.

[Delivered at the Funeral of the Rev. J. Sutcliff, of Olney, June 23, 1814.]

## THE PRINCIPLES AND PROSPECTS OF A SERVANT OF CHRIST.

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”  
—Jude 20, 21.

I FEEL a difficulty in speaking on this occasion. A long and intimate friendship, cemented by a similarity of views and a co-operation in ministerial and missionary labors, produces a feeling somewhat resembling that of a near relation, who, on such an occasion, instead of speaking, must wish to be indulged in silent grief. But the request of my deceased brother cannot be refused.

In selecting a passage for so solemn an occasion, it was natural for our dear friend to fix on one that should express his *last sentiments* and his *future prospects*. He wished, no doubt, to leave a testimony of his firm persuasion of the truth of those principles which he had believed and taught, and to the hope which they inspired in the prospect of eternity.

The occasion on which the passage is introduced is deserving of our notice. Certain men, of pernicious principles, had crept unawares into the churches, so as to render it necessary for the apostle to write even on “the common salvation,” and to exhort the brethren earnestly to “contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.” Nor was it confined to principles: those who had departed from the faith had also gone far into impure and dissolute conduct; “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, defiling the flesh, despising dominion, and speaking evil of dignities.” It is no new thing for deviations in Christian doctrine to be followed by those in practice. As truth sanctifies the mind, so error pollutes it. It was to turn the apostacy of these ungodly men to the advantage of the faithful that the apostle addressed them as he did: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Having exposed the wicked ways into which these men had turned aside, he points out the good and the right way, and holds up the end to which it leads.

In discoursing on the subject, we shall notice the principles which we have suggested to us, and the prospects which they furnish in respect of a blessed hereafter.

1. Let us offer a few remarks on THE PRINCIPLES WHICH ARE HERE SUGGESTED

TO US, AS CONSTITUTING TRUE RELIGION. Whatever ideas we have entertained of truth and true religion, it is necessary to bring them to the Scriptures, as to the standard.

1. True evangelical religion is here represented as a building, *the foundation of which is laid in the faith of Christ*:—“Building up yourselves on your most holy faith.” Whether it relate to personal or to social religion, this must be the foundation of the fabric, or the whole will fall. Many persons are awakened to some serious concern about futurity, and excited to inquire what they must do to be saved; and, in that state of mind, it is not unusual for them to have recourse to reading and prayer, as a preparation for death. Many preachers, too, will think it sufficient to direct them to the use of these means. But, if the death and mediation of Christ be overlooked, it is not reading, or prayer, or any other religious exercise, that will avail us. Why did John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, lay the foundation of the gospel kingdom by calling on sinners to “repent and believe the gospel?” Was it not because all other duties, prior to these, were of no account? When some, who followed Christ for loaves, inquired what they must do to work the works of God, his answer was, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;” plainly intimating that no work, prior to this, could be pleasing to God. The Scriptures direct men to pray, but it is in faith. To the question, “What must I do to be saved?” there is but one answer—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” Christ is the door; by him if any man enter in he shall be saved. To direct inquirers to any thing short of this is to direct them to that which, if complied with, will leave them short of salvation. This the Scriptures never do: there is not a direction in the oracles of God but, if truly followed, will lead to everlasting life.

One lays the foundation of his religion in what he calls *reason*; but which in fact is his own reasoning. The same inspired writer who in one sentence commends understanding, in the next warns us against leaning to our own understanding. To strengthen ourselves and one another in this way is to build up ourselves on our own conceits. Another founds his religion on his *good deeds*. Good deeds undoubtedly form a part of the building, but the foundation is not the place for them. They are not the cause, but the effects of faith. They prepare us for heaven, as meeting us for it, but not as rendering us deserving of it. A third builds his religion on *impressions*. It is not from the death of Christ for sinners or any other gospel truth that he derives his comfort, but from an impulse on his mind



that his sins are forgiven, and that he is a favorite of God, which is certainly nowhere revealed in the Scriptures. We may build ourselves up in this way, but the building will fall. A fourth founds his religion on *faith*, but it is not a holy faith, either in respect of its nature or its effects. It is dead, being alone, or without fruit. The faith on which the first Christians built up themselves included repentance for sin. As, when forgiveness is promised to repentance, faith in Christ is supposed; so, when justification is promised to believing, repentance is supposed. However distinct they are, as to their nature and objects, they have no separate existence. Hence, in the preaching of John, Christ, and the apostles, they are united; and hence the faith of Christ, supposing a renunciation of everything opposed to it and including a cordial acquiescence in the gospel-way of salvation through his death, is *most holy*.

These principles your dear deceased pastor has long believed and taught. May you long continue to exemplify their holy influence.

2. That religion which has its foundation in the faith of Christ will increase by "*praying in the Holy Spirit*." As there is no true practical religion without faith in Christ, so there is no true prayer but "in the Holy Spirit." It is true "that men *ought* always to pray, and not to faint;" but it is no less true that we know not what to pray for *as we ought*, but as the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: clear proof this, by the way, that that may be man's duty which yet owing to his depravity cannot be performed but by divine grace; and that the Holy Spirit works that in us which God as the governor of the world requires of us; writing his law upon our hearts, or working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.

The assistance of the Holy Spirit, however, is not that of which we are always sensible. We must not live in the neglect of prayer at any time because we are unconscious of being under divine influence, but rather, as our Lord directs, pray *for* his Holy Spirit. It is *in* prayer that the Spirit of God ordinarily assists us. Prayers begun in dejection have often ended in joy and praise: of this many of the Psalms of David furnish us with examples.

One of the sentences uttered by your deceased pastor, when drawing near his end, was, "I WISH I HAD PRAYED MORE." This was one of those weighty sayings which are not unfrequently uttered in view of the solemn realities of eternity. This wish has often recurred to me since his departure, as equally applicable to myself, and with it the resolution of that holy man, President Edwards, "so to live as he would wish he had when he came to die." In reviewing my own life, *I wish I had prayed more than I have*

*for the success of the gospel*. I have seen enough to furnish me with matter of thankfulness, but, had I prayed more, I might have seen more. I wish I had prayed more than I have *for the salvation of those about me*, and who are given me in charge. When the father of the lunatic doubted whether Jesus could do any thing for him, he was told in answer that, if he could believe, all things were possible. On hearing this he burst into tears, saying, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" He seems to have understood our Lord as suggesting that, if the child was not healed, it would not be owing to any want of power in him, but to his own unbelief. This might well cause him to weep and exclaim as he did. The thought of his unbelief causing the death of his child was distressing. The same thought has occurred to me as applicable to the neglect of the prayer of faith. Have I not by this guilty negligence been accessory to the destruction of some that are dear to me? And, were I equally concerned for the souls of my connections as he was for the life of his child, should I not weep with him? I wish I had prayed more than I have *for my own soul*: I might then have enjoyed much more communion with God. The gospel affords the same ground for spiritual enjoyment as it did to the first Christians. I wish I had prayed more than I have *in all my undertakings*: I might then have had my steps more directed by God, and attended with fewer deviations from his will. There is no intercourse with God without prayer. It is thus that we walk with God, and have our conversation in heaven.

3. We are given to understand that by means of building on our most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit, we "*keep ourselves in the love of God*." The love of God here is to be understood not of his love to us, but ours to him; as when our Lord told the unbelieving Jews that they had not "the love of God" in them. To keep alive this sacred flame amidst the temptations of the world is in a manner the sum of the christian life. If this be preserved, every other grace will thrive, and we shall prosper in all that we set our hands to in the service of God. Not only must natural affection to our dearest friends and relations give place to the love of God, but even the love of our christian brethren must be *on account of their obedience to him*: "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?—Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

This is a subject into which your dear pastor entered with deep interest, considering it as essential to true religion. He dwelt much in his preaching on the glory of the divine character and government, as displayed in the law and the gospel, and scrup-



pled not to declare his firm persuasion that all religious affections which disregarded this were spurious, and would prove of no account at the great day. He was persuaded that as sin must be hated *as* sin, or it is not hated at all; so God must be loved *as* God, or he is not loved at all. But to love God as God is to love him for what he *is*, as well as for what he has *done for us*. He had, indeed, no such notion of loving God for his own excellency as should render us indifferent to our own salvation. On the contrary, he considered it as essential to the love of God to desire his favor as our chief good. But we can no more desire this, irrelative of what he is, than we can desire any other object without considering it as *in itself* desirable. Unless we love God in respect of his character, his favor would be no enjoyment to us.

In these views I am persuaded that our brother was in the right, and that, instead of their being mere metaphysical subtleties, they enter into the essence of true religion. The glory of the gospel consists in an exhibition of the glory of the divine character. Had it been possible for sin to have been forgiven, and sinners accepted, in a way inconsistent with righteousness, however agreeable it might have been, as furnishing us with the means of escape from wrath, there had been no glory in it, and, had we truly loved God, no satisfaction to our minds.

In judging of what is true or false, right or wrong, the love of God is that to the mind which an ear for music is to harmony, or which a delicate sense of fitness is to our speaking and acting with propriety. It is thus that the apostle represents it in his epistle to the Philippians: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent;" or—in *all sense*; that ye may try things that differ. In short, there is no calculating the bearings of this principle: it is the life-blood that flows through all the veins of true religion. Hence the prayer of the apostle: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God."

It is by building up ourselves on our most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit, that we are supposed to keep alive this heavenly flame. These are the means adapted to that important end: they are to the love of God that which oil is to the fire, tending to feed and to enliven it. It is by a growing acquaintance with the word of God, accompanied with habitual prayer, that the love of God increases and abounds more and more. There are things which are inconsistent with the love of God, such as the love of the world and the indulgence of its lusts: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." But a life of faith and prayer will subdue these weeds,

no less than they, when indulged, are known to choke the word of God, and to render it unfruitful. Let the field be but well occupied with good seed, and there will be no room for the weeds: "Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

4. We are taught that, when we have done all, *in looking for eternal life, we must keep our eye singly and solely on the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*. It was this part of the subject that our dear brother particularly repeated, as expressive, I doubt not, of both the ground and object of his hope. Every one who knew him can bear testimony that he was a just and holy man, and that it was his great concern, in every station he filled, to maintain good works; but his dependence for acceptance with God was not on them. He looked for eternal life through "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ." The best characters have always been the most sensible of their own unworthiness, and the farthest from self-righteous boasting. After all their labors in the cause of God, they feel to have been unprofitable servants, as having done only what was their duty to do, and that with so much imperfection as to furnish matter of humiliation and self-abasement. It is true that a servant of God may enjoy a portion of solid satisfaction in reviewing those things which, by the grace of God, he has been enabled to accomplish, and this without any mixture of self-righteous boasting. This was the case with the apostle of the Gentiles. He could say, on the approach of death, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." But, if Paul himself had been speaking of the consideration on which he hoped to be accepted and saved, he would, like Jude, have resolved it into "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ."

You know, brethren, that this is the doctrine which your pastor has preached among you for nearly forty years. It is true he did not so represent the grace of God as to cherish a spirit of slothfulness or wantonness, but, in all his labors, it was his uniform design to direct his hearers, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear, to the only way of salvation marked out in the Holy Scriptures: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." He preached the doctrine of sovereign grace in such a manner as to warn every man against trusting to his own righteousness, and *teach* every man in what way he must be saved, if saved at all, as well as to lead those who had believed in Jesus to ascribe it to the grace of

God that they were what they were. And now, having, as I said, for nearly forty years, pointed you to the good and the right way, he has himself walked in it; leaving you and all the world with this sentiment upon his lips—"Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life!"

Let us now proceed to the latter part of the subject; namely,

II. THE PROSPECTS WHICH THESE PRINCIPLES FURNISH AS TO A BLESSED HEREAFTER: "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

By "the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ" I understand that which is communicated through his death, and with the dispensation of which he is invested, both now and at the day of judgment: "Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.—The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day."

We have already received much of the mercy of Christ. It was mercy that induced him to assume our nature, and undertake our salvation; to give himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for us; to send his Holy Spirit to renew us, when we were dead in sin; to intercede for us at the right hand of God; and to be with us in all our labors and sufferings for his name's sake: but, in respect of actual enjoyment, there is much more yet to be expected. The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ is communicated in greater and greater degrees, till, like rivers terminating in the ocean, it issues in eternal life.

The first exercise of mercy which the Scriptures direct us to look for, on our leaving the body, is *an immediate reception into the presence of Christ, and the society of the spirits of just men made perfect.* "The beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.—Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.—Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.—We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.—I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.—And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." What this overwhelming tide of mercy will prove we have yet to learn. When the Lord turned again the captivity of Judah they were like those that dream: the deliverance seemed too great to be real. And thus it may be with believers on their departing from the body, and entering into the joy of their Lord. But of this our dear brother knows more, since his taking leave of us, than we should be able to discover in

a series of years on earth, even though we should make it our constant study. If an inspired apostle could say, "We know not what we shall be," it is vain for us to think of forming an adequate conception of it.

I do not know whether I ought not to reckon under this particular *the glorious progress of Christ's kingdom in this world.* Why should we suspect whether our brethren who rest from their labors be from hence interested in this object? If there be joy in heaven among the angels over one sinner that repenteth, why not among the glorified saints? And, if over one sinner, much more over the multitudes that shall be gathered in the latter days from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.\* There is a sense in which the dead know not any thing; "their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished, neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun." All this is true, as to the things of this world; but it does not follow that those who die in the Lord have no more a portion in his spiritual kingdom. As well might we infer that their love of him and hatred of evil shall perish. But I ask leave, on this subject, to refer to *A Meditation on the nature and progressiveness of the heavenly glory*, contained in a small volume of "Dialogues, Letters, and Essays," published in 1806.

Another stream of mercy for which we are directed to look will attend the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consist in *the dead being raised, and the living changed.* "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven,—with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." It has been usual for nations to reserve the most notable acts of grace to the appearance or coronation of their kings, as tending to honor their entrance on the government. And thus both the first and second appearing of Christ are periods which God has distinguished by the most glorious displays of mercy. The former was a jubilee to the Gentile world; and the latter will be the same to the whole creation. As, on the sounding of the jubilee trumpet, the captives were liberated; so, when the trump of God shall sound, the righteous dead shall be raised, and their resurrection will be to the creatures of God the signal of emancipation from under the effects of sin.

View the grave as a long, dark, and comfortless abode, and it is sufficient to

\* Such, we know, were the ideas of our dear departed brother; which, as some may remember, he enlarged upon at the Thursday-morning meeting of the Association, held at Kettering, in 1813.



appal the stoutest spirit: but take into consideration that here the Lord lay—that he was raised from the dead, that he might be the first fruits of them that slept—and that of all that the Father gave him he will lose nothing, but will raise it up at the last day—and it will wear a different aspect. Job, when contemplating the grave as a long and dreary habitation, describes it in the most plaintive language: “Man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more!” But, when his views are fixed on the deliverance which he should obtain at that great and glorious day, his complaints are exchanged for triumphs. It is delightful to observe the erection of soul which a believing prospect of the resurrection gave him, after all his depression: “Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” In a strain very similar to this, the apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, describes the victory over death and the grave, representing believers as actually raised from the dead, and as standing upon their graves, looking the conquered enemy in the face, and exclaiming, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” By looking for this part of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be reconciled to death, even before we meet it.

But there is another stream of mercy beyond this, to which we are directed to look, and which pertains to *the last judgment*. We have an impressive idea given us of this in Paul's prayer for Onesiphorus: “The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find *mercy of the Lord, in that day.*”

We have needed mercy on many days, and have found it; but that is a day in which we shall need it more than ever. It is a fond notion, entertained by some, that the sins of believers will not be brought into judgment. We are assured, however, that we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one of us shall give an account of himself to God; and that of every idle word that men shall speak they shall give an account thereof at the day of judgment. The mercy of the Lord in that

day will not consist in connivance; but, as in all other instances, be exercised consistently with righteousness. In our present state of mind, we may wish to have it otherwise. David might wish that the evil he had wrought in secret should be kept secret; but the Lord determined to expose it before the sun. It does not comport with the character of God to conceal the truth, but to make it manifest. If the sins of believers were not brought into judgment, there would be no occasion for the exercise of forgiving mercy. It is from the strictness of the trial, and the awfulness of the sentence to which, if dealt with according to their deserts, they would be exposed in that day, that mercy will be needed. The world shall know their guilt, and their repentance, and the way in which they are forgiven; so as to glorify God, though it be unwillingly, and to feel the justice of their own condemnation. In this view of the last judgment, the manifestation of guilt, and wrath, and mercy, will each surpass all our present conceptions.

It is commonly represented, in the Scriptures, that every man will be judged “according to his works:” and true it is that all our actions and words, and even thoughts, will undergo an impartial scrutiny, and be considered as the test of character. They, for example, who have ministered to Christ's members in their necessities, will be treated as having ministered unto him; and they that have disregarded them as having disregarded him: but if, by being judged according to our works, were meant that God will proceed with us on the principles of mere justice, giving to every one his due, we should all be condemned: “If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”

Nor will the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, in that day, be confined to the forgiveness of sin: even the *rewards* of that day, though expressive of righteousness and faithfulness, yet have their origin in mercy. The crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give in that day to all who love his appearing, will not be a reward of debt, but of grace. But for grace, we should have had no good deeds to be rewarded; or, if we had, they could no more be named in that day than the good behaviour of a murderer will bear to be alleged as a balance against his crimes. But, being accepted in Christ, what is done for him is rewarded for his sake. Hence the crown of glory that shall be bestowed on his appearing is denominated “the *grace* that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

After this, nothing remains but that *eternal life* into which, as into an ocean, all these streams of mercy flow: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared



for you from the foundation of the world." Such was the object of your dear pastor's hope. May such be yours and mine: let our last end be like his!

The separation of a pastor and his people is a serious event. He is gone to give account of his ministry, and his account will include many things pertaining to the people of his charge. Some of them, I trust, will be found to have received the love of the truth, and will be his joy and crown of rejoicing. Could he have uttered his heart to you, his children, it would have been to press upon you a perseverance in the thing that you have received and learned. Nay, he did so far utter his heart as to say, to those about him, "If any thing be said as from me, let the last word be, 'As I have loved you, see that ye love one another.'" I doubt not but it has been his endeavor that, after his decease, you might have these things always in your remembrance; and that he was less anxious that you should remember him than them: but I trust you will remember both. Others, I fear, will be found to have sat under his ministry in vain. The word preached has not profited them, not being mixed with faith. It is an affecting case to perish from under a faithful ministry: for, if he be pure from your blood, on whose head must it be found, but on your own? Let us hope that, if the warning voice of your minister has not been heard before, it may be heard now. His last end furnishes a lesson of instruction, by which he being dead yet speaketh. You see here that, if a man keep Christ's saying, he will never see death. Death to him is not death, but the introduction to everlasting life. But know also that he that believeth not the Son will never see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

I shall conclude with a brief account of our deceased brother; which I give partly from my own knowledge, and partly from the communications of others.

I am aware that some great and good men have imposed silence on these occasions. Without impeaching their motives, I take the liberty to differ from them. It is true that for sinful creatures, as we all are, to heap encomiums on one another, is vain and sinful: yet we may err, on the other hand, by concealing what the grace of God has done for us. In this view one may, on occasion, speak of himself, as did the apostle Paul; and, if so, why not of another? David did not withhold a tribute of affection to the memory of his brother Jonathan. Nor did Luke conceal the fruits of faith and love which appeared in Dorcas. She might have left an injunction that at her decease nothing should be said of her: but the widows *must* weep and show the garments which she had made for the poor in her lifetime. It is not for us to suppress the feelings of nature, and still less those of grace.

Our deceased brother was born near Halifax, in Yorkshire, on the 9th of August, 1752, O. S. His parents were both of them pious characters, and remarkable for their strict attention to the instruction and government of their children. Of course he would be taught the good and the right way from his childhood. It does not appear, however, that he was made wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus, till about the sixteenth or seventeenth year of his age. This was under the ministry of his reverend friend and father Mr. John Pawcett, pastor of the church meeting at Hepden Bridge. Of this church he became a member, on May 28, 1769. Being of a serious and studious turn of mind, he appeared to his friends to possess gifts suited to the ministry, which was proposed to his consideration. The proposal met with his own wishes, and, being desirous of obtaining all the instruction he could, he went, in January, 1772, to the Bristol Academy, then under the care of Messrs. Hugh and Caleb Evans. Of his conduct in this situation, it is sufficient to say that it procured him the esteem of his tutors to the end of their lives.

In 1774 he left the academy, and, after stopping a short time at different places, in July, 1775, he came to Olney. It was in the spring of the following year, when the Association was held at Olney, that my acquaintance with him commenced; and, from that day to this, all that I have known of him has tended to endear him to me.

I cannot say when it was that he first became acquainted with the writings of *President Edwards*, and other New England divines; but, having read them, he drank deeply into them: particularly into the harmony between the law and the gospel—between the obligations of men to love God with all their hearts and their actual enmity against him—and between the duty of ministers to call on sinners to repent and believe in Christ for salvation and the necessity of omnipotent grace to render the call effectual. The consequence was that while he increased in his attachment to the Calvinistic doctrines of human depravity, and of salvation by sovereign and efficacious grace, he rejected, as unscriptural, the *high*, or rather *hyper*, Calvinistic notions of the gospel which went to set aside the obligations of sinners to everything spiritually good, and the invitations of the gospel as being addressed to them.\* Hence it was that his preaching was disapproved by a part of his hearers, and that, in the early part of his ministry at Olney, he had to encounter a considerable portion of individual opposition.

\* His views of the gospel may be seen by a small piece, first published in 1753, entitled *The First Principles of the Oracles of God, represented in a Plain and Familiar Catechism for the Use of Children*. It has gone through several editions.

"By patience, calmness, and prudent perseverance, however," says one of his friends, "he lived to subdue prejudice; and, though his beginning was very unpropitious, from a small and not united interest, he raised it to a large body of people, and a congregation most affectionately attached to him."

He had a largeness of heart that led him to expect much from the promises of God to the church in the latter days. It was on his motion, I believe, that the Association at Nottingham, in the spring of 1784, agreed to set apart an hour on the evening of the first Monday in every month for social prayer for the success of the gospel, and to invite Christians of other denominations to unite with them in it.

It must have been about this time that he became acquainted with *Mr. Carey*, who then resided at Hackleton. Mr. C. had been baptized by Mr. (now Dr.) Ryland, at Northampton, on the 5th of October, 1783, and, after a while, joined the church at Olney, by whom he was sent into the ministry. Without reading any thing material on Christian doctrine, besides the Scripture, he had formed his own system; and, on comparison, he found it to be so near to that of several of the ministers in his neighborhood as to lay the foundation of a close and lasting friendship between them. But to return to our deceased brother—

In all the conversations between the years 1787 and 1792, which led on to the formation of the *Baptist Missionary Society*, and in all the meetings for fasting and prayer, both before and after it was formed, he bore a part. In 1789 he republished President Edwards's "Humble Attempt to promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion." How much this publication contributed to that tone of feeling which, in the end, determined five or six individuals to venture, though with many fears and misgivings, on an undertaking of such magnitude, I cannot say; but it doubtless had a very considerable influence on it.

In April, 1791, there was a double lecture at Clipstone, and both the sermons, one of which was delivered by brother Sutcliff, bore upon the meditated mission to the heathen. His subject was *Jealousy for God*, from 1 Kings xix. 10. After public worship, Mr. Carey, perceiving the impression that the sermons had made, entreated that something might be resolved on before we parted. Nothing, however, was done but to request brother Carey to revise and print his "Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen." The sermons also were printed at the request of those who heard them.\*

From the formation of the Society, in the

autumn of 1792, to the day of his death, our brother's heart and hands have been in the work. On all occasions, and in every way, he was ready to assist to the utmost of his power.

In 1796 he married *Miss Jane Johnstone*, who was previously a member of his church. This connection appears to have added much to his comfort. For eighteen years they lived together, as fellow-helpers to each other in the ways of God; and their separation has been but short. The tomb that received his remains has since been opened to receive hers. He died on the 22d of June, and she on the 3d of September following, possessing the same good hope, through grace, which supported him. A sermon was preached at her interment, by Mr. Geard, of Hitchen, from Rom. v. 2: "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Mr. Sutcliff had been in a declining state of health for several years past. On the 3d of March, 1814, being on a visit at London, he was seized, about the middle of the night, with a violent pain across his breast and arms, attended with great difficulty of breathing. This was succeeded by a dropsy, which, in about three months, issued in his death.

Two or three times, during his affliction, I rode over to see him. The first time he had thoughts of recovering; but, whatever were his thoughts as to this, it seemed to make no difference as to his peace of mind. The last time I visited him was on my way to the annual meeting in London, on the 19th of June. Expecting to see his face no more, I said, on taking leave, "I wish you, my dear brother, an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ!" At this he hesitated; not as doubting his entrance into the kingdom, but as questioning whether the term *abundant* were applicable to him. "That," said he, "is more than I expect. I think I understand the connection and import of those words—'Add to your faith virtue—give diligence to make your calling and election sure—for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly.' I think the idea is that of a ship coming into harbor with a fair gale and a full tide. If I may but reach the

*Discourse at the Ordination of Mr. Morgan of Birmingham*, it has escaped my recollection. He, however, wrote several of the Circular Letters of the Northamptonshire Association; namely, that of 1799, *On Providence*; of 1786, *On the Authority and Sanctification of the Lord's-Day*; of 1797, *On the Divinity of the Christian Religion*; of 1800, *On the Qualification for Church Fellowship*; of 1803, *On the Lord's Supper*; of 1805, *On the Manner of attending to Divine Ordinances*; of 1808, *On Obedience to Positive Institutions*; and of 1813, *On Reading the Word of God*.

\* If he published any other sermons, or anything else, besides his *Catechism*, and the *Introductory*



heavenly shore, though it be on a board or broken piece of the ship, I shall be satisfied."

The following letter received from his brother, *Mr. Daniel Sutcliff*, who was with him the last month, will furnish a more particular account of the state of his mind than I am able to give from my own knowledge.

"From the commencement of his illness I found, by his letters,\* that his mind was in general calm and peaceful. 'All,' said he, 'is in the hands of a wise and gracious God. We are the Lord's servants, and he has a right to dispose of us as he pleases, and to lay us aside at any time.' Nearly a month before his end I went to see him—to see the chamber where the good man dies.

"His mind was generally calm and happy; though, as to strong consolation, he said he had it not. When something was mentioned of what he had *done*, in promoting the cause of Christ, he replied, with emotion, 'I look upon it all as nothing: I must enter heaven on the same footing as the converted thief, and shall be glad to take a seat by his side.'

"His evidences for heaven, he said, were a consciousness that he had come to Jesus; and that he felt a union of heart with him, his people, and his cause; and Jesus had said, 'Where I am, there shall my friends be.' The heaven that he hoped for, and which he had in no small degree anticipated, was union and communion with Christ and his people. He said, 'The idea of being forever separated from him appears to me more dreadful than being plunged into non-existence, or than the greatest possible torture.'

"He often intimated that his views of divine things were far more vivid and impressive than they had ever been before. He had a greater sense of the depravity of the human heart, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as consisting in disaffection to the character and government of God, than at any former period of his life. He had, he said, an inexpressibly greater sense of the importance of ministers having correct views of the import of the gospel-message, and of their stating and urging the same on their hearers, than he had ever had before. He was ready to think, if he could communicate his present views and feelings, they must produce a much greater effect than his preaching had ordinarily done. 'If I were able to preach again,' said he, 'I should say things which I never said before: but God has no need of me; he can raise up men to say them better than I could say them.' He would sometimes say, 'Ministers will never do much good till they begin to *pull sinners out of the fire!*'

"To Mrs. Sutcliff he said, 'My love, I commit you to Jesus. I can trust you with him. Our separation will not be long: and

I think I shall often be with you. Read frequently the book of Psalms, and be much in prayer. I am sorry I have not spent more time in prayer.' At another time he said, 'I wish I had conversed more with the divine promises: I believe I should have found the advantage of it now.' Others of his expressions were, 'Flesh and heart fail.—All the powers of body and mind are going to pieces.—Shortly this prison of my clay must be dissolved and fall.—Why is his chariot so long a coming? I go to Jesus: let me go—depart in peace—I have seen thy salvation.'

"A day or two before he died, he said, 'If any thing be said of me, let the last word be, *As I have loved you, see that ye love one another.*'

"On the 22d of June, about five in the afternoon, an alteration took place: he began to throw up blood. On perceiving this, he said, 'It is all over; this cannot be borne long.' Mr. Welsh of Newbury being present, said, 'You are prepared for the issue.' He replied, 'I think I am: go and pray for me.' About half an hour before his departure, he said, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.—It is come—perhaps a few minutes more—heart and flesh fail—but God—That God is the strength of his people is a truth that I now see as I never saw it in my life.' These were the last words he could be heard to speak.

"Life, take thy chance; but O for such an end."

Mr. Daniel Sutcliff adds the following lines, as having been frequently repeated in his illness:

"We walk a narrow path, and rough,  
And we are tired and weak;  
But soon we shall have rest enough  
In those blest courts we seek.

Soon in the chariot of a cloud,  
By flaming angels borne,  
I shall mount up the milky way,  
And back to God return.

I once have tasted Canaan's grapes,  
And now I long to go  
To where my Lord his vineyard keeps,  
And where the clusters grow!"

In saying a few things relative to his character, talents, temper, &c., I would not knowingly deviate in the smallest degree from truth. He possessed the three cardinal virtues, *integrity, benevolence, and prudence*, in no ordinary degree. To state this is proof sufficient, to every one who knew him. He was economical, for the sake of enabling himself to give to them that needed. The cause of God lay near his heart: he denied himself of many things that he might contribute toward promoting it. It was from a willingness to instruct his younger brethren whose minds were toward the mission, that, at the request of the Society, he took several of them under his care: and, in all that he has done for them and others, I am persuaded he saved noth-

\*They had been used to correspond in short-hand.



ing; but gave his time and talents for the public good.

I have heard him sigh under troubles; but never remember to have seen him weep but from joy, or from sympathy. On his reading or hearing the communications from the East, containing accounts of the success of the gospel, the tears would flow freely from his eyes.

His talents were less splendid than useful. He had not much brilliancy of imagination, but considerable strength of mind, with a judgment greatly improved by application. It was once remarked of him, in my hearing, by a person who had known him from his youth, to this effect—That man is an example of what may be accomplished by diligence and perseverance. When young he was no more than the rest of us; but by reading and thinking he has accumulated a stock of mental riches which few of us possess.—He would not very frequently surprise us with new or original thoughts; but neither would he shock us with any thing devious from truth or good sense. Good Mr. Hall of Arnsby, having heard him soon after his coming to Olney, said familiarly to me, “Brother Sutcliff is a safe man: you never need fear that he will say or do an improper thing.”

He particularly excelled in *practical judgment*. When a question of this nature came before him, he would take a comprehensive view of its bearings, and form his opinion with so much precision as seldom to have occasion to change it. His thoughts on these occasions were prompt, but he was slow in uttering them. He generally took time to turn the subject over, and to digest his answer. If he saw others too hasty for coming to a decision, he would pleasantly say, “Let us consult the town-clerk of Ephesus, and do nothing rashly.” I have thought for many years that, among our ministers, *Abraham Booth* was the first counsellor, and *John Sutcliff* the second. His advice in conducting the mission was of great importance, and the loss of it must be seriously felt.

It has been said that his *temper* was naturally irritable, and that he with difficulty bore opposition; yet that such was the overbearing influence of religion in his heart that few were aware of it. If it were so, he must have furnished a rare example of the truth of the wise man’s remark, “Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” Whatever might have been his natural temper, it is certain that *mildness* and *patience* and *gentleness* were prominent features in his character. One of the students who was with him said he never saw him lose his temper but once, and then he immediately retired into his study. It was observed by one of his brethren in the ministry, at an Association, that the promise of

Christ, that they who learned of him was “meek and lowly in heart should find rest unto their souls,” was more extensively fulfilled in Mr. Sutcliff than in most Christians. He was “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” Thus it was that he exemplified the exhortation of the apostle, “Giving no offence, that the ministry be not blamed.”

There was a gentleness in his *reproofs* that distinguished them. He would rather put the question for consideration than make a direct attack upon a principle or practice. I have heard him repeat Mr. Henry’s note, on Prov. xxv. 15, with approbation: “We say, Hard words break no bones; but it seems that soft ones do.” A flint may be broken on a cushion, when no impression could be made on it upon an unyielding substance. A young man, who came to be under his care, discovering a considerable portion of self-sufficiency, he gave him a book to read on *self-knowledge*.

He is said never to have hastily formed his *friendships* and acquaintances, and, therefore, rarely had reason to repent of his connections; while every year’s continued intimacy drew them nearer to him; so that he seldom lost his friends: but his friends have lost him!

He had a great thirst for *reading*, which not only led him to accumulate one of the best libraries in this part of the country,\* but to endeavor to draw his people into a habit of reading.

Allowing for a partiality common to men, his judgment of characters was generally correct. Nor was it less candid than correct: he appreciated the good, and, if required to speak of the evil, it was with reluctance. His eye was a faithful index to his mind; penetrating, but benignant. His character had much of the decisive, without any thing conceited or overbearing.

In his *person* he was above the ordinary stature, being nearly six feet high. In the earlier stages of life he was thin; but during the last twenty years he gathered flesh, though never so much as to feel it any inconvenience to him. His countenance was grave but cheerful; and his company always interesting.

I shall conclude with a few extracts of letters concerning him, which I have received since his decease from those who knew him intimately.

“His zeal for the cause of Christ,” says one of his congregation, “was uniform and increasingly ardent to the end of his life. One of the last conversations that he had with me, he concluded in these words:—‘Farewell! Do your utmost for the cause of Christ. I have done a little, and am

\* This library is left, by his will, to the Bradford Baptist Academy, only on condition of the trustees paying 100l to his relations; a sum far short of its value.

ashamed that I have done no more. I have such views of its importance that, had I ability, I would spread the gospel through the world.' His knowledge of books was very extensive: he appeared to have a facility in extracting the substance of them in a short time, as a bee extracts the honey from the expanded flower. He possessed an equal facility in knowing men, more especially ministers, and that not confined to his own denomination: so that in a few minutes he could give you an account who they were, what places they had occupied, and what was their general reputation. From this he was many times able to give seasonable advice."

"I believe," says a minister who had been one of his pupils, "I was the first young man placed under the care of our dear deceased father Sutcliff. From my first acquaintance with divine things, on seeing and hearing him occasionally in my native village, I formed a very high opinion of the general excellence of his character; and the intimate knowledge I had of him, from residing in his family, so far from diminishing my esteem and veneration for him, greatly increased them. His piety was not merely official and public, but personal and habitual. The spirit of devotion rested on him: He was the man of God in all his intercourse. He conducted the worship of his family with singular seriousness, ardor, and constancy, never allowing any thing to interfere with it, except great indisposition. He manifested a parental tenderness and solicitude for the welfare of his pupils, and took a lively interest in their joys or sorrows. I have seen him shed the sympathizing tear over them in the hour of affliction. Such was the kindness and gentleness of his deportment that they could freely impart their minds to him; but, while his affectionate spirit invited their confidence, the gravity of his manner and the commanding influence of his general character effectually prevented any improper freedoms being taken with him. Such, too, were the sentiments with which he was regarded among his people: they loved and venerated him. He heard the sermons of his younger brethren with great candor, and, if he saw them timid and embarrassed on public occasions, would take an opportunity of speaking a kind and encouraging word to them, and aim to inspire them with a proper degree of confidence. He was singularly regular and punctual in fulfilling his engagements, whether in preaching or visiting, not only in attending, but in being there at the time; and earnestly inculcated it on his pupils, if they wished to command respect. He endeavored to preserve and promote the order and regularity of Christian families where he visited. I never saw him out of temper but once, and that was produced by want of punctuality in another person. I often regret that

I did not profit more by his instructions and example. He has many times, by his judicious council, been 'the guide of my youth.' His name and his memory will ever be dear to me. 'My father! my father!'"

"I have just heard," says another who had some years since been his pupil, "of the death of Mr. Sutcliff. It has returned upon me, whether alone, or in company. Such an event may well do so. In him I saw bright lines of resemblance to our Lord and Master, such as are seldom, very seldom, to be met with in poor mortals. Such amiable-ness of manners, so much of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, of sound judgment and of warm affection, we seldom see united. While memory holds her place, his name and manner will be cherished by me with pleasing melancholy, not without anticipations of meeting him in another and better world."

"The memory of Mr. Sutcliff," says another, who had been his pupil, and who was present at his death, "will live in my warmest affections while I possess the powers of recollection. It seems impossible that I should ever forget such a friend, or speak of him without blessing God that I ever knew him. I am grieved that he is gone, yet grateful that he was continued with us long enough for me to receive his instructions, and to witness his example. You have heard some of his dying sentiments. As his address to me may be considered as his dying advice to the young men who were under his tuition, I communicate it, leaving it to your discretion what use to make of it. About three in the morning of the day on which he died, like Israel he strengthened himself, and sat up on his bed. Calling me to him, he, in the most affectionate manner, took hold of my hand, and expressed himself as follows:—Preach as you will wish you had when you come to die. It is one thing to preach, and another to do it as a dying man. I am glad you are settled where you are. I think you may say, I dwell among my own people. I am glad we ever knew one another. Spiritual unions are sweet. I have fled to Jesus: to his cross I am united. The Lord bless you, and make you a blessing!"

#### XXVIII.—PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE PHILIPPIANS.

(Sketch of a Sermon preached at Maze Pond, June 29th, 1800.)

"And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God."—Philip. i. 9—11.

It is pleasant to review the history of the first plantation of this church, and compare

it with its state at the time this epistle was written. You recollect Paul's journey to Philippi in company with Silas. You recollect how he first preached the gospel by the river side, and how the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, and she attended unto the things which Paul spoke. You recollect what an uproar was raised in the city, and how all were stirred up to persecute them. The mob did their part, the magistrates did their part, and God did his part. The apostles being thrown into prison, in the midst of pain and affliction, burst forth into a song of praise at midnight. You recollect the sequel of the story: how the jailor and his household were by these means effectually converted, brought to embrace the gospel of Jesus, and were baptized in his name. We hear no more of them in the history of the New Testament; but by this epistle we see this small family of the jailor—for as to Lydia, probably she, and her household likewise, being natives of Thyatira, had left the city;) but this single family of Christians had by this time so increased that a Christian church was planted, properly organized with her bishops and deacons; and such was their progress in Christianity that the apostle tells us that always in every prayer of his he made request for them with joy, which shows that true religion so operated at Philippi as to give joy to the apostle's heart, and we know how that must be.

The apostles rejoiced, as John says, when their children walked in the truth, and we may thence infer that the Christians at Philippi were eminent for their walk in the truth. Eminent, however, as they were—and there is not, that I recollect, a single reflection on them in all this epistle, which is very singular, and very different from those at Corinth and Galatia and several other places)—eminent, however, as they were, Paul did not consider them as having reached the mark. "This I pray that your love may abound yet more and more." The best and most amiable societies of individuals in this world are holy but in part: they need stirring up, and provoking yet more and more.

I think I need say nothing to prove that the prayer of the apostle on behalf of the believers at Philippi is applicable to other churches, and other congregations. You all know that what was written to them was addressed to the church in all succeeding ages. I shall, therefore, drop the character of the Philippians, and let me suppose that this prayer is applicable to the church meeting in this place—to all the believers in Jesus Christ who assemble here. "And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent," or, as the margin renders it, that ye may try things that differ, "that ye may be sincere

and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God." Brethren, I am sure that there is no prayer that I or any other could offer up on your behalf that would be better and more desirable.

In attempting to illustrate the subject, we shall notice particularly three things:—The objects for which the apostle prays—the medium through which all these excellences are to be communicated, namely, by Jesus Christ—and the end to which they were directed; "to the praise and glory of God."

Let us notice, in the first place, the objects for which the apostle prays for these primitive Christians: "And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment," and so on. In general it may be proper to remark that some of these things for which the apostle prays are the root, and others the branches. He prays that your love may abound, that it may abound in knowledge, that it may abound in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent. I apprehend the abounding, and that in knowledge and in all judgment, is the root; and that the approving of things that are excellent, and the being sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, and filled with the fruits of righteousness, are all the branches.

But, more particularly, the first thing that the apostle holds up as an object of desire is the abounding of love. Love is one of the first principles of all religion; shall I say it is the essence of all true religion. It is the cement of the moral world. It is that by which God proposes to govern all holy intelligences. It is, as our expositor, Mr. Henry, remarks, "the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, and the livery of his family." It is the law of Christ's kingdom; for "this command I give unto you, that ye love one another." It is the lesson of his school; for "ye are taught of God to love one another." It is the livery of his family; for "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Love, however, as here spoken of, is not to be taken for every thing that may bear that name. Natural affection may be denominated love; but this is not it. Party attachment may be called love; but this is not it. Christian love, how shall I distinguish it? By what medium shall I distinguish Christian love from every thing else that bears the name? I know of no better criterion than this: The object of it is holy; for it is the love of that in the divine character, or in the human character, or in things, which is holy. It is the love of the holy God—it is the love of holy ways—it is the love of holy men—it is the love of a holy gospel—it is the love of a holy religion—it is that distinguishing quality in all objects, persons, or



things, which attracts; and it is this which distinguishes Christian love from all other; and it is this which the apostle prays the Philippians might abound in yet more and more. He takes it for granted that they possessed love, and he only prays that they might abound in it. And may I take it for granted on behalf of you my hearers, this morning, that you love the Lord, that you love the Saviour, that you love the gospel, and that you love your fellow Christians? If I take it for granted, I do not wish or recommend that you should. It may be proper for you to examine yourselves on this head; but, however, taking it for granted that love exists in your hearts towards these objects, still there is reason to pray that this love may abound yet more and more. There are none of us so abounding in love, but that there is great reason for increase. Your affection towards God, towards Christians, and towards all men is faint in comparison of what it is fit and proper it should be.

But notice, secondly, he prays not only that love might abound, but that it might abound in knowledge. Knowledge is a necessary accompaniment of love, and that for two reasons; to feed it and to regulate it. It is by the knowledge of God, it is by the knowledge of divine truth, it is by drinking deeply into the gospel of Jesus Christ, that love is fed. The knowledge of divine truth is that to the mind which food is to the body; it nourishes it and keeps it alive. We cannot love an unknown being; we cannot love an unknown gospel; we cannot so much as love one another to any effect, but in proportion as we know one another. It is necessary, therefore, that we read and pray, and hear and labor, to cultivate the knowledge of God. Grace and peace are multiplied by the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ our Lord. If we love the Lord Jesus Christ in any degree, the more we know him the better we shall love him, and consequently our love will be perfected in glory, because there we shall see him as he is, and then we shall be like him. The more our minds are expanded, and we drink deeply into evangelical truth, the more our hearts will burn with holy affections towards him. "I pray, therefore," says the apostle, "that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment." Christian love is not a blind attachment; it is not that commotion of the affections which tumultuates towards some object, we know not why or wherefore: but solid Christian love is accompanied with knowledge; it has reason for its governor; it is truly rational in all its operations. The Christian, therefore, is enabled to give a reason of the love that is in him, as well as the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear. But this is not all: knowledge is a necessary companion of love, to regulate it, as well as to feed and inspire it. Love with-

out knowledge is not good; it is in danger of running into innumerable improprieties and irregularities; it was this kind of love which made Peter declare that his master should never die. There was love; but it was without knowledge, and the Lord Jesus rebuked him for it. It was this species of love, without knowledge, that made the disciples so extremely unwilling for him to go without them. Says our Saviour, "If ye loved me," he means if ye loved me with a wise love, "ye would rejoice that I go to my Father, for my Father is greater than I;" that is, the glory that I shall possess with my Father is greater than the glory I possess in this present state of humiliation; so that it was like one Christian saying to another—like a dying Christian saying to a surviving friend—"Why weep ye at my departure? if ye loved me properly, ye would rejoice that I go to my Father; for the glory that I am going to possess is far greater than the glory I at present share.—The love of the disciples, therefore, was a sort of interpreted hatred (not intentionally certainly,) and our Lord would not own it for love. Let your love, therefore, abound with knowledge.

We might apply it to many more things; to the love which you bear one towards another in church fellowship, or to the love you bear one towards another in your families. If your love be without knowledge, it will operate in a way of screening one another from faithful discipline, in a way of blinding you to each other's faults; but if your love be accompanied with knowledge, it will operate aright: it will seek the good of the person, while it abhors his evil conduct. The love of a parent that is unaccompanied with knowledge degenerates into foolish fondness, and is in danger of ruining the object of it. "This, therefore, I pray, that your love," whether it be to God or to one another, or to those with whom you are connected, "may abound in knowledge."

But, to go on a step further, the apostle prays not only that it may abound in knowledge, but "*in all judgment.*" This is still more. There is a difference between knowledge and judgment: knowledge is more of the speculative, judgment more of the practical. Judgment is knowledge ripened into maturity; knowledge, as I may say, collects the evidences, and judgment sums them up and passes a decision. A man may possess much knowledge, but little judgment. We have known characters who have been very learned, have read many books, have seen many things, have had large acquaintance, and yet had no talents at associating the particulars, so as to form a solid and practical judgment of things. This I speak even of temporal and natural things. That which the apostle here calls judgment is in the margin called sense: that ye may abound in all sense, and wherefore? Because the

judgment of which he speaks is that which arises very much from a holy sense of right and wrong: it is a compound of the feelings of the heart. That which is here called judgment, or sense, is that to a Christian which a delicate sense of propriety is to a well educated mind. You know what this is; it is something different from mere learning; it is different from mere knowledge; it is that quick sensibility which promptly, and, as I may say, instinctively determines the right from the wrong, the good from the evil: it dictates the path of propriety in the twinkling of an eye. This is what we call a delicate sense of propriety in common life; and that which this is to a natural man, such is a holy tenderness of heart, such is a holy tenderness of conscience, to a good man. This is what he means in the next phrase, "That ye may approve things that are excellent," or, as the margin renders it, that ye may try things that differ. As a delicate sense of propriety enables a man in the common concerns of life to try things that differ; that is, he judges of propriety and impropriety by an immediate instinct, as I may say; so he that possesses a holy tenderness of heart, and a holy tenderness of conscience, tries instinctively those things which differ; chooses the good and rejects the evil. Perhaps you may ask what things are they that differ, to which the apostle may here refer, and which such a holy judgment tends to distinguish? I answer, things earthly, and things heavenly; things true, and things false; things good, and things evil. Now all these things are continually passing before us, perpetually presenting themselves to our choice, to our practical judgment, as I may say, and we must decide upon them every day and every hour. Every hour you must decide either in favor of things heavenly or things earthly. Oh that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment, that you may try things that differ, and prefer the excellent! Choose heavenly things in preference to earthly, as your portion; things true and things false are continually presenting themselves before your eyes or your ears: false doctrine as well as true doctrine is continually soliciting your attention. In books, in sermons, in company, and in conversation, you are continually hearing of false doctrine: atheistical, or some corruption of the pure doctrine of the text. Here is the beauty of things—to have such a holy sense maintained in our souls as in a moment to see which is false that you may reject it, and the truth that you may imbibit. Things good and things evil are also continually passing before your eyes: the temptations and snares of the world are continually soliciting you; gold sparkles in your eyes, sensual pleasures is continually presenting itself, and soliciting your affection, and God himself deigns to stoop and ask

your heart, and he says, "Set your affections on things which are above, and not on things below." How happy you and I, if we possess that spiritual judgment, that divine sense, to abhor the one, and embrace the other. This is that holy judgment which the apostle prays for on behalf of the primitive Christians, and which is accompanied with nearness of communion with God.

I must pass on: I see here are several other things which the apostle supposes will be the fruit of this, and which he also specifies and prays for—"that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." Sincerity is one of the prominent features of genuine Christianity. That holy love, that heavenly knowledge, that spiritual judgment, of which we have been speaking, will give you a single eye, and you will be a sincere Christian. You will have one object in view through life. You will leave others to deal in dark intrigue, duplicity, and underhand practices, and you will have one object through life, to glorify him in body and in spirit whose you are. Sincerity particularly respects our approaches to God, our professions before men, and our dealings with the world. Oh, that we may be all sincere in these! In your approaches before God, dread the thought of disguising or appearing under a mask in his house. Study to approach God with your hearts; for nothing but truth will stand before him. Let us be equally so in our professions when we converse with one another. Do not let us be anxious to be thought highly of by one another. Beware of that spirit which aspires only to retain a character among men—a name in the church of God; but rather be concerned to be sincere, "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." If you look round the world, you will see that the great concern of mankind is to *appear* to be; but make it your concern to *be*. There is a great difference between a good man and a mere professor. The one is concerned to be what he professes, the other only to *appear* to be. What an awful difference! And, I may add, let sincerity distinguish us in all our worldly dealings. Religion is not a matter to be cooped up in a closet, nor yet in a place of worship. It must be carried out into the world—into our dealings. The object of the apostle's prayer is that we may be men of honor, and that we may be sincere in all our dealings. Oh what a blessed world would it be if every man acted on this principle in all his dealings with men! "And without offence," says he, "until the day of Christ." I think this means that we should cultivate an inoffensive spirit, that is, the spirit of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, we all know, was not of a turbulent discontented spirit: he did not deal in such sort of censures as were only adapted to provoke. He dealt in cen-



tures, but they were aimed at the good of the party, whatever his condition. The apostles and the primitive Christians studied an inoffensive conduct. They endeavored to live peaceably with all men, and they submitted to many injuries rather than give offence, rather than throw a stumbling-block in the way of unbelievers. Christians, be it your care to study an inoffensive life. There is a great deal of what is called faithfulness by many people that is very far from deserving that name, and is the mere exercise of corrupt passion. Under what passes by the name of an honest bluntness, some persons will be always giving offence—unnecessary offence, and thereby cause the name of Jesus Christ to be evil spoken of. Give no offence to Jew or Gentile, nor to the church of the living God.

Finally, he prays that this may not merely be the exercise of a day, a week, a month, a year, but "till the day of Christ." A thought has occurred to me that has pained me upon this clause. We have seen characters who have promised fair, who have been affectionate, who have been shining characters, and yet have not continued without offence "till the day of Christ." Towards the latter period of life, if they have not turned back and walked no more with him, still they have given offence; their misconduct has undone all the little good that they have done in the former part of their lives. These things ought to make us fear and tremble, and pray not only that we may be without offence, but that we may be without offence "till the day of Christ," till the Lord and bridegroom shall call us to himself.

But I proposed just to notice, and it must be briefly, the medium through which all these excellences are communicated, and this is by Jesus Christ. Methinks all holiness is communicated through Jesus Christ in two ways. Jesus Christ is the medium through which the Holy Spirit is given; for God would never have sent his Holy Spirit, any more than he would have given us any other spiritual blessings, but out of regard to Jesus Christ, who is the medium through whom all are communicated. But this is not all—Jesus Christ is the medium of all holiness as revealed in the gospel. It is by a knowledge of and faith in him that we come to the excellences here described. It is by preaching Jesus Christ that these fruits are cultivated, and it is by being acquainted with Jesus Christ—it is by our learning and drinking into the doctrine of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Scriptures—that all these fruits will abound in you. Read, therefore, learn, and be concerned to drink deeply into the system of the gospel of Jesus Christ, into the doctrine of the text. It is not only proper that ministers should resolve to "know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified;" but private Chris-

tians also make this the grand central point of all your conduct and all your pursuit; that "you may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." This is the only stock upon which this sort of fruit will grow. You cannot graft holiness upon any other stock than that of faith in Jesus Christ. All the labor and all the toil that may be bestowed by education, example, or any other means you can use, will amount to nothing as to the production of these fruits, unless it be by faith in Jesus Christ, and intimate acquaintance with him.

Lastly, notice the end to which all is to be directed: "To the glory and praise of God." This is carrying up the subject where it should be carried—to the throne of God himself. This is the great end to which all things are directed by God himself, and should be directed by us, "to the glory and praise of God." The glory of God, let me notice, is either essential or manifestative. The essential glory of God respects what God is in himself, and which he is irrespective of what we think of him, or what we do. All that you or I can do, all that angels in heaven can do, all that the church in glory in connection with them can do to all eternity, cannot add one gleam of glory to his essential character; and all the iniquity of man upon earth, and all the ferocity, enmity, and duplicity of man, cannot diminish it in the least degree. It is irrespective and independent of what any creature can think or can do. But it is not thus with respect to the glory of God manifestatively. No: in that respect we may dishonor God, or we may honor God, that is, in other words, we may raise him in the esteem of others. God should be raised in the esteem of those around us, or in our own esteem; and this is the way in which creatures are said to honor God, by raising him or giving him the just glory due to his name in all our own thoughts, and communicating such sentiments of him to those around us. Keep this end in view. Glorify him to whom glory is due. Glorify Him to whom be glory for evermore. Amen.

#### XXIX.—THE PEACE OF GOD.

(*Sketch of a Sermon preached at the Baptist Meeting, Devonshire Square, London, June 26, 1796.*)

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."—Philip. iv. 7.

READ this passage in connection with the three foregoing verses; "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and sup-



plication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Peace, it will be allowed, is an inestimable jewel. No man that has been at all acquainted with the calamities of war, the distresses of domestic confusion, or the horrors of a guilty conscience, can dissent from this proposition. Under such circumstances, how often has the heart yielded a sigh on the desirableness of the blessings of peace! But if peace, in the general, be so desirable, what must be said of the peace of God, which passeth all understanding! Peace among men is very desirable: it is healing to the human heart—it is transporting to the human breast—to see the bloody sword sheathed in its scabbard. It is pleasing to see amity and concord prevail, and old friends meet that have been separated, perhaps by jealousy and misunderstanding; but all this is only between man and man. The peace of God exceeds every thing of this sort as much as God's ways are above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts. As much as the heavens are above the earth, so much is peace with him greater than peace with each other. It is on this subject that we shall now discourse.

Could the apostle have pointed to a blessing of greater value than this: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ?"

In discoursing on this subject, we shall, First, ask in what this peace consists—Secondly, endeavor to justify the apostle's encomium on it—Thirdly, consider its great use in the Christian life—Lastly, inquire by what means it is to be attained.

I. LET US TRY TO ASCERTAIN WHAT IT IS—What is this invaluable jewel? What is this peace of God? Depend upon it, it is something valuable, or rather invaluable, or our Lord Jesus Christ would not have singled it out as his last bequest, at the time he was about to leave his disconsolate disciples, and when his heart was overflowing with tenderness for them. He left them one great blessing. What was it? Not crowns—not kingdoms—No. It was something far superior to these: "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your hearts be troubled."

The word which is here rendered "the peace of God" signifies oneness—union—being gathered into one—reconciliation. It is the blessedness of being in a state of reconciliation with God. I should suppose it may include the following ideas:—

1. *That sweet tranquillity of soul which arises from a well-grounded persuasion of being accepted by God.* This is what the

apostle means when he says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God."—Being accepted through the righteousness of the Redeemer, we have peace with God. I need not inform you that, in our native state, we are all at war with God, and God with us. Sin is the great enemy. It has separated great friends. God and man, you know, were once great friends; but sin separated those chief friends, and drew a veil of separation between them. Man became an enemy to God, and God to man. God in the character of a righteous governor was required—his own rectitude required him—to be an enemy to man. For he hateth all the workers of iniquity: but, through the mediation of the Son of God, atonement is made—the blood of the cross heals the breach, and opens the way of communion. God declares himself well pleased with his dear Son; and every poor sinner who sues for mercy in his name finds relief. The past is forgiven—is forgotten; the soul is justified through the redemption of Jesus Christ.—The effect of all this is sweet peace.

Who can estimate the sweetness of that enjoyment which arises from a well-grounded persuasion that God is my Father? To be permitted to say, I am an heir of blessing: I am no longer under the law, but under grace: I am no longer an alien, but a son or daughter: the blessings of the gospel are to be made my own.—Where such are the persuasions, there is the peace of God.

2. The peace of God, I should think, includes *that sweet satisfaction which possesses the mind from a view of God sitting at the helm of the universe, and having the management of all our concerns.* We are like people who are sailing on the ocean in a storm. This troubled ocean casts up mire and dirt, and we are continually subject to tempests: and were it not for the consideration that we have a pilot at the helm—a God who has the turbulent ocean under his control—were it not for the consideration that the cares of the world were under his direction, what peace could we enjoy? Let me ask you, thinking Christians, when you consider the temper of the world—when you see man hating his fellow-man, and see them combining against one another by thousands—When you see the enmity of the heart to be such that there is hardly any rational hope of peace under the sun, what would quiet your heart but the consideration that God reigns, and "that the inhabitants of the earth are but as grasshoppers"—that he "maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder thereof he doth restrain?" The thought that Jesus Christ is head over all things to his church, and that all shall contribute to the spread of the gospel, begets that peace in the mind that enabled the Psalmist to sing, in the midst of tumult and

confusion, "Though the mountains be cast into the depths of the sea, there is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." There is a source of consolation to the children of God to which others are strangers. God will help his people, and that right early.

3. It is necessary that we should feel some degree of peace in our own consciences. We cannot experience the peace of God, and joy in the Holy Ghost, unless we have the testimony of our own consciences that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world. Enoch had the peace of God, when he had this testimony—that he pleased God. By the history which we have of him, which is very short, it appears that he pleased very few people. He was a thundering preacher in his day—the object of the ill-will of his hearers; but he had the testimony that he had pleased his God.

That Christian, or that minister, who enjoys a solid, well-grounded, persuasion that he possesses the favor of Jesus Christ, whose confidence is in him who sits at the helm of the universe, who walks with God and has the testimony of a good conscience, possesses the peace of God.

II. We proceed to JUSTIFY THE APOSTLE'S ENCOMIUM. He tells us that "it passeth knowledge." It is a very strong expression; but I apprehend it is literally true—it is no hyperbole. Some have interpreted it, that it passeth the understanding of carnal men. That is very true; but that is not a thousandth part of the truth. It is of such value that the understandings of former men nor angels are capable of appreciating its worth; the peace of God none can fully estimate. None but God himself can know its real worth. We estimate most things by *contrast*: so the worth of national peace is best known by those who see the effects of war; so the worth of domestic peace is best known by those who suffer by domestic feuds; so the value of peace with God cannot be known in any tolerable degree but by those who experience the horrors of a guilty conscience. Go, then, if you would know the value of the peace of God, look at the case of a man who is borne down by worldly sorrow, and who is a stranger to God. Go, visit a poor man, on whom the Lord hath poured out much trouble and distress, under which he almost sinks, and yet he is a stranger to God. He has no refuge to which he can flee in the hour of distress. From this you will judge, in some degree, what a blessed thing it is to have the peace of God. This it was which made our Lord say, "I send you forth like sheep among wolves;" but I give you that which shall be a balance to every load: "into whatsoever house ye enter, say, Peace be to this house." Would you know some-

thing of the value of this blessing?—go to the room of a poor sinner whose eyes are opened, whose conscience is awake, but who is without God, in a dying hour. Did you never visit a dying sinner, and take notice of him when he did not expect that he had an hour to live? Did you never see with what a frightened countenance he views you? O! that pale face! that frightened countenance!—that mind that looks upon the past, with bitter regret, as gone forever, that looks on that which is to come with horror and dismay! Did you never know such a case? You might know many such cases—they are not rare. There you might learn something of the value of the peace of God; there a man would give a thousand worlds, if they were all his own, for a well-grounded hope that his sins were forgiven; there he that once despised religion, the man that has joked and derided serious people, is alarmed, and wishes that those very people whom he once derided would come and pray with him. Who can estimate the value of the peace of God? If you can tell the worth of the salvation of a soul—if you can estimate the pains of the damned in hell—if you can reckon the loss of an immortal creature—then can you tell the value of the peace of God. If you can calculate the worth of celestial enjoyments—all the pleasures resulting from God's favor—then you may calculate the value of the peace of God.

That which endears this blessing to us is not only the importance of it, but *the medium through which it comes*. The text says—"through Christ Jesus." Do not you think, for example, that the parcel of ground which Jacob gave to Joseph his son was endeared to Joseph because it was the dying bequest of his beloved father? No doubt it was; that was the singular portion he gave to his son Joseph: and what made it still more valuable was that his father had wrested it from the Amorites: "which I took out of the hand of the Amorites with my sword and with my bow."—And the peace of God must be endeared, because it was obtained by the shedding of Christ's blood. How it will enhance its value to the people of God that it was the price of blood—the blood of the Lamb! Heaven itself would not be a thousandth part so pleasant to us if it had not been obtained in this way. It was obtained by the shedding of Christ's blood! But we pass on to consider

III. THE GREAT USE OF PEACE IN THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT; "the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds."—The word here translated "*keep*" is very expressive: it is a military term, and alludes to soldiers that are in a besieged town; or rather to soldiers that come in aid of others that are besieged. So the peace of God is that to a

believer's heart and mind which a relieving army is to those who are besieged. The heart and mind are supposed to be besieged by the temptations of the present world, and in danger of being taken; and the peace of God, like a reinforcement thrown in, affords relief, and prevents their being obliged to give up the contest. This word might perhaps be expressed by the term *fortified*,—"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall *fortify* your hearts and minds." The terms *heart* and *mind* comprehend the whole soul; the one is put for the affections; the other for the judgment—the peace of God serves as a relief, a fortification, for both. Let us here be a little more particular.

There is one set of temptations which assail the heart, another the mind; and the peace of God serves to fortify our souls against them both.

1. Let us inquire *what are those temptations which assail the heart?* In times of persecution, the wrath, enmity, and outrage of a wicked world, were such as assailed the heart. It must have been trying to the feelings of the primitive Christians, and all others who have lived in times of persecution. As for our parts, we have so long enjoyed religious peace that we can scarcely realize the scene. But only consider that those who were persecuted were men like you and me, and their property was, perhaps, obtained by the sweat of their brow—and it was hard to have that wrested from them by fines and imprisonment. They had families. It was hard to be torn flesh from flesh—bone from bone. Perhaps the tears of the wives and children might say, "Spare him for our sakes!" It was cruel—it must needs come close to the heart—they had the feelings of men. Nothing but the peace of God could fortify them. "Behold I send you forth as lambs among wolves." If they throw you into dungeons—if they deprive you of the honest fruits of your industry—of your friends—your liberty! If they deprive you of all these, they shall not deprive you of one thing—the peace of God! This you shall be able to carry with you into the darkest dungeons, and it shall cause you to sing praises to God at midnight.

There is another set of temptations which assail the heart—these are the allurements of the world. The former were in the days of yore principally—these in our times. The world seems to be friendly to us; its pleasures melt resistance. It sometimes captivates the heart; and I know not but enemies of this description are more dangerous to Christians than the others. Many have stood in the hour of persecution—they could fight like Samson against thousands when the Philistines set on them; but, when the smiles of a Delilah come upon them, they, like him, would fall. There is nothing

so good an antidote to this as the peace of God in the heart. But peace in the heart does not include carnal ease. I grant that this is no friend, but an enemy. Peace and union with God are the best fortification of the heart against the allurements of sense. Not all the terrors of Sinai, nor the curses of the law, are so good a preservative as the peace of God in the heart—and why so? It affords superior pleasure to that of the world. It rises infinitely above it. You know very well that when a superior light shines forth it eclipses an inferior one; so, when the sun shines forth, the smaller lights, the moon and stars, hide their heads—they are lost. The peace of God affords a so much superior pleasure in the soul as to overcome flesh and sense. Thus it is that faith overcomes. You have often read that expressive passage—"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Faith penetrates futurity; it rends the veil and pierces into an unknown world; it fixes its eye on eternity, and these little worlds disappear—the heart becomes dead to the pleasures of sense. It was thus that Moses, "seeing him that was invisible," became dead to the pleasures of the Egyptian court. It is not, then, very difficult to perceive how the peace of God—a solid, well-grounded peace, communion with God through our Lord Jesus Christ—tends to make a man dead to the world through the cross of Christ.

Again, there is a third temptation with which the heart is assailed, and this is, The sorrows of the world. The losses, the bereaving losses, trials, and disappointments, which befall the children of God, which on some occasions are so complicated, so heavy, and so lasting, that the heart is in danger of yielding to despondency. "O that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea; therefore my words are swallowed up," that is, I want words to express my grief—to express that intolerable grief that rankles in my bosom.—My heart is in danger of yielding to despondency. Nothing but the peace of God can now preserve it. The thought that God rules and overrules all—that whatever befalls us is under his appointment—that every evil is overruled by him for our good. Such thoughts as these, which constitute the peace of God, bear up the soul, and keep it from sinking under all the loads of distress by which it is burdened.

Once more:—There is another temptation; and that is despair under a load of guilt. I do not know but this may be the heaviest of all. When guilt is fixed on the conscience, and fixed with such strong chains that it becomes impossible for us to



break them, the temptation to sink into despair becomes very great. O! how many wretched souls, under a consciousness of guilt, are swallowed up in desperation! It was thus that Cain was swallowed up—"My punishment is greater than I can bear." It was thus that Judas was swallowed up—"I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood;" and, in his despair, he went and hanged himself. Such a load of guilt as this is greater than a poor sinner can bear. But there is that which will bear us up—the peace of God will keep, will sustain, will fortify the heart, even under this load.

Here is the difference between a good man, when he falls into sin, and a bad man. When Saul rebelled against God, and God expressed his displeasure against him, he sunk into despair! When David sinned against God, and God by Nathan had reproved him for his sin, he flew into the arms of divine Mercy.—"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." A view of the divine goodness bore him up. Though at a great distance from God, yet some faint gleam of the mercy of God preserved him from despair. It is true the waves of sin rolled over him; but the mercy of God was like a rope held out to him, by the laying hold on which he was saved. "Out of the depth shave I cried unto thee, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice. Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared."

What phrase, what terms, could the apostle have used that could be more expressive?—"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds"—shall support you under afflictions, and afford relief under the impressions of a guilty conscience. But we pass on—

2. *The mind also is assailed by various temptations and difficulties.* The peace of God is a fortification to the mind as well as the heart. The mind is expressive of the intellectual part of man. The temptations to which the mind is exposed are, chiefly, pernicious principles and distracting cares.

The *pernicious principles* that are circulated in the world are like so many poisoned arrows aimed at the heart, and we need to be as much fortified against these as against any others which I have mentioned. God has thought fit to try his people by suffering them to go forth. It must needs be that there must be scoffers walking after their own ungodly lusts.—There must be infidels who should ridicule the Bible and those that pro-

less its doctrines. These are so many fans by which God thoroughly purges his floor, which is composed, methinks, of grain and chaff. There are many professors who are merely chaff; and these pernicious principles—these scoffs—these jeers, that are uttered against the gospel, are like so many blasts of wind by which the chaff is blown away, while the grain shall stand and withstand.

God permits pernicious principles, under the name of Christianity, to go forth. There must needs be heresies among you—these are poisoned arrows that are aimed at the mind, the judgment, and, if they stick, the poison of them very soon infects the whole frame; for that which once fixes on the judgment presently affects the whole soul—the whole man. Here we need, therefore, to be particularly fortified—we need the arm of God to keep us. One of the seven churches is commended because it had kept the faith; and therefore God says, "I also will keep you in the hour of temptation." Keep right with God—keep close to God—keep conversant with the gospel of peace—walk close to the God of peace, and these arrows shall not touch you. You shall be secure from every fiery dart.

To these I would add *distracting cares*. For, as the mind is in danger of being pierced and tainted with pernicious principles, it is equally liable to be hurt and interrupted by distracting cares. The mind, or the judgment, is in man like one who sits at the helm of a ship—it is that superior thing which governs and controls all other things. The mind has the reins of the soul in its hand, and the apostle says, "In patience possess ye your souls." But, when distracting cares come upon us, the mind is in danger of being swept away from the helm—the mind, if once confounded, is in great danger. But I may say, as I said before, the peace of God—that sweet peace which arises from communion with God—is the best preservative. Let that once get possession, and you will ride out the storm, and enjoy serenity amidst all the tumultuous scenes which are passing before your eyes.

III. *THE MEANS BY WHICH THIS INESTIMABLE BLESSING IS TO BE OBTAINED.* You have only to look at the preceding context. You may observe there are three things pointed out by which it is to be obtained. One is, that we should feel an *habitual joy in God*: "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." O what a blessed art is this to be able to rejoice in God, come what will! The primitive Christians had learned this heavenly art of not being moved by any of the vicissitudes of fortune: "They rejoiced always." If persecutions broke out against them, they rejoiced that they were thought worthy to suffer—so, come what will, they would rejoice. They were like

the industrious bee, who extracts honey from every opening flower. Be it to others sweet or bitter, it is all alike to him. Such is Christianity; and, if we entered into it, it would teach us to rejoice in God, whatever befalls us; though there should be no fruit on our vine, or no flock in our folds, yet we should rejoice in God. Cultivate this spirit, and then the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds. You will be armed with this armor of God, and will be able successfully to defend yourself against any enemy.

The thing next recommended is "*moderation.*" Do not be concerned at either the smiles or the frowns of this world. If providence smile upon you, do not be elated: be moderate in your attachments. Or, if she frown upon you, do not be immoderately cast down. It is not the smiles of providence that can make you, nor her frowns that can unmake you. Your possessions are in another state. You have not hazarded all your substance in one vessel, I hope. The man of the world may be greatly interested, because, if one vessel sink, all his treasures are lost; but your chief treasures are embarked on board another vessel—one that cannot sink. You may cultivate a noble dependence. "The Lord is at hand." Time is passing away, and then all those little things which now distract men's minds will distract them no longer. The Lord is about to descend from heaven, and all these little things will disappear. Let your moderation be seen by all about you. If this spirit be cultivated by you, you will be fortified against every evil. You will have a better armor than Ahab had in the day of battle—nothing can pierce it.—But,

Lastly: We are here recommended to cultivate a noble *indifference respecting things in this state*, and to commit them to God. "Be careful for nothing." The apostle does not here mean that we are to care for nothing—that we are not to be contriving schemes, but that we are to divest ourselves of that kind of distracting care which unfits us for religion. Be careful in this way for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, with resignation to his will, and the peace of God will most assuredly keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Amen.

### XXX.—SOUL-PROSPERITY.

[Sketch of a Sermon delivered at the Old Jewry Chapel, London, Dec. 27, 1797.]

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."—3 John 2.

THERE are two or three characters mentioned in the New Testament of the name

of Gaius. I shall not now inquire to which of them this epistle was directed, but it is sufficiently evident that, whoever it might be, he was an eminently pious and godly man. Gaius seems, by this epistle, to have been a man of an afflicted body, and, perhaps, in embarrassed circumstances; but, however this was, his soul prospered, and it was the desire and prayer of the apostle John that he might be as prosperous in his outward as he was in his inner man.

The prayer in the text is something that strikes conviction, at least to my mind. Here is a prayer for a man that God would prosper him in his outward affairs in proportion as his soul prospered. Now, if this were made the rule of all our prayers for temporal blessings, if we never were to pray for prosperity to attend ourselves beyond the degree of soul-prosperity which we possessed, I am afraid that very few of us would pray for much more than we have, if any; and if we made this the rule of our prayers for one another (and why should we not?) I am afraid that we could pray for the outward prosperity of but very few. If our soul-prosperity were made the rule by which to pray or wish for worldly prosperity, which is the case here with Gaius, we should very few of us be found qualified so much as to desire it.

In discoursing on this subject we will first consider a few of the leading qualities of soul-prosperity as exemplified in the beloved Gaius—and then consider this soul-prosperity as the standard by which it is safe to pray for prosperity of other kinds.

A thriving soul! This is a matter of serious import, my brethren. A plant is said to thrive and prosper when it brings forth fruit—a field when it abounds with grain—a human body when it is healthy, vigorous, and active. It is to the last of these that the apostle makes an allusion. When he speaks of Gaius's soul as prospering he opposes it to his body. You, my friend, as if he had said, you have a weak and sickly body, but you have a prosperous soul, and I pray that your bodily health and your circumstances may be as thriving and as prosperous as your soul is. This was not the language of compliment; neither need I say that it was not the practice of the apostle to deal in unmeaning compliments. The tree was known by its fruits, and Gaius was known by his conduct to have a prosperous soul.

I. WHAT THEN ARE THOSE MARKS OF A PROSPEROUS SOUL WHICH IT BEHOVES US TO ASPIRE AFTER? I would mention four or five, each of which will be found to be exemplified in the beloved Gaius.

1. A prosperous soul is *one in whom the truth dwells, and dwells richly*. You must have remarked, in reading the first eight verses, how much the apostle Paul makes of



truth. He describes Gaius as having the truth dwelling in him, as walking in the truth, as beloved for the truth's sake, and as being a fellow-helper of the truth. All these expressions are found in those verses. It seems then to enter into the very essence of a prosperous soul that the truth dwelt in him, and that it dwelt richly in him. Truly, my brethren, gospel truth is that to the soul which wholesome food is to the body, and wholesome words and sound doctrine have an effect on the soul similar to that which wholesome food has on the body; they render it strong, vigorous, and active. Thus the great principles of evangelical truth being imbibed by Gaius afforded a constant spring of activity. He was a lively, active, generous man. It is of great importance what principles we acquire. Principles will be active—will be influential. Indeed this is the very reason why divine truths are called principles. We read of the first principles of the doctrines of Christ, and principles you know signify the first moving causes which lie at the foundation and source of action. Merely speculative notions or speculative ideas, that have no influence on a man's heart, are not principles; they may be called more properly opinions: but, if the truths of God are imbibed as a thirsty man would drink in water from a fountain, they become in him a well of living water springing up in the disposition to do good, and terminating in everlasting glory. Principles, whether good or evil, will be influential if they are thoroughly imbibed. Hence we read of false doctrines having a fatal influence. The Scripture speaks of God giving men up to strong delusion, or to the energy or efficacy of deception or error.

All principles, if they deserve the name of principles, lie at the bottom and source of affections and actions. If they be genuine, evangelical, and true, they are the spring of a holy life and lie at the bottom of evangelical obedience; but if they be false principles they lie at the bottom of a course of alienation and apostacy from God. Indeed, as right principles stimulate to right actions, so where a person imbibes wrong principles, or is indifferent to right, it enervates right actions: even good men, who have swerved in a greater or less degree from the truth, have sunk into a spirit of indifference with regard to evangelical principles—it has had the effect of stagnating their souls in divine actions.

2. The prosperous soul is a soul where the doctrinal and the practical parts of religion bear lovely proportion and are united. We may often observe with regard to the healthiness or unhealthiness of the body two opposite extremes. We see some who are epicures, and they are of no use in society. They live to themselves and glut themselves in sordid and sensual enjoyments.

We see others pining away who are mere slaves. There is a great resemblance in these two characters to different species of professors. There is a kind of religious epicures—men, I mean, who are all clamorous for doctrinal truth, but have no regard to the practical part of godliness, whose whole object is to enjoy the comforts of religion, to be soothed with its promises, to be flattered with its privileges, to be comforted in the prospect of something great and glorious hereafter. Their whole attention, their whole object, is to grasp as much of this as possible, and they are regardless of every thing of a practical nature. On the other hand, there are some who, at the expense of truth, are constantly crying up morality and practical religion. My brethren, these things ought not to be divided; doctrinal and practical religion should be united. To attempt to cultivate the former at the expense of the latter is to constitute an epicurism—to reverse it is to have a body of slaves whipped to duty, without a motive. It is the great concern of the Scriptures to furnish men with the most constraining and evangelical principles, that should render practical godliness pleasurable. The true Christian is like the husbandman who labors that he may enjoy his food with an appetite, that he may be strengthened to future labor, and thus, with a happy mixture of enjoyments and labor, becomes a happy man in himself and a blessing to those about him.

3. The prosperous soul is a soul in which is united a happy mixture of the retired and the active—a happy attention to the duties of retirement mingled with an equal attention to the duties of active life. Great have been the extremes of men in these cases: some have pleaded for a religion that should make men hermits, and shut them up in a cell secluded from the society of man. As to others again, their religion is always in public; they scarcely ever retire to converse with their own souls. No man can enjoy pleasure in his soul without uniting these. It is not to be always plunged in an active course of life, nor to be shut up always in the closet. Christians must be the salt of the earth, and in order to this they must be spread in every circle of society. They must mingle amongst mankind. It is not improper to mingle in every kind of society where duty calls. But they must retire alone frequently, or they will not carry a savor of God and religion with them. They must be spread like salt, but it will be salt without the savor, if they do not retire. It is by retiring to our closets, reading the word of God in private, thinking and praying over it; by conversing with our own souls in secret, by dwelling on divine things, by giving such a tone to the soul that it falls naturally and easily into divine things; it is in these holy exercises that we may expect to meet a di-



vine blessing, and to acquire such a savor of spirit that when we go out into the world we shall carry the savor of Christ with us. This is a prosperous and thriving state of soul.

4. The prosperous soul may be known by this that *it is accompanied by a good degree of public spirit, and largeness of heart.* A man that is concerned principally about himself can never have a prosperous soul. Such was not Gaius—he was a fellow-laborer and helper of the truth. He was habitually concerned in promoting the cause of God and religion in the world by every means in his power. A man that takes up six days out of seven and thinks himself warranted to pursue nothing else but the acquiring of a fortune, and thinks it quite sufficient if he serves God one day out of the week, cannot be a Christian at all. He has not the first principles of religion in him. I grant that one day in seven ought to be devoted especially to the service of God, but the true Christian's aim is to serve God in the whole course of his life: whatever he may do,—whether he eat or drink, buy or sell,—to do all to the glory of God. What a contrast to him is the man whose sole or main object it is to get a fortune, to accumulate a few thousand pounds, and who says to himself, after a few more prosperous years in trade, I hope to take a country seat and enjoy myself; to attain this object I must save all I can, now and then giving a guinea to some pious object! Such a man may pass through life as a respectable member of society, but a Christian he cannot be. He whose main object is to amass a fortune—he whose main object is to live to himself—lives not to Christ. Christianity cultivates a public spirit, a largeness of heart—not that narrowness of mind by which we consecrate all that we have and are to ourselves.

I may mention, besides this, a sort of religious narrowness of mind in that person whose chief concern it is to get comfort to his own mind—whose chief and almost sole concern it is that he may obtain a good ground to hope for everlasting life in the world to come—who cares little or nothing about the interest of Christ on the earth, the cause of God, the cause of righteousness, truth, and humanity—who does not grasp within the circle of his prayers his fellow-men, his fellow-Christians—he whose religion centres principally in himself. Alas! it is doubtful whether that man can be a Christian: at any rate he cannot have a prosperous soul; and I have generally remarked that those religious people who are continually poring over their own case, who are only anxious to discover evidences of their Christianity, who are perpetually poring over past experiences to spell out whether they were truly converted or not, who hear sermons and read the Scriptures

only to find out whether they can come in for any thing to comfort them—I say I have found that those who spend their whole time in this are, generally, disappointed. You selfish soul, that care little for the souls of others, take a course directly opposed to your own interest. Seek to bring peace to the souls of others; that will be the way to find comfort for yourself. Seek the good of the poor and the afflicted, and in seeking that you will find your own. By seeking the public good we should find a private good. I never knew a man of a large heart—whose soul grasped the well-being of others, who laid out his time and property for the good of others—greatly troubled about his own interest in Christ. It is in seeking the good of God's cause in the world, and promoting the good of our fellow-creatures, that God will give us the earnest of eternal life. A public spirit is the spirit of the gospel, and largeness of heart is the mark of a prosperous soul.

5. One remark more, and I have done on this part of the subject: *The prosperous soul is dispossessed of an ambitious spirit*—it is meek and lowly. If a man were ever so public-spirited and active, but withal ambitious, vain-glorious, and noisy, I should say of that man whether he be a Christian at all is at least doubtful, but he cannot be a thriving one, he cannot be possessed of a healthful soul. A haughty, self-sufficient, self-important, clamorous, ostentatious professor, is a very doubtful character. High minds, like high hills, are blasted and barren. It is the lowly mind which, like a well watered valley, is productive: God's promises are made to such. It is asserted that the Lord is nigh to them that are of a lowly spirit and a contrite heart; and we are told elsewhere that God “giveth grace to the humble, but the proud he knoweth afar off.” In proportion, therefore, as we entertain such a spirit, we shall be far from God and God from us, and we shall be possessed of a soul far from prosperous.

II. Having enumerated a few marks of soul-prosperity, I proceed to observe THE STANDARD WHICH PROSPERITY OF SOUL AFFORDS TO OUR SAFETY IN PROSPERITY OF OTHER KINDS. John prays for prosperity for Gaius; and wherefore? because his soul prospers. Prosperity of soul is that which renders prosperity of body an object of desire, for two reasons:—One is that *prosperity of soul makes prosperity of other kinds safe*—we can bear it, which we cannot without. There are few men capable of bearing outward prosperity, but almost every man is vain enough to think that he could. There are very few of us that are not so blinded as to think that we could bear a little more than we have. We flatter ourselves that if God would but give us plenty we should do good with it. One says, if I had but such a one's riches,

what good should I do! Alas! this evinces an ignorance of your own hearts. Is your soul so well that you are in no danger of being selfish? You cannot but have remarked that prosperity in worldly circumstances elates men. You may have seen some persons who were very sober, modest, useful, generous people, to all appearance, when in a mediocrity of circumstances; but when providence has smiled upon them, and improved their circumstances, their hearts have been lifted up in proportion. You must have observed that worldly pleasure and worldly prosperity have had a similar effect on a man: each has detached the heart from God. It is an old saying that an additional weight put into a bag draws the strings the closer; but you think there is no danger of your being so affected, and therefore you wish, above all things, that your circumstances may improve. And is your soul so prosperous that there is no danger of your becoming forgetful of the poor and needy? Alas! there is nothing but prosperity of soul will enable us to bear worldly prosperity. Blessed be God, we have seen a few to whom it has presented no temptation. I have heard of a good man whose soul prospered alike in temporal prosperity and adversity. He had an intimate friend who used to make free with him, and, observing his prosperity, he one day thus addressed him: "Do not you find the smiles of this world, my friend, to be a snare unto you?" He paused, and said, "I am not conscious that I do; for though I enjoy much of this world, yet I think I enjoy God in all things." By and by providence turned another way; he lost all his property; he sunk into indigence; he had scarcely a competency to support him. His old friend thus addressed him, "Well, my friend, how is it with you now? do not you find your heart dejected in these circumstances?" "I am not conscious," said he, "that I do; as before I enjoyed God in all things, now I enjoy all things in God. I find God to supply all my wants, and a little, with his blessing, is enough." This, my friends, was a prosperous soul. A soul of this description might well bear prosperity, and his friend might well follow the example of John with respect to Gaius, and say, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

But the second reason which renders prosperity of soul a proper standard for that of our bodies and circumstances is that *thus the general good is promoted*. If we retain prosperity of soul under temporal prosperity, then for God to bless us is to bless all around us. A man with a truly prosperous soul will not eat his morsel alone—will not keep it to himself; the poor, the fatherless, the widow, will participate the kindness of God to him: so that for providence to bless him is to bless the neighborhood, and to bestow

a public blessing. Wherever you see a man of that character the whole neighborhood will concur with the apostle, and say, "May the Lord prosper thee," or with Boaz's reapers, "The Lord bless thee," and I dare say Boaz himself was such a character, or they would not have said, "the Lord bless thee."—"The Lord be with you," said the master.—"The Lord bless thee," said the servants, for we know that in this blessing we all shall be blessed; the town will be blessed, the whole neighborhood will be blessed, the fatherless will be blessed, the widow will be blessed; every one shall share, and therefore we wish that thou mayest prosper, for thy soul prospereth.

These few remarks I submit to your serious attention. I leave them with you, my brethren; they may lead you to consider whether there be not many who have prosperous circumstances but not prosperous souls; on whom the world smiles and loads them with its benefits, but from whom scarcely any one receives good; whether there be not many such in all places, even in this city, this opulent city! I grant that I think there is a greater proportion of generous characters in this city than perhaps in any other in the world: this I am inclined, without flattery, to say. But I am sure that there are great numbers who live wholly to themselves, and there are some who profess a regard to religion, and lay their account for eternal life, but who never live to others. Let such consider whether their Christianity be not exceedingly doubtful; or, if it must be admitted that they have the root of the matter in them, still is it not clear that they have unprosperous souls? I bless God, however, that there are many who have prosperous souls, and that over and above their circumstances. Generosity is not confined to the rich, my brethren: a poor man may feel as much as another; and he who does but little by his substance may do it in other ways. If we are poor in circumstances, yet, if our hearts be tender, we may relieve the poor by our visits, our conversations, and our prayers. I grant that this would not be sufficient without money. He who has money, and who would wish to save his money and give his prayers, will not be received—his very prayers will be an offence; but for the man who has no money, but who has this compassionate and kind disposition, who will not unite with the apostle in interceding "I pray above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, as thy soul prospereth?"

Such, my brethren, is my wish and prayer for you; such is my wish particularly for those institutions in this city which are now, I bless God, pretty numerous, for the visiting and relieving the afflicted poor.\* I have

\* This sermon it appears was preached on behalf of "a society to relieve the sick and distressed."



said, and still say, that, of all the benevolent institutions which adorn this metropolis, I know of none which excel in their principle and their effects institutions of this kind, especially in such times as these, when the poor are suffering privations and afflictions perhaps unknown but to those who visit them and search out afflicted cases. True charity does not consist in merely giving a penny to a beggar to get rid of his solicitations, or in giving a guinea to a public charity. Many of these things may be done by persons who have very little genuine benevolence about them; but that is genuine charity which leads us to search out the abodes of the wretched, and to make ourselves acquainted with their wretchedness in order to relieve them. I do not say that every one can give his time to these engagements, but he may assist those whose professed object it is to do so. To this I may add that the relieving of men's bodies to get access to their minds is a primitive and an excellent practice. The Son of God himself—and who can doubt that he had access wherever he pleased?—has set us the example; he went among the poor, the blind, the lame, the diseased. He mingled himself with them, and healed their bodies, that he might find access to their souls. The Almighty God, in human nature, would not overturn the laws of humanity: his desire was to establish and sanctify them. Let us operate by a system he himself has established, and do good to the bodies of men with a view to obtain access to their minds, thus relieving the temporal wants of the afflicted poor, and administering the balm of consolation unto the wounded spirit.

### XXXI.—THE COMMON SALVATION.

[Sketch of a Sermon delivered at the Association of Baptist Ministers and Churches at Oakham, June 3, 1801.]

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”—Jude 3.

THE writer of this epistle is, in the Gospel of John, called “Judas not Iscariot.” The epistle itself is called “*general*,” not being addressed to any particular person or people; and may, therefore, be of more common concern. In the passage which I have now read we may notice, First, *The occasion* there was for writing: “it was needful.” The apostle did not write for writing’s sake; but to guard them against “certain men” who had crept into the churches “unawares”—“turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Ver. 4. Secondly: *The earnestness* with which he engaged in it: he “gave all diligence.” The word signi-

fies haste, forwardness, diligent care; somewhat like that which a person would feel in pulling a child out of the fire.—Ver. 23. Thirdly: *The subject* on which he wrote: “the common salvation.” This furnishes a reason for his being so much in earnest!—The very vitals of Christianity were struck at. Had not this been the case, it may be, they would not have heard from him. When Haman had conspired against the Jews, you may recollect the petition of Esther, and the manner in which it was addressed to the king. After having invited him to her banquet, and postponed the matter until she had whetted his desire to the uttermost, she at length uttered her request. “If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my *life* be given me at my petition, and my *people* at my request! For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish: but, if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my peace, although the enemy could not countervail the king’s damage!” Something like this seems to be the spirit of this passage. It is as if the writer had said, If the enemy had levelled his weapon against any thing but the very heart of the gospel, I might have held my peace. The amount is: **THE COMMON DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL ARE OF THE FIRST IMPORTANCE TO BE TAUGHT BY US AS MINISTERS AND RETAINED BY US AS CHRISTIANS.**

In discoursing on this subject, I shall endeavor to ascertain wherein the common salvation consists—inquire why it is so called—and show the importance of its being made the grand theme of our ministrations, and the first object of our attachment.

I. Let us endeavor to ascertain WHEREIN THE COMMON SALVATION CONSISTS.

There can be no doubt, I think, that by this phrase is meant the gospel salvation. It is the same thing as “the faith once delivered to the saints:” the “common faith,” after which Titus is said to have been begotten. In a word, it is that which in the New Testament is peculiarly denominated “the gospel.”

But the question returns: What is the gospel? Great diversity of opinion prevails on this subject. One denomination of professing Christians tell you it is one thing, and another, another; and how shall we judge amidst such discordant accounts? If I were to tell you that such and such doctrines constitute the gospel, you might answer, This is only your opinion, which is subject to error, equally with that of other people. For this reason I shall not attempt to specify particulars, but mention certain scriptural mediums by which you yourselves may judge of it.

1. We may form a judgment wherein the gospel consists by *the brief descriptions* which are given of it.—The New Testament



abounds with these descriptions; it delights in epitome. For example: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This is the common salvation; and surely I need not ask whether the doctrine which denies the *perishing* condition of sinners by nature, and supposes the unspeakable *gift* of heaven to be a mere fellow-creature, sent only to instruct us, and to set us a good example, can comfort with this representation. Again: "The Jews require a sign," or miracle, "and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." This is the common salvation. We hear of preachers knowing their auditors, and preaching accordingly: but Paul went straight forward, regardless of the desires of men. Again: "I determined not to know any thing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified." In each of these passages the gospel is supposed to be summarily comprehended in what relates to the person and work of Christ. This is the foundation which God has laid in Zion: this is the common salvation. Again: "I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory," or hold fast, "what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." Here also we see what is the *gospel*, and what that is on which the *present standing and final salvation* of Christians depends: and I appeal to every thing that is candid and impartial in my hearers, whether such importance can be attached to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ upon any other principle than that of his dying in our stead, and rising again as our forerunner? Finally: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." This language supposes that, in coming into the world, our Lord was *voluntary*, or that it was with *design*, which supposes his pre-existence; and that this design was to *save sinners, the chief of sinners*. In calling it a faithful or true "saying," it is intimated that it was so much the theme of the apostle's ministry, and so well known amongst Christians, as to become proverbial. *A saying grown into credit by experience of its truth* is the definition which has been given of a proverb; and such was the true saying of Paul. This, therefore, must be the gospel—"the common salvation."

2. We may judge wherein the "common salvation" consists by the *brief descriptions which are given of the faith of primitive Christians*.—This, as well as the gospel, is frequently epitomized in the New Testament; and it may be expected that the one will agree with the other. "So we preach, and so ye believed." The creed of the first believers, it has often been remarked, was very simple. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."—"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."—"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Believing is called "receiving the witness," or record, "of God. And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son." There are many other important truths, no doubt, the belief of which is necessary to salvation; such as the being and perfections of God, the evil of sin, &c.; but they are all involved in the doctrine of "Christ and him crucified." This all-important principle is a golden link which, if laid hold of, draws with it the whole chain of evangelical truth. Let a man cordially embrace this, and you may trust him for the rest.

There are, I conceive, four things which essentially belong to the "common salvation;" its *necessity*, its *vicarious medium*, its *freeness* to the chief of sinners, and its *holy efficacy*. If we doubt whether we stand in need of salvation, or overlook the atonement, or hope for an interest in it any otherwise than as unworthy, or rest in a mere speculative opinion, which has no effectual influence on our spirit and conduct, we are at present unbelievers, and have every thing to learn.

II. Let us inquire WHEREFORE IT IS CALLED THE COMMON SALVATION. Three reasons may, perhaps, be assigned for this.

1. It is *that in which all the sacred writers, notwithstanding their diversity of ages and gifts, are agreed in teaching*.—The Old Testament writers understood it much less than the New: but they all *died in the faith of it*. They "testified of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow."—"To him gave all the prophets witness." The New Testament writers differed widely as to talents. Paul reasoned; but Christ and him crucified was his theme. John had more of the affectionate: he was baptized, as it were, in love; but the Lamb that was slain was the great object of it. "There is no other name," said Peter, "given under heaven, or among men, whereby we must be saved;" and John stood by his side and assented. If any of the New Testament writers could be supposed to dissent, it would be James, who wrote fully upon the necessity of good works; but he was of the same faith, and only pleaded for showing it by his works.

2. It is *that which is addressed to sinners*

in common, without distinction of character or nation. The messages of grace under the Old Testament were principally addressed to a single nation; but under the gospel they are addressed to all nations, to every creature. The promises of the gospel are indeed made only to believers; but its invitations are addressed to sinners. The gospel feast is spread, and all are pressed to partake of it, whatever has been their previous character.

3. It is that in which all believers, notwithstanding their different attainments and advantages, are in substance agreed.—It is fitly compared to milk, which is the natural food of children. There may be great darkness, imperfection, and error; and many prejudices for and against distinctive names: but let the doctrine of the cross be stated simply, and it must approve itself to a renewed heart. A real Christian cannot object to any of those four things which were considered as belonging to the common salvation:—to the necessity of it, the vicarious medium of it, the freeness of it, or its holy efficacy.

III. LET US SHOW THE IMPORTANCE OF ITS BEING THE GRAND THEME OF OUR MINISTRATIONS, AND THE FIRST OBJECT OF OUR ATTACHMENT.

It is that which God has ever blessed to the salvation of sinners, and the edification of believers. The primitive Christians lived upon it. Times of great revival in the church have always been distinguished by a warm adherence to it. In the dark ages of popery, the schoolmen, as they are called, employed themselves in deciding curious points; but, at the time of the reformation, the common salvation was the leading theme. Those ministers whose labors have been more abundantly owned for the promotion of true religion have been distinguished by their attachment to the common truth; and those churches which have abounded the most in vital and practical godliness are such as have not descended to curious researches, nor confined their approbation to elegant preaching; but have loved and lived upon the truth, from whomsoever it has proceeded. There are three things, in particular, from which we are in danger of neglecting the common salvation, both as preachers and as hearers:—

1. *A pretended regard to moral and practical preaching, to the disregard of evangelical principle.* All preaching, no doubt, ought to be practical; and there are no greater enemies to the cross of Christ than men who can bear nothing but what soothes and comforts them; but this is not the only extreme. Almost all the adversaries of evangelical truth endeavor to cover their dislike to it under an apparent zeal for “morality, the christian temper, and christian practice.” If we neglect the common salvation in our ordinary labors, morality will freeze upon our

lips, and neither the preacher nor the hearer will be much inclined to practise it. To lose a relish for the common salvation is the first step towards giving it up; and the effects of this we are warned against from the example of “the angels who kept not their first estate.”

2. *The love of novelty.* Both preachers and hearers are in danger of making light of common truths, and of indulging in a spirit of curious speculation. This will render preaching rather an entertainment than a benefit to the soul. We are commanded to feed the church of God—not their fancies or imaginations; nor merely their understandings; but their renewed minds. It indicates a vicious taste, and affords a manifest proof of degeneracy, where the common salvation is slighted, and matters of refinement eagerly pursued. The doctrine of Christ crucified is full of the wisdom of God, and will furnish materials for the strongest powers; and here we may dig deep in our researches. But, if this subject has no charms for us, what are we to do in heaven, where it is the darling theme?

3. *A partial attachment to one or two particular truths, to the neglect of the great body of truth.* It has frequently been the case that some one particular topic has formed the character of an age or generation of men; and this topic has been hackneyed in almost every place, till the public mind has become weary of it; while other things of equal importance have been overlooked. Beauty consists of lovely proportion; and herein consists the holy beauty of religion. When every part of truth has its due regard, and every part of holiness its share in our affections, then will the “beauty of Jehovah, our God, be upon us,” and then will he “establish the work of our hands.”

Finally: The common salvation, though it affords grounds for a universal application for mercy, yet will be of no essential benefit to us, unless it be especially embraced. Notwithstanding the indefiniteness of gospel invitations, it is nevertheless true that “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.”

XXXII.—THE GOOD MAN'S DESIRE FOR THE SUCCESS OF GOD'S CAUSE.

[Sketch of a Sermon delivered at the opening of a new Baptist Meeting-house, at Boston, Lincolnshire, June 25, 1801.]

“Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto thy children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.”—Psa. xc. 16, 17.

IN every undertaking we have an end or ends to answer, to which all our labors are directed. It is no less so in religious under-



takings than in others; and, as these are pure and worthy of pursuit, such is the good or evil of our exertions. What are, or at least should be, the great ends of a christian congregation in rearing a place for divine worship? What are the main desires of serious people among you now it is reared? If I mistake not they are depicted in the passage I have read:—That God's work may appear among you in your own time—that it may be continued to posterity—that God would beautify you with salvation—and prosper the work of your hands?

The psalm was written by Moses, probably on occasion of the sentence of mortality passed upon the generation of Israelites which came out of Egypt, on account of their unbelief, as recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Numbers. It was a heavy sentence, and very affectingly lamented by the holy man; but he discovers a greater concern for the cause of God than for the loss of temporal comfort. He prays that they may be taught to make such a use of this awful providence as to *apply their hearts unto wisdom*; and that however God might afflict them, during forty years' wandering in the wilderness, he would bless them with spiritual prosperity.

This prayer was answered. That generation which was trained in the wilderness was, perhaps, the best that Israel exhibited during their existence as a nation. It was of them that the Lord himself spoke, saying, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel then was holiness to the Lord." May our prayer for the prosperity of God's cause among us be thus answered!

All I shall attempt will be to review the *objects* desired, and show the *desirableness* of them.

The objects desired, though expressed by the Jewish lawgiver, have nothing in them peculiar to that dispensation; but are equally suited to our times as to others. They prove that the cause of God is one, through every dispensation, and is directed to one great end—the establishment of truth and righteousness in the earth.

The *first* branch of this comprehensive petition is that *God's work might appear unto his servants*. All God's works are great. Creation is full of his glory: providence is no less so: and each is sought out by them that have pleasure therein. But it is evident that by the work of God, in this connection, is meant the operation of his *grace*. When the Almighty took Israel to be his people, he bestowed blessings upon them of two kinds—temporal and spiritual. He gave them the promise of a good land, and of great prosperity, in case of their obedience to his will. But this was not all: he set up

his cause among them. They were his visible people, by whom true religion was practised, and its interests promoted. It is the carrying on of this cause that is here intended. It was begun from the time when God made promise to Abraham their grand progenitor, and was carried on during the lives of the patriarchs. When they were brought out of Egypt with a high hand, and formed into a people for himself, it became more apparent, and wore a more promising aspect: but, when they were doomed to die in the wilderness, it seemed as if it must sink. Hence Moses, who was tenderly affected with what concerned the honor of God, pleads as he does. Thus he pleaded his *great name* on a former occasion: and thus the prophet Iabakkuk pleaded when Judah was going into captivity, and the cause of God was likely to be ruined: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years; in the midst of the years make known: in wrath remember mercy."

The work of God may be said to *appear among us* when sinners are converted to himself. Conversion is not confined to Jews and heathens; but extends to sinners of all ages and nations. It is not enough that we are born and educated under the light of revelation, nor that we yield a traditional assent to it. Nicodemus could boast of all this, and more: yet he was told by the faithful and true Witness that, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Conversion work is peculiarly the *work of God*. Ministers and parents may be the instruments; but God is the proper cause of it. None but he who made the heart of man can turn it from its rooted aversion to the love of himself. Ministers and parents know this by painful experience; and therefore can each adopt the prayer here presented as their own. Wherever this work is, it will *appear* by its holy and happy effects. The drunkard will become sober, the churl liberal, the unclean chaste, and the malignant persecutor of Christ's people a humble sufferer for his name's sake.

The work of God will also appear among us if Christians grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The power of divine grace is no less apparent in the carrying on of God's work, than in the beginning of it. Nothing short of an almighty arm can preserve creatures, so prone to fall away, *from falling*, and present those who are so faulty "faultless before the presence of his glory." And, where this part of the work is, it will *appear* also by its holy and happy effects. Such Christians bear the most impressive testimony to the world of the reality and importance of religion.

A *second* branch of the petition is that God's work might so appear as that there



might be an illustrious display of his *glory*. All God's works display his glory; but the work of grace in the salvation of sinners most of all. Other things manifest his wisdom and power; but this his holy nature. The carrying on of his cause in the world, by the conversion and sanctification of sinners, gives a kind of visibility to the divine character. It is seen, and even felt by the most abandoned of men. God is said to have appeared in his glory in building up Zion, after it had been broken down by the Chaldeans. Even the heathen, when they saw what he had wrought, could not forbear to acknowledge "the Lord hath done great things for them!" But the building up of the gospel church, by turning the captivity of those who were the slaves of Satan, is still more glorious. The Lord could accomplish the former merely by his providence; but the latter is the effect of the travail of his soul.

It is requested, *thirdly*, that God would impart to them his beauty: "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us!"—All God's works are beautiful; but saints, who are his workmanship, are the subjects of a *holy* beauty, or of the beauty of holiness. They are comely through the comeliness which he puts upon them. Conceive of the camp of Israel after they had been humbled, and taught to fear the Lord their God. Two or three hundred thousand godly young people, following him implicitly in the wilderness, and trembling at the idea of repeating the iniquities of their fathers! This was a sight at which even a wicked prophet was struck with awe, and could not forbear exclaiming, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" Powerful are the charms of genuine piety. There is something in it that disarms malignity itself, and extorts admiration even from those who hate it. Milton represents the devil himself, on his approaching paradise, as awed by innocence, as staggered, as half inclined to desist from his purpose, and feeling a kind of perturbation within him, composed of malignity and pity. Something like this existed, methinks, in Balaam. He wanders from hill to mountain, seeking for curses, but scattering blessings: sometimes half inclined to unite with God, and concluding with a vain desire to die the death of the righteous. Powerful, I repeat it, are the charms of genuine piety. Conceive of a society of Christians drinking into the spirit of Christ, and walking according to his commandments! What an amiable sight! "Beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners!" So much as we possess of the spirit of true religion, so near as we approach its original simplicity, so far as our doctrine is incorrupt, our discipline pure and impartial, and our conversation as becometh the

gospel, so much of "the beauty of the Lord our God" is upon us.

A *fourth* branch of the petition is, that God would set his seal to their undertakings, and establish the work of their hands. "Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." It was the work of Moses and Joshua, and the rest of God's servants, to mould and form the people, especially the rising generation; to instruct them in the words of the Lord, and impress their hearts with the vast importance of obeying them. And this has been the work of God's servants in every age. This is our object in our stated and occasional labors, in village-preaching, and in foreign missions; this is the object in the present undertaking; but all is nothing, unless God establish the work of our hands. "Except the Lord build the house, the builders labor in vain." As we must never confide in God to the neglect of means; so we must never engage in the use of means without a sense of our dependence on God.

It is requested, *finally*, that these blessings might both appear in their own times, and be continued to their posterity: "Let thy work appear unto thy servants" who are now alive, "and thy glory unto their children," when they are no more. It is desirable that true religion should be promoted *in our time*. This, indeed, should be our first and chief concern. Worldly men may care nothing about this. If they gain but the corn, the wine, and the oil, it is enough for them: but God's *servants* cannot be happy with mere temporal prosperity, if the interest of Christ do not prosper. Nehemiah might have lived in affluence at the court of Persia; but he could not enjoy it while the city of his God was going to ruins. The true laborers in God's husbandry long to see it abound in fruits: the builders of his temple desire to see it rise.—And, though our times lie nearest us, yet our prayers and efforts must not be confined to them, but extend to *posterity*. The succeeding generation should lie near our hearts. In them we hope for materials for God's building. The prayer of David would fit the lips of every godly man, and especially of every godly parent; "that our sons may be as olive-plants, grown up in their youth; and our daughters as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace!"

Such were the particular objects desired: I shall only add a few words on their desirableness.

We have seen already that the manifestation of the *glory* of God depends on the progress of his *work*: by how much, therefore, we are concerned for the one, by so much shall we be importunate for the other. It is for the glory of God that Satan's kingdom should be overturned, and the kingdom

of his Son established on its ruins. This work is the *harvest* of all God's other works of glory. It was glorious in him to promise to give his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession: but the glory of this also depends upon its being performed. It was glorious for Christ to die, that he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works: but it is by the actual accomplishment of this object that his glory is perfected. It was glorious for God in his providence to drive out paganism and Popery from this kingdom; but, if it stop here, what are we the better? The cutting down of weeds will be of but little use, if the pure seed be not sown, and spring up, and bring forth fruit in their place.

The progress of God's work in heathen countries has a close connection also with our spiritual prosperity at home. There is much beauty and propriety in the petitions offered up in the sixty-seventh psalm. "God be merciful unto us . . . that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations!" God blesses the world by blessing the church, and making it a blessing. A statesman would wish for an increase in population, that the army and navy, and every other department of society, might be filled; and shall not we pray for the prosperity of the church of God, that faithful ministers, missionaries, and every other description of Christians, may not be wanting?

Finally: The regard we bear to the souls of men, especially to the rising generation, must render these blessings desirable. It is not yours, but you, that we seek. Our hearts' desire, and prayer to God for you, is that you may be saved. If we recommend you to attend the gospel and embrace it, is it because we want to enlist you under the banner of a party? God knoweth! Yet we shall say to you, and especially to the rising generation, as Moses said to Hobab, "Come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord," we trust, "hath spoken good concerning" us . . . "And it shall come to pass that whatsoever good thing the Lord shall do unto us, that will we do unto you."

### XXXIII.—PRAYER OF DAVID IN THE DECLINE OF LIFE.

#### [Sketch of a Sermon to the Aged.]

"Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth."—Psa. lxxi. 9.

THIS psalm is supposed to have been written about the time of Absalom's conspiracy. God had cast off his predecessor Saul, and things looked as if he now meant to cast *him* off. His people also seemed

disposed, by their joining with Absalom, to cast him off: hence the force of the petition.

Old men do not always put up this petition. If the desires of many of them were put into words, their request would be that they might save money, retain power, and many other things. Covetousness is particularly the sin of old age. The reason may be that in early life corruption has a number of channels in which it flows; but in old age these are stopped up, or nearly so, by the decay of natural powers and passions; and hence the whole flows in one or two channels. But these things will soon forsake us, or we must forsake them. The favor and presence of God should be the object, the supreme object, of our desire.

I. THERE ARE SOME PECULIAR CIRCUMSTANCES OF OLD AGE WHICH RENDER THIS BLESSING NECESSARY.

1. Old age is a time of but little natural enjoyment, as Barzillai acknowledged. 2. Sam. xix. 35. There is the more need, therefore, for other enjoyments. It is a soil on which that kind of pleasure will not grow;—but the joys of religion will, and there may be fruit in old age. Be this, therefore, our object. Psa. xcii. 14. Isai. xl. 30, 31.

2. It is a time in which the troubles of life are often known to increase. Many are poor and can struggle no longer, and so sink under their hardships. Others have families, and live to see their children's miseries: or what, if we fear God, will grieve us more, their evil courses. How fit then is the prayer of David to the lips of those whose grey hairs are going down with sorrow to the grave!—Others lose their friends by death. Youth is the time for forming connections, which is a source of pleasure; and age, of those connections being dissolved, which is a source of pain. How many poor widows may hear this address, who are left in a world of care and sorrow, to serve alone! Does not this prayer fit your lips?—At this period we often have to reap the bitter fruits of the sins of earlier years. Disobedience to parents is often followed by disobedience in children; neglect of family government by family ruin, as in the case of Eli; and criminal indulgences in youth by similar practices among our children. David had his troubles in his younger days, but they were light compared with those which respected Amnon, Tamar, and Absalom. Here impurity and blood re-appeared, and wounded his heart.

3. Old age is a time in which the troubles of life not only increase, but become less tolerable. Young people will weather the storm, but it is not so with the aged. Pains of mind resemble pains of body; young people will work them off, but in old people they remain, and are carried to the grave.

Jacob had hardships at Padanaram, the heat by day, and the frost by night; but he forgot them in a little time; and not so after having lost his beloved Rachel. A garment was brought to him covered with blood! Is this, or any thing like it, your condition? So much the more necessary the petition.

4. Old age is a time that ought to command respect, and does so among dutiful children, and all serious Christians; but it is often known to be attended with neglect. This is the case especially where they are poor and dependent. It has been the case where public characters have lost their youthful vivacity, and the brilliancy of their talents. In these cases, also, how fit is the petition: "Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth!"

5. It is a period bordering on death and eternity. The enjoyments of life are more than half gone, and the remainder hangs upon a thread more than half broken.

But it may be worth while to inquire

II. IN WHAT CASES THERE ARE GROUNDS TO HOPE THE BLESSING WILL BE GRANTED. Not all old men enjoy God's favor and presence. There are some tottering on the grave, who are yet wicked; yea, ripe in wickedness—mercenary, deceitful, crafty, and oppressive. Even those sins which they can no longer act, through a failure in their natural powers, they will recal in their defiled imaginations, and repeat in conversation, to the corrupting of youth. Ah, wicked old man! God will cast you off. Age itself entitles *you* to no respect from man, nor will you find mercy from God. Think particularly of two passages. "The sinner, a hundred years old, shall be accursed—God shall wound the hairy scalp of him who goeth on still in his trespasses." Isai. lxxv. 20. Psa. lxxviii. 21. Who then shall be found sharers in this blessing?

1. It is certain that, if we have been God's servants from our youth, he will not cast us off in old age. David pleaded this, in the fifth and seventeenth verses of this psalm. "Oh God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." How was this truth also verified in the old age and death of Jacob, Moses, Daniel, Paul, and others!

2. Though we should not have been his servants in our youth, yet in old age, even from thence, if we seek him with all our hearts, he will be found of us. He will not reject us even at the eleventh hour.

3. Though you should never have been his servant to this day, but have grown grey under Satan's yoke, and now a poor miserable creature, just ready to fall into hell; yet if from hence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul, he will be found of thee; for the Lord our God is a merciful God; and through the

death of Christ he can save thee to the uttermost. If with all your heart you only put up this prayer, "Cast me not off in the time of old age, forsake me not when my strength faileth;" he will not cast you off, but stand your friend when forsaken by the whole world. Deut. iv. 29—31. Heb. vii. 25.

#### XXXIV.—ADVANTAGES OF EARLY PIETY.

##### [Sketch of a Sermon to Young People.]

"O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."—Psa. xc. 14.

THE season is returned, my dear young people, in which you expect I should address you on your eternal interests. I hope what I have heretofore said to you, not only on these occasions, but in the ordinary course of my labors, has not been altogether in vain. Some of you, I hope, have already set your faces Sion-ward. Happy should I be to see many more follow their example!

The words which I have read to you express the desire of Moses, the man of God, in behalf of Israel, and especially of the rising generation. That generation of men which came out of Egypt with Moses were most of them very wicked. Though God divided the sea to save them, and caused manna to fall from heaven to feed them, with many other wonderful works; yet they did little else than provoke him by their repeated transgressions. Ten times they tempted him in the wilderness; and, to complete their crimes, they despised the good land, and disbelieved His promises who had engaged to put them in possession of it. The consequence was, Jehovah swore in his wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest." So they were all, except Joshua and Caleb, doomed to die in the wilderness. On occasion of this melancholy sentence (the account of which you will find in the fourteenth chapter of Numbers,) it is supposed that Moses, the man of God, wrote this plaintive psalm; in which he laments over the mortality of man, and supplicates divine mercy to mitigate the doom; and the doom as it respected Israel was mitigated, or at least mingled with much mercy. Though the fathers were sentenced to perish in the wilderness, yet the promise was accomplished in the rising generation. "Your little ones," said the Lord, "which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised." This younger generation, from that time, became the grand object of hope to Moses and his companions. Their great business in the wilderness, for thirty-eight years, was to teach them the good knowledge of God, and to form their spirit and manners for his service. How earnestly did Moses pray for the Lord's



blessing upon these their labors, towards the close of this psalm: "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." To the same purpose is the petition which I first read. "O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." These petitions, too, were graciously answered. God's work did appear to Moses and his associates, and his glory to their children, and that at an early period. His spirit was richly poured forth upon the Israelitish youth. The beauty of the Lord their God was upon them, and the work of their hands was established. It was this amiable generation that extorted the admiration of Balaam himself: "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" It was of them that the Lord declared, that "Israel then was holiness to the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase."

I hope I need not say that this prayer of Moses, on behalf of the Israelitish youth, is expressive of the desires of your minister and of your parents: you know it is so. O that it may also express your own!

There are two things pertaining to this subject which require particular notice; namely, the object desired, which is an early participation of divine mercy; and the influence of such a participation of mercy on the happiness of future life.

I. Let us notice THE OBJECT DESIRED.—This is *mercy*, a being *satisfied* with mercy, and a being *early* satisfied with mercy. Pay attention, young people, to each of these particulars.

1. The grand object that you need is *mercy*, the mercy of God against whom you have sinned.—Holy angels worship God; but this prayer would not fit their lips. They are guilty and undone sinners to whom the voice of mercy is addressed; and such are you, and therefore it becomes you to sue for this all-important good. Mercy is of two kinds, *common* and *special*. Every good we enjoy is mercy; but they are not common mercies only, nor chiefly, that are here desired. They would not have satisfied Moses, nor will they satisfy us. That which he sought on behalf of the Israelitish youth, and which we seek on behalf of you, is saving mercy, renewing mercy, forgiving mercy; that which Saul the persecutor obtained, having sinned in ignorance and unbelief.

2. The blessing here sought is not only mercy, but a being *satisfied* with mercy.—If the rising generation among the Israelites obtained mercy, Moses and Aaron, and all their godly associates, would feel satisfied on a review of their labors; and if you, young people, obtain a similar blessing, we shall feel the same. Nor shall we be satisfied with

any thing short of it. We are glad to see you sober, intelligent, ingenious, and industrious; we rejoice in your temporal prosperity; but this will not satisfy us. How should it? To care for the less and not for the greater were cruel beyond expression. Nor will any thing short of saving mercy satisfy you. You may think that pleasure will, but it will not; nor fame, nor riches, nor aught else under the sun. Immortal minds can be satisfied with nothing short of an immortal good. Read, and carefully consider, the first three verses of the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah. But, in order to be satisfied with mercy, you must possess a thirst after it. Nothing satisfies but that which corresponds with our desires. Have you such desire? Do you call upon the Lord for mercy? and that with your whole heart? How many heathens are there in a Christian country who live without prayer! and how many who pray in form, without any earnest or sincere desire after those things for which they pray! Such will never be satisfied. But, if mercy be the one thing desired, you need not doubt being satisfied with it; for there is enough in God, enough in Christ, to assuage all your thirst. "With the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption."—"Open your mouth wide, and he will fill it."—"The Spirit," in the invitations of the word, "says, Come; the bride," or church of Christ, "says, Come; and who-soever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely."

3. The blessing to be sought is, not only a being satisfied, but satisfied *early* with divine mercy.—Moses desired that his prayer might be speedily answered; and, if genuine piety appeared in the young people at an early period of life, this his desire would be accomplished. Piety is a beautiful flower at any age, but most so in early life. How amiable did it appear in these young people! It is called "the love of their espousals," which the Lord afterwards remembered for the sake of their posterity. How amiable did it appear in Isaac, in Joseph, in Samuel, in David, in Abijah, in Josiah, and in many others! But let us proceed to observe—

II. THE INFLUENCE WHICH A PARTICIPATION OF DIVINE MERCY, AND ESPECIALLY AN EARLY ONE, WILL HAVE ON THE HAPPINESS OF YOUR FUTURE LIFE. This good obtained, you will *rejoice and be glad all your days*.—It is a notion imbibed by many who are strangers to true religion that it makes people melancholy and miserable. But this is false. The contrary is the truth. Every one that has known it has spoken well of it. The reproaches of those who know it not are unworthy of notice. To render this evident, let me request your attention to a few remarks.

1. To have participated of mercy is to have *all your sins forgiven*; and is not this a

source of joy and gladness? You may think but little of these things in the hour of health and thoughtless dissipation; but whenever you reflect, whether it be under a sermon, or on a bed of affliction, or on any other occasion, you will feel the force of such truths as these: "Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is covered!"—"Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee!" I cannot perceive what grounds there can be for joy or gladness while your sins are unforgiven. To rise every morning, and to retire every evening, with the curse of the Almighty on your heads, must needs be a dreadful thing; and, if you be not shockingly hardened in unbelief and stupidity, it must render your life far from happy. You may rejoice and be glad in many things, but it is only while you forget your true condition. One thought on this subject dissolves the charm, and sinks you in melancholy. O, my dear young people, drink but at this fountain, and it will prove the water of life! It will banish suspense and dread; and will take away all that is terrible from the most terrible of all words—DEATH, JUDGMENT, and ETERNITY.

2. The partaking of divine mercy *will furnish you with great sources of enjoyment in the study of truth.*—While blinded by your own carnality, the things of God will appear uninteresting, if not foolishness; but, having known the gift of God, you will ask, and he will give you more and more of this living water. Knowledge of any kind is food to an ingenious mind; but mere science has not that rich and interesting quality which attends evangelical truth. Astronomy may amuse you, and even delight you, by showing you the wonderful works of God; but the gospel gives you an interest in all. If you are Christians, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours. The study of nature is a source of pleasure; but the gospel, of joy. It has with great propriety been called "the wisdom that speaks to the heart." Such was the decision of the earl of Rochester in his wisest days. Joy, and especially the joy of the gospel, possesses much of that charming perturbation of spirit which is not excited but by great, interesting, and transporting objects. Happiness may cause a smile, but joy will add to that smile a tear, and perhaps a flood of tears. What a delicious enjoyment! Thus may you *rejoice and be glad all your days!*

3. By a participation of divine mercy, *all your duties will be converted into pleasure.*—Without this, every duty will be a task: Praying, reading and hearing, sabbaths and all other religious opportunities, will either be disregarded, or, if through custom you attend to them, yet your heart will not be in them. They will appear as lost time; and

such, indeed, they will prove. Time so spent will to you be lost, and worse than lost. But true religion will inspire your hearts with love; and this will render every religious duty a delight.

4. A participation of the mercy or grace of God *will shed a lustre on all your natural enjoyments.*—To have only natural enjoyments is to have a slender, short-lived, and uncertain portion. To have to reflect, in the midst of your pleasures, Now I am receiving my good things, and these, for aught that appears, are to be my all, is sufficient to spread a damp over every thing: but to have earthly good with a blessing, with the good-will of Him that dwelt in the bush, must give it a tenfold sweetness. Art thou but a Christian, "Eat thy bread with gladness, and drink thy wine with a cheerful heart, for God now accepteth thy labor."

5. A participation of divine mercy *will support your hearts under the heaviest afflictions, and enable you to rejoice and be glad, while others are sinking under those burdens.*—You are young, but you must lay your accounts with those ills which are common to men. Some of you who may be engaged in trade may sustain heavy losses; but this will bear you up. If you have Christ, you will never have lost your all. When poor Moab was wasted, she had nothing left. Well, therefore, might Jeremiah bewail her condition.—Chap. xlviii. 36. But, when Judah was gone into captivity, she could yet say, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him." Others of you may pass through life in poverty. *Hardly bestead and hungry*, you have little to lose; and, if destitute of religion, may be tempted to "curse your king and your God, and look upward." But the hope of the gospel will cause you to rejoice, even in this situation. Though no fruit appear on your vine, nor flock in your fold, nor herd in your stall; yet you will rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of your salvation.

6. A participation of God's special mercy affords an assurance that *all the blessings before mentioned are but the beginnings of joy, the earnest of everlasting bliss.*—Here we are at a loss. "Now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know that we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." O happy people! Well are they exhorted to "rejoice always, and again to rejoice"—"to sing aloud upon their beds"—"to count it all joy, even when they fall into divers trials, knowing that these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

To all this may be added, *the earlier you obtain these blessings the greater will be your enjoyments.*—Early piety will save you from much wickedness. The conversion of a soul, especially at this period, hides a multi-

tude of sins; and renders life much more happy as well as useful. Evil habits are broken with difficulty. Those who return to God in old age seldom do much for him, or enjoy much from him. Manasseh, though he obtained mercy, yet did but little towards undoing the mischief which he had wrought in Israel. He could lead his people and his family into wickedness while he was wicked; but he could not lead them back again when he returned. Amon, his successor, imitated Manasseh the idolater, not Manasseh the penitent. And as to himself, though he cast the idols out of the temple, and out of the city, yet the far greater part of the work of reformation was left for his grandson Josiah. That amiable young prince began, in the sixteenth year of his age, to seek after the Lord God of his fathers; and in the twentieth he set about a thorough work of reformation; "and God was with him, and blessed him, and he," like his ancestor Abraham, "became a blessing."

O young people, a thousand arguments and examples might be adduced to show the force and propriety of the petition! If you have a spark of ingenuousness towards God in your hearts, you would not desire to put him off with the refuse of a life spent in the service of sin. You would offer him the first fruits of your days; the best of your time, strength, talents, and influence. And this is not all. Time flies. years roll over in quick succession. Death sweeps away the young as well as the aged. Of the burials that we have had this year in our congregation five out of six have been young people; some of them under twenty years of age, and others of them but little past that period. None of them seem to have thought much of dying, yet they are gone from the land of the living! Hark! from their tombs I hear the language of warning and solemn counsel! "Whatever thy hand findeth thee to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave, whither thou goest." Join with your pastor, join with your parents, join with all that seek your welfare, in praying, "O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."

What shall I say more? Will you, my dear young people, will you drink and be satisfied at the fountain of mercy; a fountain that is wide open, and flows freely through our Lord Jesus Christ? You cannot plead the want of sufficient inducements. Ministers, parents, Christians, angels, the faltering voice of death, the solemn assurance of a judgment to come, and, above all, the sounding of the bowels of Jesus Christ, all say, Come. But if, like those who refused the waters of Siloah, you prefer the follies and pursuits of the present life to the joys of immortality, our souls shall weep in

secret places for you. Tribulation and anguish will overtake you even in this life; and under it, instead of the consolations and hopes of the gospel, you will have to reflect, This I have brought upon myself; and these are but the beginnings of sorrows!

### XXXV.—THE CHOICE OF MOSES.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of reward."—Heb. xi. 24—26.

Common history generally overlooks the servants of God as unworthy of its notice. The world has thought it worth while to hate and persecute them in all ages, but not to record either their lives or deaths. Statesmen, warriors, philosophers, poets, and the like, are held up to view, while they and their memorial are consigned to oblivion. It is not so however in God's history. The world loves its own, and God loves his own. God's history takes as little notice of the sons of the mighty as man's history does of the sons of the holy, exhibiting them as a succession of wild beasts, who have rendered themselves conspicuous only by their rapacity; while it holds up the characters whom they have traduced as men "of whom the world was not worthy." What a catalogue is given us in this chapter! To have a name in such a record is true honor.

Among these worthies stands the name of *Moses*. From his early childhood he was an object of the special care of heaven; and when arrived to years of maturity he was a believer, and an eminent servant of God.

It is pleasing to observe how the apostle finds an evangelical spirit in Old Testament saints. Moses was distinguished as the lawgiver of Israel, and he venerated the law which he had the honor to dispense. He did not, however, trust in his obedience to it for acceptance with God, but in Christ, in whom he believed. Yes, the religion of Moses was an attachment to *Christ*, though at that time he was known only by promise. Moses had also an expectation of the earthly Canaan, of that goodly mountain and Lebanon, though for his sin in a single instance he was deprived of it: but his principle "respect" did not terminate here, but on a "recompense of reward" beyond the grave, even in that better country in the faith of which the patriarchs lived and died.

To illustrate and vindicate the choice of Moses, which is here celebrated, is all I shall attempt. There are three remarks which offer concerning it.

1. The choice of Moses is ascribed to



*faith*.—He believed in the Messiah who was promised covertly to Adam, and to Noah, and more explicitly to Abraham, as the Seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. He also believed in the invisible realities of a future state. And thus his faith determined him to embrace even the reproach of Christ, and to relinquish every thing which stood in the way of the heavenly prize. The choice of Moses was free; yet it was not the effect of free will, but of faith in Christ, and which was the gift of God. And, if we make the same choice, it will be owing to the same cause.

2. It was made under the strongest *temptations*.—The refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter was in effect refusing a crown; for she is supposed to have been the only daughter of the king of Egypt, and to have had no children of her own. Moses therefore appears to have been designed for a successor to the throne. For this also he seems to have received a suitable education, being "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." All things conspired to tempt him. Fortune, with her flattering smiles, invited him to her banqueting house, and to think no more of his abject relations. Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house, was her language. Apis must be thy God, and worship thou him.

We who are stationed in the common ranks of life may think but little of such a temptation. A crown never having been within the reach of our expectations, it may possess but few charms for us. We cannot be ignorant, however, that for such stations men in high life have frequently sacrificed every thing. Poor Henry IV., king of France, about two hundred years ago, though a protestant in principle, and a truly great man, yet rather than relinquish a crown, abjured his religion. It is true our James II. lost his throne through his attachment to popery; but he meant not so, and even his friends ridiculed him for it. "There is a certain good man," said they, "lately come to Rome, who has resigned three crowns for a crucifix!"

There is no principle that is equal to the choice which Moses made, but faith. Nothing else can find an object that will outweigh it. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

3. In making such a choice, the best of this world was weighed against the worst of religion, "the reproaches of Christ;" and yet the latter was preferred.—If the best on Christ's side had been weighed against the worst on the side of the world, or even the best on both sides against each other, the triumph had been less glorious. But here we see in one scale the pleasures of sin, and the treasures of a mighty empire; objects for

which men are continually sacrificing their health, peace, conscience, character, lives, and souls; in the other, Christ and religion, with the greatest outward disadvantages; yet the latter preponderates. An attachment to the cause of the Messiah would at any time excite the reproaches of proud men; but at this time more especially, when his kingdom seemed so unlikely to prevail that his subjects were actually in a state of slavery. "The people of God" are at all times, more or less, in an afflicted state; but now waters of a full cup were wrung out to them: yet, with all these disadvantages, faith obtains the victory. Many are daily choosing the world, with not a thousandth part of this to choose; and setting light by Christ and his people, with not a thousandth part of this to refuse.

To a mind blinded by carnality, the choice of Moses will appear fanatical and foolish: but it was not so. Faith and right reason are not at variance. His decision was as wise as it was just. He did not choose afflictions and reproaches for their own sake; for he had all the feelings of a man as well as we. His choice terminated on "the recompense of reward," which, like the joy that was set before the great Object of his faith, enabled him to endure the cross, and despise the shame.—More particularly,

1. The things which he refused would last only for a season: but the things which he chose were of everlasting duration. We measure periods in all other estimations; and why should we not in this? Who would give so much for a short lease, or rather an uncertain tenure, as for a full purchase, and a lasting possession?

2. The society of the people of God, though afflicted, reproached, and persecuted, exceeds all the pleasures of sin *while they do last*. It is delightful to cast in our lot with them; for the bond of their union is holy love, which is the sweetest of all sweets to a holy mind. If we have once tasted of this, every thing else will become comparatively insipid. How sweet a bond of union is the love of Christ!—how sweet is the fellowship of saints! Even when borne down with reproaches and afflictions, how sweet are the tears of sympathy! What are the country and the gods of Moab to Ruth, after having lived in a religious family, and become acquainted with the true and living God? And what are the discouragements which Naomi presented, on the ground of future poverty and neglect? "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee," was her answer: "for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried. Jehovah do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me!"—The Lord,

moreover, hath spoken good concerning his people, and he delights to do them good. This motive was held up by Moses to Hobab, to induce him to cast in his lot with them; and, in persuading his friend, he doubtless made use of the same considerations which had prevailed on himself.

2. The very reproaches of Christ contain *greater riches* than all the treasures of this world. They carry with them, not only the testimony of a good conscience, but the approbation of God; and these are substantial riches. They are accompanied with the fellowship of Christ; for, in suffering for him, we suffer "with him;" and these also are substantial riches. Nor is it a small thing to be counted worthy to suffer for his name sake. It becomes the servants of Christ to consider the reproach of his enemies as their honor, and to bind it to them as a crown.

Let us then inquire what is our choice. We may not have the offer of a crown; or, if we had, it might have but little influence upon us. The desires of man are mostly confined to things a little above his present situation, or which are next within his reach. A good estate, or a well watered plain, might weigh more with many of us than a kingdom. Nor may the people of God in our day lie under such reproaches and afflictions as in the time of Moses. But this only proves that our temptations are not so strong as his; and, consequently, that if the world conquer us, we shall be the less excusable. But the world and Christ are in competition for our choice, and we are required to give a decisive and immediate answer. Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. There are many who can and do say as Joshua did, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." His people shall be our people, and his cause our cause. If any refuse, and prefer the present world before him, be it known to them that, as is their choice in this world, such will be their portion in that which is to come.

#### XXXVI.—PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS.

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."—Eph. iii. 14—16.

THE writing and preaching of the apostles had two distinct objects in view. They *preached* to make men Christians; to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. They *wrote* to make them eminent Christians; to quicken believers in their heavenly race, to promote in them a growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ. Such was the zeal of Paul, in endeavoring to accomplish the former, that he counted not his life dear to him, but was willing to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. Nor was he less desirous of the latter, making it the leading object in all his epistles, and the matter of his prayer day and night.

In the apostle's words there are three things which require our notice—the object desired—its importance—and the encouragement we have to seek it.

1. THE OBJECT IN WHICH THE APOSTLE WAS SO MUCH INTERESTED ON BEHALF OF THE EPHESIANS: "That he would grant you to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Nothing good is found in fallen man; nothing grows spontaneously in that soil but what is evil. If any thing holy be found there, it must be produced by the Spirit of God, who worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure. Nor is divine influence less necessary in carrying on the good work after it is begun. Such is our proneness to relax, to grow weary and faint in our course, that we need to be continually "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

The object prayed for is not *bodily* strength. That is of but little account in the sight of God, though in many cases it becomes the matter of human boasting. Samson was possessed of might in the outward man to a high degree, and a poor use he made of it. Perhaps a more feeble character is not to be met with among those whom the Scriptures mention as good men: with all his wonderful exploits, he weakly yielded to the tempter, and became an easy prey to his enemies.

Nor is it mere *mental* ability that is here intended; that was the strength of Solomon. Paul did not pray that we might be made great men, but good men; not that we might be poets or philosophers, but Christians; not that we might excel in genius or learning, but in grace and goodness; that our souls may prosper and be in health, and that we may be strengthened with might in the inner man.

This part of the subject will be better understood by considering some of the symptoms of spiritual might:—

1. *The manner in which we perform religious duties* may serve as a criterion by which to judge of our strength and weakness.—If we be Christians, we shall worship God in our families, and in secret; we shall search the Scriptures, frequent the house of God, and aim to discharge the various duties which pertain to our stations in life. These things we shall feel it incumbent upon us habitually to regard: but the question is how, and in what manner, do we perform these exercises? If our souls be in a languishing state, they will become a

task, and not a pleasure to us; we shall be weary of the Lord's service, feel his yoke to be grievous, and, while we keep up a round of duty, our devotions will be cold, feeble, and unprofitable. But if we be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," we shall count of the return of sacred opportunities, and find that wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. When David longed for water of the well of Bethlehem, three mighty men broke through the hosts of the Philistines to obtain it, hazarding their lives for his sake; while men of weaker attachment would have murmured at the severity of such an enterprise. If we possess a warm heart for Christ, we shall not think much of the time, the talents, the property, or the influence, which we may devote to his service; nor count our lives dear to us, if we may but promote his kingdom and glory in the world. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." Nor will this pleasure be confined to the public exercises of religion, but will extend to those of a more personal and private nature. It is possible we may feel much animation, and possess much enjoyment, in the outward means, while we are cold and lifeless in the duties of retirement; and this will be the case where the religion of the heart is not cultivated, nor close walking with God carefully maintained. But, if we be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, communion with God will be earnestly sought after; private duties will be vigorously attended to, and the closet will yield us pleasure, as well as the tabernacles of the Lord of hosts. There are but few of whom it may be said, as of Caleb and Joshua, that they "follow the Lord fully." Multitudes of professors appear to be but half-hearted in religion; they neither wholly relinquish it, nor take it up in earnest; but are desirous of following the Lord so far as is consistent with their carnal ease, their worldly interest, or their sinful passions, and no farther. But, if the object of the apostle's prayer be accomplished in us, we shall be decided for God, and prompt in our manner of serving him: not consulting with flesh and blood, not attempting to accommodate our principles and practice to those of the generality, nor wishing to do as little as possible for God, consistently with our own safety; but, delighting to do his will, we shall run in the way of his commandments.

2. The degree of our spiritual strength may be determined by the manner in which we resist temptations.—All men are tempted, but all do not resist temptation: this is peculiar to the Christian character. Mere worldly men go with the stream; they walk according to the course of this world, and are hurried along with the impetuous torrent.

But, if we be Christians, we are not of the world, and are in the habit of resisting temptations. Yet if our resistance be feeble and indeterminate—if we hesitate where we ought to be decided—if we look back on Sodom, like Lot's wife, with a lingering desire after those sinful pleasures which we profess to have given up, and regret the loss of sensual gratifications—are we not carnal, and walk as men? He who is strengthened with might in the inner man will not pause when temptations meet him, nor parley with the tempter; but will readily answer, "Thus it is written." It will be sufficient for him to know that God has forbidden this or that. Like a dutiful child, the will of his father is the guide of his conduct, and that alone will furnish sufficient motives for obedience. "Thus it is written."

3. *The spirit in which we endure affliction* will tend to discover the degree of religion we possess.—Affliction is the lot of man, as well as temptation; and we must all get through our difficulties in some way or other; but the manner in which we get through them will show whether we be strengthened with might in the inner man or not. If we faint in the day of adversity, our strength is small. If we be fretful, and murmur at the hand of God—if we sink under the burden and wish in ourselves to die—we either have no religion at all, or possess it only in a small degree. Great grace would enable us to bear affliction with submission, and even to rejoice in tribulation. Primitive Christians were destitute, afflicted, tormented; and yet how happy were they with their lot! They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake, and counted it all joy when they fell into divers temptations. Out of weakness they were made strong, and waxed valiant in fight: thus they were more than conquerors through him that loved them.

4. *The sense we entertain of our own weakness* is also a criterion of our being strengthened in the inner man.—An apostle could say, "When I am weak, then am I strong." To a worldly mind this may appear highly paradoxical, but a babe in Christ can understand it. When we have the greatest sense of our own insufficiency for what is good, and feel that we are nothing, and without Christ can do nothing; then are we "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." But if we feel self-sufficient, confident, and disposed to lean to our own understanding, then are we weak indeed, and become an easy prey to the enemy. Peter was never so weak as when he thought there was no danger of falling, and boldly said, "Though all men should forsake thee, yet will not I." Paul was never so strong as when he felt himself to be "nothing." When most sensible of our own insufficiency, we shall pray



most for strength from heaven, and watch most against temptation; and by this means we shall be strengthened with strength in our souls.

II. THE IMPORTANCE AND DESIRABLENESS OF THE BLESSING PRAYED FOR. Paul would not have been so importunate in his request if it had not been of the greatest importance that we should not only be Christians indeed, but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But there are other reasons which might be offered.

1. The Scriptures lay much stress on this as tending to *glorify God*.—"Herein is my Father glorified," says our Lord, "that ye bear much fruit: so shall ye be my disciples." Every field will bear some fruit in the ordinary course of things; but it is to the more abundant honor of the husbandman when his field brings forth thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold. So it is not merely by our being Christians that God is glorified, but by our being eminent Christians. Nor is this all: if we are desirous only of so much grace as may carry us safely to heaven, it is doubtful whether we shall ever arrive there at last. Abounding in the fruits of righteousness is considered by our Lord as essential to the very existence of true religion; for, says he, "so shall ye be my disciples." Christ himself brought forth much fruit, and it is necessary that we resemble him.

2. *Our usefulness* depends much on our being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.—If our souls be in a languishing state, what good can we do in the world? "Ye are the salt of the earth: but, if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing." What good can we do in society, amongst our immediate connections, or in our families, but as we diffuse a savor of Christ? And how can this be done, if we ourselves have lost that savor, and are become lifeless and unfruitful in the ways of God? At the close of every day it becomes us to inquire, Has any one been improved by our conversation? Will any one think the better of Christ from what they have heard or seen in us? Or have we been amongst men merely as men of the world; and might they not say of us, What do you more than others? He who possesses much religion will impart more or less of it to those about him: he will not make a show of it, yet it must be seen. There is that in the outward mien, the inward temper, and daily conversation of a man of genuine piety, which indicates that he has been with Jesus. The modesty of his countenance, the meekness and cheerfulness of his disposition, the sweet familiarity and seriousness of his intercourse with men, enliven the circle in which he moves, and recommend the religion which he professes.

III. THE ENCOURAGEMENT WE HAVE TO PRAY THAT WE MAY BE STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT BY HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN is intimated by the phrase that the Lord would grant it "according to the riches of his glory." When men are both rich and generous, and willing to give to the necessitous according to their ability, it suggests a very powerful motive to solicit their assistance. But who can estimate the riches of God's goodness and the boundless extent of his grace? And, if he gives "according to the riches of his glory," what encouragement is here for prayer! "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it, saith the Lord."—"Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." Let us ask much, and we shall have much: "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy." He who had but one talent, and went and hid it in the earth, lost it: but he who had five talents, and went and traded with the same, gained five other talents. Men who live to God, and whose whole concern it is to promote his glory, shall find their sphere of usefulness enlarging with their activity, and that God is girding them with strength proportionate to their labors. Like their divine Master, their reward is with them, and their work before them. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

#### XXXVII.—INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL RELIGION.

[*Sketch of an Address delivered on laying the Foundation of a New Chapel.*]

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."—1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

HAVING been requested to say a few words on this occasion, I wish, my friends, to direct your attention, not so much to the *place* about to be erected as to the *use* to which, I trust, it will be appropriated. Under the gospel it is not *place*, but the worshipping of God in spirit and in truth, that is of account.

Much of the religion of the Old Testament consisted in the building and worship of the temple; when therefore the New Testament was introduced it was usual to speak of its religion under this imagery. Thus the passage which I have read alludes partly to the building and partly to the worship of the temple. As the stones were laid on their foundation, so, believing in Jesus, we "come to him as unto a living

stone," and are "built up a spiritual house;" and, as the priests offered up their sacrifices, so believers are "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Yet there are great *disparities* between the Jewish and Christian temple. The stones of the former, being mere unconscious matter, were brought; here, being conscious and voluntary agents, they "come:" the foundation there also was mere matter, but here it is "a living stone:" that was literally a house; this is "a spiritual house:" priesthood was there distinguished by descent; here by character: their sacrifices were taken from the herd or the flock; ours from the heart—the offering of prayer and praise, presented in the name of Jesus Christ.

But, laying aside the imagery, we may consider the whole as furnishing a description of *individual and social religion*. Social religion begins with individual, and individual religion with "coming" to Christ.

I. With respect to *PERSONAL RELIGION*, the Scriptures make much of our coming to Christ. However correct we may be in our department, and devout at the stated seasons of worship, if Christ be "disallowed," all is nothing. Election itself no otherwise secures our salvation than as it secures our coming to Christ for it: "All that the Father giveth me shall *come* to me." The atonement of Christ does not avail us but as coming to him. It was thus in the atonements under the law: in some cases sins were confessed by the party laying their hands on the head of the victim, and in others by the priest on their behalf: but in no case could they derive benefit but as "comers thereunto."

The first operations of true religion in the mind are in this way. Christ may not be the first object to which a sinner's thoughts are turned; this may be his sin and exposedness to the wrath of God; but let our thoughts of sin and misery be as pungent as they may, if they lead us not to Christ for salvation, there is no true religion in them. He is "the way" to God: "no man cometh unto the Father but by him." We may be burdened under guilt and fear; but, till we *come* to him with our burden, there will be no gospel rest for our souls. The promise is not made to us as burdened, but as coming to Christ with our burdens.—Matt. xi. 28.

Nor is it confined to the time of our first believing; the Christian life consists in coming habitually to Jesus. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." That which food is to the body the doctrine of Christ crucified is to the mind. "Except we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life in us."

Our estimation of other objects is often governed by public opinion, but we must appreciate Christ not by what men think of him, but by what he is in the account of God. He may be "disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious;" and, if we are of God, we shall be of God's mind; he that is precious to God will be so to us. May there be many characters of this description, my friends, among you! You will then have materials for building up the spiritual temple, and for the offering up of spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

II. Add a few remarks on *SOCIAL RELIGION*, under the same idea of a temple; particularly on the materials with which it must be built—the important character it sustains—the employment of its priesthood—and the medium through which all their sacrifices must be accepted.

1. The proper materials for the Christian temple are "lively stones;" else they will not fit a living foundation, nor unite with other living stones in the building. Beware that the desire of being a large and opulent people may never induce you to overlook this. If it ever come to this, that your members are admitted on any principle short of faith in a living Redeemer, Ichabod will be written upon your doors.

2. The important character you sustain is that of a temple for God to dwell in. If the word of truth be preached among you, the worship of God preserved in its purity, and the ordinances of Christ observed according to their primitive simplicity, God will dwell in you, and walk in you, and ye shall be his people, and he will be your God. He makes great account of Christian churches, as being the appointed means of establishing his kingdom among men. With what complacency did he speak of ancient Zion! "This is my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it."—"The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob." What a high degree of interest is Christ described as taking in the concerns of the seven churches in Asia! The same idea is conveyed by the judgments denounced against those who have persecuted or corrupted them. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." It was this that opened the gates and broke down the walls of old Babylon; and it is on account of this that another Babylon, the antichristian church, shall come down even to the ground. "They have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink, for they are worthy."

3. As to your employment as a holy priesthood, this is to offer up "spiritual sacrifices." We have heard much of the Christian priesthood, as applied to ministers; but Christian-

ity knows of no priesthood, except what is common to all believers. It knows of pastors, bishops, and elders; but it is a misnomer to call them priests. It is for you all as Christians to offer up prayer and praise, both for yourselves and others; and may you continue on this spot to offer them!

4. Be not forgetful of the medium through which all your offerings become acceptable—"Jesus Christ." We must not carry our offerings in our hand, like Cain, presuming to be accepted on account of them. The order of the divine proceedings is the reverse of this. The Lord had respect, not to the offering of Abel and so to him, but to Abel and so to his offering. The good works of sinful creatures, even those which are most "spiritual," are no otherwise acceptable to God than by "Jesus Christ." The case of Job and his three friends serves to illustrate this principle. The Lord was so displeased with them that he refused to accept even a petition at their hands. "My wrath," saith he, "is kindled against you. Take your offerings, and go to my servant Job: he shall pray for you, and him will I accept, lest I deal with you after your folly." Such is our case, and such the intercession of our Redeemer. Him God accepts, and through him our prayers and praises become acceptable to God.

#### XXXVIII.—ON THE VANITY OF THE HUMAN MIND.

"The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."—Psa. xciv. 11.

SURELY it is the design of God in all his dispensations, and by all the discoveries of his word, to stain the pride of all flesh. The dust is the proper place for a creature, and that place we must occupy. What a humbling thought is here suggested to us! Let us examine it.

1. If vanity had been ascribed to the meaner parts of the creation—if all inanimate and irrational beings, whose days are as a shadow, and who know not whence they came nor whither they go, had thus been characterized—it had little more than accorded with our own ideas. But the humiliating truth belongs to man, the *lord* of the creation—to man, that distinguished link in the chain of being which unites in his person mortality and immortality, heaven and earth. The "Lord knoweth the thoughts of *man*, that they are vanity."

2. Had vanity been ascribed only to the exercises of our sensual or mortal part, or of that which we possess in common with other animals, it had been less humiliating. But the charge is pointed at that which is the peculiar glory of man, the intellectual part, his *thoughts*. It is here, if any where, that

we excel the creatures which are placed around us. We can contemplate our own existence, dive into the past and the future, and understand whence we came and whither we go. Yet in this tender part are we touched. Even the *thoughts* of man are vanity.

3. If vanity had been ascribed merely to those loose and trifling excursions of the imagination which fall not under the influence of choice, a kind of comers and goers, which are ever floating in the mind, like insects in the air on a summer's evening, it had been less affecting. The soul of man seems to be necessarily active. Everything we see, hear, taste, feel, or perceive, has some influence upon thought, which is moved by it as the leaves on the trees are moved by every breeze of wind. But "*thoughts*" here include those exercises of the mind in which it is voluntarily or intensely engaged, and in which we are in earnest; even all our schemes, contrivances, and purposes. One would think, if there were anything in man to be accounted of, it should be those exercises in which his intellectual faculty is seriously and intensely employed. Yet the Lord knoweth that even these are vanity.

4. If, during our state of childhood and youth only, vanity had been ascribed to our thoughts, it would have been less surprising. This is a truth of which numberless parents have painful proof; yea, and of which children themselves, as they grow up to maturity are generally conscious. Vanity at this period however admits of some apology. The obstinacy and folly of some young people, while they provoke disgust, often excite a tear of pity. But the charge is exhibited against *man*. "*Man at his best estate is altogether vanity.*"

5. The decision proceeds from a quarter from which there can be no appeal: "The Lord knoweth" it. Opinions dishonorable to our species may sometimes arise from ignorance, sometimes from spleen and disappointment, and sometimes from a gloomy turn of mind, which views mankind through a distorted medium. But the judgment given in this passage is the decision of Him who cannot err; a decision therefore to which, if we had no other proof, it becomes us to accede.

But that which is here declared as the result of divine omniscience, is abundantly confirmed by observation and experience. Let us take a brief view of the thoughts of man as exercised on two general topics—the world that now is, and that which is to come.

I. WITH RESPECT TO THE PRESENT WORLD, CONSIDER WHAT MULTITUDES OF THOUGHTS ARE EMPLOYED IN VAIN.

1. In seeking satisfaction where it is not to be found.—Most of the schemes and devices of depraved man go to the indulging of his



appetite, his avarice, his pride, his revenge, or in some form or other to the gratifying of himself. Look at the thoughts of such a man as Nabal: "Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my flesh, that I have killed for my shearers, and give to I know not whom?" Or of such a man as Haman: now aspiring to be the man whom the king delighteth to honor; now contriving the death of a whole people, in revenge of the supposed crime of an individual.—Esther iii. Such, alas! is a great part of the world to this day. What desolations have come upon the earth through the resentment of a few individuals! And those whose situation has afforded them the greatest scope for self-gratification in all its forms are generally the farthest off from satisfaction.

2. *In poring on events which cannot be recalled.*—Grief, under the bereaving strokes of providence, to a certain degree, is natural, it is true, and allowable: but when carried to excess, and accompanied with despondency, and unthankfulness for continued mercies, it is a great evil. I knew a parent who lost an only child and who never after appeared to enjoy life. It seemed to me that, if his spirit had been expressed in words, they would have been to this effect: Lord, I cannot be reconciled to thee for having taken away the darling of my heart, which thou gavest me!—All such thoughts are as vain as they are sinful, seeing none can make straight what God has made crooked.

3. *In anticipating evils which never befall us.*—Such is our folly that, as though the evils which necessarily attend the present state were not enough for us to carry, we must let loose our imaginations and send them into the wilderness of futurity in search of ideal burdens to make up the load. This also is vanity.

4. To these may be added *the valuing of ourselves on things of little or no account.*—If providence has given one a little more wealth than another—if he lives in a better house, eats better food, and wears better apparel—what a multitude of self-important thoughts do such trifles breed in the mind! But all is vanity, and rejoicing in a thing of nought.

5. *In laying plans which must be disconcerted.*—The infinitely wise God has laid one great plan, which comprehends all things. If ours accord with his, they succeed: if not they are overturned, and it is fit they should. Men, in their schemes, commonly consult their own private interest; and, as others are carrying on similar designs for themselves, they meet, and clash, and overturn one other. Thus men, partly by their plans being at variance with that of God, and partly with those of their fellow creatures, are ever exposed to disappointment and chagrin. Their lives are wholly occupied in

building Babels, having them thrown down, and fretting against God and their neighbors on account of their disappointments.

In looking at the struggles of different parties for power, whether in a monarchy, an aristocracy, one sees a dangerous rock, which multitudes are climbing at the utmost hazard, and from which great numbers fall and perish: and the same spirit operates through all degrees of men, according to the opportunities which they enjoy.

II. LET US SEE WHAT ARE MAN'S THOUGHTS WITH REGARD TO RELIGION, AND THE CONCERNS OF A FUTURE LIFE. It might be expected that, if in anything they be other than vanity, it is in this. The thoughts of a rational and immortal creature upon its eternal interests, one would think, must be serious and solemn. When the objects of thought are—God—our accountability to him—our sin against him—our salvation from it, or condemnation for it—surely we shall not trifle and deceive ourselves! Yet, alas! so far is man from excelling in this solemn department, that there is nothing on which he thinks to so little purpose. The truth of this remark will appear from the following questions:—

1. *What are the thoughts of the heathen world about religion?*—In them we see what the thoughts of man, left to himself, amount to. To call them vanity is to call them by a tender name. I speak not merely of the common people, who are enveloped in ignorance and superstition, but of their wisest philosophers. To what do all their inquiries about God, the chief good, amount? To nothing at all. All is vanity! A babe in the Christian religion, with a page of God's word in his hand, knows more than they have been able to discover in the space of three thousand years.

2. *What are all the thoughts of the Christian world, where God's thoughts are neglected?*—Men who have the Bible in their hands, but who, instead of learning the mind of God in it and there resting contented, are ever bent on curious speculations, prying into things beyond their reach, vainly puffed up with a fleshly mind; to what do their thoughts amount? Nothing! They may presently lose themselves, and perplex others; they may obtain the flattery of unbelievers, and compliment one another with the epithets of candid and liberal; they may comfort themselves in the idea of being moderate men, and not like those bigots who refuse to yield or make any concessions to the objections of unbelievers: but all that they gain is the friendship of the world, which is enmity to God. Were a monument erected to the memory of all those who have perished by falling from the precipice of unscriptural speculation, it could not have a more appropriate motto than this: "Vain man would be wise."

3. *What is all that practical atheism which induces multitudes to act as if there were no God?*—Great numbers of people in every part of the world, whatever they may call themselves, are practical atheists. They “work iniquity in the dark, and say in their hearts, The Lord seeth us not: the Lord has forsaken the earth.” The Lord, they think, takes no cognizance of the world now, whatever he may have done formerly; but leaves us to shift for ourselves, and do as well as we can.—Such characters there were in the times of David; and their presumptuous folly seems to have given occasion for the words on which these reflections are founded. They are denominated “proud;” described as “triumphing and boasting” in their wickedness, as “uttering hard things,” as “breaking in pieces God’s people and afflicting his heritage,” as “slaying the widow and the stranger and murdering the fatherless;” yet as saying, “The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard.” Well did the Psalmist admonish them, saying, “Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen” (who are without the light of revelation) “shall not he correct?” those who possess and despise it? “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.”

4. *What are all the unbelieving self-flattering imaginations of wicked men, as though God were not in earnest in his declarations and threatenings?*—Nothing is more solemnly declared than that “except we be converted, and become as little children, we cannot enter the kingdom of God”—that “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”—that “neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”—and that “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Yet the bulk of mankind do not seem to believe these things, but flatter themselves that they shall have peace, though they add drunkenness to thirst; that to talk of a man, born in a Christian land, requiring to be born again, is enthusiastical; that God is merciful, and will not be strict to mark iniquity; and that if we do as well as we can—that is, as well as we can find in our hearts to do—the Almighty will desire no more. The vanity of these thoughts, prevalent as they are in the world, will appear, if not before, when God shall judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ.

5. *What are the conceits of the self-righteous, by which they buoy up their minds with vain hopes, and refuse to submit to the righteousness of God?*—Of the two first-born sons who presented their offerings to God, one

came without a sacrifice; and the greater part of professed worshippers in all ages, it is to be feared, have followed his example. It is deeply rooted in every human heart that if the displeasure of God be appeased towards us, or if he show us any favor, it must be on account of some worthiness found in us. To go to God as utterly unworthy, pleading the worthiness of a Mediator, and building all our hope of acceptance on his obedience and sacrifice, is a hard lesson for a proud spirit. Yet, till we learn this, we in effect learn nothing; nor will God accept our offering, any more than he accepted the offering of Cain.

Such is the vanity of man’s thoughts, in things of everlasting moment. But, it may be asked, are all the thoughts of men of this description? No: the charge is directed against men as depraved, and not as renewed; for though there be much vanity in the thoughts of the best of men, yet they are not mainly so. There are thoughts which, though we are not sufficient of ourselves to obtain them, yet being imparted to us by Him in whom is all our sufficiency, are not vanity. If we think of God with approbation, of sin with contrition, of ourselves as nothing, of Christ as all, of earth as the house of our pilgrimage, and heaven as our home: this is thinking justly, as we ought to think, Such thoughts also are an earnest of that state where themes of unutterable glory shall forever present themselves; and where all our powers, being corrected and sanctified, shall ever be employed in exploring the wonders of grace.

#### XXXIX.—EQUITY OF THE SENTENCE RECORDED AGAINST THOSE WHO LOVE NOT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maran-atha.”—1 Cor. xvi. 22.

A SENSE of the excellence of Christ, or of his worthiness of being loved, is of great importance in religion. Without this we can never truly love him, nor prize any thing which pertains to him. Destitute of this, we shall see his name degraded without indignation, and hear it exalted without delight. Without this, we shall esteem his salvation itself no otherwise than a happy expedient to escape eternal misery. In short, without this, we shall be mere statues in Christianity, bring no glory to its Author, and enjoy none of its refined pleasures.

A spirit very different from this possessed the great apostle, when he uttered the above passage. Twenty years ago, if a soldier, who had fought under the late *Marquis of Granby*, had heard the language of detraction against his noble commander, deeply impressed with a sense of the hero’s worth, he would have been ready to exclaim, In any

man love not the Marquis of Granby, let him be banished the British dominions! Probably, some such feelings might possess the heart of Paul, who had long served under the Lord Jesus Christ, and was deeply impressed with an idea of his innate worth.

Indeed the sentence is *awful*. "Let him be accursed when the Lord cometh!" It probably alludes to the Jewish excommunications, which they tell us were of three sorts, or degrees. In the first, the offender was *put out of the synagogue*, or merely *excommunicated*; in the second, he was not only excommunicated, but *anathematized*, or *cursed*; in the third (which was only for the worst, and most incorrigible,) he was not only *anathematized*, but *consigned over to the judgment of the great day!* The meaning of the word here seems to be, Let him be excommunicated from the presence of God and all holy beings: and, as he did not love the Lord Jesus Christ as a Saviour, let him fall before him as a Judge! This sentence, however awful, is strictly *equitable*. The truth of this will appear by the joint consideration of three things.

I. He that loves not the Lord Jesus Christ must be an ENEMY TO GOD, TO VIRTUE, AND TO ALL MORAL EXCELLENCE.—Such a oneness is there between God as a Lawgiver and Christ as a Saviour that what is done to the one is done to the other. The Jews, in our Saviour's time, wished to be thought friends to God, while they were enemies to Christ: but "If God were your father," saith he, "ye would love me." And again, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not." The same thing is observable now, among the Deists, who would be thought friends to the one Supreme Being, but enemies to Christianity. And indeed this deistical spirit seems greatly to prevail in multitudes that are not professed Deists, especially among some in the higher ranks, who, though they can now and then assume so much fortitude as to speak respectfully of the Supreme Being, yet would be ashamed that a word should be heard from their lips in defence of Christ or Christianity. It were to be wished, too, that none of those who sustain the character of *Christian ministers* had ever discovered the same spirit. This is very awful! But whatever we may think here, and whatever character we may sustain, it will be found at last that "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father!"

1. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ he can have no regard to the *authority of God as a Lawgiver*, seeing it was this that he came into the world to maintain. When devils had cast off God's yoke as grievous, and practically declared him a tyrant; and men had followed their example; judging it too mean a thing, it seems, for-

ever to be so kept under rule; then the Son of God came down, and, in the presence of these revoltors, was subject to the very law which they had discarded. Though he was under no natural obligation to come under the law, yet, that he might show how worthy he thought it of being obeyed, and thus wipe off the foul reproach, "he learned obedience." Yea, that it might be seen how "easy" a yoke it was, and thence the unreasonableness and wickedness of their revolt, he declared, whatever others might think, it was his "meat to do the will of his Father!" If any man, therefore, love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he cannot love the law of God, but must be of Satan's mind, accounting it a severe law, and obedience to it slavery; and thus he must be an enemy to God.

2. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he can have no regard to the honor of God's *justice* being secured. If we had a proper regard to the justice of God, we could not bear the thought of salvation itself being erected upon its ruins. To desire such a thing would be nothing less than desiring to depose the King of the universe; *for justice and judgment are the basis of his throne*. If a fallen creature loved God, and could see no way for his own salvation but what must be at the expense of truth and equity, his soul must be filled with inexpressible distress. If the way of salvation by Jesus Christ were then to be preached to him—a way wherein, through his glorious sacrifice, God could be just and the justifier of him that believed in Jesus—how would his spirit revive within him! With what joy of heart would he acquiesce in a plan wherein mercy and truth could meet together! The more he loved God, the more he would love Him who out of love to equity invited the sword of vengeance to plunge itself in his heart, saying, "*Father, glorify thy name!*" But if Christ and his way of salvation have no charm in our eyes—if we would barely like to be justified (that is, freed from condemnation,) but care not how; and think, as to God being just therein, he must see to that—is it not evident that we have no love to God, truth, or righteousness?

3. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he gives proof that God's grand *enemy being defeated*, and all his *counsels turned into foolishness*, affords him no pleasure; and consequently he can be no friend of God, but an enemy. If we love our prince, we shall rejoice at his enemies being overthrown, and admire that noble commander who, by hazarding his life in the high places of the field, should put them to confusion. If any monster had been so unfeeling, in the day when David slew Goliath and saved Israel, as to have had no love to the young hero, would he not have been deemed an enemy to his king and country,



and suspected of being on the side of the Philistines? Now, as the Lord Jesus Christ entered the field, and with his own arm spoiled principalities and powers, broke the serpent's head, routed his forces, and ruined his scheme; if we love not him, whatever we may pretend, we must be enemies to God, and on the side of Satan.

4. In short, if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, he must be an enemy to all *moral excellence*; for of this he was a perfect model, both living and dying. God himself hath borne witness of him that "he loved righteousness, and hated iniquity." He lived to set forth the amiableness of the one, and died that God in him might show his abhorrence of the other. He lived and died that God's character in saving sinners might be untainted with moral turpitude. It may well therefore be said of him—"The upright love thee!" Christ is the *sum and centre of all excellence*. Perhaps we cannot form a better idea of him than as an assemblage of all goodness, a being in whom all excellences meet. To have no love to him, then, is to have no love to moral excellence, and so to be an enemy to all good. Such a character surely deserves to be anathematized from God and all holy beings!

II. He that loves not the Lord Jesus Christ must be AN ENEMY TO MANKIND. Perhaps it might be asked, Cannot people be possessed of *humanity* without being the subjects of Christianity? It is answered, No, not in the full extent of that term. It is not denied but that people may wish well to one another's temporal interests—may wish to promote their health, and wealth, and reputation—may live in friendship with mankind, and be of a compassionate spirit to the poor—and may have no design in what they do to destroy their souls. But all this is no more than an over indulgent parent may feel, who yet *interpretatively*, by sparing the rod, is said to *hate* his son; and it is common to say, in such cases, the parent was the child's *enemy*. Yea, it is very little, if any thing, more than thieves and robbers may exercise towards their comrades. Here is one of that character, for instance, draws a young man into his practices: he has no *intention* to bring him to the gallows, or himself either; and he may wish his health and prosperity, and pity and relieve him in distress. All this is good; but could it appear from this that he was not his *enemy* in setting him against his own interests, and seducing him away from his best friends? Is he not his *enemy*? But to come nearer to the point—

The Lord Jesus Christ is the best friend to mankind that ever existed: if therefore any man bear *true* love to the souls of men, and seek their real welfare, it is impossible but that he should love the Lord Jesus Christ. We should deem him an enemy to

mankind, who, if a skilful and generous physician came into our parts and healed all gratis who applied to him, should endeavor to prejudice the minds of people against him. An enemy to *Joseph*, who was the saviour of Egypt and the adjacent countries, would have been deemed an enemy to mankind. But what were these? Christ has healed the tremendous breach between God and man, has rescued millions and millions from eternal ruin, and is still "able and willing to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him." If any man therefore love not the Lord Jesus Christ, surely he deserves, as an enemy to the public good, to be excommunicated from the society of the blessed.

But may there not be a *neutrality* exercised in this affair? If some do not love Christ, does it follow that such are his *enemies*? Yes, it does. This is a cause wherein the idea of neutrality is inadmissible and impossible. They that are not *with* him are declared to be *against* him.

III. He that loves not the Lord Jesus Christ must be AN ENEMY TO HIMSELF.—To be an enemy to Christ is to be guilty of the most awful kind of suicide. "All they that hate him" are said to "love death." Christ is the only door of hope for any lost sinner: to hate him, therefore, is to hate ourselves. Had *Nuaman* continued to despise the waters of Jordan, people would have thought that he had no love for himself. If a company of wretches who had escaped a shipwreck were in an open boat at sea, and if, on the appearance of a friendly vessel bearing down upon them, they were so infatuated that, instead of imploring assistance, they should treat it with every mark of indignity and contempt, we should say, *they love death*—they deserve to perish. If the power of Christ's *anger* be considered, it will amount to the same thing. For a man to rouse a lion would seem as if he were weary of his life: much more to provoke the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Of him it may well be said, "Who shall rouse him up?"

If a person then be an enemy to God, to mankind, and to himself, surely it is but right and fit he should be excommunicated from the society of God, and all holy beings, as an enemy to being in general. Surely he that loves not God ought to be accursed from God; he that loves not mankind ought to be banished, to take his lot among devils, as we should banish a murderer from the society of men: and he that loves not himself, but seeks his own ruin, ought to find it.

Upon the whole, if the foregoing thoughts be just, then that distinction has been made without ground, that sinners will not be punished for their not loving the Lord Jesus Christ, but only for the *breach of God's law*; as if the want of love to Christ were not a breach of the law. So far from this, it is

such a breach of it as perhaps cannot be equalled by any other case whatever. It is at once a breach of the *whole law*, and that in the highest degree. What doth the law require, but *love to God, love to our neighbor, and love to ourselves?* These are the whole of what is included in that summary given of it by our Lord; and these we have seen are all broken, and that in the highest degree, in the want of love to Christ.

O how is it that we are not all excommunicated and accursed of God? Are we better than others? No, in no wise. God might justly have banished us from the abodes of the blessed. It is all of grace, free, sovereign, and great grace, if we are brought to love him, and so escape the awful curse; and for this we can never be sufficiently thankful.

#### XL.—FELLOWSHIP OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN EVIL TIMES.

“Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels: and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”—Mal. iii. 16, 17.

WE often hear people complain of the times, and of the low state of religion; but good men will be good men in the worst of times, and that which others make an excuse will to them furnish a motive to speak often one to another. In the Jewish worship, all who were of Abraham's seed mingled together; yet even then the godly found one another out: “I am a companion of all those that fear God.”

I. NOTICE THE CHARACTER OF THESE TIMES. The prophet Malachi lived some time after Nehemiah, when the Jews were become very degenerate. 1. Great degeneracy among the *priests*—sordid despisers of religion. God speaks of what a true priest should be, but charges them with the reverse.—Chap. ii. 5—8. The consequence was, as might be expected, they were despised by the people. 2. Great degeneracy among the common people—profane towards God, and treacherous towards one another—frequent divorces for trivial causes, yet full of excuses. 3. Even the professed worshippers of God had a great deal of hypocrisy. 4. All these things put together proved a stumbling-block to people in general. Wicked men were reckoned happy and promoted, and providence seemed to favor them; hence infidelity and atheism abounded: yet even “*THEN* they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another.”

II. OBSERVE THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF THE GODLY IN THESE TIMES. I.

They are characterized as fearing the Lord. The phrase may be more expressive of the Old Testament than the New; but it is characteristic of good men under any dispensation. It denotes that filial reverence of God's name, and fear of offending or dishonoring him, which a truly good man possesses. 2. They are described as keeping up a close communion with one another. The world was alive, and they were alive. The seed of the serpent leagued, and the seed of the woman communed together. You may be sure their conversation was edifying, or it would not have been recorded. They might have occasion to reprove, to admonish, to counsel, to exhort, to encourage, to instruct. Such a state of things is necessary, especially in evil times. The more wicked the world, the more need of Christian fellowship. 3. Their doing this is called thinking upon God's name. Thinking here is not opposed to *speaking* (for they that speak are the same persons as those who think,) but to *forgetting*. While others cared not for God's name, their thoughts were occupied about it. God's interest lay near their hearts; they grieved for its dishonor, and concerted plans for its promotion. If we love his name it will occupy our thoughts.

III. THE FAVORABLE NOTICE TAKEN OF THIS CONDUCT. It seems they were retired from the notice of the multitude; perhaps like the disciples, for fear of the Jews. They might be apprehensive lest any should hearken and hear them. One, however, did so, and took down their conversation too, not literally, for God needs no book but his own mind. This will be brought out at judgment.—Matt. xxv. They that think of him here will be remembered by him there, and when they have forgotten it. “They shall be mine in that day.” That day shall be a day of general destruction, like that of a tempest to shipping, and then nothing is spared but the most valuable things or persons, as jewels. Cities, nations, sea, land, heaven, earth, all will be one general wreck; or, lest this should not be sufficiently strong, he will spare them as a man spareth his son—*as his own son*, whose life is bound up with his own.

Which of these characters is ours?

Will our conversation bear writing in a book?

#### XLI.—PUBLIC WORSHIP.

“Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord from the fountain of Israel: There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.”—Psalm lxxviii. 26—28.

THIS psalm was sung, it is probable, on the removal of the ark into the city of Da-

vid.—Numb. x. It was now that the ark had rest, and the tribes assembled three times a year at Jerusalem, the place that God had chosen.

The text is a lively description of their worship.

I. OFFER A FEW REMARKS BY WAY OF EXPOUNDING THE PASSAGE. 1. Israel had their lesser congregations in ordinary every sabbath-day, and their national ones three times a year. Their business in all was to *bless God*. 2. This business was to be carried on by *all Israel*, beginning at the fountain-head, and proceeding through all its streams. God had blessed Israel; let Israel bless God. 3. All the tribes are supposed to be present; four are mentioned in the name of the whole as inhabiting the confines of the land. Their union was a source of joy: they had been divided by civil wars, but now they are met together. 4. Those tribes which are named had each something particular attending it. Little Benjamin (see Judges xxi.) had nearly been a tribe lacking in Israel, but now appears with its ruler. Judah had been at war with Benjamin: Saul was a Benjamite; David was of Judah: yet they happily lost their antipathies in the worship of God. Zebulun and Naphtali were distant tribes, yet they were there! dark too—yet there. 5. The princes and the people were all together. 6. They were supposed to be strong, but were reminded that what they had of strength was of God's commanding. Their union and success, as well as that degree of righteousness among them which exalted the nation, was of God. 7. They are not so strong but that they need strengthening, and are directed to pray as well as praise. "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."

II. APPLY THE SUBJECT. Two things are here exemplified, namely, diligence and brotherly union; and three things recommended, namely, united praise—united acknowledgment that, for what they are, they are indebted to God—and united prayer for future mercies. Each of these affords a rule for us.

1. The worship of God must be attended with *diligence*. There are the princes of Zebulun and Naphtali. They had to travel above 200 miles three times a year, thither and back again, that is, 1200 in a year, twenty-four miles a week. Those who neglect the worship of God for little difficulties show that their heart is not in it; and, when they do attend, cannot expect to profit: "they have snuffed at it." Those whose hearts are in it often reap great advantage. God blessed the Israelites in their journeys, as well as when there, Ps. lxxxiv. 6, "the rain filleth the pools:" and so Christians. There is a peculiar promise to those that seek him *early*.

2. The worship of God must be attended to with *brotherly love*. All the tribes must go up together. It is a kind law that enjoins *social* worship; we need each other to stimulate. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together." God has made us so that we shall be greatly influenced by each other, both to good and evil. It greatly concerns us to cultivate such a spirit: to this end we must cherish an affectionate behavior in our common intercourse—bear, forbear, and forgive; and, whatever differences we may have, not suffer them to hinder our worship. The tribes, as we have seen, had their differences, yet they were there. When all Israel met at Hebron to anoint David king, what should we have said if some had kept away because others went?

3. Our business, when assembled, must be to *bless God* in our congregations; and a pleasant work this is. Israel had reasons, and great reasons—and Christians more. Thank him for his unspeakable gift—bless him for the means of grace and the hopes of glory. Bless him—he "healeth all thy diseases," &c.—Ps. ciii. This is an employment that fits for heaven. The tears of a mourner in God's house were supposed to defile his altar. We may mourn for *sin*; but a fretful, discontented, and unthankful spirit, defiles God's altar still.

4. Another part of our business is to unite in acknowledging that, whatever we are, we owe it to God alone: "Thy God hath commanded thy strength." We possess a degree of strength both individually and socially. Art thou strong in faith, in hope, in zeal? It is in Him thou art strong. Are we strong as a society? It is God that increased us with men like a flock; it is he that keeps us in union, gives us success, &c.

5. Another part of our business must be to unite in prayer for future mercies. We are not so strong, either as individuals or societies, but that there is room for increase, and this is the proper object of prayer. God has wrought a great work for us in regeneration. God has wrought much for us as a church in giving us increase, respect, and room in the earth. Pray that each may be increased; or, in the words of the text, "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."

Are there none who are strangers to all this?

#### XLII.—GREAT SINNERS ENCOURAGED TO RETURN TO GOD.

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."—Deut. iv. 29.

THERE is a mixture of mercy and judgment in all the sacred writings. The New



Testament contains some awful threatenings. "He that believeth not shall be damned"—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha." On the other hand, the law of Moses is interspersed with mercy. As the whole passage has immediate respect to Israel, it doubtless refers to their sins, their captivity and troubles, and to God's great mercy to them in remembrance of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And, as mention is made of "the latter days," it seems to be not merely an encouragement to them to return, but a prophecy which has yet to be accomplished. Yes, when the spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon them, it shall be fulfilled.

But, though it may specially refer to Israel, it is no less applicable to us Gentiles. We are sinners, and have brought innumerable miseries on ourselves, and there is but one refuge for us to seek to—and, if we seek him with all our heart and soul, we shall find mercy; for the Lord our God is a merciful God.

I. NOTICE A FEW CASES TO WHICH THIS LANGUAGE APPLIES.—The description given of an impenitent people is—"No man spoke aright, saying, What have I done?" Were we to institute such an inquiry, and answer according to truth, what would the answer be?

1. One would say, I have gone great lengths in sin: I lived without restraint; I was a drunkard, a blasphemer, an injurious person to all I had to do with; and now God has brought me into troubles—I am hated and despised by my relations and neighbors—I cannot live long, and yet fear to die. Yet, "if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

2. Another says, I was born of religious parents; I was long weary of religion and wished to be free. At length my father died, and I gave myself up to evil; and, now my troubles are come upon me, no one respects me, nor careth for my soul; I was undutiful to my parents, and now my children are so to me. But, "if from thence," &c.

3. Another may say, My conduct has been correct and orderly, so as to obtain the approbation of those about me; but I have valued myself upon it, have lived without God, and never sought mercy as a guilty creature; I have lived a pharisee; and now I feel the want of something in which to appear before God. Well, "if from thence," &c.

4. Another—I have made a profession of religion and thought well of my state, and talked to others, and was thought well of by others; but I indulged first in little and secret sins, and after this they became greater

and more exposed; and now I am an outcast—every one shuns me. Yet, "if from thence," &c.

5. Though I have not lost my character, yet I have lost my peace of mind; I have not walked with God, and God seems to have departed from me; I cannot pray, nor read, nor hear to profit; I can enjoy no pleasure in the world nor in religion; I feel myself a backslider in heart, and God has filled me with my own ways. But, "if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

II. OBSERVE THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE ENCOURAGEMENT RESTS.

1. The merciful character of God. Isa. lv. 7, "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c. No sins are so great or numerous but that he can forgive them: "if—with all thy thy heart," &c.

2. The covenant which God made with the fathers, and much more with his Son. There is this difference between uncovenanted and covenanted mercy: the one has no promises; the other has many. God has pledged his perfections that whosoever believeth in him shall be saved. No ground therefore to despair: whatever thy condition, how far soever from God, return to him through his dear Son, and you will obtain mercy.

#### XLIII.—CONSOLATION TO THE AFFLICTED.

"I go to prepare a place for you: and, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."—John xiv. 2—4.

If our Saviour had been going to some unknown place, where we must not follow him, we might well be unhappy: but "whither I go ye know." It is true we know nothing of an hereafter beyond what God in his word hath told us: but those lively oracles are a light in a dark place, whose cheering beams pierce the otherwise impervious gloom of futurity. When a dying heathen was asked whither he was going, he replied, Oh my friends, we know nothing of an hereafter! Such also must have been our answer, but for the glorious gospel of the blessed God. As it is, we know whither our Redeemer is gone. He is gone to his Father, and to our Father; to his God, and to our God. He has gone to mount Zion, the city of the living God; to the innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to God the judge of all. Whither he is gone we know, for we have had a foretaste of the bliss. As believers we also are already come to mount Zion. The church below and the church above are only different branches of the same family,

so that he who is come to one is come to the other.

But how are we to follow him, unless we "know the way?" If he "come and receive us," he will be our guide. And this is not all: "the way we know." Thomas thought he knew not whither his Lord was going, nor the way that led to him: yet he knew his Lord, and believed in him as the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners. Jesus therefore answered him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" knowing me, you know the way to the heavenly world. Yes, we not only know whither our Saviour is gone, but the way that leads to him. The doctrine of the cross, as dear Pearce observed, is the only religion for a dying sinner.

If an affectionate father had resolved to remove to a distant country, he might not take his family with him in the first instance, but might choose to go by himself; to encounter and remove the chief difficulties in the way, and make ready a habitation to receive them. Such in effect was the conduct of our Saviour. "I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." His passage through the territories of death was attended with the most dreadful of all conflicts; but, having overcome, it renders ours an easy one. Death to us is Jesus "coming to receive us to himself."

1. The presence of a beloved object is the grand preparative of any place, and that which gives it its principal charm. Such is the preparation of a place in the future world for us. Jesus is there, and that is quite enough. If any thing will operate as a magnet to attract us from earth to heaven, it is the consideration, of being "where Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God." Think what an accession of joy his triumphant entrance must have occasioned through all the heavenly regions, and what a source of uninterrupted bliss his presence affords. What would some societies be without certain interesting characters, which are in effect the life of them? And what would heaven be without Christ? The zest of all its bliss consists in *his* being there, and this is urged as the grand motive to "setting our affections on things above." Col. iii. 1, 2.

2. There also he will gather together the whole family of heaven and earth. His redemption brings multitudes to glory, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and every one that enters adds to the enjoyment. In order to connect us together in the closest bonds of affection, God has so ordained that both in this world and that which is to come our blessedness should be bound up with that of each other; in seeing the good of his chosen, rejoicing in the gladness of his nation, and glorying

with his inheritance. Hence it follows that every accession to the heavenly world affords an influx to the enjoyment of its inhabitants. Every one that goes before may be said to contribute to the preparing of the place for them which follow after. The pure river of the water of life has its origin in the throne of God and of the Lamb; but in its progress it passes through various mediums, which swell its streams, and render it more and more delectable. From the entrance of righteous Abel into the new Jerusalem, to this day, it has been rising higher and higher, and will continue to do so till all the nations of the saved are gathered together.

3. Christ prepares a place for us, in superintending the concerns of the universe, and causing all events to work together and produce the highest ultimate good. Glory awaits the righteous immediately upon their departure from the body, but a much greater glory is in reserve. Innumerable events in the system of providence must remain inexplicable, till the mystery of God be finished. It is impossible for spectators to comprehend the use of all the parts of a complicate machine, till it is constructed and put into motion. And as our Forerunner is now preparing the scenery of this grand exhibition, and hastening it to its desired issue, it is thus that he is preparing a place for us.

Hence we are encouraged to be looking for, and hastening unto, the coming of the day of God, and directed to consider it as the period when we shall be fully "satisfied." How solemn, and yet how sweet, is the description of it! "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." A "shout" perhaps denotes the universal joy of heaven, for the arrival of the day when the war is terminated in victory, and the last enemy is destroyed. The blowing of a "trumpet" may probably allude to that of the jubilee, on which the prison doors were thrown open, and the captives set at liberty. Such were the consolations presented to the Thessalonians, on the death of their Christian friends.

Our Lord did not absolutely forbid his apostles to weep at his departure: he himself wept at the grave of Lazarus: but he dissuaded them from *excessive* grief. "Let not your heart be troubled." I think I never felt what may be called heart trouble, or deep distress, for the loss of any person, however near to me, whose death I considered merely as a removal to the church above. The words of our Saviour are here applicable: "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father; for my Father is greater than I." That is, the glory I go to possess with my Father is

greater than any thing I could inherit upon earth; and therefore, if ye loved me, and your love operated in a proper way, you would rather be glad for my sake than sorry for your own.

#### XLIV.—ON COVETOUSNESS.

“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”—Luke xii. 15.

WHEN our Lord was preaching on subjects of eternal importance a certain young man interrupted him, requesting him to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him. It seems as if his father had lately died, and that his brother could not be induced to do him justice in the division of the estate. He might possibly have heard of some such case as that of Zaccheus; in which Jesus, by a few words speaking, had rendered a selfish man both just and generous. Jesus, however, instead of complying with his wishes, disclaims having anything to do in such matters; and warns others, from his example, to “take heed and beware of covetousness.”

Allowing the propriety of our Lord’s declining to be a judge in such matters, as not comporting with the spiritual nature of his kingdom, yet how was it that he should take occasion hence to warn his followers against the sin of covetousness? There is nothing in the story that gives us to suppose that the young man coveted what was not his own. Wherein then consisted his sin? Let us suppose a person under a mortal disease, who, seeing an eminent physician passing by him, instead of telling him his case, should request him to settle a dispute in his family! What should we say? If any thing, it would be to this effect:—Settle those matters as you can; in applying to the physician, treat him in character, and have regard to your life.—For a sinner to come to the Saviour on a mere secular business, and this while his soul was in a perishing condition, must prove his heart to be set supremely on this world, and his regard to Christ to be only a wish to render him subservient to his temporal interest.

Here then we perceive the species of covetousness that our Lord meant to censure. It is not that which breaks out in acts of robbery, theft, or oppression—not that which withholds the hire of the laborer, or studies the arts of fraud—it is not any thing, in short, which respects the conduct of man to man; but that which immediately relates to God, withholding the heart from him, and giving it to the world.

Such is the idea conveyed by the parable of the rich fool, which is here introduced by our Lord in illustration of the subject.

He is not accused of any thing injurious to those about him; his “grounds brought forth plentifully;” and who can blame him for this? All that he proposed was, by the bounty of Providence on his labors, to accumulate a fortune, and then to spend it on himself. And what harm (most men will ask) was there in this? Truly, it is the general opinion of mankind that this is all fair and right. If a man regard not God, but himself only, so long as he acts well towards them he will not only be acquitted, but applauded at their tribunal: “Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.” However, this is not the doctrine of Christ. In his account, it is not the miser only that is covetous, but he who sets his heart upon the world, rather than God, even though he lays out a part of his substance in building and other accommodations; and proposes, when he has got things a little in order, to “eat, drink, and be merry” with the surplus.

In the case of the young man who came to Christ on a secular errand, we see that things in themselves lawful, by being pursued out of place and out of season, may become sinful. It is lawful at proper seasons and in subordination to higher objects to follow our worldly affairs; but, if we go to the house of God with this end in view, it is profaning it. The same is true if while we are there our thoughts are employed in forming plans and schemes for the week, by which we may promote our temporal interest. Such things are: nor is it confined to the house of God. Even when upon our knees, the busy mind will wander after this and that pursuit, till we have in a manner forgotten where we are! Nor does the evil of such things consist merely in a few volatile wandering thoughts, but in that of which they are an indication; namely, a mind cleaving to the earth instead of ascending to God. In the case of this young man, we may also see the danger of regarding Christ and religion in only a secondary or subordinate manner, while the world is treated as supreme. Religion may have changed a bad husband into a good one, or induced a customer to leave off his expensive habits, and to pay his bills with punctuality and promptitude, and as such you may respect it; but such respect will not be approved of Christ. If we have any thing to do with him it must be in his proper character of Lord and Saviour. To attempt to render his religion subservient to worldly interest is to lean upon him while you are worshipping in the temple of mammon.

It was not without cause that our Saviour said, on this occasion, “Take heed and beware of covetousness!” Truly, this is a sin which presents itself under so many specious forms and names, which so insensibly insinuates itself on almost all occa-



sions, and which may be indulged with so little danger of losing our good name among men, that without much prayer and watchfulness against it, and much communion with Christ, there is no hope of overcoming it.

In observing my own mind, and the behavior of my acquaintance, I see matter for both pleasure and pain. I see a goodly number of professing Christians who appear to me to live "not unto themselves, but unto him that died for them and rose again." I see some of this description into whose hands God is pouring plenty, and who, though continually imparting, still increase. The poor people of Glasgow used to say of a late great and good man in that city, "David Dale gives his money by sho'elstul, and God Almighty sho'els it back again." Characters like-minded still live; and long may they live and be blessings to the world! They afford a striking contrast to those described by David: "Let them be as grass upon the house-top, which withereth before it groweth up; wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom; neither do they that go by say, The blessing of the Lord be upon you!—we bless you in the name of the Lord!"

Nor is it in men of opulence only that this grace shines! I see men who have learned to be economical in order to be generous; men whose *deep poverty abounds to the riches of their liberality!* This is to "cast our bread upon the waters;" and this may be more in the esteem of Christ than the most splendid donations of those who, in giving, exercise no self-denial.

But I see, on the other hand, not only sordid misers, but men who profess godliness, and who would be thought liberal, full of anxiety about appearance. They *must* dress, visit, and show away in their circle. The consequence is, they have nothing to spare in the way of doing good; or, if they give a little, it is chiefly to save appearances. It may be thought this belongs to vanity rather than covetousness; it is, however, living to ourselves rather than God; and this is the covetousness against which our Saviour warns us.

There are three descriptions of men, each of which, if I mistake not, has some peculiar temptations to this sin; and who, if destitute of grace, are likely to be carried away by it: these are the prosperous, the aged, and the professor of religion.

With respect to the *prosperous*, it is a fact which falls under common observation that men, who while possessing little were compassionate and willing to communicate, when they come to rise in the world are hard-hearted, and part with their money with great reluctance. This is not difficult to be accounted for. While necessity calls for nearly the

whole of what is received, there is no room for a plan of accumulation; but when money flows in, and rises beyond the mark of immediate want, and the advantages of it begin to be felt, a saving system is adopted, and the mind is employed in calculating the number of years necessary to the arrival at such and such a point; and, when this comes to be the case, every application for benevolence strikes a dainp upon the spirits, as interfering with the system, and lengthening the time ere it will reach the proposed point. Hence arises the force of the caution, "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." Hence also we perceive the folly and self-deception of thinking—If we had such a one's estate, what great things we should do! or, if we should live to possess so and so, then how charitable we will be! All such thoughts are framed to excuse the neglect of present duty, and are as if a person engaged in a race should desire, in order to make swifter progress, to have his feet laden with thick clay.

With respect to the *aged*, it is a fact which also falls under common observation that persons as they get older get more covetous. This observation, however, is not universally true. There is a goodly number of men who bring forth other "fruits in old age;" or who, as they draw nearer to heaven, become more heavenly-minded. The truth seems to be that, as every principle tends to maturity, those who have been covetous in their younger years, provided there be no change of heart, will be more covetous in old age. The stream of depravity in early life had several channels,—such as the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, and these would of course diminish the strength of avarice; but in the last stages of life those channels are in a manner stopped by the decay of the natural powers, and the whole current flows in one direction. Hence we perceive many an old wealthy churl living to himself, and repelling every application for a divine or benevolent object: "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?"

When I see such a spirit in aged people, recollecting that every principle, as was said, tends to maturity, I cannot help considering it as a strong indication that they have all their lives been under the dominion of his vice, only that it has been checked by a regard to appearances, and it may be by other vices; and that they are now fast ripening for destruction.

But in what way, it will be asked, are the third class, namely, *professors of religion*, subject to this sin, more than other men?

As a fact it has long impressed my mind, and I conceive it is not difficult to be accounted for. Supposing a person to be merely a professor, whatever impedes his evil propensity in all directions but one, will be certain to strengthen it in respect of that one. This is exactly the case as to a profession of religion. If you would be thought a Christian, you must not be a drunkard, nor a debauchee, nor a gamester, nor a liar, nor a blasphemer, nor an injurious person; but you may love the world more than God: for this, being confined to things between God and your own conscience, does not fall under human cognizance; or though it may affect your liberality to men, yet as the discipline of the New Testament leaves every man to judge of his own ability, and to give what he gives *not as it were of necessity, but willingly*, you may here live undetected, and with a little management unsuspected by your brethren. Of this the case of Judas Iscariot will furnish you with a notable example!

In this view, perhaps, dissenters from the established church may be more in danger of indulging in covetousness than in most other evils. They are shut out from things which are principally adapted to feed other dispositions as well as this; such as promotion in the church, in the army, and in the navy. The chief openings for them are found in manufactures, trade, and husbandry; openings which it is certainly very lawful for them to embrace, but which, in case of success attending them, are often great temptations to covetousness.

I close with two remarks:—First, that the danger of falling into covetousness is not confined to the mere professor: a Christian may be greatly impeded by it in his way to heaven, and like Lot, whose heart was seduced by the well-watered plains of Sodom, may die under a cloud. Lastly, that the most effectual preservative from this sin, as well as others, is believingly to converse with the doctrine of the cross. By this the world was crucified to the apostle, and he unto the world.

#### XLV.—MYSTERIOUS NATURE OF MAN.

“I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”—Psal. cxxxiv. 14.

THE term “fearful” is sometimes to be taken subjectively, for our being possessed of fear. In this sense it signifies the same as timid. Thus the prophet was directed to say to them that were of a “fearful heart, be strong.” At other times it is taken objectively, for that property in an object the contemplation of which excites fear in the beholder. Thus it is said of God that he is “fearful in praises,” and that it is a “fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living

God.” In this sense it is manifestly to be understood in the passage now under consideration. The human frame is so admirably constructed, so delicately combined, and so much in danger of being dissolved by innumerable causes, that the more we think of it the more we tremble, and wonder at our own continued existence.

“How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,  
How complicate, how wonderful is man!  
How passing wonder He who made him such,  
Who mingled in our make such strange extremes  
Of different natures, marvellously mixed!  
Helpless immortal, insect infinite,  
A worm, a god—I tremble at myself!”

To do justice to the subject, it would be necessary to be well acquainted with anatomy. I have no doubt that a thorough examination of that “substance which God hath curiously wrought,” ver. 15, would furnish abundant evidence of the justness of the psalmist’s words; and even those things which are manifest to common observation may be sufficient for this purpose. In general it is observable that the human frame abounds with avenues at which enter every thing conducive to preservation and comfort, and every thing that can excite alarm. Perhaps there is not one of these avenues but what may become an inlet to death, nor one of the blessings of life but what may be the means of accomplishing it. We live by inhalation; but we also die by it. Diseases and death, in innumerable forms, are conveyed by the very air we breathe. God hath given us a relish for divers aliments, and rendered them necessary to our subsistence: yet, from the abuse of them, what a train of disorders and premature deaths are found amongst men! And, where there is no abuse, a single delicious morsel may, by the evil design of another, or even by mere accident, convey poison through all our veins, and in one hour reduce the most athletic frame to a corpse.

The elements of fire and water, without which we could not subsist, contain properties which in a few moments would be able to destroy us; nor can the utmost circumspection at all times preserve us from their destructive power. A single stroke on the head may divest us of reason or of life. A wound or a bruise of the spine may instantly deprive the lower extremities of all sensation. If the vital parts be injured, so as to suspend the performance of their mysterious functions, how soon is the constitution broken up! By means of the circulation of the blood, how easily and suddenly are deadly substances diffused throughout the frame! Through this fearful medium, not only the taint of vice rankles in the veins of the debauchee, but virtue itself may destroy us. The putridity of a morbid subject has been imparted to the very hand stretched out to save it. The poisoned arrow, the envenomed dart, the hydrophobic saliva, derive from

hence their fearful efficacy. Even the pores of the skin, necessary as they are to life, may be the means of death. Not only are poisonous substances hereby admitted, but, when obstructed by surrounding damps, the noxious humors of the body, instead of being emitted, are retained in the system, and become productive of numerous diseases, always afflictive, and often fatal to life.

From these few instances we may learn our absolute dependence upon divine preservation. So numerous are the avenues at which death may enter that no human foresight can possibly render us secure for a single moment: and even those dangers which may in a measure be avoided require for this purpose the regular exercise of reason; but reason itself depends upon a variety of minute causes, over which we have no control. Instead of wondering at the number of premature deaths that are constantly witnessed, there is far greater reason to wonder that there are no more, and that any of us survive to seventy or eighty years of age.

"Our life contains a thousand springs,  
And dies if one be gone:  
Strange that a harp of thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long."

Assuredly, it can be ascribed to nothing short of the mighty power and all-pervading providence of God. A proper sense of this truth, while it would prevent us from presumptuously exposing ourselves to unnecessary injury, would induce us to commit ourselves to the divine protection in every danger which duty calls us to encounter.

Nor is this all. If we are "fearfully made" as to our animal frame, it will be found that we are much more so, considered as moral and accountable beings. In what relates to our animal nature, we are in most instances constructed like other animals; but, in what relates to us as moral agents, we stand distinguished from all the lower creation. We are made for eternity. The present life is only the introductory part of our existence. It is that however which stamps a character on all that follows. How fearful is our situation! What innumerable influences is the mind exposed to from the temptations which surround us! Not more dangerous to the body is the pestilence that walketh in darkness than these are to the soul. Such is the construction of our nature that the very word of life, if heard without regard, becomes a savor of death unto death. What consequences hang upon the small and apparently trifling beginnings of evil! A wicked thought may issue in a wicked purpose, this purpose in a wicked action, this action in a course of conduct, this course may draw into its vortex millions of our fellow creatures, and terminate in perdition, both to ourselves and them. The whole of this process was exemplified in the case of

Jeroboam the son of Nebat. When placed over the ten tribes, he first said in his heart, "If this people go up to sacrifice at Jerusalem, their hearts will return to Rehoboam; and thus shall the kingdom return to the house of David."—1 Kings xii. 26—30. On this he took counsel, and made the calves of Dan and Bethel. This engaged him in a course of wickedness, from which no remonstrances could reclaim him. Nor was it confined to himself: for he "made all Israel to sin." The issue was, not only their destruction as a nation, but, to all appearance, the eternal ruin of himself, and great numbers of his followers. Such were the fruits of an evil thought!

Oh, my soul, tremble at thyself! Tremble at the fearfulness of thy situation; and commit thine immortal all unto his hands "who is able to keep thee from falling, and to present thee faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."

#### XLVI.—LIFE AND DEATH, OR THE BROAD AND THE NARROW WAY.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."—Matt. vii. 13, 14.

THE whole world are travellers: there is no rest for the sole of man's foot: the ways in which they walk are extremely various, yet all reducible to two:—"To heaven or hell we daily bend our course." These two are here described by their properties and end. The one is attended with things which are smooth and agreeable to the flesh; but the end is destruction: the other with things which are hard and disagreeable; but the end is everlasting life.

1. If you incline to the former of these ways, it has many things, it must be owned, to recommend it; particularly,

1. You have no difficulty in your entrance upon it: it is a wide gate: it just suits your depraved inclinations. As soon as the powers of your souls begin to act, they will incline that way: so of every particular evil course that you may take—it is easy to get into it: the gate of temptation is wide, and is set wide open to invite you: you are in, ere you are aware. Evil habits are readily contracted; the transition from occasional to habitual indulgence is very short, and that of which you are scarcely sensible at the time.

2. You have also full scope for your inclination in your progress: "Broad is the way." Though there is but one way to heaven, and that a strait one; yet there are many ways to hell, out of which you may take your choice. The broad way admits of many di-



visions, and sub-divisions. You may walk in the path of gross immorality; may swear and lie, or drink and commit lewdness; or, if you covet a degree of reputation which does not comport with such a life, you may pursue a much more decent course in the indulgence of avarice or pride. You may be a mean sycophant, cringing to the great; or a haughty overbearing oppressor to those who are beneath you; nay, you may be both these at the same time. You may revel with the vulgar, or banquet with the genteel, as circumstances and inclination may lead you. You may scoff at all religion; or, if that does not suit, you may be religious yourself. You may be righteous in your own eyes; or, if that does not accord with your creed, you may be an advocate for grace, and turn it, when you have done, into lasciviousness.

3. Moreover, you will be in *no want of company*; for *many go there*. Rich and poor, rude and learned: it is impossible you should be at a loss for agreeable society. You will have the majority on your side, and that with many is a great matter; yea, the majority in all the nations, cities, towns, and villages in the world. You will hardly go into any company or place, but you will find fellow-travellers to keep you in countenance . . . "but the end thereof is destruction!"

II. If, on the other hand, you incline to the latter of these ways, I must direct you to count the cost: be assured it will be hard and disagreeable to the flesh. The difficulties which attend it are given as the reason why it is so little occupied.

1. If you incline to this way, there may be *great difficulties attending your entrance*; for "strait is the gate." While you are under convictions, and your hearts are not subdued to the obedience of Christ, these difficulties will appear insurmountable. To escape the wrath to come, it will appear absolutely necessary that you should enter in: yet to forego all hope of mercy on the ground of your good deeds, or even of your prayers and penitential tears, and to sue for pardon as one of the chief of sinners, wholly for the sake of Jesus Christ, is hard work for a proud heart. If you enter in, it is also necessary that you give up all your former idols without a single reserve; but this also is hard work to a corrupt heart: these are things which make many people hesitate about religion for a long time, laboring under darkness of mind, and unable to find rest for their souls. But, let me add, these difficulties exist only in your own mind: "ye are not straitened in God, but in your own bowels." If you can be contented to accept of mercy as one of the chief of sinners, all will be easy. Come to Jesus as such, and you will find rest unto your souls: and, if his name be precious unto you, his yoke also will be easy, and his burden light.

Denying self, taking up the cross, and following him, will then be no hard service, but your very meat and drink. The way of salvation through his atoning blood will also be a source of joy unspeakable, and of peace which passeth all understanding: and you will be amazed at your former ignorance and aversion.

2. There may be *hard struggles attending your progress*; for "narrow is the way." You may meet with contempt from the world, persecution from your connections, and, if you be faithful, with many a hard speech, and hard measure, from loose professors; you may be annoyed by temptations from without, and confounded by strong struggles from within; old companions may invite you to turn back; the allurements of the world may be placed on the right hand and on the left, to induce you to turn aside; and, through the remaining corruption of your nature, you may be too apt at times to listen to their counsels: you may also expect to meet with things that will make your heart sink within you; despondency may lay fast hold of you; and the very hand of God be stretched out against you. Let me add, however, that this way is infinitely less rugged than that in which Jesus walked to accomplish your salvation: and, if your heart be with his heart, I need not add more to reconcile you to it.

3. In pursuing the narrow way, you may have *but little company*; for "few there be that find it." Compared with the ungodly, religious people are but as the gleanings of the vintage; and your lot may be cast in a part of the world where few of those few are to be found. You may reside in a village where no one cares for Christ, or in a family that calls not upon his name. In such circumstances, you may be the object of derision, a man wondered at, and persecuted; and even hated by your nearest relations! But he of good cheer: though there be but few who will accompany you, yet those few are the excellent of the earth. You will also hold society with an invisible host of heavenly spirits that watch over you; a host so numerous that more are they that are with you than they that are with your adversaries; and, what is more than all, the narrow way "leadeth unto life."

Thus life and death are set before thee; which wilt thou choose? Recollect that the *destruction* which awaits the ungodly is not a loss of being, but of well being; it is the loss of all that is desirable, and an exposedness to all that is dreadful; the weeping of desolation, the wailing of despair, and the gnashing of teeth which attends the most intolerable anguish. Consider also that the *life* which awaits the godly is not mere being, but well being; it is an entire freedom from evil and an eternal enjoyment of bliss, "which eye hath not seen, nor ear

heard, and which hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive." It will also be heightened by the trials through which we pass to the possession of it.

If you enter the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way, an abundant entrance will be ministered unto you, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ: but, if found pursuing the broad way, you shall hereafter strive to enter into that kingdom, and shall not be able.

#### XLVII.—HOPE IN THE LAST EXTREMITY.

"Then I said, I am cast-out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple."—Jonah ii. 4.

THE greater part of the writings of the prophets contain little history; but this book is an exception. It is a history of a prophecy against a city which at that time was the metropolis of the world. It affords a singular example of the influence which the true religion, as presented among the Israelites, had upon the surrounding nations. When we read of the idolatrous gentiles, we are apt to think they were altogether sunk in ignorance, and without any means of knowing better, except what were afforded by the light of nature. But in those early times God had a people, as he has now, who were witnesses for him, and whose testimony left a strong impression on the minds of mankind about them. If Jonah, when overtaken by the tempest, had been a heathen, and had committed a crime, the mariners might have been alarmed, concluding, from their general notions of an unseen providence, that vengeance had overtaken him; but when they were told that he was a Hebrew,—and feared Jehovah, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land, but had fled from his presence,—then they were "exceedingly afraid." They had heard, no doubt, of this God of gods, who was worshipped by the Hebrews, and trembled at his judgments. So when Jonah entered into Nineveh, and threatened its overthrow, if he had been a heathen soothsayer, his message might have influenced a few; but government would doubtless have apprehended him, and either have punished him as a disturber of the public peace or confined him as a madman; but finding him to be a prophet sent by Jehovah, the God of Israel, whose judgments upon Egypt and other nations had rung through the world, they were struck with amazement. The king rises from his throne, lays aside his robe, covers himself with sackcloth, sits in ashes, and causes a fast to be proclaimed, accompanied with an admonition for every one to turn from his evil way, saying, "Who can tell if God will repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Great is

the force of truth and true religion upon the conscience!

But let us observe more particularly the history of Jonah, in which we see an affecting example of human depravity, and of the mystery of Providence. God commands him to go and prophesy against Nineveh, a great city, north of Judea. He dislikes the errand; and, in downright rebellion, takes a ship for Tarshish, a seaport of the Mediterranean, in nearly a southern direction. But whither can he flee from God's presence? Though suffered to take his course for a while, he is soon pursued. A tempest overtakes him. One would have thought his restless mind must have anticipated it, and been the first to interpret it; but, instead of this, all parties are alarmed before him;—he is asleep at the bottom of the ship. A guilty mind cannot be always on the rack of reflection; yet its repose is not peace, but the stupidity of horror and wretchedness. The rebuke of the ship-master seems scarcely to have awakened him. At length, however, the lot of God falls upon his guilty head: and now we have to witness a most humiliating sight—a prophet of the most high God arraigned at the bar of a company of heathen sailors! We should have said, Let it not be known unto the heathen!—He, if he could have prayed at all, would have said, Make me not a reproach to the foolish.—But God says, It shall be known. He knows how to vindicate the honor of his name, without having recourse to the little arts of concealment of which creatures commonly avail themselves. The whole must come out—his country, his religion, his character, his sin! And do the heathens reproach him? If they had, we could not have wondered; but it operates in a different way. God knows how to soften the hearts of men by that which we might expect would harden them; and things which appear to us injurious to his cause shall tend to establish it. They inquire of him what they shall do; and he pronounces his own doom. Humanity, notwithstanding, and the fear perhaps of incurring the displeasure of his God, struggle hard for his deliverance; but struggle in vain. He must be cast away, or they must all perish. No time is to be lost; they must come to a decision. Lifting up their eyes to heaven, they appeal to God for the painful necessity under which they acted; and then, taking up the unhappy man, they cast him into the sea! Reader, had you and I been spectators of this affecting scene, and in possession of our present views, we should probably have not only dropped a tear over the watery tomb of the prophet, but have exclaimed, "How unsearchable are God's judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Viewing the effect of all upon the mariners, we should have seen men, who till now were strangers to Jehovah, calling upon his name; we should have seen, perhaps,

the joyful conversion of some, and rejoiced in the "sacrifices and vows" which on this mysterious occasion were offered: but what would have been a damp to our pleasure we should have seen Jonah himself committed to the deep, prayerless, and, to all appearance, without a ray of hope! But "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" When the closing waves had parted him from human observation, divine providence still follows him. He is swallowed by a "great fish," probably a shark.\* In this perilous situation his life and consciousness are preserved; and here he is brought to his right mind. Hence he who could not offer one petition while in the presence of the mariners "prays unto Jehovah his God." What were his prayers, and the workings of his mind, he recorded after his deliverance. A part of this record is contained in the sentence on which this address is founded: "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." It describes the crisis of his distress the moment he was sunk to the greatest despondency, bordering on utter despair; out of which he is recovered by the hope of divine mercy.

"I said, I am cast out of thy sight." Did he mean that he was now beyond the reach of God's omniscience? No; though mortal eyes could follow him no farther, he was well aware of his being naked to the eyes of Him with whom he had to do. His meaning was, I suppose, that he was cast out of God's favor; alluding to the practice of princes and great men, who admit their friends into their presence, but banish those who have offended them out of their sight. Thus the divinely favored land of promise is described as that on which "the eyes of the Lord were set, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year;" and thus the children of Israel, when they had for a long time offended God, are said to be removed by captivity out of his sight. Now Jonah had been favored of God in several ways: As an Israelite, he had long enjoyed the means of grace, of which those of other nations had been destitute; but now he is deprived of them. No more shall I peruse the lively oracles of Jehovah. No more frequent his temple, in company with his people! No more join in the melody of Zion! Far from the holy abodes of hope and peace, I die alone! No fellow-servant of God to attend me in my last hours! no eye to pity me, nor hand to help me! I die an outcast, an outcast of the heathen!—He had also been highly honored in being made a prophet. The Lord had employed him as an ambassador extraordinary; but, having offended him, he appears now to be cast off. God, as if he should say, will employ me no more. In this shameful

and painful manner ends my stewardship.— Finally: As a religious man, he had enjoyed communion with God, and cherished hopes of everlasting life; but now what can he think of himself, and of his prospects for eternity? If by this language he meant that all was over with him, for this world and that to come, it is no more than might be expected. Sin must needs cloud our evidences for heaven, and render our state doubtful. "They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies."

There is something in this language peculiarly awful. Of all the ills that can befall us, being cast out of God's sight is the most to be dreaded, because this is the source and sum of evil. As God's presence is heaven, to be cast out of it is hell. Deprived of his favor, what is life, even though we were possessed of every earthly comfort, and could insure it for a long series of years? What then must it be to one in the very article of dissolution? To live without the divine favor is dreadful; but to die without it is much more so!

It is also observable how the punishment corresponds with the nature of the offence; and this we shall find to be a general character of the divine administration. They that receive not the love of the truth are given up to believe a lie; deceivers are deceived; adulterers are cast into a bed, and those who have committed adultery with them; and they that love cursing, the curse shall come upon them, as oil into their bones. Thus Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord; and now his conscience forebodes the issue—"I am cast out of thy sight."

There are two other remarks which present themselves from this desponding sentence, of a more pleasing complexion. One is that, happily for him, it was only *he* that said it. It was the punishment awarded by conscience at the time; but the awards of conscience are not final. They respect what ought to be, if we had our desert; but not always what shall be. Sovereign mercy reserves to itself the right of revising and reversing these decisions. If the Lord had said Amen, all had been over with Jonah; but "his thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways: as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts higher than our thoughts, and his ways than our ways."—"Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me;" but the Lord her God did not say so too! The other remark which offends is, the *piety* or *godliness* which appears even in the despondency of this good man. How different is the spirit of it from that of Cain! Future punishment is sometimes distinguished into a punishment of *loss* and a punishment of *sense*. The latter is the dread of the wicked. Could they but be exempted from positive misery, they would not be much concerned for the loss of God's favor; nor

\* See Parkhurst's Greek Lexicon, on *πιπτε*.



indeed at all, but as depriving them of natural enjoyment. But it is not thus with a good man. The loss of God's favor is, to him, the heaviest of all punishments. This was the distress of Jonah. One sees in him also, in his darkest state, a tenderness of sinning against God by being any otherwise accessory to his own death, than as owning what was his desert. Some men, if they had felt half his burden, would have plunged themselves into the sea; but he, humiliating as it must be, pronounces his own doom, and submits to be cast away by their hands!

But we have now arrived at the period of his dejection. Lo, when he was just giving up all for lost; nay, when he had actually pronounced his doom; when death had laid hold upon him, and he seemed already in his grave; a thought glances across his mind; a gleam of hope accompanies it: yet, before I die, "I will look again toward thy holy temple!" The thought proves a resurrection to his soul.

But let us observe what it was on which his hope at this affecting crisis caught hold. Was it the temple, the material building, to which he looked for relief? Surely not. An Israelite in name only might have indulged a superstitious confidence in the place: but Jonah looked farther. It was to the temple with respect to *Him that dwelt therein*, and the manner in which he dwelt therein, namely, upon the *mercy-seat*, or *propitiatory*, that he looked. If expressed in New-testament language, it would be looking to God through a Mediator, who is our Advocate with the Father, and whose advocacy is founded on his having been made a propitiation.

The encouragement which the prophet felt to look toward the temple for relief appears to have arisen from two sources, namely, *Scripture* and *experience*. The prayer of Solomon at the dedication was recorded in the Scriptures, and must have been familiar to every godly Israelite. After having enumerated divers particular cases, he adds, "What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, who shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and shall spread forth his hands toward this house, then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give." This was doubtless a directory for Jonah, when other help failed; and the answer given to Solomon, "I have heard thy prayer, and thy supplication that thou hast made before me," turned all his petitions into promises. Here, therefore, was rest for the soul of every distressed Israelite, throughout all their generations; and for Jonah, though in the most deplorable state. "I will look," saith he, "toward thy holy temple; and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place; and forgive, and do, and give." To scripture direction was added

former experience. The language implies that this was not the first time that Jonah had looked to the temple for relief. He had looked before, and would now look again. It had long, no doubt, been his practice, under every load of guilt or sorrow of any kind, to repair to the mercy-seat, where Jehovah had promised to commune with his people. This, to Old-testament believers, was as common as coming "to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need," is to believers under the New Testament; and, having formerly found relief in looking, they would be encouraged to look again. It is a good use to make of past experiences, to take encouragement from them to make renewed applications for mercy. They are not designed for a pillow of repose under the load of a guilty conscience; nor the source from which our comfort is to be derived; but a directory to point us to the Saviour, and an encouragement that we shall not apply to him in vain.

From the whole, we learn the following important instructions:—First: the great evil of departing from God, and of flying in the face of his commands. The story of Jonah leaves an impression behind it of the justness of his own reflection, "They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies." What are all the reasonings of the flesh against God's revealed will? Vanities, lying vanities; the end of which, if grace prevent not, will be death. Secondly: Yet if any one have sinned, let him not despair. While there is a propitiation, an Advocate with the Father, to despair were to add sin to sin. Thirdly: If, through sin, we have lost the light of God's countenance, and would recover it, it must be sought in the same way as that in which we first obtained it. If ever we regain rest to our souls, after having backslidden and lost it, it must be by applying to him, as guilty, unworthy, and perishing sinners, intreating to be forgiven through the blood-shedding of the Saviour. This was the manner in which we first looked; and in this manner we must look again. Fourthly: Draw no positive conclusions of the state of the dead from what we see in the last hours of life. There may be no ground to conclude any thing in their favor; yet the case of Jonah is sufficient to deter us from concluding that they are lost. Had we been present when he was convicted and cast away, and seen the manner in which he went down to the watery grave, we might have drawn an unfavorable conclusion of him. All that took place of a favorable kind was after every human eye had left him. Such a case proves the possibility of a penitent and believing look to the mercy-seat, when the party is removed beyond the ken of human observation; and this is sufficient to teach us our own ignorance, and our incom-

petency to judge of the future state of any individual.

XLVIII.—PAST TRIALS A PLEA FOR FUTURE MERCIES.

“Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.—Psa. xc. 15.

THIS “prayer of Moses the man of God,” as it is entitled, is thought to have been occasioned by the sentence denounced against that generation of Israelites which came out of Egypt, viz. that they should perish in the wilderness. In it we see much of the plaintive, and yet much of the *man of God*, cleaving to God under his judgments, and hoping in his covenant mercy and truth. Forbidden to enter their promised *dwelling place*, they are directed to make up their loss in God.—Ver. 1, 2. Cut short as to the number of their days, to apply their hearts to wisdom.—Ver. 12. And though they, and himself with them, were doomed to die, they are taught to pray that the cause of God may live.—Ver. 16, 17.

The language of the text implies that it is usual for God, in dealing with his people in this world, to balance evil with good and good with evil. He neither exempts them from chastisement, nor contends with them forever. If he had dealt with us on the mere footing of justice, we had had a cup of wrath only; but through his dear Son it is mixed with mercy. The alternate changes of night and day, winter and summer, are not more fixed in the course of nature, than the mixture of judgment and mercy in the present state.

The children of Israel were long afflicted in Egypt, and, when delivered from that grievous yoke, their numerous sins against God brought on them numerous evils in the wilderness; till at length it issued in the dismal sentence which is supposed to have occasioned this plaintive song. Yet this dark night was preparatory to a morning of hope and joy. The people that were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness. The judgments upon the first generation proved a source of wholesome discipline to the second, who appear to have been the best of all the generations of Israel. It was of them that God spoke in such high terms by Jeremiah:—“I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase.” All that God had done for them till then was but ploughing up the fallow ground: but now he began to reap the fruits of his work. Now Balaam, instead of being able to curse them, is compelled to bless and envy them. And now the prayer of

the man of God is answered. They are made glad according to the days in which they were afflicted, and the years in which they had seen evil. God’s work appeared to his servants, and his glory unto their children. His beauty was upon them, and he prospered the work of their hands.

We might refer to numerous instances in the Scriptures in which the same truth is exemplified. In the first hundred and thirty years of Adam’s life, he drank deeply of the bitter effects of his fall. He had a son; but, after high hopes had been entertained of him, he proved wicked. He had another son, but him his brother murdered; and, as the murderer was spared and his family increased, it would seem as if the world was to be peopled by a race of wicked men. But it did not end thus: God gave Adam another seed, instead of Abel whom Cain slew; and soon after this men began to call upon the name of the Lord. It must have been very afflictive for Noah to have been “a preacher of righteousness” century after century, and at last, instead of seeing his hearers converted to God, to see them all swept away by the deluge. But, as the waters were assuaged when they had risen to their height, so the wrath of heaven issued in mercy. God accepted the sacrifice of his servant, and made a covenant of peace with him and his posterity.

Similar remarks might be made from the histories of Jacob, and Joseph, and David, and many others: these were made glad according to the days wherein they had been afflicted, and the years wherein they had seen evil. Nor is it confined to individuals. When idolatrous Israel drew down the divine displeasure in Hazael’s wars, Jehu’s revolution, and Elisha’s prophecies, it was very afflictive. Yet, when Jehoahaz besought the Lord, the Lord hearkened unto him, and was gracious to his people, in respect of the covenant which he had made with their fathers.—2 Kings xiii. 3—5, 23. Thus the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, were succeeded by the still small voice.—1 Kings xix. 11, 12. Finally, the great afflictions of the church during the successive overturnings of the monarchies issued, according to Ezekiel’s prophecy (chap. xxi. xxvii.), in Christ’s coming and kingdom.

It is not difficult to perceive the wisdom and goodness of God in thus causing evil to precede good, and good to follow evil. If the whole of our days were covered with darkness, there would be but little of the exercise of love, and joy, and praise; our spirits would contract a habit of gloominess and despondency; and religion itself would be reproached, as rendering us miserable. If, on the other hand, we had uninterrupted prosperity, we should not enjoy it. What is rest to him that is never weary, or peace to one that is a stranger to trouble? Heaven

itself would not be that to us which it will be, if we came not out of great tribulation to the possession of it.

Evil and good being thus connected together, the one furnishes a plea for the other. Moses pleaded it, and so may we. We may have seen days of affliction, and years of evil, both as individuals and families. Borne down, it may be, with poverty and disappointment, our spirits are broken. Or, if circumstances have been favorable, yet some deep-rooted disease preys upon our constitution, and passes a sentence of death within us long before it comes. Or, if neither of these evils has befallen us, yet relative troubles may eat up all the enjoyment of life. A cruel and faithless husband, a peevish and unamiable wife, or a disobedient child, may cause us to say with Rebecca, What good does my life do me? Or, if none of these evils afflict us, yet if the peace of God rule not in our hearts, all the blessings of life will be bestowed upon us in vain. It may be owing to the want of just views of the gospel, or to some iniquity regarded in our heart, that we spend days and years with but little communion with God.

Finally: If, as in some cases, a number of these evils should be combined, this will make the load still heavier. But whatever be our afflictions, and however complicated, we may carry them to the Lord, and then turn them into a plea for mercy. Though the thorn should not be immediately extracted yet, if God cause his grace to be sufficient for us, we shall have reason to be glad.

We have also seen days of affliction and years of evil as a *nation*. It is true we have less cause to apply this language to ourselves than most other nations at the present time: yet to a feeling heart there is matter for grief. What numbers of widows and fatherless children have been left even among us, within the last sixteen years! Let the faithful of the land turn it into a prayer, not only in behalf of our country, but of a bleeding world.

Many of our *churches*, too, have experienced days and years of evil. The loss of faithful and useful pastors, disorders, scandals, strifes, divisions, the consequent withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, are evils which many have to bewail. Let the faithful remnant in every place carry these things to the throne of grace, and there plead with the God of mercy and truth, by whom alone Jacob can arise; and, though weeping may continue for a night, joy will come in the morning.

*The whole church of God* has seen much evil hitherto. Its numbers have been few and despised. It has often been under persecution. Compared with what might have been expected, in almost six thousand years,

“we have wrought no deliverance in the earth, neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.” But all these things furnish a plea for better times. Even the wickedness of the wicked may enable us to plead with the psalmist, “It is time for thee, O Lord, to work, for they have made void thy law.” We may urge the prayer of *faith* too on this subject: since glorious things are *spoken* of the city of God. Both the world and the church have their best days to come.

It is necessary, however, to recollect that the happy issue of all our troubles depends upon our union with Christ. If unbelievers, our troubles are but the beginning of sorrows. It is a fatal error in many that great afflictions in this life indicate that we have had our evil things here. Few men have been more miserable than Saul was in his latter days. But if, renouncing every other ground of hope, we believe in Jesus the crucified, whatever our sorrows may be in this life, they will be turned into joy.

#### XLIX.—THE CHANGES OF TIME.

[*Sketch of a Sermon delivered at the commencement of a New Year.*]

“The acts of David, first and last, behold they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, with all his reign, and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.”—1 Chron. xxix. 29, 30.

THERE is something in the manner of the sacred writers peculiar to themselves. A common historian might have glanced at the reign of David, and referred to other books in which it was described; but, viewing the events of it only with the eye of a politician, his diction, though elegant and instructive, would leave no impression upon the heart. The sacred historians felt what they wrote. Eying the hand of God in all things, they conceive of them, they represent them, in an affecting light. There is something in the phraseology of this passage which is singularly impressive. It opens at once to our contemplation the constant vicissitudes of human affairs. We see and feel, as in a moment, that the same affecting scenes which are passing over the world in our times have passed over it in former ages. Society may assume different shapes and forms; but it is essentially the same. “The things that are, are the things that have been; and there is no new thing under the sun.”

We are also led to view the great current of human affairs as moving on without our consent, and without being subject to our control. We bear a part in them, but it is like the fishes playing in the stream; which passes over them independent of their will,



and returns no more. What an idea does it give of our insignificance and entire dependence upon God! But, though our influence in counteracting the great events of time be very small, yet their influence upon us is great. They bear a relation to us, as they formerly did to David and Israel, and the kingdoms of the countries, and leave an important impression upon us. We are either the better or the worse for the times that have gone over us, and may be so to eternity. The vicissitudes that pass over us *during a single human life*, and the *impressions which they leave behind them*, are subjects which, if realized, would overwhelm the mind. There is a current of *national changes* which is passing continually. What times have passed over the nations of Europe within our remembrance! Some have risen, some have fallen, some enlarged, and some contracted. What multitudes of lives have been lost! How much of human nature has been developed! What evidence has been afforded of the enmity of man's heart against the gospel, and the insufficiency of all human devices to give happiness to the world without it! What seeds have been sown for future change, the fruits of which may be seen to the end of time!

And while the page of history records the acts of the great, whether good or bad, there are others which it overlooks, but which are no less interesting on account of the near relation they bear to us. There is a current of changes *within the circle of our immediate acquaintance*. What a number of deaths, of new faces, and of new circumstances! Property, power, and influence, have changed hands; those whose fathers were abject are raised on high; while others, who have been delicately educated, are sunk into wretchedness. Nor do these changes extend merely to our acquaintance, but to *ourselves*. There are few of us but have had our times of sickness and of health, of prosperity and of adversity, of joy and sorrow. Times when unions were formed, and times when they have been dissolved; times when children have been born, and times when they have died; times when we have been so happy that we have thought nothing could make us miserable; and times when we have been so miserable as to despair of ever again being happy.

But these are things mostly of a *civil* nature. There is also a current of changes continually passing over us of a religious kind. The cause and kingdom of Christ while in this world is subject to constant vicissitude. In some places it prospers, in others it declines. Upon the whole, however, it is going on, and it becomes us to mark its progress. It was in one life that Israel forsook Egypt, and was planted in Canaan; in one life they were carried into captivity; and in one life brought back

again: in one life the Son of God became incarnate, and accomplished our redemption; in one life the gospel was preached almost over the whole earth; in one life the reformation was effected; and it may be in one life that Antichrist may come to his end, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Our life has been cast in an eventful period, and that of our children may be more so.

But if, as has been remarked, the events of time bear a relation to us, and leave an impression upon us, it becomes us to inquire what impression those times which have passed over us have left upon our minds:—

Great numbers of them are *disregarded*, and they can leave no good impression. All that was wrought in Judea, in the times of Augustus and Tiberius, was overlooked by the great mass of mankind. It filled some few with joy unspeakable; but the world in general took but little notice of it. The Greeks, Romans, and other nations, went on just as we do; scheming, intriguing, buying, selling, amassing fortunes, spending them, waging wars, and struggling for the highest posts of honor. Many never heard of it, and most that did cared for none of these things. With what contempt did Festus speak of a cause which came before him, relative to faith in Christ.—“Certain questions of Jewish superstition, and of one Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive!” Many of those who beheld the miracles of Christ, and heard the preaching of the gospel, *wondered and perished*. Thus things of the greatest moment may pass over us disregarded, and consequently can leave no good impression. It was the same at the reformation from Popery. God wrought a great work in that day: but the mass of mankind saw it not. They were each pursuing their schemes of ambition, or covetousness, or sensuality; and so did not profit by it: and thus it is at this day. The principal actors upon the theatre of human affairs have their respective objects in view; but they see not God's hand. Nor is it much otherwise with the spectators: some admire, others fear, and others are filled with abhorrence: but few regard the works of the Lord, or discern the operation of his hands.

In others, the things which have passed over them may have made *some degree of impression upon them, and yet the issue of it may be doubtful*. Under threatening providences or close preaching, they have been affected not a little—have heard the word gladly, and done many things—have been greatly moved, and reformed in their behavior; but, after all, it is doubtful whether their hearts be divorced from their idols.

On some, however, the things which have passed over us have had a good effect, and require to be recollected with *thankfulness*.

One can remember a providence which brought him under the word, or into a praying family or religious connection; another, a conversation, a sermon, or a solitary walk, in which he saw and felt the light of life, and from which period his feet were turned from the ways of death.

Finally: A recollection of the times which have passed over us, over Israel, and over the nations, will furnish matter for much *humility and trembling*, even though we should have profited by them; and, if we have not, it is a subject the realizing of which would overwhelm us. What opportunities have we had of glorifying God, which have passed by unnoticed! what instructive lessons, under which we have been dull of learning! what rebukes, without being effectually corrected! and what narrow escapes from temptation, the falling into which had been worse than death! Neither have we sufficiently regarded the operations of God's hand upon the world and the church, so as to be properly affected by them. And, if such reflections be furnished in regard of good men, what must be the retrospection of the wicked! Youth has passed over them, and left only the impression of guilt, shame, and remorse; or, what is worse, a gust to re-act its follies, even when they have lost the capacity. Prosperity has made them proud, and adversity filled them with hardness and rebellion of heart. They have been afflicted, and have not called upon God; or, if they have, no sooner has it subsided than they have ceased. Death has approached them, and in their fright they have entered into solemn vows; but all have quickly been forgotten. How many slighted opportunities, solemn warnings, tender sermons, and powerful convictions will come into account at the last day!

#### L.—ON TRUE WISDOM.

“The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the folly of fools is deceit.”—Prov. xiv. 8.

This proverb teaches us that true wisdom is of a *useful or practical* nature. There is a great difference between the wisdom of some worldly men and that of others. Some deal in mere speculation: their discoveries are of no use either to themselves or mankind. Others, who are of a more *prudent* turn, bend their talents to useful purposes. The philosophy of a Lunardi exhibits an air balloon—that of a Franklin is applied to objects of real utility.

But Solomon seldom, if ever, writes of mere natural wisdom. That on which he chiefly dwells has its origin in “the fear of the Lord.”—Chap. i. 7. The passage may, therefore, be considered as giving the character of *holy* wisdom, as distinguished from

the wisdom of this world: it directs to the understanding of our *way*, in matters of the highest importance. And this is the proper opposite of the *folly* described in the last clause, which is said to be *deceit*. Wicked men are the greatest fools in God's account; and their folly consists in self-deception. While the wisdom of the truly wise turns to a good account, the folly of the wicked puts a cheat upon their souls.

The wisdom of some men is to understand things which *cannot be understood*.—When David appealed to God, saying, “Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me”—“My soul is as a weaned child”—It implies that there were men who did, and so there are still. “Man,” says Locke, “should know the length of his tether.” What a deluge of abstract speculations has been poured upon the world in all ages, especially since the invention of printing! There is no end to questions upon such subjects. Instead of finding out truth, we presently lose ourselves. Ask, What is a spirit? What is eternity? What is immensity? How came a pure creature to become sinful? Why did God create man, seeing what part he would act? All these, and a thousand more questions of the kind, belong to the wisdom of the imprudent. It does not lead us a step towards heaven, but in a contrary direction.

Again: The wisdom of others is to pry into things which, if understood, *are of little or no use*.—Long and elaborate treatises have been written on the question, What is space? But *cui bono*? Even those things which are of use (astronomy for instance,) if pursued to the neglect of our *way*, are folly, and will deceive the expectation. We should blame any man, and count him a fool, notwithstanding his learning, if he employed himself in studying the distances of the stars while his family were pining for want, and his affairs going to ruin: and why not if in the same pursuits he neglects the salvation of his soul?

Further: The wisdom of some is to understand the *way of other men*.—We meet with many who are exceedingly censorious on public measures. For their part, they are wise: and happy would it be for the world if it were under *their* direction! but whether it be that the affairs of religious and domestic duty are too little for their expanded minds, or whatever be the reason, so it is, that their own concerns are generally neglected. We meet with others who understand all the private concerns of a neighborhood, and can point out the faults and defects of every one about them, but forget their own. We have even met with professors of religion, who understand the faults, defects, and errors of almost all the religious world, and, whenever they meet together,



these are the topics of conversation by which they edify one another. Surely this is not "the wisdom of the prudent!"

But, it will be asked, what is "the wisdom of the prudent?" And I may answer, It is that which leads to the understanding of our way through life, and to the heavenly home.

Particularly: It will lead us above all things to see that our way be *right*. There are many by-ways, and many who are walking in them; but true wisdom will not rest till it find out the road that leads to everlasting life. It will know whom it trusts, and whether he be able to keep that which is committed to him. It will lead us also to attend diligently to the *directions* of the way. We shall read the oracles of God: the doctrines for belief, and the precepts for practice; and shall thus learn to cleanse our way by taking heed thereto, according to God's word. It will moreover induce us to guard against the *dangers* of the way. We shall not be ignorant of Satan's devices, nor of the numerous temptations to which our age, times, circumstances, and propensities expose us. It will influence us to keep our eye upon the *end* of the way. A foolish man will go that way in which he finds most company, or can go most at his ease: but wisdom will ask, "What shall I do in the end thereof?" To understand the end of the wrong way will deter: but to keep our eye upon that of the right will attract. Christ himself kept sight of the joy that was set before him. Finally: as holy wisdom possesses the soul with a sense of propriety at all times, and upon all occasions, it is therefore our highest interest to obtain this wisdom, and to cultivate it by reading, meditation, prayer, and every appointed means. "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee, so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous; he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly."

#### LI.—IRREMIEDIABLE EVILS.

"That which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbered."—Eccles. i. 15.

THE wise man inquires, "What is that good for the sons of men which they should do all the days of their life?" At the close of his inquiries he answers, "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the

whole of man." But before he comes to this *conclusion of the matter*, as he calls it, he takes a large survey of human affairs, the result of every inquiry concerning which is, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." Every thing that passeth under his review was either void of substantial good or connected with some evil which embittered it.

Two of the marks of vanity inscribed on earthly things are, that a great number of them are inveterately *crooked*, or devious from the line of what is good for the sons of men; and that a still greater number are *wanting*, or defective, so that though there were nothing in them repugnant to what is good, yet they are *insufficient* to satisfy the mind.

That devious and defective things should be found in the world is not surprising; but they are found also in the church, and our endeavors to rectify and supply them are often ineffectual. It is too much to infer from this that we are to sit down in despair and attempt nothing; but it will be profitable to know the limited extent of our powers, so as not to waste our time and energies on that which will answer no good end.

Many have been employed during the greater part of their lives in striving to correct the errors and disorders of the church, and to supply its defects. This has certainly been a good work. What else were the labors of the Reformers, of the Puritans, of the Nonconformists, and indeed of all the servants of God in every age, but so many attempts to bend the minds of men to the mind of Christ? Nor have they labored without effect. When we compare the present state of things with what we wish, we seem indeed to have done nothing: but, when with the state of things in times past, we may say, "What hath God wrought!" Paganism has been excluded from Europe; popery has been so diminished as to have lost its wonted energies; and Christianity, cherished under the wing of religious freedom, has of late taken a notable flight, alighting in the very heart of the Pagan world. But with all this there are many crooked things among us, and things which by human hands cannot be made straight. The spirit of infidelity has pervaded the minds of millions in Europe whose fathers were once the decided friends of the reformation. The systems of many who would be thought to be Christians are so tinged with it as to become antichristian. And, among those who profess to believe the doctrines of the reformation, many content themselves with the name of orthodoxy, without the thing. There is a tendency in the human mind to deviate from divine truth. Had it not been for the illuminating influence of the Spirit of God, we should never have understood it; not because of its ab-



struseness, but on account of the uncongeniality of our minds: and, when we do understand and believe it, there is a continual tendency in us to get wrong. It might seem that, when a person has once obtained a just view of the gospel, there is no danger of his losing it: but it is not so. There is a partiality in all our views, and, while we guard against error in one direction, we are in equal danger from a contrary extreme. Many, in shunning the snare of self-righteous pride, have fallen into the pit of antinomian presumption; and many, in guarding what they consider as the interests of practical religion, have ceased to teach and preach those principles from which alone it can proceed. Besides this, there are many ways by which a minister may get beside the gospel without falling into any palpable errors. There may be nothing *crooked*, yet much *wanting*. We may deliver an ingenious discourse, containing nothing inconsistent with truth, and yet not preach that truth "in which believers stand, and by which they are saved." We may preach *about* the gospel, and yet not preach the gospel, so as to "show unto men the way of salvation." And if we get into a vain, carnal, and worldly frame of mind, this is almost certain to be the case. It is no breach of charity to say, of hundreds of sermons that are ordinarily delivered by those who are reputedly orthodox, that they are not the gospel which Jesus commissioned his servants to preach: and, if it be thus among preachers, it is marvellous that a large proportion of religious people are not strictly evangelical, but imbibe another spirit? And, if the doctrine of Christ be neglected (not to say corrupted,) the effects will appear in a neglect of faithful discipline, in a worldly spirit, and in a gradual disregard of a watchful, circumspect, and holy individual conduct.

It is no breach of charity to suppose that many who profess evangelical principles are Christians only in name, and that these principles are professed merely on account of their popularity in the circles in which they move. The ways of such must be crooked. Like Saul, they know not how to go about obedience to God, but are always stumbling, or turning aside in pursuit of some carnal object.

There are few things more spoken against in the present times than *party zeal*; but there are few things more common. To unite with those whom we consider on mature examination as being nearest the mind of Christ, and having done so to act up to our principles,—is our duty; but few things are farther from the mind of the partisan than this. Having enlisted in the cause of a party, he sees no good but that which is within its pale, and will say and do almost any thing to keep up its reputation. "Many

things have I seen in the days of my vanity?" There is a man whose heart unites with every one who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and who rejoices in the work of God wherever he sees it; but, not being of the right party, he is of little or no account: and there is a man who gives no other proof of his liberality than that of boasting of it; yet, being of the right party, he is liberal.

Genuine candor and liberality are not to be looked for in parties, but in individuals of various parties. There are men who, while seeking the good of their immediate connections, consider them not so much as their *party* as an integral part of the kingdom of Christ, and who know how to rejoice in the success of truth and true religion wherever it is found: but is it thus with the bulk of any denomination, established or unestablished? I fear not. He that has lived thirty or forty years in religious society, and has not met with things that must needs have shaken his confidence in professions, must either be a very happy man or very unobservant of what has passed before him. What shall we say then? Shall we sigh, and say, "That which is crooked cannot be made straight?" Be it so; Let us distinguish between Christianity and the conduct of its professors; so that, while we are grieved at the latter, we may not think the worse of the former. "Let God be true, and every man a liar!" Let us also examine our own hearts, and pray that we may have grace at least to correct the deviations, and supply the defects, that are to be found in ourselves; in which case, whatever may befall others, we shall find rest for our souls.

I shall conclude with a few remarks on *misrepresentation*. Some men in the course of their lives are exposed to a large portion of this, accompanied, it may be, with much foul abuse, the correction of which often becomes an object of despair. "He that is first in his own cause," says the wise man, "seemeth just, but his neighbor cometh and searcheth him." But how if a man should be so deluged with misrepresentations, and his hands so occupied with more important concerns, as to have neither time nor inclination to refute them? There are two ways left him.

First: He may safely treat the foulest and most unworthy of his opponents with *neglect*. Their calumnies will not do him much injury; and, if he attempt to answer them, he may be in danger of imbibing a portion of their spirit. This seems to be the fool that should *not* be answered according to his folly, lest we be like unto him.

Secondly: He may give a brief statement of the truth, and leave the misrepresentation and abuse to fall of its own accord. When the Jews, after their return from

Babylon, began building the temple, it caused a great sensation among their adversaries. They first offered to join them in the work, thinking, no doubt, to come in for a share, and perhaps the chief share, of the glory; and, when their offer was refused, they accused them to the Persian government, so that the work for a time was stopped. We may wonder that the Jews did not by a counter-statement correct these vile misrepresentations, and expose the insincerity of their accusers: yet they did not; but, as appears from the history, held their peace. When the storm had blown over, encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, they renewed the work; and, when interrogated anew by their adversaries, contented themselves with a simple statement of the truth. The substance of it was this: We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth. We are engaged in rebuilding the house that was built many years ago by a great king of Israel. Our fathers sinned against God, and he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first year of Cyrus there was a decree to rebuild it, and its furniture was at the same time restored to Sheshbazzar, whom he appointed our governor. The same Sheshbazzar began this work, which is not yet finished.—This simple statement of truth, which leaves out all reflections on their adversaries, would bear to be repeated even by them, in their letter to Darius, and in that form was repeated, and ultimately prevailed.—Ezra iv. v. vi. The crooked things were let alone, and the straight rule exhibited, and thus the end was answered.

### LII.—IMPORTANCE OF UNION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INTERESTS IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

[Sketch of a sermon delivered at New Broad-street chapel, July 1, 1800.]

“From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house. After them repaired Zadok, the son of Immer, over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah, the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate. After him repaired Hananiah, the son of Shelemiah, and Hanan the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam, the son of Berechiah, over against his chamber.”—Nehemiah iii. 28—30.

I HAVE no desire, my friends, to amuse you with curious speculations on a difficult passage; but you will readily admit that all Scripture is profitable and is designed to convey some important instruction to us. The zeal and diligence of these good people, in rearing the walls of Jerusalem, are far from being uninteresting. Were you to

read the whole book, you would find your hearts warmed with a view of the ardor with which they undertook and finished it. Sixty or seventy years before this, the captives had returned from Babylon, and had rebuilt the city, and after that the temple; but still there was a wall wanting, and the city and temple were exposed to the depredation of enemies. Nehemiah, a godly Jew, at that time resident at the court of Persia, hearing how Jerusalem was circumstanced, was in great affliction that the gates thereof were burned, that the walls thereof were broken down and the city under great reproach. He wept, he fasted, and went in unto the king, and obtained a commission to go and rear these broken and desolated walls. He met with great impediments: there were deep-rooted enmities amongst some of the Samaritans, especially Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite; and some of his companions did all in their power to hinder the good work; but Nehemiah had his heart right, and was continually offering up his prayer, “Think upon me, O my God, for good;” and, having his heart in the work, he communicated his designs to his friends and brethren, and they set to work and wrought mightily with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other, and they labored from the dawn of day till the stars appeared—in short, the wall was begun, and the wall was finished; for “the people had a mind to work.” I think, in this ardor, this zeal on the part both of Nehemiah and of the people, there was not only an amiable patriotism, but a portion of real piety. It was not merely the city of their fathers—it was not merely their own city—the walls of which they were thus zealous to repair: it was the city of God, the city of Zion. It was for the protection of the worship of God: and here lay the piety of this zeal.

I cannot now go over the chapter—you may read it at your leisure. It gives an account of the various persons and families who were engaged in this work of building the wall. I will only offer a few remarks.

Observe, in the first place, how the work was divided amongst them. You will read all along that every man and body of men, or family of men, had all separate work appointed them. All were set at work: one built this part and one that, and thus, by every one taking his proper part, the whole was reared—by union the whole was accomplished. By a number of individuals setting their hands to the same work, uniting in it with all their heart, the work will rise, the work shall not only be begun but completed.

A second remark that offers itself, from this history, is that though their work was separate, yet they had not separate interests. The place on which each labored was separate—each had his own peculiar spot ap-



pointed him to labor on; but the object in which all were engaged was the same. Every man by rearing a part of the wall contributed to the finishing of the whole. It was one city, one wall, one great object, and, by every one accomplishing a part, the whole was completed. This teaches us that there is in the service of God a union of private and public interest, and that, while we each separately attend to our specific duty, we all contribute to that great object, the glory of God, the good of his church, and the good of mankind.

Once more, it is worthy of notice, and indeed this is the thought for which I read this passage, that things were so contrived that each man and body of men should, as far as possible, build over against his own dwelling. Nay, we are told in the thirtieth verse of one man who was only a lodger, that is, he inhabited a chamber; and we are informed "that he built the wall over against his own chamber;" so that the smallest apartment served as a ground to excite all to unite in the general work of rearing the wall. I think, without any forced interpretation, this teaches us the importance of union of public and private interests in the service of God. Things are so devised that, by thus acting in our own particular charge, we contribute to the general work; by building the wall, so to speak, against our own houses or our own chambers, we help to rear the wall around the city of God—we contribute to the building of the church, to the building of society, to the good of mankind, to the glory of God. You see, by this time, the sentiment on which I mean to enlarge.

I need not say, my brethren, that we are all engaged in a work analogous to that of the Jews. It is our business to build God's house: it is our highest honor to build up society, to be blessings in our generation; and what we are here directed to, as a means, is to attend immediately to those things which are our especial charge—to build, as it were, over against our own houses.

God requires that we be of a large heart. We are enjoined to cherish largeness of heart, to seek the good of mankind, to embrace within our affections, and good wishes, and efforts, and prayers, the well-being of the whole human race. Undoubtedly this is the case; yet the whole human race do not come within our province. We may pray for them, we may wish them well, we may long for their salvation, we may do something perhaps towards it; but the main part of our labor lies within our reach—it is over against our own apartments.

I. Let us inquire, then, WHAT ARE THOSE EXERTIONS WHICH MAY BEAR AN ANALOGY TO WHAT IS HERE RECOMMENDED—building the wall over against our own apartments? and I answer in a few of the following par-

ticulars:—By an attention, in the first place, to our own souls, in the next place to our religious connections, and in the last place to our neighbors, to the poor, to those who are within our reach. I apprehend a proper attention to these different objects will be found to be analogous to building the wall over against our own apartments, and will contribute to raise the wall of Jerusalem, to promote the cause of God and the good of mankind.

1. I would observe that *a proper attention to our own souls is of the first importance.*—I do not mean by this to deny that there is a duty owing to our bodily welfare, to our temporal interests, and that this is a part of building the wall over against our own houses too. Doubtless, if every one of us by paying a proper attention to our temporal concerns, by industry, economy, and the like, providing things honest in the sight of the Lord, and in the sight of all men, that we may have to give to him that needeth—if every one were to build in this way against his own house, we should hear of but few failures, we should hear of but few bankruptcies, of few that would be incapable of paying their just debts; undoubtedly this may be included; but I speak of the chief thing—the soul, and its most important interests. This is the main thing to which our attention should be directed. My dear hearers, you have heard much of the gospel. You have been in the habit, I presume, of hearing the gospel. You have heard much said and have thought much perhaps about spreading the gospel. You have heard animating discourses, and read animating writings, about missionary labors and efforts to spread the gospel of the Lord Jesus amongst the heathen. You have heard many an animating discourse, perhaps, in favor of efforts to spread the gospel in the towns and villages of your own country; but do not forget one thing: do not let your attention be so taken up about building the wall around the city as to forget to ask, How goes on the building against my own house? How go on matters as to my own soul? Am I a Christian? Do I repent of my sins? Do I believe in the Son of God for the salvation of my soul?—Of what account will it be to me that the wall is built all round Jerusalem, if it be down against my door! Here is the point. Undoubtedly it behoves us to be attentive to the public cause of God and the public interests of man, but not so as to neglect our own souls. On the contrary, it is by attending first, and principally, to our own good, that we contribute to the general good. Or let me take it for granted that your soul is in a state of salvation—let me take it for granted that you are converted, that you are in the road to heaven and to God—yet this is not enough. Is your soul in a thriving, prosperous state, or do its concerns lie in



ruins? It is possible you may be thriving in your business: it may be your fortune may be accumulating: it is possible you may have built yourselves a habitation in the country, as well as in the city: but is the wall repaired in a spiritual sense? Is thy soul prosperous, and art thou in health? Perhaps I ought to ask myself this question. I am sure I need it equally with you, and the Lord knows that, while preaching to you in this manner, I do not mean to overlook myself. I often fear lest, while watching the vineyards of others, my own should be neglected; and it is one of the snares and temptations that is peculiar to ministers that while they are attentive to divine things, and studying them in reference to their hearers, they should neglect to deal in them for their own souls. I fear it is no unusual thing for a minister to be employed in building up the wall against his hearers' habitations, while it is all in ruins against his own. Let each of us, especially those who are engaged in the sacred work of the ministry, say, Oh! my soul, how is it with thee? It was not without cause that the apostle said to young Timothy and Titus respectively, "Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine." No, it was not without cause that he charged each of them saying, "keep *thyself* pure." And it is by an attention, both as ministers and people, to our own souls' best interests that we rear the wall of Zion—that we promote the glory of God and the good of those around us. Nor can we be useful without it to any considerable degree. No one of us can communicate what he does not possess. He, therefore, who sinks into carnality and earthly-mindedness in his own soul, will not be able to communicate spirituality to others. How can we communicate what we do not feel? The Lord may in some instances make us of use, and bless that truth which does not proceed from our hearts; but, ordinarily speaking, it is the spiritually-minded minister, and the spiritually-minded Christian, whom the Lord blesses in making the means of diffusing the savor of Christ. It is those that have salt in themselves that are the savor of Christ to those about them. Thus by building the wall, as I may say, against our own houses, we contribute to the well-being of the city of God.

2. Perhaps the next subject that demands our attention, or the object that calls for our solicitude next to our own souls, is *the spiritual welfare of our families*. They are our charge. God has given us them as a solemn charge to rear for him. Our children, our servants, all our domestics, are in a sort our solemn charge, and so answer to the wall, or that part of the wall over against our own apartments. The godly parent has a very solemn and important charge, and he feels it to be such. It has been remarked more

than once, where a child has been born and added to a family, "Now we have not only another body to provide for, but another soul to pray for." A parent has seemed sometimes like the commander of a convoy, having a number of ships under his charge, to conduct through the boisterous sea of life, and to see them safely brought unto the desired harbor. Alas! how painful must be the thought, if one, or two, or more of those thus committed to our charge, be wrecked and lost! How interesting it must be to a serious mind to be able to say, at the last day, "Here am I and the children which thou hast given me!" It is true that the parent is not accountable for the conversion of his children. He cannot change their hearts. He only that made the human mind can change it; but the means are his, the blessing is the Lord's. It is of importance that we carefully walk before our children, setting them a holy example, walking before our families and all our domestics in such a way as that we can recommend them to follow us. Oh for the parent to be able to say, on his dying bed, "Be ye followers of me as I also have been of Christ!" Oh for the parent to be able to say to his family, when taking leave of life, "the things that you have heard and seen of me do; and the God of peace be with you!" This, my brethren, wherever it exists, is building over against our own apartment; this is building the wall of Zion; this is glorifying God. And it is worthy of notice that the church of God is thereby raised; for what is the church—what is any Christian church—but a number of Christian families associated together? A Christian family is the first nursery for the church of God. It is there that the seed of truth is ordinarily sown. It is there that the first principles of true religion are often instilled. The prayers, the tears, the cautions, and the example of a godly parent, who walks in the fear of God before his family, will leave effects on the mind. I have seldom known persons converted who were brought up in religious families, but they have dated their first impressions from something which took place in the family. They have dated their early convictions to what has passed in family worship, perhaps, or in the counsel and example of their friends. Thus is the church of God supplied from Christian families—thus are the lively stones furnished, by which the spiritual house is reared. Let this be an encouragement to us to build over against our own apartments.

3. Next to our families, perhaps I may mention *our religious connections*. I may suppose that Christians are in the habit of forming themselves into Christian societies, according to the Christian rule; and, if you are a member of a Christian church, undoubtedly it becomes your immediate charge to labor

to build up those particular societies. I do not mean to the exclusion of others. Christians should cherish a largeness of heart, as I have said before, and should pray for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Yet each has a special duty towards those peculiar connections to which he stands related. I think, as a Christian, it behoves me to reprove a fault in any Christian man, whether immediately connected with me or not; but I am under special obligations to watch over those with whom I have entered into a solemn covenant so to do. Over those we are bound to watch with tender solicitude, with brotherly love, and to consider that as a part of our charge. With them we are bound more especially to unite in worship; and it is our interest as well as our duty so to do. It is an idle notion which I apprehend many people in this city entertain—I say in this city, owing to the great number of places of worship, and the great variety of preachers—it is an idle notion that people entertain, that, being members of a church, it is an abridgment of their liberty to be obliged to attend there. In fact, your soul will never prosper if you are constantly wandering hither and thither. It is he that is planted in the house of the Lord, and he only, that shall flourish in the courts of our God; therefore, while you bear good will to all the churches of God, to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, of every denomination, yet do not forget building up that part of the wall that stands over against your own dwelling. Fulfil your special obligations; hereby it is that the building will rise.

4. Next to an attention to our religious connections, follows *an attention to those who are around about us—our neighbors, particularly the poor.* God has placed us, some in one situation, some in another; but all of us see those round about us that stand in need of our help. "The poor ye have always with you." God has wisely ordained that we should thus be linked together. The rich could not do without the poor, any more than poor without the rich. Instead of cherishing animosity one against another—instead of the poor envying the rich, and the rich despising the poor—be as one. You might as well set at variance the eye against the hand, or the head against the feet; they are different members of the same body—they all contribute to the well-being of the whole—and, provided we cherish this spirit, we shall live as brethren, and feel ourselves to be one family; and it behoves those who are possessed, not only of opulence, but of a competency of worldly good, to study the well-being of those about them. Self-interest, or a selfish spirit, that lives only to itself, and cares for none but itself, has, I was going to say, all its enjoyments to itself; but I can scarcely say it has any enjoyments. It is in doing good to those around us that we derive

good. It is by mingling souls, by feeling for the miseries of others—it is by visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, as well as by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world—it is by dropping the tear of sympathy, with a sorrowing heart—it is by lending a hand to the children of the poor, to assist in doing that which their parents may not be able to do for them—it is by helping those around us, in things essential to their present and future happiness, that we become blessings to society, and enjoy blessings ourselves.

I apprehend that, if we kept the spiritual good of mankind more in view, we might be much more useful, especially in the way of visiting the afflicted poor. It is in a time of affliction, when the hand of God is heavy on a man, when death appears full in his view, that the mind is opened to serious conversation. It is then that a little temporal relief will be acceptable, and that will be the time for serious advice and exhortation. If Christians were more disposed to water those who are round about them—to visit the poor, to avail themselves of every opportunity of suggesting to their minds the principles of the gospel—who can tell what good would be done? And this is a way of doing good without any noise. It is a still, silent mode, and therefore corresponds with the representation of the kingdom of God, that cometh without noise or observation. It is thus that we are called upon to build the wall over against our own apartments. But

II. I close the whole with A REFLECTION OR TWO.

1. *If that part of the wall which stood over against any one's apartment was not built, you know the whole city was exposed to danger: if but one place remained unreared, the enemy might get in there.* Apply this thought—whatever good may be done in the world, whatever good may be done in the church, however zealous our ministers may be, however zealous our fellow Christians, however holy and circumspect they may all be, yet, if one be negligent, if you be loose, if you be worldly, sensual, and devilish, the wall is down over against your own apartment, the enemy will come in, and the whole city will be exposed, owing to your misconduct. Think then of what consequence the ill conduct of an individual may be. It was on this account that David lamented, in the fifty-first Psalm, after his awful conduct in the affair of Uriah and Bathsheba. He had, if I may so say, beaten down the walls of Jerusalem, and the enemy came in; and, in this Psalm, one part of his prayer is, "build thou the walls of Jerusalem:" as if he had said Lord, I have been the means of pulling them down—the enemy has hereby reproached thy name—the heathen have scoffed at the God of Israel—the walls of Zion lie desolate through my misconduct: Oh! Lord, heal



the breaches which my sins have caused. Think, oh! my brethren, of the great evil to the church of God, and to society, which the wicked conduct of an individual may occasion.

2. While attentive to your own soul's concerns, to your own families, and to your neighbors, *cherish a public spirit*—keep in view the whole interest of Christ, cherish a largeness of heart; for, while every man was to build the wall over against his own house, the end of it was the repairing of the whole wall—the security of the whole city was to be kept in view; and hence you will find that there was so much public spirit that some built who had no houses against which to build. We read in the second verse that some men of Jericho builded. Now as they did not live in Jerusalem, the only end they could have in view was the public good—the general good: and so we read of several others who were not inhabitants of Jerusalem; and, what is worthy of notice, some of those who had a part of the wall allotted to them were so laborious as to get this part finished first, and then to help their neighbors. They did not stand idle when they had done their share. You will read in the twenty-fourth verse, and several parts of the chapter, that they rebuilt another piece. This should teach us, while we attend to our own personal interests, and the personal interests of those immediately connected with us, to cherish enlargedness of heart. Let no time be lost in idleness; that which can be spared from our own concerns, let us apply to the well-being of the world at large. Seek the good of all mankind. Labor all that in you lies to send the gospel throughout the whole land—yea, the whole world. Let your prayers and your efforts grasp nothing less than the world itself. It is in this way that we shall glorify God and be useful in our generations.

#### LIII.—CHRIST OUR SUBSTITUTE IN DEATH AND JUDGMENT.

[*Sketch of a Funeral Sermon, delivered Feb. 25th, 1790.*]

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”—Heb. ix. 27, 28.

The truths here taught us are the most serious and interesting. None doubt the reality of death, and few that of judgment; but many live as if they credited neither. The sum of the text is, *Christ is our substitute, both in death and judgment*; and yet we die and must appear at judgment. To make this plain, observe we are appointed to death and judgment in two ways:—First, by our subjection to corruption, or corporeal death,

and to an appearance before God in judgment. In this view the appointment takes place upon mankind in general, good and bad, and notwithstanding the death and mediation of Christ. Secondly, by the sentence of God as a law-giver. It was the sentence against man: “In the day thou eatest,” &c. In this view death incudes more than a *subjection to corruption*; it includes its sting: and judgment includes more than *appearing*; it includes our final condemnation. This last is the meaning of the text. It speaks not of what actually takes place, but of what *must have taken place* had not the mediation of Christ interposed. The text speaks of the penal sentence of the Law-giver, and then of our deliverance from that sentence through Christ, our substitute; so that though in some sense it is still appointed for men to die, and to appear before God in judgment, yet not in the sense of the text. *Believers* will find death divested of its sting, and judgment of its terror.—Ver. 28.

From the text thus explained we may make a few remarks:—

1. That the sentence which all mankind lie under, as sinners, is no less than a subjection to everlasting ruin. Some have supposed that the threatening, “in the day thou eatest thou shalt die,” meant no more than corporeal death, or subjection to bodily corruption; but, if so, the mediation of Christ does not deliver us from any part of the sentence of the law (for we are still subject to this,) which the apostle supposes here it does.

2. That the judgment here referred to is the judgment at the end of the world. Some have supposed it to refer to that which follows death immediately; but the whole text shows the contrary: it speaks of what we are subject to in death and judgment, and of Christ as our substitute in both. Two things require our consideration:

I. *THE DOOM THAT LIES ON MEN AS BREAKERS OF GOD'S LAW.*—The sentence is *awful*. We may judge what death and judgment would have been to us all, by what it is to those who die out of Christ. Think what death was to the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah, Horab and his company, Saul, Belshazzar, the rich fool, Judas, and others. This for substance was the doom upon us all. Two circumstances in particular in these deaths rendered them awful.

1. They were attended with *the loss of all their enjoyments*. Their all being in this world, 'tis gone, and gone forever! None of this beyond the grave, nor the hope of it, or of any enjoyment whatever: even wicked enjoyment is gone.

2. They had a *load of guilt upon them when they left the world*, which would sink them lower than the grave. This is the sting of death! “I said therefore unto you,



that ye shall die in your sins: for, if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." And this is an essential part of that death to which the sentence of the law subjected us. It was usual, under the law, to transfer guilt by confessing it upon the head of the sacrifice, teaching us that, if *our* guilt was not transferred to Christ our sacrifice, it must lie upon our heads when we come to die and appear before God. O what a thing it is to go down to the grave with our blood upon our head! Could we leave this load behind, death would be divested of its chief terror. But this is not all: the sentence exposes us to a judgment *hereafter*. Death is not a going out of existence. We are accountable creatures, and must be accountable for all we do, and must have stood to the issue but for Christ, and must, after all, if we die out of Christ. O, my hearers, this is true! Do think what judgment will be to those that die enemies to Christ, and thence learn what it would have been to us, all but for him.

Three things in particular here deserves notice:—(1) *It is a judgment that takes cognizance of the heart.*—All impositions are at an end. How different will characters then appear to what they have here! God is not mocked! (2) *The character of the Judge.*—God is Judge himself! His eyes are flames of fire. He cannot be deceived. A God of impartial justice, he cannot be prepossessed or bribed. A God of Almighty power.—Rev. xviii. 8. (3) *The importance of the decision.*—It is final and decisive; no appeal from it! This will be the case of sinners, on whom the sentence of the law is executed, and must have been the case of all but for what follows.—Ver. 28. This leads us to consider

II. THE DELIVERANCE WHICH BELIEVERS OBTAIN FROM THAT DOOM THROUGH THE SACRIFICE AND SECOND COMING OF CHRIST.—Not from subjection to corruption, nor yet from appearing before God in judgment. In this respect the text is true of all, though that is not the meaning of it. Good and bad, young and old, healthy and afflicted, wise and foolish: all must die.—We must shortly, without distinction, part with all our earthly enjoyments, friends, property, &c., and all our religious opportunities will soon be over. Our bodies will be reduced to dust, and our souls appear before God. All this we must pass through, whatever we are, and notwithstanding the mediation of Christ; but yet we are delivered by him from every thing in death or judgment that can render it truly terrible. If we inquire *how*, we have an answer in the text.

1. It is through his having died for us, "To bear the sin of many." Observe, it is sin that is the sting of death; and Christ, by his death, has removed this sting away in behalf of all that believe in him; as the

sacrifices bore the sins of Israel, and bore them away, so Christ by his death "hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."—"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." He bore the wrath due to our sin. The shaft of vengeance spent itself in his heart! Hence death becomes a sleep, sleeping in Jesus—a putting off this tabernacle—a departure. Hence Christians have met death with pleasure, though in himself the king of terrors. Death was originally under the power of Satan; but Christ by death has destroyed that power of Satan over death, and death now becomes Christ's servant and theirs: "Death is yours."

2. As our deliverance from the sting of death is through Christ's death, so our deliverance from the terror of judgment will be owing to Christ's standing our friend in that day. The terror of judgment is condemnation for sin, but Christ will be our advocate. Observe (1) He came before to bear sin, but now *without* sin. (2) He comes to *salvation*: to save our bodies from the grave, and body and soul from condemnation: to give the final blow. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" (3) This is to them, and them only, that look for him,—that love his appearing. 2 Pet. iii. 12. 2 Tim. iv. 8.

As to the deceased, we most of us knew little or nothing of him. I only knew that he was not destitute of an expectation of being "forever with the Lord," and I hope that expectation was not in vain. And you, my friend, who are now deprived of your only remaining relative, you are left, it is true, in a world of temptation and affliction; yet you have, I trust, a friend and a brother who yet liveth, and one who is said to have loved his own that were in the world, and to love them to the end.

A word to the congregation.—You have got to die, and it is a very serious matter whether this sentence be executed upon you in its terror: it must—it will—if out of Christ. Death will then have its sting, and Christ will come to your confusion.

To the church.—We are about to commemorate his death. He hath wrought so great a deliverance—hath borne our sins. *Look for him.* Be disengaged. Have your work forward. "The Lord is at hand."

#### LIV.—PASTORS REQUIRED TO FEED THE FLOCK OF CHRIST.

"Feed my sheep."—John xxi. 16.

THE conversation which passed between our Lord and Peter, of which the text forms a part, was designed to administer reproof, and to communicate forgiveness. The cut-

ting question was calculated to wound him to the quick; the kind direction amounted to a full forgiveness. He might expect he had lost his office—but no—he shall be restored—“Feed my sheep.”

There are a few things suggested by these words which have of late made some impression on my mind; particularly, the love of Christ to his people—my own duty as a pastor—and the character necessary for you to sustain, if you would thrive under the word. Let me notice

I. THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO HIS PEOPLE, discovered in this charge to Peter.—You are to view him as a shepherd—the good Shepherd of the sheep—the chief Shepherd. The time also is worthy of notice: he had just laid down his life for the sheep; nay more, had taken it again (Heb. xiii. 20;) and being now about to leave his flock in the world, as sheep among wolves, he commits them to his under-shepherd. There is a close connection between his having died for them and his desire to have them fed; which is afterward recognized by the apostle Paul, in his farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus: “Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Observe three things in particular:—

1. *The interest he claims in them:*—“My sheep”—“my lambs.” They are his as given him by the Father.—John x. 29. They are his as having purchased them with his blood.—Acts xx. 28. And they are his as being the travail of his soul, the reward of his death, which “satisfied” him.

2. *The qualification he requires in their shepherd*—Love! He would not trust them with one who did not love him. One who did not love him, a hireling, would starve them, or poison them, and flee in a time of danger.—John x. 12. Give him the fleece, the flock may care for themselves. But, if we love Christ, we shall love his people for his sake. We shall feel a subordinate interest in them. It is by this a good shepherd is distinguished from a hireling.—John x. 11. Love will inspire vigilance and boldness in feeding the flock, and defending them from danger. David was a genuine shepherd, when he risked his life to save a lamb.

3. *The provision he has made for their being fed.*—Under-shepherds cannot furnish the pasture: the utmost we can do is to lead you into it. But Christ does more. He not only provides shepherds, but pasture—the gospel, of which he is the subject.

II. THE DUTY OF A MINISTER TO HIS PEOPLE.—It is to “feed” them. The word here rendered “feed” signifies the whole duty of a shepherd, and not merely to supply them with food—to govern them, protect them, to care for them; or (as Peter himself expresses it) “to take the oversight of them.” To discharge this duty as it demands is a great matter.

I. It requires that we be *divested of a selfish spirit.*—The description of an idol-shepherd, by Zechariah (xi. 16, 17), has of late been much on my mind. Two evils hang over him who is his own idol, or who wishes to be idolized by his people—a blast on his labors, and a mind void of judgment.

2. It requires that we be *conversant with the gospel.*—How else can we lead others into it? If we be worldly-minded, we shall feed your evil principles and propensities; but not your graces; at best, only your mental faculties. Many are thus fed by ingenious, speculative, preachers. But we must feed your best principles—your faith, hope, and love. Lord! who is sufficient for these things?

III. THE CHARACTER NECESSARY FOR YOU TO SUSTAIN IN ORDER TO THRIVE UNDER THE WORD.—You must be Christ’s sheep, or you will not know his voice, the gospel-will not be the food you will relish. If you are his sheep, you will enter in at the door. Christ is the door. You will know his voice, and follow him. You will enter his fold, uniting yourself to his people; and you will go in and out, and find pasture. You will enter into the spirit of the church, as described by Solomon: “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest; where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.” &c.

Sustaining this character, you will not famish for want of food. The gospel is rich pasture. Having led you into it on earth, may I be able at last to give an account, both of you and myself, with joy, and not with grief!

#### LV.—SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE AND HOLY LOVE NECESSARY FOR THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

[*Sketch of a charge delivered to a young minister at his ordination.\**]

“He was a burning and a shining light.”—John v. 35.

In addressing you, my dear brother, on this solemn occasion, I shall not undertake so much to communicate any thing new as to remind you of what you know, and have felt already. You are aware that there are two main objects to be attained in the work of the Christian ministry—*enlightening the minds and affecting the hearts of the people.* These are the usual means by which the work of God is accomplished. Allow me to remind you that, in order to the attainment of these objects, you yourself must be under their influence. If you would enlighten others, you must be “a shining light” yourself. And, if you would affect others, you yourself must feel: your own

\* The *ten* which follow this were also delivered on similar occasions.

heart must "burn" with holy ardor. You must be "a *burning* and a *shining* light."

It is not enough that you should be what is called a *popular preacher*. A man may have gifts, so as to shine in the eyes of the multitude, almost as bright as he does in his own eyes; and yet possess little or nothing of *spiritual* light—light, the tendency of which is to transform the heart. So also a man may burn with zeal, as Jehu did, and yet have little or no true love to God, or affection for the souls of men. *Spiritual* light and *holy love* are the qualities which Christ here commends.

You will give your candid attention, my dear brother, while I endeavor to remind you of the necessity of each of these, in the different parts of your important work:—in the great work of preaching the gospel—in presiding in the church—in visiting your people—and in your whole demeanor through life.

I. In the great work of **PREACHING THE GOSPEL**.—O, my brother, in this department we had need resemble the living creatures mentioned by Ezekiel (chap. i. 18) "full of eyes." We had almost need, in one view, to be made up of pure intellect—to be all light. I shall not attempt to decide how much knowledge is necessary, of men and things, of past and present times, of the church and the world; but shall confine myself to two or three particulars, as specimens.

1. How necessary is it to understand in some good degree *the holy character of God!*—It is this to which you will find that men in general are blind. They conceive of God as if he were such an one as themselves. . . . And hence they fancy they are not enemies to him. You will have to point out the true character of God, that the sinner may see his own deformity, and not have the enmity of his heart concealed from his eyes. A just view of the holy character of God will also be one of the best preservatives against error in other respects. Almost all the errors in the world proceed from ignorance of the true character of God. To what else can be attributed the errors of Socinianism, Arianism, and Antinomianism? From degraded views of God's character arise diminutive notions of the evil of sin—of its just demerit—of our lost condition—of our need of a great Saviour—and of the work of the Spirit. O, my brother, may you shed abroad this light with unsullied lustre! And, in order to this, commune much with God in private; since there is no way of knowing the true character of another so well as by personal, private intercourse.

2. A knowledge of *Christ, as the Mediator* between God and man, is necessary.—"This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast

sent." Here, also, men are greatly ignorant. He is in the world, and the world knows him not. It must be our concern, as ministers, to know him; and, comparatively speaking, "to know nothing else" . . . and this that we may diffuse the knowledge of him to others. The glory of Christ's character is such that if he were but viewed in a true light, and not through the false mediums of prejudice and the love of sin, but through the mirror of the gospel, he must be loved. John iv. 29, 30—42. Here, my brother, we need to be intimately acquainted with Christ, that we may be able on all occasions to give him a just character—that we may be able to tell of his dignity, his love, the generous principles of his undertaking, and how nobly he executed the arduous enterprise.

3. A knowledge of *human nature as created* is necessary.—We shall be unskilful workmen, unless we are acquainted with the materials on which we have to work. It is not more necessary for a surgeon or a physician to understand the anatomy of the human body than it is for ministers to understand what may be called the anatomy of the soul. We had need enter into all the springs of action. In particular, we must be very careful to distinguish between primary and criminal passions. God habitually addresses the former, and so should we, but not the latter; the latter being only the abuse of the principles implanted in our nature. To be more explicit: God has created us with the love of possession, but the excess of this love becomes covetousness and idolatry. God has implanted within us a principle of emulation; but the abuse of this is pride and ambition. God has created us with the love of pleasure; but this indulged to excess becomes sensuality. Now the gospel never addresses itself to our corrupt passions; but the word of God is full of appeals to those principles of our nature with which we are created. For example: in his word, God addresses himself to our love of possession; and points to "an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away"—to the principle of emulation; and presents to our view "a crown"—to our love of pleasure; and informs us that "in his presence there is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore." And, in short, in the same way, he addresses the principles of zeal, love, hatred, shame, fear, revenge, &c. And so must we.

4. A knowledge of *human nature as depraved* is necessary.—Without this knowledge, we shall be unable to trace and detect the workings of a wicked heart. Sin is a deceitful thing, and we are apt to be imposed upon by its specious names. Parsimoniousness is called frugality; prodigality, generosity; bitterness of spirit in reproving, fidelity; and resentment, a becoming spirit. We



need therefore to know the root of the disease, and the various ways in which it operates. In order to effect a cure, the knowledge of the disease is indispensable; and, in order to attain to this knowledge, we must study the various symptoms by which the disorder may be distinguished.

5. A knowledge of human nature *as sanctified by the Spirit* is necessary.—Without this, we shall be unable to trace the work of God in the soul; and unable to fan the gentle flame of divine love in the genuine Christian, and to detect and expose the various counterfeits.

You will need also, my brother, a heart *warmed* with divine things, or you will never be “a burning and a shining light.” When we are thinking or preaching, we need to *burn*, as well as shine. When we study, we may rack our brains, and form plans; but, unless “our hearts burn within us,” all will be a mere skeleton—our thoughts mere bones: whatever be their number, they will be all dry—very dry: and, if we do not feel what we say, our preaching will be poor dead work. Affected zeal will not do. A gilded fire may shine; but it will not warm. We may smite with the hand, and stamp with the foot, and throw ourselves into violent agitations; but, if we feel not, it is not likely the people will—unless, indeed, it be a feeling of disgust. But suppose there be no affectation, nor any deficiency of good and sound doctrine; yet, if in our work we feel no inward satisfaction, we shall resemble a millstone—preparing food for others, the value of which we are unable to appreciate ourselves. Indeed, without feeling, we shall be incapable of preaching any truth or of inculcating any duty aright. How can we display the evil of sin, the love of Christ, or any other important truth, unless we feel it? How can we preach against sin, without feeling a holy indignation against it? It is this that will cause us, while we denounce sin, to weep over the sinner. Otherwise, we may deal in flings and personalities; but these will only irritate: they will never reclaim. O! if ever we do any good in our work, it must be the effect of love to God and love to men—love to the souls of men, while we detest, and expose, and denounce their sins. How could Paul have pursued his work with the ardor and intenseness which he manifested, if his heart had not burned with holy love.

II. Spiritual light and holy love are equally necessary in **PRESIDING IN THE CHURCH OF GOD.**

Wisdom and love are necessary, calmly to lay down rules of discipline—to solve difficult questions—to prepare and digest, in concurrence with the deacons, such matters as require to be laid before the church—to nip little differences in the bud—to mediate between contending parties, &c. My

brother, think of the example of the Lord Jesus, who, in his intercourse with his disciples, saluted them with this benediction—“Peace be with you!” The great art of presiding in a church, so as to promote its welfare, is to be neutral between the members, always on the side of God and righteousness, and to let them see that, whatever your opinion may be, you really love them.

III. These qualities are necessary in the more private duty of **VISITING THE PEOPLE.**

A considerable part of the pastoral office consists in visiting the people, especially the afflicted. Paul could appeal to the elders of the church at Ephesus that he had taught them publicly and “from house to house.” It is of great consequence that, in your pastoral visits, you should preserve the character of “a burning and a shining light.” Pastoral visits should not degenerate into religious gossiping—a practice in which some have indulged to the disgrace of religion. Unused to habits of reflection, they feel no relish for solitude; and therefore, to employ the time which hangs so heavy on their hands, they saunter about to see their friends, and to ask them how they are. Nor is this the worst. Satan promptly furnishes a subject where there is such a dearth; and hence gossiping has generally produced tales of slander, and practices which have proved a scandal to the Christian name! I trust, my brother, you know the preciousness of time too well to squander it away in idle visits. And yet visiting is an essential part of your work, that you may become acquainted with the circumstances, the spiritual necessities of your people. They will be able to impart their feelings freely and unreservedly; and you will be able to administer the appropriate counsel to much better purpose than you possibly can from the pulpit, and with greater particularity than would be becoming in a public address. Only let us burn while we shine. Let a savor of Christ accompany all our instructions. A minister who maintains an upright, affectionate conduct, may say almost any thing, in a way of just reproof, without giving offence.

IV. Spiritual light and holy love are necessary in **YOUR WHOLE Demeanor THROUGH LIFE.** May you, my brother, shine in holy wisdom, and burn with ardent love. You will need them, wherever you go—in whatever you engage—that you may walk as one of the children of light.

Allow me to point out a few things which I have found of use, to conduce to these ends:—

1. *Read the lives of good men*—the lives of such men as God has distinguished for gifts, and graces, and usefulness. Example has a great influence. The Scriptures abound with such examples. And, blessed be God, we have some now.

2. *Study the word of God, above all other books, and pray over it.*—It is this will set our hearts on fire. There are no such motives exhibited any where as there—no such exhibitions of wisdom and love.

3. *Read men, as well as books, and your own heart,* in order that you may read others.—Copyists, you know, are generally bunglers. There is nothing that equals what is taken immediately from the life. We need always be making our observations, wherever we are, or wherever we go. If we get a system of human nature, or experience, or any thing else, from books, rather than from our own knowledge, it will be liable to two disadvantages. First: It is not likely to be so near the truth; for systems which go through several hands are like successive copies of a painting, every copy of the preceding one is more unlike the original—or like the telling of a tale, the circumstances of which you do not know of your own personal knowledge: every time it is repeated there is some variation, and thus it becomes farther removed from the truth. Thus Agrippa showed his wisdom, when, instead of depending on the testimony of others, he determined to hear Paul himself. Secondly: If it be correct, still it will not be so serviceable to you as if it were a system of your own working. Saul's armor might be better than David's sling; but not to him, seeing he had not proved it.

4. *Live the life of a Christian, as well as of a minister*—Read as one, preach as one, converse as one—to be profited, as well as to profit others. One of the greatest temptations of a ministerial life is to handle divine truth as ministers, rather than as Christians—for others rather than for ourselves. But the word will not profit them that *preach* it, any more than it will them that hear it, unless it be “mixed with faith.” If we study the Scriptures as Christians, the more familiar we are with them the more we shall feel their importance: but, if our object be only to find out something to say to others, our familiarity with them will prove a snare. It will resemble that of soldiers, and doctors, and undertakers, with death: the more familiar we are with them, the less we shall feel their importance. See Prov. xxii. 17, 18. Ps. i. 2, 3.

5. *Commune with God in private.*—Walking with God in the closet is a grand means, with his blessing, of illuminating our minds and warming our hearts. When Moses came down from the mount, his face shone bright, and his heart burned with zeal for the honor of God and the good of his people. Alas! alas! for want of this . . . . See Jer. x. 21.

6. Hold forth the word of life, not only by precept, but by a *holy practice*.—“Let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your

Father who is in heaven.” Without this, in vain will be all our pretensions to being “burning and shining lights.”

My dear brother, allow me to conclude with an earnest prayer, that you may long continue a “burning and a shining light” to this church; and that, after having “turned many to righteousness,” you may shine as a distinguished star in the firmament forever and ever!

#### LVI.—ON AN INTIMATE AND PRACTICAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE WORD OF GOD.

“Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.”—Ezra vii. 10.

My dear brother, the long and intimate friendship which has subsisted between us will I hope render any apology unnecessary for my occupying this situation upon this solemn occasion. I should certainly have felt a pleasure in hearing some senior minister: but with your desire, on the ground of intimate friendship, I feel disposed to comply. I feel a *peculiar* pleasure in addressing you; for I can speak to you as a friend—a brother—an equal—an acquaintance, with whom I have often taken sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God. You will not, I am sure, misinterpret my freedom, or suppose that I wish to assume any superiority over you, or to dictate to you. You expect me to insist upon the importance of the work in which you are engaged; and for this purpose I have directed my attention to the passage I have read, and would recommend to you the example of Ezra.

Example has a strong tendency to excite us to emulation; and in Ezra the scribe you have the character of an eminent servant of the most high God, held up to your admiration and imitation. Ministers in the New Testament are called “scribes, instructed unto the kingdom of heaven;” and in Ezra you have the character of “a ready scribe.” There are four things in his character upon which I shall discourse, and which I would recommend to you.

I. *SEEK THE LAW, or will, of God.*—I need not inform you, my brother, that the *law*, in the Old Testament especially, is commonly to be understood as synonymous with the *Scriptures*, the *word*, or the *revealed will* of God. The Scriptures were then as commonly called “the *law* of the Lord” as they are now called “the *word* of God.” So the term is to be understood here. To “seek the law of the Lord” is the same as to ascertain his mind and will in his sacred word.

You are to “feed the people with knowledge and understanding;” but you cannot do this without understanding yourself.

Your lips are to "keep knowledge," and the people are to "seek the law at your mouth;" but, in order to communicate it to them, you must seek it at the mouth of God.

1. *Seek it, my brother.*—It will never be found without. It is a mine, in which you will have to dig. And it is a precious mine, which will well repay all your labor.

2. *Seek it at the fountain-head.*—You feel, I doubt not, a great esteem for many of your brethren, now living, and admire the writings of some who are now no more; and you will read their productions with attention and pleasure. But, whatever excellence your brethren possess, it is all borrowed; and it is mingled with error. Learn your religion from the Bible. Let that be your decisive rule. Adopt not a body of sentiments, or even a single sentiment, solely on the authority of any man—however great, however respected. Dare to think for yourself. Human compositions are fallible. But the Scriptures were written by men who wrote as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Human writings on religion resemble preaching—they are useful only so far as they illustrate the Scriptures, and induce us to search them for ourselves.

3. *Seek the will of God in every part of the Bible.*—It is very true that some parts of the Bible are more interesting than others. But "all Scripture is profitable" and necessary. Do not take this part and leave that. Some people foolishly talk of Arminian texts, and Calvinistic texts, as if Scripture were repugnant to itself! That system, whatever it be called, cannot be the right one, that rejects any one part of Scripture whatever.

4. *Seek it perseveringly.*—Do not reckon yourself so to have found it as to be self-sufficient. Be open to conviction from every quarter. Seek it by reading, by meditation, by prayer, by conversation—by all the means that offer. Do not reject information from an inferior, or even an enemy. In the study of the Scriptures you will always be a learner.

II. **PREPARE YOUR HEART** to seek the law of the Lord.—There is a preparation of heart in which we are wholly *passive*, which is, in the strictest sense, the work of God; and, without this, woe be to any of us that should dare to set up for teachers of his law and gospel!—But there is also a preparation of heart in which we are *active*; and this is the preparedness intended in the text. In this, even, God is the cause: he actuates; but then we act. Of this preparation we have to speak; and it consists in prayer, and self-examination, and meditation. Your work is a *course*, and for this you must prepare by "girding up the loins of your mind"—a *fight*, and you must "put on the whole armor of God." The work of God should not be entered upon rashly. God frequently brings his servants through a train of in-

structions and trials, that they may be fitted for it. Moses was forty years at court, and forty years a shepherd. These were his days of preparation. Christ prepared his disciples by his instructions during his life, and previous to their great work they prepared themselves.—Acts i.

Such preparation of heart is not only necessary for your *entrance* into the pastoral office, but also for your *continuance* in it. You will find that every exercise requires it. You do not need being guarded against that erroneous notion of so trusting to the Spirit as to neglect personal preparation for your public labors. But this preparedness is not only requisite for speaking the truth in public, but as well for seeking it in private. Let all your private meditations be mingled with prayer. You will study your Bible to wonderful advantage, if you go to it *spiritually-minded*. It is this which causes us to see the beauty and to feel the force of many parts of Scripture, to which, in a carnal state of mind, we are blind and stupid. If we go to the study of the Bible wise in our own conceits, and self-sufficient, we shall get no good. When we would be taught from God's word, we must learn as little children. Again: If we go to the Bible merely, or chiefly, to find something to say to the people, without respect to our own souls, we shall make but poor progress. My brother, study divine truth as a *Christian*, and not merely as a *minister*. Consider your own soul as deeply interested; and dread the thought of cultivating others, while you suffer your own heart to remain uncultivated. If you study divine truth as a Christian, your being constantly engaged in the study will promote your growth in grace: you will be like "a tree planted by rivers of water:" you will not only bring forth fruit for the people, but your leaf shall not wither, and whatever you do shall prosper. But, if merely as a minister, the reverse. I believe it is a fact that, where a minister is wicked, he is the most hardened against conviction of any character.

III. **KEEP THE LAW.**—"Do it." The apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, is very particular as to personal religion, in a bishop, or pastor. "Take heed to *thyself*, and to the doctrine."—"Keep *thyself* pure."—"Be thou an *example* of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Observe, too, the connection in which this exhortation stands—"Let no man despise thy youth;" plainly intimating that a holy example will render even youth respectable. Your Lord and Master both *did* and taught the will of God.

1. *Dread nothing more than recommending that to your people to which you do not attend yourself.*—You may preach with the fervor of an angel; but if your practice, your habitual deportment, be inconsistent, all you do will be in vain.



2. *More is expected from you than from others.*—A wicked preacher is of all characters the most contemptible. Even the profane despise him.

3. *You will attend to practical preaching.*—But how can you either exhort or reprove, if your people should ever have it in their power to say, "Physician, heal thyself?"—"Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"

4. Attend not only to such duties as fall under the eye of man, but *walk with God*,—in your family, and in your closet. It will require all your wisdom to bring up your children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and, if you rule not well in your own house, you cannot expect to maintain a proper influence in the church of God. Beware also of omitting secret devotions. Conversing with men and things may brighten your gifts; but communion with God is necessary to improve your graces.

IV. *TEACH* in Israel the statutes and judgments of God.—It is not for me to dictate to you what doctrines you are to teach, or what precepts you should enforce. But I hope you will evince your sincerity by preaching in the main such things as, in your confession of faith, you have just avowed; not however to the neglect of other points, which could scarcely be expected to be introduced in such a document. The more you are acquainted with the word of God, the more you will find it abounds with truths, reviving truths too, which seldom or never have a place in confessions of faith. But, passing this, allow me to give you a few general hints on the subject of teaching.

1. *Let Christ and his apostles be your examples.*—Teach as they taught. It would be worth while to read over the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, if it were only to discover their manner of teaching. Dare to avow every truth which they avowed; and address your audience in such language as they addressed to theirs, and that without softening it down, or explaining it away.

2. *Give every part of the truth its due proportion.*—Preach every truth in the proportion in which it is introduced by God in his word. You will find some people attached to one class of truths, and others to another class: but be you attached to *all*. If you are habitually dwelling upon one truth, it must be to the neglect of others; and it is at your peril to keep back *any* part of the counsel of God! If you preach not the great doctrines of the gospel; such as the entire depravity of our nature, the atonement of Christ, the work of the Spirit, &c., the people of God will be famished. If you preach these doctrines, to the neglect of those practical addresses, they will be in danger of a religious surfeit. If you preach doctrinally, some may call you an antinomian; if you preach practically, others may call you a legalist. But go on, my brother:

this is a kind of dirt that won't stick. Preach the law evangelically, and the gospel practically; and God will bless you, and make you a blessing.

3. *Dare to teach unwelcome truths.*—The Christian ministry must be exercised with affection and fidelity. Study not to offend any man; yet keep not back important truth, even if it do offend. You must not enter the pulpit to indulge your own temper; but neither are you at liberty to indulge the humor of others. Be more concerned to commend yourself to the *consciences* of your people than to their good opinion.

4. *Give scriptural proof of what you teach.*—Do not imagine that mere assertion will do. Evidence ought to form the body of your discourses. Such expressions as "*I say*," uttered in the most magisterial tone, will, after all, *prove* nothing—except the unwarrantable confidence of the preacher.

5. *Consider yourself as standing engaged to teach all that hear you.*—Rich and poor, young and old, godly and ungodly—"warning the wicked, lest his blood be required at your hands." Seek the salvation of every man's soul. This was the apostolic method: "warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom." Whether every individual of your congregation *will accept* your message is another question. *Your concern* should be, not to intermeddle with what is not revealed, but to "preach the gospel to every creature;" and to pray for *all*, as Paul did for Agrippa and his court, without distinction: "I would that—*all that hear me* this day were—altogether such as I am."

6. *Teach privately* as well as publicly.—Make your visits among your people subservient to instruction and edification. Take the example of Paul.—Acts xx. 20. Let a savor of Christ accompany you in your intercourse with your flock. This will greatly contribute to your public usefulness.

My brother, seek the law of God—seek it with a prepared heart—reduce it to practice—and teach it diligently; and you will be, not only, like Ezra, a "ready" scribe; but "a scribe well-instructed in the kingdom of God."

#### LVII.—MINISTERS ARE APPOINTED TO ROOT OUT EVIL AND TO CULTIVATE THAT WHICH IS GOOD.

"I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, and to build, and to plant."—Jer. i. 10.

This language, my brother, is not in every sense applicable to the present occasion. The prophet's was an extraordinary, yours is an ordinary office. His was to be exercised over nations and kingdoms, yours over a church and congregation. Yet, even in his case, there was no civil power—he

was no pope—nor was he invested with the authority of a modern bishop. All the power he had pertained to his office as a prophet: he had no secular authority: he pulled down and built up *prophetically*. And though you have no such power as this, by extraordinary inspiration, yet, in a way of declaring the truths of God's word, "whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted, and whosoever sins you retain, they are retained."

Your labor is less than the prophet's was, but the nature of your work is much the same; and the same spirit of faithfulness is required over a few things as over many things.

Your work is divided into two parts. One is, to discourage evil: "to root out, to pull down, to destroy, and to throw down." The other is, to encourage good: "to build, and to plant."

The imagery, you perceive, is of two kinds—that of a house, and that of a garden.

The church is God's house, God's building; and you are appointed to be a laborer "together with God," to pull down, and destroy, and throw down the rubbish, and then to build upon a new and good foundation.

The church is also God's garden; and you are appointed to work in it, and keep it in order, to root out the weeds, and to plant and cultivate the goodly fruit.

Give me your attention, my dear brother, while I inquire what are the evils you are to oppose, and the good you are to encourage, and the methods to be adopted in pursuing these objects. Let us

I. INQUIRE WHAT ARE THE EVILS AGAINST WHICH YOU MUST CONTEND AND THE METHODS YOU ARE TO ADOPT IN THIS OPPOSITION.

1. *By your public ministry root out errors in doctrine.*—Overturn them—not by empty declamation, but by solid scriptural evidence—not by the wild fury of a bigot, but with the pure love of the Christian pastor, whose care it should be to preserve his charge from things that tend to the ruin of their souls.—Particularly, if you love *God*, you will be concerned to root up every thing that opposes the glory of his character and moral government. Vindicate the ways of God to men against all their hard thoughts and speeches. Vindicate his law both in its precepts and penalty. You have observed, I doubt not, that this is the foundation for the grace of the gospel.—If you love *Christ*, you will root up those principles which degrade his dignity and set aside his atonement.—If you love *your people*, you will root up those principles which endanger the salvation of their souls; such as self-righteousness and presumptuous hope. There is plenty of work to remove the covering and to pull down the vain expectations of sinners . . . You have seen, and will see, many whose habitual deportment proves them enemies to the cross, who yet entertain hopes of heaven: try and find out the delusive

ground of their hope, and expose it; only be careful to avoid personalities, which will irritate rather than convince.

2. *By leading the church, in the exercise of faithful discipline, root out evil doers.*—Churches which in former years have been respectable and prosperous are fast falling into decay for want of discipline. Some have pleaded the parable of the wheat and tares as an excuse for negligence in discipline; but this is a perversion. The field is the *world*, not the *church*. The application of the principle to the church would render all the rules of the gospel superfluous.

3. *By rendering your occasional visits subservient to the purposes of conviction and correction.*—You may in this way root up many evils which you cannot by either of the other means. There are cases which you cannot touch in the pulpit, on account of their singularity and minuteness, without being personal, which, as I just said, will irritate rather than reclaim. There are also cases which do not fall under church censure, which yet should come within the cognizance of a faithful pastor. This, I confess, is a difficult part of your work; and some for fear of giving offence, have declined it: but, suppose offence were given, if you are in the path of duty, what have you to fear? Some will say, "If such and such persons are offended, the cause will sink." Then let it sink. You may safely leave that, however, to Christ: if it should therefore sink, he will not blame you. But what cause must that be that is upheld by such unworthy means? After all, however, there is a way of managing these things by which offence is seldom or ever given. The great secret is to mingle love with your fidelity. This was Paul's method with the Corinthians. Consider the peculiar temptations and constitutional or educational tendencies of the party, and mingle counsel and encouragement with censure. We proceed to inquire

II. WHAT IS THAT GOOD WHICH YOU ARE TO ENCOURAGE, OR WHAT IS THE WORK DENOTED BY BUILDING AND PLANTING?—This is a much more agreeable part of the subject than the other, though not more necessary.

In general, encourage and impart *just sentiments*. The truth has ever been God's honored instrument in doing good.—Encourage and cultivate *holy tempers and dispositions*. Labor to build up your people in these things. That is not always the best ministry that draws the most followers, but that which does the most good. When I see a company of modest, humble, upright, lovingly, diligent, holy people, I see the best evidence of a good minister. But let me be a little more particular.

First, AS A BUILDER—

1. *Be sure that you lay a right foundation.*—Christ is the foundation of God's laying, the foundation of the apostles and prophets; and you must lay him, as the



foundation of faith and holiness. All true holiness is built upon faith in Christ. Many preachers who profess to entertain a great regard for a holy life, and deal much in moral declamations, omit this part of their work.

2. *See that your materials be fitly framed together.*—Ephes. ii. 21. Three things belong to this: (1) That the materials be *hewed* and *squared*.—What would a company of proud, self-willed, prejudiced professors do together with the godly? These sins must be cut off. They ought to be like the stones of the temple before you lay them in the house of God. (2) That they be *formed by the same rule*.—The stones must not only be cut even, but so as to fit the foundation and each other, or they cannot be fitly framed. Whatever variety there may be in some respects, there must be uniformity in others. No society can exist without similarity of views. Our hearts must be renewed after the image of Christ; and, if they fit and fall in with his gospel and government, they will fit one another. But all attempts to build men into religious society without this will be vain. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?" &c.—See 2 Cor. vi. 14—18. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" (3) That, in being placed in the building, *every one be put in that situation for which he is formed*.—Some have splendid gifts, and are like stones in the front of the building, for ornament and strength. Others have more private excellences; but, though less conspicuous, they may not be less useful. Some are like Barnabas, affectionate; and excel in seeking out obscure humble inquirers.—Acts ix. 27. Others are wise in counsel and grave in deportment. Every gift should be so disposed of as that it shall be of the greatest use to the whole, otherwise the building will not be fitly framed together. Where offices are filled with men because they are men of property, it is often otherwise.

3. *So frame the whole as that it may be a fit habitation for God.*—It must be God's house, not yours. Beware that you go not about it as Nebuchadnezzar went about Babylon—"This is the house which I have built"—this is *my* house! I trust you have no greater desire than that God would take up his abode with you. Well—build you but upon his foundation, and by his rule, and he will dwell with you. All buildings are with a view to habitation.

*Secondly*, AS A PLANTER, prepare the soil by searching and convincing doctrine.—Sow "wholly a right seed." When you see the plants growing up, give attention to them. Cultivate them by every means, and pray that they may be watered by the Holy Spirit.

Allow me a word or two, my brother, par-

ticularly applicable to yourself individually.

1. While you root out and pull down, and build and plant, in *God's* house and vineyard, *do not overlook your own*. Personal religion is of the utmost importance to a minister.

2. Take into consideration that you are "a laborer together with God."—He that employs you will reward you. Look, my brother, beyond the grave for your reward. We have but little here; but, if we had much, it would be an awful thing to receive that for our reward!

#### LVIII.—MINISTERS SHOULD BE CONCERNED NOT TO BE DESPISED.

"Let no man despise thee."—Titus ii. 15.

My brother, I feel a pleasure in the work of this day, partly from the love I bear to you, and partly from the love I feel towards the church. I trust you will receive a word of advice on this solemn occasion with candor and attention.

You will observe the passage is not an address to the people not to despise their minister; but to the minister not to be despised by the people. If you ask how you are to prevent this, I answer, Contempt is not a voluntary feeling. It is not in the power of men to despise *some* characters. They may dislike them; they may affect to ridicule them; but they cannot in their hearts despise them. If a minister conducts himself in character, no man will be able to despise him. This, then, is the sentiment which I wish to impress upon you.

Your work as a pastor may be distinguished into three departments—the pulpit, the church, and the world—in each of which I hope you will so conduct yourself as that no man shall be able to despise you. Let me offer to your consideration a few particulars under each.

I. What concerns you IN THE PULPIT, or in the work of preaching the gospel.

1. *Avoid all affectation in your manner.*—Do not affect the man of learning by useless criticisms: many do this, only to display their knowledge.—Nor yet the orator, by high-sounding words, or airs, or gestures. Useful learning and an impressive delivery should by no means be slighted; but they must not be affected, or men will be sure to despise you.

2. *Avoid self-seeking in your ends.*—Preach not yourself, but Christ Jesus. Seek not the approbation of men for yourself, but for your doctrine. Study to commend the gospel to the consciences of your hearers, rather than your own orthodoxy, or ingenuity, or zeal, to their admiration. If, instead of endeavoring to secure their reception of the gospel-message, you are concerned to



recommend yourself to their applause, you will be sure to be despised.

3. *Avoid vulgarity and low wit.*—Though the pulpit is not the place for affected pomposity, neither is it the place for mean and low language. Few men are more contemptible than those who study to introduce vulgar nonsense and jocose anecdotes, to make people laugh. Sound speech, sound sense, and the greatest seriousness, adorn the pulpit. Without these, you will be despised.

4. *Do not advance sentiments without being able to support them by Scripture evidence.*—Many content themselves with assertions without proof, and make vehemence supply the place of evidence. But this will cause you to be despised by men of understanding.

5. *Beware that you do not preach an unfelt gospel.*—If you do, it will be seen, and you will be despised. It will be seen that, though you affect to be in earnest, you do not feel; and that you scarcely believe your own doctrine. We may get into a habit of talking for the truth, and pleading for holiness, and yet be dead ourselves; and, if so, we shall be sure to be despised.

6. *Let not the fear of man deter you from declaring the whole counsel of God.*—Insist on every divine truth and duty. Where interest or friendship stand in the way, it may be trying; but, if you yield, the very parties to whom you yield will despise you. Speak but the truth in love, and speak the whole truth, and you will commend yourself to every man's conscience, when you can do no more.

7. *Never degrade the pulpit by indulging in personalities.*—These are for private admonition. "Rebuke with all authority;" but let your personal rebukes be in private. To introduce them in the pulpit is unmanly, and would render you despicable. Let us apply the language

II. To your behavior in the church, and among your fellow Christians.

1. *Do not lord it over God's heritage.*—You will have to preside in the church, and direct its measures; but never assume the lordly priest. Expect your judgment, in some cases, to be overruled, and learn to yield with cheerfulness when the measures you wish to introduce appear to be opposed to the opinion and desires of the majority of your brethren. It is not with a minister of the gospel as with a minister of state—that he must have a majority, or he cannot stand his ground. If we "look on the things of others," we may, in non-essentials, after speaking our minds, yield and be happy. But if we are determined to carry every point which appears to us desirable, in spite of the opinion of our brethren, though we may not always succeed, we shall invariably be despised for the attempt.

2. *Yet have a judgment of your own.*—This will become you on every subject; and

where it is of importance you ought to be firm and resolute. A minister must not be borne down by the capriciousness of a few. He who is easily turned aside from a good object, and will bear insult without a proper manifestation of his displeasure, will be despised as much as a lordly high-priest. If a minister be not firm, discipline will, in many cases, be neglected. People have their friends, and relatives, and favorites; and very few, though the operation be bloodless, have sufficient regard for rectitude to act upon the principle of the sons of Levi.—See Exod. xxxii. 17—29. But you must, or you will be despised.

3. *Do not affect the gentleman in your visits.*—Do not assume airs of consequence, and take liberties in families, as if, because you are a minister, you are therefore superior as a man. I do not say, do not be a gentleman; but do not affect the great man. Real gentility, and urbanity, and politeness, are no mean or despicable attainments. There was much Christian politeness in the apostle Paul. But the affectation of the fine gentleman is great folly; and no men are more despised than those who strut about with lordly dignity, and give themselves consequential airs. You had much better feel yourself a Christian, and consider that you are associating with your fellow Christians, or with those who expect you to exhibit a pattern for their imitation.

4. *Yet preserve a dignity of manner and demeanor.*—There is no occasion for you, in order to avoid the affectation of gentility to sink into low buffoonery, vulgarity, or drollery. My brother, the fear of God, and a deep sense of religion, will effectually preserve you from these extremes, and render you respectable, instead of contemptible.

5. *Beware of being a loiterer.*—Do not acquire a habit of wandering about and doing nothing. Visit, and visit "from house to house." But look well to your visits: "preach from house to house." There is work enough in a congregation for a minister to do; but nothing renders him more contemptible and despised than a habit of religious gossiping. Let us apply the text

III. To your general deportment in the world.

1. *Let your conduct correspond with your preaching.*—Men will watch you. You may put off the preacher in mixed company; but you must never put off the man of God—the Christian. Whatever you may be in the pulpit, if in the world you be frothy, vain, contentious, captious, unfeeling, unjust, or make engagements you cannot fulfil, you will be despised. On the contrary, consistency of character will wear, and live down opposition.

2. *Never be ashamed of religion in any company.*—There is no need to introduce it on all occasions, and in all companies. This would render you despised one way. But

be not the subject of cowardly timidity. That would render you equally, if not more, despicable. There is nothing in true religion but what admits of a rational defence. There wants nothing to defend religion but firmness of mind. But, if you are ashamed of the cause you have espoused, its opponents will heartily despise you.

To CONCLUDE.—If the contempt of men be such a matter of dread, how much more the contempt of God! Then so conduct yourself that you may not be ashamed, and not be despised, at his coming!

#### LIX.—MINISTERS ARE FELLOW-LABORERS WITH GOD.

“We are laborers together with God.”—1 Cor. iii. 9.

My dear brother, in every address of this kind I wish to be understood as assuming no kind of authority whatever; but simply as concurring in the work of the day, and as presenting to the consideration of my brother in the ministry a few observations suited to the occasion.

The words we have selected afford us an important view of the Christian ministry—Co-operators with God! Not, indeed, as co-ordinate, but as subordinate. We labor under him. It is not our husbandry, nor our building, but God’s; and the design of the apostle was to cut off the vainglorying in men to which the Corinthians were so addicted, saying, I am of Paul, or I am of Apollos, or I am of Cephas. Yet it affords a most honorable and animating view of the Christian ministry—fellow-laborers with God! I shall consider the passage in two views; viz. as affording us a directory as to the nature of our work, and an encouragement in our performance of it.

##### I. AS AFFORDING US A DIRECTORY AS TO THE NATURE OF OUR WORK.

Our work is a labor.—If any man enter upon the ministry from a desire to live an easy, idle life, he is under a great mistake. He may make such a life of it, but he will not fulfil his work. And let him take heed lest he be rejected at the last: “Cast ye out the unprofitable servant into outer darkness.” A proper discharge of the Christian ministry must be a labor. This will appear if we consider a few of the principal parts of which it is composed.

1. A leading part of this work consists in our becoming acquainted with the mind of God in his word.—We must “labor in word and doctrine.” We cannot “feed the people with knowledge and with understanding,” unless we possess them. Truth is a well—full of water, but deep. A mine—rich, but requiring much labor to dig up the precious ore. Such a depth is there in the word of God that inspiration itself does not

supercede the necessity of close application —1’sa. xxvii. 4. We must be perpetually inquiring, and searching.—1 Peter i. 10—12. We must “give ourselves” to the word of God and prayer. The very angels are perpetually gospel students, “desiring to look into” the things that are revealed. Unless we labor in this way, there can be no proper food or variety in our preaching. “Meditate on these things: give thyself wholly to them.” The truths of God’s word are worthy of being our meat and drink . . . Digging in these mines is very pleasant work when we can enter into them. But there are seasons when it is otherwise; and yet we must go on, though we scarcely know how; this is labor.

2. Another part is communicating the mind of God so as to apply it to the cases of the people.—It belongs to the work of the ministry to apply truth to the circumstances and consciences of the hearers, as well as to teach it; and, in order to this, we must study men as well as things. We must trace the workings of a depraved heart, in order to detect its shiftings and subtrefuges—the doubts and difficulties of a desponding heart, in order to remove them, and to point out the way of life—and the general operations of a gracious heart, in order to distinguish between genuine and spurious religion, lest, while we comfort the real Christian, we should soothe the hypocrite.

For these important purposes, it is necessary that we should avail ourselves of two grand sources of information—experience and observation. That which is derived from these sources is taken from life, and is generally more profitable than that which is copied from even the most judicious writings of men, at second-hand. But all this requires labor. I may add, much of the labor that attends this part of our work arises from the state of those with whom we have to deal, and our want of success.—In preaching to sinners, we have to attack the strong holds of Satan—ignorance, prejudice, pride, self-righteousness, hardness of heart, unbelief, and aversion from God. Our work here is like having to dig through a rock of flint—we have much labor, and make slow progress. Sometimes we espy a downcast look and a falling tear, and this inspires courage; but these hopeful appearances often subside. Many a character, of whom we have hoped well for years, is still hanging between God and the world, and we know not what will be the issue. These are the things which occasion those pains of labor of which the apostle speaks: “My little children, of whom I travail in birth, until Christ be formed in you.”

3. Another part of our ministry consists in following up the work of preaching, by close conversation in our private visits.—Paul taught at Ephesus “from house to house.”



It is painful and laborious to a feeling mind to tell persons of their faults, and yet we cannot fulfil our duty without. To introduce personal reflections in public, where no answer can be made, and where the tendency is to expose rather than to reclaim, is mean and unmanly; but it is not so in private: there we must be faithful, and, in order to be faithful, we must be personal. But this is hard work. Ministers, as well as other men, have their feelings. They love peace, and they wish to retain the friendship of their people. But, if a minister tell the truth, there is great danger of his being counted an enemy, and treated as such. Faithful reproof, therefore, must be self-denying work. The grand secret, I think, to render this part of our work as easy as possible, is to love the souls of the people, and to do every thing from pure good will, and with a view to their advantage—"speaking the truth in love." The man that can be offended by such treatment, and leave his place in the house of God, can be no less to a minister or to a congregation.

4. Another part of our work is, *presiding in the church in the character of a pastor*.—And this is labor. Those who preside in a large community find it very difficult to manage amidst such a variety of spirits and tempers; and those who preside in a small one may find it still more difficult, where individuals are of more consequence, and therefore, perhaps, more assuming and litigious. A large church is like a large family, in which there is a necessity for constant labor and continual attention, to keep things in proper order. But a small church may be compared to a little boat, floating on the waters—a single wrong movement may overset it. In either case we had need be endued with righteousness, godliness, faith, love, meekness, patience, and forbearance. The less we have of self-importance and of tenaciousness in carrying a point, and the more of respect and disinterested regard for our brethren, the less labor will it be to us.

Having considered the Christian ministry under the idea of a *labor*, I may observe that we are further directed as to its nature, by considering ourselves as "*laborers together with God*."

By this we are taught to labor in the same cause and to the same ends as God. God, in all his operations, keeps certain important ends in view, and we must join with him: for example—to glorify his Son . . . to abase the sinner . . . to alarm the wicked . . . to comfort the believer . . . and we must unite with God in all this. We must habitually exalt the Saviour and humble the pride of man. Our constant message must be—it shall be well with the righteous, but it shall be ill with the wicked. We must never comfort those whom God would alarm. When God brings a sinner

under concern, it is our business to forward the work. If a man tell me he is a great sinner, it is not for me to soothe him, and to persuade him that he sees things in too strong a light; but rather to convince him that he is a much greater sinner than he conceives, and that the heart of man is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The only comfort I am authorized to offer him is, by pointing him to a great Saviour—one who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, and who will never cast out any that apply to him for mercy. It is dangerous as soon as we perceive concern to smile and tell the party that this is a good sign, and all will soon be well. It is a good symptom, *if it be genuine*; but if, before we can ascertain the reality of the repentance, we begin to soothe and console the sinner, we shall be in danger of causing him to be satisfied, instead of urging him to an application where alone he ought to take up his rest; and, instead of being laborers *together with God*, we shall be found to be laboring *against* him. God calls him to mourning and weeping and lamentation; and it is at our peril to comfort him by any thing short of an exhibition of the free grace of the gospel. We proceed

II. To consider the passage as affording us, not only a directory as to the nature of our work, but an ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE DISCHARGE OF IT.—And this is derivable from the latter clause—"laborers *together with God*." If we be with God, God is with us; and that is the greatest encouragement we can have. "Lo! I am with you always, to the end of the world."

1. If we be with God, God will be with us to *assist us in our private labors*.—There is much in the prayer of the apostle Paul on behalf of Timothy—"The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit." It is this that will sweeten our labor. Solomon speaks of a joy in labor, and certainly, of all labor, none is so productive of joy as digging in the mines of everlasting truth—especially when the Lord Jesus is with our spirit.

2. God will be with us *in blessing our public labors*.—Had Moses gone to the rock without God, he might have spoken, and have smitten it, but it would not have cleaved asunder: the rock would have broken the rod, rather than the rod the rock. The same may be said of our labors on the hearts of men. But with God we shall "do valiantly." "The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God." God, we may be certain, will not labor in vain; and, if we labor with him, neither shall we. "Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and always maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us." My brother, if we be faithful laborers, we shall in no wise lose our reward.



LX.—THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL, AND THE MANNER IN WHICH IT OUGHT TO BE PREACHED.

“Praying for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ,—that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.”—Col. iv. 3, 4.

My dear brother, I have chosen this passage, on the present occasion, as expressing not the whole of your work, but an important part of it—preaching the gospel. For the discharge of this, an apostle besought the prayers of his brethren, and so should we.

The words imply that, *to do justice to the gospel, or to preach it as it ought to be preached, we need a special divine influence, and consequently the prayers of our brethren.* I wish at this time to call your attention to the work itself—the manner in which the gospel ought to be preached; and then to offer a few motives to your consideration.

I. I shall call your attention to THE MANNER IN WHICH THE GOSPEL OUGHT TO BE PREACHED.

It is not my wish to dismay your spirit, but yet I desire to impress you with a sense of the importance of the work of the ministry, that, like the apostle, you may cry to Him who alone can give you strength to discharge it. That we may form some idea of the manner in which the gospel ought to be preached, it is necessary to consider some of its leading properties. We may mention four or five:—

1. *The gospel is a message which implies a disagreeable and heavy charge against those to whom it is addressed, and therefore requires great faithfulness.*—It supposes that all mankind are the enemies of God, and exposed to his righteous displeasure. You will have to do with the wicked as well as with the righteous, and you must not flatter them. It is at your peril to say any thing soothing to the wicked. It will be very painful to keep them at a distance, and to exhibit to them the threatenings of God's word against them. They will be trying to shift the blame, and to invent excuses; but you must follow up your charges. Their hearts may rise against you, and they may be displeased with your preaching; but you must not desist.

If we could go with a message of approbation and applause—if we could tell our auditory that they are amiable and virtuous beings, with only a few imperfections, which God will doubtless overlook—it might be much more pleasing and agreeable to ourselves as men. We can feel no pleasure in accusing our species. But woe unto us if we speak not the truth! The wicked will perish, and their blood will be required at our hand!—Ezek. iii. 16—21. Then beware of

softening matters, either with the unconverted or the backslider. Beware of giving up the authority of God over the heart, and of allowing either that the heartless services of the unconverted are pleasing to him, or, if not, that the fault is not in them. Beware of countenancing their own views of themselves, that they are poor pitiable creatures instead of sinners. The wound must be probed, or your patient will be lost! O! if we preach the gospel as we ought to preach it, what fidelity is here required! You must, my brother, side with God against an ungodly world. You must follow the windings of their evil hearts; you must detect them in all their refuges of lies, that they may flee to the only refuge set before them in the gospel. However it may pain you, or offend your hearers, if you would preach the gospel as you ought to preach it—you must be faithful.

2. *The gospel is a message in which we have truth and justice on our side; and therefore we ought to be firm and fearless of consequences.*—Speak boldly.—Eph. vi. 19, 20. If a man's cause be bad, it must render him timid: but to be timid in the cause of God and truth is unworthy. When, however, I recommend boldness, I do not mean that which is opposed to modesty and respectful feeling, nor yet that dogmatical rant which deals in assertion without evidence; but that which is opposed to mercenary fear and cowardice. You must not calculate consequences as they respect this life. If you would preach the gospel as you ought to preach it, the approbation of God must be your main object. What if you were to lose your friends and diminish your income: nay, what if you lose your liberty, or even your life—what would all this be, compared with the loss of the favor and friendship of God? Woe unto us, if we shun to declare any part of the counsel of God! He that is afraid or ashamed to preach the whole of the gospel, in all its implications and bearings, let him stand aside: he is utterly unworthy of being a soldier of Jesus Christ. Sometimes, if you would speak the whole truth, you may be reproached as unsound and heterodox. But you must not yield to popular clamor. If you have truth on your side, stand firm against all opposition.

3. *The gospel is a message full of importance, and therefore you must be in earnest.*—If your message respected the health of your hearers, or their temporal interest, or their reputation, it would be thought important. But what are these compared with the salvation of their souls! Salvation by Jesus Christ is God's last remedy—his ultimatum with a lost world.—Mark xvi. 16; Acts iv. 12. There remaineth no other sacrifice for sins. Then do not trifle on such subjects as these lest you lose your

own soul. What can be thought of you if you employ your time in making pretty speeches, and turning elegant periods, instead of endeavoring to "save yourself and them that hear you!" What if, instead of beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God, you should crack jokes before them, to excite a laugh! What can be thought of you if you trifle with *principles*, and join the sneer of the poet, when he says

"'Bout nodes of faith let graceless zealots fight:  
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right!"

Your hearers will doubtless conceive that you are insincere, and that you do not believe the message you are appointed to deliver.

4. *The gospel is a message that abounds with deep wisdom, and therefore we ought to possess a deep insight into it, and to cultivate great plainness of speech.*—The gospel is "a mystery," and a mystery that requires to be made manifest. A mystery is something hidden, or secret. Such are the great things of God. They are "hid from the wise and the prudent, and revealed unto babes."—"Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God." Much of it, indeed, was hidden from Old Testament believers.—Eph. iii. 5. Nor is it known even to New Testament believers, but by the Spirit.—1 Cor. ii. 7. Nor is it fully comprehensible to any; for it is called "unsearchable riches." "Great is the mystery of godliness." Even angels make it their study. Then to make these things manifest must require great insight into them, and great plainness of speech. Do not be content with superficial views of the gospel. Read and think for yourself on every subject. Read the Bible, not merely for texts, but for scriptural knowledge. Truth attained in this way is like property—it will wear the better for having been acquired by dint of industry. To preach the gospel as we ought to preach it requires, not the subtlety of the metaphysician, but the simplicity of the Christian.

5. *The gospel is a message of love, and therefore it ought to be preached with affection.*—Never were such messages of love announced to the world before. "God so loved the world," &c. "Come ye out from them, be ye separate," &c. This is fitly called "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." It is an overflow of his blessedness. To preach these things with an unfeeling heart is not to preach "as we ought" to preach. Cultivate the affectionate. Not indeed an affectation of feeling, but genuine feeling. Christ wept over sinners, and so must we. If we trifle with men, or be careless about their salvation, or deal forth damnation with an unfeeling heart, we do not preach "as we ought."

II. Let me offer A FEW MOTIVES to this

duty of preaching the gospel as it ought to be preached.

1. Consider *the examples held up for your imitation.*—You have Peter . . . . Paul . . . . John . . . . in each of whom these things are exemplified. Nay, more—you have *Christ*. Nor have you examples in distant ages only; but you have seen some, even among you . . . . Pearce!

2. Consider *the examples exhibited for your warning.*—Some have sunk into indolence and self-indulgence; sauntering about and gossiping, instead of preaching, from house to house; and there has been an end of them. Some have risen into pride and priestly insolence, and there has been an end of them. Some have trifled with the truth, and God has given them up to destructive error. Others have plunged into political speculations, which have eaten up all their religion: aiming to govern the world, they have lost the government of their own souls, and of their peculiar charge.

3. Consider *the effects that may follow.*—If you were deputed to negotiate a peace between the contending powers of Europe, you would tremble lest the curses of many should fall upon you. My brother, be faithful, and you shall receive a crown. If you be not, the eternal curse of God awaits you!

#### LXI.—THE WORK AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER.

"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord."  
—Matt. xxv. 21.

SUCH is the solemn and important charge, my brother, allotted you, that, if you were to contemplate it merely as it relates to its difficulties, you might shrink at the thought of it; but I rejoice to say you enter upon your pastoral work under favorable auspices. You have the hearts of your people; and that point gained is more than a thousand. You could never expect to do them good, unless you were interested in their affections.

I feel a pleasure in complying with your desire that I should address you on the present interesting occasion, and shall request your candid attention to a few observations founded on a part of the parable of the talents.

It is worthy of notice that, as our Lord approached the close of his ministry, his preaching partook of an increasing solemnity. This chapter concludes his ministerial discourses, and is all upon the subject of the last judgment. The parable of the virgins, and that of the talents, both lead to the same point. And these are followed



by a solemn representation of the final judgment. The world is convened, and the Son of God distributes everlasting salvation to his people and everlasting destruction to his enemies.

Such was the close of our Saviour's ministry; and from one of these representations I shall address you, that you also may be prepared for his second coming.

The occasion of the parable of the talents is given by Luke. He tells us that, when our Saviour came near to Jerusalem, many thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. But it was a temporal kingdom that occupied their minds; and, in order to destroy their vain conceits, our Lord described himself under the parabolical form of a certain nobleman, who went into a distant country to receive a kingdom, and delivered his goods to his servants in trust, of which trust, or of the manner in which they had fulfilled it, they were each to give an account. This, was in effect, saying to his disciples, "It is true, I am going to receive a kingdom, but not here: and you shall partake of that kingdom, but not yet." Thus he led them to expect that until his second coming their business was not to amuse or agitate themselves about what post of honor they should occupy, but to bend their attention to a solemn and important trust committed to them.

We may remark here (1) The talents do not mean *grace* but *gifts*, or things to be improved. Grace is that by which we improve them. One man had a talent, and yet turned out an unprofitable servant. He never had the grace of God in truth, but had a gift or trust imparted to him, for the abuse of which he was finally condemned. (2) These talents are dispensed in different degrees—some have five, some two, and some one. (3) Every man is called to occupy what he has—and must give an account of it—and no more. He that had two talents received the approbation of his lord, just as he who had five.

We may collect, from the whole, the important work of the Christian ministry, and the encouraging motives to a faithful discharge of it.

I. We have an interesting view of THE WORK OF A CHRISTIAN MINISTER. You are here represented as a servant—you are required to be a good and faithful servant—and you must not make light of your charge, though it extend only to a few things.

1. *You are a servant of God.*—You are intrusted with a portion of his property, of the use or abuse of which, another day you will have to render an account. God has put a talent into your hands, and says, "Occupy till I come."

Many things might be mentioned as included in the talents intrusted to you, as time, property, knowledge, influence, oppor-

tunity: for all these you must give an account. But we pass over these as common to you and others, and shall confine our attention to those which are peculiar to us as ministers. There are two in particular which constitute our ministerial trust—the gospel of Christ, and the souls of the people.

*The gospel of Christ.*—This is impressively recommended by Paul to Timothy, in the close of his First Epistle: "O Timothy!—(and Paul never dealt in interjections without feeling his subject to be one of vast importance)—O Timothy! keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." The gospel is a most sacred trust, and you must keep it. Not keep it back, but keep it safe; hold it fast in your mind and your ministry. The best way to hold fast the truth as a minister is to live upon it as a Christian. Attempt to keep it any where but in your heart, and it will go. If it be merely in the memory, it is not safe. He that is reasoned into the truth may be reasoned out of it. It is living upon the truth as a Christian that will cause the heart to be established with grace.

*The souls of the people.*—These also are a part of the property committed to your trust, of which you must give an account. You may say, perhaps, There 's such a one, and such a one—they have attended my ministry; but I have never been able to discover any thing in them friendly to the cause of Christ.—But the question which may be addressed to you is, Did you warn them? Did you deal faithfully with them? In a word, Did you discharge your trust? —If you have, your soul shall be delivered, and their blood shall be on their own heads. But, if not, though they perish in their iniquity, their blood will be required at your hands. My brother, you must "watch for souls as those that give an account."—You may have to allege with regard to others, They would not receive the doctrine I taught; they were always opposing it, always cavilling at it, and have often caused my heart to ache.—But the question for your consideration is, Did you teach them in love? Did you bear and forbear with them? If they have gone astray like lost sheep, have you searched after them with a desire to restore them? Did you preach "publicly, and from house to house?"—My brother, let it be your concern to give your account "with joy, and not with grief."

2. You are not only a servant of Christ, intrusted with an important charge; but are required to discharge that trust as a "good and faithful servant." The term "good" stands opposed to "unprofitable." A good and faithful servant is a profitable servant. True, we cannot profit Christ absolutely, but we may relatively: he has an interest in



the world, and we may profit that—a people, and we may profit them: and he will consider every thing done to them for his sake as done to him; and thus you may be a profitable servant. It is not enough that you do no harm. It is true, many are injurious; but others, who are not injurious, are “cumberers of the ground,” and as such are unprofitable, and as such will be cast out. The servant in the parable is not cast out for what he did, but for *not* doing what he ought to have done.—You are to be a “faithful” servant. Faithfulness is absolutely required of a servant of Christ. You are not required to be *successful*: your Lord and Master was not very successful: but he was faithful, and so must you be. There is great need of faithfulness. People love that their ministers should “prophesy smooth things.” They love a flesh-pleasing, flattering, doctrine. This may not be true of all, but it is of many. They love preaching that soothes, and that cherishes hope and comfort, and ease and peace, whatever be their character and their state: hence, multitudes will tell you that they cannot *profit* under a preacher, when the whole secret is that they cannot be *comforted* in their sins. Probably, if the preacher, were to comfort them, it must be at the expense of the gospel: he must preach false doctrine, and cry peace, when there is no ground for peace. So do not you. They may complain that you do not *feed* them: well, nor should you: you are not required to feed men’s lusts, but their graces. Be faithful.

Still your faithfulness must be tempered with love. There is such a thing as unfeeling fidelity—and preaching *at* people rather than *to* them. Our Lord himself, who is a perfect pattern of faithfulness, and was particularly severe against the hypocritical pharisees, yet wept over sinners, even while denouncing judgments against them. “Speak the truth in love.”

3. *You must not think it beneath you, though your lot should be to take the charge of “a few things.”*—I have often thought of this passage in reference to a small people, and these perhaps chiefly poor. I am aware that it is flattering to human vanity to have large congregations, and on some accounts it is also desirable; but should it be otherwise with you, if yours should be only a small congregation, consisting of a few people, and these chiefly poor, and this for many years to come,—what then? . . . Just think of the commendation of your Lord, “Well done, good and faithful servant; for as much as thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.” Is not this enough? And ought we not, as ministers, to be more concerned to execute well that trust which we have than to be always seeking after a larger? I abhor the spirit that shall send for an

orator, merely for the purpose of gathering a respectable congregation. A faithful discharge of the trust which God gives us is the way to have that trust increased. Instead of being anxious for a large charge, we have reason to tremble lest we should be found unfaithful in that which we have. There are times in which the spirits of a minister will flag, on account of the fewness of his hearers. The sight of empty pews must prey on his peace and comfort. But be not discouraged; remember that the thinnest assembly is made up of immortal beings, and chiefly perhaps of those who are yet in their sins; and you have an object of greater magnitude within the possibility of your compass than was ever presented to the grasp of an Alexander, a Cæsar, or a Buonaparte. The salvation of one soul is of more worth than the temporal salvation of a world—a soul, purchased by the Son of God himself. Think of this, my brother, and be not discouraged, even though you should have comparatively few to hear, unless, indeed, the cause exist in your own deficiency. Be “faithful over a few things,” and you shall eventually be “ruler over many things.”

I proceed to consider

II. THE IMPORTANT MOTIVES which are here presented to us for the discharge of our trust.

1. *You will receive the approbation of your Lord.*—Place yourself in idea, my brother, before your Lord and Master, at the last day, and anticipate the joy of receiving his approbation. This is heaven. We should not study to please men so much as to please God. If we please him, we shall please all who love him, and, as to others, they are not on any account worthy of being pleased at the expense of displeasing God. It is doubtless gratifying to receive the “well done” of a creature; but this in some cases may arise from ignorance, in others from private friendship; and in some cases men may say “well done” when, in the sight of Him who judges the heart, and recognizes the springs of action, our work may be ill done. And, even if we have done comparatively well, we must not rest satisfied with the approbation of our friends. Many have sat down contented with the plaudits of their hearers, spoiled and ruined. It is the “well done” *at the last day* which we should seek, and with which only we should be satisfied. There have been young ministers, of very promising talents, who have been absolutely nursed to death with human applause, and the hopes they inspired blighted and blasted by the flattery of the weak and inconsiderate. The sound of “well done” has been reiterated in their ears so often that at last (poor little minds!) they have thought, Surely it *was* well done; they have inhaled the delicious draught, they have sat down to enjoy it, they

have relaxed their efforts, and, after their little hour of popular applause, they have retired behind the scenes, and become of little or no account in the Christian world; and, what is worse, their spirituality has declined, and they have sunk down into a state of desertion, dispiritedness, and inactivity, as regards this world, and of uncertainty, if not of fearful forebodings, as to another. . . . My brother, you may sit down when God says "Well done!" for then your trust will be discharged; but it is at your peril that you rest satisfied with any thing short of this. Keep that reward in view, and you will not, I trust, be unfaithful in the service of your Lord.

2. *Your honor and happiness in the world to come shall be greatly enlarged.*—If you have been "a good and faithful servant" here, you shall "rule" there; and, if here you have been faithful over "a few things," there you shall be a ruler over "many things." There will be a glorious augmentation of honor and blessedness. The language is figurative. The idea may be expressed by an allusion to David's worthies, who followed him in his trials, and whom he promoted when he came to the throne: those who, to procure him a little water, fought their way through the opposing army, were highly rewarded. And so Jesus assured his apostles, "Ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Of course we are not to understand this *literally*; but the idea conveyed appears to be this—That a faithful discharge of the trust committed to us in this world will contribute to our honor and blessedness in the world to come. In fact, if this idea is not conveyed, it will be difficult to determine what is.

Nevertheless, the best services we can render are mingled with sin, and therefore, instead of *deserving* a reward, need forgiveness. The reward we shall receive will be a reward of grace, not of debt. Were it not for the sake of Christ, nothing we do could be accepted, there being so much sin cleaving even to our best services. The Lord accepted Abel and his offering. First, he accepts our persons for the sake of Christ, and then our services. And our services, being accepted, become also rewardable for his sake: our future honors are a part of Christ's reward. If you are instrumental in saving a soul, it will be impossible for you to meet that soul in heaven, and not rejoice over it: it will, in fact, be your crown of rejoicing. So your honor and blessedness will form a part of Christ's reward.

It is an unscriptural and irrational notion that all will have an equal degree of happiness in heaven. All will be perfectly happy, but some will not have so large a capa-

city for happiness as others. Every vessel will be full, but some vessels will contain more than others. "One star differeth from another star in glory." The apostle Paul must enjoy more in heaven than a soul caught up from infancy; since part of the happiness of heaven will consist of remembrance of the past. . . . But the diversity most important for *our* consideration is that which will arise from the manner in which we have performed our trust. In proportion to the degree of fidelity with which we have discharged the trust committed to us in this world will be the honor and happiness conferred upon us in the next.

3. *You will participate in that joy of which your Lord partakes:*—"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." You will "sit down with him on his throne." Whatever the joy is that was "set before him," and for which he "endured the cross, despising the shame," in that joy, if you have "run with patience the race which is set before you, looking unto him," you shall partake. That which rejoices Christ's heart will rejoice yours—the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. He will not rejoice alone, but admit to his joy all those who have had any share in the great work to accomplish which he humbled himself unto death.

My brother, let this thought encourage you amidst all your trials—that you are to enter into the joy of your Lord. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

## LXII.—ON PREACHING CHRIST, &c.

"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."—2 Cor. iv. 5.

A REMARK which I once heard from the lips of that great and good man, the late Mr. Abraham Booth, has often recurred to my recollection. "I fear," said he, there will be found a larger proportion of wicked ministers than of any other order of professing Christians!" It did not appear to me at the time, nor has it ever appeared since, that this remark proceeded from a want of charity, but rather from a deep knowledge of the nature of Christianity, and an impartial observation of men and things. It behoves us, not only as professing Christians, but as ministers, "to examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith." It certainly is possible, after we have preached to others, that we ourselves should be cast away! I believe it is very common for the personal religion of a minister to be taken for granted; and this may prove a temptation to him to take it for granted too. Ministers, being wholly devoted to the service of God, are supposed to have considerable advantages for spiritual im-



provement. These they certainly have; and, if their minds be spiritual, they may be expected to make greater proficiency in the divine life than their brethren. But it should be remembered that, if they are *not* spiritual, those things which would otherwise be a help will prove a hindrance. If we study divine subjects merely as *ministers*, they will produce no salutary effect. We may converse with the most impressive truths, as soldiers and surgeons do with blood, till they cease to make any impression upon us. We must meditate on these things as *Christians*, first feeding our own souls upon them, and then imparting that which we have believed and felt to others; or, whatever good we may do to them, we shall receive none ourselves. Unless we mix faith with what we preach, as well as with what we hear, the word will not profit us. It may be on these accounts that ministers, while employed in watching over others, are so solemnly warned against neglecting themselves: "Take heed unto *yourselves* and to all the flock," &c.—"Take heed unto *thyself*, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."

Preaching the gospel is not the only work of a Christian minister; but it is a very important part of his duty, and that which, if rightly attended to, will be followed by other things. To this, therefore, I shall request your attention.

You cannot have a better model than that which is here held up to you. The example of the apostles and primitive ministers is for our imitation. Three things are here presented to our notice: what they did not preach—what they did preach—and what they considered themselves.

I. WHAT THE APOSTLES DID NOT PREACH:—"We preach not ourselves." It might be thought that this negative was almost unnecessary; for, except a few gross impostors, who would ever think of holding up themselves as Saviours, instead of Christ? "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" Very true, in this gross sense, few men in the present day will be found to preach themselves. But self may be an object of preaching without being expressly avowed, and even while with the tongue Christ is recommended. And there is little doubt that self is the great end of numbers who engage in the Christian ministry. . . . For example:—

1. If *worldly advantage* be our object, we preach ourselves.—It is true there is but little food for this appetite in our congregations. Yet there are cases where it is otherwise. Men have made their fortunes by preaching. And, if this have been their object, they have had their reward. If this had not been a possible case, Paul would not have disavowed it as he does:—"Not for

a cloke of covetousness, God is witness."

2. If we make the ministry subservient to a life of *ease and indolence*, we preach ourselves rather than Christ. We may get but little for our labor, and yet, being fond of a life of sloth (if a *life* it can be called,) it may be more agreeable to us than any other pursuit. It is from this disposition that many ministers have got into the habit of spending a large part of every week in gossiping from house to house; not promoting the spiritual good of the people, but merely indulging themselves in idle talk. I might add it is from this disposition and practice that a large proportion of the *scandals* among ministers have arisen. Had there been no danger from these quarters, we should not have met with another of Paul's solemn disavowals:—"Our exhortation was not of uncleanness." Such a declaration as this was not without meaning. It describes the false teachers of those times, and of all times.

3. If the *applause* of our hearers be the governing principle of our discourses, we preach ourselves, and not Christ. To be acceptable is necessary to being useful, and an attention to manner with this end in view is very proper; but, if the love of fame be our governing principle, our whole ministry will be tainted by it. This subtle poison will penetrate and pervade our exercises, till every one perceives it, and is sickened by it, except ourselves. It will inflate our composition in the study, animate our delivery in the pulpit, and condescend to fish for applause when we have retired. It will even induce us to deal in flattering doctrine, dwelling on what are known to be favorite topics, and avoiding those which are otherwise. It is a great matter to be able to join with the apostle in another of his solemn disavowals:—"For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know,—nor of men sought we glory."

4. If our aim be to make *proselytes to ourselves*, or to our party, rather than *converts to Christ*, we shall be found to have preached ourselves, and not him. We certainly have seen much of this species of zeal in our times—"Men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Nor do I refer merely to men who would be thought singularly evangelical, and even inspired of God—who are continually holding up themselves as the favorites of heaven and the darlings of providence, and denouncing judgments on all who oppose them; and the tenor of whose preaching is to persuade their admirers to consider themselves as the dear children of God, and all who disapprove of them as poor blind creatures, knowing nothing of the gospel. Of them and their followers I can only say, "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." But men who have paid great attention to the Scriptures, and who have preached and written many things on the



side of truth, have nevertheless given but too evident proof that the tenor of their labors has been to make proselytes to themselves, or to their party, rather than converts to Christ.

II. WHAT THE APOSTLES DID PREACH:—We preach “Christ Jesus the Lord.” This is the grand theme of the Christian ministry. But many have so little of the Christian minister about them, that their sermons have scarcely any thing to do with Christ. They are mere moral harangues. And these, forsooth, would fain be thought exclusively the friends of morality and good works! But they know not what good works are, nor do they go the way to promote them. “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” . . . Preach Christ, or you had better be any thing than a preacher. The necessity laid on Paul was not barely to preach, but to preach Christ. “Wo unto me if I preach not the gospel.” . . . Some are employed in depreciating Christ. But do you honor him. Some who talk much about him, yet do not preach him, and by their habitual deportment prove themselves enemies to his cross. . . . If you preach Christ, you need not fear for want of matter. His person and work are rich in fulness. Every divine attribute is seen in him. All the types prefigure him. The prophecies point to him. Every truth bears relation to him. The law itself must be so explained and enforced as to lead to him. . . . Particularly,

1. *Exhibit his divinity and glorious character.*—The New Testament dwells much on his being the Son of God—equal with God. It was this that heightened the gift of him.—John iii. 16. Hence the efficacy of his blood.—1 John i. 7. Hence the condescension of his obedience, and the dignity of his priesthood.—Heb. iv. 14-16. Hence the greatness of the sin of rejecting him.—John iii. 18. And of apostacy.—Heb. x. 29.

2. *Hold up his atonement and mediation as the only ground of a sinner's hope.*—It is the work of a Christian minister to beat off self-righteous hope, which is natural to depraved man, and to direct his hearers to the only hope set before them in the gospel. Be not concerned merely to form the manners of your congregation, but bring them to Christ. That will best form their manners. The apostles had no directions short of this: “Repent and believe the gospel.” They never employed themselves in lopping off the branches of sin: but laid the axe to the root. Your business with the sins of mankind is, to make use of them to convince your hearers of the corruption of their nature, and their need of a radical cure.

3. *Hold up the blessings of his salvation for acceptance, even to the chief of sinners.*—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all accep-

tation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” The gospel is a feast, and you are to invite guests. You may have many excuses and refusals. But be you concerned to do as your Lord commands. And, when you have done your utmost, there will still be room. Dwell on the freeness and fulness and all-sufficiency of his grace, and how welcome even the worst of sinners are, who, renouncing all other refuges, flee to him.

4. *Preach him as “the Lord,” or Law-giver, of his church,* no less than as a Saviour.—Christ's offices must not be divided. Taking his yoke, and learning his spirit, are connected with coming to him. Believers are “not without law unto God, but under the law to Christ.”

The preaching of Christ will answer every end of preaching. This is the doctrine which God owns to conversion, to the leading of awakened sinners to peace, and to the comfort of true Christians. If the doctrine of the cross be no comfort to us, it is a sign we have no right to comfort. This doctrine is calculated to quicken the indolent, to draw forth every christian grace, and to recover the backslider. This is the universal remedy for all the moral diseases of all mankind. . . . We proceed to notice

III. IN WHAT LIGHT THE APOSTLES CONSIDERED THEMSELVES:—“Your servants for Jesus' sake.” Ministers are not the servants of the people in such a sense as implies inferiority, or their having an authority over them. On the contrary, what authority there is, is on the other side: “Obey them that have the rule over you.” Nor are ministers the servants of the people in such a sense as to be directed by them what to preach. In these respects one is their Master, even Christ. But ministers are the servants of their people, inasmuch as their whole time and powers require to be devoted to their spiritual advantage—to know them, caution, counsel, reprove, instruct, exhort, admonish, encourage, stimulate, pray, and preach. Study to promote their spiritual interests as individuals, and their prosperity as a people.

Nor should ministers think it too much to lay themselves out in this work. They do it “for Jesus' sake.” This was the motive addressed to Peter. “Lovest thou me?—Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs.”—“Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” . . . Let Christ be not only the theme of my remaining ministry, but the exaltation of him and the enlargement of his kingdom the great end of my life! If I forget THEE, O my Saviour, let my right hand forget; if I do not remember THEE, let my tongue cleave to the roof of mouth!

LXIII.—THE INFLUENCE OF THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST ON THE MIND AND WORK OF A MINISTER.

“The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.”—2 Tim. iv. 22.

IN addressing you, my brother, on this interesting portion of Scripture, I shall simply offer a few remarks on the blessing desired, and consider its influence on the discharge of the christian ministry.

I. Let us offer a few remarks on the BLESSING DESIRED.—If we were addressing ourselves to persons who were strangers to experimental religion, we might despair of being understood on this part of the subject; and even among Christians it is more easily felt than accurately described. We know nothing of divine influence but by its effects. We know we are created, but we know nothing of creative power. We know we are supported, but we can only feel ourselves upheld. We know Christ promised to *be with* his servants to the end of the world, and I hope we have felt the effects of it. We feel our wants hitherto supplied, our strength renewed, and our work in some measure succeeded; and we are taught to what to ascribe it. . . . But more particularly:—

1. The blessing here desired is *something different from gifts*.—God has favored you with gifts; but so he did Judas. Many shine and figure away with these, with whose spirits the Lord Jesus Christ holds no communion. Gifts are the gold of the temple; but communion with Christ is that which sanctifieth the gold. Without this, gifts will be injurious both to you and to your people.

2. This blessing is *more than grace itself, considered as inherent*.—I need not tell you that our graces have no separate subsistence. We are the branches living on the Vine. Paul said, “I live”—(and surely he had a right to say so, if any man had!)—and yet he checks himself, and adds,—“yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.”

3. It is a blessing *which you shall enjoy in common with your Christian brethren*.—It is not peculiar to you as a minister, but common to all Christians. And is it the better (you may ask) for this? Yes it is. The best blessings are those common to Christians.—Psa. xxvii. 4. Phil. iii. 8. The Romish priests have contrived to secure the cup exclusively to themselves; but it was not so from the beginning: “Drink ye *all* of it.” And not only the cup, but the thing signified, is common to all Christians. And the blessings which are common to Christians as such are of the greatest importance to us as ministers. If we study, and pray,

and preach, merely as ministers, we shall make poor work of it; but, if as Christians, we shall prosper. . . . We proceed

II. To consider the INFLUENCE OF THIS BLESSING ON THE DISCHARGE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.—Knowing that without him we could do nothing, our Lord has assured us, “Lo! I am with you always, to the end of the world.” And now, by his strengthening us, we can do all things. . . . Observe

1. *It is this that will render the doctrine of Christ familiar to us, and our favorite theme*.—The spirit of prophecy is called the spirit of Christ, because it testified of his sufferings.—1 Pet. i. 11.—And if Christ be with our spirit, though only in an ordinary way, it will lead us to delight in the doctrine of Christ.—Eph. iii. 17, 18. When Christ dwells in the heart, see what follows! This is the unction by which we know all things. And this is the doctrine which God blesses to the building of his church.

2. *It is that which gives a divine energy to our preaching*.—It imparts a much greater energy than the greatest eloquence, natural or artificial. And, though it will not in itself convert sinners, yet God usually honors such preaching. And it is a means of conversion. The apostle “so spoke that a great multitude believed.” And, where such preaching does not convert, it yet commends itself to the conscience. “They were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he (Stephen) spoke.” Apollos, who was “fervent in Spirit,” by his preaching “mightily convinced the Jews.” The preaching of Paul was “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.”

3. *It is this that will render our visits profitable*. It is difficult to turn conversation into a savory and useful channel. But, if the Lord Jesus Christ be with our spirit, all difficulty will vanish. Without this every thing will be forced and constrained; and we shall feel especially at a loss in our directions to inquirers.

4. *It is this that will sustain your heart under trials*. You are aware you must expect these. You will see things in your people towards God that will grieve you. This will enable you to reprove them in love. You will see things in them toward each other that are decidedly wrong. This spirit will cause you to be a peacemaker. You will experience painful things toward yourself: some will not receive your doctrine; some will misconstrue your conduct, and pervert your statements: but, if the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, you will not sink under the heaviest trials. You may have to lament your want of success. But go on, and be of good cheer. If the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, though Israel be not gathered, you shall not go unrewarded.



LXIV.—HABITUAL DEVOTEDNESS TO THE  
WORK OF THE MINISTRY.

“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them, for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.”  
—1 Tim. iv. 15, 16.

My dear brother, you will find many things in these epistles worthy of your attention. With a view of showing the connection of the text, let us notice what is said in the preceding verses.

Ver. 12. Timothy was a young man, and was charged to let no man despise his youth. But how could he prevent that? By being “an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” Then, whoever might dislike him, no one could despise him.

Ver. 13. It is supposed that Paul expected shortly to see Timothy, when he would have many things to say. Meanwhile he directed him how to spend his time to good purpose. In *reading*.—God knows all things; but we must receive ere we impart. *Exhortation*.—He was not to hide, but to communicate his knowledge of divine things, as he received it: the reading of a minister should be for his people, that he may be furnished with sentiments suited to their cases. Exhortation seems to be that kind of teaching which is from house to house, consisting of counsels, cautions, &c. *Doctrine*.—He was to dig in this mine, that he might enrich others.

Ver. 14. He was supposed to have a *gift*, an extraordinary gift, foretold in prophecy, by some of the New Testament prophets, and imparted by the laying on of hands. Yet even this was a talent to be improved, and not neglected. Then, how much more ordinary gifts!

Ver. 15. This verse expresses *how* his gift was to be improved. It is a shameful abuse of the doctrine of divine influence to allege it as a reason for neglecting diligent study for the pulpit. Yet such things are; and the advocates of this perversion can quote Scripture for it; as—“Take no thought beforehand, what ye shall speak, neither premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given to you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.” But this has no application to pulpit exercises, or ordinary ministrations. It was very suitable for the persecuted Christians; for how *could* they know what to answer, before they were questioned by their persecutors: it was therefore greatly calculated to encourage them, and relieve them from all anxiety. But to apply this direction to our ordinary ministrations is a shameful perversion. See Eccles. xii. 9—11.

Give me your attention, my dear brother, while I endeavor to illustrate the different branches of the exhortation of the text, and consider the motives held up to enforce it.

1. Let us endeavor to ILLUSTRATE THE EXHORTATION.

The things on which you are called to meditate are what you “*read*,” the things to which you “*exhort*,” and the “*doctrine*” of Christ. Or on the *Scriptures*—on the *precepts* contained in them, and on the *doctrines* to be deduced from them.

“*Meditate* on these things.”—There is a depth in them that requires it. You may read the Scriptures a hundred times over, and yet be only on the surface, far from having fathomed them. They are able to make us wise, *through faith*; but to believe without searching argues great indifference, and is building without a foundation. The Scriptures were always considered a deep mine. Even when they consisted of only the five Books of Moses. David meditated in the law of the Lord, “day and night.” It was to his spiritual growth as water is to a tree.

Do not imagine you understand *enough* of the Bible; or, because you have assented to a few truths, therefore you are in possession of all.—Paul desired to know yet more. Angels desire to look into the things revealed there. David intimates that the law contains “wondrous things,” and prays that his mind might be enlightened to comprehend them. A spiritual state of mind is the best expositor, and more is discovered with it, in a few verses, than in whole chapters without it.

Do not be content with *general* truth.—Study the Scriptures minutely, and for yourself, and pray over your study. This will make it *your own*; and it will be doubly interesting to yourself and your people, than if you adopt it at second hand.—Read and think, not merely as a minister, but as a Christian.

“*Give yourself wholly to them*.”—No man can excel in any art or science, but by giving himself wholly to it. Why is it one understands law? Because he gives himself wholly to it. Why is it another understands physics? Because he gives himself wholly to it. Why do rulers understand government? Because “they attend continually upon this very thing.” And though divine knowledge differs, in some things, from that which is natural and worldly, yet not in this. It is by constant application and use that our senses discern truth from error, and good from evil.—Heb. v. 14. And you must not only give your whole *time* to this study, but your whole *heart*.

“*Be thou in them*.”—It is a shocking thing to be engaged in a work which is against the heart. It is not what we think *officially*, but *spontaneously*, that proves what we are: not what we do at certain appointed seasons;



but the bent of our minds in common, in our leisure hours, when we sit in the house, or walk by the way. Engaging in the work without the heart is the forerunner and cause of many scandals. Time hangs heavy on their hands—they saunter and gossip from place to place—scandalize and listen to scandal—and not seldom terminate their career by impurity.

“*Take heed to thyself.*”—It were an awful thing to guide others to the right way, and not walk in it ourselves. See that all is right between God and your own soul. Public religion, without that which is private and personal, is worse than no religion. We had better be any thing than preachers of the gospel, unless we be personally interested in it.”

“*And to thy doctrine.*”—There is great danger of going off from the gospel—perhaps in *submission to great authorities, or to please the people.* That minister who makes the taste of his hearers the standard of his preaching may go on, and succeed in pleasing them and himself; but, at the coming of his Lord, it will be said to him, Thou hast had thy reward!

There is also danger of going off from the gospel by *leaning to our own understanding.* Consult your own understanding; but remember you are liable to err; therefore do not *lean* to it, in opposition to the Scriptures.

Finally: “*Continue in these things.*”—That only is true religion which endures to the end.

II. Let us consider THE MOTIVES BY WHICH THE EXHORTATION IS ENFORCED.

1. *Your growth in gifts and graces will be hereby apparent.*—“That thy profiting may appear to all.” The meaning is much the same as the parable of the talents—five, by improvement, gaining other five. It holds true in temporal things even.—Prov. xxii. 20. There is, however, this difference between their pursuits and yours: they labor to obtain an earthly good; you a heavenly, spiritual, and eternal one. If worldly profit or honor were your object, you might study the embellishments of style, or the arts of the partizan; but, if you would be the servant of God, your heart must be in your work. A diligent minister will be a useful one.

2. *Your own salvation is involved in it.*—“Thou shalt save thyself.” This language does not denote that we are the *cause* of our own salvation any more than of the salvation of others. But, as we may be instrumental in the latter, so we may be active in the former.—Acts ii. 40. Take refuge in the Saviour you recommend to others. The expression may also have reference to that particular kind of salvation which consists in being delivered from the blood of souls.

3. *The salvation of your people may be involved in it.*—A spiritual, diligent minister, is commonly a fruitful one, and a blessing to his people. Consider these exhortations, and the motives by which they are enforced, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things. Thus thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.

#### LXV.—AFFECTIONATE CONCERN OF A MINISTER FOR THE SALVATION OF HIS HEARERS.

“We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.”—1. Thes. ii. 7, 8.

My dear brother, you have requested me to address you on your appointment to the important office of pastor over this people; and I know of nothing more impressive on the subject of the Christian ministry than this whole chapter, both as to what a minister should *not* be, and as to what he *should* be. Not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile, nor as pleasing men; but gentle, affectionate, laborious, disinterested, holy. Let us, however, confine ourselves to the words we have selected as a text, in which the apostle compares his own ministrations and those of his colleagues to the gentle solicitude of a nurse, whose concern is to impart warmth and strength to her children. “So we, being affectionately desirous,” &c. Three things here require your attention: the feeling of a true minister of Christ towards the people of his charge—the subject matter of his ministry—and the manner in which he must dispense it.

I. THE FEELING OF A TRUE MINISTER OF CHRIST TOWARDS THE PEOPLE OF HIS CHARGE.—This is an affectionate concern after their salvation, one of the most important qualifications for the ministry. True it is not the only one. There are gifts, both natural and acquired, which are necessary, since, without them, we cannot be said to be “apt to teach.” But this qualification is that without which the greatest gifts, natural and acquired, are nothing as to real usefulness. Genius may amuse, but “love edifieth.” A strong mind and a brilliant imagination may excite their admiration, but this will attract the hearts of the people. Look at the men who have been the most honored; and you will find that they are not the brightest geniuses, but the humble and affectionate.

Look at the example of Paul.—Observe how he felt towards his poor, *unbelieving countrymen*, who sought his life: “Brethren, my heart’s desire, and prayer to God for Israel, is, that they may be saved.” Even his

zeal for the conversion of the Gentiles bore an aspect towards his brethren after the flesh: "I speak to you, Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office; if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them." He speaks as a humane seaman would in a wreck; who, when he found he could not save all, would do what he could, plunging into the sea and saving at least some of them. Here, my brother, is an example for your imitation, towards the unbelieving part of your hearers.

See also how he felt toward *those Christians who had sinned*.—Witness his epistles to the Corinthians. How anxious he was to reclaim them! how dissatisfied with any thing short of their restoration! looking upon them as lost children.—2 Cor. ii.; xiii. 2.

Look at the example of *John* towards the rising generation.—"I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in the truth."—And look at the example of our apostle, in connection with the text, towards all to whom he wrote. He could not be satisfied with any reward short of their eternal salvation. All other hope, all other joy connected with them, he considered as of small account; and he looked forward to them as constituting the brightest jewels in his future crown.

Most of all, look at the example of your *Lord and Saviour*.—How did the kindness and love of God our Saviour appear! What did he not forego, and do, and suffer! May the love of Christ constrain you!

II. Consider THE SUBJECT MATTER OF HIS MINISTRY:—"The gospel of God."

1. *It is a blessed errand to go on*. Good news to a lost world. Angels were visited with wrath; but men with the cup of salvation. There is a pleasure in being an almoner, even of earthly blessings; but you have the unsearchable riches of Christ to impart; you are the herald of peace and pardon and reconciliation. How a man, bearing such tidings from an earthly sovereign, would be hailed by a number of convicts!

2. *But what is the gospel?* It is not merely the privilege of believers; for then it would not be for every creature. It is a declaration of what Christ has done and suffered, and of the effects; exhibiting a way in which God can be "just and the justifier of the ungodly." It is not merely to convince of sin, but also to point to the remedy.

3. *Make a point, then, of distinctly and habitually preaching the gospel*. Do not suppose your people are so good, and so well informed, as not to need this. Visit the sick, and you will be astonished how little they know, compared with what it might reasonably be expected they should know. Many sermons are ingenious essays; but, if they bear not on this great object, they

are not the gospel. Woe unto you if you preach not the gospel! Do not suppose I have any particular suspicion that you will not. But I feel the importance of the exhortation, "Preach the gospel." *Study the gospel*—what it implies, what it includes, and what consequences it involves. I have heard complaints of some of our young ministers that, though they are not heterodox, yet they are not evangelical; that, though they do not propagate error, yet the grand, essential, distinguishing truths of the gospel do not form the prevailing theme of their discourses.

I love a sermon well laden with Christian doctrine. I love to find young ministers well learned in the Scriptures. Then their preaching will not be dry, but good news and glad tidings. Complaints have been made of some preaching as *too doctrinal*; and a preference has been manifested for experimental and practical preaching; but that doctrinal preaching which I would recommend should include both. The doctrines of the Scriptures, scripturally stated, are calculated to interest the heart, and to produce genuine evangelical obedience. You need not fear that you shall be limited. You may take a wide range. There is a great variety of subjects which may be introduced; as—the purity and spirituality of the law, the evil of sin, the wrath of God against it, and many others: but then all these naturally lead to an explicit declaration of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."

III. Consider THE MANNER IN WHICH A MINISTER SHOULD DISPENSE THE GOSPEL:—"Willingly;" and so as, while imparting the gospel, to impart their own souls with it. Some have supposed that it is the matter, and not the manner of preaching, that God blesses. But I see no ground for this distinction. I allow that the matter is of the first importance; but the manner is not of small account. For example: the apostle prays that he might make the gospel manifest, "*as he ought to speak*."—Col. iv. 4. And this relates to manner, not to matter. You may preach even the gospel drily. It must be preached faithfully, firmly, earnestly, affectionately. The apostle *so* spoke that many believed. Manner is a means of conveying truth. A cold manner disgraces important truth. "Willingly."—Where the ministration of the word is connected with external honors and great temporal advantage, there is no test of this; but, where it is attended with self-denial, there is. . . . "Our own souls."—This is expressive of the deep interest the apostles and their colleagues took in the gospel, and their earnest desire that their hearers should embrace it. Hence we speak of pouring out our souls in prayer. How would you feel in throwing out a rope to a drowning man,



or in lighting a fire in a wilderness to attract the attention of one who was dear to you, and who was lost? How did Aaron feel during the plague, when he stood between the dead and the living? O, my brother, enter into these feelings. Realize them. Let them inspire you with holy, affectionate zeal. Souls are perishing around you; and, though you cannot "make an atonement for the people's sins," yet you can publish one, made by our great High-priest; and, receiving and exhibiting this atonement, you may hope to save yourself and them that hear you.

LXVI.—THE NATURE AND ENCOURAGEMENTS OF THE MISSIONARY WORK.

[*Substance of the Charge delivered to the first Missionaries of the Baptist Society at the parting Meeting at Leicester, 1793.*]

"Peace be unto you; as my Father sent me, so send I you!"—John xx. 21.

My very dear brethren, every part of the solemnities of this day must needs be affecting; but, if there be one part which is more so than the rest, it is that which is allotted to me, delivering to you a solemn parting address. Nevertheless, I must acknowledge that the hope of your undertaking being crowned with success swallows up all my sorrow. I could myself go without a tear, so at least I think, and leave all my friends and connections, in such a glorious cause. Impressed, therefore, with these sentiments, I can the more readily and cheerfully part with you.

My dear brethren, let me address you in the words of our Lord Jesus to his disciples, "Peace be unto you; as my Father sent me, so send I you!" The whole of this language was sweet, especially considering the troubles of their hearts to whom it was primarily addressed,—The preface is sweet: "Peace be unto you"—as if he had said, All is well as to the past, and all shall be well as to the future.—The commission itself is sweet. Nothing could well be more grateful to those who loved Christ than to be employed by him on such an errand, and to have such an example to imitate.

There is to be sure a great disparity between your mission and that of Christ. He came to offer himself a sacrifice for sin, and by his blood to obtain eternal salvation for poor lost sinners. Yet, notwithstanding this disparity, there are various points of likeness between your undertaking and that of your Lord and Master. I shall single out three or four, which I would wish to impress upon your minds. These are—the objects you must keep in view—the directions you must observe—the difficulties you must encounter—and the reward you may expect.

First: There is an analogy between the OBJECTS of Christ's mission and those of yours. The great objects of his mission were to glorify God, and to seek and to save lost souls; and yours are the same. Men and devils have dishonored God; they had virtually called him a hard master; had thrown off his yoke, and represented him, in the punishment of sin, as a Being whose ways were not equal. But Christ by his obedience and death rolled away these reproaches. By the former, that is, by making it his meat and drink to do the will of his Father, he proved in the face of a rebellious world that his yoke was easy and his burden light. By the latter, that is, by enduring the full penalty of the divine law without a murmuring thought, he manifested its equity, declaring in effect that God was in the right, and that man deserved to fall a sacrifice to his justice. You also, my brethren, have to glorify God, and that both by your cheerful obedience to his will and by patiently enduring affliction. The heathen will judge of the character of your God, and of your religion, by what they see of your own character. Beware that you do not misrepresent your blessed Lord and his glorious gospel. It is a great encouragement to be engaged in the same cause with Christ himself. Does he ride forth as on a white horse, in righteousness judging and making war? —Rev. xix. You are called, like the rest of the armies of heaven, to follow him on white horses, pursuing the same glorious object, that India may be conquered by his truth. May you be able at the close of your lives to say, after the example of your Lord, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Christ was sent of the Father, not only to glorify his name, but to seek and to save that which was lost; and such, my brethren, is your errand. Go then, after your Saviour's example, go in pursuit of the lost sheep; follow after them, search and find them out, that they may be brought home to his fold, from the dark mountains whither they have wandered, and gathered from the dreary deserts whither they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day; that they may be delivered from the errors and abominations of the heathen, and be brought to the knowledge and enjoyment of God.

Secondly: Christ, in the execution of his mission, WAS UNDER THE DIRECTION OF HIM THAT SENT HIM, and you must be the same. As mediator, he always acted as the Father's servant. Though a Son, and as such equal with God, yet in his *official* capacity he learned obedience. It is emphatically said of him, he both *did and taught*; and in both he inflexibly adhered to the directions of him that sent him. "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him who sent me."—"I have not



spoken of myself, but the Father who sent me; he gave me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak."

Christ acted as the Father's servant; and you are the servants of Christ. There is a woe upon any minister if he preach not the Gospel of Christ, but especially upon those whose business it is to preach the Gospel among the heathen. Among us, if you do not preach the gospel of Christ, others will; but there all, under God, will depend upon you. When the Lord first planted the Israelites in Canaan, he planted them *wholly a right seed*. Be exceedingly careful to follow this example. See that the doctrines you teach, and the duties you inculcate, be not yours, but His who sent you. A right seed is necessary to a profitable harvest. You must likewise do the will of Christ as well as teach it, and that after his example. He pleased not himself. Perhaps no men must expect to have their wills so often crossed, or to meet with so frequent calls for self-denial, as those who embark in such an undertaking as yours. This leads me to observe,

Thirdly: Christ, in the execution of his mission, had GREAT DIFFICULTIES AND TRIALS to encounter, and you must expect the same. The trials of your Lord were partly from *pain*, and partly from *contempt*. Great were the hardships he had to undergo. Foxes had holes, and birds had nests, but he had not where to lay his head. And, notwithstanding all that your brethren can do to make you comfortable, you may expect to taste of the same cup. Your Lord was also exposed to contempt. He is mad, said they, why hear ye him? If these things were done to the green tree, what may be expected of the dry? But Jesus "endured the cross, and despised the shame." May you be enabled to follow his example. He met with trials, not only from open enemies, but from pretended friends. Those who ate of his bread lifted up the heel against him. Betrayed, denied, and forsaken, he yet persevered; nor did he desist till he could declare "it is finished." Then, when he could appeal to him who sent him, saying, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," then he bowed his head and gave up the ghost! What an example for you to follow!

Fourthly: Christ was not sent forth in his undertaking without a PROMISE OF SUPPORT IN IT AND A GLORIOUS REWARD FOR IT. It was predicted of him, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have brought forth judgment unto victory." This implied that he would meet with much to discourage him. If many waters could have quenched his love, it had been quenched: but divine Omnipotence supported him. And, as his Father sent him, so sends he you. Faithfully has he promised to be with you always

to the end of the world. The divine Father promised him souls for his hire; that he should see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. And herein, as the Father sent him, so sends he you. You also shall have your reward. The joy set before him encouraged him to endure the cross; you also shall enter into the joy of the Lord. Keep that joy in your view. For "it is a faithful saying, If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Hearken to the promise of your Lord and Master, for his sayings are very true, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, as I also have overcome and am set down with my Father in his throne."

Go then, my dear brethren, stimulated by these prospects. We shall meet again. Crowns of glory await you and us. Each, I trust, will be addressed at the last day, by our great Redeemer, "Come ye blessed of my Father;—these were hungry, and you fed them; athirst, and you gave them drink; in prison, and you visited them;—Enter ye into the joy of your Lord." Amen.

#### LXVII.—THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY A GREAT WORK.

[Sketch of a Sermon addressed to two Missionaries and their Wives.]

"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it and come down to you."—Neh. vi. 3.

MY dear young friends, it would have been more agreeable to my feelings if this address had been delivered by one of our brethren in London. I submit, however, the more cheerfully, from the persuasion I have that you will receive what I say in love. I shall find a few observations on the words I have read. Let us review the occasion of them.

We may consider the chapter as a fulfilment of what Daniel had foretold about a hundred years before. "The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times."

It shows, in a striking light, how all great undertakings for the church of God are accompanied with difficulties and strong oppositions. When Judah returned, all their difficulties seemed at an end: they imagined, now they were liberated, they had only to go to work and rebuild the temple; but they soon discovered that they had new enemies.

The conduct of Sanballat and Geshem shows how the most iniquitous designs are concealed under friendly pretences. "Come let us meet together in one of the villages—but they thought to do me mischief."

The answer of Nehemiah discovers a union of wisdom and firmness. He saw through their designs, but did not reveal his

suspicions. His answer would have been proper even had they meant as they said.

But wherein was the greatness of the work of Nehemiah? The building of a wall would not seem to be a mighty matter. But then it must not be considered in itself, but in its effects—it was to secure a city, where the worship and cause of God were to be carried on for ages; and in this view it was a great work, and greatly interested the hearts of the godly. Hence the people had “a mind to work,” night and day, with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other. In short, with respect to the *principle*, it was the same as that which has attracted the hearts of the godly in all ages—love to Zion, or the cause of God. It was that which dictated the 137th Psalm, when times went ill; and the 29th chapter of the Second Book of Chronicles, when things went well. Such was the public spirit of those times.

But, passing the work of Nehemiah, I shall not be thought to misapply the subject if I apply it to the work in which you are engaged. You have a great work, and you may expect great difficulties and oppositions in its execution, and great encouragements. It is a work which will occupy your whole attention.

I. Let me remind you of a few things relative to THE GREATNESS OF YOUR WORK.—Such a view of it may, in one sense, dismay you, and induce you to exclaim, “Who is sufficient for these things?” But in another sense it is necessary; and remember, for your encouragement, that “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.”

1. It is the work of *saving souls*.—Light as this is made of by the world, it is great. The temporal salvation of an empire is great and interesting; but the salvation of one soul exceeds all this; for the soul is capable of eternal happiness or misery. “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?”

2. It is the work of *introducing the gospel where it has never been*.—There is great importance attaching to this, whether in a country, city, town, or village. It is lighting a candle which may burn for ages. When Paul and Silas first entered Europe, they might have no conception of the effects. But what they taught was a light that has never been extinguished.

3. It is a work to which you may expect *great opposition*.—Satan will dispute every inch of ground with you, and his opposition will be varied. It is true, your brethren who have gone before you have had difficulties to encounter which you will probably escape; but do not expect that all opposition has ceased. The more God blesses you the more opposition you may expect, not from Brahmans only, and Hindoos, but from Europeans. Expectations of ease and hon-

or are utterly unworthy of a Christian missionary.

4. It is a work that must occupy your *whole attention*.—Nehemiah could not be diverted from his work, nor must you. You must not go with a divided heart. You may wish to attend to other things; but every thing must be done in subserviency to your great work. Never lose sight of this. If politics or worldly speculations invite your attention, you must reply, “I am doing a great work: why should the work cease whilst I come down to you?” Always consider an attention to any thing that would divert you from the grand object you have in view as “going down:” and say, I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down.

II. But, while yours is unquestionably a great work, it is also a work in which there are great encouragements.—Under this head we may remark:—

1. It is a work the foundation of which has been laid at a *great expense*.—When God would save a nation, he sent Moses and Aaron: he gave Egypt for them. When he would restore them he sacrificed Babylon. But to lay the foundation of *this* work he sacrificed his Son!

2. It is a work which occupies a *first place in the designs of God*.—All his other works are subservient to this. They were not only made by Christ but for him. The revolutions of empires are permitted for the sake of the people of God. Babylon was raised up to chastise them, and destroyed to deliver them. The invasion of Britain and other nations was permitted for the gospel’s sake; and who can tell but this may be the end which God intends to answer in permitting British armies to subdue India! Even slavery itself may be permitted for the gospel’s sake.

3. It is a work in which *the hand and heart of God will be with you*.—If ever you incline to despond, remember—“The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform it.”

4. It is a work which involves the *happiness of your species*.—Whence spring all the miseries of mankind? “Whence come wars and fightings?” From the state of their hearts. The gospel is the remedy, and the only remedy.—Ps. lxxvii.

III. Let me conclude with a few REMARKS:—

1. *The greatest work requires attention to a multitude of little things*.—It is composed of little things. Great works are not accomplished by a single exploit, but by a series of labors—by leaving no stone unturned. Look at Nehemiah. He inquires, weeps alone, prays, speaks to the king, obtains favor and a commission; but still he returned to labor, even in the night, and took a calm and deliberate view of the work; and, when he communicated his intentions,

his friends joined him; and thus, by a multitude of operations, the work is accomplished. He was laborious, firm, disinterested, patient, and persevering; and looked for his reward to God.

2. *A great work may be hindered and stopped by little things.*—Little follies will spoil the whole.—Eccles. x. 1. Such as the dispute of the disciples who should be the greatest; and little discords; and self-will. A great character will imitate Him who “pleased not himself.” Abraham’s condescension to Lot is a fine example.

*My dear sisters,* yours is a great work. In the first ages, there were women who helped to advance the good cause; and we are indebted nearly as much, under God, to the services of your sex as to those of our own. It is for you to strengthen the hands of your companions, by a cheerful demeanour under their various discouragements, by conversing with the native females, by keeping order in the family, by setting an example of modesty and affection, by economy and industry.—You may be of service on your voyage. It was remarked of one of our dear sisters, during her voyage, by an officer, that he never saw her equal in sweetness of disposition, calmness, kindness, and firmness in danger. This was a powerful recommendation of the gospel.—You may be members of a large family—conform to its rules; make yourselves useful; beware of jealousy, whisperings, envies.—You may be called to preside in a small station—conduct every thing in the fear of God. Bear and forbear, and forgive. Keep near to God. Seek your own happiness and interest in that of the whole.

Dear brethren and sisters, we shall be with you in heart. We shall pray for you. And we trust we shall meet you in the world above. Meanwhile my brethren and companions, assembled to bid you farewell, will cordially unite with me in the fervent prayer—Remember them, O our God, for good!—The Lord Jesus Christ be with their spirits!

#### LXVIII.—FAITH IN THE GOSPEL A NECESSARY PREREQUISITE TO PREACHING IT.

[*Sketch of a Sermon addressed to the Students of the Bristol Education Society.*]

“We believe, and therefore speak.”—2 Cor. iv. 13.

THE words immediately preceding those on which I shall found a few observations on the important work of the ministry are a quotation from the 116th Psalm. David, under his troubles, believed in God, and therefore spoke. And the apostles, under persecutions and reproaches, believed in the gospel, and therefore spoke. They spoke bold-

ly in the name of Jesus, whatever might be the consequence. They might be slain, as Christ was. But then like him, too, they would be raised.—Ver. 14. If they suffered with him, they would also reign with him.

I shall comprise what I have to offer under two heads of discourse—the subject matter of the Christian ministry, and the necessity of believing it.

1. THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.—It is *that which we have believed*. It is of the first importance to a messenger to know his errand. Without this, whatever be our talents, natural or acquired, we are unqualified for the Christian ministry. Without this, the most fascinating eloquence is in danger of becoming an engine of mischief. The subject matter of the apostle’s preaching is variously described: it is called “the faith”—“the truth”—“the truth as it is in Jesus”—“Christ crucified”—“the gospel”—“the word of reconciliation,” &c. In these descriptions, we see our work.

It does not follow that the dictates of reason and conscience are to be rejected or disused in preaching. The light of nature itself teaches some truth—such as the being of God, the accountableness of man, the fitness of doing to others as we would they should do to us, our being sinners, or what we ought not to be. These are truths which the gospel supposes, and which require to be enforced in subserviency to it.

But several important particulars *do* follow; as,

1. *That we must not deal in curious speculations*, which have no foundation in the Scriptures.—Some have been turned aside by such an indulgence to false hypotheses, and made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. A large proportion of the objections to divine truth are of this kind: “*How* can a man be born when he is old?” “*How* are the dead raised, and with what body?” *How* can one be three, and three one? *How* could Christ be both God and man? *How* can the certain efficaciousness of grace consist with free agency and the accountableness of man? Paul would not answer such questions as these by opposing conjecture to conjecture, but in the spirit of the text—“We believe, and therefore speak.”

2. *That we must not deal in private impulses or impressions*, which have no foundation in the Scriptures.—One founds a doctrine on his own experience; but experience ought to be judged by the Bible, not the Bible by experience. “The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord.”—Another swears that, as God liveth, such a thing is true; but what does this prove, save the impudence and profanity of the preacher?



3. That the person and work of Christ must be the leading theme of our ministry.—In this, if we be Christians, we have believed; and this we must preach to others. For example: We must preach him *as divine*. How else could we know whom we had believed? We must preach him *as having assumed our nature*, and thereby qualified himself to be our Saviour.—Heb. ii. 14, 15. We must preach him *as dying for our sins*, &c.—1 Cor. xv. 1—4. We must preach him *as the Saviour of the lost*, taking the place of the chief of sinners. We must preach him *as the only way of acceptance with God*. “Being justified freely by his grace, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” In short, he is suited to all our wants. To whom else shall we go? He hath the words of eternal life. So preach Christ.

Every sermon, more or less, should have some relation to Christ, and bear on his person or work. This is the life of all doctrine, and it will be our own fault if it is dry. Do not consider it as one subject among others, but as that which involves all others, and gives them an interest they could not otherwise possess. Preach, not only the truth; but all truth, “*as it is in Jesus*.” However ingenious our sermons may be, unless they bear on Christ, and lead the mind to Christ, we do not preach the faith of the gospel.

As all doctrinal religion meets here, so does all practical.—The Scriptures draw every thing from the dying love of Christ. “Feed the church of God, *which he hath purchased with his own blood*.”—“Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, *even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*.”—“Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”—“Let this mind be in you *which was in our Lord Jesus Christ*.”—“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because *he laid down his life for us*: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”—“Husbands, love your wives, *as Christ also loved the church*.”

The same may be said of *experience*.—Christian experience clings to Christ and his gospel. The religion of some, who talk of experience, goes to idolize their own feelings and admire their supposed graces. But true Christian experience thinks little of self, and much of Christ.—John vi. 68.

II. THE NECESSITY OF BELIEVING THE GOSPEL before we preach it:—“We believe, and therefore speak.” It does not follow that every believer should be a preacher; but every preacher ought to be a believer; for,

1. *This is the only motive that will render preaching a delight*.—How can we discourse on subjects which we do not believe? If we have not tasted the grace of God, we

shall feel no pleasure in proclaiming it to others. Is it any wonder that faithless preachers call preaching “doing duty?” or that they preach other men’s sermons? and that in delivering them they are uninterested by them? But, if we speak because we believe, our preaching will be the utterance of a full heart, and our work its own reward. We must taste of truth as Christians, before we preach it. Studying it merely as ministers will never do. Believing belongs to us as Christians.

2. *It affords ground to hope for usefulness to others*.—What effect will the sermons of those ministers have, who, by their frothy conversation, loose deportment, or avaricious spirit, are always counteracting them? The hearers will say, and say truly, He does not believe his own doctrine. He may talk of truth, or of holiness and practical religion; but all is vain.—If, on the other hand, we feel and practise what we preach, this must at least recommend it to the conscience; and it often does more. The one resembles a man persuading you to embark on board his vessel, assuring you it is safe, while he himself stands on the shore. The other has embarked himself and all he has; and, like Moses to Hobab, invites you to accompany him.

3. *It will render the work of the ministry compatible with common honesty*.—The world has long accused ministers with being hypocrites. This is malicious enough; but while men engage in this work from indolence, avarice, pride, or any other worldly motive, rather than from the principle expressed in the text, they are furnished with a pretext for such reproaches. If we believe not ere we speak, we only deceive, and the sooner we throw off the deception the better.

4. *No other motive will bear the test*.—What an account will faithless ministers have to give when asked, “What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?” One may have to answer, *The vanity of my parents* led them to educate me for the ministry, and when I grew up I was fit for nothing else.—Another may have to answer, *My own vanity* influenced me: having a taste for learning, and public speaking, and esteeming it a reputable and genteel mode of life, I took to it.—Another may have to say, It was my own *conceit and arrogance*: having a large portion of native effrontery, I made my way, and was caressed by the people.—Oh! how different these from the apostles!—“We have believed, and therefore speak.”

But why do I thus speak? I am not addressing a society which pretends to train graceless characters for the ministry, or to make men ministers by mere education. They are aware of the necessity of their pupils being believers; and, if any of them

prove otherwise, they have deceived their patrons. They do not so much as pretend to impart gifts; but merely to improve those which Christ appears to have imparted. They wish to enable the aged and experienced part of our ministers, like Aquila and Priscilla, to expound to the younger brethren the way of the Lord more perfectly.

And as to you, my young brethren, I have no particular jealousy of you; only as we ought to be jealous with a godly jealousy, "looking lest any one fail of the grace of God." You are likely, another day, to occupy stations of much greater importance than if each were a minister of state. Our churches look to you. Many aged ministers are gone. Those that remain will soon follow. God has begun a great work in our day. May you take it up, and carry it on. It is but the other day since *we* were youths, looking up to those who are now no more. Now the load lies on us. Soon it must lie on you, or on some others. Should you prove yourselves unworthy, God will find others. Deliverance will arise from some other quarter. O, men of God, "Flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart!"

I ought not to conclude without recommending to the audience that Saviour whom we have believed. We have found rest for our souls. Come ye. Forsake the world and your own righteousness. We have worn his yoke, some of us for forty years, and it has never galled us. Take his yoke, and learn of him, and you shall find rest for your souls. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

#### LXIX.—THE YOUNG MINISTER EXHORTED TO MAKE FULL PROOF OF HIS MINISTRY.

[*Sketch of a Sermon addressed to the Students of the Stepeny Academical Institution.*]

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."  
—2 Tim. iv. 5, 6.

BEING requested to address a word of exhortation to my younger brethren, I doubt not but I shall be heard with candor and attention; and that not only by those immediately addressed, but by all my younger brethren in the ministry. You will not suppose, then, that I mean to compare myself to an apostle, or you to evangelists; but the work is in substance the same, whether it be in the hands of extraordinary or ordinary men: and, as Paul argued the importance of Timothy's work from his own approaching dissolution, I may be allowed to enforce it upon you from kindred con-

siderations; namely, that many of your elder brethren are gone, and others are going, the way of all the earth.

You will not expect me, my dear young men, to discourse to you on the advantages of literary acquirements. I might do so indeed, and that from experience. I know the value of such acquirements, both by what I have been enabled to attain, and by the want of that which I have not attained: but it is more congenial with my feelings to speak of things of still greater importance. Three things in particular are suggested by the passage which I have read, and these I shall recommend to your serious attention; namely, the work itself to which you are devoted—the duties inculcated as necessary to the discharge of it—and the considerations by which it is enforced.

I. THE WORK ITSELF to which you are devoted.—It is called a "ministry." The word signifies, as you are aware, *service*. The leading character of a minister is that of a servant. This is an idea that you must ever bear in mind. It is a service, however, of a special kind. Every Christian is a servant of Christ, but every Christian is not a minister of the gospel. A deacon is a servant, as the word also signifies; but his service respects temporal things; yours is that on account of which the office of deacon was appointed, that you should "give yourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." It is that which Jethro assigned to Moses—"Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God." Your living under the gospel dispensation renders this a pleasant work: it must, if you enter into the spirit of it, be pleasant to study and impart the gladdening doctrine of salvation.

I have observed two extremes relative to this work; one on the part of ministers themselves, and the other on the part of the people. That on the part of ministers has been an abuse of their office of *ruling*, a fondness for power, aspiring to the exercise of dominion over their brethren. It has always grieved in my ears to hear such language as this:—*My church, my deacons, &c.*, as if churches were made for them, rather than they for churches. Do not emulate this empty swell. True greatness will revolt at it. He that will be great, let him be the servant of all. Think of the woe denounced against the idol shepherd: "The sword shall be upon his arm, and his right eye shall be darkened." Think especially of him who said, "I have been amongst you as one that serveth."

The extreme on the part of the people is this: from the idea of ministers being servants, some of them seem to have imagined that they are their masters. It is true they have a Master, and one to whom they must give account; but it is not to the people of



their charge. As Christians, they are accountable to one another, the same as other Christians; but, as ministers, to Christ only. In serving the church of God, you will act as a faithful steward towards his lord's family; who renders service to them all, but is accountable to his lord only. Serve the church of Christ for his sake.

II. Let me direct your attention to THE DUTIES INCULCATED AS NECESSARY TO THE DISCHARGE OF THE MINISTRY. These will be found to consist in four things:—

1. *Vigilance*.—"Watch thou in all things." This is a general quality that is required to run through all our work. If any of you enter the ministry as furnishing you with a genteel post in society, you will be at best a drone, and had better be any thing than a preacher. You are watchmen, and must be awake when others are asleep.

2. *Patience*.—"Endure afflictions." If you cannot bear these, you had better let the ministry alone. If you be good ministers of Jesus Christ, you will not only be afflicted in common with others, but the afflictions of others will become yours. "Who is offended, and I burn not?" You must care for all, and expect on some occasions, when you have done, to receive evil for good.

3. *Activity* in the great work of evangelizing men:—"Do the work of an evangelist." Without considering you as evangelists in the full import of the term, there is a portion of the work pertaining to that office which is common to us all as ministers. Wherever Providence may station you, my dear young men, be concerned to evangelize your neighborhood. Look at the situations of a number of the ejected ministers, and see if the effects of their evangelical labors do not remain to this day. Who can look over the churches in Cambridgeshire, without seeing in them the fruits of the labors of Oddy and Holcroft? Who can review those of Bedfordshire, and not perceive in them the effects of the labors of Bunyan—labors for which he suffered twelve years' imprisonment? The same remarks might be made respecting other parts of the kingdom. Emulate these men of God in evangelizing your respective neighborhoods.

4. *Fidelity* in discharging your trust:—"Make full proof of thy ministry." The word means thoroughly to accomplish that which you have undertaken. Such is the import of Col. iv. 17: "Say to Archippus, take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." Were you to present a soldier with a sword, and bid him make full proof of it, he could not misunderstand you. Would you see an example, look at that of the great apostle in the context: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

But here allow me to be a little more par-

ticular. If you would make full proof of your ministry you must attend

(1) *To personal religion*.—This is often inculcated by the apostle.—"Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock."—"Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine." &c. Many people will take our personal religion for granted; as though a man who teaches others must needs be religious himself: but woe unto us if we reason in this way. Tremble at the idea of being a graceless minister—a character, it is to be feared, not very frequent! To what is it owing that some of our churches have been prejudiced against an educated ministry? I may be told to their ignorance; and in part it is so; but in part it is owing to other causes. The lightness, the vanity, the foppery, and the irreligion of some young men have produced not only this effect, but an abhorrence of the very worship of God, as by them administered. Who were ever known to be prejudiced against a Pearce, a Francis, or a Beddome, on account of their education? If there were individuals of this description, let them be disregarded as ignorant, and let them be told that vicious characters are found among the uneducated as well as the educated. But be it your concern, my dear young men, to shun these evils. The instructions which you receive, if consecrated to Christ, will be a blessing to you; but, if your object be to shine before men, they will be a curse.

(2) Let the time allotted you for education be employed in acquiring *a habit of useful study*.—To make full proof of your ministry, you must give yourselves continually prayer, and the ministry of the word. "Meditate on these things, and give yourselves wholly to them;" and this to the end of your lives. Let no one imagine that he will leave his present situation fully qualified for the work. If, by prayer and a diligent application to study, you acquire such a habit of close thinking as that on entering the work it shall be your delight to prosecute it, this is all that will be expected of you. It is for the want of this habit of study that there are so many saunterers, and have been so many scandals amongst ministers.

(3) In every stage of literary improvement *be concerned to have it sanctified and subordinated to God as you go on*.—On this depends its utility. It were desirable that the study of languages and sciences should commence in early youth, and that religion should come after it to make the last impression, seeing it is this that ordinarily stamps the character. Could we be certain that the faith of Christ, and the gifts suited to the ministry, would follow an early education, this would be our course; but, as this cannot be, our dread of an unconverted ministry makes us require religion as the first qualification. Only pursue learning that you may be better able to serve the Lord, and all will be well. It is thus that



our brethren in India, though their attainments were not made in the earliest stages of life, have retained their spirituality and increased in usefulness. Let me conclude by noticing.

III. THE CONSIDERATION WITH WHICH THESE EXHORTATIONS ARE ENFORCED:—“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.” This language denotes an anxiety in the apostle that the work of God might go on when he should have fallen asleep; and, if we be worthy of the name of Christian ministers, we must feel a portion of the same. Dear young men, to you we look for successors in the work. It is not for me to say how long your elder brethren may continue; but we have seen stars of no ordinary magnitude set within a few years! It seems but yesterday since they were with us, and we were the juniors amongst them. Now we are obliged to take their place; and you, beloved youths, will soon have to take ours. We do not wish to hold ourselves up as your examples; but the *cause* in which we have been engaged, and in which the Lord has not frowned on our attempts, we do most earnestly recommend to your tender and solicitous regards.

Your elder brethren may be spared a little longer, and yet be able to do but little more. We feel the force of the wise man's counsel; may you feel it too—“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”

#### LXX.—IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN MINISTERS CONSIDERED AS THE GIFT OF CHRIST.

[*Sketch of a Sermon addressed to the Church at Moulton\* on the Ordination of Mr. (now Dr.) Carey, August 1, 1787.*]

“Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.”—Psa. lxxviii. 18.

SOME think it refers to God's goings forth in behalf of his people Israel, leading them forth to victory, taking their enemies captive, and enriching them with the spoils. Suppose it be so, we are warranted to consider it as mainly referring to Christ, for so the apostle Paul has applied it.—Eph. iv. 8.

The apostle not only applies it to Christ, but *proves* it applicable. Thus he reasons, ver. 9, 10, “Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended,” &c. The

\* The nine which follow this were addressed to other churches on the ordination of their respective pastors

captivity which he led captive was our spiritual enemies who had led us captive—Satan, Death. And, having obtained the victory, he proceeds to divide the spoils. *Gifts to men.*—As David made presents. And hence comes our ordinances, ministers, &c. There was a glorious fulfilment immediately after his ascension, in a rich profusion of gifts and graces to his church, like David's presents. Here it is “*received* ;” in Ephesians “*gave*.” He received that he might give, received the spoil that he might distribute it. But, as I wish to appropriate the passage to the work allotted me, the whole of that to which I would at this time call your attention will be contained in two things:—

#### I. THE GREAT BLESSING OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

1. Ministers are *received for* and are *given to* you by Christ.—As men, and as sinful men, ministers are as nothing, and wish not to make any thing of themselves; but as the gifts of Christ it becomes you to make much of them. (1) If you *love Christ* you will make much of your minister, on account of his being *his* gift. A gift designed to supply Christ's absence in a sort. He is gone (“*ascended*,”) but he gives you his servants. By-and-by you hope to be with him, but as yet you are as sheep in the wilderness. He gives you a shepherd. (2) If you *fear God* you will be afraid of treating your pastor amiss, seeing he is the gift of Christ. God took it ill of Israel for despising Moses.—Numb. xii. 8. He is *my servant*.

2. Ministers are not only given to but *received for* you of God the Father, as a covenant blessing, among the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. In this view consider that Christ received nothing at his Father's hand but what cost him dear—cost him his life. Or, if the allusion be to the dividing of the spoils, suppose we say, He received them as a conqueror receives the spoils at the hand of the foe. Your minister was one of those who, like yourselves, were brands consuming in the fire. Christ took him from your enemies and gives him to you. Make much of the gift on this account. “This I received of the Amorite.”

3. Consider your unworthiness of such a blessing. You are *men*, mere men, and, what is more, *rebellious* men, who had joined with Satan. And must you share the spoils? It is not usual to divide the spoils amongst rebels. . . . Men that put him to death had these gifts given to them. And we should all have done the same. Some of you, it is likely, have been vile and abandoned characters, and yet, &c. . . .

4. The end of it:—“That the Lord God might dwell among them.” “But will God indeed dwell with men?” God had not dwelt with the world, nor in it, while sin bore the rule; but Christ's mediation was

for the bringing it about. "Will God indeed dwell with men?" He will; and how? It is by the means of ordinances and ministers. A church of Christ is God's house, and where any one builds a house it is a token that he means to dwell there. What a blessing to a village, a country, for God to build a house in it. It is by this that we may hope for a blessing upon the means to the conversion of our children and friends, and for the edification of believers.

## II. POINT OUT SOME CORRESPONDING DUTIES AS ANSWERING TO THESE YOUR PRIVILEGES.

1. Constant and diligent attendance at the house of God. If the house of God be God's dwelling, let it be yours, your home. If God gives you a pastor, do you thankfully receive and prize him. He hath not dealt so with every village.

2. Cheerfully contribute to his support. Christ has given you freely, and you ought to give him freely. Consider it not as a gift, but as a debt; and not as done to him, but to Christ.

3. Follow those things which make for peace, with which the presence and blessing of God are connected.

4. Shun those things that tend to provoke the Lord to withdraw his gifts, and to cease to dwell among you.

## LXXI.—NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."—John xiii. 34, 35.

THE counsels of a dying friend have peculiar weight: those especially which arise from love, and a regard to our well-being. Such was this. It was the counsel of the greatest and best friend we have; and the advice is calculated, more than any thing else, for our good. And what better than this can I advance on the present occasion? To enter into all the particular duties of a people to a minister and to one another would be far too wide a field. If therefore I dwell on the *principle*, I hope it will suffice, and prove beneficial. If you ask, What are our duties to our minister? I answer, Love him. If you ask, what are our duties to each other? I answer, Love one another. Learn this lesson well, and everything else will follow. We shall endeavor to ascertain wherein consists the nature of Christian love and why it is called a new commandment—to consider its importance in Christian society—and to state a few means and motives to cherish it.

### I. Let us endeavor to ascertain THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE, AND WHY IT IS

CALLED A NEW COMMANDMENT.—We may remark

1. It is not mere *good neighborhood* or, civility between man and man.—We may meet as neighbors, and practise the little civilities dictated by a sense of propriety, and regard each other indifferently; and yet be strangers to *love*.

2. It is not mere *friendship*.—This belongs to us as men. Heathens are capable of this. But there is no religion in it. It is not *Christian love*.

3. It is not mere *respect on account of religion*.—I never remember being without that. That was found in Saul to David, and at times in Pharaoh to Moses, and in Balaam to Israel. But there was no religion in it—no *love*.

4. It is not mere *party attachment*.—A good man will, of course, unite himself with that denomination of Christians whose sentiments he believes to be nearest the truth; but he will not limit his affection to a party, but love all who love Jesus Christ. A man may be a zealous partizan, and the party whose cause he espouses may be nearest the truth, but he, nevertheless, may be destitute of *love*.

5. It is not that *excessive and mistaken attachment* which shall lead us to idolize and flatter a minister, or to exempt each other from the exercise of faithful discipline.—This, in fact, is hatred. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him."

6. It is not mere *benevolence* itself.—There may be that without Christianity.

*Then what is Christian love?*

It is *complacency in the divine image*.—It is a union of *heart*, like that of Ruth to her mother-in-law. Christian love is *love for Christ's sake*.

This last remark, I suppose, furnishes a clue for its being called "a new commandment." The old commandment required benevolence, or love to our neighbor; but this is complacency in Christ's image, or the love of Christians as such. And being introductory to the New-Testament or gospel dispensation, under which the church should be composed of believers only, it is suited to it. Personal religion is now to be the bond of union. This was never so expressly required before. This is more than love to our neighbor, or benevolence: this is brotherly love, or complacency in each other as brethren in Christ.—Rom. xii. 10. Heb. xiii. 1. This is genuine *charity*.—I Cor. xiii.

II. Let us consider THE IMPORTANCE of this principle in Christian society.—This new commandment is the most extensive of any that could be given. Love is a most comprehensive principle: it is the fulfilling of the whole law; it is the grand cement that unites the spiritual building. Without

this, any wind will blow it down. More particularly,

1. With respect to the duties of social religion.—Only love your pastor, and every thing of consequence will follow. You will attend early and constantly on his ministry. You will pray for him. You will take well his brotherly admonitions. And, if you see faults in him, you will not unnecessarily expose him; but, if the nature of the case allow, mention them to him alone. You will, in return for your spiritual privileges, cheerfully impart to him of your natural good things. You will, in a word, treat him respectfully, tenderly, and with affectionate fidelity. Only love your brother, and you will cast in your lot with him, and the house of God will be sweet to you. You will consider yourselves as intimately united to Christians, and, after the interruptions of business or the world, you will rejoice, as did the primitive disciples, to return to “your own company.” The return of opportunities will be welcomed. You will have an interest in each other’s prayers. You will give and receive reproof. You will be kind to the poor, and particularly to those of “the household of faith.” You will sympathize with the afflicted. You will “bear one another’s burdens.” You will bear and forbear, and forgive.

2 With respect to its privileges and advantages.—These are nothing without love. To be “fellow-citizens with the saints,” to unite at the Lord’s table, and a variety of other privileges, without love, will be privileges in name only. With love, the company, counsels, and prayers of Christian friends, will be valued; but not otherwise.

III. Let us mention a few MEANS AND MOTIVES to cherish this divine principle.—As means,

1. Avoid those things which tend to damp it.—As sarcastic speeches, and unkind reflections.

2. Be concerned to be spiritually-minded yourselves, or others cannot love you as Christians. If any err from this rule, let us beware that we do not make their conduct the rule of our own, returning evil for evil.

Consider as motives,

1. The love of Christ.—“As I have loved you, so love ye one another.” Let your love be ardent and self-denying.

2. This may comfort you under the world’s hatred.—If you be like Christ the world will hate you.—John xv. 17—19. Then when they hate you do not be without any source of comfort; but love one another.

3. Brotherly love is the grand recommendation of religion.—Young beginners are drawn by it. But, if they cannot perceive this, they will be damped and discouraged, and the Holy Spirit will be grieved.

4. All love to one another will turn to our own account.—While self-love defeats its

own ends, this will be sure to benefit us. Seek another’s good, and in it you shall find your own. “By this ye shall know that ye have passed from death unto life, because ye have love one to another.”

#### LXXII.—CHRISTIAN CHURCHES FELLOW-HELPERS WITH THEIR PASTORS TO THE TRUTH.

“We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.”—3 John, 8.

THE ordination of elders over the churches was a practice among the primitive Christians.—Acts xiv. 23. And I hope it will never be dispensed with in our churches. Besides being sanctioned by apostolical example, it is a guard against the introduction of improper characters, who, by getting an artificial majority in a church, may intrude themselves on a people to their great injury. Hence the exhortation, “Lay hands suddenly on no man.” It also furnishes an opportunity of solemnly addressing both parties on the intimate relation into which they have entered. In compliance with this custom, I would affectionately address the members of this church on the present interesting occasion.

The language of the text, I allow, has respect to Christian missionaries; but that which is said of them, and the treatment due to them, will in a great degree apply to settled pastors; for

1. They went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles; and these give up all worldly prospects and pursuits for Christ’s name’s sake, and to serve your spiritual interests.

2. They were engaged in a great work, even the evangelization of the world; and so are these. God promised Canaan to Abraham, but Israel must take it; and the world to Christ, but Christians must conquer it. “Go ye into all the world,” &c. Of this army, Christian missionaries and ministers are the leaders.

3. They wanted help from their brethren, and it was to the honor of private Christians to help them; for in so doing they became fellow-helpers, not to them only, but also “to the truth.” And so do these need help, and it is for you, by helping them, to be fellow-helpers to the truth.

To illustrate and enforce the duty which is here enjoined upon you, we shall take a view of the work of a pastor and observe, as we go along, how you are to be fellow-helpers in it.

In general, it is spreading the truth.—This is a name by which the religion of the Bible is very properly designated, since it is not only true, but emphatically the truth; being the only true doctrine ever given to the world under the name of religion. All that



went before it were false, and tended to mislead and destroy the souls of men, on the true character of God, and of men, and on the true way of salvation.

The apostle spoke not the language of conjecture, but of assurance; as one having been in a mine, coming to the light of day: "We believe and are sure."

It is the work of your pastor to spread the heavenly truth, and yours to be fellow-helpers to the truth. Particularly,

I. It is his work to PREACH THE GOSPEL to you. There are many ways in which you may be his fellow-helpers.

1. In *your prayers to God for him*.—I have lately read of a man who despised the prayers of a people. But so did not Paul. "Brethren, pray for us."—"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." Prepare the way to God's house by prayer. Do not expect to profit else. It is a great mercy that God sends to us by men like ourselves; men whose everlasting interests are involved in their doctrine. But they are sinful creatures, subject to temptations in common with others, and to some peculiar to themselves: they therefore need your prayers.

2. By *an early and constant attendance, and spiritual attentiveness to the word*, you may be fellow-helpers.—What an effect do empty pews, and yawning sleepy hearers, produce! How delightful for a minister to enter his pulpit, as Paul speaks of coming to Rome,—in the hope of being comforted by the faith of his hearers!—Rom. i. 12. Where faith is seen to glisten in the eyes of an attentive audience, it produces feelings and thoughts more interesting and affecting than could ever have been produced in the study: while the contrary has a tendency to chill and freeze the feelings of the soul, and to reduce a minister to a situation resembling a ship locked in by islands of ice near the poles.

3. By *rendering his circumstances as easy as possible, so that his mind may not be harassed by worldly cares*, you may be fellow-helpers.—I have never felt it a hardship to be dependent on a people who loved me. I have thought it an honor to be so supported. The expressions of love are sweet. But, if love be wanting, all goes wrong. Little is done, and that little is not done heartily.

4. By *enabling him by your habitual deportment to speak strongly as to the holy effects of religion*, you may be fellow-helpers.—He will wish to be able to point the world to the people of his charge and say—These are my epistles of commendation, known and read of all men! And to address you boldly in their hearing, in the language of the apostle—"Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by

the Spirit of our God." But, if your conduct does not answer the description, who will believe him?

II. Another part of your pastor's work is VISITING HIS PEOPLE FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, AND ENCOURAGING HOPEFUL CHARACTERS TO STAND FORWARD ON THE LORD'S SIDE.—And in this you may be fellow-helpers.

1. By *welcoming him, and teaching your children and servants to respect him*.—Much depends on this. They will form their opinion of him by the sentiments they hear you express towards him; and, if they do not think highly of him, it cannot be expected they should profit under his ministrations. On the contrary, if they witness in you a high esteem for his character and his talents, they will attend his ministry greatly prepossessed in his favor, and with minds prepared to receive his instructions.

2. By *noticing those in the congregation who are inquiring after the way of salvation, and directing them to the good old way*, you may be fellow-helpers.—There are some who, like Barnabas with Saul, get acquainted with and assist converts in the divine life, and introduce them to the church.—Acts ix. 27. Such persons are great blessings in a church, and great helpers to the pastor. Be friendly with the poor; encourage the modest and timid; visit the sick, and converse and pray with them. This will strengthen the hands and cheer the heart of your pastor, and greatly promote the interests of the truth.

III. Another part of his duty is THE MAINTENANCE OF A STRICT AND FAITHFUL DISCIPLINE. And in this you may be fellow-helpers. He must reprove, and rebuke, and sometimes separate from the church some of whom he once thought well. This is a painful duty. But it is a duty, and it is your duty to stand by him. Say to him, as the people said to Ezra, "Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: Be of good courage and do it." Do not consult relationship, or worldly interests, or private friendships. Do not weaken his reproofs by siding with the sinner. Act in unison. "Have no fellowship with such a one, no, not to eat!"

You especially who are *deacons*, you must be fellow-helpers. You must be to your pastor as Aaron and Hur were to Moses. Encourage him to advise with you. It is customary in some of our churches, and I wish it were in all, for the pastor and deacons to meet and consult on the affairs of the church an hour or two, some evening immediately preceding the monthly meeting of the church. These meetings, in connection with the stated meetings of the church, constitute a happy union of Christian wisdom with Christian liberty.

Thus, my dear brethren, I have pointed out, very briefly and plainly, a few ways in

which you and your pastor may be fellow-helpers to the truth. Consider what I have said as dictated by love and a desire for your own welfare, and for the promotion of the cause of our common Lord; and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

### LXXIII.—ON CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS.

“We live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.”—1 Thess. iii. 8.

If I wished to be impressed with a pattern of a Christian minister, I would study the second chapter of this Epistle; and, if I wished to see a pattern of a Christian people, I know not where I could look, better than to the church of the Thessalonians.—Chap. i. 5—10. They were a very amiable people, but greatly persecuted; and this excited the sentiments and conduct expressed in the third chapter.

The amount of the text is that *steadfastness in a Christian people is the life of a Christian minister*. We shall notice, therefore, the nature of Christian steadfastness, and its influence on the happiness of a minister.

I. Let us inquire WHAT IS THAT SPIRIT AND CONDUCT IN A PEOPLE EXPRESSED BY “STANDING FAST IN THE LORD.”

We may remark in general (1) The language supposes they are “*in the Lord*.” It may be thought, perhaps, my hearers, that I should take this for granted of you. And I hope I may of some, and of many; but can I of all? It will not be wise for you to take it for granted. It will be well if there be no profane person among you, as Esau. There is great force in that exhortation—(Heb. xii. 15)—“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” Beware therefore what members you receive. If the world be allowed to mingle with the church, it will soon become corrupt . . . Rome . . . National churches . . . . . And even the best formed churches are liable to impositions, and in danger of imbibing a worldly spirit. (2) The language itself is *military*. Its import is similar to the advice of the apostle to the Corinthians: “Watch you, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” It supposes the army of the Lamb subject to many onsets from opposing forces, which tend to break their ranks and to put them to flight. This is the object of Satan, who knows that, if an army be thrown into disorder, it is defeated. The great onset of that day was persecution. We have of late years been exempted from this in public; but still we may expect family and individual persecution. They that will live godly, and thus oppose the current of public opinion

and public practice, must still expect to suffer persecution. But the chief things against which we are called to make a stand are the temptations of the world. Then let me be a little particular here, and apprise you of your danger in three quarters—in doctrine, discipline, and spirit.

1. *Beware of being moved from the simplicity of Christian doctrine*.—Christian doctrine is the foundation on which the church is built. Christians feel it to be so, and therefore will follow it wherever it is preached. The church has been attacked by infidelity, by gross corruptions, by false candor, and spurious zeal. If we be rooted and grounded in Christian doctrine, we shall not be materially wrong in any thing. The doctrine of the cross involves and will draw after it all evangelical truth, and holy discipline, and holy practice. But, if that be given up, all will go to ruin. For example, If you give up the divinity and atonement of Christ, the life-blood of Christianity is gone, and you become a dead, putrid mass.—Or if, without openly rejecting these truths, you yet, under the specious pretences of candor, liberality, and charity, give up their importance, the effect will be the same. They that hold the truth with a loose hand will soon let it go; and they that receive not the love of the truth will soon be given up to believe a lie.—Or if, under the pretence of being favorable to practical religion, you make light of its leading principles, the effect will be the same. This would be razing the foundation to rear the structure, or tearing up the root to produce the fruit.—Or, if you introduce such notions of the gospel as are at variance with the holy government of God, you in fact introduce another gospel. Such are a kind of religious gluttons, with a large appetite, but no spiritual taste. They may call themselves orthodox, and count all those who differ from them enemies to the gospel, and stun you with their effrontery; but what saith Paul?—“Many walk, of whom I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.”—Or, if you reduce the doctrine of the gospel to mere speculation, you will become conceited and litigious, thinking you know something, while you are deplorably ignorant; and the effect will be the same. O, my brethren, we beseech you by the love of Christ, and by the miseries and mischiefs occasioned by corrupt doctrine in churches, “stand fast in the Lord!” Next to doctrine,

2. *Beware of sinking into a relaxed discipline*.—As an army without good order and discipline cannot stand their ground, so neither can a Christian church. Great forbearance should doubtless be exercised in small matters. There would be endless divisions if a uniformity of opinion were required in minor things. In such things

we must bear and forbear. But we must be firm and resolute in opposition to much of the liberality and candor of the present age. The church at Ephesus is commended because she "could not bear them which were evil." There are not only wicked characters, but evils even in good men, from which the church is to be purged. There is plenty of work to be done by those who are spiritual. Many churches have sunk into ruin by slothfulness, and by worldly policy—retaining opulent sinners from a dread of losing their patronage, or from perverted notions of our Saviour's meaning when he told the Jews that they who were without sin should cast the first stone, or from false tenderness, and sometimes from a wish to be excused in their own turn; thus agreeing together to tempt the Lord. My brethren, stand fast here. Whatever pleas may be urged, have no merely nominal members; but all effective men, whose hearts are with you, and whose prayers are with you. If any habitually absent themselves, try and restore them; but, if they will not return, dissolve the union. If any man set himself against discipline, such a man had better be out of the church than in it. If any man forsake the gospel, restore him if you can; but, if you cannot, where the bond of union is broken the form is not worth preserving, nor ought it to be preserved. The candor of modern times has in it a large portion of indifference to truth and uprightness, and is in direct contradiction to the council given to the seven Asiatic churches.

3 *Beware of sinking into a worldly spirit.* This is a great temptation. In times of outward ease and affluence, many individuals have been carried away, and many churches melted down and lost in worldly conformity. The most dangerous feature of this evil is, that it may prevail in a person, and yet he shall maintain a respectability of character. Let a man fall into gross immoralities, and the world will soon let you know. But "men will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself." And therefore many are entrenched in this evil, and yet fancy themselves good Christians all the while. This is one of the grand onsets of your mighty foe. My brethren, stand fast! . . . We proceed,

II. TO CONSIDER THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN STEADFASTNESS ON THE MIND AND LABORS OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER.

There is something supposed in this as well as the former part of the subject; viz. that the minister be a man of God; otherwise, so long as you stand fast with him, he will be regardless whether or not you "stand fast in the Lord." This is a good rule for trying the spirit. See that in all your steadfastness you have an eye to *the Lord*, and to his cause. Where a minister preaches himself, so long as a people stand fast with him

he will praise them, and they will be sure to be the people of God! But the life and joy of a true minister of Christ will be, that you "stand fast *in the Lord*." If your minister be the friend of God, as I trust he is, he will join with me in charging you to stand fast with *him* no longer, and no farther, than he stands fast "*in the Lord*." If he leave Christ, in doctrine or in practice, it is at your peril to follow him. . . . We may notice the influence of Christian steadfastness on a minister,

1. *In his manner of preaching.* The effect on the mind is very great. If the people are often absent, late, inattentive, or sleepy, it is death to him. But if constant, early, attentive, affectionate, and spiritual, it is life.

2. *In the matter of his preaching.*—Christian steadfastness will enable your minister to state all the genuine effects of the gospel, and to point to you as exemplifications without fear of contradiction. But, except you "stand fast in the Lord," in vain will your minister present to the attention of his hearers, for their admiration, the church as the building of God.—Ps. cxxvii. 1. My brethren, enable your pastor to refer to you as his "epistles," his letters of recommendation, "know and read of all men."

3. *In the success of his ministry.*—This greatly depends on the co-operation of his people, on their knowing one another, and provoking one another to love and good works, and on each one being willing to take some part in active service. This would be convincing to sinners, winning to inquirers, encouraging to your fellow-Christians, and life to your minister. But, if every thing be left to him, his heart will die, and his work will die in his hands.

It is not difficult to account for this, for your sanctification and salvation are his reward. If we have not this, what have we?

After all, my brethren, this is of greater concern to you than to your minister. For, if he be faithful, he shall have his reward, whatever become of you. Though Israel be not gathered, yet will he be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and his God shall be his strength. His loss may be made up, but yours will be irreparable.

LXXIV.—CHURCHES WALKING IN THE TRUTH THE JOY OF MINISTERS.

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."—3 John 4.

THE CONNECTION of pastor and people, in dissenting churches, is altogether voluntary. There are no bonds to bring them together, or to keep them together, but love. The great point, therefore, in this connection, is the maintaining of brotherly love, and to



render each other holy and happy. You wish to render your minister happy, or you can expect no religious happiness yourselves. I have selected the text as pointing out the course of conduct that will accomplish this end. "Walk in the truth."

I take it for granted that your minister can adopt the language of the text. If, indeed, he were a mercenary or an ambitious man, many other things would afford him much greater pleasure. But I trust, in this respect, his heart is one with the apostle's. In pursuing this subject, I shall

I. Offer SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE DUTY ITSELF OF WALKING IN THE TRUTH.—In order to this, we may observe that *the* truth is of a practical nature; other truths may be speculative, but not this. But what is truth? To this question I would reply generally and particularly.

1. *In general*—(1) The truth is a system of *love and goodness*—an overflow of divine blessedness. Then walk in love to the church, and bear good will even to enemies. (2) The truth is a system full of *joy*—"good news, and glad tidings of great joy." Then be cheerful and happy, not morose and gloomy. (3) The truth is a system of *reconciliation*. Then let it be your concern to live peaceably, and to exercise forgiveness. (4) The truth is a system of amazing *condescension*. Then "let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." (5) The truth is a system of *purity*—"a highway of holiness." Then "be ye holy, in all manner of conversation." (6) The truth is a system *full of importance*. Then be you in earnest. "Strive earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints."

2. *More particularly*—(1) Divine truth includes *the existence of God*, as a being of infinite excellence and glory; "holy, just, and good." Then live in the love and fear of God. (2) It includes *the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures*. Then make them, and not interest, or inclination, or fashion, the rule of your faith and practice. (3) It includes *the guilty and lost condition of men as sinners*. Then, in all your dealings with God, approach him in that character—as ill and hell deserving. (4) It includes *the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Christ*. Then remember that you are "not your own," but his. (5) Divine truth teaches us that, if we are saved, it is in consequence of *sovereign and discriminating grace*. It traces our salvation to electing love, and informs us that the great end that Christ had, in laying down his life, was "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And to walk in this truth is to be such people, to be distinguished by zeal and uprightness. Let it never be asked concerning us, "What do ye more than others?" (6) It includes the doctrine of *efficacious*

grace—"My people shall be willing in the day of my power." "The righteous shall hold on his way."—Then to walk in this truth is to *prove* that grace is efficacious by a perseverance in all holy conversation and godliness. (7) It includes the doctrine of *eternal life*, as infinitely outweighing all the pleasures and all the ills of the present life.—"I reckon that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed." Then be dead to the world, and alive to God. Look not at the things that are seen and are temporal; but at those which are unseen and eternal.

My brethren, if the truth thus dwell in you, and operate, you will naturally be attentive to all relative duties: you will love your *pastor*, for the truth's sake which he preaches; and, if you love him, you will make a point of attending his ministry, of contributing to his support, and of consulting his peace and happiness in every possible way.—And, if the truth dwell in you, you will also love *one another*, for the truth's sake. You will watch over one another in the Lord, and follow the things that make for peace.

II. I proceed to notice THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SUCH A COURSE OF CONDUCT IN A PEOPLE, AND THE JOY AND HAPPINESS OF A MINISTER.

1. If he be an upright man, *it will be the great object of his life that the people of his charge should be conformed to Christ*; and it must needs be a matter of joy to see this great end answered. He must needs rejoice over the prosperity of those with whom he travailed in birth, till Christ was formed in them.

2. Such a course of conduct in a people would *greatly assist a minister in his public work*.—It recommends his preaching to the world. It speaks louder than language, when he can say of his people, "Ye are my epistles, known and read of all men." It enables him to be bold in declaring the holy efficacy of truth; and to answer the enemies in the gate, who would reproach the grace of God as tending to licentiousness.

3. *Your sanctification and salvation are his great reward*:—"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?" As to any other reward, you well know that the prospects of dissenting ministers, generally speaking, are any thing but inviting. And, if his pecuniary reward were ten times greater, if he be a Christian, it would not satisfy him. It is not *yours*, but *you*, that must make him happy. He will long to present you before the throne, and to be able to say, "Here, Lord, am I, and the children which thou hast given me."

Young people, your minister longs also for *your* salvation. He looks upon you as

rising plants, destined, he hopes, to occupy the places of those who must soon die. You have no conception how much you can add to his joy.—He can have no greater joy than to see you walking in the truth. Then do not disappoint him. Remember that his joy and your joy are involved in the same course of conduct. Then, while others wander in the mazes of error, be it your concern to walk in the truth.

LXXV.—CHURCHES SHOULD EXHIBIT THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL.

“These things saith he . . . who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”—Rev. ii. 1.

My dear brethren, that part of the solemn exercises of this day which you have allotted to me is to give a word of advice to you, as a church of Christ. I confess it is with pleasure I accept of this service, partly because I see you once more happily united in the choice of a pastor, and partly because I believe you will receive the word of exhortation with candor and attention.

The language of the text, though figurative, is sufficiently explained in the preceding verse: “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” The allusion in the latter figure is doubtless to the candlestick in the Jewish tabernacle, which was made of solid gold.—Exod. xxv. 31—37; Zech. iv. 2. It is described as a candlestick with a bowl, or fountain, from which oil was conveyed, through pipes, to the several lamps which branched out from it.

It is observable that, under the Old-testament dispensation, the church is represented as *one* candlestick, though with divers branches; but under the New as *seven distinct* candlesticks: which may denote the different kinds of church government under the different dispensations. Under the first the church was *national*, and so was represented by *one* candlestick. Under the last the churches were *congregational*: and the seven churches are represented by *seven* distinct candlesticks.

The gospel is “a light shining in a dark place.” . . . To view God as having lighted up a candle to a benighted world is a cheering thought; and to consider yourselves as instrumental in holding it forth—as being that to the gospel which a candlestick is to the candle—is as interesting as the other is cheering.

You may consider yourselves, therefore, brethren, as INSTRUMENTS IN HOLDING FORTH THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL TO A BENIGHTED WORLD. This is the thought I propose to dwell upon, and this only.

The end of your existence, as a church of

Christ, is to “hold forth the word of life.” There are two ways of doing this, to both which I hope you will religiously attend: First, By supporting the preaching of the gospel: and, secondly, by recommending it in your spirit and practice.

I. By SUPPORTING THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL.—I scarcely need inform you that to do this you must support him that preaches it; and now give me your attention while I mention a few different ways in which it is your duty, interest, and honor, to support your pastor:—

1. By a *diligent and constant attendance on his ministry*.—If possible, at all the services of the Sabbath, and in the week. And those who live in neighboring places may support the cause essentially by receiving their minister at their houses, for the purpose of village preaching.

2. By a *free and affectionate carriage towards him*.—Treat him as a friend and a brother. If in his preaching he should occasionally make a mistake, do not magnify it. Do not make him an offender for a word. You are as likely to mistake in judging as he is in advancing a sentiment. If you perceive faults in his deportment, do not whisper them about, but kindly mention them to *him*. Do not give ear to every report concerning him. He has a right to expect this as a brother, but especially as an elder. “Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father:” that is an elder *in office*; and, though your pastor may be your junior in years, he is your elder in office, and as such has an especial claim on your forbearance and protection. Ministers are the objects of envy, and, if every report against them were encouraged, they would be unable to stand their ground.—Under *trials and afflictions*, especially, you should manifest great tenderness towards them. God often afflicts ministers for the good of the people—that they may be able to comfort those who are afflicted: surely then it becomes the people to be very affectionate towards them under their trials. . . . You that are officers in the church should especially be concerned to bear up his hands, as Aaron and Hur stayed the hands of Moses.

3. By *treating him with becoming respect*, and teaching your children and servants to do the same.—This will conduce to your own advantage. So long as he deserves your respect, you ought to show it; and no longer ought he to continue to be your pastor.

4. By *acknowledging his instrumentality in your edification*.—There is great danger of extremes here. Some are always feeding a minister’s vanity by telling him how well he preached at this time and that; and, by the bye, at the same time displaying their own vanity, by wishing him to consider what good judges they are of an ingenious discourse! Others, to avoid this extreme,



will never speak to him in the language of encouragement. Surely there is a way of acknowledging ourselves to have been edified and profited, which does not tend to feed a minister's vanity, but to encourage him in his work.

5. By *giving him a place in your prayers*.—Think much on the greatness of his work. It is to enlighten a benighted world. Pray that he himself may be enlightened. It is to “feed you with knowledge and understanding.” Pray that he himself may be fed. It is to stand between God and men. Pray that he may be kept humble. It is to disturb the carnal security of men. Pray that he himself may be kept awake. It is to break the hard heart. Pray that he may be tender-hearted. It is to rouse the listless soul to action. Pray that he may be alive to himself. It is to trace the windings of the human heart, and to describe the genuine operations of grace in the true believer. Pray that he himself may increase in Christian experience. From what your pastor has this day heard, methinks I hear him sigh and say to himself—“Who is sufficient for these things?” Think of this, my brethren, and you will not forget him in your near addresses to God.

6. By *not hindering, but helping him, in the exercises of his pastoral office*.—Be not of a touchy temper, so as to prevent him from freely giving you advice and caution, and even reproof. It would be to his dishonor to deal in personal reflections in the pulpit; but, out of it, it will be to your dishonor to be offended with plain and close dealing. If you are of such a temper that you cannot bear to be told of your faults, you will hinder him in the discharge of his office. Be at the same time also willing to take your share in the exercise of discipline. In cases of personal offence, it may be well for your pastor in some instances to be excused, lest the parties contract a prejudice against him, and so prevent the success of his ministrations. But, where he cannot be excused, be you always ready to join him, to stand by him, to sanction and encourage him in the execution of the laws of Christ; even though the offenders be among your relatives and acquaintance. Let the deacons in particular stand by him; and never let a church censure have so much as the appearance of being passed by the influence of the minister. The address of the elders of Israel to Ezra, in a most painful case of discipline, will furnish you with a good example: “Arise, for this matter belongeth unto thee: *we also will be with thee*: be of good courage and do it.”

7. By *liberally contributing to the support of his family*.—It is to the honor of protestant dissenters that what they contribute to their ministers they contribute *freely*, without constraint; but it is greater honor still,

if they contribute *liberally*. Consider your minister's salary, not as a gift, but as a debt; and not as done to him, but to Christ. Give liberally, or you will lose the liberal reward. Give it as due to the cause of Christ, or Christ will take no favorable notice of it. A generous and punctilious regard to God's servants, even in their temporal character, was a feature of the great reformation in the days of Nehemiah.—Chap. xii. 43—47.

11. We proceed to observe that the end of your existence, as a church of Christ, is to “hold forth the word of life” by **RECOMMENDING IT IN YOUR SPIRIT AND PRACTICE**.—“Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.” This is a powerful way of preaching the gospel. It speaks louder than words—louder than thunder. Your ministers may assure those who are strangers to religion that religion is a matter of infinite *importance*, and you may say so too; but if they see you light and frothy in your conversation, indifferent and negligent in your duties, do you think they will believe you? No (say they,) they don't believe it themselves! Again, you may tell them what an evil and bitter thing sin is; but, if they see you loose and vain in your deportment, you cannot expect them to believe you. You may dilate upon the vanity of the world; but, if you are covetous and oppressive, what will your servants and workmen say? You may assure the gay and thoughtless that religion is the happiest life; but what can they think, if they see you melancholy in the service of God and cheerful only when engaged in other pursuits? . . . There are various divine truths, besides the above, which you believe and which you wish others to believe. For instance, justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ: then disprove the calumny that this doctrine leads to licentiousness, by letting them see that your personal righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the pharisees. The near relation of Christians to God as their Father: then be of a child-like disposition. The work of the Holy Spirit: then bear its fruits. Efficacious grace: then prove it by your perseverance. . . . There are three things I would here recommend as to your spirit, and then draw to a close.

1. Cultivate a *humble savory* spirit, rather than a censorious or a curious one.—A curious and censorious temper is almost always the mark of a little mind, and has no tendency to recommend the gospel. A humble savory Christian will speak the loudest.

2. Cultivate a *peaceful, sincere, affectionate* spirit to each other.—“Be ye all of one



mind."—All of a piece, like the golden candlestick. If jarring, and strife, and contention, be kindled among you, the scandal will not be confined to you, but will extend to the whole body, yea, to religion itself. It is in a time of peace that a people are prosperous. The heavenly dove "flies from the abode of noise and strife." Let me especially recommend you

3. To cultivate *godly sincerity*.—If there is any one leading idea held forth in your being compared to a golden candlestick, it seems to be this. The candlestick was to be *all gold*—no washing, no deception: yea, of *beaten gold*—that no part should be *hollow*. It was what it appeared to be—the same within as without. Let this be your character. The great art of church-government is to love in sincerity.

My brethren, Christ walketh among you! This should—(1) Impress you with *fear*.—His eye is upon you! (2) Inspire you with *courage*.—What could you do without him? (3) Induce you to *imbibe his spirit*.—A meek and benevolent spirit to all mankind.

#### LXXVI.—ON CULTIVATING A PEACEFUL DISPOSITION.

"Let us, therefore follow after the things which make for peace."—Rom. xiv. 19.

MY dear brethren, in complying with your request to address you, on the present occasion, I shall study plainness of speech. I shall not divert your minds with curious speculations, or irrelevant remarks, but endeavor at least to recommend such things as I conceive your circumstances immediately require; and for this purpose I have selected the text as the foundation of a few observations: "Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace."

There is scarcely any blessing more desirable than peace—true, well-grounded peace. It is so intimately connected with prosperity that the Hebrew word which is commonly translated "peace" signifies also prosperity. "*Peace* be within thy walls, and *prosperity* within thy palaces." The Hebrew word is the same in both instances.

I am requested on the present occasion to give you a word of advice, as respects your deportment to your pastor and to one another. All I shall attempt will be to explain and to enforce the exhortation contained in the text; and, if peace be with you, prosperity will follow as a matter of course.

I. EXPLAIN THE EXHORTATION.—In general, I may observe, we do not wish you to be so fond of peace as to sacrifice *truth* to preserve it. If your pastor desert those grand essential truths which he has this day confessed, you ought to desert him, or rather to desire that he would leave you.—Nor do

we mean that you are to maintain peace at the expense of *righteousness*—a peace consisting in the neglect of discipline, and the passing over of such evils as ought to be exposed and reprov'd. It is the glory of a man to pass over an injury done to himself, but not to be pliable in matters which relate to God's glory. It is lamentable, however, to reflect that in general men are less severe against sin towards God than against an injury done to themselves. The rule of Scripture is this—"First pure, then peaceable." Let this be your rule.

Some of the observations I have to make will more immediately respect your conduct towards your pastor; and others your conduct towards one another.

*First*: Endeavor by all means to preserve a good understanding with *YOUR PASTOR*. His peace of mind is essential for his happiness and your "edification."

1. *Let your stated attendance on his ministry be constant and candid*.—If you are negligent, or late, it will affect his peace of mind. He will think his labors are unacceptable. . . . And if you should discover any mistakes in his preaching consider human frailty. Do not talk of them to others, nor among yourselves, but to him, and that with modesty and tenderness.

2. *Let the vigilance you exercise over his conduct, be characterized by the same tenderness and candor*.—Enemies will watch him with a desire for his halting; but do not you. Be not hasty in taking up or falling in with reports to his disadvantage.

3. *Let your contributions for his support be distinguished, not only by their liberality, but also by the cheerfulness with which they are given*.—Let it be a tribute of love. . . . Do not imagine that your contributions entitle you to scrutinize and dictate in his family arrangements. . . . His being a minister does not destroy his privilege as a man. Ministers also have peculiar feelings in reference to such subjects. If one of you were to intermeddle with the domestic arrangements of another, you would be told to mind your own concerns, and not to interfere with his, seeing he does not come to you for what he has. But your minister would feel a delicacy on this point, and a difficulty, which it should be your study to render unnecessary. And, after all, you have no more right to inspect his concerns than he yours.

4. *Let your exercise of discipline be prompt, and such as shall preserve him from prejudice*.—Always unite with him, that he may not have to endure all the prejudice and odium consequent on strict discipline. In many cases you may relieve him altogether from the painful duty, and thus prevent his ministrations from being rejected. Take as much of this from him as you can, "that the gospel of Christ be not hindered."

These are some of the things an attention to which would greatly contribute to his peace of mind and to your edification.

*Secondly:* Let me exhort you to endeavor, by all means, to preserve peace among ONE ANOTHER.

1. *Be careful to cultivate a spirit of love.*—There is nothing more conducive to peace than this. Provoke not one another to anger, but “to love and good works.” Be examples of love, striving who shall excel in acts of kindness and sympathy. “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

2. *Beware of sin.*—There is nothing more opposed to Christian peace than this. Where this is nourished, peace will be banished; for, though it be private, it will work, and work mischief. It will be a wedge, gradually widening the breach between God and your souls, and between one another.

3. *Beware of a disputatious temper.*—Debates may be productive of good . . . But they too often originate in captiousness and pride. Think of the account of them in God’s word. “A fool’s lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.” —“If any man consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words; whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth. From such withdraw thyself.”

4. *Avoid a spirit of groundless jealousy.*—Godly jealousy is necessary, when we consider what we all are, and by what influences we are surrounded. But an ill opinion of others is the source of much mischief. From this suspicious disposition, words are misconstrued, and actions imputed to wrong motives. If we indulge in this, we shall be unable to believe one another, or to place confidence in the most explicit declarations. “Jealousy is cruel as the grave!” It devours the happiness of those who cherish it. How opposed to true charity! Charity suspecteth no evil, hopeth the best, believeth the most favorable representations . . . In general, a spirit of jealousy would seem to indicate a dishonest heart. Its possessors seem to know themselves to be bad, and therefore think none others can be good. Probably this made Satan so suspicious of Job’s sincerity. Beware lest you imitate him!—and lest your suspicions should originate in the same cause!

5. *Beware of a spirit of envy.*—The members of a church are like the stars. One excelleth another. Then beware of envy. Saul envied David for his superiority, when David “behaved himself wisely.” Some excel in gifts, and graces, and consequently

obtain a greater degree of esteem. Beware of envy. Some exceed others in worldly property, and consequently, though not always deservedly, receive greater respect. But beware of envy. Do not imagine that religion cancels the obligation to treat men according to their rank and station in society. Let not envy lead you to think much of every instance of respect shown to a superior, and to reflect, If I had been rich, he would have visited me! Certainly, a minister should visit all his flock; but there may be reasons, apart from outward circumstances, why one shall be visited more than another. “Charity envieth not.”

6. *Do not intermeddle with each other’s temporal affairs.*—What I just now said respecting your conduct towards your pastor, I would repeat concerning your conduct towards one another. Different people have different ways of managing their domestic affairs; and, if your brethren do but act so as to be honorable in the world, what right have you to interfere? If indeed their deportment be inconsistent with their character as professed Christians, and in any sense involve the honor of God: if, for example, they be indolent, and disgrace the cause—or extravagant, and therefore become unable to pay their just debts—then, indeed, it will be right to interfere; but even then it is neither friendly nor wise to make their faults the topic of common conversation.

7. *Guard against a touchy temper.*—Charity is not soon angry.

“For every trifle scorn to take offence;  
It either shows great pride or little sense.”

8. *Repeat no grievances, especially when acknowledged.*—“He that repeateth a matter, separateth very friends.”

9. *Strive to heal differences.*—It is a great honor to be a peace-maker. True, it is often very difficult; for “a brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.” But by how much the more difficulty there is by so much the more honor will there be. Do not abandon the attempt for a few hard sayings. Those who interfere in an affray commonly receive a few blows from both sides. But do not be discouraged. Pray, and try again. And let the saying of our Lord, “Blessed are the peace-makers, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” weigh more with you than a little temporary difficulty and discouragement.

10. *Encourage no tale-bearers.*—Persons that make it their business, and feel it their delight, to go about telling secrets to the disadvantage of their neighbors, deserve the deepest marks of censure. Are you at variance with a brother? Mark the man who by his insinuations and inuendoes would make the breach wider, and shun him. There are cases, indeed, in which, in our



own vindication, we are compelled to speak to the disadvantage of others; but to blacken the character of another unnecessarily, and intentionally to widen a breach existing between friends or neighbors, is infernal! If blessed are the peace-makers, cursed are these peace-breakers, and peace-preventers! One cannot always shut one's doors against such characters, but we can and ought to shut our ears against them; and, if we do this, we shall deprive them of their excitement and their highest gratification. "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out; so where there is no tale-bearer the strife ceaseth." . . . And, if you would not encourage tale-bearing in others, be sure you are not guilty of it yourselves. If you hear one speak ill of another, do n't go and tell him, unless indeed it affect his moral character and the cause of religion; and never assist in propagating evil reports.

11. *Be ready to forgive.*—Without this heavenly temper we cannot expect to live long in peace. There is a very mistaken notion of honor existing among men, as if it lay in not yielding, but in resenting an injury; whereas it is very plain that true honor consists in the very opposite. "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." Our own interest should lead us to this; for in some things we shall need the forgiveness of our brethren; and, what is of greater consequence still, we all need the divine forgiveness. But Christ assured his disciples, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."

These, my brethren, are some of the dispositions the cultivation of which will make for peace. Some of them may appear to you little; but great rivers flow from little springs. "How great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

These things you are to "follow after." Sometimes you may be inclined to despair of obtaining peace by any means. But be not discouraged—"follow after."

II. Having thus explained the exhortation of the apostle, I shall endeavor to ENFORCE IT.

1. Consider *how invaluable a blessing peace is.*—It is closely connected with *church prosperity*; for the heavenly dove flies from the abodes of noise and strife. And to *soul prosperity*.—"Live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." See the blessedness of peace in those churches which have been careful to cultivate it . . . and see the wretched state of those where peace has been infringed upon . . . "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down," &c.

2. Consider *what it cost our Lord Jesus Christ to obtain it.*—Peace between us and

God—between us and all holy intelligences—was brought about by Christ; and all our peace with one another is the price of his blood. "It pleased the Father, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself."

3. Consider *its influence on spectators.*—Friends . . . enemies . . . other churches . . . young converts!

#### LXXVII.—CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ARE GOD'S BUILDING.

"Ye are God's building."—1 Cor. iii. 9.

Who can help admiring the disinterested spirit of the apostle Paul? The Corinthians were divided into parties, at the head of each of which was some great man. Paul himself was one. But he disdained such a distinction. "Who is Paul? or who is Apollos?" "Ye are God's building." The emphasis of the text is here. "Ye are God's husbandry, God's building;" not ours. Then be not called after our name, but God's. We are rather yours, than you ours.—Ver. 22.

The building here alluded to is that of the temple.—Ver. 16, 17. The apostle expatiates upon the same idea in Eph. ii. 20—22, which may be considered as the key to the text, and of which, in discoursing from it, I shall avail myself. "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ—himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together, for a habitation of God, through the Spirit."

This description will apply either to the Christian church at large, or to a particular church. There are four things observable in the apostle's account of building, each of which is applicable to a Christian church: it must be reared on a good foundation—it must be fitly framed together—it is supposed at present to be incomplete, but in a growing state—and the end for which it is built is, that it may be a habitation of God, through the Spirit.

I. IT MUST BE REARED ON A GOOD FOUNDATION.—On Jesus Christ, himself being the chief corner-stone. This is the foundation that God hath laid in Zion.—Isa. xxviii. 16. And all after builders must follow his example. The Jews refused it. They went on to build; but they were no longer "God's building."—The doctrine of Christ crucified was the foundation of the apostolic churches, and continued so for ages. When this doctrine was deserted and corrupted, men might call themselves the church, and greatly increase; but they ceased to be "God's building."—This was the foundation laid at the Reformation; and while these continued,



though accompanied with "wood, hay, and stubble," God blessed the churches. But, when these reformed churches went off into a mere heathen morality, God forsook them. They were no longer "*God's building*."—Look at particular churches. It is this doctrine that God blesses for conversion. The building will not rise without it. Where Christ is left out as the foundation, he will say, as he did to the Jews of old, "As for your house, it is left unto you desolate." I trust, my brethren, your minister will lay this foundation, and exalt the Saviour, and that you will encourage him in so doing.

II. IT MUST BE FITLY FRAMED TOGETHER. —A *building* is not a mere assemblage of a heterogeneous mass of materials. This were a heap, rather than a building. There are three things necessary to a building's being fitly framed:—

1. The materials must be *prepared*, before they are laid in it. Such were the orders concerning Solomon's temple. There was to be no noise there.—1 Kings vi. 7. You are few in number, my brethren; but do not be so anxious after increase as to lay improper materials. What if you could obtain hundreds of members, and they men of property; yet if they were haughty, self-willed, and worldly, how could they fit in with the humble, meet, and heavenly-minded?

2. That they be formed *by the same rule*. It is not enough that the roughness and protuberances of their characters should be smoothed down and polished off; they must be made to fit the foundation and each other: if the members of churches fit in with the foundation—with Jesus Christ, in his gospel, government, and spirit—there would be little danger of disunion among themselves. The great means of promoting religious union among Christians is, not by dispensing with disagreeable truth, but by aspiring to a conformity to Christ. Religious uniformity is like perfection in other things: we are not to expect it in this world: still it is our duty to aspire after it. There is no union any further than we agree; and no Christian union any further than that in which we agree is the mind of Christ. It will be of no account to be of one mind, unless that mind be the mind of Christ. The way therefore to promote Christian union is for each to think more, to read more, to pray more, to converse more, on the principles of the doctrine and example of Christ. God builds by rule. He conforms to the image of his Son: and so must you. The house must not be built according to your fancy, or your inclination, but according to the rules contained in the word of God. "See thou make all things according to the pattern."—"Keep the ordinances as they are delivered unto you." A neglect of holy discipline is the bane of the present age; but you must ex-

ercise a holy vigilance here, or you will not be *God's building*.

3. That each shall occupy *his proper place* in the building. Some are formed to teach; others to be taught: some to lead; others to be led: some to counsel; others to execute. See that each is in his place, the situation for which he is formed, or you will not be *God's building*.

III. It is supposed at present to be *INCOMPLETE, BUT ADVANCING*:—"It *groweth* unto a holy temple." This is applicable to the church at large: it resembles Solomon's temple—widest at the upper end.—1 Kings vi. 6. The church has been widening from the commencement, and will still extend. And may we not hope that there will be some resemblance to this in particular churches? If you would answer to the spiritual model—be chaste, not admitting any rivals in your affections; zealous, spiritual, and faithful—and you will be *God's building*, and you must increase.

IV. THE END FOR WHICH THE BUILDING IS REARED,—"*For a habitation of God*." When men build a house, it is that it may be inhabited. So it is with God. If you are *God's building*, it is that you may be the habitation of God. This a vast blessing. "Will God in very deed dwell with men?" Yes. Christ "gave gifts to men, that the Lord might dwell among them." He hath given you a pastor—that he might dwell among you. . . . .

#### LXXVIII.—THE SATISFACTION DERIVED FROM A CONSCIOUSNESS THAT OUR RELIGIOUS EXERCISES HAVE BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY GODLY SIMPLICITY.

"Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."—2 Cor. i. 12.

SUCH was the declaration of Paul, in behalf of himself and his brethren; and a great thing it was to be able to say, especially when accused of being crafty and designing men. That they were so accused is evident from the twelfth chapter; and the declaration of the text nobly repels all such insinuations.

I do not mean to assume this language in behalf of myself or my brethren; but would rather apply it in a way of self-examination. By "*fleshy wisdom*" is meant the wisdom of this world, worldly policy, that wisdom which has carnal and worldly ends in view or is aimed and exercised for our own interest, honor, or gratification. By "*the grace of God*" is meant that holy wisdom which is from above, or that line of conduct which the

grace of God teaches—"simplicity and godly sincerity."

1. Let us state A FEW CASES IN WHICH THESE OPPOSITE PRINCIPLES WILL, ONE OR THE OTHER OF THEM, INFLUENCE OUR CONDUCT.—It may be too much to say that all men are governed by the one or the other. Some have neither. Their way is fleshly; but it is fleshly *folly*. The principles of the text, however, are very common. Particularly:—

1. In *preaching the gospel*.—We are mostly governed by one or other, as ministers.

They give a character to *the matter of our preaching*.—If we are influenced by the former, our preaching will partake of the wisdom of this world. It will savor of the flesh. There will be little or no spirituality in it. It will favor some other gospel. But, if we are influenced by the latter, our preaching will savor of Christ and heaven. It will be wisdom, but not the wisdom of this world. The doctrine we preach will not be selected to please the tastes of our hearers, but drawn from the holy Scriptures. We shall declare "the whole counsel of God."

These principles will also give a character to *the manner of our preaching*.—If we are influenced by the former, our preaching will be merely an art, with "enticing words of man's wisdom." But, if by the latter, it will be characterized by simplicity; not thinking of ourselves, but of Christ and the salvation of souls.

Finally, These principles will give a character to our *motives*.—If we are influenced by the former, we shall study to be approved of men, and to have it understood that we are men of consequence. "Giving it out that he was some great one." But, if by the latter we shall seek, "not yours, but you." The love of God, of Christ, and of souls, will constrain us.

2. In *reading the Scriptures, and hearing the gospel*.—Here, also, we are for the most part governed by one or the other of these principles.

There is the spirit of the world, and the spirit which is of God. It is of great consequence with which spirit we take up our *Bibles*.—If with the former, it will be no wonder that we err, and stumble, and perish. "A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not." Paine read the Scriptures to pervert and vilify them. We may be acquainted with the original languages, and be able to criticise texts; and yet not discern the mind of the Spirit. "Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned." This will be especially the result, if we form a system of our own, and go to the Scriptures to have it confirmed, instead of deriving it in the first place from the unerring oracles.—But, if we are influenced by the opposite principle, we shall pray, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." And,

coming with the simplicity of children, we shall have the mind of the Spirit revealed to us.—Matt. xi. 25.

So in *hearing the gospel*.—If we hear merely as critics on the preacher, full of conceit and fleshly wisdom, whatever the preaching may be, it will do us no good.—But if we hear as Christians, in simplicity and godly sincerity, we shall hear the word to profit. Take heed how ye hear, lest by-and-by you become regardless of what you hear, or even prefer the flesh-pleasing doctrines which lead to perdition.—2 Pet. ii. 1—3.

3. In *church-fellowship and discipline* we are governed by one or other of these principles. Particularly,

In *receiving members*.—If we are governed by the former, we shall catch at the rich, and covet respectability, and be more ambitious to increase in number than in conformity to Christ.—But, if by the latter, we shall rejoice in the accession of the meanest Christian, and of Christian graces, though they shine in those whom the world despise.

In *choosing officers*.—If we are governed by the former principle, ministers will be chosen on account of their popularity, and deacons on account of their opulence. But, if by the latter, we shall fix our eye steadfastly on the qualifications required in Scripture; and, if we cannot find men who attain to the full standard, we shall be so much the more concerned to choose those who approach the nearest.

In *exercising discipline*.—If we be governed by the former, we shall be concerned to be great and respectable. If by the latter, we shall strive after conformity to Christ. If by the former, our discipline will be partial, screening our favorites. But, if by the latter, we shall be no respecter of persons, but act with impartial fidelity, with a single eye to the glory of God.

4. In *deciding in our various worldly concerns* we are commonly influenced by one or other of these principles.—If by the former, the question will be, in all cases,—Is it wise? Is it *politic*? What will people say? But, if by the latter, the question will be,—Is it *right*? The former is the spirit of all worldly men, and all mere nominal Christians: the latter, of the genuine Christian: If we are governed by the former, in forming our various *concerns*, the question will be,—Will this promote my *worldly* interests? But, if by the latter, the question will be,—Will it contribute to the prosperity of my *soul*? My friends, think of the fruits of Lot's well-watered plain: and shudder at the thought of choosing situations for yourselves or your children, without a supreme regard to the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

II. Observe THE SATISFACTION ARISING FROM BEING ABLE TO ADOPT THE LAN-



GUAGE OF THE APOSTLE.—He speaks of his consciousness of simplicity and godly sincerity, as a matter of rejoicing, yea, of singular rejoicing. Wherefore?—

1. *The testimony of a good conscience is sometimes the only testimony we have in our favor.*—It was nearly so with the apostle, at Corinth. The world may be offended, and bad men may influence even good men to join a wrong cause. This was the case at Corinth. Thus Judas led away the disciples with respect to Mary. But, if we can say as Paul in the text, this will bear us up under all the misapprehensions and misconstructions of the world, or even of our brethren. Thus Enoch was supported. Doubtless he had to endure the world's scorn; but "he had this testimony—that he pleased God."

2. *The testimony of such a conscience is an echo to the voice of God.*—"If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God."

3. *The testimony of a good conscience will support us in death.*—But, if we have not this, how shall we bear to die, and to appear in judgment?

My friends, if your minister can adopt the language of Paul, and feel a consciousness of being governed by the best of principles, still this will avail for himself only: it will not avail you. He may be pure of your blood; but are you? If you perish, and your minister be guiltless, where will the guilt lie then?

#### LXXIX.—THE REWARD OF A FAITHFUL MINISTER.

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming?"—1 Thess. ii. 19.

I do not know any part of the Scriptures in which we have a more lovely picture of a true pastor and true Christians than is contained in this chapter. Though the picture is drawn by the apostle himself, he could appeal to God for its correctness. It exhibits him and his brethren as bold in proclaiming the gospel; sincere in their doctrine; acting as in the sight of God; faithful to their trust, and to the souls of their hearers; unostentatious; gentle and affectionate; disinterested; and consistent in their deportment, not only among unbelievers, where even hypocrites will preserve appearances, but also among the people of their charge. Let ministers look at this picture, and at themselves.

We have also the character of primitive Christians. They received the gospel, not merely as the message of the apostles, but as "the word of God;" it wrought in them effectually; and they were the determined

followers of the very earliest Christians, though at the risk of persecution, and even of death. The apostle sums up all by a solemn appeal to them and to God, that, if he and his brethren had any reward in their labors, it consisted in their salvation: "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye?"

The import of this passage is that *the salvation of his hearers is the reward of a faithful minister.* In discoursing on this interesting subject, I shall endeavor to explain it—account for it—and apply it.

I. I shall endeavor to EXPLAIN THE OBJECT WHICH EVERY FAITHFUL MINISTER ACCOUNTS HIS HOPE AND JOY AND CROWN. It is *you*, even *you*, in the presence of the Lord. There are two things designed by the apostle in this language:—

1. *To disclaim all sordid and mercenary ends on his part.*—It is not yours, but *you*." Of course we have a hope, and expect a reward of some kind. They that run must have a prize, a joy, a crown: but it is not any thing carnal, or worldly. Men may, indeed, engage in the ministry, with the desire of obtaining lucre, or fame; or from the love of power, or the love of ease: but not so Paul; not so any true minister of Jesus Christ. As to Paul, he had voluntarily resigned every thing of this kind, for the sake of the gospel, as those to whom he wrote very well knew. The language, therefore, peculiarly became his lips. And no true minister of Christ, though supported by the people (and it is fit that those who devote their lives to an object should be supported in it,) will enter on the work for the sake of this; nor will he be satisfied with this alone, however liberal.

2. Another object of the apostle was to *show the necessity of true religion, and a perseverance in it, in them.*—There are some who are our hope, who are not our joy; and others who are our hope, and joy too, for a time, who will never be our crown; who hold not out to the end, and therefore, will never be our rejoicing in the presence of the Lord, at his coming. Some are under serious impressions, and excite a hope and joy, like that felt at the sight of blossoms in the spring, which yet are afterwards blighted. There are some that have even made a public profession, and yet, like the thorny and stony-ground hearers, produce no fruit. The object desired, therefore, is not only your setting out, but your holding on, walking in the truth, and holding fast your profession to the end. Then, indeed, you will not only be our hope, and joy, but our crown of rejoicing.

II. I shall endeavor to ACCOUNT FOR ITS BEING SO:—

1. If we are faithful ministers, *we shall be of the same mind as Christ.*—And this was the reward which satisfied him.—Isa. liii.



11. He endured all things for the elect's sake; and so shall we, if we be of his mind.

2. If we are faithful ministers, *our love to Christ will make us rejoice in every thing that honors him.*—The highest honor to which John the Baptist aspired was to be the Bridegroom's friend; and to see him increase was enough, though at the expense of his own popularity. This fulfilled his joy! What labor and pains will men take at an election to procure votes for the candidate to whom they are attached! And how grateful to him to see his friends, each on the day of election, bring with him a goodly number of votes! Much more we, if we be faithful ministers, shall, in the day of the Lord, be admired in all them that believe, and that love his appearing.

3. If we be true ministers of Christ, *we shall love the souls of men as he loved them.*—And this accounts also for the language of the text. All of you have souls of infinite value. Some of you are the children of those whom we have loved, and with whom we have taken sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company, but who are now no more. And what is our hope now? Why, that *you* may follow in their steps. Is it strange that we should long to present you with them before the throne? Some of you have professed to be the spiritual children of your pastor; and you are his hope, and his joy too. See to it that you form a part of his crown.

III. Allow me to APPLY THE SUBJECT.—You may think this subject mostly concerns ministers; but be assured you have a deep interest in it.

*If it be our duty to obtain volunteers for Christ, it is your duty to give us an answer.*—God is saying, by us, "Choose ye, this day, whom ye will serve."

2. *If your salvation be our reward, still is it no concern of yours that we should be rewarded?* You would scorn to deprive your servants of their wages, or your minister of his salary; but this is not enough; this will not satisfy us; you must not put us off with your money; for we seek not yours, but you. The salvation of your souls is the only reward which will satisfy a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

3. *The personal interest you have in this matter is far greater than ours.*—If we be faithful, our loss will be made up in the approbation of God. Though you be not gathered, we shall not go unrewarded. But *your* loss will be irreparable.

4. *You must be presented in some way,*—if not as our joy and crown, as rebellious children, to be dealt with as such. We shall have to say of you, These our hearers were stubborn and rebellious, and would not listen to our message of love. They would not come to Christ that they might have life.

LXXX.—MINISTERS AND CHURCHES EXHORTED TO SERVE ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE.

[Sketch of an Ordination Sermon addressed to both Pastor and People.]\*

"By love serve one another."—Gal. v. 13.

My brethren, having been requested on this solemn occasion to address a word of exhortation to both pastor and people, I have chosen a subject equally suitable for both.

I. I shall begin by addressing a few words to you, my brother, the PASTOR of this church.

The text expresses your duty—to "serve" the church; and the manner in which it is to be performed—"in love." Do not imagine there is any thing degrading in the idea of being a servant. Though you are to serve them, and they you, yet neither of you are to be masters of the other. You are fellow-servants, and have each "one Master, even Christ." It is a service, not of constraint, but of love; like that which your Lord and Master himself yielded. "I have been among you as one that serveth." Let the common name of *minister* remind you of this . . . The authority you exercise must be invariably directed to the spiritual advantage of the church. You are invested with authority; you are to have the rule over them, in the Lord; but not as a "lord over God's heritage." Nor are you invested with this authority to confer dignity on you, or that you may value yourself as a person of consequence; but for the good of the church. This is the end of office: "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." . . . But, more particularly,

1. You must serve the church of God, *by feeding them with the word of life.*—This is the leading duty of a minister. "Preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season." This will be serving them, as it will promote their best interests. For this end you must be familiar with the word, "Meditate on these things: give thyself wholly to them." It is considered a fine thing with some to have a black coat, to loiter about all the week, and to stand up to be looked at and admired on the Sabbath. But truly this is not to serve the church of God. Be concerned to be "a scribe well instructed in the things of the kingdom." Be concerned to have *treasures*, and to bring them forth. I would advise that one service of every Sabbath consist of a well-digested exposition, that your hearers may become Bible

\*As were also the two which follow it.

Christians. Be concerned to understand and to teach the doctrine of Christianity—"the truth as it is in Jesus." Be careful, particularly, to be conversant with the doctrine of the cross; if you be right there, you can scarcely be essentially wrong any where. Cut off the reproach of *dry* doctrine, by preaching it feelingly; and of its being inimical to good works, by preaching it practically.

*And do all this in love.*—Your love must be, first, to *Christ*, or you will not be fitted for your work of feeding the church.—John xxi. 15—17. Also to the *truth*, or your services will be mischievous, rather than useful. And to *Christians*, for Christ's sake.—Acts xx. 28. And to the souls of *men*, as fellow-men and fellow-sinners. If love be wanting, preaching will be in vain.

2. You must feed the church of God, *by watching over them.*—"Be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." Watch over them, not as a vulture, to destroy them; but as a good shepherd, who careth for the sheep. If you are compelled to reprove, beware that your reproof be conveyed, not in ill temper, but in love; not to gratify self, but to do your brother good.

3. You must serve them, *by leading them on, in all spiritual and holy exercises.*—Lead them by your example. "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Visit them. You have as much need to pray with them and for them in private, as to preach to them in public. And you must do all this in love. An affectionate example and deportment will draw them on.

II. Let me now address myself to THE CHURCH.—You also must serve your pastor, as well as he you, and this in love. You must seek his good, as well as he yours.

1. Be assiduous to make him *happy in his mind.*—If he discharge his work with grief, it will be unprofitable for you. If you be touchy, and soon offended, or cold and distant, it will destroy his happiness. Do not be content with a merely negative respect. Be free, open, kind, inviting to friendly and Christian intercourse and conversation; and be early and constant in your attendance on public worship.

2. Be concerned to render him *as easy in his circumstances as possible.*—If he serve you in spiritual things, is it such a great thing that he partake of your carnal things? I hope he does not covet a haughty independence of you; but neither let him sink into an abject dependence. Worship not with—offer not to God—that which costs you nothing. It is the glory of dissenting churches, if they voluntarily make sacrifices for the maintenance of the true religion among them.

3. *If there be any thing apparently wrong in*

*his conduct or his preaching, do not spread it abroad, but tell him of it alone.*—You may have mistaken him, and this will give him an opportunity of explaining, or, if he be in fault, this will give him an opportunity of correcting himself.

And do everything *in love.*—Love will dictate what is proper on most occasions. It will do more than a thousand rules; and all rules without it are nothing.

To the deacons let me say, Be you helpers in everything—whether agreeable or disagreeable.

To the congregation generally, I would say, You also have an interest in the proceedings of this day. My brother considers you as part of his charge. His appointment by the church is with your approbation. He will seek the good of you and your children. Then teach them to respect and love him. . . . .

#### LXXXI.—MINISTERIAL AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNION.

"That I may be comforted with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me."—Rom. i. 12.

THE communion of saints was thought of such importance among the early Christians as to become an article of faith; and, where the spirit of it is preserved, it is a charming part of the Christian religion. The text gives us a brief description of it. Paul longed to see the Roman Christians, of whom as yet he had only heard, that he might impart to them some spiritual gift, that they might be established. His faith would comfort them, and theirs would comfort him.

We are here naturally led to inquire what there is in the faith of a minister to comfort Christians—what there is in the faith of private Christians to comfort ministers—and what there is in the common faith of both to comfort each other.

Let us then inquire,

I. WHAT THERE IS IN THE FAITH OF MINISTERS TO COMFORT PRIVATE CHRISTIANS.—For, when Christians see their ministers, they naturally expect to hear something concerning the faith; and Paul seems to take this for granted. There are three things in the faith of a minister calculated to comfort private Christians:—

1. Its being *scriptural and decided.*—If anti-scriptural, we might comfort the sinner and the hypocrite: if speculative, we might amuse a few ingenious minds; but we could not comfort the Christian. Nor must we be undecided. To see a minister who is decided, on scriptural grounds, is to see a guide who is well acquainted with his map, and who knows his way; or a pilot well acquainted with his chart. The reverse

will be stumbling and most distressing. If a guide now tells you this is the way, then that, and is at a loss which to choose, it must occasion fear and distrust, instead of comfort.

2. Its being considered, *not for themselves only, but as a public trust to be imparted*.—Paul considered himself a debtor to others; an almoner, possessing the unsearchable riches; “as poor, yet making many rich.” In fact, the very afflictions of ministers, as well as their consolations, are sent to produce this effect.—2 Cor. i. 6.

3. Its being a *living principle in their own souls*.—1 Tim. iv. 6. Without this, whatever be our attainments, our ministrations will not ordinarily edify Christians. We must preach from the heart, or we shall seldom, if ever, produce any good in the hearts of our hearers.

II. WHAT THERE IS IN THE FAITH OF PRIVATE CHRISTIANS TO COMFORT MINISTERS.—Ministers must receive, as well as impart; and should be concerned to do so, in every visit, and in all their intercourse with their people. Now the faith of Christians contributes to the comfort of ministers, in its being, its growth, and its fruits.

1. It furnishes them with *sentiments and feelings in their preaching which nothing else will*.—A believing, spiritual, attentive, affectionate audience, whose souls glisten in their eyes, will produce thoughts in the pulpit which would never have occurred in the study. On the other hand, if a minister perceive in his hearers, and especially in those of whom he should expect better things, unbelief, worldliness, carelessness, or conceit, he is like a ship locked up near the pole.

2. *In the faith of Christians, ministers see the travail of the Redeemer's soul*.—And this, if they love him, will be a high source of comfort to them.

3. *In the faith of Christians, ministers often see the fruit of their own labors*.—They often pray for their people, of whom they “travail in birth” until Christ be formed in them. Such fruit, therefore, of their anxiety and their labor, is very encouraging.

4. *The faith of Christians is a pledge of their future salvation*.—A Christian minister must love his people, and in proportion as he loves them he will feel concerned for their eternal happiness. Well, here is a pledge of it, and this cheers him. Your minister looks around, and feels tenderly attached to you as friends, and as the children of dear friends now with God; and sometimes he enters into the spirit of the apostle, who wished himself accursed, after the manner of Christ, for his brethren, his kinsmen after the flesh. Your faith therefore, as a pledge of eternal glory, must needs comfort him.

III. WHAT THERE IS, IN THE COMMON FAITH OF BOTH, TO COMFORT EACH OTHER.

—Common blessings are best. Let us not desire great things—the wreath of honor, or a crown. Amidst all this, the sweet singer of Israel desired and sought after “one thing;” and that was a common blessing.—Psa. xxvii. 4. Extensive attainments, even mental acquisitions, are comparatively poor. An apostle would sacrifice them all for a common blessing—the knowledge of Christ—Phil. iii. 8. These blessings are common to the meanest Christian.

1. *Its unity*.—Those who have never seen each other, men of different nations and manners, when they come to converse on Christ and the gospel, presently feel their faith to be one, and love one another; and this is a source of great delight. As a Hindoo said of some of the missionaries, newly arrived, “They cannot talk our language; but we see all our hearts are one: we are united in the death of Christ.”

2. *The interesting nature of the truths believed*.—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”—“God manifest in the flesh.”—“There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”—“He that believeth on him is not condemned.” Christ is come; atonement is made; the way of access to God is opened; our sins are remembered no more; we are no more strangers and foreigners; we live in hope of eternal life. These are things which, if we be in ignorance and unbelief, will have no effect upon us; or if we be in doubt and darkness, like the two disciples going to Emmaus, we shall commune and be sad; but, if our faith be in lively exercise, our hearts will burn within us, and time will glide sweetly on.

LEARN, from the whole,

1. *The necessity of faith to Christian communion*.—Unbelievers, or, which is the same thing, merely nominal Christians, are non-conductors. Neither ministers, nor others, can receive or impart without faith.

2. *The necessity of the communication of faith to profitable visits*.—We may not always be able to maintain Christian conversation. We are men, and must sometimes converse as such. But *Christian* visits will be of this kind. It is delightful when they are of this description; and, to promote this, we should avoid large, promiscuous parties.

3. What will *heavenly* communion be!—No darkness—no discord—no carnality—no pride—no imperfection!

LXXXII.—MINISTERS AND CHRISTIANS EXHORTED TO HOLD FAST THE GOSPEL.

“Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.”—2 Tim. i. 13.

THIS epistle was written on the near approach of death, and is very solemn. It is



addressed to Timothy, and as such is doubtless especially applicable to ministers; but it is by no means exclusively so; since all Scripture is given for the sake of the church.

1. Let us notice THE EXHORTATION ITSELF.—“Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me,” &c. The gospel is here denominated “sound words,”—and “a form of sound words:” and requires to be “held fast in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus.”

1. The gospel is called “*sound words*.”—Much has been said of sound words, and every one reckons his own creed to be such. I would only observe that sound words must be *true words*, and words suited to convey the truth. All other systems are hollow. We must be more concerned about their being true, than fine or harmonious. We must beware of specious words, which are often vehicles of error. The words which the Holy Ghost teaches are the standard of soundness. So much regard as we pay to them, so far are we orthodox, and no farther.

2. The gospel is called “*a form of sound words*.”—The word signifies a brief sketch, or first draft; such as artists sketch when they begin a painting. Paul intimates that he had given Timothy such a sketch—a compendium, or epitome. Whether he had given him any thing of the kind, different from what we have, we know not; but what he wrote to him and others contains such a form, expressed in different ways. As—“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

—“Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”—We have one of the forms in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xv. 1—4. And a still more perfect one in his epistle to the Romans, chap. iii. 24, 25.

The term implies two things:—(1) That what the apostle taught was a *sure guide*. We are quite safe here. Where will men go, if the apostles’ doctrines are treated as mere opinions? These are the genuine criterion of orthodoxy. Keep within these lines, and you are safe. They are able, through faith, to make you “wise unto salvation.” By these, the man of God may be “perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”—(2) It implies that what he taught, though it contained the outline of truth, and as much as was necessary for the present, yet is *not the whole*. It was only an outline, only a sketch, for Timothy and all other Christians to fill up, and to meditate upon. Paul did not know all. Angels do not. It will require eternity to reveal all. There is plenty of room for meditation;

only let us keep within the lines which the apostles have sketched out.

3. The gospel, as a form of sound words, must be “*held fast*.”—This supposes that we do, at least, hold the faith. Alas! many do not. Some have hold of a wholly false doctrine, and hold it fast too. Some are Gallios, perfectly indifferent, and hold fast the world, or any thing rather than the gospel. Nay more, it is to be feared that many who talk and profess much about doctrines, and Scripture doctrines too, yet do not hold them fast. We must *find* the gospel, as Philip and Nathanael found the Messiah, and then we shall hold it fast. They sought out Jesus, and compared his character and pretensions with the descriptions of the Messiah in the prophecies; and were convinced from examination. If, instead of being convinced of the truth from actual personal research, we receive the notions of others, without examination, upon *their* representations, even if these notions should be correct, we shall be in danger of not holding them fast. Many will try to wrest the truth from us. Persecutions—temptations and false doctrines sanctioned by fashion and the appearance of learning, have occasionally made sad havoc with the truth, and forced many a one who held it loosely, or any a one who received his faith at second-hand, instead of drawing directly from the fountain, and who therefore never fully comprehended it, to give up.

4. The gospel must be held “*in faith and love*.”—There is such a thing as a bigoted and blind attachment to doctrines, which will be of no use, even if they be true. The word does not profit, unless it be “mixed with faith.”—And there is such a thing as a sound creed, without charity, or love to God and men. But the gospel must be held in faith and love. The union of genuine orthodoxy and affection constitutes true religion.

II. LET US ENFORCE THE EXHORTATION.—

1. Consider the *inestimable value* of these sound words.—They are the words of eternal life. There is nothing in this world equal to them. They are the pearl of great price.

2. They have been held in such esteem that *many of the best of men have sacrificed their lives* rather than part with them.—And shall we cowardly desert the truth, or shun the avowal of it, merely lest the indifferent should call us bigots, or infidels, or enthusiasts? There is not a more dangerous foe to the truth than *indifference*. Then “*hold fast*” the form of sound words.

3. They are the *only principles that can meet the exigences of perishing sinners*.—All besides, however plausible, will flatter, and allure, and deceive, and destroy the soul.

4. They are the *only source of a holy life*.—People foolishly discard doctrines under

the pretence of exalting practice; but holy doctrine is the source and spring of a holy life. What has the church become where these doctrines are given up? And what have those dissenters become who have embraced another gospel? Mere men of the world.

5. They are the *only source of real happiness*.—They inspire a peace and joy in health, a cheerful acquiescence under affliction, and a hope in death and the prospect of futurity, to which all are strangers who are building on any other foundation than that laid in the Scriptures by the apostles, even Jesus Christ—himself being the chief corner stone,

LXXXIII.—NATURE OF TRUE CONVERSION  
AND EXTENT OF IT UNDER THE REIGN OF  
THE MESSIAH.

[*Sketch of a Sermon preached in the Circus,  
Edinburgh, Oct. 13, 1799.*]

“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him.”—Ps. xxii. 27.

It is worthy of notice that the Spirit of inspiration in the prophets is called the *Spirit of Christ* (1 Pet. i. 10,) because Christ was so frequently the theme of it. The plaintive part of this psalm is applied more than once to him. The explanation (ver. 1,) “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?” he adopted as his own. The revilings in ver. 8 were used, inadvertently no doubt, by his enemies: “He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighteth in him.” The kind of death which he endured was expressly pointed out in ver. 16. “They pierced my hands and my feet.” Even the circumstance of their casting lots for his garments is noticed in ver. 18. “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”

And, as the sufferings of Christ were the theme of Old-testament prophecy, so also was the glory that followed them. His resurrection and exaltation at the right hand of God, with the glorious success of his gospel in the world, are hinted at from ver. 19 to the end of the Psalm.

The passage first read is a prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles. It furnishes us with two interesting ideas; the nature of true conversion—and the extent of it under the reign of the Messiah.

I. THE NATURE OF TRUE CONVERSION:—It is to *remember—to turn to the Lord—and to worship before him*. This is a plain and simple process. Perhaps the first religious exercise of mind of which we are conscious is reflection. A state of unregeneracy is a

state of forgetfulness. God is forgotten. Sinners have lost all just sense of his glory, authority, mercy, and judgment: living as if there were no God, or as if they thought there was none. And, when God is forgotten, there is no proper remembrance of themselves. Their own evil ways attract little or no attention. They go on, adding sin to sin, and think scarcely any thing about them. Even if some threatening judgment should have affrighted them into vows and resolutions to amend their lives, no sooner is the cloud dissipated than all is forgotten.

But, if ever we are brought to be the subjects of true conversion, we shall be brought to remember these things. This divine change is fitly expressed by the case of the prodigal, who is said to have *come to himself*; or to his right mind. If we thus come to ourselves we shall think of the holiness, goodness, and forbearance of God and be troubled. And, if we think of God, we shall not forget our own evil ways. We shall remember, and be confounded, and never open our lips any more.

The Holy Spirit makes use of divers means in conversion; but they all operate to bring the sinner to reflection. Sometimes he works by *adverse providences*.—Thus it was with Joseph's brethren. They had sold their brother for a slave, and framed a lie to deceive their father; and more than twenty years had elapsed when they went down into Egypt to buy corn. There they were treated roughly, and put in ward as though they were spies. In this situation, they remembered and reflected upon their evil ways: “And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake not I unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear? therefore behold, also, his blood is required.”—Gen. xlii. 21, 22. Thus, also, Manasseh king of Judah, after a long life of the most awful wickedness, was reclaimed by an adverse providence. In the thorns of affliction, he remembered the Lord God of his fathers, called upon his name, and obtained mercy. Frequently the Lord works by his *word*.—In reading or hearing it, something lays hold of the heart; and the effect is the same. Peter's hearers (Acts ii.) were brought to remember their evil doings, and to sue for mercy. We may read the Scriptures over and over, and hear hundreds of sermons, without any real profit, unless they operate in this way. If ever you hear to purpose, you will think but little of the preacher; your attention will be principally turned to yourselves. Sometimes, I believe, a sinner is converted without any apparent second cause. While sitting in his house, or walk-



ing by the way, his mind is insensibly drawn to think of its own evil courses: "I thought on my ways," says David, "and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Whatever be the way in which we are brought, if it be by the word of God, we shall certainly be induced to remember those things which heretofore have been neglected and forgotten.

If you be truly the subjects of God's work, there will be many *ways* which will be brought to your remembrance, and which you will reflect upon with bitterness; ways of open immorality—ways in which you have thought there was little or no harm—ways that you have thought little about—and even ways which you have heretofore accounted good. 1. You will remember your ways of *open immorality*, odious to both God and man, and which have required some pains to stifle convictions while you pursued them. Such were the objects of bitter recollection to the penitent publican, and to the returning prodigal. Those evil courses which have distinguished your character may be supposed to have most interested your hearts; and consequently will generally be the first which occur to your remembrance. But these are not the only evils to be lamented. 2. You will remember things in which you have thought there was *little or no harm*.—Such are those pursuits which are common with the world. The principles, customs, and amusements of those people among whom you have lived, you accounted lawful; or if not quite lawful, yet nearly so. You have observed many to act upon this principle in trade, *that we may get all we can*; and may have thought you might do the same: but, if you are brought to a right mind, you will remember these pursuits as Zaccheus did, and, like him, your hands will not be able to hold the ill-acquired gain. You saw little or no harm, it may be, in cards, dice, and other amusements of the kind, being kept in countenance by the example of people of fashion; but, if brought to a right mind, you will remember such things with shame, being conscious that in many instances the desire of your neighbor's property was your ruling motive: or, if no property was at stake, it is an exercise on which you cannot ask for a divine blessing before you engage, nor go with freedom upon your knees when you retire. 3. You will remember ways that you have *thought nothing about*.—This will be the case, especially, with respect to heart sins. Saul, the Pharisee, had no idea of God's law taking cognizance of his heart; but, when the commandment came in its spirituality, it opened to him an entirely new scene; it slew all his self-righteous hopes. Or, if you should have had some convictions on account of secret sins, yet you were not aware of that awful load of negative sin of which you were continually guilty; I mean *the want of love to God*. But, if you are

brought to a right mind, you will remember and be confounded at the idea that a God of so glorious a character, and whose goodness to you has never abated, should have had no place in your heart; that you have never regarded him in any thing; but lived in wicked aversion against him. Finally, You will remember, and that with contrition, even ways that you have counted *good*. Your very prayers, and tears, and alms, and the whole of your religion while unconverted, will appear odious to you. That of which you have made a righteousness, hoping at least that it would balance your evil deeds, will now appear as "filthy rags," fit for nothing, unless it were to bind you hand and foot, in order to your being cast into utter darkness. Nor will these your views be at all exaggerating; for all this is but the truth. God requires the heart, the whole heart, and *nothing but the heart*. All those things which God requires as duties are but so many expressions of the heart; whatever, therefore, we have done without the heart, can have no goodness in it in his sight, who sees things as they are; but must needs be evil. And that which is evil in the sight of God, if we become of God's mind, will be evil in our sight.

But, farther, true conversion consists not only in remembering but in "turning to the Lord." This part of the passage is expressive of a cordial relinquishment of our idols, whatever they have been, and an acquiescence in the gospel-way of salvation by Christ alone. Its importance will appear, if we consider, 1. That it is possible to remember our evil ways without turning from them. There are few who attend a faithful ministry, but are compelled, at one time or other, to remember their ways, and that with pain, shame, and remorse; yet they continue to pursue them. Their consciences are enlightened and awakened, but their hearts remain the same. Therefore they persist in evil, though the road is covered with briars and thorns. The guilt of such characters is greater by far than that of sinners in common. O! dread the thought of remembering without turning. 2. It is possible both to remember and turn, and yet not turn "to the Lord." We may break off our open sins, from merely selfish considerations, and not from the love of God. This is not breaking off our sins "by righteousness;" but a mere exchange of vices. Shimei, when circumstances required it, left off abusing and casting dust at David; but he was the same character notwithstanding. Neither God nor man can be satisfied with such turnings: "If ye will return, return to me, saith the Lord."

Once more, true conversion to Christ will be accompanied with the *worship* of him. Worship, as a religious exercise, is the homage of the heart, presented to God ac-



ording to his revealed will. This homage being paid to the Messiah affords a proof of his proper deity. It was the practice of the primitive Christians, and that by which they are described, "to call upon the name of the Lord Jesus."

Such is and will be the practice of all true Christians to the end of time. If we be truly converted to Christ, we shall worship him both privately and publicly. The worship of the closet, of the family, and of the church, will be our delight. That which has heretofore been a task and an uneasiness will become our meat and drink.

II. The *EXTENT* of conversion under the kingdom or reign of the Messiah: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord,—all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him."

It was fit that the accession of the Gentiles should be reserved for the gospel-day, that it might grace the triumph of Christ over his enemies, and appear to be what it is, "the travail of his soul." It is becoming the coronation of a prince, for liberty to be granted to the captives, that many hearts may unite in the public joy. Hence it might be that the Spirit was so copiously poured out upon the apostles, and that their preaching became so eminently successful. The coronation of Christ in heaven must be accompanied with the pardon of his murderers, and followed by the liberation of millions among the heathen who had hitherto been the willing captives of the prince of darkness.

And this great and good work, begun in the apostles' days, *must* go on, and "must increase," till "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn," and "all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him." Conversion-work, except for a few years in the early ages, has been *individual*: God has gathered sinners one by one. Thus it is at present with us; but it will not be thus always. People will flock to Zion as doves to their windows. The church will be struck with joyful surprise, on viewing her own increase. Her heart shall fear and be enlarged, saying, "who hath begotten me these?" These, whence are they?

Further: Conversion-work has hitherto been circumscribed within certain parts of the world. For many ages it was nearly confined to the posterity of Abraham. By means of the labors of the apostles, it was extended to various parts of Asia, the borders of Africa, and of Europe. Of late ages it has been nearly confined to Europe and America. But the time will come when "all the kindreds of the earth" shall worship. Ethiopia, and all the unknown regions of Africa, shall stretch out their hands to God. Arabia and Persia, and Tartary, and India, and China, with the numerous islands in the Eastern and Southern Ocean,

shall bring an offering before him. Mahomedans shall drop their delusion, papists their cruel superstition, Jews shall be ashamed of their obstinacy, deists of their enmity, and merely nominal Christians of their form of godliness without the power of it.

These hopes are not the flight of an ardent imagination; they are founded on the true sayings of God. Nor can the time of their accomplishment be far distant. Daniel, in his seventh chapter, has given us a prophecy of all the principal events from his time to the universal spread of the Messiah's kingdom. The whole is comprehended in the rising and falling of four great governments, with their branches and subdivisions. The world has seen the rise and fall of three out of the four. They have also seen the fourth divided into ten kingdoms, and the "little horn," or papal government, rise up amongst them. They have witnessed its rise, its reign, and in part its downfall. The last branch of the last of the four beasts is now in its dying agonies. No sooner will it be proclaimed, "Babylon is fallen!" than the marriage of the Lamb will come. There are no more tyrannical or persecuting powers to succeed; but "the kingdom shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." All ranks of men, princes, nobles, and people, becoming *real* Christians, the government of the world will naturally be in their hands; and love, peace, and universal good, shall consequently pervade the whole earth.

Finally: While we are concerned for the world, let us not forget our own souls. If the whole world be saved and we lost, what will it avail us?—Perhaps we can scarcely conceive of any thing more dreadful than that of seeing multitudes from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, sitting down in the kingdom of God, while we, who thought ourselves the children of the kingdom, are thrust out!

#### LXXXIV.—EFFECT OF THINGS DIFFER ACCORDING TO THE STATE OF THE MIND.

"Unto the pure all things are pure, but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."—Titus i. 15.

THE apostle had lived to see many who had bid fair turn aside. Under the impression of these things, he writes to Titus as he had done to Timothy.—2 Tim. ii. 21.

The human mind is exposed to numerous influences—the world—the flesh—the devil; and, according to the state of the mind, such is the influence exercised. The beams of the sun lighting on a garden of spices exhale the most pleasing odors, while they pro-

duce an opposite effect on a foul and unsavory object.

I. Let us endeavor to ascertain THE IMPORT OF THE TERMS.—By the *pure* is not meant the sinless. No such characters are to be found. If any think so, the Scriptures are decisive on this point.—1 John i. 8, 10. But as a *defiled* mind is connected with *unbelief*, and is attributed (ver. 14) to those who “turn from the truth,” so a pure mind must be a believing one—one that receives the “truth in the love of it.” Evangelical purity is connected with faith—thus Peter: 1 Pet. i. 22; Acts xv. 9. The *mind* and *conscience* are the governing powers of the soul. If they be polluted, all is so. If the judgment be corrupted, there is no pledge for our retaining one correct view of ourselves, or of God. If conscience, God’s witness, be defiled, there is nothing to recal us. Faith is the principle that opposes these corruptions.

II. ILLUSTRATE THE SENTIMENT by a review of the different effects produced by the same things, according to the different state of the mind. I. On a believing mind the *doctrines* of Christ will have a sanctifying effect, and the contrary on an unbelieving. Some parts of Christian doctrine have a *warning* tendency, particularly the omnipresence, omnipotence, and holiness of God—these beget holy fear. Others are of an *encouraging* complexion, as redemption, pardon, reconciliation, eternal life. Even in those doctrines to which unbelievers are ever objecting—sovereign efficacious grace, personal election, &c.—the Christian finds the most powerful motive to purity. But on others they produce an ill effect, exciting dislike to religion, causing to raise objections. You never hear of them but in ridicule. Some believe in them, and hail them as that which frees them from restraint. Thus they are either “stumbling at the

word being disobedient,” or “turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.” 2. On a believing mind *precepts*, and even *threatenings*, produce a salutary effect. Considering the divine commands as their rule, they fear to deviate and are tender of conscience; but unbelievers dislike restraints, and there is a species of *religion* which proposes to leave them out. 3. *Mercies and judgments* humble, melt, and soften some, but harden others. Mercy—Ecc. viii. 11. Judgments soften transiently only: Pharaoh—Saul. David says, Ps. xviii. 5, 6. But another returns to his sin for relief; so the means of grace and salvation produce no good effect.—Isa. xxvi. 10. 4. *Evils which occur among men*.—A pure mind gathers good from the wickedness that occurs around him—from the defection of apostates (John vi. 68,) and from the falls of good men. But others are carried away before these things. 5. *Treatment from men*.—It may be unkind—unjust, but we shall view it as coming from God. David turned the reproaches of Shimei into reproofs from God; but the lawyer mentioned in the gospels turned reproof into reproach; thus the most faithful preaching gives offence.

From the whole we see the vast importance of the mind being purified by faith. There are those in the world that are neither believers nor unbelievers; but none such are here. Every one who *has heard*, or who has had *opportunities* of hearing, the gospel, is one of them. Some manifest their unbelief by making no pretension either to faith or purity, but ridicule both. Some pretend faith; but it does not purify the heart and life. O, come to Jesus—purify your souls by obeying the truth! Wash in that laver. If found impure at the great day, all is over. Nothing unclean shall enter heaven. Rev. xxii. 11.

# CIRCULAR LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO THE

## CHURCHES OF THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ASSOCIATION.

1782—1815.

1782.

### THE EXCELLENCY AND UTILITY OF THE GRACE OF HOPE.

Dear Brethren,

ON this delightful subject, we feel great pleasure in addressing you. We congratulate you, amidst all your sorrows, on your possessing such a *hope*; a hope which has foundations the most solid, and objects the most substantial. God has not put this jewel into your hands to be made light of. He would have you to understand it in order to prize it. His bestowing upon you a spiritual illumination is to this very end. He does not open your eyes to present you with mere spectacles of misery, nor call you by his grace as having nothing to bestow upon you: no, blessed be his name, "the eyes of your understandings are enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."

To assist your meditations on this cheering subject, by showing its *excellency* and pointing out its *great utility*, we devote this epistle.

We trust that what we have already communicated to you on various important subjects, has not been received in vain. We would not wish to trifle with you, brethren, and we trust our letters to you have not been trifled with. Having therefore confidence in your readiness to examine and receive what we communicate, "we are will-

ing to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye are dear unto us!"

HOPE, or an *expectation of future good*,\* is of so extensive an influence that whether true or false, well or ill founded, it is one of the principal springs that keep mankind in motion. It is vigorous, bold, and enterprising. It causes men to encounter dangers, endure hardships, and surmount difficulties innumerable, in order to accomplish the desired end. In religion it is of no less consequence. It is claimed by almost all ranks and parties of men. It makes a considerable part of the religion of those that truly fear God; for, though in all true religion there is and must be a love to God and divine things for their own excellency, yet God who knows our frame, and draws us with the *cords of a man*,

\* Hope, as its objects are *future*, is distinguished from *enjoyment*. Herein the portion of the saints is unlike that of the worldling, and even that of saints in glory. Also from *love*, the objects of which are past and present, as well as future, whereas hope is confined to the last. As they are *good* it is opposed to *fear*, which is the dread of evil. As they are both *future* and *good*, and merely so, it is distinct from *faith*. We may be said to believe things past, as that the worlds were made; and things evil, as the wrath to come; but cannot be said to hope in either. As it is an *expectation*, it is distinguished from *desire*. We may be said to desire what it is not possible we should ever enjoy; but we cannot hope unless there appear at least a possibility, and generally speaking some probability, of our possessing the object hoped for; and, in proportion as this probability appears to the mind great or small, hope or expectation is strong or weak.



condescends also to excite us with the promise of gracious reward, and to allure us with the prospect of a crown of glory.

We wish you, brethren, seeing God has given you an everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, to consider well the GOODNESS or EXCELLENCY of that divine gift. On this account it excels every other hope as much as a pearl excels a pebble. A great part of its excellency consists in its being so *well founded*. Though our hope should aspire to the highest heavens, and could grasp in all the bliss of an eternal world, alas! what would it avail us if ill founded? The hope that is ill founded is said to *make ashamed*, and so terminates in disappointment. It is to be feared that many (O that there may be none of us!) who are now towering high in expectation will one day be "ashamed and confounded" because they thus had hoped.

The grand FOUNDATION of all good hope is the *Lord Jesus Christ God's revealed Mediator, embraced by faith*. On this rock the people of God in all ages have built their hope, whatever other foundations sinners have devised. Of old, God laid this in Zion. This was the subject of apostolic ministrations; they held forth none other than him "whom God had set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood."

That the mediation of Christ is the primary ground of all good hope will appear evident if we do but recollect (and O let us never forget!) the hopeless condition in which sin involved us. By our breach of covenant with God, the very idea of future good for us was totally annihilated. Nothing but eternal tribulation and anguish, as the reward of evil doers, was now to be expected. The image of God being totally effaced in us, his favor towards us was absolutely forfeited. Hence the least idea of hope from any other ground than the mediation of Christ is not only declarative of opposition to God's way of salvation, but is altogether a wild chimera. By the state of the fallen angels we may learn what ground is left for hope where no mediator is provided; and what must have been our state had we been left in their condition. These, void of all hope whatever, "are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."

We are not unacquainted with the many false grounds on which sinners rest their hopes, but we as well know who has said, "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." We doubt not, brethren, but you have perceived the vanity of a multitude of those things which buoy up the hopes of a great part of mankind. Yourselves, it may be, were once the subjects of those delusory dreams whereof we trust ye are now ashamed. It yields us great pain to see such numbers of our

fellow-sinners standing on such slippery places! The mere mercy of God, to the exclusion of Christ's mediation—not being so bad as some others—common honesty and civility between man and man—descent from pious parents—a place and a name among the godly—suffering much affliction in this life—legal convictions—superior knowledge—superstitious zeal—these are some of the dangerous foundations on which vast numbers of deluded mortals build their eternal ALL! But ye, brethren, have not so learned Christ. Be it your and our resolution, with holy Paul, to "know nothing" in this matter "but Christ and him crucified!"

You will remember, dear brethren, it was necessary that this glorious Mediator should be *revealed* ere he could become a ground of hope. The amazing design of mercy was first laid in the eternal council; hence the blood of Christ is termed the blood of the covenant through which prisoners in the pit become prisoners of hope: but, whatever design of mercy might exist in the mind of God, that could not become a ground of hope till revealed by the word of God. Hence the promise of the woman's seed afforded the first and only dawn of hope to a lost world. Hence also the word of God is frequently represented in Scripture as that whereon our hope resteth.

Equally necessary is it that the mediation of Christ should be *embraced by faith*. We trust you need not be told that though this mediation be the sole meritorious ground of our hope, yet a special work of the Spirit of God must take place in us, before we can reasonably put in our claim for eternal bliss. The work of Christ gives to the elect sinner a title to its possession; the work of the Spirit gives a meetness for its enjoyment. If we experience the latter, we may lay claim to a personal interest in the former. These God has joined together, and let no man dare to put them asunder. Christ must be *in us*, ere he can be to us the hope of glory. The hope that maketh not ashamed is wrought by *experience*. The graces of the Spirit, however, become a ground of hope, not through any inherent merit, but in virtue of the promise of God; or rather they are the evidence of our interest in the promise. In numerous passages of holy writ, God has promised eternal life to all such as bear certain characters: namely, to those that are of a broken and contrite spirit, that mourn for sin, believe in Christ, love him in sincerity, deny themselves, take up their cross, follow him, &c. Hence all who through grace are the subjects of these spiritual dispositions enjoy a right, founded on such promises, to hope for eternal bliss; and this is another reason why the word of God is frequently represented in Scripture as that whereon our hope resteth.

It is to be feared that many split upon this rock. We cautioned you against those who professedly build on other foundations than Jesus Christ; but these are not the only self-deceivers. There is a more refined sort, as to their professed principles, who build their hope on something more specious in appearance, but not a whit better in reality. These, brethren, you have more reason to be guarded against, since they are more frequent in your assemblies, and some of them less discernible, though not less dangerous, than the former. These will frequently abound with supercilious treatment towards those who profess to build upon their own works—will abundantly exclaim against legal books and legal preaching, which, by the way, is the name they give not only to those performances wherein men are taught to expect eternal life as the fruit of their own doings, but as well to all those wherein practical godliness is pressed home. These much value themselves for their supposed orthodoxy or soundness in the doctrines of grace; nay, so valiant are they, many of them, for the TRUTH, that they will contend for it even at the tavern or upon the ale bench! but they seem to have forgotten that part of sound doctrine that “faith without works is dead, being alone.”\* These talk loudly of building their hopes on Christ alone, but forget that he must be, as one says, a Christ believed in, loved, and obeyed, and not merely a Christ talked of. These are frequently heard boasting how strong their hopes are of their being delivered from slavish fear, of their certainty of going to heaven, die when they may, with many such presumptuous things; but they forget surely what the Judge of all the earth has said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.” These, whatever their professions may be, build not upon the rock of ages, but upon a *concealed part of self*. There is no such great difference between them and professed legalists, against whom they so bitterly inveigh: those think to gain heaven by doing, and these by knowing, which they think to be believing. Their hope is but the hope of the hypocrite, which will in the end prove no better than the spider’s web. Nor do they draw their evidences for glory from such things as the Scriptures speak of

\* Besides, it would be no great difficulty to prove that these people, with all their boasted soundness, are unbelievers in the very *essentials* of the gospel. That is an essential of the gospel, without which it would not be the gospel. Now what constitutes it gospel is its being *good news*; but, whatever faith such people may have in it as a piece of *news*, they have none in the *goodness* of it, which is a most essential thing in it, and without which it would not be the gospel.

as characterizing the godly, but from their supposed orthodoxy or soundness in religious principles, with perhaps some texts of Scripture which may have occurred to their minds with a certain impulse, tending mightily to lift them up with joy, but not to fill them with holy mourning, or self-loathing, or with a desire and endeavor to walk humbly with their God. Real religion has no worse enemies than these. By approaching near unto it, and being accounted its votaries, they are capable of doing it much more injury than its professed foes. While, Joab-like, they embrace it with a dissimulating kiss, by their works they stab it as under its fifth rib!

We do not mean to suggest but that the holy Scriptures are often of great consolation to the godly; nor yet to deny that some passages of it may be more consolatory to the godly than others, and the same passages at one time which are not at another: these are things which we freely acknowledge and happily experience. For the truth or duty contained in any passage of Scripture to be, by the Spirit of God, opened to the mind, and impressed upon the heart, and afford strong consolation to the person, is a part of experience which we can set seal to, as both reasonable and desirable. It is *through patience and comfort of the Scriptures that we have hope*. But when impressions have no tendency to humble, sanctify, and lead the soul to God, we affirm, and are ready to give proof, that they are no better than “lying vanities,” though they lie at the bottom of some mighty fabrics. Our having certain passages of Scripture impressed upon our minds is in itself no evidence for glory at all, either to ourselves or others; no, not though those passages should be promises of heaven itself: but if by this we are humbled and sanctified—if a spirit of holy mourning, self-loathing, watchfulness, love to Christ and holiness, as well as joy, be hereby wrought in us, *that* is an evidence for glory.

Many persons are the subjects of Scripture impressions, and, to the great scandal of religion, are *hence* supposed to have God’s good work begun in them, when it appears evident by their spirit and conduct that they are utter strangers to real Christianity. Balaam could have produced plenty of such evidence as this. All those things of his speaking are recorded as a part, and an excellent part, of holy Scripture, and were suggested to him even by God himself. “The Lord,” we are told, “put a word in Balaam’s mouth.” But, as none of these things had any tendency to sanctify his heart, they left him but where they found him! Besides, we have no reason to think but that Satan can and does suggest many things in the words of Scripture. We know he did thus to Christ himself; and if to him why not to us? He has ends to answer in so doing; namely, to



deceive poor souls with such airy dreams, to draw them away from resting their hopes on scriptural grounds, and to substitute these illusory foundations in their room.—On the other hand, whatever be the means, whether hearing the word preached, reading, conversation, prayer, or meditation; and whether, in so meditating, any part of the word be *suddenly* brought to our mind, and impressed upon our heart, or whether it be more *gradually*—whether we have never thought of the passage before, or whether we have read it a thousand times over—it matters not.\* If it tend to produce a spirit of pure love to Christ, lowliness, and holiness, *that* affords us a ground for hope, and a reason for thankfulness. God has plentifully promised salvation to all who are the subjects of these spiritual dispositions.

Should an enemy to your holy religion, after all, require of you a reason for the hope that is in you—should he demand what grounds you have to conclude that the things you hope for have a *real existence*—we trust you would not be at a loss for a reply. There is not one of all those solid arguments which prove the divinity of the sacred oracles (which, for brevity's sake, we forbear to enumerate,) but would furnish you with sufficient reason to give an answer substantial in its nature, though in its manner “with meekness and fear.”

The glorious OBJECTS with which your hope is conversant next demand your attention, brethren; as they much, very much, contribute to its excellency and your felicity.—You may be assured they are something *good*. Hope of every kind has to do with nothing but what in the view of the mind appears such; and this hope has to do with nothing but what is really such. That which we hope for is not merely an apparent, but a real good; and not only a good, but a substantial good; and not only a substantial, but a suitable, a great, yea, an everlasting good!

The hope of worldlings terminates on trifles; on things which, when enjoyed, do but cloy, and cannot satisfy.—Let a man in pursuit of happiness knock at the door of every created good, every created good must answer, “It is not in me!” Riches make themselves wings and fly away; honor is empty as the wind; mirth, what is it but madness? Crowns of earthly glory commonly prove crowns of thorns to them that wear them; all are lying vanities, promising what they cannot perform. O, brethren, let the resolve of the church made wise by affliction be our resolve: “The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.”

Here we find what the wisest of men well termed *substance*.—Only a taste thereof af-

fords substantial bliss. O, to enjoy God! To enjoy God in Christ! To enjoy him with the society of the blessed! To enjoy him with soul and body, the latter raised and reunited to the former! To enjoy him to all eternity. To enjoy him and be changed into the same image! These, brethren, these are the things on which our hope centres: nor is it a matter of small consolation that God himself has pledged his faithfulness for their bestowment on all his faithful followers. However desirable these things might be, we should have little reason to rejoice therein, if he on whose word it rested were either false or fickle; but, blessed be his name, we live “in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began!”

Nor let it seem the less glorious that it is a *future good*.—In the view of infinite wisdom, “it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.” It seems good to him to place the blessings he means to bestow upon us at a distance; so at a distance that they must be hoped in, and waited for, ere they are enjoyed. Doubtless, God could have bestowed all his blessings on us as quickly as he did paradise on the converted thief; but he has not seen fit in common so to do. Certainly by his suspending for a time our enjoyment of promised favors, and at length bestowing them, he glorifies his faithfulness in the end, as well as that in the mean time he exercises our faithfulness, patience, and resignation to his will. But this is not all: they are the more welcome when they do come. If the object hoped for prove less in value than we expected, then indeed its having been suspended only sinks it the more in our esteem; but if it surpass all expectation, if it exceed desire itself when it makes its appearance, then its having been so long in coming only makes it the more welcome when come. “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick” for a time: “but, when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life!” Let us not think much at waiting a little while; no, not though during that time exposed to great tribulations; since our dwelling before the throne will by this be rendered the more blissful, and our *weight of glory* by this increased. With what sacred pleasure did the patriarch Jacob resign his life, having *waited* for God's salvation! With what unspeakable joy did good old Simeon embrace the *long-looked-for* blessing! With what raptures of bliss will the Lord again be welcomed on an approaching period, when all who love his appearing will unite, saying, “Lo, this is our God, we have *waited* for him!”

Nay, it seems to be a glory in some sense peculiar to religion to *reserve the best till the last*.—That you may enjoy strong consolation, brethren, in your passage through life, God has placed his favors in a glorious as-

\* See *Help to Zion's Travellers*, a piece published at the request of the Association by our brother Hall, p. 130—141.



ending gradation. The inviting language of every one of them is, *Press forward*. The pleasures of the world and sin, if they speak truth, can afford no such encouragement to their admirers: no, Ezekiel's roll is descriptive of their utmost prospects; that roll which had written within and without "lamentations, mourning, and woe." But religion presents a train of rising glories: he that enters it aright will find it like the waters of the sanctuary; first to his ancles, then to his knees, then to his loins, and at last a river to swim in!—The different stages of the church maintain the same idea; the Mosaic dispensation contained greater discoveries than the patriarchal; the gospel contains greater than the Mosaic; the latter-day glory will outshine this; and ultimate bliss will exceed them all. "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the son, and terrible as an army with banners?"

Give us your attention, brethren, while we next attempt to point out the UTILITY of this heavenly grace throughout the Christian life.—Truly this is beyond expression. If hope in general is of so much use among men as to stimulate them in all their labors, support them in their sorrows, and extricate them from a thousand labyrinths in life—if by it they brave dangers, encounter hardships, and endure difficulties—if, in short, it be that by which, as a means, even God himself as it were bears up the pillars of the world—then what must be the use of that hope which, as we have already seen, so much surpasses this in excellence? As far as the objects of Christian hope exceed in value, and its grounds in solidity, those of natural hope, so far does the use of the one exceed that of the other. Its special use will, however, be best ascertained by taking a view of some of those exercises, cases, and circumstances, wherein you are concerned in your passage through life.—Particularly,

You have known its value from the time when you were first *converted* unto God, when in that time of need it presented before you an all-sufficient refuge.—You remember, dear brethren, it may be some of you particularly, "the wormwood and the gall" in that great work, which is commonly begun with a painful conviction of sin. You remember when a sense of the nature and demerit of sin, of *your* sin, was such that your souls had almost dwelt in silence! Ah, you remember when the glorious character of God appeared, though excellent, yet terrible, approaching judgment unavoidable, and the Judge at the door! And have you forgotten the "door of hope" which then was opened to you? Have you forgotten the sound of the great trumpet which invited you to come when you were ready to perish? No, surely. While many, like Cain and

Judas, despair of mercy, and so "die in the pit," you have reason to bless God for having enabled you to "turn to the strong-hold as prisoners of hope!"

Moreover, as *servants* of God, you have a great work to do.—Though the meritorious part of your salvation has been long since finished, yet there is a salvation for you still to work out. By prayer, by patience, by watchfulness, and holy strife, you have to overcome the world, mortify sin, and run the race set before you. Hope is of excellent use in this great work. It is well denominated a "lively hope." Its tendency is not to lull the soul asleep, but to rouse it to action. We trust, dear brethren, that the hope of which you are partakers will more and more animate your breasts with generous purposes, and prompt your souls to noble pursuits. For this you have the greatest encouragements surely that a God can give! God will employ none in his service without making it their inestimable privilege. They that plough for him shall plough in hope. Mansions of bliss stand ready to receive you, and crowns of unfading glory to reward you; therefore, beloved brethren, "be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Again: You are attended with *indwelling sin*: a "body of sin," which, in the account of every one that loves and longs for purity, is a body of *death*: yea, worse than death itself!—You wish to think spiritually, pray fervently, hear profitably, and, in a word, grow in grace; but this proves a dead weight to all: "the good that ye would, that ye do not!"—You wish to hate and avoid evil, and all its detestable appearances; but you find it in ten thousand forms haunting, surprising, and drawing you aside, so that too often "the evil that ye would not, that ye do!" We doubt not, dear brethren, but that in secret you frequently groan with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Now we ask what can afford relief in this case, but a good hope through grace of being freed at the hour of death? This proves a helmet in your spiritual warfare. This will inspire you with courage in every conflict: nothing invigorates the soldier like the hope of conquering at last. With this you will tread down strength, and, in prospect of approaching victory, sing with the apostle, "*I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Again: You are subject to many *fears* and *despondings* of mind ere you reach your desired haven. Too often, through an unwatchful, unholy conduct, the Spirit of God is grieved. His presence once withdrawn, darkness will overspread the mind, and evidences for glory seem blotted out. Satan is often permitted at such seasons to stand as

at your right hand, accusing you of your filthy garments; suggesting that such a one cannot be "a brand plucked out of the burning." Under these exercises the mind is apt to be depressed beyond measure; the soul, afraid of acting presumptuously, in laying hold of consolation, is ready, strangely ready, to sink beneath the waves of dark despair. If any offer consolation, like Rachel on the loss of her children, he "refuseth to be comforted." The spirit, at some such seasons, is so dejected, it is as if all must be given up. The painful language of the heart is, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and" he whom I once thought "my God hath forgotten me!"—"My hope is dried up, and I am cut off for my part!" Ah, farewell hope! farewell heaven! farewell Christ!—No,—no,—nor Christ, nor heaven, nor hope, will suffer this! Let deep call to deep, let waves, let billows overflow, deliverance shall arise, hope will not fail, but will afford relief. It will prove "an anchor to your soul, sure and steadfast." Yes, it will cheer your heart, and enable you to sing, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God!" Again,

You are subject to various *trying providences* in your passage through life.—Enjoyments in this life are very precarious. While we are feathering our nests, and promising ourselves that we shall die therein unmolested, how soon are we disappointed! yea, how many have been nearly stripped of their earthly all! These, being deprived of almost every comfort of this life, have then tasted the sweetness of hope in another. These look to their Maker, and their eyes have respect to the HOLY ONE of Israel for the reparation of their losses. Thus sang the church in affliction, stripped, and bound in Babel's yoke, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him!"

Some of you are *poor* in this world, and are subject to numerous hardships.—You are often entangled in mazes of difficulty; you have a thousand fears that you shall never get honorably through life. Especially at times, God seems to have set you in "dark places;" your hopes confounded, your fears come upon you, and your prospects at an end! Yes, say you, "Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day. He hath builded against me and compassed me with gall and travail. He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone. He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy!" Poor people, we feel for you! wherewith shall we comfort you? Shall we recommend and exercise benevolence towards you in our respective churches? Shall we exhort you

"to trust in the Lord, and do good;" and assure you, in God's name, that "so shall ye dwell in the land, and verily ye shall be fed?" Or shall we hold up before you a kingdom to which ye are heirs; a period when "every tear shall be wiped away?" O, brethren, the hope of the gospel furnishes you with these strong consolations! Again,

You are *members of Christian society*; and though by your letters it appears you enjoy peace in general, yet you are not unacquainted with many things of a grieving tendency. In this state of imperfection offences will come. Unhappy feuds will sometimes arise, and grievous scandals will take place. When church-members become self-sufficient, and cease to be afraid of entering into temptation—when carnal ease is substituted in the room of gospel peace—when love grows cold, and complaisance takes its place—when we are so watchful over one another as to forget ourselves—when godly jealousy is exchanged for an uncharitable temper, "more cruel than the grave"—when, instead of "submitting to one another in the fear of God," each one becomes headstrong and resolved to have his own way—when superior gifts are envied, and inferior ones despised—when zeal for the truth degenerates into vain jangling—when we are very apt to take an offence, but not to forgive one—when tale-bearers are encouraged, and a spirit of animosity cherished—then, brethren, then expect "confusion, and every evil work." We are happy that we can say (and blessed be God for it) that such a spirit is far from generally prevailing among you; yet, so far as it does prevail (which the all-seeing God knows is too far,) it dishonors the great Head of the church, and wounds every upright member! However, this should be far from discouraging religious society *itself*; not to mention that these are things that must always be expected, more or less, in this state of trial, and that they always existed even in the purest ages; we can affirm, and ye are our witnesses, that it has pleasures which abundantly outweigh all these unhappinesses. Nor is this all: hope holds up a period, even within the limits of time, a heaven compared with the present state of things, when "*holiness to the Lord* shall be written as upon the bells of the horses, and Zion shall become a quiet habitation!" But this, say you, is a period that *we* have but little hope of living to see. Perhaps so: still you live in prospect of a better. Blessed society, where purity and amity forever reign! Yes, brethren, immediately on entering members of the church triumphant, you will "enter into peace," and *each one* of you "walk" forever "in his uprightness!" Moreover,

You are members of *civil society*.—You wish well to your country, and must have



been the subjects of grief to see what you have of late years seen—its glory eclipsed by unhappy wars and dissensions; to see it conspired against by surrounding nations and divided by domestic feuds, forsaken by its friends, and derided by its enemies. It may be, at times, fear has been ready to seize you, and tempted you to ask what will be the end of these things? The sounds of "Nineveh is fallen," "Babylon is fallen," yea, of "*Judah* is fallen," have been long since heard in the world; and what, say you, are we better than they? Under these exercises, brethren, we trust you have found, and will yet find, hope of excellent use to you. Great have been the deliverances your God has wrought in former ages, which afford a ground of hope to us. He can defend our coasts, and still preserve our country; yes, he can, and blessed be his name for any encouragement afforded us. Let us then hope and pray: "It may be the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of his people." Or should he refuse that, should a consumption be decreed to overflow, in righteousness, still he can preserve his faithful followers as he did *Baruch*, and those who "sighed and cried" in the day of Jerusalem's ruin. Nay, suppose him to refuse that; suppose that not only your country must sink, but you must sink with it, and perish in the general wreck! Still all is not lost. Did your portion lie in this world, then, indeed, like the owner of a vessel whose all is on board, you might dread its sinking: but, seeing your inheritance is far beyond the reach of these vicissitudes, there is reason for you to mingle joy with trembling. Yes, brethren, we trust there is reason for you to unite with holy David, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble—therefore will we not fear, though the earth be moved, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea!"

Once more: You and we all, by some means, must shortly *die*.—Be it so that no untimely end befall us, the hour cometh when we must bid farewell to every creature comfort; when every created union must be dissolved, and we appear before the judgment-seat of Christ! Oh, then to be without hope! better had we never been born! Let the reluctance and horror of those who are *driven* away in their wickedness teach us the value of a well-grounded hope in that awful hour. Verily, words cannot describe it, nor thoughts conceive it! Here is a rock when all beside sinks under us! With this, brethren, like the priest that bore the ark of God, your feet will stand firm amidst all the swellings of Jordan! With this you can behold the ghastly spectre, yea, the horrors of the grave itself, with a cheerful countenance, and sing with holy Job, "Although after my skin worms destroy this body, yet

in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself; mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me!"

Upon the whole, permit us to advise and exhort you, dear brethren, to a few things which become persons who have expectations like yours.—While you guard against presumption, beware of *despair*. The latter, as well as the former, is dangerous to men, and offensive to God. Despair is the death of action. To despair of mercy, and so never apply for it, is to act like the wicked and slothful servant, than which nothing tends more to cast reproach on the character of God. Even a *man* of honor cannot bear to be distrusted. While fear keeps you from presumption, let hope preserve you from despair. As condemned criminals in yourselves considered, cast yourselves on him for mercy; as servants, serve him cheerfully and rely on his bounty; and, as suffering the loss of all things for him, trust him, like Moses, to make up your losses. Remember, "the Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."

Observe, also, he that has this hope must *purify himself as Christ is pure*.—He must take him for his example, and aim at no less than a complete conformity to his temper and spirit. That which true hope centres in is not only to see him as he is, but to be "like him." Be constant, then, dear brethren, in holy exercises. We trust your hope is not of that kind which, in proportion as it increases, slackens the hand of diligence. Neglect neither public nor private duties; it is at the peril of your souls' welfare if you do! Shame may keep you to the one, but rather let the love of Christ constrain you to both. Think nothing too great to perform, too much to lose, or too hard to endure, that you may obtain so blessed a hope. O, brethren, be it our daily concern and earnest endeavor to grow in every grace, to excel in every virtue. Remember he whose eyes are flames of fire surveys our heart and life: how transporting the thought, could we conceive him addressing each of us as he did the Thyatiran church, "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith; and thy patience, and thy works, and the last to be more than the first!"

Finally: Use all means to cultivate this heavenly grace.—Remember sin is its worst enemy; beware of that. The Holy Spirit is its best friend; see that you grieve not him. Tribulations themselves, though they may seem to destroy it, in the end cherish it. They "work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope;" therefore be reconciled to them. Read the Holy Scriptures; pray in secret as well as openly; though sojourners on earth, let your conversation be in heaven; learn to set light by this world; court not its smiles, nor fear its



frowns; live in daily expectation of dying, and die daily in humble expectation of living for evermore; realize and anticipate those enjoyments and employments to which ye are hastening: in proportion to this, your desires will be strong and your hopes lively. Remember hope is one of those graces which must do its all within the limits of time; "be sober," therefore, "and hope to the end;" aim, like Enoch, to "walk with God" till God shall take you; "let your loins be girt, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find so doing! Verily, I say unto you," said this blessed Lord of yours (O hearken, and be astonished,) "Verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them!"

Dearly beloved brethren, farewell! "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work!"

1785.

CAUSES OF DECLENSION IN RELIGION, AND  
MEANS OF REVIVAL.

Dearly beloved brethren,

THROUGH the good hand of our God upon us we met together according to appointment, and enjoyed the pleasure of an agreeable interview with several of our dear friends and brethren in the Lord. We trust also that our God was with us in the different stages of the opportunity. The letters from the several churches, which were attended to the first evening of our meeting together, afforded us matter for pain and pleasure. Two of the associate churches continue destitute of the stated means of grace, others are tried with things of an uncomfortable nature, and most complain of the want of a spirit of fervor and constancy in the ways of God. Yet, on the other hand, we met with some things which afforded us pleasure. Many of our congregations are well attended; a spirit of desire after the word is, we think, upon the increase; nor are our labors, we hope, altogether in vain, as the work of the Lord, in a way of conversion, appears to be carrying on, though not in instances very remarkable.

'Tis true we have reason to bewail our own and other's declensions, yet we are not, upon the whole, discouraged. It affords us no little satisfaction to hear in what manner the *monthly prayer meetings* which were proposed in our letter of last year have been carried on, and how God has been evidently present in those meetings, stirring up the

hearts of his people to wrestle hard with him for the revival of his blessed cause. Though as to the number of members there is no increase this year, but something of the contrary; yet a spirit of prayer in some measure being poured out more than balances in our account for this defect. We cannot but hope, wherever we see a spirit of earnest prayer generally and perseveringly prevail, that God has some good in reserve, which in his own time he will graciously bestow.

But, while we rejoice to see such a spirit of united prayer, we must not stop here, brethren, lest in so doing we stop short. If we would hope for the blessing of God upon us, there must be added to this a *spirit of earnest inquiry into the causes of our declensions, and a hearty desire and endeavor for their removal*. When Israel could not go forward, but were smitten by the men of Ai, Joshua and the elders of the people prostrated themselves before the Lord. In this they did well; but this was not sufficient—"Get thee up," said the Lord to his servant—"wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned—Up, sanctify the people—and search for the accursed thing!"—This, it is apprehended, is the case with us, as well as it was with Israel; and this must be our employment as well as theirs. With a view to assist you, brethren, and ourselves with you, in this very necessary inquiry, we appropriate the present letter to THE POINTING OUT OF SOME OF THOSE EVILS WHICH WE APPREHEND TO BE CAUSES OF THAT DECLENSION OF WHICH SO MANY COMPLAIN, AND THE MEANS OF THEIR REMOVAL.

The *first* thing that we shall request you to make inquiry about, is whether there is not a *great degree of contentedness with a mere superficial acquaintance with the gospel, without entering into its SPIRIT AND END; and whether this be not one great cause of the declension complained of*.—In the apostles' time, and in all times, *grace and peace* have ever been multiplied by the *knowledge of God*; and, in proportion as this has been neglected, those have always declined. If we are sanctified by the *word of truth*, then, as this word is received or disrelished, the work of sanctification must be supposed to rise or fall. We may give a sort of idle assent to the truths of God, which amounts to little more than taking it for granted that they are true, and thinking no more about them, unless somebody opposes us: but this will not influence the heart and life, and yet it seems to be nearly the whole of what many attain to, or seek after.

We maintain the doctrine of one infinitely glorious God; but do we realize the amiableness of his character? If we did, we could not avoid loving him with our heart and soul, and mind and strength.—We hold the doctrine of the universal depravity of man-

kind ; but do we enter into its evil nature and awful tendency ? If we did the *one*, how much lower should we lie before God, and how much more should we be filled with a self-loathing spirit ! If the *other*, how should we feel for our fellow-sinners ! how earnest should we be to use all means, and have all means used, if it might please God thereby to pluck them as brands out of the burning !—We hold the doctrine of a trinity of persons in the Godhead ; but do we cordially enter into the glorious economy of redemption, wherein the conduct of the sacred Three is most gloriously displayed ? Surely, if we did, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost would be with us more than it is.—We avow the doctrines of free, sovereign, and efficacious grace ; but do we generally *feel* the grace therein discovered ? If we did, how low should we lie ! how grateful should we be ! We should seldom think of their sovereign and discriminating nature without considering how justly God might have left us all to have had our own will, and followed our own ways ; to have continued to increase our malady, and despise the only remedy ! Did we properly enter into these subjects, we could not think of a *great* Saviour, and a *great* salvation, without loathing ourselves for being such *great* sinners ; nor of what God had done for, and given to us, without longing to give him our little all, and feeling an habitual desire to do something for him.—If we realized our redemption by the blood of Christ, it would be natural for us to consider ourselves as bought with a price, and therefore not our own ; “ a price, all price beyond ! ” O, could we enter into this, we should readily discern the force and propriety of our body and spirit being his ; *his* indeed ! dearly bought, and justly due !—Finally, we all profess to believe the vanity of this life and its enjoyments, and the infinitely superior value of that above ; but do we indeed enter into these things ? If we did, surely we should have more of heavenly-mindedness, and less of criminal attachment to the world.

It is owing in a great degree to this contentment with a superficial knowledge of things, without entering into the spirit of them, that we so often hear the truths of the gospel spoken of with a tone of disgust, calling them “ *dry doctrines* ! ” Whereas gospel truths, if preached in their native simplicity, and received with understanding and cordiality, are the grand source of all well-grounded consolation. We know of no consolation worth receiving but what arises from the influence of truth upon the mind. Christ’s words are *spirit* and *life* to them who hunger and thirst after them, or have a heart to live upon them ; and, could we but more thoroughly enter into this way of living, we should find the doctrines of the gospel, in-

stead of being *dry*, to be what they were in the days of Moses, who declared, “ My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew ; and as the small rain upon the tender herb and as the showers upon the grass. ”—Deut. xxxii. 2. O, brethren, may it be our and your concern not to float upon the surface of Christianity, but to enter into the spirit of it ! “ For this cause ” an apostle bowed his knees “ to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ” that we might “ comprehend the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ” of things : and for this cause we also wish to bow our knees, knowing that it is by this, if at all, that we are “ filled with all the fulness of God. ”—Eph. iii. 14—19.

Another thing which we apprehend to be a great cause of declension is a *contentedness with present attainments, without aspiring after eminence in grace and holiness*.—If we may judge of people’s thoughts and aims by the general tenor of their conduct, there seems to be much of a contentment with about so much religion as is thought necessary to constitute them good men, and that will just suffice to carry them to heaven ; without aiming by a course of more than ordinary services to glorify God in their day and generation. We profess to do what we do with a view to glorify God, and not to be saved by it ; but is it so indeed ? Do these things look like it ? How is it too that the positive institutions of Christ are treated with so little regard ? Whence is it that we hear such language as this so often as we do—“ Such a duty, and such an ordinance, is not essential to salvation—we may never be baptized in water, or become church members, and yet go to heaven as well as they that are ? ”

It is to be feared the old puritanical way of devoting ourselves wholly to be the Lord’s, resigning up our bodies, souls, gifts, time, property, with all we have and are to serve him, and frequently renewing these covenants before him, is now awfully neglected. This was to make a *business* of religion, a *life’s work*, and not merely an accidental affair, occurring but now and then, and what must be attended to only when we can spare time from other engagements. Few seem to aim, pray, and strive after *eminent* love to God and one another. Many appear to be contented if they can but remember the time when they had such love in exercise, and then, tacking to it the notion of perseverance without the *thing*, they go on and on, satisfied it seems if they do but make shift just to get to heaven at last, without much caring how. If we were in a proper spirit, the question with us would not so much be, what *must* I do for God ? as what *can* I do for God ? A servant that heartily loves his master counts it a *privilege* to be employed by him, yea, an *honor* to be entrusted with any of his concerns.



If it is inquired, what then is to be done? wherein in particular can we glorify God more than we have done? We answer by asking, Is there no room for amendment? Have we been sufficiently earnest and constant in private prayer? Are there none of us that have opportunities to set apart particular times to pray for the effusion of the Holy Spirit? Can we do no more than we have done in instructing our families? Are there none of our dependants, workmen, or neighbors, that we might speak to, at least so far as to ask them to go and hear the gospel? Can we rectify nothing in our tempers and behavior in the world, so as better to recommend religion? Cannot we watch more? Cannot we save a little more of our substance to give to the poor? In a word, is there no room or possibility left for our being more meek, loving, and resembling the blessed Jesus than we have been?

To glorify God, and recommend by our example the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, are the chief ends for which it is worth while to live; but do we sufficiently pursue these ends? Even these chief ends of our existence, are they in any good degree so much as kept in view? Ah, what have we done for God in the towns, villages, and families where we reside? Christians are said to be the *light* of the world, and the *salt* of the earth—do we answer these characters? Is the world enlightened by us? Does a savor of Christ accompany our spirit and conversation? Our business, as Christians, is practically to be *holding forth the word of life*. Have we, by our *earnestness*, sufficiently held forth its *importance*? or by our *chaste* conversation, coupled with fear, its *holy* tendency? Have we all along, by a becoming *firmness* of spirit, made it evident that religion is no *low*, *mean*, or *dastardly* business? Have we by a *cheerful complacency* in God's service, gospel, and providence, sufficiently held forth the *excellency* of his government and the *happy* tendency of his holy religion?—Doubtless, the most holy and upright Christians in these matters will find great cause for reflection, and room for amendment; but are there not many who scarcely ever think about them, or, if they do, it only amounts to this, to *sigh*, and *go backward*, resting satisfied with a few lifeless *complaints*, without any real and abiding efforts to have things otherwise?

Another cause of declension, we apprehend, is *making the religion of others our standard, instead of the word of God*.—The word of God is the only safe rule we have to go by, either in judging what is real religion, or what exertions and services for God are incumbent upon us. As it is unsafe to conclude ourselves real Christians because we may have such feelings as we have heard spoken of by some whom we account good men, so it is unjust to conclude that we have

religion *enough* because we may suppose ourselves to be equal to the generality of those that now bear that character. What if they be good men? they are not our standard—and what if their conversation in general be such as gives them a reputation in the religious world? Christ did not say learn of *them*, but learn of *me*. Or if in a measure we are allowed to follow them who through faith and patience inherit the promises, still it is with this restriction, as far as they are *followers of Christ*.

Alas, how much is the professing part of mankind governed by ill example! If the question turns upon religious diligence, as how often shall I attend at the house of God—once or twice on the Lord's day? or how frequently shall I give my company at church-meetings, opportunities for prayer, and such like? is not the answer commonly governed by what others do in these cases, rather than by what is right in itself?—So, if it turns on *liberality*, the question is not what am I able to spare in this case, consistent with all other obligations? but what does Mr. *such a one* give? I shall do the same as he does.—Something of this kind may not be wrong, as a degree of proportion among friends if desirable; but, if carried to too great lengths, we must beware lest our attention to precedent should so far exclude principle in the affair as to render even what we do unacceptable in the sight of God.—So if the question turns on *any particular piece of conduct*, whether it be defensible or not, instead of searching the Bible, and praying to be led in the narrow way of truth and righteousness, how common is it to hear such language as this—Such and such good men do so; surely, therefore, there can be no great harm in it!—In short, great numbers appear to be quite satisfied if they are but about as strict and as holy as other people with whom they are connected.

Many *ill effects* appear evidently to arise from this quarter. Hence it is that, for the want of bringing our religion and religious life to the test of God's holy word, we are in general so wretchedly *deficient in a sense of our vast and constant defects*, have *no spirit to press forward*, but to go on, *without repentance* for them or as much as a *thought of doing otherwise*.—Hence also there is so much *vanity* and *spiritual pride* among us. While we content ourselves with barely keeping pace with one another, we may all become wretched idlers, and loose walkers; and yet, as one is about as good as another, each may think highly of himself; whereas, bring him and his companions with him to the glass of God's holy word, and, if they have any sensibility left, they must see their odious picture, abhor themselves, and feel their former conduct as but too much resembling that of a company of evil conspirators who kept each other in countenance.—



Finally, To this it may be ascribed in part that so many are constantly waxing *worse* and *worse*, more and more loose and careless in their spirit and conduct.—For those who are contented not to do better than other people generally allow themselves to do a little worse. An imitator is scarcely ever known to equal an original in the good, but generally exceeds him in the bad; not only in imitating his feelings, but adding others to their number. If we would resemble any great and good man, we must do as he does, and that is keep our eye upon the mark, and follow Christ as our model. It is by this means that he has attained to be what he is. Here we shall be in no danger of learning anything amiss; and truly we have failings enough of our own, in not conforming to the model, without deriving any more from the imperfections of the model itself.

Once more,—*The want of considering the consequences of our own good and evil conduct is, we apprehend, another great cause of declension in many people.*—It is common for people on many occasions to think within themselves in some such manner as this—“What signify *my* faults, or *my* efforts? They can weigh but little for or against the public good: What will *my* prayers avail? and what great loss will be sustained by an individual occasionally omitting the duty of prayer, or attendance on a church-meeting, or it may be the public worship and ordinances of God? And what consequences will follow if one be a little now and then off one’s watch—nobody is perfect,” &c. &c. This, and a great deal more such horrid atheism, it is to be feared, if a thorough search were made, would be found to lie at the bottom of our common departures from God.

If, when an army goes forth to engage the enemy, every soldier were to reason with himself thus—Of what great consequence will *my* services be? it is but little execution that I can do; it will make but very little difference, therefore, if I desert or stand neuter—there are enough to fight without me,—what would be the consequence? Would such reasoning be admitted? Was it admitted in the case of the *Reubenites*, who cowardly abode by their sheep-folds while their brethren jeoparded their lives upon the high places in the field? Was not *Meroz* cursed with a bitter curse because its inhabitants came not forth to the help of the Lord in the day of the mighty?—Judges v. 15, 16, 23. If an army would hope to obtain the victory, every man should act as if the whole issue of the battle depended upon *his* conduct: so, if ever things go well in a religious view, it will be when every one is concerned to act as if he were the only one that remained on God’s side.

We may think the *efforts* of an individual to be trifling; but, dear brethren, let not

this atheistical spirit prevail over us. It is the same spawn with that cast forth in the days of Job, when they asked concerning the Almighty, “What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?” At this rate Abraham might have forborne interceding for Sodom, and Daniel for his brethren of the captivity. James also must be mistaken in saying that the prayer of a single, individual, righteous man availeth much. Ah, brethren, this spirit is not from above, but cometh of an evil heart of unbelief departing from the living God! Have done with that bastard humility that teaches you such a sort of thinking low of your own prayers and exertions for God as to make you decline them, or at least to be slack or indifferent in them! Great things frequently rise from small beginnings. Some of the greatest good that has ever been done in the world has been set a going by the efforts of an individual.—Witness the christianizing of a great part of the heathen world by the labors of a *Paul*, and the glorious reformation from popery began by the struggles of a *Luther*.

It is impossible to tell what good may result from one earnest wrestling with God, from one hearty exertion in his cause, or from one instance of a meek and lowly spirit, overcoming evil with good. Though there is nothing in our doings from which we could look for such great things; yet God is pleased frequently to crown our poor services with infinite reward. Such conduct may be, and often has been, the means of the conversion and eternal salvation of souls: and who that has any Christianity in him would not reckon this reward enough? A realizing sense of these things would stir us all up; ministers to preach the gospel to every creature, private Christians situated in this or that dark town or village to use all means to have it preached, and both to recommend it to all around by a meek and unblemished conversation.

Again, we may think the *faults* of an individual to be trifling, but they are not so. For the crime of *Achan* the army of Israel suffered a defeat, and the whole camp could not go forward. Let us tremble at the thought of being a dead weight to the society of which we are members!—Besides, the awful tendency of such conduct is seen in its *contagious* influence. If people continue to be governed by example, as they certainly will in a great degree, then there is no knowing what the consequences will be, nor where they will end. A single defect or slip, of which we may think but little at the time, may be copied by our children, servants, neighbors, or friends, over and over again; yea, it may be transmitted to posterity, and pleaded as a precedent for evil when we are no more! Thus it may kindle a fire which, if we ourselves are saved from it, may nevertheless burn to the lowest hell, and

aggravate the everlasting misery of many around us, who are "flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone!"

These, brethren, we apprehend, are some of the causes, among many others, which have produced those declensions which you and we lament. But what do we say? Do we indeed lament them? If we do, it will be natural for us to inquire, *What shall we do? What means can be used towards their removal, and a happy revival?* If this be now indeed the object of our inquiry, we cannot do better than to attend to the advice of the great Head of the church to a backsliding people—"Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first works."—"Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die."—"Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent!"—Rev. ii. 5; iii. 2, 3. Particularly,

First, Let us *recollect the best periods of the Christian church, and compare them with the present; and the best parts of our own life, if we know when they were, and compare them with what we now are.*—A recollection of the disinterested zeal and godly simplicity of the primitive Christians, and their successors in after ages, millions of whom, in Christ's cause, loved not their lives unto death, would surely make us loathe ourselves for our detestable lukewarmness! As *protestants*, let us think of the fervent zeal and holy piety of our reformers—think what objects they grasped, what difficulties they encountered, and what ends they obtained! As *protestant dissenters*, let us reflect on the spirit and conduct of our puritan and non-conforming ancestors. Think how they served God at the expense of all that was dear to them in this world, and laid the foundation of our churches in woods, and dens, and caves of the earth! Say, too, was their love to God more than need be? Is the importance of things abated since their death? Might not they have pleaded the danger and cruelty of the times in excuse for a non-appearance for God with much more seeming plausibility than we can excuse our spirit of hateful indifference? O let us remember whence we are fallen, and repent!

As to *our own lives*, if we are real Christians, probably we can remember times wherein the great concerns of salvation seemed to eclipse all other objects. We covenanted with God—we resigned over all to him—we loved to be his, willingly his, rather than our own—we were willing to do any thing, or become any thing, that should glorify his name. And is it so now? No! but why not? what iniquity have we found in him, that we are gone away backward? "O, my people, saith the Lord, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me!" Have I been a hard master, or a churlish fa-

ther, or a faithless friend? Have I not been patient enough with you, or generous enough towards you? Could I have done anything more for you that I have not done? Was the covenant you made with me a hard bargain? Was it hard on your side for me to be made sin, who knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in me? Were the rewards of my service such as you could not live upon? Is it better with you now than then?—O, Christian reader! pause awhile; lay aside the paper, and retire before God! reflect, and pour out thy soul before him—Say unto him, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face!" Thus, thus, remember whence thou art fallen, and repent!

But do not stop here—think it not sufficient that we lament and mourn over our departures from God; we must return to him with full purpose of heart—"Strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die." Cherish a greater love to the truths of God—pay an invariable regard to the discipline of his house—cultivate love to one another—frequently mingle souls by frequently assembling yourselves together—encourage a meek, humble, and savory spirit, rather than a curious one. These are some of the things among us that are "ready to die!" To this it is added,

"*Do thy first works.*"—Fill up your places in God's worship with that earnestness and constancy as when you were first seeking after the salvation of your souls—flee from those things which conscience, in its most tender and best informed state, durst not meddle with, though since perhaps they may have become trifling in your eyes—walk in your family, in the world, and in the church, with God always before you—live in love, meekness, and forbearance with one another—whatever your hands find you to do, "do it with all your might;" seeking to promote, by all means, the present and eternal welfare of all around you.

Finally, brethren, let us not forget to intermingle *prayer* with all we do. Our need of God's Holy Spirit to enable us to do any thing, and every thing, truly good, should excite us to this. Without his blessing all means are without efficacy, and every effort for revival will be in vain. Constantly and earnestly, therefore, let us approach his throne. Take all occasions especially for *closet prayer*: here, if any where, we shall get fresh strength, and maintain a life of communion with God. Our Lord Jesus used frequently to retire into a mountain alone for prayer; he, therefore, that is a *follower* of Christ, must follow him in this important duty.

Dearly beloved brethren, farewell! "Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the pres-

ence of his glory with exceeding joy—To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen.”

1795.

WHY CHRISTIANS IN THE PRESENT DAY  
POSSESS LESS JOY THAN THE PRIMI-  
TIVE DISCIPLES.

Dear brethren,

WHILE the judgments of God are abroad in the earth, and multitudes are trembling for the fate of nations and dreading lest famine, or war, or pestilence, which have desolated other countries, should receive a commission to lay waste our own, we have reason to bless God that he has manifested his care of his churches, by continuing the gospel among us, and granting it to be attended with some increasing success. The wall of Jerusalem is built up even in troublous times; and we were not only permitted to assemble in peace, but received tidings from most of the churches of a peculiarly pleasing nature.

In our letter of last year we addressed you on the nature and grounds of *joy in God*. In pursuance of the resolution of the last association, we shall in this attempt an answer to the following inquiry: WHY IS IT THAT CHRISTIANS IN THE PRESENT DAY COME SO FAR SHORT OF THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS IN THE POSSESSION OF JOY?

That the thing itself is a fact can admit but little doubt. It is true, the joy of the primitive Christians was not always the same: previous to the resurrection and ascension of Christ they appeared to possess it in a far less degree than afterwards; and in their brightest days they, no doubt, as well as we, occasionally experienced intervening clouds. The account, nevertheless, which is given of them, intimates that a vein of sacred enjoyment ran through their lives. No sooner had they beheld the Lord Jesus taken up into heaven than they returned “to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.” And after the day of Pentecost, and the addition of 3000 souls by the preaching of Peter, they are described as “continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and eating their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.” Persecution itself did not destroy their happiness, but helped, on some considerations, to increase it. Having been summoned before the Jewish council for preaching Christ, they “departed rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name’s sake.” Covered with stripes, thrust into an inner prison, and with their feet made fast in the stocks, “at mid-

night Paul and Silas prayed, and sung praises to God!” Nor was this happy frame of mind confined to the apostles, or to the first few years after the introduction of Christianity: Peter could say of the generality of Christians at the time when he wrote his first epistle, “whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet, believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

Such accounts of the primitive disciples afford an affecting view of the great disparity between them and the generality of modern Christians. The following particulars, amongst others, must needs strike an attentive observer:—First, they rejoiced in all their labors, complying with the commands of Christ rather as an honor and a privilege than as mere matter of duty. The prompt and cheerful manner in which they attended to divine institutions exhibits a lovely picture of genuine Christianity. “They that gladly received the word were baptized.—And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” There is not a single instance in all the New Testament of an avowed Christian living in the neglect of the ordinances of Christ. Such an idea seems never to have entered into their minds; but it is unnecessary to say that with us it is a common case.—Secondly, they *rejoiced*, as we have seen, *in tribulation*, considering the reproaches of the world as an honor, and counting it all joy when they fell into divers temptations: but the highest exercises of grace that are common amongst us fall short in this particular: instead of rejoicing *in tribulation*, we are ready to account it pretty much if we rejoice *notwithstanding it*.—Thirdly, they experienced an habitual consciousness of their being the subjects of gracious dispositions, and consequently enjoyed a settled persuasion of their interest in Christ. In all the New Testament we have scarcely an instance of a Christian being at a loss to perceive the evidence of his Christianity. What are called doubts and fears amongst us, and which make up so large a proportion of our religious experiences, seem to have occupied scarcely any place amongst them. This fact, if there were no other, calls for serious inquiry into the cause or causes of it. The *language* that we are in the habit of using, when speaking of our love, or faith, or obedience, betrays a sad defect in the exercise of these heavenly graces. Instead of being able to say, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee”—“I have believed, and therefore have I spoken”—“God whom I serve in the gospel,”—and the like, we are ready to be startled at such professions, and feel ourselves under a kind of necessity to soften the language into a wish, a willingness, or a desire. *I desire to*



love, I *would* believe, I *wish* to be obedient, are expressions which frequently occur in our prayers and hymns; but wishing to love, and desiring to obey, when substituted in the place of love and obedience themselves, are inadmissible. Such language is unknown in the Scriptures, unless it be found in the character of the slothful, whose *desire* is said to *kill him*; and indicates, to say the least, but a small degree of real religion.

To account for this disparity is of importance, as by a knowledge of the causes of a malady we may be directed to the proper means of a cure. Peculiar dejection in *individuals* may often be accounted for from the peculiarity of their habits, constitution, circumstances, opportunities, and connections; but when it affects a body or generation of men it must be traced to other causes. Why should not we go on our way rejoicing in the same manner, and to the same degree, as the primitive Christians? We have the same gospel, the same promises, and the same hopes. The *joy and peace* which they experienced was *in believing*: the great, interesting, and transporting truths of the gospel were the source whence they derived their bliss. The Lord Messiah was come according to promise, and by laying down his life had delivered all who should believe in him from the wrath to come.—Through his death also they were freed from the spirit of bondage attendant on the former dispensation, and received the spirit of adoption whereby they cried Abba, Father.—The thunders of Sinai gave place to the blessings of Sion, the city of the living God; to the holy society of which, as to a kind of heaven upon earth, they were introduced.—Commissioned to publish these glad tidings to every creature, and persuaded that the cause in which they had engaged would sooner or later universally prevail, they labored with courage and unwearied assiduity, and the work of the Lord prospered in their hands.—Finally, in hope of eternal life, the joy set before them, like their Lord and Master, they endured the cross, despised the shame, and went and sat down with him on his throne, as he had overcome, and sat down with his Father on his throne.

Now which of these sources of joy has been exhausted? Are not Christ and the gospel, and its promises, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever? Is not God as willing now that the heirs of promise should have strong consolation as he was formerly? Are not the great blessings of eternal life as real and as interesting in the present age as in any that have gone before? and being promised to the smallest degree of real grace, even to the giving of a cup of cold water to a disciple of Jesus because he belongs to him, can it, in ordinary cases, be a difficult matter for a decided friend of

Christ to obtain a clear satisfaction of his interest in them? Wherefore is it then, if the Son hath made us free, that we are not, in the most extensive meaning of the term, *free indeed*?

Some would probably attribute the whole to *divine sovereignty*, alleging that the Holy Spirit divideth to every age and generation, as well as to every man, severally as he will. It is allowed that the Holy Spirit, in all his gifts and operations, acts in a way of sovereignty, since we have no claim upon him for any thing which he bestows: but it does not belong to the idea of sovereignty that there be no reason for it, or wisdom in it. The Holy Spirit divideth to every age and every man severally as he will, but he always willeth what is wise and good, or what is best upon the whole. The sovereignty of creatures may degenerate into caprice; but this cannot be supposed of God. Now it belongs to the wisdom of God to bestow his favors in such a way as to encourage righteousness, and stamp an honor upon the means of his own appointment: hence it is that the joys of salvation, though bestowed in a way of sovereignty, are generally connected with a close walk with God, and communicated through means adapted to the end.

It has been thought by others that the difference betwixt us and the primitive Christians, in these things, may be accounted for, at least in some degree, by a difference of *circumstances*. Life and immortality were *brought to light*, as the Scriptures express it, by the gospel. The wonderful transition therefore which they experienced, some of them from the darkness of Judaism and others from the still grosser darkness of Paganism, together with the great success of their labors, must have forcibly impressed their minds with both surprise and joy. There is some truth, no doubt, in this observation; but it ought to be considered, on the other hand, that our circumstances are in some respects more favorable to joy than theirs; sufficiently so perhaps to balance, if not over-balance, those in which theirs were superior to ours. Let the following things be considered in connection with each other: First, glorious things are spoken in prophecy of what shall be done for the church in the last periods of time. All the light and glory that have ever yet appeared will be eclipsed by what is to come. One peculiar characteristic of the kingdom of Christ is, that it is *progressive*. God is saying to his church under every new dispensation, or period of her existence, "Remember not the former things, neither consider the things of old: behold I do a new thing in the earth."—As if he should say, You may forget the past, and yet have enough to fill you with joyful admiration. The Jewish dispensation contained a greater display of God than had

ever been made before; yet, compared with the dawn of gospel glory, it was but as the moon to the sun; and glorious as this was, with regard to all that had gone before, it will bear no comparison to that which is to follow after. Not only shall "the moon be confounded," but "the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and before his ancients gloriously!" Secondly, the time when things shall be accomplished cannot be very far off. The sacred writers of the New Testament frequently intimate that they had passed the meridian of time, and were entered, as it were, into the afternoon of the world. They speak of their times as the *last days*, and of themselves as those "on whom the ends of the world were come." They declared that "the end of all things was at hand;" that the judge was "at the door;" and the concluding warning of the book of God is couched in this strong expression, "Surely I come quickly!" But, if the end of all things was then at hand, what must we think of it after a lapse of nearly 1800 years? Thirdly, it is highly probable, if not more than probable that in the ages yet to come there may be much more effected than in all preceding ages put together. Some of the greatest events in prophecy we know remain to be accomplished; particularly, the utter downfall of antichrist, the conversion of the Jews, and the universal spread of true religion: but if the end of all things be at hand, and such great events are first to be accomplished, we have every reason to expect great changes, in quick succession, and at no great distance of time. The convulsions of the present day may, for aught we know, be some of the throes of creation travailing in pain for the glorious liberty of the sons of God. At all events, the day of the church's redemption draweth nigh; it is time therefore to "lift up our heads," and to go forth in prayer, and praise, and joyful exertion to meet the Bridegroom. Could the apostles and primitive Christians have been placed in our situation, they would have rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—We must turn our attention then to some other objects besides the circumstances in which we are placed as the causes of our want of joy.

We pass over the cases of such as indulge themselves in known sin, or live in the neglect of known duty, as cases easily accounted for, at one period of time as well as another; and confine our inquiry to those whose conversation is allowed in general to be regular and circumspect; so much so, at least, as to be equal to that of the body of professing Christians around them.

In the first place, let it be considered whether it does not arise from *the want of a greater degree of religion in general*.—Joy is a grace which cannot thrive by itself; it

is a kind of appendage to the lively exercise of other graces. "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."—"Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name; ask and receive, that your joy may be full."—"The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." From these passages, and many others which might be cited, it is apparent that holy joy stands connected with appropriating the great truths of the gospel to our particular cases—with importunate prayer in the name of Christ—and with the practice of righteousness and peace. The same persons who are daily employed in praising and blessing God have this testimony given of them, "and great grace was upon them all."

Secondly: Let it be considered whether another reason be not *our neglect of a more frequent and intense application to those objects whence joy arises*.—We have seen already that the sources from which the primitive Christians derived their joy were the great doctrines of the gospel; but it is a lamentable fact that the generality of professing Christians amongst us content themselves with a very superficial knowledge of these things. There are but few even amongst the goldily in our day that so enter into the spirit and glory of the gospel as clearly to distinguish it from error speciously disguised. Hence, if a minister who is much respected by his people turn aside from even important truth, it is common for many of them to go off with him. If Christians were properly rooted and grounded in the gospel—if they understood not only *what* they believe, but *wherefore* they believe it—they would not be shaken with every wind of doctrine; nor would many of the principles which prevail in the present age excite even a momentary hesitation in their minds. But, if we do not so understand the truth as clearly to distinguish it from error, it cannot be supposed that we should be greatly affected by it. It is by drawing waters from the wells of salvation that we have joy; but these wells are deep, and, in proportion as we are wanting in an understanding of divine things, we may be said to have nothing to draw with.

Thirdly: To this may be added *the want of public spirit*.—The primitive Christians were all intent on disseminating the gospel through the world; and it was in the midst of this kind of employment, and the persecutions which attended it, that they are said to have been "filled with joy and the Holy Ghost."—Acts xiii. 52. Much of the joyful part of religion is lost by rendering it the *immediate* object of our pursuit. The chief end for which great numbers read their Bibles, and hear the word, is that they may be comforted, and obtain some satisfaction of their being in a state of salvation; but this is not the way in which the comfort

of the gospel are obtained. There are things which, if pursued as our chief end, will elude our grasp and vanish from our sight: such is reputation amongst men, and such is religious joy. If we pursue the public good, not for the sake of applause, but from a disinterested regard to the well-being of our species, reputation will follow us; and, if the glory of God and the prosperity of his cause occupy the first place in our affection, we shall not in ordinary cases be wanting in peace and heavenly consolation. If a portion of that time which we spend in ransacking for evidence in the mass of past experiences were employed in promoting the cause of God in the world, and seeking the welfare of the souls and bodies of men, it would turn to a better account. In seeking the salvation of others we should find our own. The love of Zion has the promise of personal prosperity. Ardently to promote the honor of God, and the good of mankind, is itself an evidence, and the highest evidence, of true religion: while, therefore, we feel conscious of the purity of our present motives, we have less occasion for reflections on the past. There is a much greater satisfaction too in this way of obtaining comfort than in the other; for, however former exercises of grace might be strong and decisive at the time, yet it must be difficult to realize them merely by a distant recollection. It is much better also, and more for our profit, to live in the exercise of grace, than barely to remember that we did so at some former period of our lives. We appeal to your own hearts, brethren, with respect to your late disinterested exertions for carrying the gospel amongst the heathen,—we appeal to those of you especially who have had the undertaking most at heart, whether, since your own comfort has in a sort been overlooked, and swallowed up in concern for the salvation of others, you have not felt more of the joyful part of religion than you did before; yea, may we not add, more than at any former period in your remembrance?

Fourthly: Much may be owing to our viewing the mixture of evils which pervade creation on a contracted scale.—If the evils which befall creatures be considered merely as evils, and our minds are disposed to pore upon them, we must necessarily feel dejected; but if every partial evil contribute to the general good—if every adversity, whether it respect our persons, families, christian connections, country, or species, be but as a wheel acting upon other wheels, and all necessary to complete the vast but well-ordered machinery—the contemplation of evil itself in this view must raise the heart instead of depressing it. The miseries of the present and of the future life, if contemplated by a good man merely as

evils, must overwhelm him and destroy his present peace. What can he do? He cannot shun the abodes of the wretched in this world, and so put the thoughts of their miseries far from him, for that were inhumanity; neither can he allow himself to doubt of the execution of divine threatenings in the world to come, for that were to arraign the justice, goodness, wisdom, and veracity of God in denouncing them: but he may view things on an enlarged scale, and thus perceive that *all is right and best upon the whole*. This is to be of one mind with God, and so to be truly happy. It is in this way that we are reconciled to our own adversities: could Jacob have seen through the gracious designs of God with regard to his children, or, though he might be unable to do this, had he properly recollected the divine promise, “I will surely do thee good,” he would not have concluded, as he did, that *all these things were against him*.

It is thus that upon some occasions we are reconciled to the miseries of a public execution. Awful beyond conception it must be to the party who suffer; but justice may require the sacrifice. However natural affection, therefore, may for a moment revolt at the idea of inflicting death, all concern for a suffering individual is absorbed by the love of our species, and a regard for the general good.—It is thus that the heavenly inhabitants are described as being not only reconciled to the overthrow of mystical Babylon, but as rejoicing in it. While the merchants who traded in her wares bitterly lament her fall, crying “alas! alas! that great city! In one hour is she made desolate!” the friends of God are called to a very different employment: “Rejoice over her thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her. And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven saying, *Hallelujah!*—true and righteous are his judgments, for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said *Hallelujah!*—and her smoke rose up forever and ever!” Was there any malevolence or unchristian bitterness in all this? No: it was only viewing things on a large scale; viewing them as God views them, and feeling accordingly.

The primitive Christians were in the habit of considering all things as working together for good, and so of deriving joy from every occurrence. If the world smiled upon them they rejoiced, and availed themselves of the opportunity for spreading the gospel; or, if it frowned on them for their attachment to Christ, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for



his name sake. By thus converting every thing into food for joy, they answered to the exhortations of the apostles. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low"—"Beloved, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations"—"Rejoice evermore—In every thing give thanks." If we would feel like them we must enter into their views; we must have less of the complaining patriarch, as well as of the whining merchants; and more of that temper which prompted the holy inhabitants of heaven, on every new dispensation of providence, to cry "Amen, Hallelujah!"

Fifthly: Much is owing, no doubt, to a *spirit of conformity to the present world*, by which many Christians, especially those in prosperous circumstances, are influenced. It was a complaint made by one of the fathers (Cyprian) in the middle of the third century, a time when the church had enjoyed a considerable respite from persecution, that "each one studied how to increase his patrimony, and, forgetting what the faithful had done in apostolic times, or what they ought always to do, their great passion was an insatiable desire of enlarging their fortunes."

This complaint, every one knows, is too applicable to our times. The primitive Christians were persecuted. The Waldenses, the reformers, the puritans, and the non-conformists were the same; and, having but little security for property, they had but little motive to increase it: being driven also from the society of their persecutors, they were under very little temptation to imitate their manners; their trials were great, but they were of a different kind from ours. Having long enjoyed the blessings of religious liberty, we have relaxed in watchfulness, and the world has seemed in a measure to have lost its enmity, and to smile upon us. In consequence of this we have become upon more friendly terms with it; not merely by behaving courteously and affectionately to men in common, which is our duty; but by imbibing their spirit, court- ing their company, and subjecting ourselves to a servile compliance with their customs.

These things were extremely unfriendly to true religion. If the cares of this world be compared to thorns, which choke the word, the alluring pleasures of it are with no less propriety compared to the burning sun, through whose influence many a promising plant has withered away. Or, should the root of the matter be found in us, yet if our heads and hearts are occupied with appearance, dress, entertainments, and the like, there can be but little room for heaven or heavenly things; and consequently this joyful part of religion will be slighted and lost.

Finally: It is not to be dissembled that much is to be traced to *the manner in which*

*the gospel is preached.* The Holy Spirit ordinarily works by means of the word. It is the office of ministers to be "helpers of your joy;" but, if they partake of the spirit common to the age in which they live, their preaching will partake of it too. If the great and interesting truths of the gospel are not thoroughly understood, and felt, they cannot, in the ordinary course of things, be communicated in such a manner as greatly to interest the hearts of others. While, therefore, we recommend serious reflection to you, brethren, you also have a right to expect the same of us; and we trust we are willing to receive as well as to administer the word of exhortation. Dear brethren, farewell!

1799.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE PRIMITIVE CHURCHES ILLUSTRATED AND ENFORCED.

Beloved brethren,

WHEN the apostles, by the preaching of the word, had gathered in any place a sufficient number of individuals to the faith of Christ, it was their uniform practice, for the farther promotion of his kingdom in that place, to proceed to the forming of them into a religious society, or Christian church. Being thus associated, in the name of Christ, divine worship was carried on, Christian ordinances observed, holy discipline maintained, and the word of life, as the light by the golden candlesticks, exhibited. Amongst them our Lord Jesus Christ, as the high-priest of our profession, is represented as walking; observing the good, and applauding it; pointing out the evil, and censuring it; and holding up life and immortality to those that should overcome the temptations of the present state.

Let us suppose him to walk amongst our churches, and to address us in the manner he addressed the seven churches in Asia. We trust he would find some things to approve; but we are also apprehensive he would find many things to censure. Let us, brethren, look narrowly into the *discipline* of the primitive churches, and compare our own with it.

By discipline we do not mean to include the whole of the order of a Christian church. We have already touched on these subjects in the course of our annual address to you. The particular object to which we shall, at this time, request your attention, is that part of church-government which consists in A MUTUAL WATCH OVER ONE ANOTHER, AND THE CONDUCT WE ARE DIRECTED TO PURSUE IN CASES OF DISORDER. A great part of our duty consists in cultivating what is lovely, but this is not the whole of it; we must prune as well as plant, if we would

bear much fruit, and be Christ's disciples. One of the things applauded in the church of Ephesus was, that *they could not bear them that were evil.*

Yet we are not to suppose from hence that no irregularity or imperfection whatever is an object of forbearance. If uniformity be required in such a degree as that every difference in judgment or practice shall occasion a separation, the churches may be always dividing into parties, which we are persuaded was never encouraged by the apostles of our Lord, and cannot be justified in trivial or ordinary cases. A contrary practice is expressly taught us in the epistle to the Romans (ch. xiv. ;) and the cases in which it is to be exercised are there pointed out. An object of forbearance, however, must be one that may exist without being an occasion of dispute and wrangling in the church: it must "not be to doubtful disputations."—Ver. 1. It must also respect things which do not enter into the essence of God's *kingdom*, the leading principles of which are "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."—Ver. 16, 17. That which does not subvert the gospel of the kingdom, nor set aside the authority of the King, though it be an imperfection, is yet to be borne with. Finally, it must be something which does not "destroy the work of God," or which is not inconsistent with the progress of vital religion in the church, or in one's own soul.—Ver. 20. In all such cases we are not to judge one another, but every man's conscience is to be his judge.—Ver. 23.

In attending to those things which are the proper objects of discipline, our first concern should be to see that all our measures are aimed at *the good of the party, and the honor of God.* Both these ends are pointed out in the case of the Corinthian offender. All was to be done "that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord," and to *clear themselves* as a church from being partakers of his sin. If these ends be kept in view, they will preserve us from much error; particularly from the two great evils into which churches are in danger of falling—false lenity, and unchristian severity. There is often a party found in a community who, under the name of tenderness, are for neglecting all wholesome discipline; or, if this cannot be accomplished, for delaying it to the utmost. Such persons are commonly the advocates for disorderly walkers, especially if they be their particular friends or relations. Their language is, "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone." My brother hath fallen to-day, and I may fall to-morrow. This spirit, though it exists only in individuals, provided they be persons of any weight or influence, is frequently known to impede the due execution of the laws of Christ; and, if it pervade the community, it will soon reduce it to the lowest

state of degeneracy. Such for a time was the spirit of the Corinthians; but, when brought to a proper sense of things, "what carefulness it wrought in them, yea what clearing of themselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what vehement desire, yea what zeal, yea what revenge."—In opposing the extreme of false tenderness, others are in danger of falling into unfeeling severity. This spirit will make the worst of every thing, and lead men to convert the censures of the church into weapons of private revenge. Persons of this description know not of what manner of spirit they are. They lose sight of the good of the offender. It is not love that operates in them; for love worketh no evil. The true medium between these extremes is a union of *mercy and truth.* Genuine mercy is combined with faithfulness, and genuine faithfulness with mercy; and this is the only spirit that is likely to "purge iniquity."—Prov. xvi. 6. Connivance will produce indifference; and undue severity will arm the offender with prejudice, and so harden him in his sin: but the love of God and of our brother's soul is adapted to answer every good end. If we love God, like Levi, we shall know no man after the flesh, nor acknowledge our nearest kindred; but shall observe his word, and keep his covenant. And, if we love the soul of our brother we shall say, He is fallen to-day, and I will reprove him for his good: I may fall to-morrow, and then let him deal the same with me. Love is the grand secret of church discipline, and will do more than all other things put together towards insuring success.

In the exercise of discipline it is necessary to distinguish between faults which are the consequence of sudden temptation, and such as are the result of premeditation and habit. The former require a compassionate treatment; the latter a greater portion of severity. The sin of Peter in denying his Lord was great, and, if noticed by the enemies of Christ, might bring great reproach upon his cause; yet, compared with the sin of Solomon, it was little. He first gave way to licentiousness, then to idolatry, and on finding that God, as a punishment for his sin, had given ten tribes to Jeroboam, he sought to kill him. Cases like this are eminently dangerous, and require a prompt and decided treatment, like that which we should use towards a child fallen into the fire; in which a moment's delay might be fatal, and in which hesitating tenderness would be the height of cruelty. "Of some have compassion, making a difference: others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh."—Jude 22, 23. See also Gal. vi. 1.

In all our admonitions regard should be had to the age and character of the party. An elder, as well as other men, may be in a

fault, and a fault that may require to be noticed; but let him be told of it in a tender and respectful manner. While you expostulate with younger men on a footing of equality, pay a deference to age and office. "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren."—1 Tim. v. 1.

In the due execution of Christian discipline there are many things to be done by the members of churches *individually*; and it is upon the proper discharge of these duties that much of the peace and purity of a church depends. If we be faithful to one another, there will be but few occasions for public censure. Various improprieties of conduct, neglects of duty, and declensions in the power of godliness, are the proper objects of pastoral admonition. It is one essential branch of this office to "rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering."—2 Tim. iv. 2. Nor is this work confined to pastors: Christians are directed to "admonish one another."—Rom. xv. 14. Indeed there are things which a wise and affectionate people will be concerned to take upon themselves, lest a prejudice should be contracted against the ministry, which may prevent its good effects. This is peculiarly necessary in the settling of differences in which whole families may be interested, and in which it is extremely difficult to avoid the suspicion of partiality.

In all cases of *personal offence* the rule laid down by our Lord in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew ought to be attended to; and no such offence ought to be admitted before a church till the precept of Christ has been first complied with by the party or parties concerned.

In many cases where faults are *not* committed immediately against us, but which are unknown except to a few individuals, love will lead us to endeavor to reclaim the party, if possible, without any further exposure. A *just man will not be willing* unnecessarily to make his brother a *public example*. The Scriptures give peculiar encouragement to these personal and private attempts. "If any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."—James v. 19, 20.

In cases of *evil report*, where things are said of a brother in our hearing which if true must affect his character, and the purity of the church, it cannot be right to go on to report it. Love will not lead to this. Many reports we know are unfounded; or, if true in the main, they may have been aggravated; or there may be circumstances attending the case which, if fully understood, would make things appear very different from the manner in which they have been represented. Now it is almost impossible

that any one but the party himself should be acquainted with all these circumstances, or able to give a full account of them. No time therefore should be lost ere we inquire at the hand of our brother, or, if on any consideration we feel that to be unsuitable, it would be proper to apply to an officer of the church, who may conduct it with greater propriety.

There are also cases of a still more public nature in which much of the peace and happiness of a church depend upon the conduct of its members in their individual capacity. The charge given by the apostle to the Romans (ch. xvi. 17, 18), though applicable to a church, yet seems to be rather addressed to the individuals who compose it:—"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." The characters to be *avoided* appear to be persons whose object it is to set up a party in the church, of which they may be the heads or leaders—a kind of religious demagogues. Such men are found, at one time or other, in most societies: and in some cases the peace of the churches has been invaded by strangers, who are not of their own community. Let the "brethren" have their eye upon such men. "Mark them." Trace their conduct, and you will soon discover their motives. Stand aloof from them, and "avoid" striking in with their dividing measures. In case of their being members, the church collectively considered ought, no doubt, to put away from amongst them such wicked persons: but, as every collective body is composed of individuals, if those individuals suffer themselves to be drawn away, the church is necessarily thrown into confusion, and rendered incapable of a prompt, unanimous, and decided conduct. Let members of churches therefore beware how they listen to the insinuations of those who would entice them to join their party. Men of this stamp are described by the apostle, and therefore may be known, particularly by three things:—First, By their doctrine: it is *contrary to that which has been learned of Christ*. Secondly, By their selfish pursuits: "they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies." Thirdly, By their insinuating whining pretences of affectionate regard towards their partizans: "by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple."

To this may be added, there are duties incumbent on individuals in their behavior towards persons who *lie under the censure of the church*. If they still continue in a state of impenitence, persist in their sin, or be unreconciled to the church's proceedings with them, it is of the



utmost consequence that every member should act a uniform part towards them. We may, it is true, continue our ordinary and necessary intercourse with them as men, in the concerns of this life; but there must be no familiarity, no social interchange, no visitings to them nor receiving visits from them, nothing, in short, that is expressive of connivance at their conduct. "If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, we must not keep company with such a one, no not to eat."—1 Cor. v. 11. If individual members act contrary to this rule, and carry it freely towards an offender, as if nothing had taken place, it will render the censure of the church of none effect. Those persons also who behave in this manner will be considered by the party as his friends, and others who stand aloof as his enemies, or at least as being unreasonably severe; which will work confusion, and render void the best and most wholesome discipline. We must act in concert, or we may as well do nothing. Members who violate this rule are partakers of other men's sins, and deserve the rebukes of the church for counteracting its measures.

With respect to those things which fall under the cognizance of a church in its *collective capacity*, we earnestly recommend, in general, that every thing be done not only with a view to the honor of God and the good of the party, as before observed, but with a special regard to the revealed will of Christ. That some kind of order be preserved in every community is necessary to its existence. Decency, reputation, and even worldly policy, will induce us to take some notice of gross immoralities; but this is not Christian discipline, nor will it be productive of its salutary effects. In the choice of officers few if any churches would elect a profligate; but if opulence be allowed to supply the place of spirituality, or ambitious or litigious characters be preferred on the principle of expediency, as a means of keeping them in better humor, is it not carnal? So, in matters of discipline, few churches would suffer a grossly immoral or litigious character to continue amongst them unnoticed: but if instead of a calm, impartial, and decided procedure, we enter into pusillanimous compromises with the offender, consenting that he should withdraw of his own accord—if the crimes of rich men be either entirely overlooked or but slightly touched, lest the *cause* should suffer from their being offended—or if the misconduct of poor men be disregarded on the ground of their being persons of little or no account—"are we not carnal, and walk as men?" Brethren, are there any such things amongst us? Search and consider. Such things ought not to be. The private withdraw-

ment of an individual, if it be without good reasons, may justify a church in admonishing him, and, if he cannot be reclaimed, in excluding him; but it cannot itself dissolve the relation. Till such exclusion has taken place he is a member, and his conduct affects their reputation as much as that of any other member. With regard to a neglect of discipline lest it should injure the *cause*, what cause must that be which requires to be thus supported? Be it our concern to obey the laws of Christ, and leave him to support his own cause. If it sink by a fulfilment of his commandments, let it sink. He will not censure us for not supporting the ark with unhallowed hands. And, if it be criminal to fear the rich, it cannot be less so to despise the poor. Let brotherly love abound towards both. Do all things without partiality and without hypocrisy.

We cannot enumerate all the particular cases which fall under the cognizance of a Christian church, but shall mention a few which are recorded in the Scriptures for our imitation.

A DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL, OR ANY OF ITS LEADING DOCTRINES, is an object of Christian discipline. "I would they were even cut off that trouble you."—"I have a few things against thee, because thou hast them who hold the doctrine of Balaam—so hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate."—"A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

It is worthy of notice that the only passage in the New Testament wherein heresy is introduced as an *object of discipline* makes no mention of any thing as composing it but *what relates to the principles of the party*. It may be supposed that those who were accounted heretics by the apostles were as impure in their lives as they were antichristian in their doctrine, and that they were commonly disturbers of the peace and unity of the churches; but, however this might be, neither of these evils is alleged as the ground for which the heretic was to be rejected. All that is mentioned is this: He is "subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

He is "subverted," that is, his professed faith in the gospel is in effect overturned, or rendered void; consequently he requires to be treated as an unbeliever. He is "condemned of himself;" that is, the gospel being a consistent whole, he that rejects some of its leading principles, while he professes to retain others, is certain to fall into self-contradiction; which if clearly pointed out in "a first and second admonition," he will be compelled, if he persist, obstinately to shut his eyes against the light, and thus *sin* against the dictates of his own conscience.

It has been asked, by persons who disapprove of all church proceedings on account of difference in religious principles, who is to judge what is heresy? We answer, those who are to judge what is immorality in dealing with loose characters. To suppose it impossible to judge what heresy is, or to deny that the power of so deciding rests in a Christian church, is to charge the apostolic precept with impertinence. It is true the judgment of a church may be erroneous, as well as that of an individual; and it becomes them in their decisions to consider that they will all be revised at the great day: but the same may be said of all human judgment, civil or judicial, to which no one is so void of reason as on this account to object.

It has been farther objected that censuring a person on account of his religious sentiments invades the right of private judgment, is inconsistent with the liberty of the gospel, and contrary to the leading principles on which protestants have separated from the church of Rome and protestant dissenters from the church of England. The right of private judgment, while we claim no connection with others, is an undoubted right. We may be Christians, infidels, or atheists, and none but God has any control over us: but if we desire the friendship and esteem of good men notwithstanding, or claim admission to a Christian church, or should we be in it already and claim to continue our situation, surely they would not be obliged to comply. If so our right of private judgment must interfere with that of others whose judgment tells them that there can be no fellowship between light and darkness, or communion with him that believeth and an infidel. If the liberty of the gospel consist in a right of fellowship with Christian churches whatever be our principles, it will follow not only that unbelievers may claim visible communion with believers, but that no exclusions for immorality can be justified, provided the party insists that his sentiments are in harmony with his practice. There is a great variety of opinion as to what is morality, as well as to what is truth. One loose character believes in polygamy, another in concubinage, and a third can see no harm in fornication, nor even in adultery, provided it be undiscovered.\* If the churches of Rome and England had done nothing more than exclude from their society characters whom they considered as deviating from the first principles of the gospel, without subjecting them to civil penalties or disabilities, however we might have disputed the truth of their doctrine, we could not have justly objected to their discipline. And, on the other hand, we should suppose that the separation of protestants from the one, and of protestant dissenters from the other,

was for the sake of enjoying a purer church state, wherein they might act up to the laws of Zion's King; and not that they might live as though there were no king in Israel, which is the case where every man does that which is right in his own eyes.

IN CASES NOTORIOUS AND COMPLICATED WICKEDNESS it appears that in the primitive churches immediate exclusion was the consequence. In the case of the incestuous Corinthian, there are no directions given for his being admonished, and excluded only in case of his being incorrigibly impenitent. The apostle determined what should be done—"In the name of the Lord Jesus when ye are gathered together to deliver such a one unto Satan." We cannot but consider it as an error in the discipline of some churches, where persons have been detected of gross and aggravated wickedness, that their exclusion has been suspended, and in many cases omitted, on the ground of their professed repentance. While the evil was a secret, it was persisted in, but, when exposed by a public detection, then repentance is brought forward, as it were, in arrest of judgment. But can that repentance be genuine that is pleaded for the purpose of warding off the censures of a Christian church? We are persuaded it cannot. The eye of a true penitent will be fixed upon the greatness of his sin, and he will be the last to discern or talk of his repentance for it. So far from pleading it in order to evade censure, he will censure himself, and desire nothing more than that testimony may be borne against his conduct for the honor of Christ.

But, allowing that repentance in such cases is sincere, still it is not of such account as to set aside the necessity of exclusion. The end to be answered by this measure is not merely the good of the party, but the clearing of a christian church from the very appearance of conniving at immorality, and which cannot be accomplished by repentance only. Though *Miriam* might be truly sorry for her sin in having spoken against Moses, and though she might be healed of her leprosy; yet "the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days; and after that let her be received in again."—Numb. xii. 14.

We do not suppose, however, that every notorious fault requires immediate exclusion. The general rule given is that NOTORIOUS EVILS SHOULD MEET WITH A PUBLIC REBUKE. "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear."—1 Tim. v. 20. But this proceeding does not appear to amount to exclusion; it is rather of the nature of a *censure* or *reprimand*, accompanying an admonition. To us it appears that the circumstances attending a sin ought to determine whether it require immediate exclu-

\*Such was the morality taught by Mr. Hume.



sion or not. If these be highly aggravating—if there appear to have been premeditation, intention, and perseverance in the crime—"put away from amongst yourselves that wicked person:" but, if circumstances extenuate rather than heighten the evil, solemn admonition, accompanied with rebuke, ought to suffice, and no exclusion to follow but in case of incorrigible impenitence.

There are also faults which do not come under the denomination of notorious sins, wherein directions are given for recovering the offenders WITHOUT ANY MENTION BEING MADE OF EXCLUSION, EITHER IMMEDIATE OR ULTIMATE. There is perhaps in all the churches a description of men whose characters are far from being uniformly circumspect, and yet not sufficiently irregular to warrant their being separated from communion. They are disorderly walkers; busy bodies in other men's matters, while negligent of their own; in a word, unamiable characters. Now those that are such we are directed to exhort, and charge that they conduct themselves as becometh Christians. If after this they continue disorderly, observe a degree of distance in your conduct towards them; withdraw your intimacy; let them feel the frowns of their brethren: yet be not wholly reserved, but occasionally explain to them the reasons of your conduct, affectionately admonish them at the same time to repentance and amendment of life. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which ye received of us.—For we hear that there are some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command, and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. And, if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed: yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."—2 Thes. iii. 6—15. If churches were to consult only their own reputation, they would often discard such persons at an early period: but, where there is reason to hope that the heart is right in the main, great forbearance must be exercised, and long perseverance in endeavoring to recover. How many imperfections were discovered in the conduct of the twelve apostles, while their Lord was with them, and what an example of forbearance has he left us! One character reclaimed is of greater account, and more to the honor of a Christian church, than many discarded.

Finally: A watchful eye upon the state of the church, and of particular members, with a seasonable interposition, may do more towards the preservation of good order than

all other things put together. Discourage whisperings, backbitings, and jealousies. Frown on tale-bearers, and give no ear to their tales. Nip contentions in the bud. Adjust differences in civil matters amongst yourselves. Bring together at an early period those in whom misconception and distrust have begun to operate, ere ill opinion ripen into settled dislike. By a frank and timely explanation, in the presence of a common friend, that may be healed in an hour, which, if permitted to proceed, a series of years cannot eradicate. Be affectionately free with one another. Give tender and faithful hints where it appears to you that one of your brethren is in danger of being drawn aside from the principles or spirit of the gospel. Let all be given, from their first entering into connection with you, to expect them. If any one take offence at such treatment, give him to understand that he who cannot endure a caution, or a reproof, is unfit for Christian society, and is in the utmost danger of falling into mischief.

Brethren, consider what we say, and the Lord give you understanding in all things! The free circulation of the blood, and the proper discharge of all the animal functions, are not more necessary to the health of the body, than good discipline is to the prosperity of a community.

If it were duly considered how much the general interests of religion, and even the salvation of men, may be affected by the purity and harmony of Christian churches, we should tremble at the thought of their being interrupted by us. The planting of a church in a neighborhood, where the gospel is preached, and the ordinances of Christ administered in their purity, is a great blessing. It is a temple reared for God, in which he deigns to record his name, to meet with his humble worshippers, and to bless them. We have seen churches of this description, in the midst of a career of spiritual prosperity, edifying one another in love, and gathering souls to the Redeemer's standard, all in a little time blasted and ruined by some unhappy event that has thrown them into disorder. One of the members, it may be, has acted unworthily—he is reprov'd—his relations or particular acquaintances take on his side—discipline is interrupted—the church is divided into parties—hard things are said on both sides—the bond of love is broken—tender minds are grieved, and retire—worship is but thinly attended, and the enjoyment of it is vanished—God's friends mourn in secret, and his enemies triumph, saying "aha! aha! so would we have it!" O brethren, it is a serious thing to occasion the ruin of a church of Christ! "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy!" Dearly beloved, farewell. Grace and peace be with you.



1802.

## THE PRACTICAL USES OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

Dear brethren,

IN connection with our last general letter, and agreeably to the appointment made at the yearly meeting, we now address you on a subject, not only of general interest, but which more immediately relates to that solemn profession which you have made of Christianity; namely, THE PRACTICAL USES OF THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM.

That Christian baptism is properly administered only by immersion, and to those who make a credible profession of faith in Christ, it is no part of our present design to prove. Addressing *you*, we shall take each of these particulars for granted. The only subject to which we now request your attention is the *influence* of this ordinance, where it produces its proper effects, in promoting piety in individuals, and purity in the church.

There is no part of true religion that is merely speculative: the whole is designed and adapted to sanctify the soul. We may presume, therefore, that if baptism be an ordinance of God, and of perpetual obligation in the church, it is of importance to Christian practice.

But it is not on presumptive evidence that we wish to rest the improvement of this institution, any more than the institution itself; neither shall we go about to connect with it acknowledged duties by imaginary alliances; but shall confine ourselves to those uses of the ordinance which are actually made, or suggested, in the New Testament. We could address many things to parents, and things of importance too, on bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: we could also urge it upon the children of believers that they were committed to God from their earliest infancy; but, as we find nothing of this kind in the Scriptures *connected with baptism*, however important these things would be in their place, they would be altogether irrelevant while treating on this ordinance.

Baptism is a divine institution, pertaining to the kingdom of the Messiah, or the gospel dispensation. John received it *from heaven*, and administered it to the Jews, who, on his proclaiming that *the kingdom of heaven was at hand*, confessed their sins. Jesus gave sanction to it by his example; and after his resurrection, when all power in heaven and earth was committed to him, he confirmed and extended it to believers of all nations. Whatever circumstantial differences there might be, therefore, between the baptism of John and that of Christ, they were substantially the same. There were

things in former ages which bore a *resemblance* to it; as the salvation of Noah and his family in the ark, the passage of the Israelites through the sea, divers washings or bathings prescribed by the Mosaic ritual, &c.; but the thing itself existed not, till it was revealed to the immediate forerunner of Christ.

The principal design of it appears to be, *A solemn and practical profession of the Christian religion*. Such was the baptism of John, who "said unto the people, that they should believe on him who should come after him; that is, on Christ Jesus." And such was that in the times of the apostles. Paul addressing himself to the churches in Galatia, who, after having professed to believe in Christ, cleaved to the Mosaic law as a medium of justification, thus speaks: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith: but, after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have **PUT ON CHRIST**." The allusion is to the putting on of apparel, as when one that enters into the service of a prince puts on his distinguishing attire: and the design of the sacred writer is to remind those of them who had before professed the Jewish religion that by a solemn act of their own they had, as it were, put off Moses, and put on Christ. There is a putting on of Christ which is internal, and consists in relinquishing the former lusts, and being of the mind of Christ; but that which is here referred to appears to be an *open profession* of his name, to the renouncing of every thing that stood in competition with him. It was therefore true of *as many as had been baptized*, whether they abode in the truth or not. And even their being "the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ" seems to express what they were in profession, rather than what they were in fact. They had by their baptism disowned all dependence on the privileges of birth, and the adoption which pertained to them as the children of Abraham; and declared their acquiescence in that power, or privilege, to become the sons of God, which the gospel imparts to them that believe. The mention of this was perfectly in point, as it greatly heightened the evil of their defection. The amount is, *That as many as were baptized in the primitive ages were voluntary agents, and submitted to this ordinance for the purpose of making a solemn and practical profession of the Christian faith*. It was their oath of allegiance to the King of Zion; that by which they avowed the Lord to be their God. Hence a rejection of it involved a *rejection of the counsel of God*. The sin of the Pharisees and lawyers consisted, not in their refusing to submit to baptism *as unbelievers*;

but in not embracing the Messiah, and so putting on the badge of his profession. Their rejection of this sign was justly construed as a rejection of the thing signified; as, when a rebel refuses to take the oath of allegiance, it is construed as a refusal of submission and subjection to his rightful prince.

Such, brethren, is the profession we have made. We have not only declared in words our repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; but have said the same things by our baptism. We have solemnly surrendered ourselves up to Christ, taking him to be our prophet, priest, and king; engaging to receive his doctrine, to rely on his atonement, and to obey his laws. The vows of God are upon us. We have even sworn to keep his righteous judgments; and, without violating the oath of God, we cannot go back. If it be a sin not to confess the Lord Jesus, through fear or shame, it is a still greater sin, after we have confessed him, to turn from the holy commandment.

The religion of Jesus consists partly of *truths* to be believed and partly of *precepts* to be obeyed; and the ordinance of baptism furnishes motives for a faithful adherence to both.

We have been baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit;" and have thus practically avowed our belief in them. It was at Jordan that the Father bore witness to his well-beloved Son, and that the Holy Spirit descended upon him: hither, therefore, in the early ages, men were directed to repair, that they might learn the doctrine of the trinity. If we relinquish this doctrine, we virtually relinquish our baptism. Of this there need not be a more convincing proof than the inclination which has been discovered by those who have renounced the doctrine to disuse the form of baptizing in the name of the Sacred Three.

We have also professed by our baptism to embrace that great salvation which is accomplished by the united influence of the Sacred Three. We have in effect declared our acquiescence in the freeness of the Father's grace, in the all-sufficient atonement of the Son, and in the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit: for these are the principal things by which, in the New-testament account of the economy of grace, each is distinguished. Nor can we renounce them, without virtually renouncing our baptism.

The immersion of the body in *water*, which is a purifying element, contains a profession of our faith in Christ, through the shedding of whose blood we are cleansed from all sin. Hence, baptism in the name of Christ is said to be *for the remission of sins*. Not that there is any such virtue in the element, whatever be the quantity; nor in the ceremony, though of divine appointment: but it contains a *sign* of the way in

which we must be saved. Sin is washed away in baptism in the same sense as Christ's flesh is eaten, and his blood drank, in the Lord's supper: the sign, when rightly used, leads to the thing signified. Remission of sins is ascribed by Peter not properly to baptism, but to the *name* in which the parties were to be baptized. Thus also Saul was directed to *WASH AWAY HIS SINS, calling on THE NAME OF THE LORD*. Nearly akin to this is the idea conveyed to us in the First Epistle of Peter: "The long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were *saved by water*. The like figure wherunto baptism doth *now save us* (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The salvation of Noah and his family by the ark was a *figure* of our salvation by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The ark for a time was surrounded, as it were, with waters from above, and from beneath: but it survived its trial, and those who were in it were at length brought safe to land. Christ, also, for a time sustained the deluge of wrath due to our sins; but survived the trial, rising triumphantly from the dead, and thereby saved us from everlasting death. Of this great transaction baptism is a *like figure*. It is another sign of the same thing. The resemblance of baptism by immersion to the death and resurrection of Christ, and the suitableness of the one to signify our faith in the other, are manifest. It is thus that baptism does *now save us*: not as putting away the filth of the flesh (for all the virtue contained in the ordinance itself is "the answer of a good conscience toward God,") but as affording a sign of our salvation by the victorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, as we are taught by our baptism to adhere to the doctrine of God our Saviour, so we are furnished with motives to adorn it by a *holy conversation*. Thus it is introduced in the epistles to the Romans and Colossians as a sign of our being *dead and buried* to the principles and pursuits of the present world; and, by faith in Christ, *raised* as into a new world. The *death* of Christ is emphatically mentioned as that into which we are baptized—"Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his *death*? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism *into death*; that like as Christ died, and was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Christ's dying *for sin* afforded a most powerful motive for our *dying to it*; and the immersion of the body in baptism, being *in the likeness* of the former, furnishes an additional motive to the latter.



The leading idea suggested by a death and burial seems to be that of *separation from the world*. There is no greater line of separation than that which is drawn between the dead and the living. "The dead know not any thing; and have no portion in all that is done under the sun." Such is the line which is drawn by the faith of the operation of God between the world renewed and the world depraved, of which baptism is the appointed sign. If, after this, we are found among evil doers, we may well be considered and shunned as a kind of apparitions, which have no proper concern in the affairs of mortals.

The apostle applied this reasoning against a conformity to abrogated ceremonies. "If ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" The same reasoning is applicable to other things, If we be dead with Christ, why, as though living, are we subject to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, which are of the world? Why are any of us conformed to this world; and not rather transformed by the renewing of our minds? If we be dead, and our life be hid with Christ in God, why are not our affections set on things above, and not on things on the earth? We cannot but express our concern that persons professing godliness should be carried away by the course of this world, as many are; meanly imitating the ungodly, whose conduct they ought rather to reprove. Such imitation, so far as it operates, contains a virtual renunciation of our baptism. The ideas of baptism and a separation from the world, whether connected by us or not, are strongly associated in the minds of men in general. After this, we cannot unite with them in evil, without drawing upon ourselves their most pointed censures. They may labor to seduce us for the sake of comforting themselves; and while accomplishing their purpose may suppress their private thoughts of us, and even compliment us for our liberality; but, if we comply, their pretended esteem will be turned into reproach. Nor ought we to consider this as an evil; but rather as a mercy. God has hereby set a hedge about us, which tends more than a little to preserve us from temptation. If any think otherwise, and feel uneasy that they cannot act like other men, without drawing upon themselves the censures of mankind, it is a dark sign that their hearts are not right in the sight of God.

Nor is this ordinance adapted merely to separate between believers and unbelievers *individually* considered: its design is also to draw a line of distinction between the *kingdom of Christ* and the *kingdom of Satan*. Whatever may be said of baptism as it is now generally understood and practised, and of the personal religion of those who prac-

tise it, it was *originally* appointed to be the boundary of visible Christianity. This is a principle which, if properly acted upon, would go far to prevent the confounding of the church and the world; and which, consequently, tends more than any thing of the kind to counteract ecclesiastical degeneracy and corruption. Had the Christian church in all ages admitted none to baptism, from whomsoever descended, but those who professed to repent and believe the gospel, it is scarcely conceivable that any others would have been admitted to the Lord's supper: and, if so, a stream of corruption which has actually deluged it with anti-christianism would have been diverted at the spring-head. The church might, indeed, have been corrupted from other causes, but these would have been merely *accidental*. Hypocrites and formalists might have imposed themselves upon it, as they did in some degree in the apostolic age; but they would have been intruders. Whatever of this kind might have existed, believers could not have been *constitutionally* yoked together with unbelievers. The carnal descendants of godly people could not have claimed a place in Christ's visible kingdom. The church could not have become national, embracing as its children all who are born in a Christianized country, without any profession of personal religion. Princes and nobles, if worthy, would have been received into its communion as brethren; but not as rulers or patrons: and, if unworthy, refused; even though an exposure to persecution had been the consequence. But if persons be admitted to baptism without any profession of personal religion, or upon the profession of others on their behalf, their admission to the Lord's-supper will in most cases follow as a matter of course. Indeed it *ought* to follow: for, though among evangelical dissenters these things are separated, yet from the beginning it was not so. Neither Scripture nor the practice of the ancient churches affords a single example of a baptized person, unless his conduct was grossly immoral, being ineligible to communion. And, if all who are now baptized be admitted to the supper, the line of separation will be broken; the church will be no longer a *garden enclosed*, but an open wilderness, where every beast of prey can range at pleasure. Thus, indeed, it was foretold it should be. The writer of the Apocalypse, describing the corruptions which should prevail in the *visible church* during the twelve hundred and sixty years' reign of Antichrist, represents it under the form of the *outer court* of the temple being *left out* of the measurement as profane, and *given to the Gentiles to be trodden under foot*, in like manner as the holy place and holy city had been trodden down by the heathen, in the time of Antiochus.

As the principle of believers' baptism,



properly acted upon, would prevent the admission of all unconverted characters, except hypocrites and self-deceivers, so it would have its influence in repelling *them*. The habits of some hypocritical characters, it is true, would render it an easy thing to overleap this boundary; but it is equally true that to others it would be an effectual bar. There are not a few in the religious world who would like well to be members of a Christian church, especially where the pastor is a man of respectability, provided they could be admitted without drawing upon themselves the laugh of the irreligious. There is reason to believe that many persons of genteel connections, who wish to be thought religious, and whose consciences approve of believers' baptism, are withheld by this kind of shame from offering themselves to our churches. An ordinance which thus operates possesses a mark of its pertaining to that kingdom which is *not of this world*, and into which it is *hard for a rich man to enter*.

As the leading idea suggested by a death and burial is that of *separation* from the world, so the principal thing denoted by a resurrection is an entrance into a *new* state of being. Such is that *newness of life* of which the emersion of the body from the waters of baptism is a sign, and to which it furnishes an important motive. The religion of Jesus does not consist in mere negatives. It is not enough that we be dead to the world: we must be alive to God. With real Christians old things are passed away, and all things are become new. Unless our baptism, therefore, be merely a sign, or an unmeaning ceremony, our hopes, fears, sorrows, joys, companions, principles, and pursuits, are opposite to those of this world. Even a partial return to it is inconsistent with our baptismal vows. If those who profess to be dead to the world cannot walk in the course of it without being considered and shunned as a kind of apparitions, those who are alive from the dead cannot return without resembling a living character who should take up his abode in a sepulchre.

A few general reflections will conclude this epistle.

The baptism of a number of serious Christians is an interesting and impressive spectacle! Often on such solemn occasions have we witnessed the falling tear; not only from the parties baptized, and others immediately connected with them, but from indifferent spectators. We could appeal to the consciences of many serious Christians, whether they did not receive their first convictions of the reality of religion at such opportunities. We could appeal to all of you who have been in the habit of attending the administration of this ordinance, whether it has not frequently furnished you with the most solemn and tender reflections. Has

not the sight of a number of young Christians, offering themselves willingly to the Lord, touched the secret springs of holy sensibility? Yes; you have been reminded by it of your own solemn engagements, and led to inquire in what manner they have been fulfilled. You have remembered the days of your espousals, when you first went after your Saviour as in the wilderness, and have been sweetly impelled to renew the solemn surrender. Nor have your reflections been confined to yourselves; you have considered these new accessions to the church of God as supplying the place of others that were taken away, and as fulfilling the promise, "Instead of thy fathers, shall be thy children." When a number of dear friends and useful characters have, one after another, been removed by death, you have been ready to ask, Who shall fill up their place; and by whom shall Jacob arise? But when others of promising gifts and graces have come forward, and yielded up themselves to the Lord in baptism, they have seemed in a manner to be "baptized for the dead." Thus, when the ranks of an army in a besieged city are thinned by repeated engagements, and the hearts of survivors are ready to faint, a reinforcement arrives: a body of new companions throw themselves in to its relief, and inspire them with new vigor.

Further: If the foregoing remarks be just, the *importance* of believers' baptism must appear in a very different light from that in which some have represented it. If the ordinary acknowledgments of many who live in the neglect of this ordinance, and disapprove of the zeal of others who submit to it, may be considered as expressive of their principles, their conduct is not owing to a solid conviction, arising from impartial inquiry accompanied with prayer, that it is unscriptural, or that they have already been baptized according to the institution of Christ; but to a notion that it is of *little or no account*. If it be of little or no account to bind ourselves to the Lord *in the way of his own prescribing*—to confess his name before men—to avow our being dead to the world, and alive to him—to preserve the church from being constitutionally corrupted, and yoked together with unbelievers—to obey his commandments who saith, "Repent, and be baptized *every one of you*;" and to follow his example who yielded obedience to this institute, saying, "Thus it *becometh us* to fulfil all righteousness;"—then may this excuse be admitted. But, if these things be important, then is believers' baptism important; and all attempts to depreciate it are offensive in the sight of Him who is the Lord and lawgiver of Zion.

Finally, brethren, it becomes us to beware lest that which is good in itself should, through the corruption of our nature, become

an occasion of evil. There is, perhaps, no temptation more common among religious people than to think too highly of themselves on account of their advantages. Where such a spirit is cherished, baptism may become an idol, and the table of the Lord itself a snare. It is more than possible that some may so value themselves on account of their baptism as to make it a substitute for a life of holiness and universal righteousness. It appears that some among the Corinthians approached too near, at least, to this spirit. They had been baptised . . . they had eaten and drank at the table of the Lord . . . yet they trifled with idolatry, and worldly lusts. "I would not that ye should be ignorant," said Paul, "how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; and did eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink (for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.) But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples."—"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall!" As if he had said,—Are you members of a community which has the promised presence of Christ? Our fathers also were "under the cloud." Has God interposed in your favor? They "passed through the sea," as on dry land. Have you been baptized? So were they. They "descended" in a body into the sea; were "buried," as it were, by the cloud above them and the waters on each hand of them; and afterwards "ascended" on the other side. Have you been admitted to the holy supper? They also ate of that food, and drank of that stream, the spiritual intent of which was much the same. Yet all this afforded them no security, when they provoked the divine jealousy. Notwithstanding these privileges they fell, and were destroyed of the destroyer. These things are recorded for our admonition.—Of what account then will our baptism be to us, if, instead of being dead to the world and alive to God, we be the reverse? Will baptism save us? No: it will bear witness against us!

And though we may not fall into so fatal an error as to substitute baptism in the place of holiness, righteousness, and godliness; yet if we cherish a fond conceit of ourselves, magnifying our advantages to the neglect of a spirit of humble watchfulness, our baptism, instead of aiding us, will become a snare. We do not always act up to our advantages. It is very possible that Christians who are behind us, in this particular, may notwithstanding be before us in their general character. It were vain and foolish to imagine that our possessing the truth in one instance will secure us from er-

ror in every other; or that our fulfilling this command of Christ, however important, will insure a course of universal obedience.

Let us never forget that however adapted this or that ordinance, form, or mode of church government, may be to promote our spiritual interests, yet if we rest in the means they will deceive us; or rather we shall deceive ourselves. It is the presence of Christ only that can keep us alive, either as individuals or as churches. While, therefore, we recommend the means which he has prescribed, we devoutly add, with the apostle, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all!" Amen.

1806.

THE PASTOR'S ADDRESS TO HIS CHRISTIAN HEARERS, ENTREATING THEIR ASSISTANCE IN PROMOTING THE INTEREST OF CHRIST.

Beloved brethren,

THE ministry to which God by your election has called us, forms a distinguished part of the gospel dispensation. Divine instruction was communicated under the Old Testament, and an order of men appointed of God for the purpose: but their work can scarcely be denominated *preaching*. They foretold the good news: but it is for us to *proclaim* it. The poor having the gospel preached to them is alleged in proof that the Messiah was come, and that they were not to look for another.

The very existence of Christian churches is in subserviency to the preaching of the gospel; or they would not have been described as "golden candlesticks," the use of which is to impart light to those around them. We speak not thus, brethren, to magnify ourselves. There is an important difference between Christian ministers and the Christian ministry. The former, we are ready to acknowledge, exist for your sakes. "Whether Paul, Apollos, or Cephas—all are yours;" but the latter, as being the chosen means of extending the Redeemer's kingdom, is that for which both we and you exist. "Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

These considerations will enable us to account for the joy which the apostle expressed in "Christ's being preached," even though it were from "envy;" and may teach us to rejoice in the same thing, though it be in the most corrupt communities, or even from the most suspicious motives. But, though God may cause his truth to triumph wherever and by whomsoever it is taught, yet it should be our concern to publish it willingly, and to the best advantage.

The primitive churches were not mere as-



semblies of men who agreed to meet together once or twice a week, and to subscribe for the support of an accomplished man who should on those occasions deliver lectures on religion. They were men gathered out of the world by the preaching of the cross, and formed into society for the promotion of Christ's kingdom in their own souls and in the world around them. It was not the concern of the ministers or elders only: the body of the people were interested in all that was done, and, according to their several abilities and stations, took part in it. Neither were they assemblies of heady, high-minded, contentions people, meeting together to argue on points of doctrine or discipline, and converting the worship of God into scenes of strife. They spoke the truth; but it was in love: they observed discipline; but, like an army of chosen men, it was that they might attack the kingdom of Satan to greater advantage. Happy were it for our churches if we could come to a closer imitation of this model!

We trust it is our sincere desire as ministers to be more intent upon our work: but allow us to ask for your assistance. Nehemiah, zealous as he was, could not have built the wall if the people had not had a mind to work. Nor could Ezra have reformed the abuses among the people if nobody had stood with him. But in this case the elders, when convinced of the necessity of the measure, offered themselves willingly to assist him. "Arise," said they, "for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage and do it." Such is the assistance, brethren, which we solicit at your hands.

We might enumerate the different ways in which your assistance in promoting the interest of Christ is needed. We might ask for your prayers, your early attendance, your counsels, your contributions, and your example: but what we have to offer will arise from a review of the different branches of our own labors.

In the discharge of our work we have to do with four descriptions of people, and in dealing with each we stand in need of your assistance: namely, serious and humble Christians—disorderly walkers—persons under concern about salvation—and persons manifestly unconverted.

First: It may be supposed that in every church of Christ there will be a considerable proportion of *serious and humble Christians*.—Our work in respect of them is to feed them with the wholesome doctrine of the word, and to teach them the mind of Christ in all things. The assistance which we ask of you, brethren, in this part of our ministry, is, that you would not only pray for us, but be free to impart to us the state of your minds, and whether our labors be edifying to you or not. It is not so much by a systematical statement and defence of

Christian doctrines that believers are edified, as by those doctrines being applied to their respective cases. This is the way in which they are ordinarily introduced in the Scriptures, and in which they become "words in due season." But we cannot well preach to the cases of people unless we know them. Add to this, the *interest* which you discover in the things of God has a more than ordinary influence on our minds in the delivery of them. You cannot conceive the difference between addressing a people full of tender and affectionate attention, whose souls appear in their eyes, and answer, as it were, to the word of God; and preaching to those who are either half asleep, or their thoughts manifestly occupied by other things. By looking at the one, our hearts have expanded like the flowers before the morning sun: thoughts have occurred, and sensations have been kindled, which the labors of the study could never have furnished. But, by observing the other, our spirits are contracted like the flowers by the damps of the evening, and thoughts which were interesting when alone have seemed to die as they proceeded from our lips.

It will tend not a little to increase your interest in hearing, if you exercise yourselves on other occasions in reading and reflection. If you attend to the things of God only, or chiefly, while hearing us, we shall preach to you under great disadvantage. The apostle complained of many things being hard to be uttered, owing to the Hebrews being dull of hearing; and that, when for the time they ought to have been teachers, they had need that one should teach them again which were the first principles of the oracles of God. Thinking hearers give a facility to preaching, even upon the most difficult subjects; while those whose minds are seldom occupied at other times can scarcely understand the most easy and familiar truths.

Secondly: In every church we must expect a greater or less proportion of *disorderly walkers*.—Our work, in respect of them, is to warn, admonish, and, if possible, to reclaim them; or, if that cannot be, to separate them, lest the little leaven should leaven the whole lump. But in these cases, more than in many others, we stand in need of your assistance. It is not ministers only, but all "who are spiritual," that the apostle addresses on this subject; and spiritual characters may always expect employment in restoring others in the spirit of meekness. It is of great importance to the well-being of a church that men are not wanting who will watch over one another in love, observe and counteract the first symptoms of declension, heal differences at an early period, and nip disturbances in the bud. By such means there will be but few things of a disagreeable nature, which will require either the cen-



tures of the church or the interference of the pastor.

There will be instances, however, in which both the pastor and the church must interfere; and here it is of the utmost consequence that they each preserve a right spirit, and act in concert. There are two errors in particular into which individuals have frequently fallen in these matters. One is a harsh and unfeeling conduct towards the offender, tending only to provoke his resentment, or to drive him to despair; the other is that of siding with him, apologizing for him, and carrying it so familiarly towards him in private as to induce him to think others who reprove him his enemies. Beware, brethren, of both these extremes, which, instead of assisting us in our work, would be doing the utmost to counteract us. We may almost as well abandon discipline as not to act in concert. It was on this principle that the apostle enjoined it on the Corinthians "not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one, no not to eat."

Your assistance is particularly necessary to resist and overcome those unlovely *partialities* which are too often found in individuals towards their relations or favorites. We have seen and heard of disorderly walkers, whose connections in a church have been so extensive, that, when they should have been censured or admonished, either a strong opposition was raised in their favor, or at least a considerable number have chosen to stand neuter, and so to leave the officers of the church to act in a manner alone. It is glorious to see a people in such cases acting in the spirit of Levi, who "did not acknowledge his brethren, nor know his own children; but observed God's word, and kept his covenant!"

It is often extremely difficult for a pastor to go through with such matters without injury to his character and ministry. He, being by his office obliged to take the lead, becomes the principal object of resentment; and every idle story is raked up by the party and their adherents which may wound his reputation, and impute his conduct to suspicious motives. If, in such circumstances, his brethren stand by him, he will disregard the slander of his enemies; but, if they be indifferent, it will be death to him. Should such a conduct issue in his removal, it is no more than might be expected.

Thirdly: In every church of Christ we may hope to find some persons *inquiring after the way of salvation*.—This may be the case much more at some periods than at others; but we may presume, from the promise of God to be with his servants, that the word of truth shall not be any length of time without effect. Our work in this case

is to cherish conviction, and to direct the mind to the gospel remedy. But if, when men are inquiring the way to Zion, there be none but the minister to give them information, things must be low indeed. It might be expected that there should be as many persons capable of giving direction on this subject as there are serious Christians; for who that has obtained mercy by believing in Jesus should be at a loss to recommend him to another? It is matter of fact, however, that though, as in cases of bodily disease, advisers are seldom wanting; yet, either for want of being interested in the matter, or sufficiently skilful in the word of righteousness, there are but few, comparatively, whose advice is of any value; and this we apprehend to be one great cause of declension in many churches. Were we writing on ministerial defects, we should not scruple to acknowledge that much of the preaching of the present day is subject to the same censure; but in the present instance we must be allowed to suppose ourselves employed in teaching the good and the right way, and to solicit your assistance in the work. When the apostle tells the Hebrews that, considering the time, "they ought to have been teachers," he does not mean that they ought all to have been ministers; but able to instruct any inquirer in the great principles of the gospel.

It has been already intimated that, to give advice to a person under concern about salvation, it is necessary, in the first place, that we be *interested* on his behalf, and treat him in a free and affectionate manner. Some members of churches act as if they thought such things did not concern them, and as if their whole duty consisted in sending the party to the minister. A church composed of such characters may be opulent and respectable; but they possess nothing inviting or winning to an awakened mind. To cherish conviction, and give a right direction to such a mind, we must be free and affectionate. When a sinner begins to think of his condition, such questions as the following will often cross his mind:—Was there ever such a case as mine before? Are there any people in the world who have been what I am, and who are now in the way to eternal life? If there be, who are they? Where are they? But if, while he is thinking what he must do to be saved, he neither sees nor hears any thing among you which renders it probable that such was ever your concern—if, as soon as a sermon is ended, he sees merely an exchange of civilities, and, on leaving the place, observes that all the congregation immediately fall into conversation about worldly things, what can he think? Either that there is nothing in religion, or, if there be, that he must seek elsewhere for it. The voice of a Christian church to those who attend upon their ministry should be

that of Moses to Hobab: "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord hath said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

It is of great consequence to the well-being of a church, that there be persons in particular in it who are accessible to characters of this description, and who would take a pleasure in introducing themselves to them. Barnabas, who, by a tender and affectionate spirit, was peculiarly fitted for this employment, was acquainted with Saul while the other disciples were afraid of him. It was he that introduced him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Affection, however, is not the only qualification for this work: it requires that you be *skilful in the word of righteousness*; else you will administer false consolation, and may be instrumental in destroying, instead of saving souls. Not that it requires any extraordinary talents to give advice in such cases; the danger arises principally from inattention and erroneous views of the gospel.

If, brethren, you would assist us in this delightful work, allow us to caution you against one prevailing error, and to recommend one important rule. The *error* to which we allude is, **TAKING IT FOR GRANTED THAT THE PARTY HAS NO DOUBTS AS TO THE GOSPEL WAY OF SALVATION, AND NO UNWILLINGNESS TO BE SAVED BY IT, PROVIDED GOD WERE BUT WILLING TO SAVE HIM.**

Such are probably his thoughts of himself; and the only question with him is, whether he have an *interest* in Christ and spiritual blessings. Hence he is employed in searching for something in his religious experience which may amount to an evidence of his conversion; and in talking with you he expects you to assist him in the search. But do not take this account of things as being the true one: it is founded in self-deception. If he understood and believed the gospel way of salvation, he would know that God was willing to save any sinner who is willing to be saved by it. A willingness to relinquish every false confidence, every claim of preference before the most ungodly character, and every ground of hope save that which God has laid in the gospel, is all that is wanting. If he have this, there is nothing in heaven or earth in the way of his salvation. In conversing with such a character we should impress this truth upon him, assuring him that if he be straitened it is not of God, but in his own bowels—that the doubts which he entertains of the willingness of God, especially on account of his sinfulness and unworthiness, are no other than the workings of a self-righteous opposition to the gospel (as they imply an opin-

ion that, if he were less sinful and more worthy, God might be induced to save him)—and that if he be not saved it will be owing to his thus continuing to stumble at the stumbling stone of allowing that that he believeth, and is willing to be saved by, is not the way, while yet his very manner of believing is contrary, we should labor to persuade him that he does not yet understand the deceit of his own heart—that, if he were willing to come to Christ for life, there is no doubt of his being accepted; in short, that, whenever he is brought to be of this mind, he will not only ask after the good way, but walk in it, and will assuredly find rest unto his soul.

The *rule* we recommend is this: **POINT THEM DIRECTLY TO THE SAVIOUR.** It may be thought that no Christian can misunderstand or misapply this important direction, which is every where taught in the New Testament. Yet, if you steer not clear of the above *error* you will be unable to keep to it. So long as you admit the obstruction to believing in Christ to consist in something distinct from disaffection to the gospel way of salvation, it will be next to impossible for you to exhort a sinner to it in the language of the New Testament. For how can you exhort a man to that which you think he desires with all his heart to comply with, but cannot? You must feel that such exhortations would be tantalizing and insulting him. You may, indeed, conceive of him as ignorant, and as such labor to instruct him; but your feelings will not suffer you to exhort him to any thing in which he is involuntary. Hence, you will content yourselves with directing him to wait at the pool of ordinances, and it may be to pray for grace to enable him to repent and believe, encouraging him to hope for a happy issue in God's due time. *But this is not pointing the sinner directly to Christ.* On the contrary, it is furnishing him with a resting-place short of him, and giving him to imagine that duties performed while in unbelief are pleasing to God.

If you point the awakened sinner directly to the Saviour, after the manner of the New Testament, you will not be employed in assisting him to analyze the distresses of his mind and administering consolation to him from the hope that they may contain some of the ingredients of true conversion, or at least the signs that he will be converted. Neither will you consider distress as ascertaining a happy issue, any otherwise than as it leads to Christ. If the question were, Do I believe in Jesus for salvation? then, indeed, you must inquire what effects have been produced. But it is very different where the inquiry is, What shall we do? or, What shall I do to be saved? The murderers of Christ were distressed; but Peter did not attempt to comfort them by alleging that this was a hopeful sign of their conversion, or by



any way directing their attention to what was within them. On the contrary, he exhibited the Saviour, and exhorted them to repent and be baptised in his name. The same may be said of the Philippian jailor. He was in great distress, yet no comfort was administered to him from this quarter, nor any other, except the salvation of Christ. Him Paul and Silas exhibited, and in him directly exhorted him to believe. The promise of rest is not made to the weary and heavy laden, but to those who *come to Christ* under their burdens.

Once more: If you keep this *rule*, though you will labor to make the sinner sensible of his sin (as till this is the case he will never come to the Saviour,) yet you will be far from holding up this his sensibility as affording any warrant, qualification, or title to believe in him, which he did not possess before. The gospel itself is the warrant, and not any thing in the state of the mind; though, till the mind is made sensible of the evil of sin, it will never comply with the gospel.

Fourthly: There is in all congregations and neighborhoods a considerable number of people who are *living in their sins*, and in a state of *unconcernedness about salvation*.—Our work in respect of them is, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, to declare unto them their true character, to exhibit the Saviour as the only refuge, and to warn them to flee to him from the wrath to come. In this also there are various ways in which you may greatly assist us. If, as heads of families, you were to inquire of your children and servants what they have heard and noticed on the Lord's-day, you would often find occasion to second the impressions made by our labors. It is also of great consequence to be endued with that wisdom from above which dictates a word in season to men in our ordinary concerns with them. Far be it from us to recommend the fulsome practice of some professors, who are so full of what they call religion as to introduce it on all occasions, and that in a most offensive manner. Yet there is a way of dropping a hint to a good purpose. It is admirable to observe the easy and inoffensive manner in which a patriarch introduced some of the most important truths to a heathen prince, merely in answer to the question, How old art thou? "The days of the years of my pilgrimage," said he, "are a hundred and thirty years; few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers, in the days of their pilgrimage." This was insinuating to Pharaoh that he and his fathers before him were strangers and pilgrims upon the earth—that their portion was not in this world, but in another—that the life of man, though it extended to a hundred and thirty years, was but a few days—and that those few days

were mixed with evil—all which, if the king reflected on it, would teach him to set light by the earthly glory with which he was loaded, and to seek a crown which fadeth not away.

You are acquainted with many who do not attend the preaching of the word. If, by inviting them to go with you, an individual only should be caught, as we say, in the gospel net, you would save a soul from death. Such examples have frequently occurred. It is an established law in the divine administration that men, both in good and evil, should in a very great degree draw and be drawn by each other. The ordinary way in which the knowledge of God is spread in the world is, by every man saying to his neighbor and to his brother, Know the Lord. It is a character of gospel times, that "Many people shall go and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Add to this, by visiting your neighbors under affliction you would be furnished with many an opportunity of conversing with them to advantage. Men's consciences are commonly awake at such seasons, whatever they have been at others. It is as the month to the wild ass, in which they that seek her may find her.

Finally: Enable us to use strong language when recommending the gospel by its holy and happy effects.—Unbelievers constantly object to the doctrine of grace as licentious; and, if they can refer to your unworthy conduct, they will be confirmed, and we shall find it impossible to vindicate the truth of God without disowning such conduct, and it may be you on account of it: but if we can appeal to the upright, the temperate, the peaceable, the benevolent, the holy lives of those among whom we labor, it will be of more weight than a volume of reasonings, and have a greater influence on the consciences of men. A congregation composed of kind and generous masters, diligent and faithful servants, affectionate husbands, obedient wives, tender parents, dutiful children, and loyal subjects, will be to a minister what children of the youth are said to be to a parent: *As arrows in the hand of a mighty man*:—"Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

These, brethren, are some of the principal ways in which we affectionately solicit your assistance in promoting the interest of Christ. In doing this, we virtually pledge ourselves to be ready on all occasions to engage in it. We feel the weight of this implication. Let each have the other's prayer, that we may both be assisted from above, without which all the assistance we can render each other will be unavailing.



Should this address fall into the hands of one who is yet in his sins, let him consider that the object of it is his salvation; let him reflect on the case of a man whom many are endeavoring to save, but he himself, with hardened unconcern, is pressing forward to destruction; and finally, should he bethink himself, and desire to escape the wrath to come, let him beware of false refuges, and flee to Jesus, the hope set before him in the gospel.

1807.

ON MORAL AND POSITIVE OBEDIENCE.

Dear brethren,

IN addressing these our annual letters to you, it is our desire to lead you on in the divine life, that, not contented with a superficial acquaintance with religion, you may clearly understand its most discriminating principles. The winds of doctrine which abound, by which many, like children, are tossed to and fro and carried away, require that you grow up into Him in all things who is the head, even Christ.

Concerning the subject of our present address, namely, *moral and positive obedience*, suffice it to say, we think we perceive some serious evils growing up in certain parts of the Christian world for want of distinct ideas concerning it, and wish to arm your minds against them. All we shall attempt will be to give a clear statement of the distinction, and to point out the use of it in the Christian religion.

An unreserved obedience to the revealed will of God, in whatever form it is delivered, is the scriptural test of faith and love. You have professed to believe in Christ for salvation, and have been baptized in his name; but this is not all; the same commission which requires this directs also that the disciples should be instructed in the whole mind of Christ: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." As the commandments of Christ, however, are not all of the same kind, so neither is our obedience required to be yielded in all respects on the same principles.

The distinction of obedience into *moral* and *positive* is far from being novel. It has been made by the ablest writers, of various denominations, and must be made if we would understand the Scriptures. Without it, we should confound the eternal standard of right and wrong given to Israel at Sinai (the sum of which is love to God and our neighbor) with the body of "carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation." We should also confound those precepts and examples of the New Testament which arise from the relations we stand in to God and to one another with positive institutions which arise merely from the

sovereign will of the Lawgiver, and could never have been known had he not expressly enjoined them. Concerning the former, an inspired writer does not scruple to refer the primitive Christians to that sense of right and wrong which is implanted in the minds of men in general; saying, "Whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report*; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." But, concerning the latter, he directs their whole attention to Christ, and to those who acted under his authority. "Be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ."—"Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the *ordinances* as I delivered them to you." The one is commanded because it is *right*; the other is right because it is *commanded*. The great principles of the former are of perpetual obligation, and know no other variety than that which arises from the varying of relations and conditions; but those of the latter may be binding at one period of time, and utterly abolished at another.

We can clearly perceive that it were inconsistent with the perfections of God not to have required us to love him and one another, or to have allowed of the contrary. Children also must needs be required to "obey their parents; for this is *right*." But it is not thus in positive institutions. Whatever wisdom there may be in them, and whatever discernment in us, we could not have known them had they not been expressly revealed; nor are they ever enforced as being *right* in themselves, but merely as being of divine appointment. Of them we may say, Had it pleased God, he might in various instances have enjoined the opposites: but of the other we are not allowed to suppose it possible, or consistent with righteousness, to require any thing different from that which is required.

The design of moral obligation is to preserve order in the creation; that of positive institutions, among other things, to prove us, whether, like Abraham in offering up his son, we will yield implicit obedience to God's commandments, or whether we will hesitate till we perceive the reason of them. The obligation of man to love and obey his Creator was coeval with his existence: but it was not till God had planted a garden in Eden, and there put the man whom he had formed, and expressly prohibited the fruit of one of the trees on pain of death, that he came under a positive law. The former would approve itself to his conscience as according with the nature of things: the latter as being commanded by his Creator.

Having briefly stated our views of the subject, we proceed to point out the uses to

which it is applicable in the exercise of Christian obedience.

Far be it from us to amuse the churches we represent with useless distinctions, or speculations which apply not to the great purposes of practical godliness. If we mistake not, brethren, a clear view of the subject, as stated above, will furnish you with much important instruction.

We need only remind you of the use of this distinction in reducing to a narrow compass the *baptismal* controversy. Your ablest writers have shown from hence the fallacy of all reasonings in favor of infant baptism from the Abrahamic covenant, from circumcision, or from any ground of mere *analogy*: and not your writers only; for the principle is conceded by a considerable number of our most learned opponents.\* In instituted worship, we have only to understand the will of our divine Lawgiver *in relation to the subject in question*, and to obey it.

But this is not the sole, nor perhaps the principal use to be made of the distinction. We are not only taught by it to look for express precept or example, in things positive, but *not to look for them in things moral*. In obedience of the latter description there is not that need of minute rules or examples as in the former; but merely of general principles, which naturally lead to all the particulars comprehended in them. To require express precept or example, or to adhere in all cases to the literal sense of those precepts which are given us, in things of a moral nature, would lead to very injurious consequences. We may, by a disregard of that for which there is no express precept or precedent, omit what is manifestly right; and, by an adherence to the letter of scriptural precepts, overlook the spirit of them, and do that which is manifestly wrong.

If we do nothing without express precept or precedent, we must build no places for Christian worship, form no societies for visiting and relieving the afflicted poor, establish no schools, endow no hospitals, nor contribute any thing towards them, nor any thing towards printing or circulating the Holy Scriptures. Whether any person pretending to serious religion would deny these things to be the duty of Christians, we cannot tell; some, however, on no better ground, have thought themselves at liberty to lay aside *family worship, and the sanctification of the Lord's-day*. There is no express precept or precedent for either, that we recollect, in the New Testament. But the worship of God, being of moral obligation, extends to the various relations and situations in life. In duties of this description, it is not God's usual, at least not his

universal method, to furnish us with minute precepts, but rather with general principles which will naturally lead us to the practice of them. We have no account of any particular injunction given to Abraham respecting the order of his family. God had said to him in general, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect;" and this was sufficient. "I know Abraham, said the Lord, that *he will* command his children, and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, and do justice and judgment." And with respect to "the sanctification of the Lord's-day," so far as it relates to its being the day appointed for Christian worship, rather than the seventh—that is to say, so far as it is positive—though we have no express precept for it, yet there are not wanting precedents, which amount to the same thing. As to the keeping of the day "holy to the Lord," this is moral, and not positive, and is therefore left to be inferred from general principles. If God be publicly worshipped, there must be a time for it; and that time requires to be devoted to him. Whatever was moral in the setting apart of the seventh day for divine worship (and that something was so may be presumed from its being one of the ten commandments) applies to *any* day that shall be appointed for the like purpose. Positive institutions have all something moral pertaining to them, as it respects the holy manner in which they are to be observed. It was on this principle that Paul censured as immoral the manner in which the Corinthians attended to a positive institute. His reasoning on that subject applies to the Lord's day. He argued from the ordinance of breaking bread being *the Lord's* supper that eating *their own* supper while attending to it was rendering it null and void. And, by a parity of reasoning, it follows, from the first day of the week, being *the Lord's* day, that to do *our own* work, find *our own* pleasure, or speak *our own* words on that day, is to render it null and void. Of the former the apostle declared, "THIS IS NOT TO EAT THE LORD'S SUPPER;" and of the latter he would, on the same principle, have declared, THIS IS NOT TO KEEP THE LORD'S DAY. After all, it is surprising if any who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity can feel this to be a burden. "Why, even of your own selves, judge ye not what is right?"

If, on the other hand, we do every thing according to the letter of moral precepts, we shall often overlook the true intent of them, and do that which is manifestly wrong. Our Lord's precepts, in his sermon on the mount, if so understood, would contain a prohibition of all *public* prayers, and *public* contributions, and require such an acquiescence in injuries as he himself, when smitten before Pilate, did not exemplify. The right hand, in certain cases, must be

\* See Booth's *Pædobaptism Examined*, Vol. 1. Chap. 1.



cut off, and the right eye plucked out. If God prosper our lawful undertakings, we must not only avoid all increase of property, but must retain no part of what we have. No beggar nor borrower that asks assistance, whether he need it or not, must, on any consideration, be refused.

We believe self-love will be a sufficient preservative against such expositions being reduced to practice: but, if the principle be retained, it will be at work in some other form, diverting the attention from weightier matters, and reducing religion to ceremony and litigious trifling.

It was not our Lord's design, in these precepts, to regulate external actions so much as motives. Many of his precepts, it is true, mention the act, and the act only; but their aim is at the principle. It was the spirit of *ostentation* in prayer and almsgiving, of *selfish resentment* in cases of injury, and of *the love of the world* in cases of accumulating and retaining property, that he meant to censure.

Neither is it by attending to a ceremony which the country and climate ordinarily render unnecessary, that we comply with our Lord's precept, "Ye ought to wash one another's feet;" but "by love serving one another." We may wash the saints' feet, and neglect to dry their clothes, or administer necessary comfort to them when cold and weary. We may give a disciple a cup of cold water, and keep back what is more valuable for our own use. If we be taught of God to love one another, we shall find little difficulty in understanding and practising these precepts.

By confounding moral and positive obedience, some have reasoned thus: "You agree to take your children to family and public worship, teach them to read the Bible with seriousness and attention, instruct them in catechisms, &c., and *why do you not take them to the Lord's supper?*" We answer, The former are moral obligations; but the latter is not. These are binding on all mankind, and therefore ought to be inculcated from the earliest dawn of knowledge, even though we had never been told to "bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" but this is the immediate duty of believers only. Others, on the same principle, have argued thus, or to this effect: "You withhold the unconverted from joining at the Lord's table, and *and why not also from joining in family and public prayer?*" Our answer is the same. The Lord's supper is the immediate duty of believers only; but prayer is binding on men in general, however far they may be from performing it in an acceptable manner. To join with unbelievers in what is not their immediate duty is to become partakers of their sin; but to allow them to join with us in what is the duty of every one is not so.

We ought to pray for such things as both we and they stand in need of, and if they unite with us in desire it is well for them; if not, the guilt remains with themselves, and not with us.

If we be not greatly mistaken, many disputes which have divided Christians on the *form, order, and government of the church of Christ*, might at least have been considerably diminished by a proper attention to this subject. While one party contends for an Erastian latitude, or that no divine directions are left us on these subjects, and that the church must be modelled and governed according to circumstances, the other seems to have considered the whole as a system of positive institutions, requiring in all things the most literal and punctilious observance. The truth lies, we apprehend, between these extremes; and the way to find it is to ascertain *on what principles* the apostles proceeded in forming and organizing Christian churches, *POSITIVE OR MORAL*. If the former, they must have been furnished with an exact model, or pattern, like that which was given to Moses in the mount, and have done all things according to it: but, if the latter, they would only be furnished with *general principles*, comprehending, but not specifying, a great variety of particulars.

That the framing of the tabernacle was positive there can be no doubt; and that a part of the religion of the New Testament is so is equally evident. Concerning this, the injunctions of the apostle are minute and very express. "Be ye followers (imitators) of me, as I also am of Christ."—"In this I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the *ordinances* as I delivered them to you."—"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." But were we to attempt to draw up a formula of church government, worship, and discipline, which should include any thing more than *general outlines*, and to establish it upon express New-testament authorities, we should attempt what is impracticable.

We doubt not but the apostles acted under divine direction; but in things of a moral nature that direction consisted, not in providing them with a model, or pattern, in the manner of that given to Moses, but in furnishing them with *general principles*, and enduing them with holy wisdom to apply them as occasions required.

We learn from the Acts and the epistles that the first churches were congregations of faithful men, voluntarily united together for the stated ministration of the word, the administration of Christian ordinances, and the mutually assisting each other in promoting the cause of Christ; that they were governed by bishops and deacons; that a bishop was an overseer, not of other ministers, but of the flock of God; that the gov-



ernment and discipline of each church was within itself; that the gifts of the different members were so employed as to conduce to the welfare of the body; and that, in cases of disorder, all proper means were used to vindicate the honor of Christ, and reclaim the party.

These, and others which might be named, we call *general principles*. They are sometimes illustrated by the incidental occurrence of examples, and which, in all *similar cases*, are binding: but it is not always so. That a variety of cases occur in our times, in which we have nothing more than general principles to direct us, is manifest to every person of experience and reflection. We know that churches were formed, elders ordained, and prayer and praise conducted with "the understanding," or so as to be understood by others; but in what particular manner they proceeded in each we are not told. We have no account of the formation of a single church, no ordination service, nor any such thing as a formula of worship. If we look for express precept or example for the removal of a pastor from one situation to another, we shall find none. We are taught, however, that for the church to grow unto a holy temple in the Lord it requires to be "fitly framed together." The want of "fitness" in a connection, therefore, especially if it impede the growth of the spiritual temple, may justify a removal. Or, if there be no want of fitness, yet, if the material be adapted to occupy a more important station, a removal of it may be very proper. Such a principle may be misapplied to ambitious and interested purposes; but, if the increase of the temple be kept in view, it is lawful, and in some cases attended with great and good effects.

This instance may suffice instead of a hundred, and goes to show that the forms and orders of the New-testament church, much more than of the Old, are founded on the reason of things. They appear to be no more than what men who were possessed of the wisdom from above would, as it were instinctively, adopt, even though no specific directions should be given.

But, to place the matter beyond all doubt, let us refer to the professions and practices of the apostles themselves. The principles on which they *professed* to act, and which they inculcated on others, were these: "Let all things be done to edifying."—"Let all things be done decently, and in order." Whatever measures had a tendency to build up the church of God and individuals in their most holy faith, these they pursued. Whatever measures approved themselves to minds endued with holy wisdom as fit and lovely, and as tending, like good discipline in an army, to the enlargement of Christ's kingdom, these they followed, and inculcated on the churches. And however worldly minds

may have abused the principle, by introducing vain customs under the pretence of *decorum*, it is that which, understood in its simple and original sense, must still be the test of good order and Christian discipline.

The way in which the apostles actually proceeded in the forming and organizing of churches corresponds with this statement of things. When a number of Christians were assembled together in the days of Pentecost, they were considered as a Christian church. But at first they had no deacons, and probably no pastors, except the apostles. And, if the *reason* of things had not required it, they might have continued to have none. But in the course of things *new service* rose upon their hands, therefore they must have *new servants* to perform it; for, said the apostles, "It is not *reason* that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. *Wherefore*, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." In this process we perceive nothing of the air of a ceremony, nothing like that of punctilious attention to forms, which marks obedience to a positive institute; but merely the conduct of men endued with the wisdom from above; servants appointed when service required it, and the number of the one regulated by the quantity of the other. All things are done "decently and in order;" all things are done "to edifying."

It is not difficult to perceive the wisdom of God in thus varying the two dispensations. The Jewish church was an army of soldiers who had to go through a variety of forms in learning their discipline: the Christian church is an army going forth to battle. The members of the former were taught punctilious obedience, and led with great formality through a variety of religious evolutions: but those of the latter (though they also must keep their ranks, and act in obedience to command whenever it is given) are not required to be so attentive to the mechanical as to the mental, not so much to the minute observance of forms as to the spirit and design of them. The order of the one would almost seem to have been appointed for order's sake: but in that of the other the utility of every thing is apparent. The obedience of the former was that of children; the latter that of sons arrived at maturer age.

As our Saviour abolished the Jewish law of divorce, and reduced marriage to its original simplicity; so, having abolished the form and order of the church as appointed by Moses, he reduced it to what, as to its first principles, it was from the beginning, and to what must have corresponded with the desires of believers in every age. It was natural for "the sons of God," in the days of Seth, to assemble together, and to

“call upon the name of the Lord;” and their unnatural fellowship with unbelievers brought on the deluge. And, even under the Jewish dispensation, wicked men, though descended from Abraham, were not considered as Israelites indeed, or true citizens of Zion. The friends of God were then “the companions of those that feared him.” They “spoke often one to another,” and assembled for mutual edification. What then is gospel church-fellowship, but godliness ramified, or the principle of holy love reduced to action? There is scarcely a precept on the subject of church discipline, but what may, in substance, be found in the Proverbs of Solomon.

Nor does it follow that all forms of worship and church-government are indifferent, and left to be accommodated to times, places, and circumstances. The principles, or general outlines of things, are marked out, and we are not at liberty to deviate from them; nor are they to be filled up by worldly policy, but by a pure desire of carrying them into effect according to their true intent.

It does follow, however, that Scripture precedent, important as it is, is not binding on Christians in things of a *moral* nature, unless the *reason* of the thing be the same in the case to be proved as in the case adduced. The first Christians met in an “upper room;” for they had no proper places of worship. But it does not follow that we who have more convenient houses should do so. The first Christians were exhorted to “salute one another with a *holy kiss*.” The reason was, it was the custom in the east for men in general in this manner to express their affection; and all that the apostle did was to direct that this common mode of affectionate salutation should be used in a religious way. In places where it is a common practice, it may still be used to express the strength of Christian affection: but, in a country where the practice is nearly confined to the expression of affection between the sexes, it is certainly much more liable to misconstruction and abuse. And as it was never a divine institution, but merely a human custom applied to a religious use, where this custom has ceased, though the spirit of the precept remains, yet the form of it may lawfully be dispensed with, and Christian affection expressed in the ordinary modes of salutation.

Again: The Corinthian men were forbidden to pray or prophesy with their heads covered. The reason was, the head being uncovered was then the sign of authority, and its being covered of subjection. But in our age and country each is a sign of the contrary. If, therefore, we be obliged to wear any sign of the one or the other, in our religious assemblies, it requires to be reversed.

It also follows that, in attending to *posi-*

*tive institutions*, neither express precept nor precedent is necessary in what respects the *holy manner* of performing them, nor binding in regard of mere *accidental circumstances*, which do not properly belong to them. It required neither express precept nor precedent to make it the duty of the Corinthians, when they met to celebrate the Lord’s supper, to do it soberly and in the fear of God, nor to render the contrary a sin. There are also *circumstances* which may on some occasions accompany a positive institution, and not on others; and which, being therefore no part of it, are not binding. It is a fact that the Lord’s supper was first celebrated with “unleavened bread;” for no leaven was found at the time in all the Jewish habitations: but no mention being made of it, either in the institution or in the repetition of it by the apostle, we conclude it was a mere accidental circumstance, no more belonging to the ordinance than its having been in “a large upper room.” It is a fact, too, that our Lord and his disciples sat in a reclining posture at the supper, after the manner of sitting at their ordinary meals: yet none imagine this to be binding upon us. It is also a fact, with regard to the *time*, that our Saviour first sat down with his disciples on the evening of the “fifth day” of the week, “the night in which he was betrayed:” but though that was a memorable night, and worthy to be noticed as a circumstance tending to show the strength of his love, yet seeing the words of the institution decide not *how often* it shall be attended to, and no mention is made of its being afterwards a rule, but, on the contrary, of the church at Troas meeting for the purpose on another day, no one imagines it to be a rule of conduct to us.

The same might be said of *females* being admitted to communion, a subject on which a great deal has been written of late years in the baptismal controversy. Whether there be express precept or precedent for it, or not is no consequence; for the distinction of sex is a mere *circumstance*, in no wise affecting the qualifications required, and therefore not belonging to the institution. It is of just as much account as whether a believer be a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free man; that is, it is of no account at all.—“For there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female; but all are one in Christ Jesus.” Express precept or precedent might as well be demanded for the parties being tall or low, black or white, sickly or healthy, as for their being male or female. If the difference between a professed believer and an unconscious infant, with respect to baptism, were no greater than this is with respect to the supper, we would allow it to be lawful to baptize the latter, though neither express precept nor precedent be found for the practice.



It follows, lastly, that many disputes on which Christians have divided and crumbled into parties might well have been spared, and that without any disadvantage to the cause of pure religion. Whatever necessity there may be for withdrawing from those who walk disorderly, we have no warrant to consider those things as the standard of order, and to censure our brethren for deviating from them, which belong not to the laws of Christ, but either to a mere difference of opinion respecting their application, or to some accidental circumstance which may or may not attend them.

Finally, brethren, while you guard against the extremes of certain disciplinarians on the one hand, avoid those of anti-disciplinarians on the other. Allow us to repeat, what was observed at the beginning, that *an unreserved obedience to the revealed will of God, in whatever form it is delivered, is the scriptural test of faith and love.* "Prove what that good, perfect, and acceptable will of the Lord is." "Do all things without murmurings and disputings." Remember that "the wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Dearly beloved, farewell. The God of love and peace be with you.

1810.

THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT THE GRAND  
ENCOURAGEMENT IN PROMOTING THE  
GOSPEL.

Dear brethren,

IN our last public letter, we addressed you on the work of the Holy Spirit: in this we would direct your attention to the PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT AS THE GRAND ENCOURAGEMENT IN PROMOTING THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

We take for granted that the spread of the gospel is the great object of your desire. Without this it will be hard to prove that you are Christian churches. An agreement in a few favorite opinions, or on one side of a disputed subject, or even a disagreement with others, will often induce men to form themselves into religious societies, and to expend much zeal and much property in accomplishing their objects: but this is not Christianity. We may be of what is called a sect, but we must not be of a sectarian spirit, seeking only the promotion of a party. The true churches of Jesus Christ travail in birth for the salvation of men. They are the armies of the Lamb, the grand object of whose existence is to extend the Redeemer's kingdom.

About eighteen years ago God put into the hearts of a number of your ministers

and members to do something for his name among the heathen; the effect of which has been to give an impulse to those labors for the attainment of the same object in our several stations at home. The success which has followed is sufficient to induce us to press forward in the work, and to search after every direction and every consideration that may aid our progress.

The influence of the Holy Spirit is by some disowned, by others abused; and even those who are the subjects of it, from various causes, enjoy much less of it than might be expected.

Those who *disown* it apply all that is said in the Scriptures on the subject to the communication of miraculous and extraordinary gifts, as though the Lord had long since forsaken the earth, and men were now to be converted by the mere influence of moral suasion. It is on this principle that writers, according to the leaning which they have felt towards the opinions of this or that political party, have represented the work of converting the heathen as either extremely easy or absolutely impossible. It is not for us to acquiesce in either; but, while we despair of success from mere human efforts, to trust in Him who, when sending forth his servants to teach all nations, promised to be with them "to the end of the world."

There are those, on the other hand, who *abuse* the doctrine, by converting it into an argument for sloth and avarice. God can convert sinners, say they, when he pleases, and without any exertions or contributions of ours.—Yes, he can; and probably he will. Deliverance will arise from other quarters, and they who continue in this spirit will be destroyed!

Even those in whom the spirit of God is, *enjoy much less of it than might be expected*; and this principally for want of the things which were stated in our letter of last year; namely, setting a proper value upon it, seeking it with fervent prayer, placing an entire dependence upon it, and maintaining a deportment suitable to it. In proving, therefore, that the promise of the Holy Spirit is the grand encouragement in promoting the spread of the gospel, we have not merely to oppose the adversaries of the doctrine, but to instruct and impress the minds of its friends. With these ends in view, let us recommend to your consideration the following remarks.

First: The success of God's cause under the Old Testament was considered by believers in those days as depending entirely upon God.—God had a cause in the world from the earliest ages, and this it was which interested the hearts of his servants. It was for the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in the world that he blessed the seed of Abraham, and formed them into a people. This was the *work* that he carried on from



generation to generation among them. When, therefore, sentence was passed on the people who came up out of Egypt, that they should die in the wilderness, Moses, who seems on that occasion to have written the 90th Psalm, was deeply concerned, lest, in addition to temporal judgments, the Lord should withdraw from them his Holy Spirit. "Let thy work," said he, "appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children; and let the beauty of Jehovah our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us: the work of our hands establish thou it." It is worthy of notice that this prayer was answered. Though the first generation fell in the wilderness, yet the labors of Moses and his companions were blessed to the second. These were the most devoted to God of any generation that Israel ever saw. It was of them that the Lord said, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first-fruits of his increase." It was then that Balaam could not curse, but, though desirous of the wages of unrighteousness, was compelled to forego them, and his curse was turned into a blessing. We are taught by this case, amidst temporal calamities and judgments, in which our earthly hopes may be in a manner extinguished, to seek to have the loss repaired by spiritual blessings. If God's work does but appear to us, and our posterity after us, we need not be dismayed at the evils which afflict the earth.

Similar remarks might be made on the state of the church at the captivity. When the temple was burnt, and the people reduced to slavery in a foreign land, it must seem as if the cause of God in the world would go to ruin. Hence the prayer of Habakkuk, "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid. O Lord, revive, (or preserve alive) thy work in the midst of the years: in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." This prayer also was answered. The work of God did not suffer, but was promoted by the captivity. The church was purified, and the world, beholding the divine interposition, acknowledged, "The Lord hath done great things for them."

After the return of the captives, they went about to rebuild the temple; but they had many adversaries, and no military force to protect them. On this occasion the prophet Zechariah (who with Haggai stood to strengthen the builders) had a vision. He saw and behold "a candlestick, all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it; and his seven lamps thereon: and seven pipes to the seven lamps; and two olive trees on each side of the bowl, which, through the golden pipes emptied the golden oil out of themselves."

On inquiry of the angel what these meant, he was answered, "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." As if he had said, "This vision contains a message of encouragement to Zerubbabel, the purport of which is, Not by army or by power, &c. For, like as the candlestick is supplied without the hand of man, so God will prosper his cause, not by worldly power or armies, but by his gracious influence and superintending providence. Here, also, a lesson is taught us, not to wait for legal protection, or even toleration, before we endeavor to introduce the gospel into a country; but to engage in the work, trusting in God, not only to succeed our labors, but, while acting on Christian principles, either to give us favor in the eyes of those with whom we have to do, or strength to endure the contrary.

Further: The success of the gospel in the times of the apostles is ascribed to the influence of the Holy Spirit, as its first or primary cause. That the truth of the doctrine, and even the manner in which it was delivered, contributed as second causes to its success, is allowed. Such appears to be the meaning of Acts xiv. 1. "They so spake that a great multitude believed." But, if we look to either of these as the first cause, we shall be unable to account for the little success of our Lord's preaching when compared with that of his apostles. He spoke as never man spoke; yet compared with them he labored in vain, and spent his strength for nought and in vain. It is the Holy Spirit to which the difference is ascribed. They did greater works than he, because, as he said, "I go to the Father."

In promising to "be with his disciples to the end of the world," he could refer to no other than his *spiritual* presence; to this, therefore, he taught them to look for encouragement. To this cause the success of the apostle is uniformly ascribed. "The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord. — God always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of his knowledge by us in every place.—The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, and she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. —The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds."

The great success which prophecy gives us to expect in the latter days is ascribed to the same cause. Upon the land of my people shall be thorns and briers—"until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high." Then the wilderness would be a fruitful field, and that which had been hitherto considered as a fruitful field would be counted a forest.

If the success of the gospel were owing to the pliability of the people, or to any pre-

paredness, natural or acquired, for receiving it, we might have expected it to prevail most in those places which were the most distinguished by their morality, and most cultivated in their minds and manners. But the fact was that in Corinth, a sink of debauchery, God had "much people;" whereas in Athens, the seat of polite literature, there were only a few individuals who embraced the truth. Nor was this the greatest display of the freeness of the Spirit: Jerusalem, which had not only withstood the preaching and miracles of the Lord, but had actually put him to death—Jerusalem bows at the pouring out of his Spirit; and not merely the common people, but "a great company of the priests, were obedient to the faith."

To the above may be added, the *experience* of those whose ministry has been most blessed to the turning of sinners to God.—Men of light and speculative minds, whose preaching produces scarcely any fruit, will go about to account for the renewal of the mind by the established laws of nature: but they who see most of this change among their hearers, see most of God in it, and have been always ready to subscribe to the truth of our Lord's words to Peter, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."

To this brief statement of the evidence of the doctrine, we shall only add a few remarks to enforce "the prayer of faith" in your endeavors to propagate the gospel both at home and abroad.—This is the natural consequence of the doctrine. If all our help be in God, to him it becomes us to look for success. It was from a prayer-meeting, held in an upper room, that the first Christians descended, and commenced that notable attack on Satan's kingdom in which three thousand fell before them. When Peter was imprisoned, prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. When liberated by the angel, in the dead of night, he found his brethren engaged in this exercise. It was in prayer that the late undertakings for spreading the gospel among the heathen originated. We have seen success enough attend them to encourage us to go forward; and probably if we had been more sensible of our dependence on the Holy Spirit, and more importunate in our prayers, we should have seen much more. The prayer of faith falls not to the ground. If "we have not," it is "because we ask not;" or, if "we ask and receive not," it is "because we ask amiss." Joash smote thrice upon the ground and stayed, by which he cut short his victories. Something analogous to this may be the cause of our having no more success than we have.

Consider, brethren, the dispensation under which we live.—We are under the kingdom

of the Messiah, fitly called "the ministration of the Spirit," because the richest effusions of the Holy Spirit are reserved for his reign, and great accessions to the church from among the Gentiles ordained to grace his triumphs. It was fit that the death of Christ should be followed by the out-pouring of the Spirit, that it might appear to be what it was, its proper effect; and that which was seen in the days of Pentecost was but an earnest of what is yet to come. To pray under such a dispensation is coming to God in a good time. In asking for the success of the gospel, we ask that of the Father of heaven and earth in which his soul delighteth, and to which he has pledged his every perfection; namely to glorify his Son.

Finally: Compare the current language of prophecy with the state of things in the world, and in the church.—In whatever obscurity the minutiae of future events may be involved, the events themselves are plainly revealed. We have seen the four monarchies, or preponderating powers, described by Daniel as successively ruling the world; namely, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman. We have seen the last subdivided into ten kingdoms, and the little papal horn growing up among them. We have seen the saints of the Most High "worn out" for more than a thousand years by his persecutions. We have seen his rise, his reign, and, in a considerable degree, his downfall. "The judgment is set," and they have begun to "take away his dominion;" and will go on "to consume and to destroy it unto the end." And, when this is accomplished, "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, will be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." It is not improbable that "the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound," have already commenced; which voice, while it ushers in the vials or seven last plagues upon the antichristian powers, is to the church a signal of prosperity: for, the seventh angel having sounded, voices are heard in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." The glorious things spoken of the church are not all confined to the days of the millennium; many of them will go before it, in like manner as the victorious days of David went before the *rest*, or pacific reign, of Solomon, and prepared its way. Previous to the fall of Babylon, an angel is seen flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth; and, before the terrible conflict in which the beast and the false prophet are taken, the Son of God is described as riding forth on a white horse, and the armies of heaven as following him. The final ruin of the antichristian cause will be brought



upon itself by its opposition to the progress of the gospel.

The sum is, that the time for the promulgation of the gospel is come; and, if attended to in a full dependence on the promise of the Spirit, it will, no doubt, be successful.—The rough places in its way are smoothing, that all flesh may see the salvation of God. The greatest events pertaining to the kingdom of heaven have occurred in such a way as to escape the observation of the unbelieving world, and it may be of some believers. It was so at the coming of our Lord, and probably will be so in much that is before us. If we look at events only with respect to instruments, second causes, and political bearings, we shall be filled with vexation and disquietude, and shall come within the sweep of that awful threatening, "Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operations of his hands, he will destroy them and not build them up." But, if we keep our eye on the kingdom of God, whatever become of the kingdoms of this world, we shall reap advantage from every thing that passes before us. God in our times is shaking the heavens and the earth: but there are things which cannot be shaken. "Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear."

1815.

THE SITUATION OF THE WIDOWS AND ORPHANS OF CHRISTIAN MINISTERS, &c.

Dear brethren,

The subject to which we this year invite your attention is THE SITUATION OF THE WIDOWS AND ORPHANS OF CHRISTIAN MINISTERS, AND OF MINISTERS THEMSELVES WHO BY AGE, OR PERMANENT AFFLICTION, ARE LAID ASIDE FROM THEIR WORK.

We have not been used to address you on subjects relating to our own temporal interests; nor is this the case at present; for the far greater part of those who have been most active in forming the institution for which we plead have no expectation of deriving any advantage from it, but, feeling for many of their brethren, they are desirous of alleviating their condition.

*Mercy* is a distinguishing character of the religion of the Bible, especially to the *fatherless and the widow*. The great God claims to be their protector and avenger. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow, is God in his holy habitation."—"Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry. And my wrath shall wax hot,

and I will kill you with the sword: and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless." Mercy to the fatherless and the widow is introduced as a test of true religion. "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world." The affliction of the fatherless and the widow is a subject taken for granted. From the day of their bereavement, dejection takes possession of their dwelling, and imprints its image on every object around them. And, when to this is added that from time to time their sources of the necessaries of life are in a great measure dried up, a full cup of affliction must needs be their portion. At first many feel for them, and weep with them: but time and a number of similar cases wear away these impressions; and, being unprotected, it is well if they be not exposed to oppression; and, even where there is no particular want of kindness towards them, yet their cases, being but little known, are often but little regarded.

The widow and fatherless children of *ministers* have peculiar claims on the benevolence of the churches. The ministerial profession, like that of arms, requires the subjects of it, if possible, not to "entangle themselves with the affairs of this life, that they may please him who has chosen them to be soldiers." On this ground, a large proportion of ministers, living entirely on the contributions of their hearers, have no opportunity of providing for their families after their decease. You, brethren, by the blessing of God on your diligent attention to business, are generally enabled to meet this difficulty. You have business in which to bring up your children from their early years; but they seldom have: and when you have taught them an honorable calling you can spare something to set them up in trade; but it is rarely so with them.

Yet the post occupied by your ministers is honorable and important. Regardless of the sneers of the irreligious, they feel it to be so. To be chosen and approved by a Christian congregation, next to the choice and approbation of Christ, is their highest ambition. This honor, however, involves them in circumstances which require your consideration. You expect them to maintain a respectable appearance, both in their persons and families: but to do this, and at the same time to pay every one his due, often renders it impossible to provide for futurity.

Our churches, when in want of ministers, are solicitous to obtain men of talent. There may be an excess in this desire, especially where personal godliness is overlooked; and it is certain that great talents are far from being common. But view Christian ministers as a body, and we may



appeal to you whether they be not possessed of talents, which, if employed in business, would with the blessing of God, ordinarily bestowed on honest industry, have rendered both them and their families equally comfortable with you and yours. And shall their having relinquished these temporal advantages to serve the cause of Christ, and to promote your spiritual welfare, be at the expense of the comfort of their widows and children when they have finished their course?

In the persecuting times which preceded the Revolution of 1688, our protestant dissenting forefathers had but little encouragement to provide for futurity, as the fruits of their industry were taken from them: but it is not so with us; our property is secure; and we are therefore able to contribute to those benevolent objects which tend to the good of mankind.

It was an object that attracted the attention of our fathers, early in the last century, to provide for the widows of their ministers; and a noble fund it is which was then established in London for the widows of the three denominations. Besides this, a liberal plan has been pursued within the last two-and-twenty-years to increase the sum, by an addition from the profits of a magazine. It is not to supersede these benevolent means of relief, but to add to them according to the exigences of the times, and to include not only widows, but superannuated ministers and orphans, that societies like ours have of late been formed in various countries and religious connections.

The case of superannuated ministers, or ministers who by affliction are permanently laid aside from their work, has a serious influence on the well-being of the churches. Where no provision of this kind is made, every humane and Christian feeling revolts at the idea of dismissing an aged and honorable man, even though his work is done. Yet, if the congregation continue to support him, they may be unable to support another. The consequence is, in a few years the congregation has dwindled almost to nothing. To meet these cases, along with those of the fatherless and the widow, is the object of this institution.

Brethren, we feel it an honor to be supported by the free contributions of those whom we serve in the gospel of Christ. To receive our support as an expression of love renders it doubly valuable. And, if you view things in a right light, you will esteem it a privilege on your part. If your places of worship were ready built for you, your ministers supported, and their families provided for, would it be better? Would you feel equally interested in them? Would you not feel as David did when Araunah the Jebusite offered his threshing-floor, his oxen,

and his wood? "Nay, but I will not offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing!"

Should any object that ministers ought to set an example of trust in their heavenly Father, who knoweth what things they need, and of leaving their widows and fatherless children with him; we answer, when all is done that can be done to alleviate their wants, there will be abundant occasion for these graces. The trust that we are called to place in our heavenly Father does not however preclude the exercise of prudent foresight, either in ourselves, or in the friends of Christ towards us for his sake.

It is one of the most lovely features of our mission in the East, that, while our brethren are disinterestedly giving up all their temporal acquirements to the cause in which they are engaged, they have provided an asylum for their widows and orphans; so that, when a missionary dies, he has no painful anxiety what is to become of them. They have a home, which some have preferred to their native country. Is it any distrust of the Lord's goodness to be thus tender of those who are flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone, and who have helped to bear the burden of their cares? Say, rather, is it not a truly Christian conduct? But, if so, why should we not go and do likewise?

It is one of the most endearing traits in the character of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, while the salvation of the world was pending, he did not neglect to provide for his aged mother. Joseph is thought to have been dead for some years, and Mary seems to have followed Jesus, who, while upon earth, discharged every branch of filial duty and affection towards her. But, now that he is going to his Father, who shall provide for her? Looking down from the cross on her, and on his beloved disciple, he saith to the one, "Behold thy son!" and to the other, "Behold thy mother!" What exquisite sensibility do these words convey! To her it was saying, Consider me as living in my beloved disciple; and, to him, consider my mother as your own. It is no wonder that "from that time that disciple took her to his own home."

We live in times very eventful; and it cannot have escaped your observation that the success of the gospel has kept pace with the mighty changes which have agitated the world. Never, perhaps, were there such great calls on our liberality as of late years, and never were more honorable exertions made. Yet God, that giveth us all things richly to enjoy, has not suffered us to want, and has promised to supply all our need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

# LETTERS

ON

## SYSTEMATIC DIVINITY.

[ADVERTISEMENT.—About the beginning of 1814 Mr. Fuller, in compliance with the request of Dr. Ryland, began a Series of Letters, intending to prepare one every month, till he had gone through a BODY OF DIVINITY. He was however prevented by ill health and his many pressing engagements from punctually fulfilling his design; and only the following NINE Letters had been completed when he was called to his reward.]

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### LETTER I.

#### IMPORTANCE OF SYSTEMATIC DIVINITY.

My dear brother,

RESPECTING your request of a monthly letter, I acknowledge I have wished for several years past to give, as far as I was able, a *connected view of the gospel*; but have hitherto wanted either sufficient leisure, or sufficient inducement, seriously to set about it. The difficulty of giving every part of divine truth its due importance, and of placing it in the system where it will have the greatest effect, is such that I have no expectation of doing it to my own satisfaction: but I am willing to try. May the Holy Spirit of God preserve my heart and mind, that I may neither be misled, nor contribute to the misleading of others! Pray that this may be the case; and, as you receive my letters, make free remarks upon them, and let me see them.

Before I enter upon particulars, I wish to obviate some objections to the study of *systematic* divinity, and to show its importance to a just and enlarged view of the gospel. For this purpose, I must beg leave to introduce part of a sermon, which I printed nearly eighteen years ago, "On the Importance

of a Deep and Intimate Acquaintance with Divine Truth."\*

### LETTER II.

#### IMPORTANCE OF A TRUE SYSTEM.

IN my last I endeavored to show the importance of *system*: in this I shall attempt to show the importance of a *true* system; and to prove that truth itself, by being displaced from those connections which it occupies in the Scriptures, may be perverted, and prove injurious to those that hold it. No system can be supposed to be *wholly* erroneous; but, if a considerable part of it be false, the whole will be vitiated, and that which is true will be divested of its salutary influence. "If ye be circumcised," said the apostle to the Galatians, "Christ shall profit you nothing." As one truth, thoroughly imbibed, will lead to a hundred more, so will one error. False doctrine will eat as *doth a gangrene*, which though it may seem to be confined to one, part of the body, infects the whole mass, and, if not extracted, must issue in death.

\* In this edition it is not thought necessary to transcribe the passage, as it will be found in pages 204—206 of this volume, and comprises the fourth subdivision of the first part of the discourse referred to.

If one put on the profession of Christianity without cordially believing it, it will not sit easy upon him; his heart will not be in it: and if, at the same time, he live in the indulgence of secret vice, he will soon feel it necessary to new-model his religious opinions. It degrades him, even in his own esteem, to be a hypocrite, avowing one thing and practising another. In order to be *easy*, therefore, it becomes necessary for him to have a new creed, that he may answer the reproaches of his conscience, and it may be those of his acquaintance, by the assumption that *his ideas are changed*. He begins by doubting; and, having by criminal indulgence effaced all sense of the holiness of God from his mind, he thinks of him only in respect of what he calls his goodness, which he hopes will induce him to connive at his frailties. With thoughts like these, of God and of sin, he will soon find himself in possession of a system. A new field of thought opens to his mind, in which he finds very little need of Christ, and becomes, in his own eyes, a being of consequence. Such, or nearly such, was the process of those who perished, "because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." But, passing these delusive systems, truth itself, if viewed out of its *scriptural connections*, is vitiated and injurious. The members of our bodies are no otherwise beneficial than as they occupy the places in which the Creator has fixed them. If the foot were in the place of the hand, or the ear of the eye, instead of being useful, they would each be injurious: and the same is true of a preposterous view of scripture doctrines. The Jews, in the time of our Saviour, professed the same creed, in the main, as their forefathers; they reckoned themselves to believe Moses; but, holding with Moses to the exclusion of Christ, their faith was rendered void. "If ye believed Moses," said our Lord, "ye would believe me; for he wrote of me." Thus it is with us: if we hold the law of Moses to the exclusion of Christ, or any otherwise than as subservient to the gospel, or Christ and the gospel to the exclusion of the law of Moses, neither the one nor the other will profit us.

To illustrate and confirm these observations, I shall select, for examples, three of the leading doctrines of the gospel; namely, *election, the atonement, and the influence of the Holy Spirit*.

If the doctrine of *election* be viewed in those connections in which it stands in the Scriptures, it will be of great importance in the Christian life. The whole difference between the saved and the lost being ascribed to sovereign grace, the pride of man

is abased: the believer is taught to feel and acknowledge that by the grace of God he is what he is; and the sinner to apply for mercy, not as being on terms with his Maker, but absolutely at his discretion. It is frequently the last point which a sinner yields to God. To relinquish every claim and ground of hope from his own good endeavors, and fall at the feet of sovereign mercy, requires that he be born of God. If we take our views of this great subject in its connection with others, I need not say we shall not consider it as founded on any thing good *foreseen* in us, whether it be faith or good works: this were to exclude the idea of an *election of grace*; and to admit, if not to establish, boasting. Neither shall we look at the *end* in such a way as to lose sight of the *means*. We shall consider it as we do other divine appointments, not as revealed to us to be a rule of conduct, but to teach us our entire dependence upon God. We are given to believe that whatever good or evil befalls us we are *thercunto appointed*.—1 Thess. iii. 3. The time of our continuance in the world is as much an object of divine purpose as our eternal destiny; but we do not imagine, on this account, that we shall live though we neither eat nor drink; nor presume that though we leap headlong from a precipice no danger will befall us. Neither does it hinder us from exhorting or persuading others to pursue the way of safety, and to flee from danger. In these things we act the same as if there were no divine appointments, or as if we believed nothing concerning them; but, when we have done all that can be done, the sentiment of an all-disposing providence recurs to mind, and teaches us that we are still in the hands of God. Such were the views of good men, as recorded in Scripture. They believed the days of man to be *appointed*, and that he could not *pass his bounds*; yet, in time of famine, the patriarch Jacob sent to Egypt to buy corn, "that they might live, and not die." Elisha knew of a certainty that Benhadad would die; yet, speaking of him in respect of his disease, he did not scruple to say, "He may recover." The Lord assured Paul, in his perilous voyage, that "there should be no loss of any man's life; yet, when he saw the ship-men making their escape, he said to the centurion, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

A fleshly mind may ask, "How can these things be?" How can divine predestination accord with human agency and accountability? But a truly humble Christian, finding both in his Bible, will believe both, though he may be unable fully to understand their consistency; and he will find in the one a motive to depend entirely on God, and in the other a caution against slothfulness and presumptuous neglect of duty. And thus a Christian minister, if he view the



doctrine in its proper connections, will find nothing in it to hinder the free use of warnings, invitations, and persuasions, either to the converted or the unconverted. Yet he will not ground his hopes of success on the pliability of the human mind, but on the promised grace of God; who (while he prophesies to the dry bones, as he is commanded) is known to inspire them with the breath of life.

Thus it was that the apostle, while in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of his Epistle to the Romans, he traces the sovereignty of God in calling some from among the Jews, and leaving others to perish in unbelief, never thought of excusing that unbelief, nor felt any scruples in exhorting and warning the subjects of it, nor in praying for their salvation. Even in his preaching to the Gentiles, he kept his eye on them, if by any means he might provoke to emulation those who were his flesh, and might save some of them.

But, whatever this doctrine is in itself, yet, if viewed out of its connections, or in connections which do not belong to it, it will become another thing. God's election of the posterity of Abraham was of sovereign favor, and not on account of any excellence in them, natural or moral; in which view it was humbling, and no doubt had a good effect on the godly Israelites. But the Jews in our Saviour's time turned this their national election into another kind of doctrine, full of flattery towards themselves, and of the most intolerable contempt and malignity towards others. And thus the doctrine of eternal and personal election viewed in a similar light becomes a source of pride, bitterness, sloth, and presumption. Conceive of the love of God as capricious fondness—imagine, because it had no inducement from the goodness of the creature, that therefore it was without reason, only so it was and so it must be—view it, not as a means by which God would assert the sovereignty of his grace, but as an end to which every thing must become subservient—conceive of yourself as a darling of heaven, a favorite of providence, for whom divine interpositions next to miracles are continually occurring—and, instead of being humbled before God as a poor sinner, you will feel like a person who in a dream or a reverie imagines himself a king, takes state to himself, and treats every one about him with distant contempt.

If the doctrine of *atonement* be viewed in the connections in which it stands in the sacred Scriptures, it is the life-blood of the gospel system. Consider it as a method devised by the infinite wisdom of God, by which he might honor his own name by dispensing mercy to the unworthy in a way consistent with righteousness, and we shall be furnished with considerations at once the

most humiliating and transporting that were ever presented to a creature's mind.

But there are ways of viewing this doctrine which will render it void, and even worse than void. If, for instance, instead of connecting it with the divinity of Christ, we ascribe its efficacy to divine *appointment*, the name may remain, but that will be all. On this principle it *was* possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should have taken away sin, and that the cup should have passed away from the Saviour without his drinking it. As there would on this principle be no necessity for the death of Christ, so neither could there be any great love displayed by it; and, as to its constraining influence, we need not look for it.

Or, if the atonement be considered as a *reparation to man* for the injury done him by his being connected with his first parents, it is rendered void. Whatever evil we derive from our first parents, while we ourselves choose it, we are no more injured than if we derived it from our immediate parents; and it will no more bear to be pleaded at the last judgment, than it will bear to be alleged by a thief, at an earthly tribunal, that his father had been a thief before him. To argue, therefore, as some have done, that if Christ had not come into the world and given us grace, so as to remove the inability for doing good under which we lay as the descendants of Adam, we should not have been blameworthy for not doing it, is to render grace no more grace, and the atonement a satisfaction to man rather than to God. If man would not have been blameworthy without the gift of Christ and a provision of grace, it would seem a pity that both had not been withheld, and that we had not been left to the justice of our Creator, who surely might be trusted not to punish for that in which we were not in fault.

Or, if the doctrine of atonement lead us to entertain *degrading notions of the law of God*, or to plead an *exemption from its preceptive authority*, we may be sure it is not the Scripture doctrine of reconciliation. Atonement has respect to justice, and justice to the law, or the revealed will of the sovereign, which has been violated, and its very design is to repair its honor. If the law which has been transgressed were unjust, instead of an atonement being required for the breach of it, it ought to have been repealed, and the lawgiver have taken upon himself the disgrace of having enacted it. Every instance of punishment among men is a sort of atonement to the justice of the country, the design of which is to restore the authority of good government, which transgression has impaired. But if the law itself is bad, or the penalty too severe, every sacrifice made to it must be an instance of cruelty. And should a prince of the blood

royal, in compassion to the offenders, offer to suffer in their stead, for the purpose of atonement, whatever love it might discover on his part, it were still greater cruelty to accept the offer, even though he might survive his sufferings. The public voice would be, There is no need of any atonement; it will do no honor but dishonor to the legislature: and to call the liberation of the convicts an act of grace is to add insult to injury. The law ought not to have been enacted, and, now it is enacted, ought immediately to be repealed. It is easy to see from hence, that, in proportion as the law is depreciated, the gospel is undermined, and both grace and atonement rendered void. It is the law as *abused*, or as turned into a *way of life* in opposition to the gospel (for which it was never given to a fallen creature,) that the sacred Scriptures depreciate it; and not as the revealed will of God, the immutable standard of right and wrong. In this view, the apostle delighted in it: and, if we be Christians, we shall delight in it too, and shall not object to be under it as a rule of duty; for no man objects to be governed by laws which he loves.

Finally: If the doctrine of *divine influence* be considered in its scriptural connections, it will be of essential importance in the Christian life; but, if these be lost sight of, it will become injurious.

To say nothing of *extraordinary* influence, I conceive there is what may be termed an *indirect* influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, having inspired the prophets and apostles, testified *in and by them*, and often without effect. "Many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them, by thy Spirit, in thy prophets, yet would they not give ear." The messages of the prophets being dictated by the Holy Spirit, resistance of them was resistance of him. It was in this way, I conceive, that the Spirit of God *strove* with the antediluvians, and that unbelievers are said *always to have resisted the Holy Spirit*. But the divine influence to which I refer is that by which sinners are renewed and sanctified; concerning which two things require to be kept in view.

First: *It accords with the Scripture*. Is it the work of the Holy Spirit, for example, to illuminate the mind, or to guide us into truth? In order to try whether that which we account light be the effect of divine teaching, or only a figment of our own imagination, we must bring it to the written word. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The Holy Spirit teaches nothing but what is true, and what was true antecedently to his teaching it, and would have been true though we had never been taught it. Such are the glory of the divine character, the exceeding sinfulness of sin,

our own guilty and lost condition as sinners, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The test of divine illumination, therefore, is whether that in which we conceive ourselves to be enlightened be a part of divine truth as revealed in the Scriptures. Further: Is it the work of the Holy Spirit to lead us in the "paths of righteousness?" This also must be tried by the written word. The Holy Spirit leads us into nothing but what is *right* antecedently to our being led into it, and which would have been so though we had never been led into it. He that teacheth us to profit leadeth us "by the way that we should go." The paths in which he leads us for his name's sake are *those of righteousness*. Such are those of repentance for sin, faith in Christ, love to God and one another, and every species of Christian obedience. One test, therefore, of our being led by the Spirit of God, in any way wherein we walk, is, whether it be a part of the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures. As the Holy Spirit teaches us nothing but what was previously true, so he leads us into nothing but what was previously duty.

Secondly: Divine influence not only accords with the sacred Scriptures, but requires to be *introduced in those connections in which the Scriptures introduce it*. We have heard it described as if it were a *talent*, the use or abuse of which would either issue in our salvation or heighten our guilt. This is true of *opportunities* and *means of grace*, or of what is above described as the *indirect* influence of the Holy Spirit; but not of his *special* influence. The things done for the Lord's vineyard, concerning which he asks, "What more could I have done?" include the former, and not the latter. The mighty works done in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, relate, not to the *special* influences of the Spirit on their minds, but to the miracles wrought before their eyes, accompanied as they were by the heavenly doctrine. I do not remember an instance in the sacred Scriptures in which the *renewing* and *sanctifying* influences of the Spirit are thus represented. Divine influence has been introduced as an excuse for sin committed previously to our being the subject of it, as if, because it is necessary to any thing truly good being *done by* us, therefore it must be necessary to its being *required of* us. But, if so, there would have been no complaints of Simon the Pharisee for his want of love to Christ; nor of unbelievers at the last judgment for the same thing; nor would Paul have carried with him so humbling a sense of his sin in having persecuted the church of God, while in unbelief, as to reckon himself the chief of sinners on account of it. The want of divine influence has been introduced as an apology for negligence and slothfulness in the Christian life. What else do men mean when they speak of this and the other



duty as "no farther binding upon them than as the Lord shall enable them to discharge it?" If it be so, we have no sin to confess for "not doing that which we ought to have done;" for, as far as the Lord enables us to discharge our obligations, we discharge them. The doctrine of divine influence is introduced in the sacred Scriptures as a motive to activity: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

Finally: We have often heard this doctrine introduced in the pulpit in such a way as to weaken the force of what has been previously said on behalf of God and righteousness. When the sacred Scriptures speak of the *cause* of good, they ascribe every thing to God's Holy Spirit. The writers seem to have no fear of going too far. And it is the same with them when they exhort, or warn, or expostulate; they discover no apprehension of going so far as to render void the grace of God. In all their writings, the one never seems to stand in the way of the other: each is allowed its full scope, without any apparent suspicion of inconsistency between them. But is it so with us? If one dares to exhort sinners in the words of Scripture, to "repent and believe the gospel," he presently feels himself upon tender ground; and, if he does not recede, yet he must qualify his words, or he will be suspected of disbelieving the work of the Spirit! To prevent this he must needs introduce it, though it be only to blunt the edge of his exhortation—"Repent and believe the gospel; I know, indeed, you cannot do this of yourselves; but you can pray for the Holy Spirit to enable you to do it."

It is right to pray for the Holy Spirit, as well as for every thing else that we need, and to exhort others to do so; and it may be one of the first petitions of a mind returning to God, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned:" but to introduce it *instead of repenting and believing*, and as something which a sinner *can* do, though he cannot do the other, is erroneous and dangerous.

### LETTER III.

#### PLAN PROPOSED TO BE PURSUED.

I wish, in this letter, to state the principal and general outlines of what I shall attempt. In observing different systematic writers, I perceive they have taken different methods of arrangement. The greatest number proceed on the analytical plan, beginning with the being and attributes of God, the creation of the world, moral government, the fall of angels and men, and so proceed to redemption by Jesus Christ, and the benefits and obligations resulting from it. One eminent divine, you know, has treated the

subject historically, tracing the gradual development of divine truth as it actually took place in the order of time.\* These different methods have each their advantages; but it has for some time appeared to me that the great number of them have also their disadvantage; so much so as to render truth, in a systematic form, almost uninteresting.

I do not know how it may prove on trial, but I wish to begin with the centre of Christianity—the *doctrine of the cross*, and to work round it; or with what may be called the heart of Christianity, and to trace it through its principal veins or relations, both in doctrine and practice. If Christianity had not been comprehended in this doctrine, the apostle, who shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, could not have determined to know nothing else in his ministry. The whole of the Christian system appears to be *presupposed* by it, *included* in it, or to *arise from* it: if, therefore, I write any thing, it will be on this principle. In its favor, the following things may be alleged:—

First: It accords with *truth*. All things are said to have been created not only by Christ, but for him. All things in creation, therefore, are rendered subservient to his glory as Redeemer; and, being thus connected, they require to be viewed so, in order to be seen with advantage.

Secondly: By viewing all divine truths and duties as related to one great object, as so many lines meeting in a centre, a character of *unity* is imparted to the subject which it would not otherwise possess, and which seems properly to belong to the idea of a system. A system, if I understand it, is a *whole*, composed of a number of parts, so combined and arranged as to show their proper connections and dependencies, and to exhibit every truth and every duty to the best advantage. The unity of a number in one great object, and so forming a whole, gives an interest to the subject which it would not otherwise possess. It is interesting, no doubt, to view the works of nature as revolving round the sun as their centre; but to view nature and providence as centering in the glory of the Redeemer is much more interesting.

Thirdly: The object in which all the parts of the system are united being CHRIST must tend to shed a sweet savor on the whole. We have often heard the epithet *dry* applied to the doctrines of the gospel, especially when systematically treated: but this must have arisen from the faults or defects of the system, or from the uninteresting manner of treating it, or from a defect in the hearer or reader. The doctrine of the gospel, if imparted in its genuine simplicity, and received in faith and love, "drops as the rain and distils as the dew

\* President Edwards's History of Redemption.



upon the tender herb." I may not be able thus to impart it: but, whether I do or not, it may be done; and, so far as I or any other may fail, let the fault be imputed to us, and not to the doctrine of God our Saviour.

Fourthly: There is a singular advantage attending the study of other truths through this medium. We might know something of God and of ourselves through the medium of the divine law; and it is necessary for some purposes to understand this subject as distinct from the gospel. But a sense of the holiness and justice of God, contrasted with our depravity and guilt, might be more than we could bear. To view these great subjects on the other hand through the cross of Christ is to view the malady through the medium of the remedy, and so never to want an antidote for despair.

With the idea of all divine truth bearing an intimate relation to Christ agrees that notable phrase in Ephes. iv. 21: "The truth as it is in Jesus." To believe the truth concerning Jesus is to believe the whole doctrine of the Scriptures. Hence it is that in all the brief summaries of Christian doctrine the person and work of Christ are prominent. Such are the following: "Brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, among the first principles, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.—Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.—This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.—This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.—He that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is the Son of God.—Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Fully aware that this golden link would draw along with it the whole chain of evangelical truth, the sacred writers seem careful for nothing in comparison of it. It is on this ground that faith in Christ is represented as essential to spiritual life.—See John vi. 53—56. "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." We may

be Christians by education, may be well versed in Christianity as a science, may be able to converse, and preach, and write, in defence of it; but if Christ crucified be not that to us which food is to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty, we are dead while we live. It is on this ground that error concerning the person and work of Christ is of such importance as frequently to become death to the party. We may err on other subjects and survive, though it be in a maimed state; but to err in this is to contract a disease in the vitals, the ordinary effect of which is death. When Peter confessed him to be the Son of the living God, Jesus answered, "Upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Upon this principle, as a foundation, Christianity rests; and it is remarkable that, to this day, deviation concerning the person and work of Christ is followed by a dereliction of almost every other evangelical doctrine, and of the spirit of Christianity. How should it be otherwise? If the foundation be removed, the building must fall.

What is it that is denominated *the great mystery of godliness*? Is it not that "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory?" It is this that the apostle John introduces at the beginning of his gospel under the name of "the Word:" "The Word was with God, and was God; by whom all things were made, and who was made flesh, and dwelt among us."\* It is this upon which he dwells in the introduction of his first epistle: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Christ is here described, 1. As to what he was in his pre-incarnate state; namely, as that which was from the beginning, the word of life, and that eternal life which was with the Father. 2. As to what he became by his incarnation: he was so manifested that his disciples could see him, and look on him, and handle him; and thus be qualified to bear witness of him, and to show unto others that eternal life that was with the Father. 3. As having opened a

\* Whether we read *God*, or the *Son of God*, or the *Lord*, or the *Word*, the idea is the same. There is no meaning in saying of any one who was not God that he was manifest in the flesh, or that he was made flesh, &c.

way in which those who believed in him were admitted to fellowship with God, and with him, and were commissioned to invite others to partake with them. I have long considered this passage as a decisive proof of the divinity of Christ, and as a summary of the gospel.

## LETTER IV.

## ON THE BEING OF GOD.

HAVING in the foregoing letters endeavored to show the importance of system, and of that system being the true one, and proposed the plan of what I may communicate, I shall now proceed to execute it as well as I am able. In the last letter it was stated, concerning the doctrine of the cross, that every thing pertaining to Christianity was *presupposed by it, included in it, or arose out of it*. This threefold distribution will form the three parts into which what I write will be divided. Under the first; namely, *principles presupposed* by the doctrine of the cross, I begin with *the being of God*, to which fundamental principle this letter will be devoted. God is the first cause and last end of all things. "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to him be glory forever, Amen!" To undertake to prove his existence seems to be almost as unnecessary as to go about to prove our own. The Scriptures at their outset take it for granted; and he that calls it in question is not so much to be reasoned with as to be reprov'd. His error belongs to the heart rather than to the understanding. His doubts are either affected, or arise from a wish to free himself from the idea of accountableness. The things that are seen in the visible creation contain so clear a manifestation of the things that are not seen, even of his eternal power and Godhead, as to leave atheists and idolaters "without excuse."—Rom. i. 20.

All reasoning must proceed upon some acknowledged principles; and what can deserve to be so considered more than our own existence, and that of the great First Cause? There are truths among men which it is indecorous to attempt to prove. To discuss the question whether a parent ought to be acknowledged and obeyed by his children, whatever proof might be alleged for it, would tend to agitate a subject which ought to be at rest. I question whether argumentation in favor of the existence of God has not made more sceptics than believers. An Orissa pundit, not being able to see God, required of a missionary a proof of his existence. He was asked, in answer, whether he could see his own soul; and whether he had any doubts of his possessing one. "Certainly not," said the pundit. "Such," said the missionary, "is the living God: he is

invisible to us, but he is every where present."

In the early ages of the world there appears to have been a much stronger persuasion of divine interposition in human affairs than generally prevails in our times. Even heathens, whose gods were vanity, put their trust in them. In all their wars, they not only took counsel with their wise men, but consulted their oracles. Rollin, from Xenophon, holds it up as one of the great virtues of Cyrus that he respected the gods. "In the sight of all his army," says he, "he makes mention of the gods, offers sacrifices and libations to them, addresses himself to them by prayer and invocation, and implores their succor and protection. What a shame, then, and a reproach, would it be to a Christian officer or general, if, on a day of battle, he should blush to appear as religious and devout as a pagan prince; and if the Lord of hosts and God of armies, whom he acknowledges as such, should make a less impression on his mind than a respect for the false deities of paganism did upon the mind of Cyrus." Yet this is the fact. Now and then, on an occasion of great success, God is acknowledged; but in general he is disregarded. How is this to be accounted for? Cyrus's gods were *according to his mind*; but, with the true God, *the dispositions of the greater part of mankind are of perfect variance*. Real Christians still acknowledge him in all their ways, and he directs their paths; but merely nominal Christians, having a *God who is not according to their minds*, think but little of him, feel ashamed to own him, and thus sink into practical atheism. To know that there is a God is necessary, indeed, to true religion; but, if we stop there, it will be of no use. What is the *Supreme Being* of modern unbelievers? and of what account is their knowledge of him? As the Author of the machinery of the universe, he is admired, and magnified in such a way as to render it beneath him to interfere with the affairs of mortals, or to call them to account.

The true knowledge of God is less speculative than practical. It is remarkable with what deep reverence the inspired writers speak of God. Moses, when relating his appearance at the bush, did not attempt to explain his name, but communicated it in the words which he heard. "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they will say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, *I am that I am*: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, *I am* hath sent me unto you." This sublime language suggests not only his self-existence, but his in-



comprehensibility. It is beyond the powers of a creature even to be taught what he is.

"As to the being of God," says Dr. Owen, "we are so far from a knowledge of it, so as to be able to instruct one another therein by words and expressions of it, as that to frame any conceptions in our own mind, with such species and impressions of things as we receive the knowledge of all other things by, is to make an idol to ourselves, and so to worship a God of our own making, and not the God that made us. We may as well and as lawfully hew him out of wood and stone, as form him a being in our minds suited to our apprehensions. The utmost of the best of our thoughts of the being of God is, that we can have no thoughts of it. Our knowledge of a being is but low when it mounts no higher but only to know that we know it not.—There be some things of God which he himself hath taught us to speak of, and to regulate our expressions of them; but, when we have so done, we see not the things themselves, we know them not; to believe and to admire is all that we can attain to. We profess, as we are taught, that God is infinite, omnipotent, eternal; and we know what disputes and notions there are about omnipresence, immensity, infinity, and eternity. We have, I say, words and notions about these things; but, as to the things themselves, what do we know? what do we comprehend of them? Can the mind of man do any thing more but swallow itself up in an infinite abyss, which is as nothing? Give itself up to what it cannot conceive, much less express? Is not our understanding brutish in the contemplation of such things? and is as if it were not? Yea, the perfection of our understanding is, not to understand, and to rest there: they are but the back parts of eternity and infinity that we have a glimpse of. What shall I say of the trinity, or the subsistence of distinct persons in the same individual essence; a mystery by many denied, because by none understood; a mystery whose very letter is mysterious.—How little a portion is heard of him!"

In the epistles of Paul there are various instances in which, having mentioned the name of God, he stops to pay him adoration. Thus, when describing the dishonor put upon him by worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, he pauses, and adds, "Who is blessed forever, Amen!" Thus also, speaking of Christ as having "given himself to deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father," he adds, "To Him be glory forever and ever, Amen!" And thus, when having spoken of the exceeding abundant grace shown to himself as the chief of sinners, he adds, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever, Amen!"

It is the name of God that gives authority, importance, and glory, to every person or thing with which it stands connected. The glory of man, above the rest of the creatures, consisted in this: "God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him." Thus, and not merely the well-being of man, is the reason given why murder should be punished with death. "He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man." This is the great sanction to the precepts and threatenings of the law: "That thou mayest fear that fearful name, the Lord thy God." Herein consists the great evil of sin; and of that sin especially which is committed immediately against God. "Know thou therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but, if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" The sin of the men of Sodom, though it had reached to heaven, yet was not completed till they persevered in it, when smitten of God with blindness. Pharaoh and the Egyptians had grievously oppressed Israel; but it was by persevering in their sins notwithstanding the judgments of God, and presuming to follow his people into the sea, that they brought upon themselves destruction. Of this nature was the disobedience of Saul, the boasting of Sennacherib and Rabshakeh, the pride of Nebuchadnezzar, the profanation of the sacred vessels by Belteshazzar, and the shutting up of John in prison by Herod. Each of these men had done much evil before; but, by setting themselves directly against God, they sealed their doom. It is on this principle that idolatry and blasphemy were punished with death under the theocracy, and that, under the gospel, unbelief and apostacy are threatened with damnation.

God manifested himself in creation, in giving laws to his creatures, in the providential government of the world, and in other parts; but all these exhibited him only in part: it is in the gospel of salvation, through his dear Son, that his whole character appears; so that, from invisible, he in a sense becomes visible. "No one had seen God at any time; but the only begotten Son, who dwelleth in the bosom of the Father, he declared him." What is it that believers see in the gospel when their minds are spiritually enlightened? It is "the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Whatever is visible in an object is called its face. Thus we speak of the face of the heavens, of the earth, and of the sea; and in each of these the glory of God is to be seen; but in the face of Jesus Christ, that is, in that which has been manifested to us by his incarnation, life, preaching, miracles,



sufferings, resurrection, and ascension, the glory of God is seen in a degree that it has never been seen in before. The apostle, when speaking of God in relation to the gospel, uses the epithet "blessed" with singular propriety: "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God." The gospel is the grand emanation from the fountain of blessedness, an overflow of the divine goodness. It is the infinitely happy God, pouring forth his happiness upon miserable sinners, through Jesus Christ. The result is, that, as God is the Great Supreme, he must in all things occupy the supreme place. Thus we are required, by his law, to love him first, and then to love our neighbor as ourselves; and thus the coming of Christ is celebrated, first as giving "glory to God in the highest," and then "peace on earth and good will to men."

## LETTER V.

### ON THE NECESSITY OF A DIVINE REVELATION.

It would be improper, I conceive, to rest the being of God on Scripture testimony: seeing the whole weight of that testimony must depend upon the supposition that he is, and that the sacred Scriptures were written by holy men inspired by him. Hence, the Scriptures, at their outset, take this principle for granted: yet, in the way that the works of nature imply a divine first cause, so does the work of revelation. Men were as morally unable to write such a book as they were naturally unable to create the heavens and the earth. In this way the sacred Scriptures prove the being of a God.

I wish to offer a few remarks on the necessity of a divine revelation—on the evidence of the Bible being written by inspiration of God, so as to answer this necessity—and on its uniform bearing on the doctrine of salvation through the cross of Christ: but, as this is more than can be comprehended in a single letter, I must divide it into two or three.

First: I shall offer a few remarks on the *necessity of a revelation from God*. In establishing this principle, let it be observed, we are not required to depreciate the light of nature. The word of God is not to be exalted at the expense of his works. The evidence which is afforded of the being and perfections of God by the creation which surrounds us, and of which we ourselves are a part, is no more superseded by revelation than the law is rendered void by faith. All things which proceed from God are in harmony with each other. If all the evidence which the heathen have of the being and perfections of God consist of traditional accounts, derived originally from revelation, there must be great uncertainty in it, as in

every thing else that comes through such an uncertain medium; and, if so, though they should disbelieve it, how are they *without excuse*? and how are we to understand the reasonings of the apostle on the subject? He appears to represent the wrath of God as revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, "because that which may be known is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him, that is, his eternal power and godhead, are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made: so that they are *without excuse*." This is equal to saying, God is invisible, but his works are visible: his eternal power and godhead are manifest from the things which he has created. All things which have a beginning must originate in a cause without beginning; so that they are without excuse. Whether the heathen in any instance have, or have not, *actually perceived* the eternal power and godhead of the creator, merely from the works of his hands, is a question that I shall not undertake to answer. If such a case never occurred, it is sufficient for my argument that it has not been for want of objective light, but of a state of mind to receive it. In pleading for the necessity of divine revelation, as the means of enlightening and saving sinners, we should beware of imitating those who, in arguing for the necessity of divine grace to renew and sanctify them, represent them as physically unable to do good without it, and so excuse them in their sins. "Every mouth will be stopped, and all the world," whatever advantages or disadvantages they may have possessed in these respects, "will be found guilty before God." It is true that the guilt of those who have lived in sin without the light of revelation will be much less than theirs who have continued in their sins under it; but all are without excuse before God. Divine revelation is necessary to a *competent* knowledge of God, and of his will concerning us. This principle will be evident by a review of two others; namely, the insufficiency of human reason for these important purposes, and the connection between revelation and faith.

1. *Let us review the insufficiency of human reason to obtain from the mere light of nature a competent knowledge of God, and of his will concerning us.* The light of nature furnishes us with little or no knowledge of the moral character and government of God. While man was in a state of innocence, indeed, he might, by reflecting on his own mind, understand something of the character of that divine original after whose image he was created; but, having sinned, this image is effaced. It is also true that the judgments of God against sinners are manifest in all the earth; and every man's conscience bears witness that what is wrong in

another towards him must be wrong in him towards another; and that, having felt and acted contrary to this equitable principle, in innumerable instances, he is a sinner; but as to the evil nature of sin as committed against God, and his own lost condition, conscience itself can yield him little or no information. And as to an hereafter, whether there be any, and, if there be, what it will prove; whether we shall have to give account of the deeds done in the body; whether there will be any hope of forgiveness; and what we must do to be saved—all is darkness. The light of nature, though sufficient to bear witness for God, and so to leave sinners without excuse, was never designed in any state to furnish man with all he needed. Even in innocence man was governed by a revealed law. It does not appear that he was left to find out the character or will of his Creator by his reason, though reason, being under the influence of rectitude, would lead him, as he understood the mind of God, to love and obey it. But, if revelation was necessary in innocence, much more now man's foolish heart is darkened by sin.

The state of the heathen who are without divine revelation, furnishes awful proof of its necessity. The grossness of their thoughts of God, and of a hereafter, is such that those who have received the light of revelation can scarcely think it possible for rational beings to entertain them. To say nothing of the uncivilized heathen, even the polished sons of Greece and Rome, though prodigies in science, yet, in relation to these things, were the subjects of the most sottish stupidity. Well is it said, "The world by wisdom knew not God." That small portion of real light which on these subjects appears in the writings of our modern Deists is borrowed from those very writings which they mean to depreciate. They live in the neighborhood of revelation, and, whether they will own it or not, are enlightened by it. The speculations of those who have had only the light of nature to guide them are, in respect of God and religion, absurd in the extreme.

Man is said to be *wiser than the beasts of the field*; but it is principally by means of *instruction*. We are born, it is true, with an immortal mind; but, uninformed, what is it? Knowledge chiefly enters in at the door of the senses. To what do we owe the gift of speech? It seems to be natural to us; but, if we look at one who is born deaf, we shall find him dumb also; and, if to this be added blindness, there will be but little difference between him and the beasts of the field. But, if we need human instruction for the attainment of knowledge in things of this life, is it surprising that we should need a divine instructor for things heavenly and divine? It is true that God instructs us, as

has been said, by his works: but they contain only a few of the rudiments of divine knowledge: like the parables of our Saviour, they were not designed to furnish perfect information on the subject, but merely a general intimation, tending to excite humble inquiry for further instruction; which, when asked, was readily granted, but, when set at nought, it was "seeing and not perceiving, hearing and not understanding; lest they should be converted and healed." The apostle, in his address to the Athenians, represents it as the design of God, in his works of creation and providence, to lead men to *seek him*: but, though he was not far from every one, seeing all live and move and have their being in him, yet the light of nature could only enable them "to feel after him, if haply they might find him." Though "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work;" though "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge," and though their voice is heard in every language and in every clime, even to the end of the world; yet it is not by them, but by the word of Jehovah, that souls are converted, and the simple made wise. Some of the wisest among the old heathens felt and acknowledged the need there was of a revelation from heaven; and heathens of the present day acknowledge the same thing. A Hindoo fakeer, who was a brahmin goroo, being lately asked by one of his disciples, who had heard a missionary at Balasore, whether he could make known to him the living and only God, answered, "We know there is one living God, besides Kreshnoo, Seeb, and Ram; but we do not know his way." The disciple replied, "Come to the Sahib, Fakeer; he will tell you of the God of heaven, whose way he knows."

2. *The necessity of divine revelation will further appear, if we consider its relation to faith.*

Supposing mankind to be in a guilty and perishing condition, and that "God so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;" a revelation from heaven was necessary as the ground of faith. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:" without revelation, therefore, there would be no faith, and so no salvation.

Both revelation and faith may, however, exist in widely different *degrees*. Revelation was first given in obscure intimations, afterwards in types and shadows, in promises and in prophecies; and under each it was the office of faith to keep pace with it. The faith of Abel and that of Paul, though as to their nature and object the same, yet, as to degree, must have been widely different, on account of the difference



of the degrees of divine revelation which each possessed. Revelation, like the shining light, shone "more and more unto the perfect day," and such was the "path of the just," which corresponded with it.

From these remarks, we may see the force of such passages as the following: "He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation, and as to his judgments they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord."—"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."—"At that time ye were without Christ (being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,) having no hope, and without God in the world: but now, in Christ Jesus, ye who some time ago were far off are made nigh, by the blood of Christ."

We may also learn, from these remarks, to make allowance for the small degrees of faith where the light of revelation has been but little known. It is not for us to say how small a portion of divine truth may irradiate the mind, nor by what means the Holy Spirit may impart it. According to the ordinary way of the divine proceeding under the gospel, it may be asked, "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?" But this has not been the uniform method of the divine proceeding from the beginning. Previously to the time of Moses, there was no *written* revelation, and till the coming of Christ no ordinance for *preaching* the word. No missionaries till then were sent among the heathen. Good men under the Old Testament stood on much lower ground than those under the New Testament. Cornelius, the Roman centurion, being stationed in Judea, learned enough of the God of Israel to be *just and devout, giving much alms to the people, and praying to God alway*; and, before he had heard of Jesus being the Messiah, his prayers and his alms were approved of God. Yet the words spoken to him by Peter were those by which he *was saved*: a proof this, not of there being another way of acceptance with God than that which the gospel reveals, nor of its being possible without faith to please God; but that faith may exist while as yet there is no explicit revelation of the Saviour. Finally: It is not for us to say what may be effected in an extraordinary way upon the minds of men. A ray of divine revelation shot athwart the darkness of paganism, into the minds of the eastern magi, and led them to worship the new-born Saviour.

## LETTER VI.

## ON THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

IN my last, I endeavored to show the necessity of a divine revelation. In this, I shall *offer evidence of the Bible being written by inspiration of God, so as to answer to this necessity*. It is certain that those who wrote the books which compose the Old and New Testaments profess to have been divinely inspired. "The Spirit of God spake by me, and his word was in my tongue: the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me.—The Lord spake unto Moses saying, &c.—Thus saith the Lord.—All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.—Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.—The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." We must, therefore, either admit these writings to be the word of God, or consider them as mere imposture. To pretend to "venerate them as authentic records of the dispensation of God," and yet deny their inspiration, is absurd: it is believing the writers in what they say of other subjects, and disbelieving them in what they say of themselves. If their writings be not what they profess them to be, they are imposture, and deserve to be rejected. There is no consistent medium between faith and unbelief.

But, though all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, it does not follow that it is so in the *same sense and degree*. It required one degree of inspiration to foretell future events, and another to narrate facts which fell under the writer's knowledge. The one required less exercise of his own judgment, the other more. Inspiration, in the latter case, might be little more than a divine superintendence, preserving him from error, and from other defects and faults, to which ordinary historians are subject. Divine inspiration, of whatever kind or degree, must have *carried in it its own evidence to the party*, or he could not with propriety have declared, "Thus saith the Lord"—and "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." And it appears, in some cases, to have been *equally evident to those who were present*. Thus, when the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel, and he foretold the overthrow of the Moabites and Ammonites, Jehoshaphat and the people appear to have been as certain that it was by inspiration of God as he himself was; and therefore fell before the Lord, and worshipped.—2 Chron. xx.

The only question is, whether that which was evident to them *can be so to us, at this distance of time and place; if not in the same*



degree, yet with sufficient certainty to warrant our unreserved dependence upon it. Some of the principal grounds on which the affirmative may be maintained, I conceive to be the following: the truth of the things contained in the sacred writings, their consistency, their perfection, their pungency, and their utility. Let us review these particulars.

1. The *truth* of the things contained in the sacred writings. It requires that a book professing to be a revelation from God should contain truth, and nothing but truth: such particularly must be its history, its prophecies, its miracles, and its doctrines. Now, as the Scriptures abound with these, if they be untrue, it can be no difficult undertaking to prove them so. The facts being stated, with the evidence accompanying them, it lies upon those who disbelieve them to show cause. It certainly has not been for want of adversaries, nor of adversaries of talent, that this work has never been accomplished. How is that, out of all those who have written against the Bible, not an individual has soberly and modestly undertaken to answer the evidence which has been adduced for the veracity of its history, the fulfilment of its prophecies, the reality of its miracles, and the purity and consistency of its doctrines? Instead of this, many of them have meanly pretended to believe the Bible, while yet they have been deceitfully undermining it; and those who have avowed their hostility have commonly dealt in ridicule, rather than in reason. Verily, it is to the honor of the Bible to have such men for its adversaries.

2. Their *consistency*. A book written by more than thirty men, of different talents and stations in life, living in different ages, the greater part of whom, therefore, could have no communication with each other, must, had it not been written under the inspiration of God, have been full of contradictions. Let any other production be named which has preserved a consistency under such circumstances. To suppose a succession of writings, the work of designing impostors or at least of weak-headed fanatics, capable of maintaining that harmony which is apparent in the sacred Scriptures, is no less absurd than the notion of Epicurus, that the world was formed by a fortuitous concurrence of atoms, without a designing cause. Great as are the differences between Jews and Christians, there is none between their sacred writings. The Old and New Testaments are dictated by one and the same Spirit. Paul was hated by his unbelieving countrymen, and treated as an apostate from the religion of his ancestors; but he was not an apostate. "I thank God," says he to Timothy, "whom I serve from my forefathers." He speaks also of the *same faith* which was in Timothy as having dwelt first in his grandmother Lois, and then in his mother Eunice; the former of whom lived and died under the

former dispensation. The same God who, "at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets;" in the "last days spoke unto us by his Son." Consistency, it is true, may not in every instance be a test of truth; since error and falsehood may, in some particulars, be made to agree; but, in a subject whose bearings are multifarious and minute, they cannot escape detection: nothing but truth in such cases will be found consistent throughout.

3. Their *perfection*. If the Bible be of God, perfection must be one of its properties; for "He is a Rock, and his work is perfect." This property, however, belongs to it, not as having been begun and ended at once. This the work of creation was not: each day had its proper work; which, on review, was pronounced very good, and all together, when finished, formed a glorious whole. Such was the work of inspiration: the sacred Scriptures were upwards of fifteen hundred years from their commencement to their completion; but, being completed, they form a whole, and every part of them is very good. There is this peculiar property belonging to the sacred Scriptures, that, if you are in possession of only a single book, you may generally learn from it the leading principles which run through all the rest. The strong language of David concerning the sacred Scriptures, such as their being "more to be desired than thousands of gold and silver, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb," and the like, could have reference to little more than the Pentateuch of Moses. Even a leaf from the sacred oracles would, in innumerable instances, teach him that should find it, and read it with a humble mind, the way to everlasting life; and this not as possessing any thing like a charm, but as containing principles which, if understood and followed, will lead the inquirer to God.

4. Their *pungency*. There is nothing in the sacred Scriptures to gratify an idle curiosity; but much that commends itself to the conscience, and that interests the heart. They are a mirror, into which he that seriously looks must, in a greater or less degree, see his own likeness, and discover what kind of character he is. That which was said of Jesus by the Samaritan woman, might be said of them, in thousands of instances: "He told me all that ever I did." They are "the words of the wise, which are as goads, and as nails fastened by the master of assemblies." They not only prick the sinner in his heart, but stick so fast that he is incapable of extracting them. It has been remarked that they who heard the preaching of the apostles were generally moved by it, either to repent and be converted, or to oppose the truth with bitter resentment. Their doctrine was a savor of life unto life in them that be-

lieved, and of death unto death in them that resisted. Surely, if we preached more in the spirit and power of the apostles, the effects of our ministry would more resemble theirs, and our hearers would not be able to sit year after year easy in their sins. "The word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." If our preaching be but little adapted to produce these effects, surely it contains but little of the word of God.

5. Their *utility*. There is much in the sacred Scriptures that is entertaining and pleasing to the ingenious, and more to console the sorrowful: it was not, however, to please, nor merely to comfort, but to *profit* us that they were written. That which is given by inspiration of God is "*profitable* for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Unbelievers may declaim against the Bible; but universal experience proves that, in respect of the present life only, they who believe it and form their lives on its principles are, beyond all comparison, the best members of society; while they who disbelieve and traduce it are the worst. And, if to this be added the life to come, it is no longer a subject of comparison, but of contrast; for the former ordinarily die in peace and hope, the latter either blinded by insensibility, or, if awakened to reflection, in fearful forebodings of the wrath to come.

I shall conclude this letter with a few remarks on the *properties* and *tendencies* ascribed to the sacred Scriptures in the nineteenth Psalm. Having declared the glory of God, as manifested by his works, the writer proceeds to exhibit another medium of the divine glory, less magnificent, but more suited to the bases of sinful men, namely, his word. The *law*, the *testimony*, the *statutes*, the *commandments*, the *fear*, and the *judgments* of the Lord, are but different names given to the Scriptures.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."—The book of nature declares the "eternal power and Godhead" of the Creator; but that of Scripture represents his whole character; not only as the Creator, but as the Moral Governor and Saviour of men. Hence it is "able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

"The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."—The opinions of the greatest men, formed merely from the works of nature, are full of uncertainty, and but ill adapted to instruct the illiterate part of mankind in their best interests; but the sa-

cred Scriptures contain the true sayings of God, which may be safely depended upon.

"The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart."—The principles inculcated in the sacred Scriptures accord with the nature and fitness of things. That which they require approves itself to the conscience; and that which they teach, though foolishness in the account of unbelievers, is, to those who understand and believe it, the wisdom of God. This property gives joy to every upright mind; for the friends of righteousness must needs rejoice in that which is right.

"The commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes."—Their freedom from every mixture of corruption renders them fit to illuminate the mind and cheer the heart. Wearied with the discordant opinions of men, we turn to the Scriptures, and, like Jonathan on tasting the honey, our eyes are enlightened.

"The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever."—The worship of God, as taught in the sacred Scriptures, is chaste and uncorrupt; and therefore shall continue when idolatry, and every abomination which has passed under the name of religion, shall be no more.

"The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether."—The sacred Scriptures contain the decisions of the Judge of all, both as to things and characters, from which there is no appeal: nor is it fit there should be; seeing they are not only formed in wisdom, but perfectly accord with truth and equity.

"More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb."—There is a rich, a valuable, I might say an invaluable quality in these writings, which is not to be found in any other; and which so interests the heart that the things most valued in the world lose all their attractions in comparison of it.

"Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward."—They are adapted at the same time to preserve us from evil, and to lead us in the good and the right way: and, as we follow it, yield inexpressible satisfaction. If in reading these holy oracles we make the proper use of them, we shall, according to the remaining verses in the Psalm, perceive that our errors are innumerable; shall feel the need of keeping grace to preserve us even from the worst of crimes; and shall aspire to a conformity in our words and thoughts to the will of God.

May the blessing of God attend the various attempts to translate and circulate the sacred Scriptures! A few years ago, a certain infidel braggadocio pretended to have gone through the wood and cut down trees,



which the priests, he said, might stick in again, but they would not grow! And have the sacred Scriptures been less in request since that time than they were before? Rather have they not been much more so? Infidelity, by overacting its part, has given itself a wound; and its abettors, like Herod, have been eaten of worms, and have died. But the word of the Lord has grown and been multiplied.

## LETTER VII.

### ON THE UNIFORM BEARING OF THE SCRIPTURES ON THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST.

IN the two preceding letters I have endeavored to show the necessity of divine revelation, and to give evidence of the Bible's being written by inspiration of God, so as to answer to that necessity; in this I shall add a few thoughts on its *uniform bearing on the person and work of Christ*.

We need not follow those who drag in Christ on all occasions. To suppose, for instance, that *all* the Psalms of David refer to him, is to establish the gospel on the ruins of common sense. Still less need we see him prefigured by every thing in which a heated imagination may trace a resemblance. This were to go into a kind of spiritual Quixotism, finding a castle where others would only find a windmill. Nevertheless, the sacred Scriptures are full of Christ, and uniformly lead to him. The holy book begins with an account of the *creation* of the world: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But they elsewhere inform us that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." Yea more, that all things were made not only *by him*, as the first cause, but *for him*, as the last end. The creation seems to have been designed as a theatre on which he should display his glory, particularly in the work of redemption. Surely it was in this view that he "rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men."

The *history* contained in the sacred Scriptures is that of the church or people of God: other nations are introduced only in an incidental manner as being connected with them: and this people were formed for Christ. Him God appointed to be "heir of all things." All that was done by the patriarchs and prophets, under the Old Testament, was preparatory to his kingdom. It was in his field that they labored, and therefore his apostles "entered into their labors." God's calling Abraham, and blessing and increasing him, had all along a reference to

the kingdom of his Son. He was the principal seed in whom all the kindreds of the earth were to be blessed. Why did Melchizedek, on meeting Abraham, when he returned from the slaughter of the kings, bless him with so much heart? Was it not as knowing that he *had the promises*, especially that of the Messiah? Why is Esau's despising his birthright reckoned *profaneness*, but on account of its referring to something *sacred*? The promises made to Abraham's posterity chiefly related to things at a great distance; but Esau longed for something nearer at hand, and therefore sold his birthright for a present enjoyment. Why is the reproach which Moses preferred to the treasures of Egypt called "the reproach of Christ," but that Israel being in possession of Him, and Moses believing it, cast in his lot with them, though in a state of slavery? Were not these the "good things" to which he referred, in persuading Hobab to go with them? All that was done for Israel from their going down into Egypt to their settlement in Canaan, and from thence to the coming of Christ, was in reference to him. The conquest of the seven nations was authorized, and even commanded by JeHOVAH, for the purpose of re-establishing his government in his own world, from which he had in a manner been driven by idolatry. It was setting up his standard with the design of ultimately subduing the world to the obedience of faith. What but the promise of Christ, as including the covenant that God made with David, rendered it *all his salvation and all his desire*? It was owing to the bearing which the Old-testament history had on the person and work of Christ that Stephen and Paul, when preaching him to the Jews, made use of it to introduce their subject.—Acts vii. xiii.

The body of the Jewish *institutions* was but a shadow of good things to come, of which Christ was the substance. Their priests and prophets and kings were typical of him. Their sacrifices pointed to him who "gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." The manna on which they fed in the wilderness referred to him, as the "bread of God that should come down from heaven." The rock, from whence the water flowed that followed them in their journeys, is said to be *Christ*, as being typical of him. Their cities of refuge represent him, "as the hope set before us." The whole dispensation served as a foil, to set off the superior glory of his kingdom. The temple was but as the scaffolding to that which he would build, and the glory of which he would bear. The moral law exhibited right things, and the ceremonial law a shadow of good things; but "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The Christian dispensation is to that of the Old Testament as the jubilee to a state of



captivity. It might be in reference to such things as these that the psalmist prayed, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wonderful things out of thy law!"

Of the *prophecies* with which the Scriptures abound, the person and work of Christ form the principal theme. "To him gave all the *prophets witness*," either in what they wrote or spoke. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." From the first mention of the woman's seed, to his appearance in the flesh, the language of prophecy concerning him became more explicit and distinct. The blessing on *JeHoVaH the God of Shem* seems to intimate designs of mercy towards his descendants. The promise to Abraham and his seed is more express. Abraham, understanding it as including the Messiah, believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness. He earnestly desired to see his day; he saw it, and rejoiced. Jacob's prophecy is still more explicit and distinct. He foretells his being of the tribe of Judah, and that under his reign the Gentiles should be gathered. After this, the house of David is specified, as that from which the Messiah should spring. The Psalms abound in predictions concerning him. Isaiah tells of his being miraculously born of a virgin—of his humble and gentle character, "not breaking the bruised reed, nor quenching the smoking flax"—of his sufferings, death, and everlasting kingdom, which implied his resurrection.—Acts xiii. 34. Micah named the town of Bethlehem as the place where he should be born. Zachariah mentioned the beasts on which he should make his public entry into Jerusalem. The spirit of inspiration in the prophets is called "the spirit of Christ," because it "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." But, if the Old Testament had a uniform bearing on the person and work of Christ, much more the New. This is properly entitled "The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The one abounds with prophecies; the other relates to their accomplishment. The ordinances of the former were prefigurative; those of the latter are commemorative. But both point to the same object. Every divine truth bears a relation to him: hence the doctrine of the gospel is called "the truth as it is *in Jesus*." In the face of Jesus Christ we see the glory of the divine character in such a manner as we see it no where else. The evil nature of sin is manifested in his cross, and the lost condition of sinners in the price at which our redemption was obtained. Grace, mercy, and peace are in him. The resurrection to eternal life is through his death. In him every precept finds its most powerful motive and every promise its most perfect fulfilment. The Jews possessed the sacred Scriptures of the

Old Testament, and *searched them*,\* thinking that in them they had eternal life; but they *would not come to him that they might have it*. What a picture does this present to us of multitudes in our own times. We possess both the Old and the New Testament; and it is pleasing to see the zeal manifested of late in giving them circulation. All orders and degrees of men will unite in applauding them. But they overlook Christ, to whom they uniformly bear testimony; and, while thinking to obtain eternal life, will not come to him that they might have it.

## LETTER VIII.

### ON THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

I NEED not say to you that just views of the divine character lie at the foundation of all true religion. Without them, it is impossible, in the nature of things, to love God, or to perceive the fitness of our being required to love him, or the evil of not loving him, or the necessity of such a Saviour and such a salvation as the gospel reveals. We may be terrified by the fear of the wrath to come, and delighted with the hope of escaping it through Christ; but if this terror and this hope have no respect to the character of God, as holy, just, and good, there can be no hatred of sin *as sin*, nor love to God *as God*, and consequently no true religion. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." God is a Spirit, and cannot be known by sense, nor by any means but those in which he has been pleased to manifest himself. These are his works and his word. Every thing that meets our eyes, or accosts our ears, in heaven or in earth, is full of his glory. "The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that, were there no other revelation of himself, this were sufficient to leave sinners *without excuse*. But, besides this silent mode of manifesting himself, God has displayed himself by his *word*. Even in a state of innocence, man was governed by the revealed will of his Creator; and the revelation of God, from first to last, manifests the glory of his perfections.

The perfections of God require to be distinguished into *natural* and *moral*: the former respect his greatness, the latter his goodness; or, more particularly, the one refers to his infinite understanding, his almighty power, his eternity, immensity, omnipresence, immutability, &c.; the other, to his purity, justice, faithfulness, goodness, or,

\* See Dr. Campbell's translation of John v. 39, 40.

in one word, to his holiness. The former are necessary to render him an object of respect, the latter of love, and both together of holy fear. The natural perfections of God are principally manifested in the creation and providential government of the world; his moral perfections in the creation, moral government, and salvation of intelligent beings. The former are glorious as connected with the latter, but the latter are glorious in themselves. Power and knowledge, and every other attribute belonging to the greatness of God, could they be separated from his righteousness and goodness, would render him an object of dread, and not of love: but righteousness and goodness, whether connected with greatness or not, are lovely.

Correspondent with this is what we are taught of the "image of God" in the soul of man: it is partly natural and partly moral. The moral image of God, consisting in "righteousness and true holiness," was effaced by sin; but the natural image of God, consisting in his rational and immortal nature, was not. In this respect, man, though fallen, still retains his Creator's image, and therefore cannot be murdered or cursed without incurring his high displeasure.—Gen. ix. 6. James iii. 9.

The same distinction is perceivable in the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. He *emptied* or *disrobed* himself; he laid aside his glory for a season: yet not his goodness, but his greatness: not his purity, justice, faithfulness, or holiness; but the display of his eternity, supremacy, immensity, wisdom, power, omniscience, and omnipresence: becoming a mortal man, subject to his parents, supported by the ordinary aliments of life, and ascribing his doctrine and miracles to the Father. It was thus that, "being rich, he *became poor*, that through his poverty we might be made rich." And this it is that accounts for the ascriptions given him after his exaltation: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. Each of these terms has respect to that glory of which he had disrobed himself, and with which he was therefore worthy now to be doubly invested.

As it is not talent, but morality, that constitutes character among men, so it is not the natural, but the moral perfections of God, which properly constitute his character. Holiness is the glory of the divine nature. Thus, when he would show Moses his glory, he said, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee." Yet, as greatness illustrates goodness among men, so does the greatness of God illustrate his goodness. His being "the High and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity," illustrates the holiness of his name, and the unexampled condescension of his nature towards the poor and contrite. It is by the union of these divine excellences

that he stands opposed to all the deities of the heathen. His greatest enemies have often confessed him to be the "Most High" and "Most Holy." Hence Moses could say, "their rock is not as our Rock, our adversaries themselves being judges."

The precepts, prohibitions, and promises of the divine law, are a mirror in which we may perceive the moral perfections of the Lawgiver. They each express his heart; or what he loves, and what he hates. They moreover show his goodness to his creatures, granting them every thing that would do them good, and withholding nothing but that which would prove their ruin. The sum of all his requirements was love to God and one another. And, as his promises to the obedient would express his love of righteousness, so his threatenings against transgressors show his great abhorrence of sin. On no other principle can we account for such tremendous curses being denounced, by a Being full of goodness, against the work of his hands. Moreover, to show that these are not mere words given out to deter mankind, without any design of carrying them into execution, but that, in all his threatenings of future punishment to the ungodly, he means what he says, he inflicts numerous and sore judgments upon his enemies, even in this world. In one instance, he destroyed, with the exception of a single family, the whole race of man which he had created. In many others, by war, by famine, by pestilence, and other means, his displeasure against sin has been expressed in almost every age. Yet has he never failed to maintain his character, as "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth." Often has he pardoned those who have sought his mercy; and, even when the parties have not sought it, he has wrought for his great name's sake. These are a few of the expressions of the divine mind; but, as Job says, they are "but a part of his ways," and exhibit only a part of his character. The only display of the divine perfections which can be denominated perfect is in the salvation of sinners, through the obedience and death of his beloved Son. After all the preceding manifestations of his glory, it may be said, "No one hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. In his undertaking, every divine perfection meets and harmonizes. There were, in former ages, various displays of truth and righteousness on the one hand, and of mercy and peace on the other: but there does not appear to have been a point in which they could meet and be united. If one prevailed, the other receded, or gave place. It was thus at the flood, and at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: truth and righteousness prevailed; but mercy and peace retired, leaving



the transgressors to suffer. And thus, when Israel was pardoned at the intercession of Moses, mercy and peace prevailed; but justice was suspended. It was reserved for the only-begotten of the Father to unite them in the same instance. In him "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

When the appointed time was come, justice awoke and smote the Shepherd, that mercy might turn its hand towards the little ones. It is thus that every perfection in the divine nature, natural and moral, is declared; wisdom, and power, and faithfulness, and justice, and love, and mercy, all meet and blend their rays. God is "just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus." A greater honor is conferred on the divine law, both as to its precept and penalty, than is sufficient to counterbalance the utmost disgrace upon it, by man's rebellion; and a greater display afforded of the divine displeasure against sin than if the whole world had suffered the reward of their deeds. And now love to sinners, which wrought unsolicited in the gift of Christ, flows without any impediment towards all who come unto God by him.

The struggles of justice and mercy, and the triumphs of the latter, are very affectingly represented in Jeremiah iii. 19. &c. Hosea xi. 8. "But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land?"—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together." In the former of these passages, it is intimated that, though God was disposed to show mercy, yet their conduct put his very perfections to the proof. In the latter, we must conceive an offended father as having hold of his son with one hand, and holding up a rod in the other, making alternate appeals, first to his own compassion, then to the conscience of the offender. Justice requires him to be delivered over to punishment, to be made as Admah, and set for an example as Zeboim. But mercy pleads in arrest of judgment, and overcomes. To such a case as this the divine conduct towards Israel might be compared; but all this mercy, and all that follow, and all that shall yet follow, is through the atonement of Christ. His sacrifice has furnished the answers to these hard questions.

#### LETTER IX.

ON THE TRINITY—OR ON THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT BEING ONE GOD.

A SUBJECT so great and so much above our comprehension as this is requires to be

treated with trembling. Every thing that we can think or say, concerning the ever blessed God, requires the greatest modesty, fear, and reverence. Were I to hear two persons engaged in a warm contest upon the subject, I should fear for them both. One might in the main be in the right, and the other in the wrong: but, if many words were used, they might both be expected to incur the reproof of the Almighty: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge."

The people of Israel were forbidden to break through the bounds which were set for them, and to gaze on the visible glory of Jehovah. The Bethshemites, for looking into the ark, were smitten with death. Such judgments may not befall us in these days; but we may expect others, more to be dreaded. As the gospel is a spiritual dispensation, its judgments, as well as its blessings, are chiefly spiritual. Where men have employed themselves in curiously prying into things too high for them, they have ordinarily been smitten with a blast upon their minds and upon their ministry.

There is a greater importance in the doctrine of the trinity than commonly appears on a superficial inspection of it; chiefly, perhaps, on account of its affecting our views of the doctrine of the person and work of Christ; which doctrine, being the foundation on which the church is built, cannot be removed without the utmost danger to the building.

It is a subject of pure revelation. If the doctrine be not taught in the oracles of God, we have nothing to do with it; but, if it be, whether we can comprehend it or not, we are required humbly to believe it, and to endeavor to understand so much as God has revealed concerning it. We are not required to understand *how* three are one: for this is not revealed. If we do not consider the Father, Son, and Spirit, as being both three and one in the *same sense*, which certainly we do not, then we do not believe a contradiction. We may leave speculating minds to lose themselves and others in a labyrinth of conceits, while we learn what is revealed, and rest contented with it.

In believing three divine persons in one essence, I do not mean that the distinction between the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, is the same as that between three human persons: but neither is there any other term that answers to the scriptural idea; and, since Christ is said to be "the express image of his Father's person," I see nothing objectionable in using this.

The doctrine was certainly less explicitly revealed in the Old Testament than it is in the New. When the Messiah came, it was expected that he would tell us all things. If the degree in which the doctrine was made known in the Old Testament bears a pro-



portion to that of other important truths, it is sufficient. From the beginning of the creation the name of God is represented under a plural form; with which agrees the moving of the Spirit of God upon the face of the waters; and all things being made by the Word, and without him nothing made that was made. The angel of the Lord which appeared to Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, &c., in the form of man, was considered and treated by them as God, and received divine worship at their hands. In reference to this, I conceive, it is said in the New Testament, that, "being in the form of God, he thought it no usurpation to be as God."

In the New Testament the doctrine is more explicitly revealed; particularly in Christ's commission to his apostles to baptize in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. In the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, he invokes the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit to be with them. And John, in his First Epistle, introduces the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, as bearing witness to the gospel; or, that God had given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. If, in the first of these passages, the Son and Holy Spirit be considered as divine persons, and as one with the Father, both in nature and in the economy of redemption, there is a fitness in our being baptized into this individual name; but to be baptized into the name of God, a creature, and an energy, must be the height of incongruity. The next passage shows the importance of the doctrine to the existence and progress of vital godliness. It is not a subject of mere speculation, but one on which depends all the communications of grace and peace to sinful men; and it is remarkable that they who reject it are seldom known to acknowledge any spiritual communion with God, but treat it as fanaticism. The last of these passages has been strongly opposed as an *interpolation*. It is not for me to decide this question by a reference to ancient versions of the New Testament; but there are two or three considerations which, after all that I have seen on the other side, weigh with me in its favor. First: From the seventh verse being wanting in some copies and found in others, all that can be fairly inferred is that there must have been either an interpolation by some copyist, or an omission by some other. The question is, Which is the most probable? If it is an omission in the copies where it is wanting, it might not have been from *design*, but from mere oversight, especially as the eighth verse begins so much like the seventh; whereas, if it be an interpolation, no oversight can account for it, but it must have arisen from wicked, wilful imposture. To which of these suppositions

will candor give its vote? Secondly: Supposing the omission or interpolation, whichever it was, to have arisen from design; which is the most probable, and the least likely to have escaped detection—that the antitrinitarians should omit what was unfavorable to them, or that the trinitarians should introduce what was favorable? An omission would escape detection seven times where an interpolation would escape it once. Thirdly: The connection of the passage is altogether in its favor. The phraseology is that of the apostle John; so that, if the words are not his, it must have been the most successful imitation of him that can be imagined. As it stands in our translation, there is evidently a gradation of ideas, forming a kind of climax of witnesses; namely, that of the three in heaven, of the three on earth, and the testimony which a believer has within himself. To leave out the first were to weaken the passage and destroy its beauty. Besides, it is not the omission of the seventh verse only that is necessary, to make any thing like sense of the passage. The words *on earth*, in the eighth verse, must also be left out, if not the whole of the ninth verse, in which the *witness of God* is supposed to have been introduced: but which, if the seventh verse be left out, had not been introduced. Those who are now for new-modelling the passage leave out *some* of these, but not all; nor can they prove that those words which they do leave out were uniformly left out of even those copies in which the seventh verse is omitted. As the Father is allowed on all hands to be a divine person, whatever proves the divinity and personality of the Son proves the plurality of divine persons in the Godhead. I need not adduce the evidences of this truth: the sacred Scriptures are full of them. Divine perfections are ordinarily ascribed to him, and divine worship is paid to him, both by angels and men. If Jesus Christ is not God, equal with the Father, Christianity must have tended to establish a system of idolatry, more dangerous, as being more plausible, than that which it came to destroy. The union of the divine and human natures, in the person of Christ, is a subject on which the sacred writers delight to dwell; and so should we, for herein is the glory of the gospel. "Unto us a *child is born*; and his name shall be called—the *mighty God*." He was *born* in Bethlehem; yet his "goings forth were *from of old*, from everlasting." He was made "of the seed of David *according to the flesh*," and "declared to be the *Son of God with power*." "Of whom *as concerning the flesh* Christ came, who is *over all God blessed forever*, Amen." In his original nature, he is described as incapable of death, and as taking flesh and blood upon him to qualify himself for enduring it.—Heb. ii. 14. He was the "*Son of God*," yet "*touched with*

a feeling of our infirmities ;"—the root and the offspring of David." The sacred Scriptures lay great stress on what Christ was antecedently to his assumption of human nature, and of the official character of a Mediator and Saviour. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God.—He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich.—Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, &c.—Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery," or usurpation, "to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." If divine personality be not essential to Deity, distinct from all office capacity, and antecedent to it, what meaning is there in this language? An economical trinity, or that which would not have been but for the economy of redemption, is not the trinity of the Scriptures. It is not a trinity of divine persons, but merely of offices personified ; whereas Christ is distinguished from the Father as the express image or character of his person, while yet in his pre-incarnate state.

The sacred Scriptures lay great stress on the character of Christ as "the Son of God." It was this that formed the first link in the Christian profession, and was reckoned to draw after it the whole chain of evangelical truth. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." From this rises the great love of God in the gift of him: "God so loved the world as to give his *only-begotten Son*"—the condescension of his obedience: "Though he was a son yet learned he obedience"—the efficacy of his blood: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"—the dignity of his priesthood: "We have a *great High Priest Jesus the Son of God*"—the greatness of the sin of unbelief: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the *only-begotten Son of God*"—the greatness of the sin of apostacy: "Who have trodden under foot the *Son of God*." The incarnation, resurrection, and exaltation, of Christ declared, but did not constitute him the Son of God ; nor did any of his offices, to all which his Sonship was antecedent. God sent his Son into the world. This implies that he was his Son antecedently to his being sent, as much as Christ's sending his disciples implies that they were his disciples before he sent them. The same may be said of the *Son of God being made of a woman, made under the law*. These terms no more express that which rendered him a Son, than his being *made flesh* expresses that which rendered him the Word. The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil ; he must therefore have been the Son

of God antecedently to his being manifested in the flesh. I have heard it asserted that "Eternal generation is eternal nonsense." But whence does this appear? Does it follow that, because a son among men is inferior and posterior to his father, therefore it must be so with the Son of God? If so, why should his saying that God was his own Father be considered as making himself equal with God? Of the only-begotten Son it is not said he was, or will be, but he is in the bosom of the Father ; denoting the eternity and immutability of his character. There never was a point in duration in which God was without his Son: he rejoiced always before him. Bold assertions are not to be placed in opposition to revealed truth. In Christ's being called the Son of God, there may be, for the assistance of our low conceptions, some reference to sonship among men ; but not sufficient to warrant us to reason from the one to the other. The sacred Scriptures often ascribe the miracles of Christ, his sustaining the load of his sufferings, and his resurrection from the dead, to the power of the Father, or of the Holy Spirit, rather than to his own divinity. I have read in human writings, "But the divinity within supported him to bear." But I never met with such an idea in the sacred Scriptures. They represent the Father as upholding his servant, his elect in whom his soul delighted: and as sending his angel to strengthen him in the conflict. While acting as the Father's servant, there was a fitness in his being supported by him, as well as his being in all things obedient to his will. But when the value, virtue, or efficacy of what he did and suffered, are touched upon, they are never ascribed either to the Father or the Holy Spirit, but to himself. Such is the idea suggested by those fore-quoted passages. "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high."—"Ye are not redeemed by corruptible things, but by the precious blood of Christ."—"The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Much less is said in the sacred Scriptures on the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, than on those of the Son. The Holy Spirit not having become incarnate, it might be less necessary to guard his honor, and to warn men against thinking meanly of him. All judgment was committed to the Son, because he was the Son of Man. Yet there is enough said against grieving the Spirit, blasphemy against him, lying against him, doing despite to him, and defiling his temple, to make us tremble. In the economy of redemption it is the office of the Holy Spirit, not to exhibit himself, but to "take of the things of Christ, and to show

them to us." He is the great spring head of all the good that is in the world; but, in producing it, he himself appears not. We are no otherwise conscious of his influences than by their effects. He is a wind which bloweth where it listeth: we hear the sound, and feel the effects; but know nothing more of it.

The Holy Spirit is not the grand object of ministerial exhibition; but Christ, in his person, work, and offices. When Philip went down to Samaria, it was not to preach *God the Holy Spirit* unto them, but to preach *Christ* unto them. While this was done, the Holy Spirit gave testimony to the word of his grace, and rendered it effectual. The more sensible we are, both as ministers and Christians, of our entire dependence on the Holy Spirit's influences, the better: but, if we make them the grand theme of our ministry, we shall do that which he himself avoids, and so shall counteract his opera-

tions. The attempts to reduce the Holy Spirit to a mere property, or *energy*, of the Deity, arise from much the same source as the attempts to prove the inferiority and posteriority of Christ as the Son of God; namely, reasoning from things human to things divine. The Spirit of God is compared to the spirit of man; and, as the latter is not a person distinguishable from man, so, it has been said, the former cannot be a person distinguishable from God the Father. But the design of the apostle, in 1 Cor. ii. 11, was not to represent the Spirit of God as resembling the spirit of man *in respect of his subsistence*, but of his *knowledge*; and it is presumptuous to reason from it on a subject that we cannot understand. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you, and your affectionate brother  
—A. F.



# THOUGHTS ON PREACHING,

IN

## LETTERS TO A YOUNG MINISTER,

&c. &c.

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### LETTER I.

#### ON EXPOUNDING THE SCRIPTURES.

“ My dear brother,

As you have expressed a wish for a few of my thoughts on your principal work as a Christian minister, I will endeavor to comply with your request, persuaded that what I write will be read with candor and seriousness.

The work in which you are engaged is of great importance. To declare the whole counsel of God in such a way as to save yourself and them that hear you—or, if they are not saved, to be pure from their blood—is no small matter. The character of the preaching in an age contributes, more than most other things, to give a character to the Christians of that age. A great and solemn trust, therefore, is reposed in us, of which we must shortly give an account.

The work of a Christian minister, as it respects the pulpit, may be distinguished into two general branches; namely, expounding the Scriptures, and discoursing on divine subjects. In this letter I shall offer a few remarks on the former.

I have found it not a little useful, both to myself and to the people, to appropriate one part of every Lord's-day to the *exposition* of a chapter, or part of a chapter, in the sacred writings. In this way, during the last eighteen years, I have gone over the greater part of the Old Testament, and some books in the New. It is advantageous to a minister

to feel himself necessitated, as it were, to understand every part of Scripture, in order to explain it to the people. It is also advantageous to a people that what they hear should come directly from the word of God, and that they should be led to see the scope and connection of the sacred writers. For want of this, a great number of Scripture passages are misunderstood and misapplied. In going over a book, I have frequently been struck with surprise in meeting with texts which, as they had always occurred to me, I had understood in a sense utterly foreign from what manifestly appeared to be their meaning when viewed *in connection with the context*.

The great thing necessary for expounding the Scriptures is *to enter into their true meaning*. We may read them, and talk about them, again and again, without imparting any light concerning them. If the hearer, when you have done, understand no more of that part of Scripture than he did before, your labor is lost. Yet this is commonly the case with those attempts at expounding which consist of little else than comparing parallel passages, or, by the help of a Concordance, tracing the use of the same word in other places, going from text to text till both the preacher and the people are wearied and lost. This is troubling the Scriptures rather than expounding them. If I were to open a chest of oranges among my friends, and, in order to ascertain their quality, were to hold up one, and lay it down; then hold up another, and say, This is like the last;

then a third, a fourth, a fifth, and so on, till I came to the bottom of the chest, saying of each, It is like the other; of what account would it be? The company would doubtless be weary, and had much rather have tasted two or three of them.

The scope of the sacred writers is of greater importance in understanding the Scriptures than the most critical examination of terms, or the most laborious comparison of the use of them in different places. For want of attending to this, not only particular passages, but whole chapters, are frequently misunderstood. The reasonings of both Christ and his apostles frequently proceed, not upon what is true in fact, but merely in the estimation of the parties addressed: that is to say, they reason with them *on their own principles*. It was not true that Simon the pharisee was a *little* sinner, nor a *forgiven* sinner, nor that he *loved Christ a little*: but he thought thus of himself, and upon these principles Christ reasoned with him. It was not true that the pharisees were just men, and needed no repentance: but such were their thoughts of themselves, and Christ suggested that therefore they had no need of him; for that he came "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Finally: It was not true that the Pharisees who murmured at Christ's receiving publicans and sinners had never, like the ninety-nine sheep in the wilderness, gone astray; nor that, like the elder son, they had served God, and never at any time transgressed his commandment; nor that all which God had was theirs: but such were their own views, and Christ reasons with them accordingly. It is as if he had said, Be it so that you are righteous and happy; yet why should you murmur at the return of these poor sinners? Now, to mistake the *principle* on which such reasonings proceed, is to lose all the benefit of them, and to fall into many errors.

Moreover, to enter into the true meaning of the Scriptures, it is absolutely necessary that we *drink into the spirit* of the writers. This is the greatest of all accomplishments. I do not mean that you are to expect a spirit of extraordinary inspiration; but that of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. It is impossible to enter into the sentiments of any great writer without a kindred mind. Who but a Pope, or a Cowper, could have translated Homer? and who can explain the oracles of God, but he who, in a measure, drinks into the same spirit? Every Christian knows by experience that, in a spiritual frame of mind, he can understand more of the Scriptures in an hour than he can at other times, with the utmost application, in a week. It is by an *unction from the Holy One* that we know all things.

I may add, there are some things which, when known, wonderfully facilitate the knowledge of other things. It thus that a

view of the glory of the divine character and government opens the door to the whole mystery of redemption. It is thus also that a lively faith in the sufferings of Christ, and the glory arising out of them, is a key which unlocks a large part of the sacred oracles. While the disciples remained ignorant of his death, they knew but little of the Scriptures; but, having learned the design of this great event, a flood of light poured in upon them, and the Old Testament became plain and deeply interesting.

A humble sense of our own ignorance, and of our entire dependence upon God, has also a great influence on our coming at the true meaning of his word. There are few things which tend more to blind the mind than a conceit of our own powers. Hence we perceive the justness of such language as the following:—"Proud, knowing nothing."—"He that thinketh he knoweth anything, knoweth nothing as he ought to know."—"If any man will be wise, let him first become a fool, that he may be wise."

To understand the Scriptures in such a manner as profitably to expound them, it is necessary to be conversant with them in private; and to mix, not only faith, but the prayer of faith, with what we read. There is a great difference between reading the Scriptures *as a student*, in order to find something to say to the people, and reading them *as a Christian*, with a view to get good from them to one's own soul. That which is gained in the latter of these ways is, beyond all comparison, of the greatest use, both to ourselves and others. That which we communicate will freeze upon our lips, unless we have first applied it to ourselves; or, to use the language of Scripture, "tasted, felt, and handled the word of life."

When I have read a psalm or chapter, which I mean to expound, and have endeavored to understand it, I have commonly thought it right to consult the best expositors I could obtain, trying and comparing my ideas with theirs. Hereby I have generally obtained some interesting thought which had not occurred to me, and sometimes have seen reason to retract what before appeared to me to be the meaning. But to go first to expositors is to preclude the exercise of your own judgment; and, after all, that which is furnished by the labors of another, though equally good in itself, will be far less interesting to us than that which is the result of our own application.

I will only add that I have found it not a little useful to keep a book in which I write down all my expository notes, which, though illegible to others, yet answer two purposes to myself: first, by looking them over before I go into the pulpit, I have a clear understanding of every sentence: and, secondly, I can have recourse to them on future occasions.

## LETTER II.

## ON SERMONS, AND THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THEM.

THOUGH expounding the Scriptures be an important part of the public work of a minister, yet it is not the whole of it. There is a great variety of *subjects*, both in doctrinal and practical religion, which require to be illustrated, established, and improved; which cannot be done in an exposition. Discourses of this kind are properly called *sermons*.

You request me to give you my thoughts on this part of your work somewhat more particularly. I will endeavor to do so, by considering what must be the *matter*, and the *manner* of preaching, if we wish to do good to the souls of men.

Unless the subject-matter of your preaching be truly evangelical, you had better be any thing than a minister. When the apostle speaks of a necessity being laid upon him to preach the gospel, he might mean that he was not at liberty to relinquish his work in favor of ease, or honor, or any other worldly object; but he was not bound to preach merely, but to preach that doctrine which had been delivered unto him. The same may be said of us; we unto us if we preach not the gospel!

It may seem to be a very easy thing, with the Bible in our hands, to learn the truth, clear of all impure mixtures, and to make it the subject of our ministry. But it is not so. We talk much of thinking and judging for ourselves; but who can justly pretend to be free from the influences which surround him, especially in early life? We are insensibly, and almost irresistibly, assimilated by the books we read, and the company with which we associate; and the principles current in our age and connections will ordinarily influence our minds. Nor is the danger solely from without: we are "slow of heart" to believe in a doctrine so holy and divine, and prone to deviate at every point. If, therefore, we were wholly to think for ourselves, that were no security for our keeping to the mind of Christ.

I mention these things, not to deter you from either reading or thinking for yourself; but rather to inculcate the necessity of prayer for divine guidance and a close adherence to the Scriptures. Though we must think for ourselves, we must not depend upon ourselves, but, as little children, learn at the feet of our Saviour.

If you look over the New Testament, you will find the subject-matter of your preaching briefly yet fully expressed in such language as the following: "Preach *the word*.—Preach *the gospel*.—Preach the gospel to every creature.—Thus it is written, and thus

it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that *repentance and remission of sins* should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.—I declare unto you *the gospel* which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.—We preach *Christ crucified*.—I am determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified.—This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.—We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech men by us, we pray them in Christ's stead, saying, Be ye reconciled unto God. For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.—I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*."

Such, my brother, is the concurrent language of the New Testament. Every one of the foregoing passages contains an epitome of the gospel ministry. You will not expect me to expatiate upon their various connections: I may, however, notice three or four particulars, which follow from them.

First: *In every sermon we should have an errand; and one of such importance that if it be received or complied with it will issue in eternal salvation*.—I say nothing of those preachers who profess to go into the pulpit without an errand, and to depend upon the Holy Spirit to furnish them with one at the time. I write not for them, but for such as make a point of thinking before they attempt to preach. Even of these I have heard some who, in studying their texts, have appeared to me to have no other object in view than to find something to say, in order to fill up the time. This, however, is not preaching, but merely talking about good things. Such ministers, though they think of something beforehand, yet appear to me to resemble Ahimaaz, who ran without tidings. I have also heard many an ingenious discourse, in which I could not but admire the talents of the preacher; but his only object appeared to be to correct the grosser vices, and to form the manners of his audience, so as to render them useful members of civil society. Such ministers have an errand; but not of such importance as to *save* those who receive it, which sufficiently proves that it is not *the gospel*.



In preparing for the pulpit, it would be well to reflect in some such manner as this:—I am expected to preach, it may be to some hundreds of people, some of whom may come several miles to hear; and what have I to say to them? Is it for me to sit here studying a text merely to find something to say to fill up the hour? I may do this without imparting any useful instruction, without commending myself to any man's conscience, and without winning, or even aiming to win, one soul to Christ. It is possible there may be in the audience a poor miserable creature, laboring under the load of a guilty conscience. If he depart without being told how to obtain rest for his soul, what may be the consequence? Or, it may be, some stranger may be there who has never heard the way of salvation in his life. If he should depart without hearing it now, and should die before another opportunity occurs, how shall I meet him at the bar of God? Possibly some one of my constant hearers may die in the following week; and is there nothing I should wish to say to him before his departure? It may be that I myself may die before another Lord's-day: this may be the last time that I shall ascend the pulpit; and have I no important testimony to leave with the people of my care?

Secondly: *Every sermon should contain a portion of the doctrine of salvation by the death of Christ.*—If there be any meaning in the foregoing passages, this is emphatically called THE GOSPEL. A sermon, therefore, in which this doctrine has not a place, and I might add a prominent place, cannot be a *gospel sermon*. It may be ingenious, it may be eloquent; but a want of the doctrine of the cross is a defect which no pulpit excellence can supply.

Far be it from me to encourage that fastidious humour manifested by some hearers, who object to a sermon unless the cross of Christ be the *immediate and direct* topic of discourse. There is a rich variety in the sacred writings, and so there ought to be in our ministrations. There are various important truths *supposed* by this great doctrine, and these require to be illustrated and established. There are various *branches* pertaining to it, which require to be distinctly considered; various *consequences* arising from it, which require to be pointed out; various *duties* corresponding with it, which require to be inculcated; and various *evils* inimical to it, which may require to be exposed. All I mean to say is that as there is a *relation* between these subjects and the doctrine of the cross, if we would introduce them in a truly evangelical manner, it requires to be *in that relation*. I may establish the moral character and government of God; the holiness, justice, goodness, and perpetual obligation of the law; the evil of sin; and the exposedness of the sinner to end-

less punishment: but if I have any other end in view than, by convincing him of his lost condition, to make him feel the need of a Saviour, I cannot be said to have preached *the gospel*; nor is my reasoning, however forcible, likely to produce any good effect. I may be very pointed in pressing the practical parts of religion, and in reproving the sins of the times; but if I enforce the one, or inveigh against the other, or any other than evangelical principles, I, in so doing, preach not the gospel. All scriptural preaching is practical: but when practice is enforced in opposition to doctrine, or even to the neglect of it, it becomes antisciptural. The apostolic precept runs thus: "Preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering *and doctrine*."

Thirdly: *In preaching the gospel, we must not imitate the ORATOR, whose attention is taken up with his performance, but rather the HERALD, whose object is to publish, or proclaim, good tidings.*—There is in the one an earnestness, a fulness of heart, a mind so interested in the subject as to be inattentive to other things, which is not in the other. "We believe, and therefore speak." The emphatical meaning of the terms *κηρυσσω, εὐαγγελίζω, to preach, and preach the gospel*, is noticeable in the account given of the ministry of John the Baptist. "The law and the prophets were until John; since that time the kingdom of God is *preached*, and every man presseth into it." Moses and the prophets spoke of things *at a distance*; but John did more than prophecy: his was "the voice of one that *cried*;" he announced the fulfilment of what had been foretold, proclaiming the Messiah as being *among* them, and his kingdom as *at hand*. He opened the door of salvation, and great numbers pressed in!

Fourthly: *Though the doctrine of reconciliation by the blood of Christ forms the ground-work of the gospel embassy, yet it belongs to the work of the ministry, not merely to declare that truth, but to accompany it with earnest calls, and pressing invitations, to sinners to receive it, together with the most solemn warnings and threatenings to unbelievers who shall continue to reject it.*—The preaching of both John and Christ is, indeed, distinguished from the calls to repentance and faith which they addressed to their hearers, as being the ground on which they rested; but the latter were no less essential to their work than the former. John came "*preaching* in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye," &c. After John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, "*preaching* the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand—repent ye, and believe the gospel." And thus the apostle explains the ministry of reconcilia-

tion as comprehending not only a declaration of the doctrine, but the persuading of men, "beseeching" them to be "reconciled to God."—2 Cor. v. 18—20.

There is nothing in all this which clashes with the most entire dependence on the influence of the Holy Spirit to give success to our ministry. Though we invite men, yet it is not on their pliability that we must rest our hopes, but on the power and promise of God. These are a part of the weapons of our warfare; but it is through God that they become mighty to the pulling down of strong holds.

### LETTER III.

#### ON THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.

You have requested my thoughts on the composition of a sermon. There are several publications on this subject well worthy of your notice. If what I may offer have any peculiar claim to your attention, it will be on account of its familiarity.

The form or manner in which a sermon is composed and delivered is of some importance, inasmuch as it influences the attention, and renders the matter delivered more or less easy of being comprehended and retained.

In general, I do not think a minister of Jesus Christ should aim at fine composition for the pulpit. We ought to use sound speech, and good sense: but if we aspire after great elegance of expression, or become very exact in the formation of our periods, though we may amuse and please the ears of a few, we shall not profit the many, and consequently shall not answer the great end of our ministry. Illiterate hearers may be very poor *judges* of preaching; yet the effect which it produces upon them is the best criterion of its real excellence.

A considerable part of the ministerial gift consists in fruitfulness of invention; but that which greatly aids in the composition and delivery of a sermon is spirituality of mind. Without this we shall get no good ourselves, and be likely to do but little good to others. The first thing, therefore, before we sit down to study, should be to draw near to God in prayer. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

When a passage of Scripture is fixed on as the ground of a sermon, it is necessary to read it in connection with the context, and endeavor by your own judgment to gain a clear idea of its genuine meaning. Having formed your own judgment, I would then advise you to consult expositors, who may throw additional light upon it, or give a different sense to it; and, if the sense which they give appear to have evidence in its favor, you must relinquish your own. Be

satisfied, at all events, that you have the mind of the Holy Spirit before you proceed.

In the next place, having determined on the meaning of the text, it is necessary to examine the force of each word or term of importance in it. This may be done by examining the use of the same terms in other places of Scripture by the help of a concordance: but here a good judgment of your own is required, that you may select a few out of the many parallel texts which really illustrate that on which you have fixed. Some of the worst sermons are made out of a concordance, being a mere collection of similar sounds, which, instead of throwing light upon the subject, only throw it into confusion.

The force of words or terms of importance may also be examined to great advantage by a judicious use of *contrast*. Place all the important terms of your text, one at a time, in contrast with other things, or examine to what ideas they stand opposed. For example, let your text be Psa. cxlv. 16: "Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Begin with the term *OPENEST*. "Thou *openest* thy hand." What an idea does this convey of the *paternal goodness* of the great Father of his creation! How opposite to the conduct of many of his creatures one to another, whose hands and hearts are *shut*! What an idea also does it convey of the *ease* with which the wants of the whole creation are supplied! Let me pause a moment and think of their wants. What a quantity of vegetable and animal food is daily consumed in one town: what a quantity in a large city like London: what a quantity in a nation: in the whole world! But *men* do not compose a hundredth part of "every living thing!" O what innumerable wants throughout all animate nature; in the earth, in the air, in the waters! Whence comes their supply? "Thou openest thy hand," and all are satisfied. And can all these wants be supplied by only the *opening of his hand*? What then must sin be, and salvation from it? That is a work of wonderful expense. God openeth his hand and satisfieth all creation, but he must purchase the church *with his blood*! God is all sufficient as to power in the one case as well as the other; but there are things relative to his moral conduct which he cannot do: he cannot deny himself. Here lies the great difficulty of salvation. In what a *variety of ways* are our wants supplied. The earth is fruitful, the air is full of life, the clouds empty themselves upon the earth, the sun pours forth its genial rays; but the operation of all these second causes is only *the opening of his hand*! Nay, further: look we to *instruments* as well as means? Parents feed us in our childhood, and supply our youthful



wants; ways are opened for our future subsistence; connections are formed, which prove sources of comfort; friends are kind in seasons of extremity; supplies are presented from quarters that we never expected. What are all these but *the opening of his hand*? If his hand were shut, what a world would this be! The heavens brass, the earth iron; famine, pestilence, and death must follow.—See Psalm civ. 27—29.

Next take up the pronoun *THOU*. You will infer from this, If *thou* openest thy hand, should I shut mine against my poor brother? This important sentiment will properly occupy the place of improvement towards the close of the discourse.

Consider next the term *HAND*. There is a difference between the *hand* and the *heart*. God opens his hand, in the way of providence, towards his worst enemies. He gave Nebuchadnezzar all the kingdoms of the earth. But he opens his *heart* in the gospel of his Son. This is the better portion of the two. While we are thankful for the one, let us not rest satisfied in it: it is merely a *hand* portion. Rather let us pray with Jabez to be blessed *indeed*; and that we might have a Joseph's portion; not only the precious things of the earth and the fulness thereof, but "the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush!"

Proceed: "Thou *satisfiest the desire*," &c. God, I see, does not give grudgingly. It seems to be a characteristic of the divine nature, both in the natural and moral world, to raise desires, not with a view to disappoint, but to satisfy them. O what a consoling thought is this! If there be any desires in us which are not satisfied, it is through their being self-created ones, which is our own fault; or through artificial scarcity arising from men's luxury, which is the fault of our species. God raises no desires as our creator but he gives enough to satisfy them; and none as our redeemer and sanctifier but what shall be actually satisfied. O the wonderful munificence of GOD! "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!"

Now, having examined the force of every term of importance, by contrasting it with the opposite idea or ideas, you will find yourself in possession of a number of interesting thoughts, which you may consider as so many recruits, and, having noted them down as they occurred, your next business is to *arrange* them in order, or to give each thought that place in your discourse which it will occupy to the greatest advantage. Many sermons are a *mob* of ideas: they contain very good sentiments, but they have no object in view; so that the hearer is continually answering the preacher, Very true, very true; but what then? What is it you are aiming at? What is this to the purpose? A preacher, then, if he would inter-

est a judicious hearer, must have an object at which he aims, and must never lose sight of it throughout his discourse. This is what writers on those subjects call *a unity of design*: and this is a matter of far greater importance than studying well turned periods, or forming pretty expressions. It is this that nails the attention of an audience. *One thing at once* is a maxim in common life, by which the greatest men have made the greatest proficiency. Shun, therefore, a multiplicity of divisions and subdivisions. He who aims to say every thing in a single discourse, in effect says nothing. Avoid making a head or particular of every thought. Unity of design may be preserved consistently with various methods of division; but the thing itself is indispensable to good preaching.

The following reasons have induced me to hold this opinion: 1. The human mind is so formed as to delight in unity. To divide the attention is to weaken, if not destroy it. PRESIDENT EDWARDS'S sermons, though in some respects not proper for imitation, yet, in this, are worthy of notice. They all hold up some one great leading truth; and that truth is the spirit of his text, and serves for the title of his sermon. Look over the table of contents to his *Thirty-three Sermons*, and you will find the title of each sermon throw an amazing light upon the text. The sentiment expressed in the title he calls the *doctrine* of the text; and all he says is to *illustrate, establish, or improve* it. It might be of use, if, in the composition of sermons, we were to oblige ourselves to give titles to them. Many of what are called sermons would be found to require three or four titles to answer to their contents; which at once proves that, properly speaking, they are not sermons.

2. It has been said, and I think justly, that *evidence* should constitute the body or substance of every doctrinal discourse. Evidence may be drawn from various sources; as Scripture testimony, example, the reason of things, &c.; but evidence always implies a leading truth to be proved. Where this is not the case, the preacher gives himself no opportunity of advancing evidence; consequently his sermon, if it may be so called, will be without body, without substance, and will contain nothing that shall leave any strong impression upon a thinking mind. In opening a battery against a wall, you would not throw your balls at random, first at one place and then at another, but direct your whole force against a particular spot. In the one case your labor would be thrown away; in the other you are likely to make an effectual impression.

3. It is greatly assisting to *memory*, both with respect to the preacher and the hearer. Memory is exercised by the *relation* of one



thing to another. Were you to attempt to remember seven different objects which bore no manner of relation to each other, such as *water, time, wisdom, fruit, contentment, fowls, and revenues*, you would find it almost impossible; but take seven objects which, though different in nature, yet possess some point of unity which associates them in the mind, and the work is easy. Thus, *sun, moon, stars, earth, air, fire, and water*, are readily remembered, being so many principal parts of the *one creation*.

4. I cannot so well satisfy my *conscience* unless I have some interesting truth to communicate, or some important duty to enforce. When I have been thinking of the approach of the Lord's-day, the questions have occurred to my mind, What message have I to deliver to the people of my charge? What important doctrine to establish? What sin to expose? What duty to inculcate? What case to meet? What acknowledged truth to improve? The method frequently used seems to afford an answer to none of these questions; but is rather saying, None at all, only I have a text of Scripture, on the different parts of which I may say something that will fill up the time.

Divisions are either *topical, textual, or compound*. The first, or *topical* method, is to collect all your remarks upon a text, and reduce them to a point, like so many rays of light in a focus. In other words, ask yourself, *What important truth is it that the text contains, and which I feel impressed upon my own mind, and wish to impress upon that of the congregation?* And make this the topic of discourse.

After going over the passage before mentioned, as above, you could be at no loss to determine that the leading sentiment would be—*The bounty of providence*. This is what the old divines called the *doctrine* of the text; and, when they printed their discourses, this was the title of them.

But, you may ask, what am I to do with this doctrine when I have found it? Am I to make no divisions, or subdivisions? Of what is my discourse to be composed? Yes, there must be divisions, and perhaps subdivisions; but let them not be so many distinct subjects, which have no relation to each other, but *so many parts of a whole*. When I have a subject before me, I sometimes ask myself three questions: What is it? On what evidence does it rest? and what does it concern me, or any of the people, if it be true? The division of many subjects will therefore be, I. Explain the doctrine. II. Establish it. III. Improve it.

Let us try the above subject on this plan, and see whether we cannot find a place, under one or other of these heads, for all the foregoing thoughts, which occurred spon-

taneously on looking over the terms; and perhaps, as we go along, others no less interesting may occur.

INTRODUCTION.—However men have been in the dark respecting God, it has not been for want of evidence. He is not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being. Creation is full of God.

There is something in this passage wonderfully sublime. It expresses a great truth in the most simple language. It represents the great Creator as the Father of his creation, encompassed round by an innumerable family, whose eyes all wait on him for daily food; while he, with paternal goodness, opens his bounteous hand, and satisfies their various wants.

The subject which invites our attention is—*the bounty of providence*. In discoursing on it, I shall offer some remarks by the way of explanation—notice the evidence on which it rests—and then improve the subject.

I. Offer some remarks upon the subject by way of EXPLANATION. There is much discontent among men. Many objections may arise in the mind to this doctrine, and but few feel themselves duly impressed with its reality. In order to obviate such objections, I would observe,

1. The desires which God satisfies are to be *restricted to those of his own creating*.—Men have a number of artificial, self-created, and sinful desires. . . . These he does not engage to satisfy; but merely those which are purely natural.

2. Though God satisfies the desire of every living thing, yet not all in *the same way*, but of every creature according to its nature and circumstances. Many of the creatures, like the lily, neither toil nor spin, but receive the bounties of providence ready prepared to their hand: but this is not the case with all. It is not thus with man: for, though we are forbidden to be inordinately careful, yet we must commonly labor for what we have. It is a part of the load laid upon us, that by the sweat of the brow we shall eat bread. Nor do I know whether there be more of judgment than of mercy in this sentence. Idleness is certainly a soil on which sin grows to its greatest perfection. Considering what man is, it is a mercy that we have employment. It is among the rich who have nothing to do, and the very poor who will do but little, that wickedness is most prevalent.

3. The text expresses what God does *ordinarily*, not *universally*, or in all cases.—There are cases of famine; seasons in which God as it were shuts his hand, on account of the sins of men; and, if he shuts his hand, the heavens become brass, and the earth iron, and millions perish for want of bread. There are also cases more common than fam-

ine: great numbers of mankind labor under the hardships of poverty, pine away, and are stricken through, for want of the fruits of the field. But this is one of those evils under which the world groans, owing to the sin of man. If there were no waste or intemperance among one part of mankind, there would be a sufficiency and more than a sufficiency for all.

II. We proceed to notice a few of the EVIDENCES by which this important truth is supported.

There are some subjects which are difficult to prove, not from a scarcity, but from a profusion of evidence. Where this is the case, the difficulty lies in selection: I shall content myself with offering three things to your consideration.

1. The supplies we constantly receive cannot be ascribed to *our own labor as their first cause*.—The whole of human labor is but a kind of manufactory of the materials with which God is pleased to furnish us. We make nothing: we only change the forms of different productions, to suit our convenience. We are as really, though not as sensibly, dependent on God as Israel in the wilderness, who were fed with manna from heaven. To this may be added, when we have labored to the utmost, it amounts to nothing without a divine blessing upon it. All, therefore, that we possess proceeds from the opening of his hand.

2. A consideration of the *number and magnitude of the wants of creatures* will convince us that nothing short of the all-sufficiency of God can supply them.—What a quantity of vegetable and animal food is required by a single town, for only one day! more for a city; more for a nation; more still for a world; and that for a succession of ages! And what are men, when compared with the whole animate creation? All nature teems with life. The earth, the air, the sea, each swarms with being. Whence can all these be continually supplied, but by him that made them? “Thou openest thy hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.”

3. If we consider the *various ways and means* by which our supplies reach us, we shall be convinced of the truth in question. God does not satisfy our desires immediately, so much as through the medium of second causes; and, though we may be too insensible of that hand which puts all in motion, yet it is no less engaged than if we were supplied by miracle. A concatenation, or chain of causes, is apparent in the works of God. Our food is prepared by a complicate but beautiful machinery. The heavens are made to hear the earth, the earth to hear the corn, the wine, and oil, and the corn, the wine, and the oil to hear the people. What is that tendency of various parts of the creation to satisfy the desires of other parts, but the operation of his hand, who is concerned to uphold

and render happy the creatures that he hath made? The earth abounds in fertility, and the air with salubrity: the clouds pour forth their waters on the earth, and the sun its genial rays. Fire and hail, snow and winds and seas contribute to our welfare. We inhale life with every breath we breathe. The elements are employed for our sustenance and happiness.

Look we to instruments as well as means? Tender parents have supplied us during our childhood and youth; ways have been opened for our future subsistence; endearing connections have been formed, which have proved a source of much enjoyment; in seasons of difficulty friends have kindly aided us; supplies have arisen from quarters that we never expected: what are these but the openings of his hand?

III. IMPROVE the subject. There is no divine truth but is of some account, and this will be found not a little fruitful.

1. If such be the bounty of divine providence, *under what obligations do we lie!* yet what actual returns have we made for all this goodness? All the return that God requires is a grateful heart: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” But, alas! are there not many of you who are this day his enemies? The idea is shocking, that such a God should have an enemy; yet so it is. The worst thing that was said of one of the worst of men was, “He hath eaten at my table, and hath lifted up his heel against me!” God has been feeding a generation of vipers; which, under the frost of childhood or adversity, seemed to claim his pity: but which, under the sunshine of maturer years and prosperous circumstances, do not fail to hiss and spit their venom in his face! These things must all come into account. All God’s goodness, and all our abuses of it, will be brought to light at the last day.

2. From this view of the divine beneficence, *what encouragement is there to trust in the Lord* under all our wants and difficulties! With what *ease* can he supply our wants! In how many ways, unknown to us, and unexpected by us, can he give a favorable turn to our affairs! “Trust in the Lord and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.”—“Young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.”

3. If such be the bounty of providence, *what is that of grace?* If this be the opening of his hand, that is the opening of his heart. If he satisfies natural desires, much more those that are spiritual.—See ver. 19. That which is only done generally in the one case is done universally in the other. Not one soul shall perish through famine, or any kind of want, whose desires terminate on Christ.

While therefore we cherish gratitude for temporal mercies, let us not rest satisfied in

them. God gave Nebuchadnezzar all the kingdoms of the earth. See how light he makes of worldly good, to bestow it on the basest of men; to throw it away, as it were, on his worst enemies. Do not be content with Nebuchadnezzar's portion; but rather covet, with Jabez, to be blessed *indeed*. Worldly good, though a blessing in itself, is capable of being turned by sin into a curse. Covet the crowning point of Joseph's portion; not only the precious things of the earth, and the fulness thereof; but "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush!"

4. If God be thus good, *what must sin be*, that can induce him to load this world with such a degree of misery!

5. If God can with such *ease* supply all creation, *what a blessing must redemption be!* For the one he has only to open his hand, and the work is done: the other must be accomplished by the purchase of his blood! God was sufficient for the latter, as well as for the former, as to power; but there are things relative to his moral conduct which he cannot do—He cannot deny himself. Here lies the great difficulty of salvation.

6. What a motive is here to *be kind to the poor and needy!* If we be children of God we must imitate him: "Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land."

This may serve as an example of the topical method of preaching; and, where it can be accomplished, it is very interesting. But there are some texts which cannot be easily reduced to a single topic: and indeed it is better not to be confined to one method, but to indulge variety. Whatever method may be pursued consistent with a *unity of design* is very allowable. This object may be attained in what is called the *textual* method of division, on which I shall next proceed to offer a few observations.

[N. B. Mr. Fuller appears not to have fulfilled his intention of proceeding with the subject, the foregoing letters being all that can be found of the series. The letter which follows was addressed to another of Mr. Fuller's friends, and has been kindly handed to the editor of this edition of the works.]

## LETTER IV.

### ON THE COMPOSITION OF A SERMON.

ENDEAVOR to understand a subject before you speak of it. Do not overload your memory with words. Write down a few leading things for the sake of arrangement and assistance of memory; but not a great deal. Memory must not be overburdened. Never carry what you write into the pulpit. Avoid vulgar expressions: do not affect

finical ones, nor words out of common use. As to division and arrangement, it barely respects the assortment of your materials. You must endeavor to understand and feel your subject, or the manner in which you divide it will signify but little. But if both these may be taken for granted, then I should say much depends, as to your being heard with pleasure and profit, on a proper discussion and management of the subject. At all events, avoid a multiplying of *heads* and particulars. A few well-chosen thoughts, matured, proved, and improved, are abundantly more acceptable than when the whole is chopped, as it were, into mince meat. It is very common to divide in a textual way, i. e. to propose to discourse first upon one part or branch of it; secondly, upon another, &c. As for example:—

"In thy light we shall see light."—Ps. xxxvi. 9.

First, inquire what is meant by that light which is ascribed to God: "Thy light;" secondly, what is that light which we see in God's light; thirdly, what is included in seeing this light. I cannot say I approve of this method. It is not, properly speaking, a sermon. A sermon is a discourse on some divine subject, or a train of interesting thoughts on some sacred theme. The above process, I think, should be brought into the introduction and explication of the text, and should be done in about five minutes. Then, having made the text plain by explaining the difficult parts of it, I should state the leading truth taught in the text as the subject or theme of the discourse. For example:—

"In thy light we shall see light."—Ps. xxxvi. 9.

There is a great boast of light in the world, and there is some ground for it in natural things: but, as of old the world by wisdom knew not God, so of late. If ever we know God, it must be through the medium of his word. This I take to be the meaning of the passage I have read. The term light in the last clause means the true knowledge of God: and, in the first, the true medium of attaining it, viz. divine revelation. The sun seems to amount to this: the word of God is the grand medium by which we can attain a true and saving knowledge of God. What the sun and stars are to the regions of matter, that revelation is to the mental region.—Gen. i. 13, 17.

I. Let us try to ILLUSTRATE THIS IMPORTANT TRUTH BY A FEW OBSERVATIONS.

1. The knowledge of God was objectively manifested by the light of nature, but through man's depravity rendered operative. See Rom. i. 28. It is the revelation of the law of the Lord that converteth the soul.—Psa. xix. 1—11.



2. The true knowledge of God was obtained under the patriarchal or Mosaic dispensation by great numbers, but it was through the medium of revelation. As revelation increased, the knowledge of God increased with it; prophecies, promises, and precepts; types, and shadows. In this light they saw light, though not so clearly as in after days.

3. The true knowledge of God has obtained still more ground under the gospel dispensation; but it is still through the medium of revelation. Whenever the latter has gone among the Gentiles, the former has gone along with it: and, as revelation is more perfect, God has the more honored it.

4. The light of the gospel dispensation is not yet perfect (Isa. xxx. 26;) but, whatever degree of brilliancy arises, it will be through this medium. We must not think we have exhausted Scripture knowledge: we know but little of it yet. A thousand promises and prophecies will appear in a glory, of which we have now but faint ideas. Let us now—

## II. ENDEAVOR TO IMPROVE THIS SUBJECT.

1. Be thankful for the light of revelation. Regard not the ignis fatuus which wanders about under the name of reason in modern productions.—2 Peter i. 19.

2. Walk in it particularly in finding your way to eternal life; for settling disputed principles, and regulating your lives.

3. There are many things of which you may entertain no doubt, concerning which there may be no manner of dispute; yet make a point of seeing them in God's light. Many content themselves with seeing them in the light in which great and good men have placed them; but, though angels, they are not the true light: they all view things partially. If what they say be true, yet, if we receive it merely on their representation, our faith will stand in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God.—1 Cor. ii. 9. That knowledge or faith which has not God's word for its ground will not stand the day of trial.

4. Endeavor to spread it in your connections and in the world at large, &c.

I do not pretend to say that sermons should be formed after this or any other mode. Every subject, in some degree, requires a mode of discussion for itself. There are, however, some general observations, that will ordinarily apply to most subjects. In doctrinal subjects, in which some great truth is taught, your business is to find out that truth, and state it in the introduction: if clearly stated, search for the evidences, and make it one head of the discourse to establish it. If it be a truth to be illustrated, set it before the hearers in various points of light; and as no divine truth is merely speculative,

but some way or other concerns the hearers, the latter part of the subject should consist in improvement. I. To explain—II. To establish—III. To improve it.

But in all cases the division must be governed by the materials you have to divide. It would be absurd to explain a subject that was already as plain as you could make it, or in which there appeared no difficulties or liability to misunderstand. There are three questions I have often put to myself in thinking on a subject—*What? Why? What then?* In other words—*What am I going to teach? Why? or on what ground do I advance it as a truth? And what does it concern any or all of my hearers if it be true?*

On practical subjects there is seldom much room for you to prove and improve. Not the former, since there is no truth to be established; not the latter, because the whole sermon is an address upon those things of which no improvement is made. I have generally found that exhortations include matter for a two-fold division, and have very commonly proposed, first, to inquire into the meaning and extent of the exhortation; secondly, to enforce it. Under the former there is room to expatiate upon every idea or branch of the duty. In the latter, to introduce any motive that serves either for that or other texts.

If a text be partly doctrinal and partly practical, the practical part may often be introduced first: I think the doctrinal part will come as a motive to enforce it.

[The subject of the following paper, which originally appeared in the Evangelical Magazine, will it is presumed sufficiently justify its insertion in this place.]

## ON THE ABUSE OF ALLEGORY IN PREACHING.

AFTER what several able writers have produced of late years upon this practice, particularly the late Dr. Stennett on the Parable of the Sower, it might have been expected that this evil would at least have been considerably diminished. But the misfortune is, those who are most addicted to this way of preaching seem in general to have very little inclination to read. Whether they deem it unlawful, as involving them in the sin charged upon the prophets, of stealing every one from his neighbor—or whether they be so enamored of their own thoughts as to set all others at defiance—I cannot decide; but certain it is that many preach as if they had never read or thought upon the subject.

Very little observation will convince us that the preachers with whom this practice mostly prevails are of the lower sort with respect to seriousness and good sense, how-

ever high they may affect to soar in their notions. Of such characters I have but little hope. But as some godly men are, I believe, too much infected with this disease, if the editor will indulge me with two or three pages in the magazine, I will expostulate with one of them on the *causes* and *consequences* of his conduct.

Let me intreat you then, my friend, to consider, in the first place, whether, when you turn plain historical facts into allegory, you treat the word of God with becoming reverence. Can you seriously think the Scriptures to be a book of riddles and conundrums, and that a Christian minister is properly employed in giving scope to his fancy, in order to discover their solution? I have been asked the meaning of certain passages of Scripture; and, when I have answered according to what appeared to be the scope of the sacred writer, it has been said, "Yes, that may be the *literal* meaning; but what is the *spiritual* meaning of it?" as though every part of Scripture had a spiritual, that is, a hidden or allegorical meaning, besides its obvious one. That some parts of Scripture are allegorical—that some prophecies have a double reference—and that the principle suggested by many a passage may be applied to other things besides what is immediately intended—there is no doubt: but this is very different from the practice to which I allude. All Scripture is profitable in some way; some for doctrine, some for reproof, some for correction, and some for instruction in righteousness: but all is not to be turned into allegory. If we must play, let it be with things of less consequence than the word of the eternal God!

Secondly: consider whether the motive that stimulates you to such a manner of treating the sacred oracles be any other than *vanity*. If you preached to a people possessed of any thing like good sense, they would consider it as perverting the word of God, and whipping it into froth. Instead of applauding you, they would be unable to endure it. But, if your people be ignorant, such things will please them; and they may gaze, and admire, and smile, and say one to another, it may be in your hearing too, Well, what a man! Who would have thought that he would have found so much gospel in that text? Ah, very true: who indeed? But what would the apostle Paul say? "Are ye not carnal?" Is it for a man of God to "court a grin when he should woo a soul?" For shame! desist from such folly, or lay aside the Christian ministry! You are commanded to "feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood:" but it is not every thing pleasing to a people that feeds them in the sense of the apostle. He did not mean to direct the

Ephesian elders to feed men's fancies, and still less their prejudices; but their spiritual desires: and this is accomplished only by administering to them the words of truth and soberness. If your preaching be such as God approves, and if you study to show yourself approved of him, it will lead the people to admire your Saviour rather than you, and render him the topic of their conversation.

Thirdly: Consider whether both you and your people be not in danger of mistaking this spiritualizing passion for spirituality of mind and a being led into "the deep things of God." There are few objects at a greater distance than the effervescence of a vain imagination and that holy and humble spirit by which spiritual things are discerned; yet the one is often mistaken for the other. The preacher dreams of deep discoveries: and the people wonder to hear them: but what saith the Scriptures? "The prophet that hath only a dream must tell his dream; but he that hath God's word, let him speak it faithfully: for what is the chaff to the wheat?"

Finally: Consider the consequences which must follow from this practice. If an unbeliever come into your assembly, and find you arraying Christianity in this fancy dress, is it likely he should be convinced of all—and, the secrets of his heart being made manifest, fall down and worship God, and report that God is among you, and that of a truth? If he hear you treat of the historical parts of Scripture as meaning something very different from what they appear to mean, will he not say you are mad, and be furnished with a handle for representing religion itself as void of truth and good sense? Or if he hear you interpret the miracles, which Christ wrought in proof of his Messiahship, of that change which is now wrought in the minds of sinners by the Spirit of God, will he not say that you yourselves appear to consider the whole as a string of fables, and are employed in finding out the morals of them?

But perhaps you are seldom attended by men of this description. Be it so; what, think you, must be the effect of such preaching on professing Christians, either nominal or real? The former will either fall asleep under it, as something which does not concern them; or, if they attend to you, and understand your interpretations, they will think they are quite in the secret, and set themselves down for deep Christians; when, in truth, they know nothing yet as they ought to know. And, as to real Christians, their souls will either pine under your ministry, or, by contracting a false taste, will thirst after the froth of human fancy, to the neglect of the sincere milk of the word;

and instead of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, will make no progress in either.

It is an easy thing for a man of a luxuriant imagination, unincumbered by judgment, to make any thing he pleases of the Scriptures, as well as any other book; but in so doing he must destroy their simplicity, and

of course their efficacy; which in fact is reducing them to nothing. If they be not applied to their appropriate uses, they are perverted; and a perverted good proves the greatest of evils. Thus it is that characters abound who are full of scripture language, while yet they are awfully destitute of scripture knowledge, or scriptural religion.



MEMOIRS  
OF THE  
REV. SAMUEL PEARCE.

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TO THE  
FAMILY AND FRIENDS  
OF  
MR. PEARCE,  
THESE MEMOIRS,  
COMPILED WITH THEIR APPROBATION  
AND FROM A TENDER REGARD TO HIS MEMORY,  
ARE AFFECTIONATELY  
AND RESPECTFULLY  
INSCRIBED BY  
THE COMPILER.

## INTRODUCTION.

IT was observed by this excellent man, during his affliction, that he never till then gained any personal instruction from our Lord's telling Peter by *what death* he should glorify God. To die by a consumption had used to be an object of dread to him: but "Oh my dear Lord," said he, "if by *this death* I can most *glorify thee*, I prefer it to all others." The lingering death of the cross, by which our Saviour himself expired, afforded him an opportunity of uttering some of the most affecting sentences which are left on sacred record: and to the lingering death of this his honored servant we are indebted for a considerable part of the materials which appear in these Memoirs. Had he been taken away suddenly, there had been no opportunity for him to have expressed his sentiments and feelings in the manner he has now done in letters to his friends. While in health, his hands were full of labor, and consequently his letters were written mostly upon the spur of occasion; and related principally to business, or to things which would be less interesting to Christians in general. It is true, even in them it was his manner to drop a few sentiments, towards the close, of an experimental kind; and many of these hints will be interspersed in this brief account of him: but it was during his affliction, when, being laid aside nearly a year, and obliged to desist from all public concerns, that he gave scope to all the feelings of his heart. Here, standing as on an eminence, he reviewed his life, re-examined the ground of his hope, and anticipated the crown which awaited him, with a joy truly *unspeakable and full of glory*.

Like Elijah, he has left the "chariot of Israel," and ascended as in a "chariot of fire;" but not without having first communicated of his eminently Christian spirit. Oh that a double portion of it may rest upon us!

# MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE

## REV. SAMUEL PEARCE.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### HIS PARENTAGE, CONVERSION, CALL TO THE MINISTRY, AND SETTLEMENT AT BIR- MINGHAM.

MR. SAMUEL PEARCE was born at Plymouth, on July 20th, 1766. His father who survives him, is a respectable silversmith, and has been many years a deacon of the baptist church in that place.

When a child, he lived with his grandfather, who was very fond of him, and endeavored to impress his mind with the principles of religion. At about eight or nine years of age he came home to his father with a view of learning his business. As he advanced in life, his evil propensities, as he has said, began to ripen; and, forming connexions with several vicious school-fellows, he became more and more corrupted. So greatly was his heart at this time set in him to do evil, that had it not been for the restraining goodness of God, which somehow, he knew not how, preserved him in most instances from carrying his wicked inclinations into practice, he supposed he should have been utterly ruined.

At times he was under strong convictions, which rendered him miserable; but at other times they subsided, and then he would return with eagerness to his sinful pursuits. When about fifteen years old he was sent by his father to inquire after the welfare of a person in the neighborhood, in dying circumstances, who (though before his departure he was in a happy state of mind) at that time was sinking into deep despair. While in the room of the dying man, he heard him cry out with inexpressible agony of spirit, "I am damned forever!" These awful words pierced his soul; and he felt a resolution at the time to serve the Lord; but the impression soon wore off, and he again returned to folly.

When about sixteen years of age, it pleased God effectually to turn him to himself. A sermon delivered by Mr. *Birt*, who was then co-pastor with Mr. *Gibbs* of the baptist church at Plymouth, was the first means of impressing his heart with a sense of his lost condition, and of directing him to the gospel remedy. The change in him appears to have been sudden, but effectual; and, though his vicious propensities were bitter to his recollection, yet, being now sensibly subdued, he was furnished with so much the clearer evidence that the work was of God. "I believe," he says, "few conversions were more joyful. The change produced in my views, feelings, and conduct, was so evident to myself, that I could no more doubt of its being from God than of my existence. I had the witness in myself, and was filled with peace and joy unspeakable."

His feelings being naturally strong, and receiving a new direction, he entered into religion with all his heart; but, not having known the devices of Satan, his soul was injured by its own ardor, and he was thrown into great perplexity. Having read Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," he determined formally to dedicate himself to the Lord, in the manner recommended in the seventeenth chapter of that work. The form of a covenant, as there drawn up, he also adopted as his own; and, that he might bind himself in the most solemn and affecting manner, *signed it with his blood*. But afterwards, failing in his engagements, he was plunged into great distress, and almost into despair. On a review of his covenant, he seems to have accused himself of a pharisaical reliance upon the strength of his own resolutions; and therefore, taking the paper to the top of his father's house, he tore it into small pieces, and threw it from him to be scattered by the wind. He did not however consider his obligation to be the Lord's as hereby nullified; but, feeling more



suspicious of himself, he depended solely upon *the blood of the cross*.

After this he was baptized, and became a member of the baptist church at Plymouth, the ministers and members of which, in a few years, perceived in him talents for public work. Being solicited by both his pastors, he exercised as a probationer; and, receiving a unanimous call from the church, entered on the work of the ministry in November, 1786. Soon after this he went to the academy at Bristol, then under the superintendence of Dr. Caleb Evans.

Mr. Birt, now pastor of the baptist church, in the square, Plymouth Dock, in a letter to the compiler of these memoirs, thus speaks of him:—"Though he was, so far as I know, the very first-fruits of my ministry on my coming hither, and though our friendship and affection for each other were great and constant, yet previously to his going to Bristol I had but few opportunities of conversing with him, or of making particular observations on him. All who best knew him, however, well remember and most tenderly speak of his loving deportment; and those who attended the conferences with him soon received the most impressive intimations of his future eminence as a minister of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Very few," adds Mr. Birt, "have entered upon and gone through their religious profession with more exalted piety or warmer zeal than Samuel Pearce; and as few have exceeded him in the possession and display of that *charity* which 'suffereth long, and is kind, that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up, that doth not behave itself unseemly, that seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, that beareth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things.' But why should I say this to you? You know him yourself."

While at the academy he was much distinguished by the amiableness of his spirit and behavior. It is sometimes observable that where the talents of a young man are admired by his friends, and his early efforts flattered by crowded auditories, effects have been produced which have proved fatal to his future respectability and usefulness. But this was not the case with Mr. Pearce. Notwithstanding the popularity which even at that early period attended his ministerial exercises, his tutors have more than once remarked that he never appeared to them to be in the least elated, or to have neglected his proper studies; but was uniformly the serious, industrious, docile, modest, and unassuming young man.

Towards the latter end of 1789, he came to the church in Cannon-street, Birmingham, to whom he was recommended by Mr. Hall, now of Cambridge, at that time one of his tutors. After preaching to them a while on probation he was chosen to be their pas-

tor. His ordination was in August 1790. Dr. Evans gave the charge, and the late venerable Mr. Hall, of Arnsby, delivered an address to the church on the occasion.

About two months after this he wrote to his friend Mr. Summers. Whether the sentiments contained in that letter arose from the recollection of his late solemn engagement is uncertain; but they were certainly very appropriate to the occasion. Requesting his friend to pray for him, he says:—"Paul speaks of blessings received through the prayers of his fellow-christians: no wonder, therefore, he so often solicits their continuance. But, if it be well to be interested in the prayers of fellow-christians, how much more to believe the great High Priest of our profession, Jesus the Son of God, is gone into the holy of holies, with our names on his breast-plate, ever to plead in the presence of God for us—for us: O transporting thought! Who can doubt of the success of such an intercessor?"

"I have of late had my mind very pleasantly, and I hope profitably, exercised on this subject, more than ever, and find increasing pleasure from a well-grounded faith in the *divinity* of my incarnate advocate. I see the glory of his office, arising from the infinite extent of his knowledge, power, and love, as well as from the efficacy of his atoning sacrifice. I do not wonder at those men who deny the priestly office of Christ, when they have refused him *the honors of deity*. I rejoice in that he who pleads for us knows our wants individually, as well as the necessities of the whole church collectively. Through his intercession alone I expect my sins to be pardoned, my services accepted, and my soul preserved, guided, and comforted: and, with confidence in his intercession, I cannot doubt but I shall enjoy all. O how sweet is it, my dear friend, to exercise a lively faith in a living Saviour! May you and I do this daily. Thus for us to live will be Christ, and to die gain: living or dying, we shall be the Lord's."

In this early stage of his ministry, redemption by the blood of Christ appears to have been his chosen theme. Writing to the same friend as above, on Sept. 30, 1791, he says:—"I have for my evening discourse the best subject in all the Bible—*redemption*.—Ephes. i. 7. How welcome to the captive! Forgiveness, how delightful to the guilty! Grace, how pleasing to the heart of a saved sinner! O, my dear friend, how much do we lose of gospel blessings for want of realizing our personal concern with them! Hence it is that we are no more humble, thankful, watchful, prayerful, joyful. We view the glories of the gospel at a distance; and for want of that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and evidence of things not seen, think too lightly of them. "Lord, increase our faith!"

In the year 1791 he married Miss Sarah Hopkins, daughter of Mr. Joshua Hopkins of Alcester—a connection which appears to have been all along a source of great enjoyment to him. The following lines addressed to Mrs. Pearce when he was on a journey, a little more than a year after their marriage, seem to be no more than a common letter: yet they show, not only the tenderness of his affection, but his heavenly-mindedness, his gentle manner of persuading, and how every argument was fetched from religion, and every incident improved for introducing it:—

“*Chipping Norton, August 15, 1792.*”

“I believe, on retrospection, that I have hitherto rather anticipated the proposed time of my return, than delayed the interview with my dear Sarah for an hour. But what shall I say, my love, now to reconcile you to my procrastinating my return for several days more? Why I will say—It appears I am called of God; and I trust the piety of both of us will submit and say, ‘Thy will be done.’”

“You have no doubt perused Mr. Ryland’s letter to me, wherein I find he solicits an exchange. The reason he assigns is so obviously important that a much greater sacrifice than we are called to make should not be withheld to accomplish it. I therefore propose, God willing, to spend the next Lord’s day at Northampton. I thought of taking tea with you this evening: *that* would have been highly gratifying to us both; but it must be our meat and drink to do and submit to the will of our heavenly Father. All is good that comes from him, and all is done right which is done in obedience to him. Oh to be perfectly resigned to his disposal—how good is it! May you, my dearest Sarah, and myself, daily prove the sweetness of this pious frame of soul: then all our duties will be sweet, all our trials will be light, all our pleasures will be pure, and all our hopes sanctified.

“This evening I hope to be at Northampton. Let your prayers assist my efforts on the ensuing Sabbath. You will, I trust, find in Mr. R. a ship richly laden with spiritual treasures. Oh for more supplies from the exhaustless mines of grace!”

The soul of Mr. Pearce was formed for friendship: it was natural therefore to suppose that, while engaging in the pursuit of his studies at the academy, he would contract religious intimacies with some of his brethren; and it is worthy of notice that the grand cement of his friendship was *kindred piety*. In the two following letters, addressed to his friend Mr. Steadman, the reader will perceive the justness of this remark, as well as the encouraging prospects which soon attended his labors at Birmingham:—

May 9, 1792.

“My very dear Brother,

“You live so remote that I can hear nothing of your prosperity at Broughton. I hope you are settled with a comfortable people, and that you enjoy much of your Master’s presence, both in the study and in the pulpit. For my part, I have nothing to lament but an insensible ungrateful heart, and that is sufficient cause for lamentation. This, only this, bows me down; and under this pressure I am ready to adopt the words I preached from last evening—‘Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest!’”

“As a people we are generally united: I believe more so than most churches of the same dimensions. Our number of members is about 295, between forty and fifty of whom have joined us since I saw you, and most of them I have the happiness of considering as my children in the faith.—There is still a crying out amongst us after salvation; and still, through much grace, it is my happiness to point them to ‘the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.’”

“In preaching, I have often peculiar liberty; at other times barren. I suppose my experience is like that of most of my brethren: but I am not weary of my work. I hope still that I am willing to spend and be spent, so that I may win souls to Christ, and finish my course with joy: but I want more heart-religion: I want a more habitual sense of the divine presence: I want to walk with God as Enoch walked. There is nothing that grieves me so much, or brings so much darkness on my soul, as my little spirituality, and frequent wanderings in secret prayer. I cannot neglect the duty; but it is seldom that I enjoy it.

“Ye that love the Lord indeed,  
Tell me, is it so with you?”

When I come to the house of God, I pray and preach with freedom. Then I think the presence of the people seems to weigh more with me than the presence of God, and deem myself a hypocrite, almost ready to leave my pulpit, for some more pious preacher. But the Lord does own the word: and again I say, if I go to hell myself, I will do what I can to keep others from going thither; and so in the strength of the Lord I will.

“An observation once made to me helps to support me above water:—‘If you did not plough in your closet, you would not reap in the pulpit.’ And again I think, ‘the Lord dwelleth in Zion, and loveth it more than the dwellings of Jacob.’”

“Feb. 1793.

“The pleasure which your friendly epistle gave me rises beyond expression; and it is one of the first wishes of my heart ever to

live in your valued friendship. Accept this and my former letters, my dear brother, as sufficient evidences of my ardent wishes to preserve, by correspondence, that mutual remembrance of each other which on my part will ever be pleasurable, and on yours, I hope, never painful.

“But, ah, how soon may we be rendered incapable of such an intercourse! When I left Bristol, I left it with regret. I was sorry to leave my studies to embark, inexperienced as I am, on the tempestuous ocean of public life, where the high blowing winds, and rude noisy billows, must more or less inevitably annoy the trembling voyager. Nor did it make a small addition to my pain that I was to part with so many of my dear companions, with whom I had spent so many happy hours, either in furnishing or unburdens the mind. I need not say, amongst the first of these I considered Josiah Evans.\* But ah, my friend, we shall see his face no more! Through divine grace I hope we shall go to him; but he will not return to us. ‘He wasted away, he gave up the ghost, and where is he?’ I was prepared for the news because I expected it. The last time I heard directly from him was by a very serious and affectionate letter, which I received, I think, last September. To it I replied; but received no answer. I conjectured—I feared; and now my conjectures and fears are all realized. Dear departed youth! Thy memory will ever be grateful to this affectionate breast. May thy amiable qualities live again in thy surviving friend, that, to the latest period of his life, he may thank God for the friendship of Josiah Evans!

“I assure you, my dear Steadman, I feel, keenly feel, the force of the sentiment which Blair thus elegantly expresses:—

‘Of joys departed, ne’er to be recalled,  
How painful the remembrance!’

“But I sorrow not as one without hope. I have a two-fold hope: I hope he is now among the spirits of the just made perfect, and that he will be of the blessed and holy number who have part in the first resurrection: and I hope also, through the same rich, free, sovereign, almighty, matchless grace, to join the number too. Pleasing thought! Unite to divide no more!

“I preached last night from Rev. xxi. 6: ‘I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.’ I took occasion to expound the former part of the chapter, and found therein a pleasure inexpressible; especially when speaking from the first verse—‘and there was no more sea.’ The first idea that presented itself to me was this—*there shall be no bar to inter-*

*course.* Whether the thought be just, or not, I leave with you and my hearers to determine; but I found happy liberty in illustrating it. What is it that separates one nation, and one part of the globe, from another? Is it not the sea? Are not Christians, though all of one family, the common Father of which is God, separated by this sea, or that river, or the other stream below? Yes, but they are one family still. *There shall be none of these obstructions to communion, of these bars to intercourse; nothing to divide their affections or disunite their praise forever.—Forgive my freedoms. I am writing to a friend, to a brother.”*

There are few, if any, thinking men but who at some seasons have had their minds perplexed with regard to religious principles, even those which are of the greatest importance. In the end, however, where the heart is right, such exercises commonly issue in a more decided attachment to the truth. Thus it was with Mr. Pearce. In another part of the above letter, he thus writes to his friend Steadman:—“I have, since I saw you, been much perplexed about some doctrinal points, both Arminian and Socinian, I believe through reading very attentively, but without sufficient dependence on the Spirit of truth, several controversies on those subjects; particularly the writings of Whitby, Priestly, and others. Indeed, had the state of mind I was in about ten weeks since continued, I should have been incapable of preaching with comfort at all. But in the mount of the Lord will he be seen. Just as I thought of giving up, he who hath the hearts of all men in his hand, and turneth them as the rivers of water are turned, was pleased, by a merciful though afflicting providence, to set me at a happy liberty.

“I was violently seized with a disorder very rife here, and which carried off many, supposed to be an inflammation in the bowels. One Sabbath evening I felt such alarming symptoms that I did not expect to see the Monday morning. In these circumstances I realized the feelings of a dying man. My mind had been so accustomed to reflect on virtue and moral goodness, that the first thing I attempted was a survey of my own conduct; my diligence and faithfulness in the ministry, my unspotted life, &c. &c. But, ah, vain props these for dying men to rest on! Such heart-sins, such corruptions, and evil propensities, recurred to my mind, that, if ever I knew the moment when I felt my own righteousness to be as loathsome and filthy rags, it was then. And where should I, where could I, where did I flee, but to Him whose glory and grace I had been of late degrading, at least in my thoughts? Yes, there I saw peace for guilty consciences was to be *alone* obtained through an almighty Saviour. And oh,

\* See a brief account of him, given in part by Mr. Pearce, in Dr. Rippon’s Register, Vol. 1. pp. 51—516.



wonderful to tell, I again came to him; nor was I sent away without the blessing. I found him full of all compassion, ready to receive the most ungrateful of men.

'Oh to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrain'd to be!'

Thus, my dear brother, was the snare broken, and thus I escaped.

'A debtor to mercy alone,  
Of covenant mercy I sing.'

Join with me in praising Him who remembered me in my low estate, because his mercy endureth forever. Yet this is among the *all things*. I have found it has made me more spiritual in preaching. I have prized the gospel more than ever, and hope it will be the means of guarding me against future temptations."

From his first coming to Birmingham, his meekness and patience were put to the trial by an antinomian spirit which infected many individuals, both in and out of his congregation. It is well known with what affection it was his practice to beseech sinners to be reconciled to God, and to exhort Christians to the exercise of practical godliness: but these were things which they could not endure. Soothing doctrine was all they desired. Therefore it was that his ministry was traduced by them as arminian, and treated with neglect and contempt. But, like his divine Master, he bore the contradiction of sinners against himself, and this while he had the strongest satisfaction that, in those very things to which they objected, he was pleasing God. And though he plainly perceived the pernicious influence of their principles upon their own minds, as well as the minds of others, yet he treated them with great gentleness and long forbearance; and, when it became necessary to exclude such of this description as were in communion with him, it was with the greatest reluctance that he came into that measure, and not without having first tried all other means in vain. He was not apt to deal in harsh language; yet, in one of his letters about that time, he speaks of the principles and spirit of these people as a "cursed leaven."

Among his numerous religious friendships, he seems to have formed one for the special purpose of *spiritual improvement*. This was with Mr. Summers, of London, who often accompanied him in his journeys; to whom, therefore, it might be expected he would open his heart without reserve. Here, it is true, we sometimes see him, like his brethren, groaning under darkness, want of spirituality, and the remains of indwelling sin; but frequently rising above all, as into his native element, and pouring forth his ardent soul in expressions of joy and praise.—On Aug. 19, 1793, he writes thus:—

"My dear Brother,  
"When I take my pen to pursue my correspondence with *you*, I have no concern but to communicate something which may answer the same end we propose in our annual journeys; viz. lending some assistance in the important object of *getting and keeping nearer to God*. This, I am persuaded, is the mark at which we should be continually aiming, nor rest satisfied until we attain that to which we aspire. I am really ashamed of myself, when, on the one hand, I review the time that has elapsed since I first assumed the christian name, with the opportunities of improvement in godliness which have crowded on my moments since that period; and when, on the other, I *feel* the little advance I have made! More *light*, to be sure, I have; but *light without heat* leaves the Christian half dissatisfied. Yesterday, I preached on the duty of engagedness in God's service, from Jer. xxx. 21, 'Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord' (a text for which I am indebted to our last journey.) While urging the necessity of *heart-religion*, including sincerity and ardor, I found myself much assisted by reflecting on the ardor which our dear Redeemer discovered in the cause of sinners. 'Ah,' I could not help saying, 'if our Saviour had measured his intensesness in his engagements for us, by our fervency in fulfilling our engagements to him,—we should have been now farther from hope than we are from perfection.'

'Dear Lord the ardor of thy love  
Reproves my cold returns.'

"Two things are causes of daily astonishment to me:—The readiness of Christ to come from earth to heaven for me; and my backwardness to rise from earth to heaven with him. But, oh, how animating the prospect! A time approaches when we shall rise to sink no more: to 'be forever with the Lord.' To be with *the Lord* for a week, for a day, for an hour; how sweetly must the moments pass! But to be *forever* with the Lord,—that enstamps salvation with perfection; that gives an energy to our hopes, and a dignity to our joy, so as to render it *unspeakable and full of glory!* I have had a few realizing moments since we parted, and the effect has been, I trust, a broken heart. Oh, my brother, it is desirable to have a broken heart, were it only for the sake of the pleasure it feels in being helped and healed by Jesus! Heart-affecting views of the cursed effects of sin are highly salutary to a Christian's growth in humility, confidence, and gratitude. At once how abasing and exalting is the comparison of our loathsome hearts with that of the lovely Saviour! In Him we see all that can charm an angel's heart: in *ourselves* all that can gratify a devil's. And yet we may rest perfectly as—

sured that these nests of iniquity shall, ere long, be transformed into the temples of God; and these sighs of sorrow be exchanged for songs of praise.

"Last Lord's-day I spent the most profitable Sabbath to myself that I ever remember since I have been in the ministry; and to this hour I feel the sweet solemnities of that day delightfully protracted. Ah! my brother, were it not for past experience I should say,

'My heart presumes I cannot lose  
The relish all my days.'

But now I rejoice with trembling, desiring to 'hold fast what I have, that no man take my crown.' Yet fearing that I shall find how,

—'Ere one fleeting hour is past,  
The flatt'ring world employs  
Some sensual bait to seize my taste,  
And to pollute my joys.'"

In April, 1794, dropping a few lines to the compiler of these Memoirs, on a Lord's day evening, he thus concludes:—"We have had a good day. I find, as a dear friend once said, *it is pleasant speaking for God when we walk with him.* Oh, for much of Enoch's spirit! The Head of the church grant it to my dear brother, and his affectionate friend—S. P."

In another letter to Mr. Summers, dated June 24, 1794, he thus writes:—"We, my friend, have entered on a correspondence of heart with heart; and must not lose sight of that avowed object. I thank you sincerely for continuing the remembrance of so unworthy a creature in your intercourse with heaven; and I thank that sacred Spirit whose quickening influences, you say, you enjoy in the exercise. Yes, my brother, I have reaped the fruits of your supplications. I have been indulged with some seasons of unusual joy, tranquil as solitude, and solid as the rock on which our hopes are built. In public exercises, peculiar assistance has been afforded; especially in these three things:—The exultation of the Redeemer's glory—the detection of the crooked ways, false refuges, and self-delusions of the human heart—and the stirring up of the saints to press onward, making God's cause their own, and considering themselves as living not for themselves, but for *Him* alone.

"Nor hath the word been without its effect: above fifty have been added to our church this year, most of whom I rejoice in as the seals of my ministry in the Lord. Indeed, I am surrounded with goodness; and scarcely a day passes over my head but I say, were it not for an *ungrateful heart*, I should be the happiest man alive; and, *that* excepted, I neither expect nor wish to be happier in this world. My wife, my children, and myself, are uninterruptedly healthy; my friends kind; my soul at rest; my labors successful, &c. Who should be con-

tent and thankful if I should not? Oh, my brother, help me to praise!"

In a letter to Mrs. Pearce, from Plymouth, dated Sept. 2, 1794, the dark side of the cloud seems towards him:—"I have felt much barrenness," says he, "as to spiritual things, since I have been here, compared with my usual frame at home; and it is a poor exchange to enjoy the creature at the expense of the Creator's presence! A few seasons of spirituality I have enjoyed; but my heart, my inconstant heart, is too prone to rove from its proper centre. Pray for me, my dear, my dearest friend: I do for you daily. Oh, wrestle for me, that I may have more of Enoch's spirit! I am fully persuaded that a Christian is no longer really happy, and inwardly satisfied, than whilst he walks with God; and I would this moment rejoice to abandon every pleasure here for a closer walk with him. I cannot, amidst all the round of social pleasure, amidst the most inviting scenes of nature, *feel* that peace with God which passeth understanding. My thirst for preaching Christ, I fear, abates, and a detestable vanity for the reputation of a 'good preacher' (as the world terms it) has already cost me many conflicts. Daily I feel convinced of the propriety of a remark which my friend Summers made on his journey to Wales, that 'it is easier for a Christian to walk habitually near to God than to be irregular in our walk with him.' But I want resolution; I want a contempt for the world; I want more heavenly-mindedness; I want more humility; I want much, very much, of that which God alone can bestow. Lord, help the weakest lamb in all thy flock!

"I preached this evening from Cant. ii. 3: 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.' But how little love for my Saviour did I feel! With what little affection and zeal did I speak! I am by some praised. I am followed by many. I am respected by most of my acquaintance. But all this is nothing, yea, less than nothing, compared with possessing this testimony, *that I please God.* Oh, thou friend of sinners, humble me by repentance, and melt me down with love!

"To-morrow morning I set off for Launceston. I write to-night, lest my stay in Cornwall might make my delay appear tedious to the dear and deserving object of my most undisssembled love. Oh, my Sarah, had I as much proof that I love *Jesus Christ* as I have of my love to *you*, I should prize it more than rubies! As often as you can find an hour for correspondence, think of your more than ever affectionate—S. P."

On the same subject, and the same occasion, about three weeks afterwards (Sept. 23, 1794,) he wrote to Mr. Summers. His dissatisfaction with himself while spending his time in visits, and his satisfaction when engaged in his proper work, are well worthy

of attention. "I was pretty much engaged in preaching," says he, "and often felt enlarged in public work: but, in private, my almost daily cry was, 'My leanness, my leanness!' Indeed it was a barren visit, as to the inward exercises of grace. Now and then I felt a brokenness of spirit, and a pining after God; but in general my mind was in a dissipated state. After so long an absence from so large an acquaintance, I was always crowded with company, some of whom though amiable, were very gay. Their politeness and cheerfulness, joined with a high degree of indulgence, were too fascinating for my volatile mind. I admired, and was too much conformed to their spirit. I did indeed often struggle with myself, and watched for occasions of dropping some improving hint; but, either through want of opportunity or of fortitude, the hint seldom produced a long conversation, or a permanent effect. New visits, or excursions, were every day proposed, and my heart was continually divided between painful recollection and flattering hopes. One lesson, indeed, I have thoroughly learned—that real, solid satisfaction, is to be found in nothing but God. May I have grace to improve it throughout my future life.

"The last week I have known more of the power of inward religion than all the four which I have spent from home. I devoted the week to my Lord's service entirely, and I found in keeping his commandments great reward."

In another letter to Mr. Summers, dated Nov. 10, 1794, he says—"I suppose I shall visit London in the spring: prepare my way by communion both with God and man. I hope your soul prospers. I have enjoyed more of God within this month than ever since the day of my espousals with him. Oh, my brother, help me to praise! I cannot say that I am quite so exalted in my frame today; yet still I acknowledge what I have lived upon for weeks—that, were there no being or thing in the universe beside God and me, I should be at no loss for happiness. Oh,

'Tis heaven to rest in his embrace,  
And no where else but there."

## CHAP. II.

### HIS LABORIOUS EXERTIONS IN PROMOTING MISSIONS TO THE HEATHEN, AND HIS OFFERING HIMSELF TO BECOME A MISSIONARY.

MR. PEARCE was uniformly the spiritual and the active servant of Christ; but neither his spirituality nor his activity would have appeared in the manner they have, but for his engagement in the *introduction of the gospel among the heathen.*

It was not long after his settlement at Birmingham that he became acquainted with Mr. CAREY, in whom he found a soul nearly akin to his own. When the brethren in the counties of Northampton and Leicester formed themselves into a missionary society at Kettering, in October, 1792, he was there, and entered into the business with all his heart. On his return to Birmingham, he communicated the subject to his congregation with so much effect that, in addition to the small sum of £13. 2s. 6d., with which the subscription was begun, £70 were collected, and transmitted to the treasurer; and the leading members of the church formed themselves into an assistant society. Early in the following spring, when it was resolved that our brethren, Thomas and Carey, should go on a mission to the Hindoos, and a considerable sum of money was wanted for the purpose, he labored with increasing ardor in various parts of the kingdom; and, when the object was accomplished, he rejoiced in all his labor, smiling in every company, and blessing God.

During his labors and journeys on this important object he wrote several letters to his friends, an extract or two from which will discover the state of his mind at this period, as well as the encouragements that he met with in his work at home:—

TO MR. STEADMAN.

Birmingham, Feb. 8, 1793.

"My very dear Brother,

"Union of sentiment often creates friendship among carnal men, and similarity of feeling never fails to produce affection among pious men, as far as that similarity is known. I have loved you ever since I knew you. We saw, we felt alike, in the interesting concerns of personal religion. We formed a reciprocal attachment. We expressed it by words. We agreed to do so by correspondence; and we have not altogether been wanting to our engagements. But our correspondence has been interrupted, not, I believe, through any diminution of regard on either side; I am persuaded not on mine. I rather condemn myself as the first aggressor; but I excuse while I condemn, and so would you, did you know half the concerns which devolve upon me in my present situation. Birmingham is a central place; the inhabitants are numerous; our members are between three and four hundred. The word preached has lately been remarkably blessed. In less than five months I baptized nearly forty persons, almost all newly awakened. Next Lord's-day week I expect to add to their number. These persons came to my house to propose the most important of all inquiries—'What must we do to be saved?' I have been thus engaged some weeks, during the greatest part of most days. This,



with four sermons a week, will account for my neglect. But your letter, received this evening calls forth every latent affection of my heart for you. We are, my dear brother, not only united in the common object of pursuit—salvation; not only rest our hopes on the same foundation—Jesus Christ; but we feel alike respecting the poor heathens. Oh how Christianity expands the mind! What tenderness for our poor fellow-sinners! What sympathy for their moral misery! What desires to do them everlasting good doth it provoke! How satisfying to our judgments is this evidence of grace! How gratifying to our present taste are these benevolent breathings! Oh, how I love that man whose soul is deeply affected with the importance of the precious gospel to idolatrous heathens! Excellently, my dear brother, you observe, that, great as its blessings are in the estimation of a sinner called in a christian country, inexpressibly greater must they shine on the newly illuminated mind of a converted pagan.

“We shall be glad of all your assistance in a pecuniary way, as the expense will be heavy. Dear brother Carey has paid us a visit of love this week. He preached excellently to-night. I expect brother Thomas next week, or the week after. I wish you would meet him here. I have a house at your command, and a heart greatly attached to you.”

TO MR. FULLER.

Feb. 23, 1793.

“I am willing to go any where, and do any thing in my power, but I hope no plan will be suffered to interfere with the affecting—hoped for—dreaded day, March 13 (the day of our brethren Carey and Thomas’s solemn designation at Leicester.) Oh how the anticipation of it at once rejoices and afflicts me! Our hearts need steeling to part with our much-loved brethren, who are about to venture their all for the name of the Lord Jesus. I feel my soul melting within me when I read the 20th chapter of the Acts, and especially verses 36—38. But why grieve? We shall see them again. Oh yes; them and the children whom the Lord will give them;—we and the children whom the Lord hath given us. We shall meet again, not to weep and pray, but to smile and praise.”

From the day of the departure of the missionaries, no one was more importunate in prayer than Mr. Pearce; and, on the news of their safe arrival, no one was more filled with joy and thankfulness.

Hitherto we had witnessed his zeal in promoting this important undertaking at home; but this did not satisfy him. In October, 1794, we were given to understand that he had for some time had it in serious contemplation to go himself, and to cast in his lot with his brethren in India. When

his designs were first discovered, his friends and connexions were much concerned, and endeavored to persuade him that he was already in a sphere of usefulness too important to be relinquished. But his answer was that they were too interested in the affair to be competent judges. And nothing would satisfy him short of his making a formal offer of his services to the committee: nor could he be happy for them to decide upon it without their appointing a day of solemn prayer for the purpose, and, when assembled, hearing an account of the principal exercises of his mind upon the subject, with the reasons which induced him to make the proposal, as well as the reasons alleged by his connections against it.

On October 4, 1794, he wrote to an intimate friend, of whom he entertained a hope that he might accompany him, as follows:—

“Last Wednesday I rode to Northampton, where a ministers’ meeting was held on the following day. We talked much about the mission. We read some fresh and very encouraging accounts. We lamented that we could obtain no suitable persons to send out to the assistance of our brethren. Now, what do you think was said at this meeting? My dear brother, do not be surprised that *all* present united in opinion that in all our connection there was no man known to us so suitable as *you*, provided you were disposed for it, and things could be brought to bear. I thought it right to mention this circumstance; and one thing more I cannot refrain from saying, that, were it manifestly the will of God, I should call that the happiest hour of my life which witnessed our *both* embarking with our families on board one ship as helpers of the servants of Jesus Christ already in Hindostan. Yes, I could unreluctantly leave Europe and all its contents for the pleasures and perils of this glorious service. Often my heart in the sincerest ardors thus breathes forth its desires unto God,—‘Here am I, send me.’ But I am ignorant whether you from experience can realize my feelings. Perhaps you have friendship enough for me to lay open your meditation on this subject in your next. If you have had half the exercises that I have, it will be a relief to your laboring mind: or, if you think I have made too free with you, reprove me, and I will love you still. Oh if I could find a heart that had been tortured and ravished like my own in this respect, I should form a new kind of alliance, and feel a friendship of a novel species. With eagerness should I communicate all the vicissitudes of my sensations, and with eagerness listen to a recital of kindred feelings. With impatience I should seek, and with gratitude receive, direction and support; and I hope feel a new occasion of thankfulness when I bow my knee to the Father of mercies and the God

of all comfort. Whence is it that I thus write to *you*, as I have never written to any one before? Is there a fellowship of the spirit; or is it the confidence that I have in your friendship that thus directs my pen? Tell me, dear——! Tell me how you felt, and how you still feel, on this interesting subject, and do not long delay the gratification to your very affectionate friend and brother—S. P.”

About a month preceding the decision of this affair, he drew up a *narrative* of his experience respecting it; resolving at the same time to set apart one day in every week for secret fasting and prayer to God for direction; and to keep a *diary* of the exercises of his mind during the month.

When the committee were met at Northampton, according to his desire, he presented to them the narrative, which was as follows:—

“October 8, 1794. Having had some peculiar exercises of mind relative to my personally attempting to labor for the dear Redeemer amongst the *heathen*, and being at a loss to know what is the will of the Lord in this matter respecting me, I have thought that I might gain some satisfaction by adopting these two resolutions:—First, that I will, in the presence of God, faithfully endeavor to recollect the various workings of my mind on this subject, from the first period of my feeling any desire of this nature until now, and commit them to writing; together with what considerations do now on the one hand impel me to the work, and, on the other, what prevent me from immediately resolving to enter upon it. Secondly, That I will from this day keep a regular journal, with special relation to this matter.

“This account and journal will, I hope, furnish me with much assistance in forming a future opinion of the path of duty; as well as help any friends whom I may hereafter think proper to consult to give me suitable advice in the business. Lord, help me!

“It is very common for young converts to feel strong desires for the conversion of others. These desires immediately followed the evidences of my own religion; and I remember well they were particularly fixed upon the poor heathen. I believe the first week that I knew the grace of God in truth I put up many fervent cries to heaven in their behalf, and at the same time felt a strong desire to be employed in promoting their salvation. It was not long after that the first settlers sailed for Botany Bay. I longed to go with them, although in company with the convicts, in hopes of making known the blessings of the great salvation in New Zealand. I actually had thought of making an effort to go out unknown to my friends; but, ignorant how to proceed, I abandoned my purpose. Nevertheless, I could not help

talking about it; and at one time a report was circulated that I was really going, and a neighboring minister very seriously conversed with me upon the subject.

“While I was at the Bristol academy, the desire remained; but not with that energy as at first, except on one or two occasions. Being sent by my tutor to preach two Sabbaths at Coleford, I felt particular sweetness in devoting the evenings of the week to going from house to house among the colliers, who dwell in the Forest of Dean, adjoining the town, conversing and praying with them, and preaching to them. In these exercises I found the most solid satisfaction that I have ever known in discharging the duties of my calling. In a poor hut, with a stone to stand upon, and a three-legged stool for my desk, surrounded with thirty or forty of the smutty neighbors, I have felt such an unction from above that my whole auditory have been melted into tears, whilst directed to “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;” and I, weeping among them, could scarcely speak, or they hear, for interrupting sighs and sobs. Many a time did I then think, thus it was with the apostles of our Lord, when they went from house to house among the poor heathen. In work like this I could live and die. Indeed, had I at that time been at liberty to settle, I should have preferred that situation to any in the kingdom with which I was then acquainted.

“But the Lord placed me in a situation very different. He brought me to Birmingham; and here, amongst the novelties, cares, and duties of my station, I do not remember any wish for foreign service, till, after a residence of some months, I heard Dr. Coke preach at one of Mr. Wesley’s chapels, from Psalm lxxviii. 31: ‘Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.’ Then it was that, in Mr. Horne’s phrase, ‘I felt a passion for missions.’ Then I felt an interest in the state of the heathen world far more deep and permanent than before, and seriously thought how I could best promote their obtaining the knowledge of the crucified Jesus.

“As no way at that time was open, I cannot say that I thought of taking a part of the good work among the heathen abroad; but resolved that I would render them all the assistance I could at home. My mind was employed during the residue of that week in meditating on Psalm lxxvii. 3: ‘Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!’—and the next Sabbath morning I spoke from those words, on the promised increase of the church of God. I had observed that our monthly meetings for prayer had been better attended than the other prayer-meetings, from the time that I first knew the people in Cannon-street; but I thought a more general attention to them

was desirable. I therefore preached on the Sabbathday evening preceding the next monthly prayer-meeting from Matthew vi. 10—'Thy kingdom come;' and urged with ardor and affection a universal union of the serious part of the congregation in this exercise. It rejoiced me to see three times as many the next night as usual; and, for some time after that, I had nearly equal cause for joy.

"As to my own part, I continued to preach much upon the promises of God respecting the conversion of the heathen nations; and by so doing, and always communicating to my people every piece of information I could obtain respecting the present state of missions, they soon imbibed the same spirit; and from that time to this they have discovered so much concern for the more extensive spread of the gospel that at our monthly prayer-meetings, both stated and occasional, I should be as much surprised at the case of the heathen being omitted in any prayer as at an omission of the name and merits of Jesus.

"Indeed it has been a frequent means of enkindling my languid devotion, in my private, domestic, and public engagements in prayer. When I have been barren in petitioning for myself, and other things, often have I been sweetly enlarged when I came to notice the situation of those who were perishing for lack of knowledge.

"Thus I went on, praying and preaching, and conversing on the subject, till the time of brother Carey's ordination at Leicester, May 24, 1791. On the evening of that day he read to the ministers a great part of his manuscript, since published, entitled 'An Inquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen.' This added fresh fuel to my zeal. But to pray and preach on the subject was all I could then think of doing. But when I heard of a proposed meeting at Kettering, October 2, 1792, for the express purpose of considering our duty in regard to the heathen, I could not resist my inclination for going, although at that time I was not much acquainted with the ministers of the Northamptonshire association. There I got my judgment informed, and my heart increasingly interested. I returned home resolved to lay myself out in the cause. The public steps I have taken are too well known to need repeating; but my mind became now inclined to go among the heathen myself. Yet a consideration of my connections with the dear people of God in Birmingham restrained my desires, and kept me from naming my wishes to anybody (as I remember,) except to brother Carey. With him I was pretty free. We had an interesting conversation about it just before he left Europe. I shall never forget the *manner* of his saying, 'Well, you will come

after us.' My heart said Amen! and my eagerness for the work increased; though I never talked freely about it, except to my wife, and we then both thought that my relation to the church in Cannon-street, and usefulness there, forbid any such an attempt. However, I have made it a constant matter of prayer, often begging of God, as I did when first I was disposed for the work of the ministry, either that he would take away the desire or open a door for its fulfilment. And the result has uniformly been that the more spiritual I have been in the frame of my mind, the more love I have felt for God, and the more communion I have enjoyed with him, so much the more disposed have I been to engage as a missionary among the heathen.

"Until the accounts came of our brethren's entrance on the work in India, my connections in Europe pretty nearly balanced my desire for going abroad; and, though I felt quite devoted to the Lord's will and work, yet I thought the scale rather preponderated on the side of my abiding in my present situation.

"But since our brethren's letters have informed us that there are such prospects of usefulness in Hindostan, and that preachers are a thousand times more wanted than people to preach to, my heart has been more deeply affected than ever with their condition; and my desires for a participation of the toils and pleasures, crosses and comforts, of which they are the subjects, are advanced to an anxiety which nothing can remove, and time seems to increase.

"It has pleased God also lately to teach me, more than ever, that HIMSELF is the *fountain* of happiness; that likeness to him, friendship for him, and communion with him, form the basis of all true enjoyment; and that this can be attained as well in an eastern jungle, amongst Hindoos and Moors, as in the most polished parts of Europe. The very *disposition* which, blessed be my dear Redeemer! he has given me, to be any thing, do any thing, or endure any thing, so that his name might be glorified,—I say, the *disposition* itself is heaven begun below! I do feel a daily panting after more devotedness to his service, and I can never think of my suffering Lord without dissolving into love—love which constrains me to glorify him with my body and spirit, which are his.

"I do often represent to myself all the possible hardships of a mission, arising from my own heart, the nature of the country, domestic connections, disappointment in my hopes, &c. &c.: and then I set over against them all these two thoughts,—*I am God's servant; and God is my friend.* In this I anticipate happiness in the midst of suffering, light in darkness, and life in death. Yea, I do not count my life dear unto myself, so that I may win some poor heathen



unto Christ; and I am willing to be offered as a sacrifice on the service of the faith of the gospel.

“Mr. Horne justly observes ‘that, in order to justify a man’s undertaking the work of a missionary, he should be qualified for it, disposed heartily to enter upon it, and free from such ties as exclude an engagement.’—As to the first, others must judge for me; but they must not be men who have an interest in keeping me at home. I shall rejoice in opportunities of attaining to an acquaintance with the ideas of judicious and *impartial* men in this matter, and with them I must leave it. A willingness to embark in this cause I do possess; and I can hardly persuade myself that God has for ten years inclined my heart to this work without having any thing for me to do in it. But the third thing requires more consideration; and here alone I hesitate.”—Here he goes on to state all the objections from this quarter, with his answers to them, leaving it with his brethren to decide, when they had heard the whole.

The committee, after the most serious and mature deliberation, though they were fully satisfied as to brother Pearce’s qualifications, and greatly approved of his spirit, yet were unanimously of opinion *that he ought not to go*; and that not merely on account of his connections at home, which might have been pleaded in the case of brother Carey, but on account of the mission itself, which required his assistance in the station which he already occupied.

In this opinion brother Carey himself, with singular disinterestedness of mind, afterwards concurred; and wrote to brother Pearce to the same effect.\*

On receiving the opinion of the committee he immediately wrote to Mrs. P. as follows:—

*Northampton, Nov. 13, 1794.*

“My dear Sarah,

“I am disappointed, but not dismayed. I ever wish to make my Saviour’s will my own. I am more satisfied than ever I expected I should be with a negative upon my earnest desires, because the business has been so conducted that I think (if by any means such an issue could be ensured) the mind of Christ has been obtained. My dear brethren here have treated the affair with as much seriousness and affection as I could possibly desire, and I think more than so insignificant a worm could expect. After we had spent the former part of this day in fasting and prayer, with conversation on the subject, till nearly two o’clock, brother Potts, King, and I retired. We prayed, while the committee consulted. The case seemed difficult, and I suppose they were

nearly two hours in deciding it. At last, *time* forced them to a point, and their answer I enclose for your satisfaction. Pray take care of it; it will serve for me to refer to when my mind may labor beneath a burden of guilt another day. I am my dear Sarah’s own—S. P.”

The decision of the committee, though it rendered him much more reconciled to abide in his native country than he could have been without it, yet did not in the least abate his zeal for the object. As he could not promote it abroad, he seemed resolved to lay himself out more for it at home. In March, 1795, after a dangerous illness, he says, in a letter to Mr. Fuller—“Through mercy I am almost in a state of convalescence. May my spared life be wholly devoted to the service of my dear Redeemer! I do not care where I am, whether in England or in India, so I am employed as he would have me: but surely we need pray hard that God would send some more help to Hindostan.”

In January, 1796, when he was first informed by the secretary of a young man (Mr. Fountain) being desirous of going, of the character that was given of him by our friend Mr. Savage of London, and of a committee-meeting being in contemplation, he wrote thus in answer:—“Your letter, just arrived, put—I was going to say—another soul into my little body; at least it has added new life to the soul I have. I cannot be contented with the thought of being absent from your proposed meeting. No, no; I must be there (for my own sake I mean) and try to sing with you, ‘O’er the gloomy hills of darkness.’”\*

In August, the same year, having received a letter from India, he wrote to Mr. Fuller as follows:—“Brother Carey speaks in such a manner of the effects of the gospel in his neighborhood as in my view promises a fair illustration of our Lord’s parable, when he compared the kingdom of heaven to a little leaven, hid in three measures of meal, which insinuated itself so effectually as to leaven the lump at last. Blessed be God, the leaven is already in the meal; the fermentation is begun; and my hopes were never half so strong as they are now that the whole shall be effectually leavened. O THAT I WERE THERE TO WITNESS THE DELIGHTFUL PROCESS! But whither am I running? . . . . I LONG TO WRITE YOU FROM HINDOSTAN!”

On receiving other letters from India, in January, 1797, he thus writes:—“Perhaps you are now rejoicing in spirit with me over fresh intelligence from Bengal. This moment have I concluded reading two letters from brother Thomas: one to the Society,

\* See Periodical Accounts, Vol. 1. p. 374.

\* The 428th hymn of Dr. Rippon’s Selection, frequently sung at our committee meetings.

and the other to myself.\* He speaks of others from brother Carey. I hope they are already in your possession. If his correspondence has produced the same effects on your heart as brother Thomas's has on mine you are filled with gladness and hope. I am grieved that I cannot convey them to you immediately. I long to witness the pleasure their contents will impart to all whose hearts are with us. O that I were accounted worthy of the Lord to preach the gospel to the Booteas!"

Being detained from one of our mission meetings by preparing the Periodical Accounts for the press, he soon after wrote as follows: "We shall now get out No. IV. very soon. I hope it will go to the press in a very few days. Did you notice that the very day on which we invited all our friends to a day of prayer on behalf of the mission (December 28, 1796) was the same in which brother Carey sent his best and most interesting accounts to the society? I hope you had solemn and sweet seasons at Northampton. On many accounts I should have rejoiced to have been with you: yet I am satisfied that on the whole I was doing best at home."

It has been already observed that, for a month preceding the decision of the committee, he resolved to devote one day in every week to secret prayer and fasting, and to keep a *diary* of the exercises of his mind during the whole of that period. This diary was not shown to the committee at the time, but merely the preceding *narrative*. Since his death a few of them have perused it, and have been almost ready to think that, if they had seen it before, they would not have dared to oppose his going. But the Lord hath taken him to himself. It no longer remains a question now whether he shall labor in England, or in India. A few passages, however, from this transcript of his heart, while contemplating a great and disinterested undertaking, will furnish a better idea of his character than could be given by any other hand; and with these we shall close the present chapter.

"Oct. 8, 1794.—Had some remarkable freedom and affection this morning, both in family and secret prayer. With many tears I dedicated myself, body and soul, to the service of Jesus; and earnestly implored full satisfaction respecting the path of duty.—I feel an increasing deadness for all earthly comforts; and derive my happiness immediately from God himself. May I still endure, as Moses did, by seeing him who is invisible!

"10.—Enjoyed much freedom to-day in the family. Whilst noticing in prayer the state of the millions of heathen who know

not God, I felt the aggregate value of their immortal souls with peculiar energy.

"Afterwards was much struck whilst (on my knees before God in secret) I read the fourth chapter of Micah. The ninth verse I fancied very applicable to the church in Cannon-street: but what reason is there for such a cry about so insignificant a worm as I am? The third chapter of Habakkuk too well expresses that mixture of *solemnity* and *confidence* with which I contemplate the work of the mission.

"Whilst at prayer-meeting to-night, I learned more of the meaning of some passages of Scripture than ever before. Suitable frames of soul are like good lights, in which a painting appears to its full advantage. I had often meditated on Phil. iii. 7, 8, and Gal. vi. 14, but never *felt* crucifixion to the world, and disesteem for all that it contains, as at that time. All prospects of pecuniary independence, and growing reputation, with which in unworthier moments I had amused myself, were now chased from my mind; and the desire of living *wholly* to Christ swallowed up every other thought. Frowns and smiles, fulness and want, honor and reproach, were now equally indifferent; and, when I concluded the meeting, my whole soul felt, as it were, going after the lost sheep of Christ among the heathen.

"I do feel a growing satisfaction in the proposal of spending my whole life in something nobler than the locality of this island will admit. I long to raise my Master's banner in climes where the sound of his fame hath but scarcely reached. He hath said, for my encouragement, that '*all nations shall flow unto it.*'

"The conduct and success of Stach, Boonish, and other Moravian missionaries in Greenland, both confound and stimulate me. O Lord, forgive my past indolence in thy service, and help me to redeem the residue of my days for exertions more worthy a friend of mankind and a servant of God.

"13.—Being taken up with visitors the former part of the day, I spent the after part in application to the Bengal language, and found the difficulties I apprehended vanish as fast as I encountered them. I read and prayed, and made no small advances. Blessed be God!

"15.—There are in Birmingham 50,000 inhabitants; and, exclusive of the vicinity, ten ministers who preach the fundamental truths of the gospel. In Hindostan there are twice as many millions of inhabitants; and not so many gospel preachers. Now Jesus Christ hath commanded his ministers to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: why should we be so disproportionate in our labors? Peculiar circumstances must not be urged against positive commands: I am therefore bound, if

\* See these Letters printed in Periodical Accounts, Vol. I. pp. 294, 301.

others do not go, to make the means more proportionate to the multitude.

"To-night, reading some letters from brother Carey, in which he speaks of his wife's illness when she first came into the country, I endeavored to realize myself not only with a sick but a *dead* wife. The thought was like a cold dagger to my heart at first: but on recollection I considered the same God ruled in India as in Europe; and that he could either preserve her, or support me, as well there as here. My business is only to be where he would have me. Other things I leave to him. O Lord, though with timidity, yet I hope not without satisfaction, I look every possible evil in the face, and say, '*Thy will be done!*'

"17.—This is the *first* day I have set apart for extraordinary devotion in relation to my present exercise of mind. Rose earlier than usual, and began the day in prayer that God would be with me in every part of it, and grant the end I have in view may be clearly ascertained—the knowledge of his will.

"Considering the importance of the work before me, I began at the foundation of all religion, and reviewed the grounds on which I stood,—The being of a God, the relation of mankind to him, with the divine inspiration of the Scriptures—and the review afforded me great satisfaction.\* I also compared the different religions which claimed divine origin, and found little difficulty in determining which had most internal evidence of its divinity. I attentively read and seriously considered Doddridge's three excellent Sermons on the Evidences of the Christian Religion; which was followed by such conviction that I had hardly patience to conclude the book before I fell on my knees before God, to bless him for such a religion, established on such a basis; and I have received more *solid* satisfaction this day upon the subject than ever I did before.

"I also considered, since the gospel is true, since Christ is the head of the church, and his will is the law of all his followers, what are the obligations of his servants in respect of the enlargement of his kingdom. I here referred to our Lord's commission, which I could not but consider as universal in its object and permanent in its obligations. I read brother Carey's remarks upon it: and as the command has never been repealed—as there are millions of beings in the world on whom the command may be exercised—as I can produce no counter-revelation—and as I lie under no natural impossibilities of perform-

\* There is a wide difference between admitting these principles in theory, and *making use of them*. David might have worn Saul's accoutrements at a parade; but, in meeting Goliath, he must go forth in an armor that had been *tried*. A mariner may sit in his cabin at his ease, while the ship is in harbor; but, ere he undertakes a voyage, he must examine its soundness, and inquire whether it will endure the storms which may overtake him.

ing it—I concluded that I, as a servant of Christ, was bound by this law.

"I took the narrative of my experience, and statement of my views on this subject, in my hand, and, bowing down before God, I earnestly besought an impartial and enlightened spirit. I then perused that paper; and can now say that I have (allowing for my own fallibility) not one doubt upon the subject. I therefore resolved to close this solemn season with reading a portion of both Testaments, and earnest prayer to God for my family, my people, the heathen world, the society, and particularly for the success of our dear brethren Thomas and Carey, and his blessing, presence, and grace, to be ever my guide and glory. Accordingly I read the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah; and with what sweetness! I never read a chapter in private with such feelings since I have been in the ministry. The eighth, ninth, tenth, twentieth, and twenty-first verses, I thought remarkably suitable.

"Read also part of the epistle to the Ephesians, and the first chapter to the Philippians. O, that for *me* to live may be *Christ* alone! Blessed be my dear Saviour! in prayer I have had such fellowship with him as would warm me in Greenland, comfort me in New Zealand, and rejoice me in the valley of the shadow of death!

"18.—I dreamed that I saw one of the Christian Hindoos. O, how I loved him! I long to realize my dream. How pleasant will it be to sit down at the Lord's table with our swarthy brethren, and hear Jesus preached in their language! Surely then will come to pass the saying that is written, In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, all are *one* in him.

"Have been happy to-day in completing the manuscript of Periodical Accounts, No. 1. Any thing relative to the salvation of the heathen brings a certain pleasure with it. I find I cannot pray, nor converse, nor read, nor study, nor preach with satisfaction, without reference to this subject.

"20.—Was a little discouraged on reading Mr. Zeigenbald's conferences with the Malabarians, till I recollected, what ought to be ever present to my mind, in brother Carey's words,—'*The work is God's.*'

"In the evening I found some little difficulty with the language; but, considering how merchants and captains overcome this difficulty for the sake of wealth, I sat confounded before the Lord that I should ever have indulged such a thought; and, looking up to him, I set about it with cheerfulness, and found that I was making a sensible advance, although I can never apply till eleven o'clock at night on account of my other duties.†

† Night studies, often continued till two or three o'clock in the morning, it is to be feared were the first occasion of impairing Mr. Pearce's health,



“Preached from 2 Kings iv. 26, ‘It is well’ . . . was much enlarged both in thought and expression. Whilst speaking of the satisfaction enjoyed by a truly pious mind when it feels itself in all circumstances and times in the hand of a *good God*, I felt that were the universe destroyed, and I the only being in it beside God, he is fully adequate to my complete happiness; and had I been in an African wood, surrounded with venomous serpents, devouring beasts, and savage men, in such a frame I should be the subject of perfect peace and exalted joy. Yes, O my God, thou hast taught me that *THOU ALONE* art worthy of my confidence; and, with this sentiment fixed in my heart, I am free from all solicitude about any temporal prospects or concerns. *If thy* presence be enjoyed, poverty shall be riches, darkness light, affliction prosperity, reproach my honor, and fatigue my rest; and thou hast said, ‘My presence shall go with thee.’ Enough, Lord! I ask for nothing, nothing more.

“But how sad the proofs of our depravity; and how insecure the best frames we enjoy! Returning home, a wicked expression from a person who passed me caught my ear, and recurred so often to my thoughts for some minutes as to bring guilt upon my mind, and overwhelm me with shame before God. But I appealed to God for my hatred of all such things, secretly confessed the sin of my heart, and again ventured to the mercy-seat. On such occasions how precious a mediator is to the soul!

“22.—I did not on the former part of the day feel my wonted ardor for the work of a missionary, but rather an inclination to consult flesh and blood, and look at the worst side of things. I did so: but, when on my knees before God in prayer about it, I first considered that my judgment was still equally satisfied, and my conscience so convinced that I durst not relinquish the work for a thousand worlds! And then I thought that this dull frame had not been without its use, as I was now fully convinced that my desire to go did not arise from any fluctuation of inconstant passions, but the settled convictions of my judgment. I therefore renewed my vows unto the Lord, that, let what difficulties soever be in the way, I would, provided the society approved, surmount them all. I felt a kind of unutterable satisfaction of mind in my resolution of leaving the decision in the hands of my brethren. May God rightly dispose their hearts! I have no doubt but he will.

and brought on that train of nervous sensations with which he was afterwards afflicted. Though not much accustomed to converse on the subject, he once acknowledged to a brother in the ministry, that, owing to his enervated state, he sometimes dreaded the approach of public services to such a degree that he would rather have submitted to stripes than engage in them; and that while in the pulpit he was frequently distressed with the apprehension of falling over it.

“23.—Have found a little time to apply to the Bengallee language. How pleasant it is to work for God! Love transforms thorns to roses, and makes pain itself a pleasure. I never sat down to any study with such peculiar and continued satisfaction. The thought of exalting the Redeemer in this language is a spur to my application paramount to every discouragement for want of a living tutor. I have passed this day with an abiding satisfaction respecting my present views.

“24.—O for the enlightening, enlivening, and sanctifying presence of God to-day! It is the *second* of those days of extraordinary devotion which I have set apart for seeking God in relation to the mission. How shall I spend it? I will devote the morning to prayer, reading, and meditation; and the afternoon to visiting the wretched, and relieving the needy. May God accept my services, guide me by his counsel, and employ me for his praise!

“Having besought the Lord that he would not suffer me to deceive myself in so important a matter as that which I had now retired to consider, and exercised some confidence that he would be the rewarder of those who diligently seek him, I read the 119th Psalm at the conclusion of my prayer, and felt and wondered at the congruity of so many of the verses to the breathings of my own heart. Often with holy admiration I paused, and read, and thought, and prayed over the verse again, especially verses 20, 31, 59, 60, 112, 145, 146. ‘My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.’—‘I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O Lord, put me not to shame.’

“Most of the morning I spent in seriously reading Mr. Horne’s ‘Letters on Missions,’ having first begged of the Lord to make the perusal profitable to my instruction in the path of duty. To the interrogation, ‘Which of you will forsake all, deny himself, take up his cross, and, if God pleases, die for his religion?’ I replied spontaneously, Blessed be God, I am willing! Lord, help me to accomplish it!

“Closed this season with reading the 61st and 62d chapters of Isaiah, and prayer for the church of God at large, my own congregation, the heathen, the society, brethren Thomas and Carey, all missionaries whom God hath sent of every denomination, my own case, my wife and family, and for assistance in my work.

“The after part of this day has been gloomy indeed. All the painful circumstances which can attend my going have met upon my heart, and formed a load almost insupportable. A number of things which have been some time accumulating have united their pressure, and made me groan being burdened. Whilst at a prayer-meeting I looked round on my Christian

friends, and said to myself, A few months more, and probably I shall leave you all! But in the deepest of my gloom I resolved, though faint, yet to pursue; not doubting but my Lord would give me strength equal to the day.

"I had scarcely formed this resolution before it occurred, my Lord and Master was a man of sorrows. Oppressed and covered with blood, he cried, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.' Yet in the depth of his agonies he added, 'Thy will be done.' This thought was to me what the sight of the cross was to Bunyan's pilgrim; I lost my burden. Spent the remainder of the meeting in sweet communion with God.

"But, on coming home, the sight of Mrs. P. replaced my load. She had for some time been much discouraged at the thoughts of going. I therefore felt reluctant to say any thing on this subject, thinking it would be unpleasant to her; but, though I strove to conceal it, an involuntary sigh betrayed my uneasiness. She kindly required the cause. I avoided at first an explanation, till she, guessing the reason, said to this effect:—'I hope you will be no more uneasy on my account. For the last two or three days I have been more comfortable than ever in the thought of going. I have considered the steps you are pursuing to know the mind of God, and I think you cannot take more proper ones. When you consult the ministers, you should represent your obstacles as strongly as your inducements: and then, if they advise your going, though the parting from my friends will be almost insupportable, yet I will make myself as happy as I can, and God can make me happy any where.'

"Should this little diary fall into the hands of a man having the soul of the missionary, circumstanced as I am, he will be the only man capable of sharing my peace, my joy, my gratitude, my rapture of soul. Thus at evening-tide it is light: thus God brings his people through fire and through water into a wealthy place: thus those who ask do receive, and their joy is full. 'O love the Lord, ye his saints: there is no want to them that fear him!'

"26.—Had much enlargement this morning whilst speaking on the nature, extent, and influence of divine love: what designs it formed—with what energy it acted—with what perseverance it pursued its object—what obstacles it surmounted—what difficulties it conquered—and what sweetness it imparted under the heaviest loads and severest trials. Almost through the day I enjoyed a very desirable frame; and, on coming home, my wife and I had some conversation on the subject of my going. She said, Though in general the thought was painful, yet there were some seasons when she had no preference, but felt herself dis-

posed to go or stay as the Lord should direct.

"This day wrote to brother Fuller, briefly stating my desires, requesting his advice, and proposing a meeting of the committee on the business. I feel great satisfaction arising from my leaving the matter to the determination of my honored brethren, and to God through them.

"27.—To-day I sent a packet to our brethren in India. I could not forbear telling brother Carey all my feelings, views, and expectations; but without saying I should be entirely governed by the opinion of the Society.

"28. Still panting to preach Jesus among my fellow-sinners to whom he is yet unknown. Wrote to Dr. Rogers, of Philadelphia, to-day, upon the subject with freedom and warmth, and inquired whether, whilst the people of the United States were forming societies to encourage arts, liberty, and emigration, there could not a few be found among them who would form a society for the transmission of the word of life to the benighted heathen; or, in case that could not be, whether they might not strengthen our hands in Europe, by some benevolent proof of concurring with us in a design which they speak of with such approbation. With this I sent Horne's Letters. I will follow both with my prayers; and who can tell?

"29.—Looked over the Code of Hindoo Laws to-day. How much is there to admire in it, founded on the principles of justice! The most salutary regulations are adopted in many circumstances. But what a pity that so much excellence should be debased by laws to establish or countenance idolatry, magic, prostitution, prayers for the dead, false-witnessing, theft, and suicide. How perfect is the morality of the gospel of Jesus; and how desirable that they should embrace it! Ought not means to be used? Can we assist them too soon? There is reason to think that their shasters were penned about the beginning of the Kollee Jogue, which must be soon after the deluge: and are not 4000 years long enough for 100,000,000 of men to be under the empire of the devil?

"31.—I am encouraged to enter upon this day (which I set apart for supplicating God) by a recollection of his promises to those who seek him. If the sacred word be true, the servants of God can never seek his face in vain; and, as I am conscious of my sincerity and earnest desire only to know his pleasure that I may perform it, I find a degree of confidence that I shall realize the fulfilment of the word on which he causeth me to hope.

"Began the day with solemn prayer for the assistance of the Holy Spirit in my present exercise, that so I might enjoy the spirit

and power of prayer, and have my personal religion improved, as well as my public steps directed. In this duty I found a little quickening.

"I then read over the narrative of my experience, and my journal. I find my views are still the same: but my heart is much more established than when I began to write.

"Was much struck in reading Paul's words in 2 Cor. i. 17, when, after speaking of his purpose to travel for the preaching of the gospel, he saith, 'Did I then use lightness when I was thus minded? Or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea, yea, nay, nay?' The *piety* of the apostle in not purposing after the flesh, the *seriousness* of spirit with which he formed his designs, and his *steadfast* adherence to them, were in my view worthy of the highest admiration and strictest imitation.

"Thinking that I might get some assistance from David Brainerd's experience, I read his life to the time of his being appointed a missionary among the Indians. The exalted devotion of that dear man almost made me question mine. Yet, at some seasons, he speaks of sinking as well as rising. His singular piety excepted, his feelings, prayers, desires, comforts, hopes, and sorrows, are my own; and if I could follow him in nothing else, I knew I had been enabled to say this with him, 'I feel exceedingly calm, and quite resigned to God respecting my future improvement (or station) *when* and *where* he pleased. My faith lifted me above the world, and removed all those mountains which I could not look over of late. I thought I wanted not the favor of man to lean upon; for I knew God's favor was infinitely better, and that it was no matter *where*, or *when*, or *how* Christ should send me, nor with what trials he should still exercise me, if I might be prepared for his work and will.'

"Read the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters of the second epistle to the Corinthians. Felt a kind of placidity, but not much joy. On beginning the concluding prayer I had no strength to wrestle, nor power with God at all. I seemed as one desolate and forsaken. I prayed for myself, the society, the missionaries, the converted Hindoos, the church in Cannon-street, my family, and ministry; but yet all was dullness, and I feared I had offended the Lord. I felt but little zeal for the mission, and was about to conclude with a lamentation over the hardness of my heart, when on a sudden it pleased God to smite the rock with the rod of his Spirit, and immediately the waters began to flow. O what a heavenly, glorious, melting power was it! My eyes, almost closed with weeping, hardly suffer me to write. I feel it over again. O what a view of the love of a crucified Redeemer did I enjoy! the attractions of his cross how powerful! I

was as a giant refreshed with new wine, as to my animation: like Mary at the master's feet, weeping for tenderness of soul; like a little child, for submission to my heavenly Father's will; and like Paul, for a victory over all self-love and creature-love, and fear of man, when these things stand in the way of my duty. The interest that Christ took in the redemption of the heathen, the situation of our brethren in Bengal, the worth of the soul, and the plain command of Jesus Christ, together with an irresistible drawing of soul, which by far exceeded any thing I ever felt before, and is impossible to be described to or conceived of by those who have never experienced it—all compelled me to *vow* that I would, by his leave, serve him among the heathen. The Bible lying open before me (upon my knees,) many passages caught my eye, and confirmed the purposes of my heart. If ever in my life I knew any thing of the influence of the Holy Spirit, I did at this time. I was swallowed up in God. Hunger, fulness, cold, heat, friends, and enemies, all seemed nothing before God. I was in a new world. All was delightful; for Christ was all, and in all. Many times I concluded prayer; but, when rising from my knees, communion with God was so desirable that I was sweetly drawn to it again and again, till my animal strength was almost exhausted. Then I thought it would be pleasure to *burn* for God!

"And now while I write such a heavenly sweetness fills my soul that no exterior circumstances can remove it; and I do uniformly feel that the more I am thus, the more I pant for the service of my blessed Jesus among the heathen. Yes, my dear, my dying Lord, I am thine, thy servant; and, if I neglect the service of so good a master, I may well expect a guilty conscience in life, and a death awful as that of Judas or of Spira!

"This evening I had a meeting with my friends. Returned much dejected. Received a letter from brother Fuller, which, though he says he has many objections to my going, yet is so affectionately expressed as to yield me a gratification.

"Nov. 3.—This evening received a letter from brother Ryland, containing many objections: but contradiction itself is pleasant when it is the voice of judgment mingled with affection. I wish to remember that *I may be mistaken*, though I cannot say I am at present convinced that it is so. I am happy to find that brother Ryland approves of my referring it to the committee. I have much confidence in the judgment of my brethren, and hope I shall be perfectly satisfied with their advice. I do, think however, if they knew how earnestly I pant for the work, it would be impossible for them to withhold their ready acquiescence. O Lord, thou knowest my sincerity; and that, if I go



not to the work, it will not be owing to any reluctance on my part! If I stay in England, I fear I shall be a poor useless drone; or, if a sense of duty prompt me to activity I doubt whether I shall ever know inward peace and joy again. O Lord, I am, thou knowest I am *oppressed*, undertake for me!

"5. At times to-day I have been reconciled to the thought of staying, if my brethren should so advise; but at other times I seem to think I could not. I look at brother Carey's portrait as it hangs in my study: I love him in the bowels of Jesus Christ, and long to join his labors! every look calls up a hundred thoughts, all of which inflame my desire to be a fellow-laborer with him in the work of the Lord. One thing however I have resolved upon, that the Lord helping me, if I cannot go abroad, I will do all I can to serve the mission at home.

"7.—This is the last day of peculiar devotion before the deciding meeting. May I have strength to wrestle with God to-day for his wisdom to preside in the committee, and by faith to leave the issue to their determination!

"I did not enjoy much enlargement in prayer to-day. My mind seems at present incapable of those sensations of joy with which I have lately been much indulged, through its strugglings in relation to my going or staying: yet I have been enabled to commit the issue into the hands of God, as he may direct my brethren, hoping that their advice will be agreeable to his will."

The result of the committee-meeting has already been related; together with the state of his mind, as far as could be collected from his letters, for some time after it. The termination of these tender and interesting exercises, and of all his other labors, in so speedy a removal from the present scene of action, may teach us not to draw any certain conclusion, as to the designs of God concerning our future labors, from the ardor or sincerity of our feelings. He may take it well that "it was in our hearts to build him a house," though he should for wise reasons have determined not to gratify us. Suffice it that in matters of EVER-LASTING MOMENT he has engaged to "perfect that which concerns us." In this he hath condescended to bind himself, as by an oath, for our consolation; here, therefore we may safely consider our spiritual desires as indicative of his designs: but it is otherwise in various instances with regard to present duty.

### CHAPTER III.

HIS EXERCISES AND LABORS, FROM THE TIME OF HIS GIVING UP THE IDEA OF GOING ABROAD TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF HIS LAST AFFLICTION.

HAD the multiplied labors of this excellent man permitted his keeping a regular diary,

we may see, by the foregoing specimen of a single month, what a rich store of truly christian experience would have pervaded these memoirs. We should then have been better able to trace the gradual openings of his holy mind, and the springs of that extraordinary unction of spirit, and energy of action, by which his life was distinguished. As it is, we can only collect the gleanings of the harvest, partly from memory, and partly from letters communicated by his friends.

This chapter will include a period of about four years, during which he went twice to London, to collect for the *Baptist Mission*, and once he visited Dublin, at the invitation of the *Evangelical Society* in that city.

There appears throughout the general tenor of his life a singular submissiveness to the will of God; and, what is worthy of notice, this disposition was generally most conspicuous when his own will was most counteracted. The justness of this remark is sufficiently apparent from his letter to Mrs. Pearce, of November 13, 1794,\* after the decision of the committee; and the same spirit was carried into the common concerns of life. Thus, about a month afterwards, when his dear Louisa was ill of a fever, he thus writes from Northampton to Mrs. Pearce:—

Northampton, Dec. 13, 1794.

"My dear Sarah,

"I am just brought on the wings of celestial mercy safe to my Sabbath's station. I am well; and my dear friends here seem healthy and happy: but I feel for *you*. I long to know how our dear Louisa's pulse beats: I fear still feverish. We must not, however, suffer ourselves to be infected with a mental fever on this account. Is she ill? It is right. Is she very ill . . . dying? It is still right. Is she gone to join the heavenly choristers? It is all right, notwithstanding our repinings . . . Repinings! No; we will not repine. It is best she should go. It is best for *her*: This we must allow. It is best for *us*: Do we expect it? O, what poor, ungrateful, short-sighted worms are we! Let us submit, my Sarah, till we come to heaven: if we do not *then* see that it is best, let us then complain. But why do I attempt to console? Perhaps an indulgent providence has ere now dissipated your fears: or, if that same *kind providence* has removed our babe, you have consolation enough in Him who suffered more than we; and more than enough to quiet all our passions in that astonishing consideration,—"*God* so loved the world, that he *spared not* his own Son." Did God cheer-

\* See page 531.

fully give the holy child Jesus for us; and shall we refuse our child to him? He gave his Son to *suffer*: He takes our children to *enjoy*: Yes; to enjoy *Himself*. Yours with the tenderest regard,—S. P.”

In June, 1795, he attended the association at Kettering, partly on account of some missionary business there to be transacted. That was a season of great joy to many, especially the last forenoon previous to parting. Thence he wrote to Mrs. Pearce as follows:—

“From a pew in the house of God at Kettering, with my cup of joy running over, I address you by the hands of brother Simons. Had it pleased divine providence to have permitted your accompanying me, my pleasures would have received no small addition, because I should have hoped that you would have been filled with similar consolation, and have received equal edification by the precious means of grace on which I have attended. Indeed, I never remember to have enjoyed a public meeting to such a high degree since I have been in the habit of attending upon them. Oh, that I may return to you, and the dear church of God, in the *fulness* of the blessing of the gospel of Christ! I hope, my beloved, that you are not without the enjoyment of the sweetness and the supports of the blessed gospel. Oh, that you may get and keep near to God, and in *Him* find infinitely more than you can possibly lose by your husband’s absence!

“Mr. Hall preached, last evening, from I Pet. i. 8. A most evangelical and experimental season! I was charmed and warmed. Oh, that Jesus may go on to reveal himself to him as altogether lovely! I am unable to write more now. To-day I set off for Northampton, and preach there to-night. The Lord bless you!”

In July, 1795, he received a pressing invitation from the *General Evangelical Society* in Dublin to pay them a visit, and to assist in diffusing the gospel of the grace of God in that kingdom. To this invitation he replied in the following letter, addressed to Dr. M’Dowal:—

*Birmingham, Aug. 3, 1795.*

“Rev. and dear Sir,

“I received your favour of the 22nd ult., and, for the interesting reason you assign, transmit a ‘speedy answer.’ The society, on whose behalf you wrote, I have ever considered with the respect due to the real friends of the best of causes—the cause of God and of his Christ—a cause which embraces the most important and durable interests of our fellow-men; and your name, dear sir, I have been taught to hold in more than common esteem by my dear brother and father, Messrs. Birt and Francis. The benevolent institution which you are

engaged in supporting, I am persuaded, deserves more than the good wishes or prayers of your brethren in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, on this side the channel; and it will yield me substantial pleasure to afford personal assistance in your pious labors. But for the present, I am sorry to say, I must decline your proposal, being engaged to spend a month in London this autumn on the business of our *mission society*, of which you have probably heard.

“When I formed my present connections with the church in Birmingham, I proposed an annual freedom for six weeks from my pastoral duties; and, should the ‘Evangelical Society’ express a wish for my services the ensuing year, I am perfectly inclined, God willing, to spend that time beneath their direction, and at what part of the year they conceive a visit would be most serviceable to the good design. I only request that, should this be their desire, I may receive the information as soon as they can conveniently decide, that I may withhold myself from other engagements, which may interfere with the time they may appoint. I entreat you to make my christian respects acceptable to the gentlemen who compose the society; and assure yourself that I am, dear sir, respectfully and affectionately, your brother, in our Lord Jesus,—S. P.”

The invitation was repeated, and he complied with their request, engaging to go over in the month of June, 1796.

A little before this journey, it occurred to Dr. Ryland that an itinerating mission into Cornwall might be of use to the cause of true religion, and that two acceptable ministers might be induced to undertake it; and that, if executed during the vacation at the Bristol academy, two of the students might supply their place. He communicated his thoughts to Mr. Pearce, who wrote thus in answer:—

*May 30, 1796.*

“My very dear Brother,

“I thank you a thousand times for your last letter. Blessed be God, who hath put it into your heart to propose such a plan for increasing the boundaries of Zion! I have read your letter to our wisest friends here, and they heard it with great joy. The plan, the place, the mode, the persons,—all, *all* meet our most affectionate wishes. How did such a scheme never enter our minds before? Alas! we have nothing in our hearts that is worth having, save what God puts there. Do write to me when at Dublin, and tell me whether it be resolved on, when they set out, &c. I hope, ere long, to hear that as many disciples are employed in Great Britain, as the Saviour employed in Judea. When he gives the word, great will be the company of the preachers.

“Oh, my dear brother, let us go on still



praying, contriving, laboring, defending, until the little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, and the small stone from the mountain fill the whole earth.

"What pleasures do those lose who have no interest in God's gracious and holy cause! How thankful should we be that we are not strangers to the joy which the friends of Zion feel, when the Lord turneth again Zion's captivity! I am, beyond expression, your affectionate brother in Christ,—S. P."

On May 31 he set off for Dublin, and "the Lord prospered his way" so that he arrived at the time appointed; and from every account it appears that he was not only sent *in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace*, but that the Lord himself went with him. His preaching was not only highly acceptable to every class of hearers, but the word came from him with power; and there is abundant reason to believe that many will, through eternity, praise God for sending his message to them by this dear ambassador of Christ. His memory lives in their hearts, and they join with the other churches of Christ in deploring the loss they have sustained by his death.

He was earnestly solicited by the *Evangelical Society* to renew his visit to that kingdom in 1798. Ready to embrace every call of duty, he had signified his compliance; and the time was fixed: but the breaking out of the late rebellion prevented him from realizing his intention. This was a painful disappointment to many, who wished once more to see his face, and to have heard the glad tidings from his lips.

Such is the brief account of his visit to Dublin given by Dr. M'Dowal. The following letter was written to Mrs. Pearce, when he had been there little more than a week:—

*Dublin, June 30, 1796.*

"My dear Sarah,

"I long to know how you do, and you will be as much concerned to know how I go on at this distance from you. I haste to satisfy your inquiries.

"I am in perfect health: am delightfully disappointed with the place and its inhabitants. I am very thankful that I came over. I have found much more religion here already than I expected to meet with during the whole of my stay. The prospect of usefulness is flattering. I have already many more friends (I hope *Christian* friends) than I can gratify by visits. Many doors are open for preaching the gospel in the city; and my country excursions will probably be few. Thus much for outline.

"But you will like to know how I spend my time, &c. Well, then: I am at the house of a Mr. Hutton, late high-sheriff for the city, a gentleman of opulence, respectability, and evangelical piety. He is by profession a Calvinistic presbyterian, an elder of Dr.

M'Dowal's church; has a most amiable wife, and four children. I am very thankful for being placed here during my stay. I am quite at home—I mean as to ease and familiarity; for, as to *style* of living, I neither do, nor desire to equal it. Yet, in my present situation, it is convenient. It would, however, be sickening and dull, had I not a God to go to, to converse with, to enjoy, and to call *my own*. O it is this, *it is this*, my dearest Sarah, which gives a point to every enjoyment, and sweetens all the cup of life.

"The Lord's-day after I wrote to you last, I preached for Dr. M'Dowal in the morning, at half past eleven; heard a Mr. Kiburne at five; and preached again at Plunket-street at seven. On Tuesday evening I preached at an hospital; and on Thursday evening at Plunket-street again. Yesterday for the baptists, in the morning; Dr. M'Dowal at five; and at Plunket-street at seven.

"The hours of worship will appear singular to you: they depend on the usual *meal times*. We breakfast at ten; dine between four and five, sometimes between five and six; take tea from seven to nine; and sup from ten to twelve.

"I thank God that I possess an abiding determination to aim at the *consciencess* of the people in every discourse. I have borne the most positive testimony against the prevailing evils of professors here: as sensuality, gaiety, vain amusements, neglect of the Sabbath, &c.; and last night told an immense crowd of professors of the first rank 'that, if they made custom and fashion their plea, they were awfully deluding their souls; for it had always been the fashion to insult God, to dissipate time, and to pursue the broad road to hell: but it would not lessen their torments there that the way to damnation was the fashion.'

"I feared my faithfulness would have given them offence: but, I am persuaded, it was the way to please the Lord; and those who I expected would be enemies are not only at peace with me, but even renounce their sensual indulgences to attend on my ministry. I do assuredly believe that God hath sent me hither for good. The five o'clock meetings are miserably attended in general. In a house that will hold 1500 or 2000 people, you will hardly see above fifty! Yesterday morning I preached on the subject of *public worship*, from Psalm v. 7, and seriously warned them against preferring their bellies to God, and their own houses to his. I was delighted and surprised, at the five o'clock meeting, to see the place nearly full. Surely this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in my eyes. Never, never did I more feel how weak I am in myself—a mere nothing: and how strong I am in the omnipotence of God. I feel a superiority to all fear, and possess a conscious dignity in being the ambassador of Christ. O help me



to praise! for it is he alone who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight: and still pray for me; for, if he withdrew for a moment, I become as weak and unprofitable as the briars of the wilderness.

"You cannot think how much I am supported by the assurance that I have left a *praying people* at Birmingham; and I believe that, in answer to their prayers, I have hitherto been wonderfully assisted in the public work, as well as enjoyed much in private devotion.

"I have formed a most pleasing acquaintance with several serious young men in the university here, and with two of the fellows of the college—most pious gentlemen indeed, who have undergone a world of reproach for Christ and his gospel, and have been forbidden to preach in the churches by the archbishop: but God has raised another house for them here, where they preach with much success, and have begun a meeting in the college, which promises fresh prosperity to the cause of Jesus."

The following particulars, in addition to the above, are taken partly from some notes in his own hand-writing, and partly from the account given by his friend Mr. Summers, who accompanied him during the latter part of his visits.

At his first arrival, the congregations were but thinly attended, and the baptist congregation in particular, amongst whom he delivered several discourses. It much affected him to see the whole city given to sensuality and worldly conformity; and especially to find those of his own denomination amongst the lowest and least affected with their condition. But, the longer he continued, the more the congregations increased, and every opportunity became increasingly interesting, both to him and them. His faithful remonstrances, and earnest recommendations of prayer-meetings to his baptist friends, though at first apparently ill received, were well taken in the end; and he had the happiness to see in them some hopeful appearances of a return to God. On June the 20th he wrote to his friend Mr. Summers as follows:—

My dear friend,

"If you mean to abide by my opinion, I say, Come to Dublin, and come directly! I have been most delightfully disappointed. I expected darkness, and behold light; sorrow, and I have had cause for abundant joy. I thank God that I came hither, and hope that many, as well as myself, will have cause to praise him. Never have I been more deeply taught my own nothingness—never hath the power of God more evidently rested upon me. The harvest here is great indeed; and the Lord of the harvest hath enabled me to labor in it with delight.

I praise him for all that is past;  
I trust him for all that's to come.

"The Lord hath of late been doing great things for Dublin. Several of the young men in the college have been awakened; and two of the *fellows* are sweet evangelical preachers. One of them is of a spirit serene as the summer's evening, and sweet as the breath of May. I am already intimate with them, and have spent several mornings in college with various students who bid fair to be faithful watchmen on Jerusalem's walls. But I hope you will come; and then you will see for yourself. If not, I will give you some pleasant details when we meet in England."

Mr. Summers complied with this invitation; and of the last seven or eight days of Mr. Pearce's continuance at Dublin he himself thus writes:—

"Monday, July 4.—At three in the afternoon I went with my friend, Mr. Summers, to Mr. K.'s. Spent a very agreeable day. Miss A. K. remarked two wonders in Dublin:—A praying society composed of students at college, and another of lawyers.—The family were called together. We sung: I read, and expounded the twelfth chapter of Isaiah; and prayed.—At seven we went to a prayer-meeting at Plunket-street—there was a very large attendance. Mr. R. and Mr. S. prayed; and I spoke from Rom. x. 12, 13: "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all who call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."—Many seemed affected.—After I had closed the opportunity, I told them some of my own experience, and requested that, if any present wished for conversation, they would come to me, either that evening or on Thursday evening, in the vestry.—Five persons came in: one had been long impressed with religion, but could never summon courage enough to open her heart before. Another, a Miss W., attributed her first impressions, under God, to my ministry; and told me that her father had regularly attended of late, and that her mother was so much alarmed as to be almost in despair. Poor girl! she seemed truly in earnest about her own soul, and as much concerned for her parents.—The next had possessed a serious concern for some time, and of late had been much revived.—One young lady, a Miss H., staid in the meeting-house, exceedingly affected indeed. Mr. K. spoke to her.—She said she would speak to me on Thursday.

"Tuesday, 5th.—Went to Leislip. At seven preached to a large and affected auditory.

"Wednesday, 6th.—Mr. H. and myself went to Mrs. M'G., to inquire about the young lady who was so much affected at the meeting. Mrs. M'G. said her mother and sister were pious; that she had been very giddy; but that last Lord's-day she

was seriously awakened to a sense of sin; had expressed her delight in religion, and fled for refuge to the blood of Jesus.—Her sister was introduced to me; a sweetly pious lady.—I agreed to wait for an interview with the young lady at Mr. H.'s, in Eccles-street, to-morrow.

“Thursday, 7th.—Miss H., her sister, and Mrs. M'G. came to Eccles-street.—A most delightful interview. Seldom have I seen such proficiency in so short a time.—That day week, at Plunket-street, she received her first serious impressions. Her concern deepened at Mass-lane, on Lord's-day morning—more so in the evening at Plunket-street—but most of all on Monday night. I exhorted them to begin a prayer and experience-meeting; and they agreed. Blessed be God! this strengthens my hands greatly.—At seven o'clock preached at Plunket-street, from Jer. i. 4, 5: ‘Going and weeping—they shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward.’ A full house; and an impressive season. Terminated after the public services were ended, to converse on religion. The most pleasing case was that of a young man of Mr. D.'s.

“Saturday, 9th.—Went with my friend, Mr. S., to call on Miss H.—Found her at her mother's.—We first passed the door.—She ran out after us.—Seemed happy; but agitated. Ran, and called her mother.—Soon we saw the door of the parlor open, and a majestic lady appeared; who, as she entered the room, thus accosted me:—‘Who art thou, oh, blessed of the Lord? Welcome to the widow's house! Accept the widow's thanks for coming after the child whom thou hast begotten in the gospel!’—I was too much overcome to do more than take by the hand the aged saint. A solemn silence ensued for a minute or two; when the old lady, recovering, expressed the fulness of her satisfaction respecting the reality of the change effected in her daughter, and her gratitude for great refreshment of her own soul, by means of my poor labors. She said she had known the Lord during forty years, being called under the ministry of John Fisher, in the open air, when on a visit to an officer, who was her brother-in-law. She told us much of her experience, and promised to encourage the prayer-meeting which I proposed to be held in her house every Lord's-day evening. They are to begin to-morrow, after preaching.—It was a pleasant meeting; and we returned with pleasure to Eccles-street. After we rose up to come away, the old lady affectionately said, ‘May the good-will of Him who dwelt in the bush attend you wherever you go, for ever and ever.’

The young lady, some months after, wrote to Mr. S., and says, amongst other things, ‘I have great reason to be thankful for the many blessings the Lord has been pleased

to bestow upon me, and in particular for his sending Mr. Pearce to this city; and that through his means I have been convinced of sin. I am happy to inform you that, through grace, I am enabled to walk in the narrow path. The Lord has taken away all desire for worldly company; all my desires, now, are to attend on the means of grace. Blessed be his name! I often find him present in them. My mother and I often remember the happy time we spent in your company at our house. She often speaks of it with great pleasure, and blesses the Lord for the change which grace has wrought in me.”

“Lord's-day, 10th (the last Sabbath)—Preached in the morning at Mary's Abbey, from Job xxxiii. 27, 28: ‘He looked upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.’—A happy season.—In the afternoon, having dined with Mr. W., he took me to Swift's-alley, the baptist place of worship, where I gave an exhortation on brotherly love, and administered the Lord's supper. At Mr. W.'s motion, the church requested me to look out a suitable minister for them. In the evening I preached at Plunket-street, from 2 Tim. i. 18: ‘The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day!’—A very solemn season.

Monday, 11th.—Met the dear Christian friends, for the last time, at a prayer-meeting in Plunket-street.—The Lord was there! Several friends spent the evening with us afterwards at Mr. H.'s.

“Tuesday, 12th.—Went on board at four; arrived at Liverpool on Thursday, and safely at home on Friday, July 15th, 1796. Blessed be the preserver of men, the Saviour of sinners, and the help of his servants, for evermore, amen, amen.”

Some time after, writing to his friend who accompanied him, he says, ‘I have received several letters from Dublin: two from Master B., one from Miss H., one from M., three or four from our baptist friends, and some from others whom I cannot recollect.—Mr. K. lately called on me, in his way from Bath to Holyhead. We talked of you, and of our Lord, and did not part till we had presented ourselves before the throne.”

During his labors in Dublin, he was strongly solicited to settle in a very flattering situation in the neighborhood;\* and a very liberal salary was offered him. On his positively declining it, mention was made of only *six months* of the year. When that was declined, *three months* were proposed; and, when he was about to answer this in the negative, the party refused to receive

\* At the *Black Rock*, the residence of some of the most genteel families in the vicinity of Dublin.

his answer, desiring him to take time to consider of it. He did so; and, though he entertained a very grateful sense of the kindness and generosity expressed by the proposal, yet, after the maturest deliberation, he thought it his duty to decline it. Mr. Pearce's modesty prevented his talking on such a subject; but it was known at the time by his friend who accompanied him, and, since his death, has been frequently mentioned as an instance of his disinterested spirit.

His friends at Birmingham were ready to think it hard that he should be so willing to leave them to go on a mission among the heathen: but they could not well complain, and much less think ill of him, when they saw that such a willingness was more than could be effected by the most flattering prospects of a worldly nature, accompanied, too, with promising appearances of religious usefulness.

About a month after his return from Dublin, Mr. Pearce addressed a letter to Mr. Carey, in which he gives some farther account of Ireland, as well as of some other interesting matters:—

*Birmingham, Aug. 12, 1796.*

“Oh, my dear brother, did you but know with what feelings I resume my pen, freely to correspond with you after receiving your very affectionate letter to myself, and perusing that which you sent by the same conveyance to the society, I am sure you would persuade yourself that I have no common friendship for you, and that your regards are at least returned with equal ardor.

“I fear (I had almost said) that I shall never see your face in the flesh; but if any thing can add to the joy which the presence of Christ, and conformity, perfect conformity to him, will afford in heaven, surely the certain prospect of meeting with my dear brother Carey there is one of *the greatest*. Thrice happy should I be if the providence of God would open a way for my partaking of your labors, your sufferings, and your pleasures, on this side the eternal world: but all my brethren here are of opinion that I shall be more useful at home than abroad; and I, though reluctantly, submit. Yet I am truly with you in spirit. My heart is at Mudnabatty, and at times I even hope to find my body there: but with the Lord I leave it; He knows my wishes, my motives, my regret: He knows all my soul; and, depraved as it is, I feel an inexpressible satisfaction that he does know it. However, it is an humbling thought to me, that he sees I am unfit for such a station, and unworthy of such an honor as to bear his name among the heathen. But I must be thankful still that, though he appoints me not to a post in foreign service, he will allow me to stand

sentinel at home. In this situation may I have grace to be faithful unto death!

“I hardly wonder at your being pained on account of the effects produced in the minds of your European friends, by the news of your engagement in the indigo business, because I imagine you are ignorant of the process of that matter amongst us. When I received the news, I glorified God in sincerity on account of it, and gave most hearty thanks to him for his most gracious appearance on your behalf: but at the same time I feared lest, through that undertaking, the work of the mission might in some way or other be impeded. The same impression was made on the minds of many others; yet no blame was attached, in our view, to you. Our minds were only alarmed for the future—not disposed to censure for the past. Had you seen a faithful copy of the prayers, the praises, and the conversation of the day in which your letters were read, I know you would not have entertained one unkind thought of the society towards you. Oh, no, my dear brother, far be it from us to lay an atom upon your spirits of a painful nature. Need I say, we do love you, we do respect you, we do confide too much in you, to *design* the smallest occasion of distress to your heart. But I close this subject. In future we will atone for an expression that might bear a harsh construction. We will strengthen, we will support, we will comfort, we will encourage you in your arduous work: all, *all* shall be love and kindness; glory to God, and good will to men. If I have done aught that is wrong, as an individual, pardon me; if we have said aught amiss, as a society, pardon us. Let us forbear one another in love, ‘forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us.’

“By the time this reaches you, I hope you will have received Nos. I. and II. of Periodical Accounts. Should you find any thing in them which you think had better be omitted, pray be free in mentioning it, and in future your instructions shall be fully attended to. We have taken all the pains, and used all the caution, in our power, to render them unexceptionable; but you can better judge in some respects than we. If you should not approve of all (though we are not conscious of any thing that you will disapprove) you will not be offended, but believe we have done our best, and, with your remarks, hope to do better still.

“With pleasure, approaching to rapture, I read the last accounts you sent us. I never expected immediate success: the prospect is truly greater than my most sanguine hopes. “The kingdom of heaven is like to a *little* leaven hid in three measures of meal, till the *whole* is leavened.” Blessed be God! the leaven is in the meal, and its influence is already discoverable. A great God is doing great things by you. Go on, my dearest



brother, go on; God will do greater things than these. Jesus is worthy of a *world* of praise: and shall *Hindustan* not praise him? Surely he shall see of the travail of his soul there, and the sower and the reaper shall rejoice together. Already the empire of darkness totters, and soon it shall doubtless fall. Blessed be the laborers in this important work; and blessed be *He* who giveth them hearts and strength to labor, and promises that they shall not labor in vain!

“Do not fear the want of money. *God* is for us, and the silver and the gold are his; and so are the hearts of those who possess the most of it. I will travel from the Land’s end to the Orkney’s but we will get money enough for all the demands of the mission. I have never had a fear on that head: a little exertion will do wonders; and past experience justifies every confidence. *Men*, we only want; and *God* shall find them for us in due time.

“Is brother Fountain arrived? We hope he will be an acceptable remittance, and, *viva voce*, compensate for the lack of epistolary communications.

“I rejoice in contemplating a church of our Lord Jesus Christ in Bengal, formed upon his own plan. Why do not the Hindoo converts join it? Lord help their unbelief! But perhaps the drop is now withheld, that you may by and bye have the shower, and lift up your eyes and say, “These, whence came they?” They fly as clouds, or as doves to their windows.” For three years we read of few baptized by the first disciples of our Lord; but, on the fourth, three thousand, and five thousand, openly avowed him. The Lord send *you* such another Pentecost!

“I intend to write my dear brother a long letter. It will prove my *desire* to gratify him, if it do no more. I wish that I knew in what communications your other correspondents will be most deficient: then I would try to supply their omissions.

“I will begin with myself: but I have nothing good to say. I think I am the most vile, ungrateful servant that ever Jesus Christ employed in his church. At some times, I question whether I ever knew the grace of God in truth; and at others I hesitate on the most important points of christian faith. I have lately had peculiar struggles of this kind with my own heart, and have often half concluded to speak no more in the name of the Lord. When I am preparing for the pulpit, I fear I am going to avow fables for facts, and doctrines of men for the truths of God. In conversation I am obliged to be silent, lest my tongue should belie my heart. In prayer I know not what to say, and at times think prayer altogether useless. Yet I cannot wholly surrender my hope, or my profession.—Three things I find, above all others, tend to my preservation:—First, a re-

collection of a time when, *at once*, I was brought to abandon the practice of sins which the fear of damnation could never bring me to relinquish before. Surely, I say, this must be the finger of God, according to the scripture doctrine of regeneration:—Secondly, I feel such a consciousness of guilt that nothing but the gospel scheme can satisfy my mind respecting the hope of salvation:—Thirdly, I see that what true devotion does appear in the world seems only to be found among those to whom Christ is precious.

“But I frequently find a backwardness to secret prayer, and much deadness in it: and it puzzles me to see how this can be consistent with a life of grace. However, I resolve, that, let what will become of me, I will do all I can for God while I live, and leave the rest to him; and this I usually experience to be the best way to be at peace.

“I believe that, if I were more fully given up to God, I should be free from these distressing workings of mind; and then I long to be a missionary, where I should have temptations to nothing but to abound in the work of the Lord, and lay myself entirely out for him. In such a situation, I think, pride would have but little food and faith more occasion for exercise; so that the spiritual life and inward religion would thrive better than they do now.

“At times, indeed I do feel, I trust, genuine contrition, and sincerely lament my short-comings before God. Oh the sweets that accompany true repentance! Yes, I love to be abased before God. ‘There it is I find my blessing.’ May the Lord daily and hourly bring me low, and keep me so!

“As to my public work, I find, whilst engaged in it, little cause to complain for want either of matter or words. My labors are acceptable and not altogether unprofitable to the hearers; but what is this to me, if my own soul starve whilst others are fed by me? Oh, my brother, I need your prayers; and I feel a great satisfaction in the hope that you do not forget me. Oh, that I may be kept faithful unto death! Indeed, in the midst of my strugglings, a gleam of hope that I shall at last awake in the likeness of God, affords me greater joy than words can express. To be with Christ is far better than to continue sinning here: but, if the Lord hath any thing to do by me, His will be done.

“I have never so fully opened my case to any one before. Your freedom on similar topics encourages me to make my complaint to you, and I think if you were near me I should feel great relief in revealing to you all my heart. But I shall fatigue you with my moanings, so I will have done on this subject.

“It is not long since I returned from a mission to Ireland. A society is established in Dublin for the purpose of inviting from

England, ministers of various denominations to assist in promoting the interests of the kingdom of Christ there. Some of our Baptist brethren had been there before me, as Rippon, Langdon, Francis, and Birt; and I think the plan is calculated for usefulness. I have, at Dr. Rippon's request, sent him some remarks on my visit for the Register, but, as it is probable you will receive this before that comes to hand, I will say something of my excursion here.

"Having engaged to spend six Lord's-days in that kingdom, I arrived there the day before the first Sabbath in June. I first made myself acquainted with the general state of religion in Dublin. I found there were four presbyterian congregations; two of these belong to the southern presbytery, and are Arians or Socinians; the other two are connected with the northern presbytery, and retain the Westminster confession of faith. One of these latter congregations is very small, and the minister, though orthodox, appears to have but little success. The other is large and flourishing: the place of worship is ninety feet by seventy, and in a morning well filled. Their times of public service are at half-past eleven and five. In the afternoon the stated congregations are small indeed; for five o'clock is the usual dining-hour in Dublin, and few of the hearers would leave their dinners for the gospel. Dr. M'Dowal is the senior pastor of this church—a very affectionate, spiritual man. The junior is Mr. Horner. The doctor is a warm friend to the society at whose request I went over to Ireland.

"There is one congregation of burgher seceders, and another of antiburghers. The latter will not hear any man who is not of their own cast; the former are much more liberal. I preached for them once, and they affectionately solicited a repetition of my services.

"Lady Huntingdon's connection has one society here, the only one in the kingdom, perhaps, except at Sligo, where there is another. It is not large and I fear rather declining. There is not one independent church in the whole kingdom. There were ten baptist societies in Ireland: but they are now reduced to six; and are I fear, still on the decline.

"The inhabitants of Dublin seem to be chiefly composed of two classes; the one assumes the appearance of opulence; the other exhibits marks of the most abject poverty: and, as there are no parishes in Ireland which provide for the poor, many die every year for want of the common necessaries of life.

"Most of the rich are by profession protestants; the poor are nearly all papists, and strongly prejudiced against the reformed religion. Their ignorance and superstition are scarcely inferior to your miserable Hin-

doos. On Midsummer-day I had an affecting proof of the latter. On the public road about a mile from Dublin is a well, which was once included in the precincts of a priory dedicated to St. John of Jerusalem. This well is in high repute for curing a number of bodily complaints, and its virtues are said to be the most efficacious on the saint's own day. So from twelve o'clock at night, for twenty-four hours, it becomes the rendezvous for all the lame, blind, and otherwise diseased people, within a circuit of twenty miles. Here they brought old and young, and applied the 'holy water' both internally and externally; some by pouring, some by immersion, and all by drinking; whilst, for the good of those who could not attend in person, their friends filled bottles with the efficacious water to use at home. Several I saw on their knees before the well at their devotions, which were not unfrequently interrupted with a glass of whiskey. With this they were supplied from a number of dealers in that article, who kept standings all round the well.

"Near to the spot was a church-yard, where great numbers kneeled upon the tombs of their diseased relatives, and appeared earnestly engaged in praying for the repose of their souls.

"It was truly a lamentable sight. My heart ached at their delusions, whilst I felt gratitude, I hope unfeigned, for an acquaintance with the 'water of life, of which if a man drink he shall live forever!'

"There are few or none of the middle class to connect the rich and the poor, so that favorable access to them is far more difficult than to the lower orders of the people in England; and their priests hold them in such bondage that, if a catholic servant only attend on family-worship in a protestant house, penance must be performed for the offence."

Mention has already been made of his having "formed a pleasing acquaintance with several serious young gentlemen of the university of Dublin."\* The following letter was addressed to one of them, the Rev. Mr. Matthias, a few months after his return:

"Dear brother Matthias,

"I have been employed this whole day in writing letters to Dublin; and it is the first day I have been able to redeem for that purpose. I will not consume a page in apology. Let it suffice to say that necessity, not disinclination, has detained from my Irish friends those proofs of my gratitude and esteem which in other circumstances I ought to have presented three months ago. I thought this morning of answering all their demands before I slept; but I have written so many sheets, and all full, that I find my



eyes and my fingers both fail; and I believe this must close my intercourse with Dublin this day. When I shall be able to complete my purpose I do not know. To form friendships with good men is pleasant; but to maintain *all that communion* which friendship expects, is in some cases very difficult. Happy should I be could I meet my Irish friends in propria persona, instead of sitting in solitude, and maintaining, by the tedious medium of the pen, this distant intercourse. But 'the Lord he shall choose our inheritance for us.' Were all the planets of our system embodied and placed in close association, the light would be greater and the object grander; but then usefulness and systematic beauty consist in their dispersion: and what are we, my brother, but so many satellites to Jesus, the great Sun of the Christian system? Some, indeed, like burning Mercuries, keep nearer the luminary, and receive more of its light and heat, whilst others, like the ringed planet, or the Georgium Sidus, preserve a greater distance, and reflect a greater portion of his light; yet if, amidst all this diversity, *they belong to the system*, two things may be affirmed of all:—all keep true to one centre, and borrow whatever light they have from one source. True it is that the further they are from the sun, the longer are they in performing their revolutions: and is not this exemplified in us? The closer we keep to Jesus, the more brilliant are our graces; the more cheerful and active are our lives: but alas! we are all comets; we all move in eccentric orbits: at one time glowing beneath the ray divine, at another congealing and freezing into icicles. 'Oh what a miracle to man is man!'

"Little did I think when I begun this letter that I should thus have indulged myself in allegory: but true friendship, I believe, always dictates extempore; and my friends must never expect from me a studied epistle. They can meet with better thoughts than I can furnish them with, in any bookseller's shop. It is not the dish, however well it may be cooked, that gives the relish, but the sweet sauce of friendship; and this I think sometimes makes even nonsense palatable.

"But I have some questions to put to you: first, how are all my college friends, Messrs. Walker, Maturin, Hamilton, &c.? How is their health? But, chiefly, how are the interests of religion among you? Are there any praying students added to your number? Do all those you thought well of continue to justify their profession? You know what it is that interests me. Pray tell me all, whether it makes me weep or rejoice.

"I hope Mr. H—'s ministry was blessed in Dublin. Do you know any instances of it? We must sow in hope, and I trust that we shall all gather fruit to eternal life, even where the buddings have never appeared to us in this world. How is it with your own

soul? I thank God I never, I think, rejoiced habitually so much in him as I have done of late. '*God is love.*' That makes me happy. I rejoice that God reigns; that he reigns over all; that he reigns over *me*; over my crosses, my comforts, my family, my friends, my senses, my mental powers, my designs, my words, my preaching, my conduct; that he is *God over all*, blessed forever. I am willing to live, yet I long to die, to be freed from all error and all sin. I have nothing else to trouble me; no other cross to carry. The sun shines without all day long; but I am sensible of internal darkness. Well, through grace it shall be all light by and by. Yes, you and I shall be *angels* of light; all Mercuries then; all near the sun; always in motion; always glowing with zeal, and flaming with love. Oh, for the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness!

'Oh what love and concord there,  
And what sweet harmony  
In heaven above, where happy souls,  
Adore thy majesty!

Oh how the heavenly choirs all sing  
To him who sits enthroned above!

What admiring!

And aspiring!

Still desiring:

Oh how I long to taste this feast of love!

"Will you tell brother M—— that I wait an opportunity of sending a parcel to him? In that I will enclose a letter. My very affectionate respects to him and Mr. H——, and all my college friends as though named. If you be not weary of such an eccentric correspondent, pray do not be long ere you write to your unworthy but affectionate brother in Christ,—S. P."

Awhile after this, he thus writes to his friend Mr. Summers:—

"December, 1796. I rejoice that you have been supported under and brought through your late trials. I do not wonder at it; for it is no more than God has *promised*: and though we may well wonder that he promises any thing, yet his performance is no just ground of surprise: and, when we find ourselves so employed, we had better turn our wonder to our own unbelief, that for one moment suspected God would not be as good as his word.

"I have been lately more than ever delighted with the thought that God *hath engaged* to do any thing for such worms as we. I never studied the deistical controversy so much, nor ever rejoiced in revelation more. Alas! what should we know if God had not condescended to teach us? Paul very justly remarks that no one knoweth any thing of God, but the Spirit of God, and he to whom the Spirit revealeth him. Now the Spirit hath revealed God in the Bible; but to an unbeliever the Bible is a sealed book. He can know nothing from a book that he looks



upon as an imposture, and yet there is no other book in which God is revealed: so that to reject the Bible is to immerse ourselves in darkness, and, whilst professing to be wise, actually to become fools: whereas no sooner do we believe what the Spirit saith, than unto us is God revealed, and in his light do we see light."

To the above may be added a few extracts of letters which he addressed to his friends in 1797 and 1798.

TO DR. RYLAND.

March, 1797.

"During the last three weeks I have, at times, been very poorly, with colds, &c. Am better now, and have been all along assisted in going through my public duties. Let us continue to pray for each other till death makes it a needless service. How uncertain is life, and what a blessing is death to a saint! I seem lately to feel a kind of affection for death. Methinks if it were visible I could embrace it. 'Welcome herald that bids the prisoner be free; that announces the dawn of everlasting day; that bids the redeemed come to Zion with everlasting joy, to be beyond the reach of an erroneous judgment and a depraved heart.' To believe, to feel, to speak, to act *exactly* as God will have me; to be wholly absorbed and taken up with him; this, nothing short of this, can make my bliss complete. But *all this is mine*. Oh the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of redeeming love! It conquers my heart, and constrains me to yield myself a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ.—My dear brother, we have had many happy meetings on earth: the best is in reserve.

'No heart upon earth can conceive  
The bliss that in heaven they share;  
Then who this dark world would not leave,  
And cheerfully die to be there?'

"Oh how full of love, and joy, and praise, shall we be when that happy state is ours! Well, yet a little while, and He that shall come will come: Even so come, Lord Jesus! My dear brother, forgive the hasty effusions of a heart that loves you in the bowels of Jesus, and is always happy in testifying itself to be affectionately yours,—S. P."

TO MR. CAVE,

On the falling away of some who had promised fair in religion.

—, 1797.

"I thank you, my dear brother, for the confidence you repose in me, the affection you have for me, and the freedom with which you write to me. Assure yourself that I sincerely sympathize in the cutting events which you have lately experienced. Trying indeed! Your heart must bleed. Yet be not discouraged in your work. The more *Satan* opposes *Christ*, the more let us oppose

*him*. He comes with great violence because his time is short. His kingdom is on the decline; his strong holds are besieged, and he knows they must soon be taken. Whilst it lasts, he is making desperate sallies on the armies of the Lamb. It is no great wonder that he fights and wounds a raw recruit now and then, who strays from the camp, and, thoughtless of the danger, keeps not close by the captain's tent. I hope our glorious leader will heal the wounded, and rescue the captive. He is sure to make reprisals. Christ will have ten to one. You will see his arm made bare. He shall go forth like a man of war. The prisoners shall be redeemed, and the old tyrant shall be cast into the bottomless pit. Be of good cheer, my fellow-soldier. The cause is not ours, but God's. Let us endure hardness, and still fight the good fight of faith. At last we shall come off conquerors through him who hath loved us.

"I hope you have some causes for joy as well as grief. I trust though one, or two, or three fall, the tens and the twenties stand their ground. Oh do what you can to cheer them under the common trial. Let them not see a faint heart in *you*. Fight manfully still. Tell them to watch the more; to pray the harder; to walk the closer with God. So out of the eater shall come forth meat, and sweetness out of the strong."

TO MR. BATES AND MRS. BARNES,

Who had been burnt out of their residence.

"The many expressions of christian friendship which I received from you, and your affectionate families, during my late visit to London, will often excite grateful recollection in future, as they have almost daily since I parted from you; and though I do not write this avowedly as a mere letter of acknowledgment, yet I wish it to assure you that I am not forgetful of my friends, nor unthankful for their kindness. May all the favor you show to the servants of our common Lord, for his sake, be amply recompensed in present peace, and future felicity, when the promise of him who cannot lie shall be fulfilled,—'A cup of cold water given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose its reward.'

"But, whilst you, my dear friends, live 'in hope of the glory' that remains 'to be revealed,' I am persuaded that you expect *all* as the fruit of sovereign mercy, which first forms us to the mind of Christ, then accepts, and then rewards. Truly, if sinners be rewarded, it must be 'of grace, and not of debt.' Yet it is a mercy of unspeakable magnitude that grace should establish a connection between obedience and enjoyment, such a connection as at once ensures joy to the believer, and glory to Christ.

"Oh that our thoughts, our affections, our

desires, may be much in heaven! *Here*, you have been taught, is 'no continuing city,' no certain place of abode; and though you have been taught it awfully in flames, yet, if you learn it effectually, the terror of the means will be conquered by the excellency and glory of the consequences. Yes, my friends, 'in heaven we have a better and enduring substance:' the apartments there are more spacious; the society more sweet; the enjoyments more perfect; and all to last forever. Well may Christians 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God!'

TO MR. AND MRS. BOWYER, Pall Mall.

Nov. 17, 1797.

"Blessed be 'the preserver of men,' for all his goodness to dear Mr. and Mrs. B—. With theirs shall my gratitude also ascend, whilst separated from their society; and with theirs shall it more warmly and permanently ascend, when we meet to form a part of the 'general assembly, and church of the first-born.'

"I do not return to London this autumn, but I mean to visit Portsmouth. I must be indebted to you for my directions. We shall be very happy to see you at Luke-street: but *Wales* I suppose will be the vortex that will swallow up much of your time. Well, so you are happy, we must be disinterested enough to be satisfied, although we be denied a personal participation.

"Let us not forget that we are Christians; and Christians profess a hope of a better country than *Cambria* contains. *There* we all belong. Already citizens by privilege, we shall be so by possession soon.

'Roll swifter round, ye wheels of time,  
And bring the welcome day!'

"In hope of greeting you both in that good land, I remain most affectionately yours,—S. P."

TO DR. RYLAND.

Nov. 17, 1797.

"I feel much for you in relation both to the duties and trials of your present situation: at the same time I bless God who fixed you in it, because I am persuaded that it will be for his glory in the churches of Christ. And, though none but those whose hands are full of religious concerns can guess at your difficulties, yet our blessed Redeemer knows them all. Oh, my brother, you are travelling for him who redeemed you by his blood, who sympathizes with you, and who will graciously crown you at last. Small as my trials are, I would turn smith, and work at the anvil and the forge, rather than bear them for any other master than *Christ*. Yet, were they ten thousand times as many as they are, the thought of their being for Him, I trust, would sweeten them all.

"I have reason to be very thankful for much pleasure of late both as a Christian

and a minister. I have never felt so deeply my need of a divine Redeemer, and seldom possessed such solid confidence that he is mine. I want more and more to become a little child, to dwindle into nothing in my own esteem, to renounce my own wisdom, power, and goodness, and simply look to and live upon *JESUS* for all. I am ashamed that I have so much pride, so much self-will. Oh my Saviour! make me 'meek and lowly in heart;' in this alone I find 'rest to my soul.'

"I could say much of what Immanuel has done for my soul; but I fear lest even this should savor of vanity. When shall I be like my Lord? Oh welcome death, when I have nothing more to do for Christ! To him, till then, may I live every day and every hour. Rather may I be annihilated than not live to him!

"You will rejoice with me to hear that we have a pleasing prospect as a church. Several very hopeful and some very valuable characters are about to join us. Lord, carry on thy work!"

TO MRS. PEARCE,

On the dangerous illness of one of the children.

"Portsmouth, Jan. 29, 1798.

"Ignorant of the circumstances of our dear child, how shall I address myself to her dearer mother! With a fluttering heart, and a trembling hand, I, in this uncertainty, resume my pen. One consideration tranquillizes my mind,—I and mine are in the hands of *God*; the wise, the good, the indulgent parent of mankind! Whatever he does is best. I am prepared for all his will, and hope that I shall never have a feeling whose language is not, 'Thy will be done.'

"I am most kindly entertained here by Mr. and Mrs. Shoveller; and, except my dear Sarah's presence, feel myself at home. *They* have had greater trials than we can at present know. They have attended seven children to the gloomy tomb: they have been supported beneath their loss by him who hath said, 'As thy days so shall thy strength be.' Mrs. S. tells me she 'blessed God for all.' May my dear Sarah be enabled to do the same, whatever the result may prove. To-morrow I expect another letter from you; yet, lest you should too much feel my absence, I will not delay forwarding this a single post. O that it may prove in some degree a messenger of consolation!

"Yesterday I preached three times: God was very good. I received your letter before the first service: you may be assured that I bore you on my heart in the presence of my Lord and yours; nor shall I pray in vain: He will either restore the child, or support you under the loss of it. I dare not pray with importunity for any *earthly good*; for 'who knoweth what is good for man in

this life, all the days of his vain life, which the spendeth as a shadow?' But *strength* to bear the loss of earthly comforts he has *promised*: for *that* I importune; and *that*, I doubt not, will be granted.

"In a house directly opposite to the window before which I now write, a *wife*, a *mother*, is just departed! Why am I not a bereaved husband? Why are not my children *motherless*? When we compare our condition with our wishes, we often complain: but, if we compare it with that of many around us, our complaints will be exchanged for gratitude and praise."

To R. BOWYER, Esq.

Feb. 14, 1798.

"Not a day has hurried by, since I parted with my dear friends in Pall Mall, but they have been in my affectionate remembrance; but, not being able to speak with any satisfaction respecting our dear child, I have withheld myself from imparting new anxieties to bosoms already alive to painful sensibility.

"At length, however, a gracious God puts it in my power to say that there is hope. After languishing between life and death for many days, she now seems to amend. We flatter ourselves that she has passed the crisis, and will yet be restored to our arms; but parental fears forbid too strong a confidence. It may be that our most merciful God saw that the shock of a sudden removal would be too strong for the tender feelings of a mother; and so by degrees prepares for the stroke which must fall at last. However, she is in the best hands, and we are, I hope, preparing for submission to whatever may be the blessed will of God.

"I was brought home in safety, and feel myself in much better health in consequence of my journey. Oh that it may be all consecrated to my Redeemer's praise!

"Happy should I be if I could oftener enjoy your friendly society; but we must wait for the full accomplishment of our social wishes till we come to that better world for which divine grace is preparing us;—*There* our best, our brightest hopes, and there our warmest affections must be found. Could we have all we want below, we should be reluctant to ascend, when Jesus calls us home. No, this is not our rest; it is polluted with sin, and dashed with sorrow: but though our pains in themselves are evil, yet our God turns the curse into a blessing, and makes all that we meet with accomplish our good.

"What better can I wish, my friends, than the humble place of Mary, or the happy rest of John! Faith can enjoy them both, till actually we fall at the Saviour's feet, and

lean upon his bosom, when we see him as he is.

'Oh the delights, the heavenly joys,  
The glories of the place,  
Where Jesus sheds the brightest beams  
Of his o'erflowing grace!'"

#### CHAPTER IV.

AN ACCOUNT OF HIS LAST AFFLICTION,  
AND THE HOLY AND HAPPY EXERCISES  
OF HIS MIND UNDER IT.

EARLY in October, 1798, Mr. Pearce attended at the Kettering ministers' meeting, and preached from Psalm xc. 16, 17: "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." He was observed to be singularly solemn and affectionate in that discourse. If he had known it to be the last time that he should address his brethren in that part of the country, he could scarcely have felt or spoken in a more interesting manner. It was a discourse full of instruction, full of a holy unction, and that seemed to breathe an apostolical ardor. On his return, he preached at Market Harborough; and riding home the next day in company with his friend Mr. Summers, of London, they were overtaken with rain. Mr. Pearce was wet through his clothes, and towards evening complained of a chilliness. A slight hoarseness followed. He preached several times after this, which brought on an inflammation, and issued in a consumption. It is probable that, if his constitution had not been previously impaired, such effects might not have followed in this instance. His own ideas on this subject are expressed in a letter to Dr. Ryland, dated Dec. 4, 1798; and in another to Mr. King, dated from Bristol, on his way to Plymouth, March 30, 1799. In the former, he says, "Ever since my Christmas journey last year to Sheepshead, Nottingham, and Leicester, on the mission business, I have found my constitution greatly debilitated, in consequence of a cold caught after the unusual exertions which circumstances then demanded: so that, from a frame that could endure any weather, I have since been too tender to encounter a single shower without danger; and the duties of the Lord's day, which, as far as bodily strength went, I could perform with little fatigue, have since frequently overcome me. But the severe cold I caught in my return from the last Kettering ministers' meeting has affected me so much that I have sometimes concluded I must give up preaching entirely; for, though my head and spirits are better than for two years past, yet my stomach is so very weak that I cannot pray



in my family without frequent pauses for breath, and in the pulpit it is labor and agony which must be felt to be conceived of. I have however made shift to preach sometimes thrice, but mostly only twice on a Lord's day, till the last, when the morning sermon only, though I delivered it with great pleasure of mind and with as much caution as to my voice as possible, yet cost me so much labor as threw me into a fever till the next day, and prevented my sleeping all night."—In the latter, he thus writes,—“Should my life be spared, I and my family, and all my connections, will stand indebted, under God, to you. Unsuspecting of danger myself, I believe I should have gone on with my exertions, till the grave had received me. Your attention sent Mr. B. (the apothecary) to me, and then I first learned what I have since been increasingly convinced of—that I was rapidly destroying the vital principle. And the kind interest you have taken in my welfare ever since has often drawn the grateful tear from my eye. May the God of heaven and earth reward your kindness to his unworthy servant, and save you from all the evils from which your distinguished friendship would have saved me!”

Such were his ideas. His labors were certainly abundant; perhaps too great for his constitution: but it is probable that nothing was more injurious to his health than a frequent exposure to night air, and an inattention to the necessity of changing damp clothes.

Hitherto we have seen in Mr. Pearce the active, assiduous, and laborious servant of Jesus Christ: but now we see him laid aside from his work, wasting away by slow degrees, patiently enduring the will of God, and cheerfully waiting for his dissolution. And, as here is but little to narrate, I shall content myself with copying his letters, or extracts from them, to his friends, in the order of time in which they were written, only now and then dropping a few hints to furnish the reader with the occasions of some of them.

TO DR. RYLAND.

*Birmingham, Oct. 8, 1798.*

“Oh! my dear brother, your letter of the 5th, which I received this morning, has made me thankful for all my *pulpit agonies*, as they enable me to weep with a weeping brother. They have been of use to me in other respects; particularly in teaching me the importance of attaining and maintaining that spirituality and pious ardor in which I have found the most effectual relief; so that on the whole I must try to ‘glory in tribulations also.’ I trust I often can when the conflict is past; but to glory ‘in’ them, especially in mental distress—hic labor, hoc opus est.

“But how often has it been found that when ministers have felt themselves most embarrassed the most effectual good has been done to the people! Oh for hearts entirely resigned to the will of God!

“How happy should I be could I always enjoy the sympathies of a brother who is tried in these points as I of late have been!”

TO MR. FULLER.

*Birmingham, Oct. 29, 1798.*

“I caught a violent cold in returning from our last committee-meeting, from which I have not yet recovered. A little thing now affects my constitution, which I once judged would be weather and labor-proof for at least thirty years, if I lived so long. I thank God that I am not debilitated by iniquity. I have lately met with an occurrence which occasioned me much pain and perplexity . . . Trials soften our hearts, and make us more fully prize the dear few into whose faithful sympathizing bosoms we can with confidence pour our sorrows. I think I should bless God for my afflictions, if they produced no other fruit than these—the tenderness they inspire, and the friendships they capacitate us to enjoy. Pray, my dear brother, for yours affectionately,—S. P.”

To a young man who had applied to him for advice how he should best improve his time, previous to his going to the Bristol Academy:—

*Birmingham, Nov. 13, 1798.*

“My dear M.

“I can only confess my regret at not replying to yours at a much earlier period, and assure you that the delay has been accidental, and not designed. I felt the importance of your request for advice—I was sensible it deserved some consideration before it was answered.—I was full of business at the moment—I put it by, and it was forgotten; and now it is too late. The time of your going to Bristol draws nigh. If, instead of an opinion respecting the best way of occupying your time before you go, you will accept a little counsel during your continuance there, I shall be happy at any time to contribute such a mite as my experience and observation have put in my power.

“At present, the following rules appear of so much moment, that, were I to resume a place in any literary establishment, I would religiously adopt them as the standard of my conduct:—First, I would cultivate a spirit of habitual devotion. Warm piety connected with my studies, especially at my entrance upon them, would not only assist me in forming a judgment on their respective importance, and secure the blessing of God upon them; but would so cement the religious feeling with literary pursuit, as that it might abide with me for life. The habit of uniting these, being once formed, would, I

hope, be never lost; and I am sure that, without this, I shall both pursue trivial and unworthy objects, and those that are worthy I shall pursue for a wrong end.—Secondly, I would determine on a uniform submission to the instructions of my preceptor, and study those things which would give him pleasure. If he be not wiser than I am, for what purpose do I come under his care? I accepted the pecuniary help of the Society on condition of conforming to its will; and it is the Society's will that my tutor should govern me. My example will have influence: let me not, by a single act of disobedience, or by a word that implicates dissatisfaction, sow the seeds of discord in the bosoms of my companions.—Thirdly, I would pray and strive for the power of *self-government*, to form no plan, to utter not a word, to take no step, under the mere influence of passion. Let my judgment be often asked, and let me always give it time to answer. Let me always guard against a light or trifling spirit; and particularly as I shall be amongst a number of youths whose years will incline them all to the same frailty.—Fourthly, I would in all my weekly and daily pursuits observe the strictest *order*. Always let me act by a plan. Let every hour have its proper pursuit; from which let nothing but a settled conviction that I can employ it to better advantage ever cause me to deviate. Let me have fixed time for prayer, meditation, reading, languages, correspondence, recreation, sleep, &c.—Fifthly, I would not only assign to every hour its proper pursuit; but what I did I would try to do with all my might. The hours at such a place are precious beyond conception, till the student enters on life's busy scenes. Let me set the best of my class ever before me, and strive to be better than they. In humility and diligence let me aim to be the first.—Sixthly, I would particularly avoid a *versatile habit*. In all things I would persevere. Without this, I may be a gaudy butterfly; but never, like the bee, will my hive bear examining. Whatever I take in hand, let me first be sure I understand it, then duly consider it, and, if it be good, let me adopt and use it.

“To these, my dear brother, let me add three or four things more minute, but which, I am persuaded, will help you much.—*Guard against a large acquaintance while you are a student*. Bristol friendship, while you sustain that character, will prove a vile thief, and rob you of many an invaluable hour. *Get two or three of the students, whose piety you most approve, to meet for one hour in a week for experimental conversation and mutual prayer*. I found this highly beneficial, though, strange to tell, by some we were persecuted for our practice!—*Keep a diary*. Once a week at farthest call yourself to an account: What advances you have made in your different studies; in divinity, history, language, nat-

ural philosophy, style, arrangement; and, amidst all, do not forget to inquire, Am I more fit to *serve* and to *enjoy* God than I was last week?”

On Dec. 2, 1798, he delivered his last sermon. The subject was taken from Dan. x. 19, “Oh man, greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my Lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.”—“Amongst all the Old Testament saints,” said he, in his introduction to that discourse, “there is not one whose imperfections were fewer, than those of Daniel. By the history given of him in this book, which yet seems not to be complete, he appears to have excelled among the excellent.” Doubtless, no one was farther from his thoughts than himself: several of his friends, however, could not help applying it to him, and that with a painful apprehension of what followed soon after.

TO MR. CAVE, Leicester.

“*Birmingham, Dec. 4, 1798.*

“. . . . . Blessed be God, my mind is calm; and, though my body be weakness itself, my spirits are good, and I can write as well as ever, though I can hardly speak two sentences without a pause. All is well, brother! all is well, for time and eternity. My soul rejoices in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure. Peace from our dear Lord Jesus be with your spirit, as it is (yea, more also) with your affectionate brother—S. P.”

TO MR. NICHOLS, Nottingham.

“*Birmingham, Dec. 10, 1798.*

“I am now quite laid by from preaching, and am so reduced in my internal strength that I can hardly converse with a friend for five minutes without losing my breath. Indeed, I have been so ill that I thought the next ascent would be, not to a pulpit, but to a throne—the throne of glory. Yes, indeed, my friend, the religion of Jesus will support when flesh and heart fail; and, in my worst state of body, my soul was filled with joy. I am now getting a little better, though but very slowly. But fast or slow, or as it may, the Lord doth all things well.”

TO R. BOWYER, Esq.

“——I have overdone myself in preaching. I am now ordered to lie by, and not even to *converse*, without great care; nor indeed, till to-day, have I for some time been able to utter a sentence without a painful effort. Blessed be God! I have been filled all through my affliction with peace and joy in believing; and at one time, when I thought I was entering the valley of death, the prospect beyond was so full of glory, that, but for



the sorrow it would have occasioned to some who would be left behind, I should have longed that moment to have mounted to the skies. Oh, my friend, what a mercy that I am not receiving the wages of sin; that my health has not been impaired by vice; but that, on the contrary, I am *bearing in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus!* To him be all the praise! Truly, I have proved that God is faithful: and most cheerfully would I take double the affliction for one half of the joy and sweetness which have attended it. Accept a sermon which is this day published.\*"

To MR. BATES AND MRS. BARNES, Minorics.

"Birmingham, Dec. 14, 1798.

" . . . . . I could tell you much of the Lord's goodness during my affliction. Truly 'his right hand hath been under my head, and his left embraced me.' And when I was at the worst, especially, and expected ere long to have done with time, even *then*, such holy joy, such ineffable sweetness filled my soul, that I would not have exchanged that situation for any besides heaven itself.

"Oh, my dear friends, let us live to *Christ*, and lay ourselves wholly out for him whilst we live; and then, when health and life forsake us, he will be the strength of our heart, and our portion forever."

About this time the congregation at Cannon-street was supplied for several months by Mr. Ward, who has since gone as a missionary to India. Here that amiable young man became intimately acquainted with Mr. Pearce, and conceived a most affectionate esteem for him. In a letter to a friend, dated Jan. 5, 1799, he writes as follows:—

"I am happy in the company of dear brother Pearce. I have seen more of God in him than in any other person I ever knew. Oh how happy should I be to live and die with him! When well, he preaches three times on a Lord's-day, and two or three times in the week besides. He instructs the young people in the principles of religion, natural philosophy, astronomy, &c. They have a benevolent society, from the funds of which they distribute forty or fifty pounds a year to the poor of the congregation. They have a sick society for visiting the afflicted in general: a book society at chapel: a Lord's-day school, at which more than two hundred children are instructed. Add to this, missionary business, visiting the people, an extensive correspondence, two volumes of mission history preparing for the press, &c.; and then you will see something of the soul of Pearce. He is every where venerated, though but a young man; and all the kind, tender, gentle affections, make him as a little child at the feet of his Saviour.—W. W."

\* The last but one he ever preached, entitled, *MOTIVES TO GRATITUDE*. It was delivered on the day of national thanksgiving, and printed at the request of his own congregation.

In February, he rode to the opening of a baptist meeting-house at Bedworth; but did not engage in any of the services. Here several of his brethren saw him for the last time. Soon afterwards, writing to the compiler of these memoirs, he says,—“The Lord's-day after I came home I tried to speak a little after sermon. It inflamed my lungs afresh, produced phlegm, coughing, and spitting of blood. Perhaps I may never preach more. Well, the Lord's will be done. I thank him that he ever took me into his service; and now, if he see fit to give me a discharge, I submit.”

During the above meeting a word was dropped by one of his brethren which he took as a reflection, though nothing was farther from the intention of the speaker. It wrought upon his mind; and in a few days after he wrote as follows:—“Do you remember what passed at B——? Had I not been accustomed to receive *plain friendly* remarks from you, I should have thought you meant to insinuate a reproof. If you did, tell me plainly. If you did not, it is all at an end. You will not take my naming it unkindly, although I should be mistaken; such affectionate explanations are necessary, when suspicions arise, to the preservation of friendship; and I need not say that I hold the preservation of your friendship in no small account.”

The above is copied, not only to set forth the spirit and conduct of Mr. Pearce in a case wherein he felt himself aggrieved, but to show in how easy and amiable a manner thousands of mistakes might be rectified, and differences prevented, by a frank and timely explanation.

To MR. COMFIELD, Northampton.

"Birmingham, March 4, 1799.

"I could wish my sympathies to be as extensive as human—I was going to say (and why not?) as animal misery. The very limited comprehension of the human intelligence forbids this indeed, and whilst I am attempting to participate as far as the news of affliction reaches me, I find the same events do not often produce equal feelings. We measure our sympathies, not by the causes of sorrow, but by the sensibilities of the sorrowful: hence I abound in feeling on *your* account. The situation of your family must have given distress to a president of any character; but in you it must have produced agonies. I know the tenderness of your heart: your feelings are delicately strong. You must feel much, or nothing; and he that knows you, and does not feel much when you feel, must be a brute.

"May the fountain of mercy supply you with the cheering stream! May your sorrow be turned into joy!

"I am sure that I ought to value more



than ever your friendship for me. You have remembered me, not merely in my affliction, but in your own. Our friendship, our benevolence, must never be compared with that of Jesus; but it is truly delightful to see the disciple treading, though at a humble distance, in the footsteps of a Master, who, amidst the tortures of crucifixion, exercised forgiveness to his murderers, and the tenderness of filial piety to a disconsolate mother! When we realize the scene, how much do our imaginations embrace—the persons—the circumstances—the words—“Woman, behold thy Son; John, behold thy mother!”

By the above letter, the reader will perceive that, while deeply afflicted himself, he felt in the tenderest manner for the afflictions of others.

TO MR. FULLER.

“*March 23, 1799.*”

He was now setting out for Plymouth; and after observing the great danger he was supposed to be in, with respect to a consumption, he adds,—“But thanks be to God who giveth my heart the victory, let my poor body be consumed, or preserved. In the thought of *leaving*, I feel a momentary gloom; but in the thought of *going*, a heavenly triumph.

“Oh to grace how great a debtor!”

“Praise God with me, and for me, my dear brother, and let us not mind dying any more than sleeping. No, no; let every Christian sing the loudest as he gets the nearest to the presence of his God. Eternally yours in Him who hath washed us both in his blood,—S. P.”

TO MR. MEDLEY, London.

“*March 23, 1799.*”

“My affliction has been rendered sweet by the supports and smiles of Him whom I have served in the gospel of his Son. He hath delivered, he doth deliver, and I trust that he will yet deliver. Living or dying, all is well forever. Oh what shall I render to the Lord!”

It seems that, in order to avoid wounding Mrs. P.’s feelings, he deferred the settlement of his affairs till he arrived at Bristol; whence he wrote to his friend, Mr. King, requesting him to become an executor. Receiving a favorable answer, he replied as follows:—

“*Bristol, April 6, 1799.*”

“Your letter, just received, affected me too much, with feelings both of sympathy and gratitude, to remain unanswered a single post. Most heartily do I thank you for accepting a service which friendship alone can render agreeable in the most simple cases. Should that service demand your activities at an early period, may no unfore-

seen occurrence increase the necessary care! But may the father of the fatherless, and judge of the widows, send you a recompense into your own bosom, equal to all that friendship to which, under God, I have been so much indebted in life, and reposing on whose bosom, even death itself loses a part of its gloom. In you, my children will find another father—in you, my wife another husband. Your tenderness will sympathize with the one, under the most distressing sensibilities; and your prudent counsels be a guide to the others, through the unknown mazes of inexperienced youth. Enough—blessed God! My soul prostrates, and adores thee for such a friend.”

TO MR. FULLER.

“*Plymouth, April 18, 1799.*”

“The last time that I wrote to you was at the close of a letter sent to you by brother Ryland. I did not like that postscript form; it looked so card-like as to make me fear that you would deem it unbrotherly. After all, perhaps, you thought nothing about it; and my anxieties might arise only from my weakness, which seems to be constantly increasing my sensibilities. If ever I felt love in its tenderness for my friends, it has been since my affliction. This, in a great measure, is no more than the love of ‘publicans and harlots, who love those that love them.’ I never conceived myself by a hundred degrees so interested in the regards of my friends, as this season of affliction has manifested I was; and therefore, so far from claiming any ‘reward’ for loving them in return, I should account myself a monster of ingratitude were it otherwise. Yet there is something in affliction itself, which, by increasing the delicacy of our feelings, and detaching our thoughts from the usual round of objects which present themselves to the mind when in a state of health, may be easily conceived to make us susceptible of stronger and more permanent impressions of an affectionate nature.

“I heard at Bristol that you and your friends had remembered me in your prayers, at Kettering. Whether the Lord whom we serve may see fit to answer your petitions on my account, or not, may they at least be returned into your own bosoms!”

“For the sake of others I should be happy could I assure you that my health was improving. As to myself, I thank God that I am not without a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. I find that neither in sickness, nor in health, I can be so much as I wish like Him whom I love. ‘To die is gain:’ oh to gain that state, those feelings, that character, which perfectly accord with the mind of Christ, and are attended with the full persuasion of his complete and everlasting approbation! I want no heaven but this; and, to gain this, most

gladly would I this moment expire. But, if to abide in the flesh be more needful for an individual of my fellow-men,—Lord, let thy will be done; only let Christ be magnified by me, whether in life or death!

“The weather has been so wet and windy since I have been at Plymouth that I could not reasonably expect to be much better; and I cannot say that I am much worse. All the future is uncertain. Professional men encourage me; but frequent returns appear, and occasional discharges of blood check my expectations. If I speak but for two minutes, my breast feels as sore as though it were scraped with a rough-edged razor; so that I am mute all the day long, and have actually learned to converse with my sister by means of our fingers.

“I thank you for yours of April 4th, which I did not receive till the 12th, the day that I arrived at Plymouth. On the 16th, a copy of yours to brother Ryland came to hand, to which I should have replied yesterday, but had not leisure. I am happy and thankful for your success. May the Lord himself pilot the ‘Criterion’ safely to Calcutta river!

“Unless the Lord work a miracle for me, I am sure that I shall not be able to attend the Olney meeting. It is to my feelings a severe anticipation; but how can I be a Christian, and not submit to God?”

TO MR. WM. WARD.

“Plymouth, April 22, 1799.

“Most affectionately do I thank you for your letter, so full of information, and of friendship. To our common friend, who is gone into heaven, where he ever sitteth at the right hand of God for us, I commend you. Whether I die, or live, God will take care of you till he has ripened you for the common salvation. Then shall I meet my dear brother Ward again; and who can tell how much more interesting our intercourse in heaven will be made by the scenes that most distress our poor spirits here? Oh, had I none to live for, I had rather die than live, that I may be at once like Him whom I love. But, while he ensures me grace, why should I regret the delay of glory? No: I will wait his will who performeth all things for me.

“My dear brother, had I strength I should rejoice to acquaint you with the wrestlings and the victories, the hopes and the fears, the pleasures and the pangs, which I have lately experienced. But I must forbear. All I can now say is that God hath done me much good by all, and made me very thankful for all he has done.

“Alas! I shall see you no more. I cannot be at Olney on the 7th of May. The journey would be my death. But the Lord whom you serve will be with you then, and forever. My love to all the dear assembled

saints, who will give you their benedictions at that solemn season.

TO DR. RYLAND.

“Plymouth, April 24, 1799.

“Very dear brother,

“My health is in much the same state as when I wrote last, excepting that my muscular strength rather increases, and my powers of speaking seem less and less every week. I have, for the most part, spoken only in whispers for several days past; and even these seem too much for my irritable lungs. My father asked me a question to-day; he did not understand me when I whispered; so I was obliged to utter *one word*, and one word *only*, a little louder, and that brought on a soreness, which I expect to feel till bedtime.

“I am still looking out for fine weather; all here is cold and rainy. We have had but two or three fair and warm days since I have been here; then I felt better. I am perfectly at a loss even to guess what the Lord means to do with me; but I desire to commit my ways to him, and be at peace. I am going to-day about five miles into the country (to Tamerton,) where I shall await the will of God concerning me.

“I knew not of any committee-meeting of our society to be held respecting Mr. Marshman and his wife. I have therefore sent no vote, and, indeed, it is my happiness that I have full confidence in my brethren, at this important crisis, since close thinking, or much writing, always increases my fever, and promotes my complaint.

“My dear brother, I hope you will correspond much with Kettering. I used to be a medium; but God has put me out of the way. I could weep that I can serve him no more; and yet I fear some would be tears of pride. Oh, for perfect likeness to my humble Lord!”

TO MR. KING.

Tamerton, May 2, 1799.

“ . . . Give my love to all the dear people at Cannon-street. Oh, pray that he who afflicts would give me patience to endure. Indeed, the state of suspense in which I have been kept so long requires much of it; and I often exclaim, ere I am aware, Oh, my dear people! Oh, my dear family! when shall I be restored to you again? The Lord forgive all the sin of my desires! At times I feel a sweet and perfect calm, and wish ever to live under the influence of a belief in the goodness of God, and of all his plans, and all his works.”

The reader has seen how much he regretted being absent from the solemn designation of the missionaries at Olney. He, however, addressed the following lines to Mr.

Fuller, which were read at the close of that meeting, to the dissolving of nearly the whole assembly in tears:—

“*Tamerton, May 2, 1799.*

“ . . . Oh that the Lord, who is unconfin'd by place or condition, may copiously pour out upon you all the rich effusions of his Holy Spirit on the approaching day! My most hearty love to each missionary who may then encircle the throne of grace. Happy men! Happy women! You are going to be fellow-laborers with Christ himself! I congratulate—I almost envy you; yet I love you, and can scarcely now forbear dropping a tear of love as each of your names passes across my mind. Oh what promises are yours; and what a reward! Surely heaven is filled with double joy, and resounds with unusual acclamations, at the arrival of each missionary there. Oh be faithful, my dear brethren, my dear sisters, be faithful unto death, and all this joy is yours! Long as I live, my imagination will be hovering over you in Bengal; and, should I die, if separate spirits be allowed a visit to the world they have left, methinks mine would soon be at Mudnabatty, watching your labors, your conflicts, and your pleasures, whilst you are always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

TO DR. RYLAND.

“*Plymouth, May 14, 1799.*

“My dear brother,

“Yours of the 11th instant I have just received, and thank you for your continued concern for your poor unworthy brother.

“I have suffered much in my health since I wrote to you last, by the increase of my feverish complaint, which filled me with heat and horror all night, and in the day sometimes almost suffocated me with the violence of its paroxysms. I am extremely weak; and now that warm weather, which I came into Devon to seek, I dread as much as the cold, because it excites the fever. I am happy, however, in the Lord. I have not a wish to live or die, but as he pleases. I truly enjoy the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and would not be without his divine atonement, whereon to rest my soul, for ten thousand worlds. I feel quite weaned from earth, and all things in it. Death has lost his sting, the grave its horrors, and the attractions of heaven, I had almost said, are sometimes violent.

“Oh to grace how great a debtor!”

“But I am wearied. May all grace abound towards my dear brother, and his affectionate—S. P.”

TO THE CHURCH IN CANNON-STREET.

“*Plymouth, May 31, 1799.*

“To the dear people of my charge, the flock of Christ, assembling in Cannon-street,

Birmingham, their afflicted but affectionate pastor, presents his love in Christ Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep.

“My dearest, dearest, friends and brethren,

“Separated as I have been a long time from you, and during that time of separation having suffered much both in body and mind, yet my heart has still been with you, participating in your sorrows, uniting in your prayers, and rejoicing with you in the hope of that glory to which divine faithfulness has engaged to bring us, and for which our heavenly Father, by all his providences and by every operation of his Holy Spirit, is daily preparing us.

“Never, my dear brethren, did I so much rejoice in our being made ‘partakers of the heavenly calling’ as during my late afflictions. The sweet thoughts of glory, where I shall meet my dear Lord Jesus, with all his redeemed ones, perfectly freed from all that sin which now burdens us and makes us groan from day to day,—this transports my soul, whilst out of weakness I am made strong, and at times am enabled to glory even in my bodily infirmities, that the power of Christ, in supporting when flesh and heart fail, may the more evidently rest upon me. Oh, my dear brethren and sisters, let me, as one alive almost from the dead, let me exhort you to stand fast in that blessed gospel which for ten years I have now preached among you—the gospel of the grace of God; the gospel of God; the gospel of free, full, everlasting salvation, founded on the sufferings and death of *God manifest in the flesh*. Look much at this all-amazing scene!

‘Behold! a God descends and dies  
To save my soul from gaping hell;’

and then say, whether any poor broken-hearted sinner need be afraid to venture his hopes of salvation on such a sacrifice; especially since He who is thus ‘mighty to save’ hath said that ‘whosoever cometh to him he will in no wise cast out.’ You, beloved, who have found the peace-speaking virtue of this blood of atonement, must not be satisfied with what you have already known or enjoyed. The only way to be constantly happy, and constantly prepared for the most awful changes which we must all experience, is, to be constantly *looking and coming* to a dying Saviour; renouncing all our own worthiness; cleaving to the loving Jesus as our all in all; giving up every thing, however valuable to our worldly interests, that clashes with our fidelity to Christ; begging that of his fulness we may receive ‘grace upon grace,’ whilst our faith actually *relies* on his power and faithfulness, for the full accomplishment of every promise in his word that we plead with him; and guarded against every thing that might for a moment bring distance and darkness between your souls and your precious Lord. If you *thus live*,



(and oh that you may daily receive fresh life from Christ so to do!) 'the peace of God will keep your hearts and minds,' and you will be filled with 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.'

"As a church, you cannot conceive what pleasure I have enjoyed in hearing that you are in peace, that you attend prayer-meetings, that you seem to be stirred up of late for the honor and prosperity of religion. Go on in these good ways, my beloved friends, and assuredly the God of peace will be with you. Yea, if after all I should be taken entirely from you, yet God will surely visit you, and never leave you, nor forsake you.

"As to my health, I seem on the whole to be still mending, though but very slowly. The fever troubles me often, both by day and night, but my strength increases. I long to see your faces in the flesh; yea, when I thought myself near the gates of the grave, I wished, if it were the Lord's will, to depart among those whom I so much loved. But I am in good hands, and all must be right.

"I thank both you and the congregation most affectionately for all the kindness you have shown respecting me and my family during my absence. The Lord return it a thousand fold! My love to every one, both old and young, rich and poor, as though named. The Lord bless to your edification the occasional ministry which you enjoy. I hope you regularly attend upon it, and keep together, as 'the horses in Pharaoh's chariot.' I pray much for you: pray, still pray, for your very affectionate, though unworthy, pastor."

In a postscript to Mr. King, he says, "I have made an effort to write this letter: my affections would take no denial; but it has brought on the fever."

Towards the latter end of May, when Mr. Ward and his companions were just ready to set sail, a consultation concerning Mr. Pearce was held on board the Criterion, in which all the missionaries and some of the members of the Baptist Missionary Society were present. It was well known that he had for several years been engaged in preparing materials for a "History of Missions," to be comprised in two volumes octavo: and, as the sending of the gospel amongst the heathen had so deeply occupied his heart, considerable expectations had been formed by religious people of his producing an interesting work on the subject. The question now was, Could not this performance be finished by other hands, and the profits of it be appropriated to the benefit of Mr. Pearce's family? It was admitted by all that this work would, partly from its own merits, and partly from the great interest which the author justly possessed in the public esteem, be very productive; and that it would be a delicate and proper method of

enabling the religious public, by subscribing liberally to it, to afford substantial assistance to the family of this excellent man. The result was that one of the members of the society addressed a letter to Mr. Pearce's relations at Plymouth, requesting them to consult him, as he should be able to bear it, respecting the state of his manuscripts, and to inquire whether they were in a condition to admit of being finished by another hand; desiring them also to assure him, for his present relief concerning his dear family, that whatever the hand of friendship could effect on their behalf should be accomplished. The answer, though it left no manner of hope as to the accomplishment of the object, yet it is so expressive of the reigning dispositions of the writer's heart, as an affectionate husband, a tender father, a grateful friend, and a sincere Christian, that it cannot be uninteresting to the reader:—

"Tamerton, June 24, 1799.

"To use the common introduction of 'dear brother' would fall so far short of my feelings towards a friend whose uniform conduct has ever laid so great a claim to my affection and gratitude, but whose recent kindness—kindness in *adversity*—kindness to my *wife*—kindness to my *children*—kindness that would go far to 'smooth the bed of death,' has overwhelmed my whole soul in tender thankfulness, and engaged my everlasting esteem. I know not how to begin. . . . 'Thought is poor, and poor expression.' The *only* thing that lay heavy on my heart, when in the nearest prospect of eternity, was the future situation of my family. I had but a comparatively small portion to leave behind me, and yet that little was the *all* that an amiable woman,—delicately brought up, and, through mercy, for the most part comfortably provided for since she entered on domestic life,—with five babes to feed, clothe, and educate, had to subsist on. Ah, what a prospect! Hard and long I strove to realize the promises made to the widows and the fatherless; but *these alone* I could not fully rest on and enjoy. For my own part, God was indeed very gracious. I was willing, I hope, to linger in suffering, if I might thereby most glorify him; and death was an angel whom I longed to come and embrace me, 'cold as his embraces are: but how could I leave those who were dearest to my heart in the midst of a world in which although thousands now professed friendship for me, and, on my account, for mine; yet, after my decease, would, with few exceptions, soon forget my widow and my children, among the crowds of the needy and distressed.—It was at this moment of painful sensibility that *your heart* meditated a plan to remove my anxieties—a plan too that would involve much personal labor before it could be accomplished.

‘Blessed be God, who put it into thy heart, and blessed be thou.’ May the blessing of the widow and the fatherless rest on you and yours for ever. Amen and amen!

“You will regret perhaps that I have taken up so much respecting yourself; but I have scarcely gratified the shadow of my wishes. Excuse then, on the one hand, that I have said so much; and accept, on the other, what remains unexpressed.

“My affections and desires are among my dear people at Birmingham; and, unless I find my strength increase here, I purpose to set out for that place in the course of a fortnight, or at most a month. The journey, performed by short stages, may do me good; if not, I expect when the winter comes to sleep in peace! and it will delight my soul to see them once more before I die. Besides, I have many little arrangements to make among my books and papers, to prevent confusion after my decease. Indeed, till I get home, I cannot fully answer your kind letter; but I fear that my materials consist so much in references which none but myself would understand, that a second person could not take it up and prosecute it. I am still equally indebted to you for a proposal so generous, so laborious.

“Rejoice with me that the blessed gospel still ‘bears my spirits up.’ I am become familiar with the thoughts of dying. I have taken my leave often of the world, and, thanks be to God, I do it *always* with *tranquillity*, and *often* with *rapture*. Oh, what grace, what grace it was that ever called me to be a Christian! What would have been my present feelings, if I were going to meet God with all the filth and load of my sin about me! But God in my nature hath put my sin away, taught me to love him, and long for his appearing. Oh, my dear brother, how consonant is *everlasting praise* with such a great salvation!”

After this, another letter was addressed to Mr. Pearce, informing him more particularly that the above proposal did not originate with an individual, but with several of the brethren who dearly loved him, and had consulted on the business; and that it was no more than an act of justice to one who had spent his life in serving the public; also requesting him to give directions by which his manuscripts might be found and examined, lest he should be taken away before his arrival at Birmingham. To this he answered as follows:—

“*Plymouth, July 6, 1799.*”

“I need not repeat the growing sense I have of your kindness, and yet I know not how to forbear.

“I cannot direct Mr. K—— to *all* my papers, as many of them are in books from which I was making extracts; and, if I could, I am persuaded that they are in a state too

confused, incorrect, and unfinished, to suffer you or any other friend to realize your kind intentions.

“I have possessed a tenacious memory. I have begun one part of the history; read the necessary books; reflected; arranged; written perhaps the introduction, and then trusting to my recollection, with a revival of the books as I should want them, have employed myself in getting materials for another part, &c. Thus, till my illness, the volumes existed in my head—my books were at hand, and I was on the eve of writing them out, when it pleased God to make me pause: and, as close thinking has been strongly forbidden me, I dare say that were I again restored to health I should find it necessary to go over much of my former reading to refresh my memory.

“It is now Saturday. On Monday next we purpose setting out on our return. May the Lord prosper our way! Accept the sincere affection, and the ten thousand thanks, of your brother in the Lord,—S. P.”

As the manuscripts were found to be in such a state that no person, except the author himself, could finish them, the design was necessarily dropped. The public mind however, was deeply impressed with Mr. Pearce’s worth; and that which the friendship of a few could not effect has since been amply accomplished by the liberal exertions of many.

TO MR. BIRT.

*Birmingham, July 26, 1799.*

“It is not with common feelings that I begin a letter to you. Your name brings so many interesting circumstances of my life before me, in which your friendship has been so uniformly and eminently displayed, that now, amidst the imbecilities of sickness and the serious prospect of another world, my heart is overwhelmed with gratitude, whilst it glows with affection,—an affection which eternity shall not annihilate, but improve.

“We reached Bristol on the Friday after we parted from you, having suited our progress to my strength and spirits. We staid with Bristol friends till Monday, when we pursued our journey, and went comfortably on till the uncommonly rough road from Tewksbury to Eversham quite jaded me; and I have not yet recovered from the excessive fatigue of that miserable ride. At Alcester we rested a day and a half; and, through the abundant goodness of God, we safely arrived at Birmingham on Friday evening, the 19th of July.

“I feel an undisturbed tranquillity of soul, and am cheerfully waiting the will of God. My voice is gone, so that I cannot whisper without pain; and of this circumstance I am at times most ready to complain. For, to see my dear and amiable Sarah look at



me, and then at the *children*, and at length bathe her face in tears, without my being able to say one kind word of comfort,—  
Oh!! . . . Yet the Lord supports me under this also; and I trust will support me to the end."

To MR. ROCK.

" July 23, 1799.

" . . . I am now to all appearance within a few steps of eternity. In Christ I am safe. In him I am happy. I trust we shall meet in heaven."

To R. BOWYER, Esq.

" Birmingham, Aug. 1, 1799.

" Much disappointed that I am not released from this world of sin, and put in possession of the pleasures enjoyed by the spirits of just men made perfect, I once more address my dear fellow-heirs of that glory which, ere long, shall be revealed to us all.

" We returned from Devon last Friday week. I was exceedingly weak, and for several days afterwards got rapidly worse. My friends compelled me to try another physician. I am still told that I shall recover. Be that as it may, I wish to have my own will annihilated, that the will of the Lord may be done. Through his abundant grace, I have been, and still am, happy in my soul; and I trust my prevailing desire is that, living or dying, I may be the Lord's."

To R. BOWYER, Esq.

On his having sent him a print of Mr. SCHWARTZ, the missionary on the Malabar coast.

" Birmingham, Aug. 16, 1799.

" On three accounts was your last parcel highly acceptable. It represented a man whom I have long been in the habit of loving and revering; and whose character and labors I intended, if the Lord had not laid his hand upon me by my present illness, to have presented to the public in Europe, as he himself presented them to the millions of Asia.—The execution, bearing so strong a likeness to the original, heightened its value. And then the hand from whence it came, and the friendship it was intended to express, add to its worth."

To MR. FULLER.

" Birmingham, Aug. 19, 1799.

" The doctor has been making me worse and weaker for three weeks. In the middle of the last week he spoke confidently of my recovery; but to-day he has seen fit to alter his plans; and, if I do not find a speedy alteration for the better, I must have done with all physicians but Him who 'healeth the broken in heart.'

" For some time after I came home, I was led to believe my case to be consumptive; and then, thinking myself of a certainty near

the kingdom of heaven, I rejoiced hourly in the delightful prospect.

" Since then I have been told that I am not in a dangerous way; and, though I give very little credit to such assertions in this case, yet I have found my mind so taken up with earth again, that I seem as though I had another soul. My spiritual pleasures are greatly interrupted, and some of the most plaintive parts of the most plaintive psalms seem the only true language of my heart. Yet, 'Thy will be done,' I trust, prevails; and if it be the Lord's will that I linger long, and suffer much, Oh, let him give me the patience of hope, and still, his will be done!—I can write no more. This is a whole day's work; for it is only after tea that, for a few minutes, I can sit up, and attend to any thing."

From the latter end of August, and all through the month of September, to the 10th of October, *the day on which he died*, he seems to have been unable to write. He did not, however, lose the exercise of his mental powers; and though, in the last of the above letters, he complains of darkness, it appears that he soon recovered that peace and joy in God by which his affliction, and even his life, were distinguished.

A little before he died, he was visited by Mr. Medley, of London, with whom he had been particularly intimate on his first coming to Birmingham. Mr. Pearce was much affected at the sight of his friend, and continued silently weeping for nearly ten minutes, holding and pressing his hand. After this, he spoke, or rather whispered, as follows:—"This sick bed is a Bethel to me: it is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven. I can scarcely express the pleasures that I have enjoyed in this affliction. The nearer I draw to my dissolution, the happier I am. It scarcely can be called an affliction, it is so counterbalanced with joy. You have lost your pious father; tell me how it was."—Here Mr. Medley informed him of particulars. He wept much at the recital, and especially at hearing of his last words,—"*Home, home!*"—Mr. Medley telling him of some temptations he had lately met with, he charged him to keep near to God. "Keep close to God," said he, "and nothing will hurt you!"

The following *letters and narrative* were read by Dr. Ryland at the close of his funeral sermon; and, being printed at the end of it, were omitted in some of the former editions of the Memoirs.

To DR. RYLAND.

" Birmingham, Dec. 9, 1798.

" My dear brother, Lord's-day Evening.

" After a Sabbath—such a one I never knew before—spent in an entire seclusion from the house and ordinances of my God, I



seek Christian converse with you, in a way in which I am yet permitted to have intercourse with my brethren. The day after I wrote to you last, my medical attendant laid me under the strictest injunctions not to speak again in public for one month at least. He says that my stomach is become so irritable, through repeated inflammations, that conversation, unless managed with great caution, would be dangerous;—that he does not think my present condition alarming, provided I take rest; but, without that, he intimated my life was in great danger. He forbids my exposing myself to the evening air, on any account, and going out of doors, or to the door, unless when the air is dry and clear; so that I am, during the weather we now have in Birmingham (very foggy,) a complete prisoner; and the repeated cautions from my dear and affectionate friends, whose solicitude, I conceive, far exceeds the danger, compels me to a rigid observance of the doctor's rules.

“This morning brother Pope took my place; and, in the afternoon, Mr. Brewer (who has discovered uncommon tenderness and respect for me and the people, since he knew my state) preached a very affectionate sermon from 1 Sam. iii. 18—‘It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.’ By what I hear, his sympathizing observations, in relation to the event which occasioned his being then in my pulpit, drew more tears from the people's eyes than a dozen such poor creatures as their pastor could deserve. But I have, . . . blessed be God, long had the satisfaction of finding myself embosomed in friendship . . . the friendship of the people of my charge: though I lament their love should occasion them a pang . . . but thus it is . . . our heavenly Father sees that, for our mixed characters, a mixed state is best.

“I anticipated a day of gloom: but I had unexpected reason to rejoice, that the shadow of death was turned into the joy of the morning; and though I said, with perhaps before unequalled feeling, ‘How amiable are thy tabernacles!’ yet I found the God of Zion does not neglect the dwellings of Jacob. My poor wife was much affected at so novel a thing as leaving me behind her, and so it was a dewy morning; but the Sun of Righteousness soon arose, and shed such ineffable delight throughout my soul that I could say, ‘It is good to be here.’—Motive to resignation and gratitude also crowded upon motive, till my judgment was convinced that I ought to rejoice in the Lord exceedingly, and so my whole soul took its fill of joy. May I, if it be my Saviour's will, feel as happy when I come to die! When my poor Sarah lay at the point of death, for some days after her first lying in, towards the latter days, I enjoyed such support, and felt my will so entirely bowed

down to that of God, that I said in my heart, ‘I shall never fear another trial . . . He that sustained me amidst this flame will defend me from every spark!’ And this confidence I long enjoyed.—But that was nearly six years ago, and I had almost forgotten the land of the Hermonites and the hill Mizar. But the Lord has prepared me to receive a fresh display of his fatherly care, and his (shall I call it?) punctilious veracity. If I should be raised up again, I shall be able to preach on the faithfulness of God more experimentally than ever. Perhaps some trial is coming on, and I am instrumental in preparing them for it; or if not, if I am to depart hence to be no more seen, I know the Lord can carry on his work as well without me as with me. He who re-deemed the sheep with his blood will never suffer them to perish for want of shepherding, especially since he himself is the chief Shepherd of souls. But my *family!* Ah, *there* I find my faith but still imperfect. However, I do not think the Lord will ever take me away till he helps me to leave my fatherless children in his hands, and trust my widow also with him. ‘His love in times past,’ and I may add in times *present* too, ‘forbids me to think he will leave me at *last* in trouble to sink.’

“Whilst my weakness was gaining ground, I used to ask myself how I could like to be laid by? I have dreamed that this was the case; and both awake and asleep I felt as though it were an evil that could not be borne:—but now I find the Lord can fit the back to the burden; and, though I think I love the thought of serving Christ at this moment better than ever, yet he has made me willing to be . . . nothing, if he please to have it so; and now my happy heart ‘could sing itself away to everlasting bliss.’

“O what a mercy that I have not brought on my affliction by serving the *devil!* What a mercy that I have so many dear sympathizing friends! What a mercy that I have so much dear domestic comfort! What a mercy that I am in no violent bodily pain! What a mercy that I can read and write without doing myself an injury! What a mercy that my animal spirits have all the time this has been coming on (ever since the last Kettering meeting of ministers) been vigorous—free from dejection! And, which I reckon among the greatest of this day's privileges, what a mercy that I have been able to employ myself for Christ and his dear cause to-day; as I have been almost wholly occupied in the concerns of the (I hope) *reviving* church at Bromsgrove, and the infant church at Cradley! O, my dear brother, it is *all* mercy; is it not? O help me then in his praise, for he is good, for his mercy endureth forever.

“Ought I to apologize for this experimental chat with you, who have concerns to

transact of so much more importance than any that are confined to an individual? Forgive me, if I have intruded too much on your time—but do not forget to praise on my behalf a faithful God. I shall now leave room against I have some business to write about—till then adieu—but let us not forget that ‘this God is our God forever and ever, and will be *our guide* even until death.’ Amen. Amen. We shall soon meet in heaven.”

TO MR. KING.

“*Plymouth, April 23, 1799.*

“My dear friend and brother,

“I have the satisfaction to inform you that at length my complaint appears to be removed, and that I am by degrees returning to my usual diet, by which, with the divine blessing, I hope to be again strengthened for the discharge of the duties and the enjoyment of the pleasures which await me among the dear people of my charge.

“I am indeed informed, by a medical attendant here, that I shall never be equal to the labors of my past years, and that my return to moderate efforts must be made by slow degrees. As the path of duty, I desire to submit; but, after so long a suspension from serving the Redeemer in his church, my soul pants for usefulness more extensive than ever, and I long to become an apostle to the world. I do not think I ever prized the ministerial work so much as I now do. Two questions have been long before me. The first was, Shall I live or die? The second, If I live, how will my life be spent? With regard to the former, my heart answered, ‘It is no matter—all is well—for my own sake, I need not be taught that it is best to be with Christ; but, for the sake of others, it may be best to abide in the body—I am in the Lord’s hands, let him do by me as seemeth him best for me and mine, and for his cause and honor in the world!’—But, as to the second question, I could hardly reconcile myself to the thoughts of living, unless it were to promote the interest of my Lord; and, if my disorder should so far weaken me as to render me incapable of the ministry, nothing then appeared before me but gloom and darkness. However, I will hope in the Lord that, though he hath chastened me sorely, yet, since he hath not given me over unto death, sparing mercy will be followed with strength, that I may show forth his praise in the land of the living.

“I am still exceedingly weak; more so than at any period before I left home, except the first week of my lying by; but I am getting strength, though slowly. It is impossible at present to fix any time for my return. It grieves me that the patience of the dear people should be so long tried; but the trial is as great on my part as it can be on theirs, and we must pity and pray for one

another. It is now a task for me to write at all, or this should have been longer.”

TO MR. POPE.

“*Plymouth, May 24, 1799.*

“I cannot write much—this I believe is the only letter I have written (except to my wife) since I wrote to you last. My complaint has issued in a confirmed, slow, nervous fever; which has wasted my spirits and strength, and taken a great part of the little flesh I had, when in health, away from me. The symptoms have been very threatening, and I have repeatedly thought that, let the physician do what he will, he cannot keep me long from those heavenly joys for which, blessed be God, I have lately been much longing; and, were it not for my *dear people* and *family*, I should have earnestly prayed for leave to depart, and to be with Christ, which is so much better than to abide in this vain, suffering, sinning world.

“The doctors however pronounce my case very hopeful—say there is little or no danger—but that all these complaints require a *great deal of time* to get rid of. I still feel myself on precarious ground, but quite resigned to the will of *him*, who, unworthy as I am, continues daily to ‘fill my soul with joy and peace in believing.’ Yes, my dear friend, *now* my soul feels the value of a free, full, and everlasting salvation—and, what is more, I do *enjoy* that salvation; while I rest all my hope on the SON OF GOD in human nature dying on the cross for me. To me now, health or sickness, pain or ease, life or death, are things indifferent. I feel so happy, in being in the hands of infinite love, that, when the severest strokes are laid upon me, I receive them with pleasure, because they come from my heavenly Father’s hands! ‘O to grace how great a debtor!’ &c.”

TO DR. RYLAND.

“*Birmingham, July 20, 1799.*

“My very dear brother,

“Your friendly anxieties on my behalf demand the earliest satisfaction. We had a pleasant ride to Newport on the afternoon we left you, and the next day without much fatigue reached Tewksbury; but the road was so rough from Tewksbury to Eversham, that it wearied and injured me more than all the jolting we had had before, put together. However we reached Alcester on Wednesday evening, stopped there a day to rest, and last night, (Friday) were brought safely hither, blessed be God!

“I find myself getting weaker and weaker, and so my Lord instructs me in his pleasure to remove me soon. You say well, my dear brother, that at such a prospect ‘I cannot complain.’ No, blessed be his dear name who shed his blood for me, he helps me to rejoice at times with joy unspeakable. Now I see the value of the religion of the cross.



It is a religion for a dying sinner. It is all the most guilty, the most wretched, can desire. Yes, I taste its sweetness and enjoy its fulness with all the gloom of a dying bed before me. And far rather would I be the poor emaciated and emaciating creature that I am, than be an emperor, with every earthly good about him—but without a God!

“I was delighted the other day, in re-perusing the *Pilgrim’s Progress*, to observe that, when *Christian* came to the top of the hill *Difficulty*, he was put to sleep in a chamber called *Peace*. ‘Why how good is the Lord of the way to me!’ said I. I have not reached the summit of the hill yet, but, notwithstanding, he puts me to sleep in the chamber of *Peace every night*. . . . True, it is often a chamber of *pain*; but let pain be as formidable as it may, it has never yet been able to expel that peace which the great Guardian of Israel has appointed to keep my heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

“I have been laboring lately to exercise most love to God when I have been suffering most severely:—but what shall I say? Alas! too-often the sense of pain absorbs every other thought. Yet there have been seasons when I have been affected with such a delightful sense of the loveliness of God as to ravish my soul, and give predominance to the sacred passion.—It was never till to-day that I got any personal instruction from our Lord’s telling Peter by ‘what death’ he should glorify God. O what a satisfying thought it is that God appoints those means of dissolution whereby he gets most glory to himself. It was the very thing I needed; for, of all the ways of dying, that which I most dreaded was by a consumption (in which it is now highly probable my disorder will issue.) But O, my dear Lord, *if by this death* I can most *glorify thee*, I prefer it to all others, and thank thee that by this means thou art hastening my fuller enjoyment of thee in a purer world.

“A *sinless* state! ‘O ’tis a heaven worth dying for!’ I cannot realize any thing about heaven, but the presence of Christ and his people, and a perfect deliverance from sin—and I want no more—I am sick of sinning—soon I shall be beyond its power.

‘O joyful hour! O blest abode!  
I shall be near and like my God!’

“I only thought of filling one side—and now have not left room to thank you and dear Mrs. Ryland for the minute, affectionate, and constant attentions you paid us in Bristol. May the Lord reward you. Our hearty love to all around, till we meet in heaven. Eternally yours in Christ,—S. P.”

“*Birmingham, Aug. 4, 1799.*  
Lord’s-day Evening.

“My very dear brother,

“Still, I trust, hastening to the land ‘where

there shall be no more curse,’ I take this opportunity of talking a little with you on the road, for we are fellow-travellers; and a little conversation by the way will not lose me the privilege of getting first to the end of my journey.

“It is seventeen years within about a week since I first actually set out on my pilgrimage; and, when I review the many dangers to which during that time I have been exposed, I am filled with conviction that I have all along been the care of omnipotent love. Ah, how many *Pliables*, and *Timorouses*, and *Talkatives*, have I seen, while my quivering heart said, ‘Alas! I shall soon follow these sons of apostacy, prove a disgrace to religion, and have my portion with hypocrites at last.’

“These fears may have had their uses—may have made me more cautious, more distrustful of myself, and kept me more dependent on the Lord. Thus—

‘All that I’ve met has work’d for my good.’

“With what intricacy to our view, and yet with what actual skill and goodness, does the Lord draw his plans, and mark out our path! Here we wonder and complain.—Soon we shall all agree that it was a right path to the city of habitation; and what we now most deeply regret shall become the subject of our warmest praises.

“I am afraid to come back again to life. O how many dangers await me! Perhaps I may get proud and indolent, and be more of the priest than of the evangelist—surely I rejoice in feeling my outward man decay, and having the sentence of death in myself. O what prospects are before me in the blessed world whither I am going! To be *holy* as *God is holy*—to have nothing but holiness in my nature—to be assured, without a doubt, and eternally to carry about this assurance with me, that the pure God looks on me with constant complacency, forever blesses me, and says, as at the first creation,—‘It is very good.’ I am happy now in hoping in the divine purposes towards me; but I know, and the thought is my constant burden, that the being I love best always sees something in me which he *infinitely hates*. ‘O wretched, wretched man that I am!’ The thought even now makes me weep: and who can help it that seriously reflects he never comes to God, to pray or praise, but he brings what his God detests along with him, carries it with him wherever he goes, and can never get rid of it as long as he lives? Come, my dear brother, will you not share my joy and help my praise, that soon I shall leave this body of sin and death behind, to enter on the perfection of my spiritual nature; and patiently to wait till this natural body shall become a spiritual body, and so be a fit vehicle for my immortal and happy spirit?

“But I must forbear—I have been very unwell all day; but this evening God has



kindly given me a respite—my fever is low and my spirits are cheerful, so I have indulged myself in unbosoming my feelings to my dear friend.”

#### MEMORANDA.

Taken down occasionally by Mrs. Pearce, within four or five weeks of Mr. Pearce's death.

He once said, “I have been in darkness two or three days, crying, O when wilt thou comfort me? But last night the mist was taken from me, and the Lord shone in upon my soul. O that I could speak! I would tell a world to trust a faithful God. Sweet affliction, now it worketh glory, glory!”

Mrs. P. having told him the various exercises of her mind, he replied,—“O trust the Lord: if he lifts up the light of his countenance upon you, as he has done upon me this day, all your mountains will become mole-hills. I feel your situation, I feel your sorrows; but he who takes care of sparrows will care for you and my dear children.”

When scorching with burning fever, he said, “Hot and happy.”—One Lord's day morning he said, “Cheer up, my dear, think how much will be said to-day of the faithfulness of God. Though *we* are called to separate, *he* will never separate from you. I wish I could tell the world what a good and gracious God he is. Never need they who trust in him be afraid of trials. He has promised to give strength for the day; that is his promise. O what a lovely God! and he is *my* God and *yours*. He will never leave us nor forsake us, no never! I have been thinking that this and that medicine will do me good, but what have I to do with it? It is in my Jesus's hands; he will do it all, and there I leave it. What a mercy is it I have a good bed to lie upon; you, my dear Sarah, to wait upon me, and friends to pray for me! O how thankful should I be for all my pains! I want for nothing: all my wishes are anticipated. O I have felt the force of those words of David,—‘Unless thy law (my gracious God!) had been my delights, I should have perished in mine affliction.’ Though I am too weak to read it, or hear it, I can think upon it, and O how good it is! I am in the best hands I could be in; in the hands of my dear Lord and Saviour, and he will do all things well. Yes, yes, he cannot do wrong.”

One morning Mrs. P. asked him how he felt.—“Very ill, but unspeakably happy in the Lord, and *my* dear *Lord Jesus*.” Once beholding her grieving, he said, “O, my dear Sarah, do not be so anxious, but leave me entirely in the hands of Jesus, and think, if you were as wise as he, you would do the same by me. If he takes me, I shall not be lost; I shall only go a little before: we shall meet again never to part.”

After a violent fit of coughing he said, “It is all well. O what a good God is he! It is done by him, and it must be well.—If I ever recover I shall pity the sick more than ever; and, if I do not, I shall go to sing delivering love; so you see it will be all well. O for more patience! Well, my God is the God of patience, and he will give me all I need. I rejoice it is in my Jesus's hands to communicate, and it cannot be in better. It is my God who gives me patience to bear all his will.”

When, after a restless night, Mrs. P. asked him what she should do for him,—“You can do nothing but pray for me, that I may have patience to bear all my Lord's will.”—After taking a medicine he said, “If it be the Lord's will to bless it, for your sake, and for the sake of the dear children . . . but the Lord's will be done. O I fear I sin, I dishonor God by impatience; but I would not for a thousand worlds sin in a thought if I could avoid it.” Mrs. P. replied, she trusted the Lord would still keep him; seeing he had brought him thus far, he would not desert him at last. “No, no,” he said, “I hope he will not. As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. Why do I complain? My dear Jesus's sufferings were much sorer and more bitter than mine; ‘And did he thus suffer and shall I repine!’ No; I will cheerfully suffer my Father's will.”

One morning, after being asked how he felt, he replied, “I have but one severe pain about me: what a mercy! O how good a God to afford some intervals amidst so much pain! He is altogether good. Jesus lives, my dear, and that must be our consolation.” After taking a medicine which operated very powerfully, he said, “This will make me so much lower; well, let it be. Multiply my pains, thou good God; so thou art but glorified, I care not what I suffer: all is right.”

Being asked how he felt after a restless night, he replied, “I have so much weakness and pain, I have not had much enjoyment; but I have a full persuasion that the Lord is doing all things well. If it were not for strong confidence in a lovely God, I must sink; but all is well. O, blessed God, I would not love thee less. O support a sinking worm! O what a mercy to be assured that all things are working together for good!”

Mrs. P. saying, If we must part, I trust the separation will not be forever—“O no,” he replied, “we sorrow not as those who have no hope.” She said, Then you can leave me and your dear children with resignation, can you? He answered, “My heart was pierced through with many sorrows, before I could give you and the dear children up; but the Lord has heard me say, Thy will be done; and I now can say (blessed be his dear name!) I have none of my own.”

His last day, October 10th, was very happy. Mrs. P. repeated this verse,—

“Since all that I meet shall work for my good;  
The bitter is sweet, the medicine is food;  
Though painful at present, ’twill cease before long,  
And then, O how pleasant the conqueror’s song !”

He repeated, with an inexpressible smile, the last line, “*The conqueror’s song.*”

He said once, “O my dear! What shall I do? But why do I complain; he makes all my bed in my sickness.” She then repeated those lines,—

“Jesus can make a dying bed  
Feel soft as downy pillows are.”

“Yes,” he replied, “he can, he does, I feel it.”

## CHAPTER V.

### GENERAL OUTLINES OF HIS CHARACTER.

To develop the character of any person, it is necessary to determine what was his governing principle. If this can be clearly ascertained, we shall easily account for the tenor of his conduct.

The governing principle in Mr. Pearce, beyond all doubt, was HOLY LOVE.

To mention this is sufficient to prove it to all who knew him. His friends have often compared him to “that disciple whom Jesus loved.” His religion was that of the heart. Almost every thing he saw, or heard, or read, or studied, was converted to the feeding of this divine flame. Every subject that passed through his hands seemed to have been cast into this mould. Things, that to a merely speculative mind would have furnished matter only for curiosity, to him afforded materials for devotion. His sermons were generally the effusions of his heart, and invariably aimed at the hearts of his hearers.

For the justness of the above remarks I might appeal, not only to the letters which he addressed to his friends, but to those which his friends addressed to him. It is worthy of notice how much we are influenced in our correspondence by the turn of mind of the person we address. If we write to a humorous character, we shall generally find that what we write, perhaps without being conscious of it, will be interspersed with pleasantries: or, if to one of a very serious cast, our letters will be more serious than usual. On this principle it has been thought we may form some judgment of our own spirit by the spirit in which our friends address us. These remarks will apply with singular propriety to the correspondence of Mr. Pearce. In looking over the first volume of “*Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Mission,*” the reader will easily perceive the most affectionate letters from the missionaries are those which are addressed to him.

It is not enough to say, of this affectionate

spirit, that it formed a prominent feature in his character: it was rather the life-blood that animated the whole system. He seemed, as one of his friends observed, to be baptized in it. It was holy love that gave the tone to his general deportment: as a son, a subject, a neighbor, a Christian, a minister, a pastor, a friend, a husband, and a father, he was manifestly governed by this principle; and this it was that produced in him that lovely uniformity of character which constitutes the true *beauty of holiness.*

By the grace of God he was what he was: and to the honor of grace, and not for the glory of a sinful worm, be it recorded. Like all other men, he was the subject of a depraved nature. He felt it, and lamented it, and longed to depart that he might be freed from it: but certainly we have seldom seen a character, taking him altogether, “whose excellences were so many and so uniform, and whose imperfections were so few.” We have seen men rise high in contemplation, who have abounded but little in action.—We have seen zeal mingled with bitterness, and candor degenerate into indifference; experimental religion mixed with a large portion of enthusiasm; and what is called rational religion void of every thing that interests the heart of man.—We have seen splendid talents tarnished with insufferable pride; seriousness with melancholy; cheerfulness with levity; and great attainments in religion with uncharitable censoriousness towards men of low degree: but we have not seen these things in our brother Pearce.

There have been few men in whom has been united a greater portion of the contemplative and the active—holy zeal and genuine candor—spirituality and rationality—talents that attracted almost universal applause and yet the most unaffected modesty—faithfulness in bearing testimony against evil, with the tenderest compassion to the soul of the evil doer—fortitude that would encounter any difficulty in the way of duty, without any thing boisterous, noisy, or overbearing—deep seriousness, with habitual cheerfulness—and a constant aim to promote the highest degrees of piety in himself and others, with a readiness to hope the best of the lowest; not “breaking the bruised reed,” nor “quenching the smoking flax.”

*He loved the divine character as revealed in the Scriptures.*—To adore God, to contemplate his glorious perfections, to enjoy his favor, and to submit to his disposal, were his highest delight. “I felt,” says he, “when contemplating the hardships of a missionary life, that were the universe destroyed, and I the only being in it besides God, HE is fully adequate to my complete happiness; and had I been in an African wood, surrounded with venomous serpents, devouring beasts, and savage men; in such a frame, I should be the subject of perfect peace and exalted



joy. Yes, O my God! thou hast taught me that THOU ALONE art worthy of my confidence; and, with this sentiment fixed in my heart, I am freed from all solicitude about my temporal concerns. If thy presence be enjoyed, poverty shall be riches, darkness light, affliction prosperity, reproach my honor, and fatigue my rest!"

*He loved the gospel.*—The truths which he believed and taught, dwelt richly in him, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. The reader will recollect how he went over the great principles of Christianity, examining the grounds on which he rested, in the first of those days which he devoted to solemn fasting and prayer in reference to his becoming a missionary;\* and with what ardent affection he set his seal anew to every part of divine truth as he went along.

If salvation had been of works, few men, according to our way of estimating characters, had a fairer claim: but, as he himself has related, he could not meet the king of terrors in this armor.† So far was he from placing any dependence on his own works, that the more he did for God the less he thought of it in such a way. "All the satisfaction I wish for here," says he, "is to be doing my heavenly Father's will. I hope I have found it my meat and drink to do his work; and can set to my seal that the pure pleasures of human life spring from the humble obedience of faith. It is a good saying, 'We cannot do too much for God, nor trust in what we do too little.' I find a growing conviction of the necessity of a free salvation. The more I do for God, the less I think of it; and am progressively ashamed that I do no more."

Christ crucified was his darling theme, from first to last. This was the subject on which he dwelt at the outset of his ministry among the Coldford colliers, when "he could scarcely speak for weeping, nor they hear for interrupting sighs and sobs." This was the burden of the song, when addressing the more polished and crowded audiences at Birmingham, London, and Dublin; this was the grand motive exhibited in sermons for the promotion of public charities; and this was the rock on which he rested all his hopes, in the prospect of death. It is true, as we have seen, he was shaken for a time by the writings of a *Whitby*, and of a *Priestley*; but this transient hesitation, by the over-ruling grace of God, tended only to establish him more firmly in the end. "Blessed be his dear name," says he, under his last affliction, "who shed his blood for me. He helps me to rejoice at times with joy unspeakable. Now I see the value of the religion of the cross. It is a religion for a dying sinner. It is all the most guilty and the most wretched can desire. Yes, I

taste its sweetness, and enjoy its fullness, with all the gloom of a dying bed before me; and far rather would I be the poor emaciated and emaciating creature that I am, than be an emperor with every earthly good about him, but without a God."

Notwithstanding this, however, there were those in Birmingham, and other places who would not allow that *he preached the gospel*. And if by the *gospel* were meant the doctrine taught by Mr. *Huntington*, Mr. *Bradford*, and others who follow hard after them, it must be granted he did not. If the fall and depravity of man operate to destroy his accountability to his Creator—if his inability to obey the law, or comply with the gospel, be of such a nature as to excuse him in the neglect of either—or, if not, yet if Christ's coming under the law frees believers from all obligations to obey its precepts—if gospel-invitations are addressed only to the regenerate—if the illuminating influences of the Holy Spirit consist in revealing to us the secret purposes of God concerning us, or impressing us with the idea that we are the favorites of heaven—if believing such impressions be Christian faith, and doubting of their validity unbelief—if there be no such thing as progressive sanctification, nor any sanctification inherent, except that of the illumination before described—if wicked men are not obliged to do anything beyond what they can find in their hearts to do, nor good men to be holy beyond what they actually are—and if these things constitute the *gospel*, Mr. Pearce certainly *did not* preach it. But if a man, whatever be his depravity, be necessarily a free agent, and accountable for all his dispositions and actions—if gospel invitations be addressed to men, not as elect nor as non-elect, but as sinners exposed to the righteous displeasure of God—if Christ's obedience and death rather increase than diminish our obligations to love God and one another—if faith in Christ be a falling in with God's way of salvation, and unbelief a falling out with it—if sanctification be a progressive work, and so essential a branch of our salvation as that without it no man shall see the Lord—if the Holy Spirit instruct us in nothing by his illuminating influences but what was already revealed in the Scriptures, and which we should have perceived but for that we loved darkness rather than light—and if he incline us to nothing but what was antecedently right, or to such a spirit as every intelligent creature ought at all times to have possessed—then Mr. Pearce *did* preach the gospel; and that which his accusers call by this name is *another gospel*, and not the gospel of Christ.

Moreover, if the doctrine taught by Mr. Pearce be not the gospel of Christ, and that which is taught by the above writers and their adherents be, it may be expected that

\* See chap. II. p. 522. † chapter I p. 522.



the effects produced will in some degree correspond with this representation. And is it evident to all men who are acquainted with both, and who judge impartially, that the doctrine taught by Mr. Pearce is productive of "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, railings, evil surmising, and perverse disputings?" that it renders those who embrace it "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, false accusers, fierce, despisers of those that are good;" while that of his adversaries promotes "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance?" . . . "why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? . . . ye shall know them by their fruits."

Mr. Pearce's ideas of preaching *human obligation* may be seen in the following extract from a letter addressed to a young minister who was sent out of the church of which he was pastor. "You request my thoughts how a minister should preach *human obligation*. I would reply, do it *extensively*, do it *constantly*; but, withal, do it *affectionately*, and *evangelically*. I think, considering the general character of our hearers, and the state of their mental improvement, it would be time lost to argue much from the data of natural religion. The best way is perhaps to express duties in Scripture language, and enforce them by evangelical motives; as the example of Christ—the end of his sufferings and death—the consciousness of his approbation—the assistance he has promised—the influence of a holy conversation on God's people, and on the people of the world—the small returns we at best can make for the love of Jesus—and the hope of eternal holiness. These form a body of arguments which the most simple may understand, and the most dull may feel. Yet I would not neglect on *some occasions* to show the obligations of man to love his Creator—the reasonableness of the divine law—and the natural tendency of its commands to promote our own comfort, the good of society, and the glory of God. These will serve to *illuminate*, but, after all, it is 'the gospel of the grace of God' that will most effectually *animate*, and impel to action."

Mr. Pearce's affection to the doctrine of the cross was not merely, nor principally, on account of its being a system which secured his own safety. Had this been the case, he might, like others whose religion originates and terminates in self-love, have been delighted with the idea of the grace of the Son; but it would have been at the expense of all complacency in the righteous government of the Father. He might have admired something which he accounted the gospel, as saving him from misery; but he could have discerned no loveliness in the divine law as being holy, just and good, nor in the

mediation of Christ as doing honor to it. That which in his view constituted the glory of the gospel was, that God is therein revealed as "the just God and the Saviour—just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

*He was a lover of good men.*—He was never more in his element than when joining with them in spiritual conversation, prayer, and praise. His heart was tenderly attached to the people of his charge; and it was one of the bitterest ingredients in his cup during his long affliction to be cut off from their society. When in the neighborhood of Plymouth, he thus writes to Mr. King, one of the deacons, "Give my love to all the dear people. O pray that he who afflicts would give me patience to endure. Indeed the state of suspense in which I have been kept so long requires much of it; and I often exclaim, ere I am aware, O my dear people! O my dear family, when shall I return to you again!" He conscientiously dissented from the Church of England, and from every other national establishment of religion, as inconsistent with what he judged the scriptural account of the nature of Christ's kingdom: nor was he less conscientious in his rejection of infant baptism, considering it as having no foundation in the Holy Scriptures, and as tending to confound the church and the world: yet he embraced with brotherly affection great numbers of godly men both in and out of the establishment. His spirit was truly catholic: he loved all who loved our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. "Let us pray," said he in a letter to a friend, "for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper who love—not this part, or the other, but who love *her*—that is, the whole body of Christ."

*He bore good will to all mankind.*—It was from this principle that he so ardently desired to go and preach the gospel among the heathen. And even under his long affliction, when at times he entertained hopes of recovery, he would say, "My soul pants for usefulness more extensive than ever: I long to become an apostle to the world!" The errors and sins of men wrought much in him in a way of pity. He knew that they were culpable in the sight of God: but he knew also that he himself was a sinner, and felt that they were entitled to his compassion. His zeal for the atonement of his Saviour never appeared to have operated in a way of unchristian bitterness against those who rejected these important doctrines; and though he was shamefully traduced by professors of another description as a mere legal preacher, and his ministry held up as affording no food for the souls of believers—and though he could not but feel the injury of such misrepresentations, yet he does not appear to have cherished unchristian resentment, but would at any time have laid himself out for

the good of his worst enemies. It was his constant endeavor to promote as good an understanding between the different congregations in the town as the nature of their different religious sentiments would admit. The cruel bitterness of many people against Dr. Priestly and his friends, at and after the Birmingham riots, was affecting to his mind. Such methods of opposing error he abhorred. His regard to mankind made him lament the consequences of war: but while he wished and prayed for peace to the nations, and especially to his native country, he had no idea of turbulently contending for it. Though friendly to civil and religious liberty, he stood aloof from the fire of political contention. In an excellent Circular Letter to the churches of the midland association in 1794, of which he was the writer, he thus expresses himself:—"Have as little as possible to do with the world. Meddle not with political controversies. An inordinate pursuit of these, we are sorry to observe, has been as a canker-worm at the root of vital piety; and caused the love of many, formerly zealous professors, to wax cold. 'The Lord reigneth;' it is our place to 'rejoice in his government, and quietly wait for the salvation of God.' The establishment of his kingdom will be the ultimate end of all those national commotions which terrify the earth. 'The wrath of man shall praise him; and the remainder of wrath he will restrain.' From this time, more than ever, he turned his whole attention to the promoting of the kingdom of Christ, cherishing and recommending a spirit of contentment and gratitude for the civil and religious advantages that we enjoyed. Such were the sentiments inculcated in the last sermon that he printed, and the last but one that he preached.\* His dear young friends who are gone to India will never forget how earnestly he charged them by letter, when confined at Plymouth, to conduct themselves in all civil matters as peaceable and obedient subjects to the government under which they lived, in whatever country it might be their lot to reside.

*It was love that tempered his faithfulness with so large a portion of tender concern for the good of those whose conduct he was obliged to censure.*—He could not bear them that were evil; but would set himself against them with the greatest firmness; yet it was easy to discover the pain of mind with which this necessary part of duty was discharged. It is well remembered how he conducted himself towards certain preachers in the neighborhood, who, wandering from place to place, corrupted and embroiled the churches; whose conduct he knew to be as dishonorable as their principles were loose and unscriptural: and, when requested to

recite particulars in his own defence, his fear and tenderness for character, his modest reluctance to accuse persons older than himself, and his deep concern that men engaged in the Christian ministry should render such accusations necessary, were each conspicuous, and proved to all present that the work of an accuser was to him a *strange work*.

*It was love that expanded his heart, and prompted him to labor in season and out of season for the salvation of sinners.*—This was the spring of that constant stream of activity by which his life was distinguished. His conscience would not suffer him to decline what appeared to be right. "I dare not refuse," he would say, "lest I should shrink from duty. Unjustifiable ease is worse than the most difficult labors to which duty calls." To persons who never entered into his views and feelings, some parts of his conduct, especially those which relate to his desire of quitting his country that he might preach the gospel to the heathen, will appear extravagant: but no man could with greater propriety have adopted the language of the apostle, "Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause; for the love of Christ constraineth us."

He was frequently told that his exercises were too great for his strength; but such was the ardor of his heart, "He could not die in a better work." When he went up into the pulpit to deliver his last sermon, he thought he should not have been able to get through; but, when he got a little warm, he felt relieved, and forgot his indisposition, preaching with equal fervor and freedom as when in perfect health. While he was laid aside he could not forbear hoping that he should some time resume his delightful work; and, knowing the strength of his feelings to be such that it would be unsafe to trust himself, he proposed for a time to write his discourses, that his mind might not be at liberty to overdo his debilitated frame.

*All his counsels, cautions, and reproofs, appear to have been the effect of love.*—It was a rule dictated by his heart, no less than by his judgment, to discourage all evil speaking: nor would he approve of just censure unless some good and necessary end were to be answered by it. Two of his distant friends being at his house together, one of them, during the absence of the other, suggested something to his disadvantage. He put a stop to the conversation by answering, "He is here, take him aside, and tell him of it by himself: you may do him good."

If he perceived any of his acquaintance bewildered in fruitless speculations, he would in an affectionate manner endeavor to draw off their attention from these mazes of confusion to the simple doctrine of the

\* See page 551. Note.

cross. A specimen of this kind of treatment will be seen in the letter, No. I., towards the close of this chapter.

He was affectionate to all, but especially towards the *rising generation*. The youth of his own congregation, of London, and of Dublin, have not forgot his melting discourses, which were particularly addressed to them. He took much delight in speaking to the children, and would adapt himself to their capacities, and expostulate with them on the things which belonged to their everlasting peace. While at Plymouth, he wrote thus to one of his friends, "O how should I rejoice, were there a speedy prospect of my returning to my great and *little congregations!*" Nor was it by preaching only that he sought their eternal welfare: several of his letters are addressed to young persons.—See No. II. and III., towards the close of this chapter.

With what joy did he congratulate one of his most intimate friends, on hearing that three of the younger branches of his family had apparently been brought to take the Redeemer's yoke upon them!—"Thanks, thanks be to God," said he, "for the enrapturing prospects before you as a *father*, as a *Christian father* especially. What, *three* of a family! and these three at once! O the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of his unfathomable grace! My soul feels joy unspeakable at the blessed news. Three immortal souls secured for eternal life! Three rational spirits preparing to grace Immanuel's triumphs, and sing his praise! Three examples of virtue and goodness, exhibiting the genuine influence of the true religion of Jesus before the world!—Perhaps three mothers training up to lead three future families in the way to heaven. Oh what a train of blessings do I see in this event! Most sincerely do I participate with my dear friend in his pleasures, and in his gratitude."

Towards the close of life, writing to the same friend, he thus concludes his letter,— "Present our love to dear Mrs. S—, and the family, especially those whose hearts are engaged to seek the Lord and his goodness. O tell them they will find him good all their lives, supremely good on dying beds, but best of all in glory."

In his visits to the sick he was singularly useful. His sympathetic conversation, affectionate prayers, and endearing manner of recommending to them a compassionate Saviour, frequently operated as a cordial to their troubled hearts. A young man of his congregation was dangerously ill. His father living at a distance was anxious to hear from him; and Mr. Pearce, in a letter to the minister on whose preaching the father attended, wrote as follows:—"I feel for the anxiety of Mr. V—, and am happy in be-

ing at this time a Barnabas to him. I was not seriously alarmed for his son till last Tuesday, when I expected, from every symptom, and the language of his apothecary, that he was nigh unto death. But, to our astonishment and joy, a surprising change has since taken place. I saw him yesterday apparently in a fair way of recovery. His mind for the first part of his illness was sometimes joyful, and almost constantly calm; but, when at the worst, suspicions crowded his mind; he feared he had been a hypocrite. I talked and prayed, and wept with him. One scene was very affecting: both he and his wife appeared like persons newly awakened. They never felt *so strongly* the importance of religion before. He conversed about the tenderness of Jesus to broken-hearted sinners; and, whilst he spoke, it seemed as though he came and began to heal the wound. It did me good, and I trust was not unavailing to them. They have since been for the most part happy; and a very pleasant interview I had with them on the past day."

Every man must have his seasons of relaxation. In his earlier years he would take strong bodily exercise. Of late he occasionally employed himself with the microscope, and in making a few philosophical experiments. "We will amuse ourselves with philosophy, said he to a philosophical friend, but Jesus shall be our teacher." In all these exercises he seems never to have lost sight of God, but would be discovering something in his works that should furnish matter for praise and admiration. His mind did not appear to have been unfitted, but rather assisted by such pursuits for the discharge of the more spiritual exercises, into which he would fall at a proper season, as into his native element. If in company with his friends, and the conversation turned upon the works of nature, or art, or any other subject of science, he would cheerfully take a part in it, and when occasion required, by some easy and pleasant transition, direct it into another channel. An ingenious friend once showed him a model of a machine which he thought of constructing, and by which he hoped to be able to produce a perpetual motion. Mr. Pearce, having patiently inspected it, discovered where the operation would stop, and pointed it out. His friend was convinced, and felt, as may be supposed, rather unpleasant at his disappointment. He consoled him; and, a prayer-meeting being at hand, said to this effect, "We may learn from hence our own insufficiency, and the glory of that Being who is 'wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working:' let us go and worship Him."

His mild and gentle disposition, not apt to give or take offence, often won upon per-



sons in matters wherein at first they have shown themselves averse. When collecting for the baptist mission, a gentleman, who had no knowledge of him, or of the conductors of that undertaking, made some objections on the ground that the baptists had little or nothing to say to the unconverted. This objection Mr. Pearce attempted to remove, by alleging that the parties concerned in this business were entirely of another mind. "I am glad to hear it," said the gentleman; "but I have my fears." "Then pray, sir," said Mr. Pearce, "do not give till you are satisfied." "Why, I assure you," replied the other, "I think the Methodists more likely to succeed than you; and should feel more pleasure in giving them ten guineas, than you one." "If you give them twenty guineas, sir," said Mr. Pearce, "we shall rejoice in their success: and, if you give us one, I hope it will not be misapplied." The gentleman smiled, and gave him four.

His figure, to a superficial observer, would at first sight, convey nothing very interesting; but, on close inspection, his countenance would be acknowledged to be a faithful index to his soul. Calm, placid, and, when in the pulpit especially, full of animation, his appearance was not a little expressive of the interest he felt in the eternal welfare of his audience; his eyes beaming benignity, and speaking in the most impressive language his willingness to impart *not only the gospel of God, but his own soul also*.

His imagination was vivid, and his judgment clear. He relished the elegancies of science, and felt alive to the most delicate and refined sentiments: yet these were things on account of which he does not appear to have valued himself. They were rather his amusements than his employment.

His address was easy and insinuating; his voice pleasant, but sometimes overstrained in the course of his sermon; his language chaste, flowing, and inclining to the florid: this last, however, abated as his judgment ripened. His delivery was rather slow than rapid; his attitude graceful, and his countenance, in almost all his discourses, approaching to an affectionate smile. He never appears, however, to have studied what are called the graces of pulpit action; and, whatever he had read concerning them, it was manifest that he thought nothing of them, or of any other of the ornaments of speech, at the time. Both his action and language were the genuine expressions of an ardent mind, affected, and sometimes deeply, with his subject. Being rather below the common stature, and disregarding, or rather, I might say, disapproving every thing pompous in his appearance, he has upon some occasions been prejudged to his disadvantage: but the song of the nightingale is not the less melodious for his not

appearing in a gaudy plumage. His manner of preparing for the pulpit may be seen in a letter addressed to Mr. C—, of L—, who was sent out of his church, and which may be of use to others in a similar situation. See No. IV. towards the close of this chapter.

His ministry was highly acceptable to persons of education: but he appears to have been most in his element when preaching to the poor. The feelings which he himself expresses, when instructing the colliers, appear to have continued with him through life. It was his delight to carry the glad tidings of salvation into the villages wherever he could find access and opportunity. And, as he sought the good of their souls, so he both labored and suffered to relieve their temporal wants; living himself in a style of frugality and self-denial, that he might have whereof to give to them that needed.

Finally: *He possessed a large portion of real happiness.*—There are few characters whose enjoyments, both natural and spiritual, have risen to so great a height. He dwelt in love: and "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Such a life must needs be happy. If his religion had originated and terminated in self-love, as some contend the whole of religion does, his joys had been not only of a different nature, but far less extensive than they were. His interest was bound up with that of his Lord and Saviour. Its afflictions were his affliction, and its joys his joy. The grand object of his desire was to "see the good of God's chosen, to rejoice in the gladness of his nation, and to glory with his inheritance." "What pleasures do those lose," says he, "who have no interest in God's gracious and holy cause!"\*

If an object of joy presented itself to his mind, he would delight in multiplying it by its probable or possible consequences. Thus it was, as we have seen, in his congratulating his friend on the conversion of three of his children; and thus it was when speaking of a people who divided into two congregations, not from discord, but from an increase of numbers; and who generously united in erecting a new and additional place of worship:—"these liberal souls are subscribing," said he, "in order to support a religion which, as far as it truly prevails, will render others as liberal as themselves."

His heart was so much formed for social enjoyment that he seems to have contemplated the heavenly state under this idea with peculiar advantage. This was the leading theme of a discourse from Rev. v. 9—12, which he delivered at a meeting of ministers at Arnsby, April 18, 1797, and of which his brethren retain a lively remembrance.

\* See Letter to Dr. Ryland, May 30, '96, p. 538.

On this pleasing subject he dwells also in a letter to his dear friend *Birt*.—"I had much pleasure, a few days since, in meditating on the affectionate language of our Lord to his sorrowful disciples:—"I go to prepare a place for you." What a plenitude of consolation do these words contain! what a sweet view of heaven as a place of *society*! It is *one place* for us all; that place where his glorified body is, there all his followers shall assemble, to part no more. Where he is, there we shall be also. Oh, blessed anticipation! There shall be Abel, and all the martyrs; Abraham, and all the patriarchs; Isaiah, and all the prophets; Paul, and all the apostles; Gabriel, and all the angels; and, above all, Jesus, and all his ransomed people! Oh to be amongst the number! My dear brother, let us be strong in the Lord. Let us realize the bliss before us. Let our faith bring heaven itself nearer, and feast, and live upon the scene. Oh what a commanding influence would it have upon our thoughts, passions, comforts, sorrows, words, ministry, prayers, praises, and conduct. What manner of persons should we be in all holy conversation and godliness!"

In many persons the pleasures imparted by religion are counteracted by a gloomy constitution: but it was not so in him. In his disposition they met with a friendly soil. Cheerfulness was as natural to him as breathing; and this spirit, sanctified by the grace of God, gave a tincture to all his thoughts, conversation, and preaching. He was seldom heard without tears; but they were frequently tears of pleasure. No levity, no attempts at wit, no aiming to excite the risibility of an audience, ever disgraced his sermons. Religion in him was habitual seriousness, mingled with sacred pleasure, frequently rising into sublime delight, and occasionally overflowing with transporting joy.

#### LETTERS REFERRED TO IN THIS CHAPTER.

##### No. I.

To a young man whose mind he perceived was bewildered with fruitless speculations.

"The conversation we had on our way to ——— so far interested me in your religious feelings that I find it impossible to satisfy my mind till I have expressed my ardent wishes for the happy termination of your late exercises, and contributed my mite to the promotion of your joy in the Lord. A disposition more or less to 'scepticism,' I believe, is common to our nature, in proportion as opposite systems and jarring opinions, each supported by a plausibility of argument, are presented to our minds: and with some qualification I admit Robinson's remark, 'That he who never doubted never believed.' While examining the grounds of persuasion, it is right for the mind to hesitate. Opinions

ought not to be prejudged, any more than criminals. Every objection ought to have its weight; and, the more numerous and forcible objections are, the more cause shall we finally have for the triumph, 'Magna est veritas et prevalebit;' but there are two or three considerations which have no small weight with me in relation to religious controversies.

"The first is, The importance of truth. It would be endless to write on truth in general. I confine my views to what I deem the leading truth in the New Testament,—*The atonement made on behalf of sinners by the Son of God; the doctrine of the cross; Jesus Christ and him crucified.* It surely cannot be a matter of small concern whether the Creator of all things, out of mere love to rebellious men, exchanged a throne for a cross, and thereby reconciled a ruined world to God. If this be not true, how can we respect the Bible as an inspired book, which so plainly attributes our salvation to the grace of God, 'through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus?' And, if we discard the Bible, what can we do with prophecies, miracles, and all the power of evidence on which, as on adamantine pillars, its authority abides? Surely the infidel has more to reject than the believer to embrace. That book then which we receive, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, not as the religion of our ancestors, but on the invincible conviction which attends an impartial investigation of its evidences—that book reveals a truth of the highest importance to man, consonant to the opinions of the earliest ages and the most enlightened nations, perfectly consistent with the Jewish economy as to its spirit and design, altogether adapted to unite the equitable and merciful perfections of the Deity in the sinner's salvation, and above all things calculated to beget the most established peace, to inspire with the liveliest hope, and to engage the heart and life in habitual devotedness to the interest of morality and piety. Such a doctrine I cannot but venerate; and to the *author* of such a doctrine my whole soul labors to exhaust itself in praise.

'Oh the sweet wonders of the cross,  
Where God my Saviour lov'd and died!'

Forgive, my friend, forgive the transport of a soul compelled to feel where it attempts only to explore. I cannot on *this* subject control my passions by the laws of logic. 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ Jesus my Lord!'

"Secondly: I consider man as a depraved creature, so depraved that his judgment is as dark as his appetites are sensual, wholly dependent on God, therefore, for religious light as well as true devotion, yet such a dupe to pride as to reject every thing which the narrow limits of his comprehension cannot embrace, and such a slave to his passions

as to admit no law but self-interest for his government. With these views of human nature I am persuaded we ought to suspect our own decisions, whenever they oppose truths too sublime for our understandings, or too pure for our lusts. To err on this side, indeed, 'is human;' wherefore the wise man saith, 'He that trusteth to his own heart is a fool.' Should therefore the evidence be only equal on the side of the gospel of Christ, I should think with this allowance we should do well to admit it.

"Thirdly: If the gospel of Christ be true, it should be heartily embraced. We should yield ourselves to its influence without reserve. We must come to a point, and resolve to be either infidels or Christians. To know the power of the sun we should expose ourselves to his rays: to know the sweetness of honey we must bring it to our palates. Speculations will not do in either of these cases, much less will it in matters of religion.—'My son,' saith God 'give me thine heart!'

"Fourthly: A humble admission of the light we already have is the most effectual way to a full conviction of the truth of the doctrine of Christ. 'If any may will *do* his will, he shall know of his doctrine whether it be of God.' If we honor God as far as we know his will, he will honor us with farther discoveries of it. Thus shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord; thus, thus shall you, my dear friend, become assured that there is salvation in no other name than that of Jesus Christ; and thus, from an inward experience of the quickening influences of his Holy Spirit, you will join the admiring church, and say of Jesus, 'This is my beloved, this is my friend; he is the chiefest among ten thousand, he is altogether lovely.' Yes, I yet hope—I expect—to see you rejoicing in Christ Jesus; and appearing as a living witness that he is faithful who hath said—'Seek, and ye shall find; ask, and receive, that your joy may be full.'"

In another letter to the same correspondent, after congratulating himself that he had discovered such a mode of killing noxious insects as should put them to the least pain, and which was characteristic of the tenderness of his heart, he proceeds as follows: "But enough of nature. How is my brother as a *Christian*? We have had some interesting moments in conversation on the methods of grace, that grace whose influence reaches to the day of adversity and the hour of death; seasons when of every thing else it may be said, Miserable comforters are they all! My dear friend, we will amuse ourselves with philosophy, but Christ shall be our teacher; Christ shall be our glory; Christ shall be our portion. Oh that we may be enabled 'to comprehend the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!'"

## No. II.

To a young gentleman of his acquaintance, who was then studying physic at Edinburgh.

"Did my dear friend P—— know with what sincere affection and serious concern I almost daily think of him, he would need no other evidence of the effect which his last visit and his subsequent letters have produced. Indeed there is not a young man in the world, in earlier life than myself, for whose universal prosperity I am so deeply interested. Many circumstances I can trace, on a review of the past fourteen years, which have contributed to beget and augment affection and esteem; and I can assure you that *every interview*, and *every letter*, still tends to consolidate my regard.

"Happy should I be if my ability to serve you at this important crisis of human life were equal to your wishes or my own. Your situation demands all the aids which the wisdom and prudence of your friends can afford, that you may be directed not only to the most worthy objects of pursuit, but also to the most effectual means for obtaining them. In your professional character it is impossible for me to give you any assistance. If any general observations I can make should prove at all useful, I shall be richly rewarded for the time I employ in their communication.

"I thank you sincerely for the freedom wherewith you have disclosed the peculiarities of your situation, and the views and resolutions wherewith they have inspired you. I can recommend nothing better, my dear friend, than a *determined adherence* to the purposes you have already formed respecting the intimacies you contract and the associates you choose. In such a place as Edinburgh, it may be supposed, no description of persons will be wanting. Some so notoriously vicious that their atrocity of character will have no small tendency to confirm your morals, from the odious contrast which their practices present to your view. Against these therefore I need not caution you. You will flee them as so many serpents, in whose breath is venom and destruction. More danger may be apprehended from those mixed characters who blend the profession of philosophical refinement with the secret indulgence of those sensual gratifications which at once exhaust the pocket, destroy the health, and debase the character.

"That morality is friendly to individual happiness and to social order, no man who respects his own conscience or character will have the effrontery to deny. Its avenues cannot, therefore, be too sacredly guarded, nor those principles which support a virtuous practice be too seriously maintained. But morality derives, it is true, its best, its only support from the principles of religion.



'The fear of the Lord,' said the wise man, 'is to hate evil.' He therefore who endeavors to weaken the sanctions of religion, to induce a sceptical habit, to detach my thoughts from an *ever present God*, and my hopes from a futurity of holy enjoyment, HE is a worse enemy than the man who meets me with the pistol and the dagger. Should my dear friend then fall into the company of those whose friendship cannot be purchased but by the sacrifice of revelation, I hope he will ever think such a price too great for the good opinion of men who blaspheme piety and dishonor God. Deism is indeed the fashion of the day, and, to be in the mode, you must quit the good old path of devotion, as too antiquated for any but monks and hermits: so as you laugh at religion, that is enough to secure to you the company and the applause of the sons of politeness. Oh that God may be a buckler and a shield to defend you from their assaults! Let but their private morals be inquired into, and, if they may have a hearing, I dare engage they will not bear a favorable testimony to the good tendency of scepticism; and it may be regarded as an indisputable axiom that what is unfriendly to virtue is unfriendly to man.

"Were I to argue a posteriori in favor of truth, I should contend that those principles must be true which, first, corresponded with general observation—secondly, tended to general happiness—thirdly, preserved a uniform connection between cause and effect, evil and remedy, in all situations.

"I would then apply these data to the principles held on the one side by the deists and on the other by the believers in revelation. In the application of the *first*, I would refer to the state of human nature. The deist contends for its purity and powers. Revelation declares its depravity and weakness. I compare these opposite declarations with the facts that fall under constant observation. Do I not see that there is a larger portion of vice in the world than of virtue; that no man needs solicitation to evil, but every man a guard against it; and that thousands bewail their subjection to lusts which they have not power to subdue, whilst they live in moral slavery, and cannot burst the chain? Which principle then shall I admit? Will observation countenance the *deistical*? I am convinced to the contrary, and must say, I cannot be a deist without becoming a fool; and, to exalt my reason, I must deny my senses.

"I take the *second* datum and inquire which tends most to general happiness. To secure happiness, three things are necessary:—*objects, means, and motives*. The question is, Which points out the *true source* of happiness, which directs to the *best means* for attaining it, and which furnishes me with the most *powerful motives* to induce my pursuit of it? If I take a deist for my

tutor, he tells me that *fame* is the object, *universal accommodation of manners to interest* the means, and *self-love* the spring of action. Sordid teacher! From him I turn to *Jesus*. His better voice informs me that the source of felicity is the *friendship of my God*; that *love to my Maker*, and *love to man*, expressed in all the noble and amiable effusions of devotion and benevolence, are the means; and that *the glory of God*, and *the happiness of the universe*, must be my motives. Blessed instructor; thy dictates approve themselves to every illuminated conscience, to every pious heart! Do they not, my dear P——, approve themselves to yours?

"But I will not tire your patience by pursuing these remarks. Little did I think of such amplification when I first took up my pen. Oh that I may have the joy of finding that these (at least well meant) endeavors to establish your piety have not been ungraciously received, nor wholly unprofitable to your mind! I am encouraged to these effusions of friendship by that amiable *self distrust* which your letter expresses,—a temper not only becoming the earlier stages of life, but graceful in all its advancing periods.

"Unspeakable satisfaction does it afford me to find that you are conscious of the necessity of '*first*' seeking assistance from heaven. Retain, my dear friend, this honorable, this equitable sentiment. 'In all thy ways acknowledge God, and he shall direct thy paths.'

"I hope you will still be cautious in your intimacies. You will gain more by a half-hour's intercourse with God than the friendship of the whole college can impart. Too much acquaintance would be followed with a waste of that precious time on the present improvement of which your future usefulness and respectability in your profession depend. Like the bee, you may do best by sipping the sweets of every flower; but remember the sweetest blossom is not the *hive*.

"P. S. So many books have been published on the same subject as the manuscript which you helped me to copy, that I have not sent it to the press.\*

### No. III.

To a young lady at school, Miss A. H., a daughter of one of the members of his church.

"I cannot deny myself the pleasure which this opportunity affords me of expressing

\*The compiler believes this was an answer to Mr. Peter Edwards's *Candid Reasons*, &c. He knows Mr Pearce did write an answer to that performance. By the imposing air of the writer he has acknowledged he was at first a little stunned; but, upon examining his arguments, found it no very difficult undertaking to point out their fallacy.

the concern I feel for your happiness, arising from the sincerest friendship,—a friendship which the many amiable qualities you possess, together with the innumerable opportunities I have had of seeing them displayed, have taught me to form and perpetuate.

“It affords me inexpressible pleasure to hear that you are so happy in your present situation—a situation in which I rejoice to see you placed, because it is not merely calculated to embellish the manners, but to profit the soul. I hope that my dear Ann, amidst the various pursuits of an ornamental or scientific nature which she may adopt, will not omit that first, that great concern, the dedication of her heart to God. To this, my dear girl, every thing invites you that is worthy of your attention. The dignity of a rational and immortal soul, the condition of human nature, the gracious truths and promises of God, the sweetness and usefulness of religion, the comfort it yields in affliction, the security it affords in temptation, the supports it gives in death, and the prospects it opens of life everlasting; all these considerations, backed with the uncertainty of life, the solemnity of judgment, the terrors of hell, and the calls of conscience and of God,—all demand your heart for the *blessed Jehovah*. This, and nothing short of this, is true religion. You have often heard, and often *written* on religion: it is time you should *FEEL* it now. Oh what a blessedness will attend your hearty surrender of yourself to the God and father of men! Methinks I see all the angels of God rejoicing at the sight; all the saints in heaven partaking of their joy; Jesus himself, who died for sinners, gazing on you with delight; your own heart filled with peace and joy in believing; and a thousand streams of goodness flowing from your renovated soul to refresh the aged saint, and to encourage your fellow youth to seek first the kingdom of heaven, and press on to God. But oh, should I be mistaken! Alas, alas, I cannot bear the thought. O thou Saviour of sinners, and God of love, take captive the heart of my dear young friend, and make her truly willing to be wholly thine!

“If you can find freedom, do oblige me with a letter on the state of religion in your own soul, and be assured of every sympathy or advice that I am capable of feeling or giving.”

#### No. IV.

To a young Minister, Mr. C —, of L —, on preparation for the pulpit.

“My dear Brother,

“Your first letter gave me much pleasure. I hoped you would learn some useful lesson from the first Sabbath disappointment.

Every thing is good that leads us to depend more simply on the Lord. Could I choose my frames, I would say respecting industry in preparation for public work, as is frequently said respecting Christian obedience—I would apply as close as though I expected no help from the Lord, whilst I would depend upon the Lord for assistance as though I had never made any preparation at all.

“I rejoice much in every thing that affords you ground for solid pleasure. The account of the affection borne you by the people of God was therefore a matter of joy to my heart, especially as I learnt from the person who brought your letter that the friendship seemed pretty general.

“Your last has occasioned me some pain on your account, because it informs me that you have been ‘exceedingly tried in the pulpit;’ but I receive satisfaction again from considering that the gloom of midnight precedes the rising day, not only in the natural world, but frequently also in the Christian minister’s experience. Do not be discouraged, my dear brother; those whose labors God has been pleased most eminently to bless have generally had their days of prosperity ushered in with clouds and storms. You are in the sieve; but the sieve is in our Saviour’s hands; and he will not suffer any thing but the chaff to fall through, let him winnow us as often as he may. No one at times, I think I may say, has been worse tried than myself in the same manner as you express; though I must be thankful it has not been often.

“You ask direction of me, my dear brother. I am too inexperienced myself to be capable of directing others; yet, if the little time I have been employed for God has furnished me with any thing worthy of communication, it will be imparted to no one with more readiness than to you.

“I should advise you, when you have been distressed by hesitation, to reflect whether it arose from an inability to recollect your ideas or to obtain words suited to convey them.—If the former, I think these two directions may be serviceable: First, endeavor to think *in a train*. Let one idea depend upon another in your discourses, as one link does upon another in a chain. For this end I have found it necessary to arrange my subjects in the order of time. Thus, for instance,—if speaking of the promises, I would begin with those which were suited to the earliest inquiries of a convinced soul; as pardon, assistance in prayer, wisdom, &c.; then go to those parts of Christian experience which are usually subsequent to the former; as promises of support in afflictions, deliverance from temptations, and perseverance in grace; closing with a review of those which speak of support in death, and final glory. Then

all the varieties of description respecting the glory of heaven will follow in natural order; as, the enlargement of the understanding, purification of the affections, intercourse with saints, angels, and even Christ himself, which will be *eternal*: thus beginning with the lowest marks of grace, and ascending step by step, you arrive at last in the fruition of faith. This mode is most natural, and most pleasing to the hearers, as well as assisting to the preacher; for one idea gives birth to another, and he can hardly help going forward regularly and easily.

“Secondly: *Labor to render your ideas transparent to yourself.* Never offer to introduce a thought which you cannot see through before you enter the pulpit.—You have read in *Claude* that the best preparative to preach from a subject is to understand it: and I think Bishop Burnet says, ‘no man properly understands any thing who cannot at any time represent it to others.’

“If your hesitation proceeds from a want of words, I should advise you—1. *To read good and easy authors; Dr. Watts especially.*—2. *To write a great part of your sermons,* and for a while get at least the leading ideas of every head of discourse by heart, enlarging only at the close of every thought.—3. Sometimes, as in the end of sermons, or when you preach in villages, *start off in preaching beyond all you have premeditated.* Fasten on some leading ideas; as, the solemnity of death, the awfulness of judgment, the necessity of a change of heart, the willingness of Christ to save, &c. Never mind how far you ramble from the point, so as you do not lose sight of it; and, if your heart be any way warm, you will find some expressions then fall from your lips which your imagination could not produce in an age of studious application.—4. *Divest yourself of all fear.* If you should break the rules of grammar, or put in or leave out a word, and recollect at the end of the sentence the impropriety; unless it makes nonsense, or bad divinity, never try to mend it, but let it pass. If so, perhaps only a few would notice it; but, if you stammer in trying to mend it, you will expose yourself to all the congregation.

“In addition to all I have said, you know where to look, and from whom to seek that wisdom and strength which only God can give. To him I recommend you, my dear brother, assuring you of my real esteem for you, and requesting you will not fail to pray for the least of saints, but yours affectionately,

S. P.

#### CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.

THE great ends of Christian biography are instruction and example. By faithfully

describing the lives of men eminent for godliness, we not only embalm their memory, but furnish ourselves with fresh materials and motives for a holy life. It is abundantly more impressive to view the religion of Jesus as operating in a living character than to contemplate it abstractedly. For this reason we may suppose the Lord the Spirit has condescended to exhibit, first and principally, the life of Christ; and, after his, that of many of his eminent followers. And for this reason he by his holy influences still furnishes the church with now and then a singular example of godliness, which it is our duty to notice and record. There can be no reasonable doubt that the life of Mr. Pearce ought to be considered as one of these examples. May that same divine Spirit who had manifestly so great a hand in forming his character teach us to derive from it both instruction and edification!

First: *In him we may see the holy efficacy, and by consequence the truth, of the Christian religion.*—It was long since asked, “who is he that overcometh the world, but he who believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” This question contained a challenge to men of all religions who were then upon the earth. Idolatry had a great diversity of species, every nation worshipping its own gods, and in modes peculiar to itself: philosophers also were divided into numerous sects, each flattering itself that it had found the truth: even the Jews had their divisions; their Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes: but, great as many of them were in deeds of divers kinds, an apostle could look them all in the face, and ask, “who is he that overcometh the world?” The same question might be safely asked in every succeeding age. The various kinds of religion that still prevail; the pagan, Mahomedan, Jewish, papal, or protestant, may form the exteriors of man according to their respective models; but where is the man amongst them, save the true believer in Jesus, that overcometh the world? Men may cease from particular evils, and assume a very different character; may lay aside their drunkenness, blasphemies, or debaucheries, and take up with a kind of monkish austerity, and yet all may amount to nothing more than an exchange of vices. The lusts of the flesh will on many occasions give place to those of the mind; but to overcome the world is another thing. By embracing the doctrine of the cross, to feel not merely a dread of the consequences of sin, but a holy abhorrence of its nature—and, by conversing with invisible realities, to become regardless of the best, and fearless of the worst that this world has to dispense—this is the effect of genuine Christianity, and this is a standing proof of its divine original. Let the most inveterate enemy of revelation have witnessed the disinterested benevo-



lence of a Paul, a Peter, or a John, and whether he would own it or not, his conscience must have borne testimony that this is true religion. The same may be said of Samuel Pearce: whether the doctrine he preached found a place in the hearts of his hearers, or not, his spirit and life must have approved themselves to their consciences.

Secondly: *In him we see how much may be done for God in a little time.*—If his death had been foreknown by his friends, some might have hesitated whether it was worth while for him to engage in the work of the ministry for so short a period: yet, if we take a view of his labors, perhaps there are few lives productive of a greater portion of good. That life is not always the longest which is spun out to the greatest extent of days. The best of all lives amounted but to thirty-three years; and the most important works pertaining to that were wrought in the last three. There is undoubtedly a way of rendering a short life a long one, and a long life a short one, by filling or not filling it with proper materials. That time which is squandered away in sloth, or trifling pursuits, forms a kind of blank in human life: in looking it over there is nothing for the mind to rest upon; and a whole life so spent, whatever number of years it may contain, must appear upon reflection short and vacant, in comparison of one filled up with valuable acquisitions and holy actions. It is like the space between us and the sun, which though immensely greater than that which is traversed in a profitable journey, yet, being all empty space, the mind gets over it in much less time, and without any satisfaction. If 'that life be long which answers life's great end,' Mr. Pearce may assuredly be said to have come to his grave in a good old age. And might we not all do much more than we do, if our hearts were more in our work? Where this is wanting, or operates but in a small degree, difficulties are magnified into impossibilities; a lion is in the way of extraordinary exertion; or, if we be induced to engage in something of this kind, it will be at the expense of a uniform attention to ordinary duties. But some will ask, How are our hearts to be in our work? Mr. Pearce's heart was habitually in his; and that which kept alive the sacred flame in him appears to have been,—the constant habit of conversing with divine truth, and walking with God in private.

“Thirdly: In him we see, in clear and strong colors, *to what a degree of solid peace and joy true religion will raise us, even in the present world.*—A little religion, it has been justly said, will make us miserable; but a great deal will make us happy. The one will do little more than keep the conscience alive, while our numerous defects and inconsistencies are perpetually furnishing it with materials to scourge us: the other

keeps the heart alive, and leads us to drink deep at the fountain of joy. Hence it is, in a great degree, that so much of the spirit of bondage, and so little of the spirit of adoption, prevails among Christians. Religious enjoyments with us are rather occasional than habitual; or, if in some instances it be otherwise, we are ready to suspect that it is supported in part by the strange fire of enthusiasm, and not by the pure flame of scriptural devotion. But, in Mr. Pearce, we saw a devotion ardent, steady, pure, and persevering: kindled, as we may say, at the altar of God, like the fire of the temple, it went not out by night nor by day. He seemed to have learnt that heavenly art, so conspicuous among the primitive Christians, of converting every thing he met with into materials for love, and joy, and praise. Hence he labored, as he expresses it, “to exercise most love to God when suffering most severely;” and hence he so affectingly encountered the billows that overwhelmed his feeble frame, crying,

“Sweet affliction! sweet affliction!  
Singing as I wade to heaven.”

The constant happiness that he enjoyed in God was apparent in the effects of his sermons upon others. Whatever we feel ourselves we shall ordinarily communicate to our hearers: and it has been already noticed that one of the most distinguishing properties of his discourses was—that they inspired the serious mind with the liveliest sensations of happiness. They descended upon the audience, not indeed like a transporting flood, but like a shower of dew, gently insinuating itself into the heart, insensibly dissipating its gloom, and gradually drawing forth the graces of faith, hope, love, and joy; while the countenance was brightened almost into a smile, tears of pleasure would rise, and glisten, and fall from the admiring eye.

What a practical confutation did his life afford of the slander so generally cast upon the religion of Jesus, that it fills the mind with gloom and misery! No: leaving futurity out of the question, the whole world of unbelievers might be challenged to produce a character from among them who possessed half his enjoyments.

Fourthly: From his example we are furnished with *the greatest encouragement, while pursuing the path of duty, to place our trust in God.*—The situation in which he left his family, we have seen already, was not owing to an indifference to their interest, or an improvident disposition, or the want of opportunity to have provided for them; but to a steady and determined obedience to do what he accounted the will of God. He felt deeply for them, and we all felt with him, and longed to be able to assure him before his departure that they would be

amply provided for: but owing to circumstances which have already been mentioned, this was more than we could do. This was a point in which he was called to *die in faith*: and indeed so he did. He appears to have had no idea of that flood of kindness which, immediately after his decease, flowed from the religious public: but he believed in God, and cheerfully left all with him. "Oh that I could speak," said he to Mrs. Pearce a little before his death, "I would tell a world to trust a faithful God. Sweet affliction! now it worketh glory, glory!" And, when she told him the workings of her mind, he answered, "Oh trust the Lord! If he lift up the light of his countenance upon you, as he has done upon me this day, all your mountains will become mole-hills. I feel your situation: I feel your sorrows: but he who takes care of sparrows will take care of you and my dear children."

The liberal contributions which have since been made, though they do not warrant ministers in general to expect the same, and much less to neglect providing for their own families on such a presumption, yet they must needs be considered as a singular encouragement, when we are satisfied that we are in the path of duty, to be inordinately "careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let our requests be made known unto him."

"Finally: In him we see that *the way to true excellence is not to affect eccentricity, nor to aspire after the performance of a few splendid actions; but to fill up our lives with a sober, modest, sincere, affectionate, assiduous, and uniform conduct.*—Real greatness attaches to character; and character arises from a *course of action*. The solid reputation of a merchant arises not from his having made his fortune by a few successful adventures; but from a course of wise economy and honorable industry, which gradually accumulating advances by pence to shillings and by shillings to pounds. The most excellent philosophers are not those who have dealt chiefly in splendid speculation, and looked down upon the ordinary concerns of men as things beneath their notice; but those who have felt their interests united with the interests of mankind, and bent their principal attention to things of real and public utility. It is much the same in religion. We do not esteem a man for one or two or three good deeds, any farther than as these deeds are indications of the real state of his mind. We do not estimate the character of Christ himself so much from his having given sight to the blind, or restored Lazarus from the grave, as from his *going about continually doing good*.

These single attempts at great things are frequently the efforts of a vain mind, which pants for fame and has not patience to wait for it, nor discernment to know the way in which it is obtained. One pursues the shade, and it flies from him; while another turns his back upon it, and it follows him. The one aims to climb the rock, but falls ere he reaches the summit; the other, in pursuit of a different object, ere he is aware, possesses it; seeking the approbation of his God, he finds with it that of his fellow-Christians.

[To the editions of the foregoing Memoirs published in a separate form are appended several poetic effusions by Mr. Pearce, which is not deemed advisable to retain in an edition of Mr. Fuller's works. The following piece however is inserted as a specimen of the devotional spirit which they breathe.]

#### HYMN IN A STORM.

In the floods of tribulation,  
While the billows o'er me roll,  
Jesus whispers consolation,  
And supports my sinking soul:  
Thus the lion yields me honey,  
From the eater food is given,  
Strengthen'd thus, I still press forward,  
Singing, as I wade to heaven,—  
Sweet affliction! Sweet affliction!  
That brings Jesus to my soul!

'Mid the gloom, the vivid lightnings  
With increased brightness play;  
'Mid the thornbrake, beauteous flow'rets  
Look more beautiful and gay;  
So in darkest dispensations  
Doth my faithful Lord appear,  
With his richest consolations,  
To re-animate and cheer:  
Sweet affliction! Sweet affliction!  
Thus to bring my Saviour near!

Floods of tribulation heighten,  
Billows still around me roar;  
Those who know not CHRIST ye frighten,  
But my soul defies your pow'r:  
In the sacred page recorded,  
Thus his word securely stands,  
"Fear not, I'm, in trouble, near thee,  
Nought shall pluck thee from my hands."  
Sweet affliction! Sweet affliction!  
Every word my love demands.

All I meet I find assists me  
In my path to heavenly joy,  
Where, though trials now attend me,  
Trials never more annoy;  
Wearing there a weight of glory,  
Still the path I'll ne'er forget,  
But reflecting how it led me  
To my blessed Saviour's seat,—  
Cry, affliction! Sweet affliction!  
Haste! Bring more to Jesus' feet!

AN

# A P O L O G Y

FOR THE LATE

## CHRISTIAN MISSIONS TO INDIA.

IN THREE PARTS.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

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### P A R T I.

“There are no such things done as thou sayest; but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.”—**NEHEMIAH.**

“And now, I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought: but, if it be of GOD, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against GOD.”—**GAMALIEL.**

### SECTION I.

AN ADDRESS TO EDWARD PARRY, ESQ., CHAIRMAN OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.

SIR,

As in a letter lately addressed to you by Mr. Thomas Twining, on the danger of interfering in the religious opinions of the natives of India, there is a reference to the labors of the baptist missionaries in that country, you will not consider me, I hope, as obtruding myself on your attention while I offer a few remarks upon it, and upon the important subject which it embraces.

It is true, the principal part of Mr. Twining's pamphlet is directed against “The British and Foreign Bible Society,” and that this has been sufficiently answered from another quarter; but, though he affects “not to know these missionaries,” yet their undertaking, particularly in the work of trans-

lating the Scriptures, has, no doubt, contributed to excite his alarm.

If, by “interfering in the religious opinions of the natives of India,” Mr. Twining means nothing more than the dissemination of the Christian faith by the fair methods of persuasion, the baptist missionaries, and those of every other denomination, must be acknowledged to have interfered; but if he include under that term violence, unfair influence, or any measures subversive of free choice—or any addresses, either in speech or in writing, which have endangered the peace of society—they have not interfered, nor have they any desire of so doing.

Whether Mr. Twining has chosen this ambiguous term, that he may with the greater ease insinuate, as occasion requires, the obnoxious idea of a design to overthrow the pagan and Mahomedan religions by *force*, I shall not determine; but that such is the use that is made of it, throughout his pamphlet, is clear. “As long,” he says, “as we continue to govern India in the mild and *tolerant* spirit of Christianity, we may govern it with ease; but, if ever the fatal day shall arrive when religious innovation shall set her foot in that country, indignation will spread from one end of Hindostan to the other.”—p. 30. Is giving the Scriptures then to the natives in their own languages, and offering to in-



struct them in their leading doctrines, opposed to the mild and *tolerant spirit of Christianity?* If it be, sir, neither the Founder of the Christian religion, nor his followers, have yet understood it. Be this as it may, it is not an "innovation;" the fatal day has arrived more than a century ago. Mr. Twining "hopes our native subjects in India will be permitted quietly to follow their own religious opinions."—p. 31. We hope so too; but, if this gentleman's wishes could be realized, we should not be permitted to follow ours, nor to recommend what we believe to be of eternal importance to our fellow-men and fellow-subjects. Yet this is all we desire. If missionaries, or any other persons on their behalf, should so far forget the principles of the gospel as to aim at any thing beyond it, I trust the government will always possess wisdom and justice sufficient to counteract them. The question, sir, which Mr. Twining proposes to submit to a general court of proprietors, whatever be the terms in which it may be couched, will not be, whether the natives of India shall continue to enjoy the most perfect toleration, but **WHETHER THAT TOLERATION SHALL BE EXTENDED TO CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES.**

I have observed with pain, sir, of late years, a notion of toleration, entertained even by some who would be thought its firmest advocates, which tends not only to abridge, but to subvert it. They have no objection to Christians of any denomination enjoying their own opinions, and, it may be, their own worship; but they *must not be allowed to make proselytes*. Such appear to be the notions of Mr. Twining and his friends. They do not propose to persecute the Christians of India, provided they would keep their Christianity to themselves; but those who *attempt to convert others* are to be exterminated. Sir, I need not say to you that this is not toleration, but persecution. Toleration is a legal permission not only to enjoy our own principles unmolested, but to make use of all the fair means of persuasion to recommend them to others. The former is but little more than might be enjoyed in countries the most distinguished by persecution; for few would wish to interrupt men so long as they kept their religion to themselves. Yet this is the whole of what some would wish to allow, both in the East and West Indies. In former times, unbelievers felt the need of toleration *for themselves*, and then they generally advocated it on behalf of others; but of late, owing perhaps to the increase of their numbers, they have assumed a loftier tone. Now, though for political reasons all men must be allowed to follow their own religion, yet they *must not aim at making proselytes*. Men who have no belief in the Christian religion may be expected to have no regard for it; and, where this is the case, the rights of conscience will be but little respected.

So far as my observations extend, these remarks are applicable to deists in general; and, where situations are favorable to their views, they may be expected to rise in their demands. In a letter from Mr. Carey, now before me, of a late date, he writes as follows:—"India swarms with deists; and deists are, in my opinion, the most intolerant of mankind. Their great desire is to exterminate true religion from the earth. I consider the *alarms* which have been spread through India as the fabrications of these men. The concurrence of two or three circumstances in point of time; namely, the massacre at Vellore, the rebellious disposition of the inhabitants in some parts of Mysore, and the public advertisements for subscriptions to the oriental translations, have furnished them with occasion to represent the introduction of Christianity among the natives as dangerous."

While Mr. Carey was writing this letter, sir, he might not be aware that a number of these men were preparing to embark for Europe, with a view to spread the *alarm* at home. Assuredly they have a *cause in which they are engaged*, as well as the Bible Society; and are not wanting in zeal to support it. Mr. Twining would be thought a *Christian*; but, if so, in what cause is he engaged? He may pretend that he is only pleading for toleration; but, in fact, he is pleading for the exclusion of what he acknowledges to be *light and truth*, and for the refusal of toleration to the religion of his Maker.

As "the religious opinions and customs of the natives of India" are a subject on which Mr. Twining's feelings are so "particularly alive," it may not be amiss to state what a few of these opinions and customs are. It may not be necessary, sir, for your information; but some persons into whose hands this pamphlet may fall may be the better able to judge of the question at issue.

In the first place, then, the Hindoos acknowledge **ONE SUPREME GOD**: they do not appear, however, to worship Him, but certain subordinate powers, which, they say, proceeded from him. Of these, the three principal are denominated **BIRMAH**, the creator of all; **VISHNOO**, the preserver of all; and **SEEB**, the destroyer of all. **Birmah** is not worshipped at all; **Vishnoo** only by a few; but **Seeb** (the destroyer) by almost all: their worship, therefore, is chiefly the effect of superstitious *fears*. The foulest vices are ascribed to these subordinate deities in their own shasters; but that which is sin in men, they say, is not sin in the gods. Besides these, they worship innumerable inferior deities, called *debtas*, chiefly, if not entirely, under an idea that it is in their power to do them harm. The lusts, quarrels, and other vices of these *debtas* also fill their shasters, as their images do the country. The chief use that they seem to make

of the one Supreme God is to ascribe to him all the evil that they commit, and to persuade themselves that they are not accountable beings.

They have a most firm faith in conjuration, in lucky and unlucky days; and in almost all their civil concerns act under its influence.

A considerable part of their religion consists in *self-torment*. One will hold up a hand till it is grown stiff, and he is incapable of taking it down again: another will lie upon the points of iron spikes, just so blunt as not to pierce him to death, and this for years together; others, on certain days at the beginning of the new year, are suspended in the air by sharp iron hooks stuck through the skin on each side of their back, and continue swinging round in that position from five to fifteen minutes. At the worship of Juggernaut, whose temple is in Orissa this massy wooden god is borne in a carriage, drawn by the multitude; and, while the air resounds with their shouts, happy are those who throw themselves under the wheels to be crushed to death! This, and every other species of self-torment and self-murder, gains admiration from the spectators.

Besides this, it is well known to be a part of their religion to favor the *burning of widows* with the bodies of their deceased husbands. Their shasters pronounce this to be a *great virtue, and to render them a kind of celestial beings*. And, lest the circumstance of absence at the time of the husband's death should prevent it, their laws prescribe as follows: "If the wife be within one day's journey of the place where her husband dies, the burning of his corpse shall be deferred one day for her arrival. If he die in another country, the virtuous wife shall take any of his *effects*, a sandal for instance, and, binding it on her thigh, shall enter the fire with it." Thus careful are these sacred laws to secure their victim. And as if it were meant to outrage every vestige of humanity, and to refine upon cruelty, it is an established law that the eldest son, or nearest relation, shall set fire to the pile!

Great numbers of *infants* also are thrown into the river, as offerings to the goddess; and others, who refuse their mother's milk, are frequently hung up in baskets on the branch of a tree, &c., to be devoured by ants or birds of prey!

Whether all these customs be proper objects of toleration may admit of a doubt. The British government in India seems to have thought otherwise. The governor general in council, on August 20, 1802, is said to have passed a decree declaring some of them to be murder. We leave this, however, to the civil authorities. *Our* object is confined to remonstrance, persuasion, and the exhibition of truth: and surely, if it be possible by such means to induce a people, or any part of a people, to cast away these

practices, it must be so far favorable to human happiness. If, sir, there were *no* hereafter, and we were merely to consult our own national interest, it were worth while, as far as possible, to endeavor to mitigate these evils: but, if the good of the government be allowed to have place in a government, it is still more so: and if there be a judgment to come, where governors and governed must each appear and give an account, it must be an object of the first importance. At that bar, sir, the adversaries of those who peaceably endeavor to bring off the Hindoos from these abominations will be ashamed to show their face!

I may be told that the particulars above referred to are the most offensive parts of the system, and that other parts of it may be very good. It is true that there are degrees in evil. All things pertaining to Hindooism may not be equally shocking to the feelings of an enlightened mind. I might safely affirm, however, with Dr. Buchanan, "The Hindoos have no moral gods:" neither does any part of their religion produce a moral impression on their minds, but the contrary. As men, they are not worse than other men: but, by their superstitions, they are become exceedingly corrupt.

"The natives of India," Mr. Twining tells us, "are a *religious* people; and in this respect they differ, he *fears*, from the inhabitants of this country." If, by the inhabitants of this country, he means those Christians who are alarmed at the progress of Christianity, I fear so too. If the religion of the natives of India, however, have no influence on their morals, unless it be to corrupt them, it will argue nothing in its favor. And that this is the case, every friend to the morality of the New Testament, who has resided in India, can bear witness. I have read enough, sir, of the communications of men of this description, to make me disregard the praises bestowed on the virtues of these people by others. I find these praises proceed either from deistical writers, whose manifest design is to depreciate the value of Christianity, or from persons residing in the country, who, "despairing," as Dr. Buchanan says, "of the intellectual or moral improvement of the natives, are content with an obsequious spirit and manual service. These they call the virtues of the Hindoo; and, after twenty years' service, praise their domestic for his *virtues*."

"I know not," says Bernier, an intelligent French traveller, "whether there be in the world a more covetous and sordid nation.—The brahmins keep these people in their errors and superstitions, and scruple not to commit tricks and villainies so infamous that I could never have believed them if I had not made an ample inquiry into them." \*

\* Voyages de Francois Bernier, Tome I., pp. 150, 162, et Tome II., p. 105.

"A race of people," says governor Holwell, "who from their infancy are utter strangers to the idea of common faith and honesty. This is the situation of the bulk of the people of Hindostan, as well as of the modern brahmins; amongst the latter, if we except one in a thousand, we give them over measure. The Gentoos, in general, are as degenerate, superstitious, litigious, and wicked a people, as any race of people in the known world, if not eminently more so, especially the common run of brahmins; and we can truly aver that, during almost five years that we presided in the judicial cutchery court of Calcutta, never any murder, or other atrocious crime, came before us, but it was proved, in the end, a brahmin was at the bottom of it."\*

"A man must be long acquainted with them," says Sir John Shore, governor general of Bengal, "before he can believe them capable of that barefaced falsehood, servile adulation, and deliberate deception, which they daily practise. It is the business of all, from the ryott to the dewan, to conceal and deceive: the simplest matters of fact are designedly covered with a veil, through which no human understanding can penetrate."†

"Lying, theft, whoredom, and deceit, says Mr. Carey, "are sins for which the Hindoos are notorious. There is not one man in a thousand who does not make lying his constant practice. Their thoughts of God are so very light, that they only consider him as a sort of plaything. Avarice and servility are so united in almost every individual that cheating, juggling, and lying, are esteemed no sins with them; and the best among them, though they speak ever so great a falsehood, yet it is not considered as an evil, unless you first charge them to speak the truth. When they defraud you ever so much, and you charge them with it, they coolly answer, 'It is the custom of the country.' Were you to charge any company of ten men with having amongst them liars, thieves, whoremongers, and deceitful characters, however improper it might be, owing to your want of proof, yet there would be little probability of your accusing them falsely. All the good that can with justice be said in favor of them is, that they are not so ferocious as many other heathens."

I have said nothing of the Mahomedans; but it is well known that they are not behind the Hindoos in superstition, and greatly exceed them in ferocity, pride, and intolerance.

In short, sir, to every European who places virtue in the fear of God and a re-

gard to men, and not in that which merely contributes to his own interest and inclination, the introduction of the means of Christianity, among both Hindoos and Mahomedans, must appear a matter of national importance. Christianity might not be embraced, at first, by the greater part; but it would, nevertheless, have a powerful influence on society; not only on those who believed it, but, by way of example, on those who believed it not.

But Mr. Twining professes to be alarmed at the measure, as *dangerous* to the British interests in India. He asserts this again and again; but what has he done beyond asserting it? Has he produced a single fact that can bear upon the subject; or preferred a single charge against the conduct of the missionaries? Neither the one nor the other. It is rather surprising, indeed, that he should not have discovered something on which to found the appearance of a charge; for I am not ignorant, sir, that the missionaries have on some occasions felt much, and spoken in strong language. They have frequently seen females burnt alive, and have remonstrated against the horrid deed, as an act of murder; taking occasion also from thence to prove to the people that such a religion could not be of God. If at such times there had been somewhat of a local tumult, there had been nothing surprising in it. But the truth is, no such tumult has ever occurred; nor have any means which they have used so much as endangered their own safety.

Mr. Twining speaks of *alarms* among the natives; but what are they? When or where did they manifest themselves? If, by "alarms," he means a conviction that their principles will gradually fall before the light of the gospel, there is some foundation for what he says; for considerable numbers of them have calmly acknowledged as much as this. But if he mean that, on account of any thing done or doing by the Missionaries, they are apprehensive of their religion being suppressed by authority, there is no proof of the fact, nor so much as an attempt to prove it. Nothing can furnish stronger evidence of Mr. Twining's want of materials of this kind, than his reference to "the recent catastrophes of Buenos Ayres, Rosetta, and Vellore."—p. 27. You need not be told, sir, that none of these catastrophes were produced by an attempt to recommend our religious principles.

That alarms may exist in India is very possible; but, if such there be, they are of a date posterior to the Vellore mutiny, and must be traced, it is probable, to the causes which produced that melancholy event. That the labors of the missionaries, either in Bengal or on the Coast, have been productive of any such effect, remains to be proved. The only alarms which they have

\* Holwell's Historical Events, Vol. I., p. 228. Vol. II., p. 151.

† Parliamentary Proceedings against Mr. Hastings, Appendix to Vol. II., p. 65.



excited will be found in the minds of Europeans, who, passing under the name of Christians, are tremblingly alive to the danger of Christianity making progress in the earth.

If, by "the LIGHT and TRUTH into which the omnipotent power of heaven may sometime lead these people," Mr. Twining means Christianity, his pamphlet exhibits, to say the least, an awkward association of ideas. Of Mr. Twining I know nothing but from the part he has taken in this business, and therefore can have no personal disrespect towards him: but I cannot understand, sir, how a *Christian* could be disgusted with the idea expressed by a Suabian Catholic, of "the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls gathering together his sheep from all nations and religions, languages, and kingdoms;" (pp. 9, 10;) how, in searching for something which the British nation values as the Hindoos do their Shasters, and the Mahomedans their Koran, he should overlook the *Bible*, and instance in "Magna Charta" (p. 30;) how he can be shocked at the downfall of Mahomedism (p. 17;) how his feelings can be so "particularly alive" on the religious opinions of the natives of India (p. 29;) and above all, how he can be so *alarmed* at the progress of Christianity. It is true he professes to feel on this subject chiefly from his "extreme apprehension of the fatal consequences to ourselves." But, if so, why do his alarms extend to Turkey, and even to China?—pp. 15. 17. Is he afraid that, if the Mahomedism of the one and the Paganism of the other should give place to the gospel, they would refuse to trade with us? Surely, sir, there can be but little doubt of this gentleman's being "of a party," nor of what that party is!

May I not take it for granted, sir, that a British government cannot refuse to tolerate protestant missionaries; that a protestant government cannot forbid the free circulation of the Scriptures; that a Christian government cannot exclude Christianity from any part of its territories; and that if, in addition to this, the measures which have of late years been pursued in India, without the least inconvenience arising from them, can be proved to be *safe* and *wise*, they will be protected, rather than suppressed? I trust I may.

Permit me, sir, to copy an extract or two from the letters of the missionaries on this subject. "No political evil," says Mr. Carey, "can reasonably be feared from the spread of Christianity now; for it has been publicly preached in different parts of Bengal for about twenty years past, without the smallest symptom of the kind. Within the last five years, an edition of the New Testament, of two thousand copies, nearly one of the Pentateuch of a thousand, one of Matthew of five hundred, and one of the Psalms and

Isaiah of a thousand, besides many copies of a second edition of the New Testament, and of the poetical books of Scripture, from Job to Canticles, and many religious tracts, have been distributed among the natives without a single instance of disturbance, unless the abusive language of a few loose persons may be so called. To this might be added the experience of the missionaries on the coast, who have taught Christianity for a hundred years, and reckon about forty thousand persons to have embraced it. Such long-continued exertions to spread the gospel, carried on to such an extent and in such different situations, without producing the smallest inconvenience, may, we presume, furnish a course of experience sufficient to remove every suspicion of political evil arising from the introduction of Christianity."

"The tongue of slander itself," says Mr. Marshman, "has not been able to charge us, nor any of the native converts, with the least deviation from the laws and government under which we live. How should it, when we are devoted from our very hearts to the British government, and this not from a blind partiality, but from a firm conviction of its being a blessing to the country? Had we been sent hither for the sole purpose of conciliating the natives to it, and of supporting it by every means in our power, we could not have been more cordially attached to it, nor have pursued a line of conduct more adapted to the end. Nothing will so effectually establish the British dominion in India as the introduction of Christianity, provided it be merely by persuasion; and nothing is more *safe*, and, under the divine blessing, more *easy*."

"With regard to *safety*, there is nothing to be feared from the attempt. The Hindoos resemble an immense number of particles of sand, which are incapable of forming a solid mass. There is no bond of union among them, nor any principle capable of effecting it. Their hierarchy has no head, no influential body, no subordinate orders. The brahmins, as well as the nation at large are a vast number of disconnected atoms, totally incapable of cohesion. In this country, sin seems to have given the fullest sample of its disuniting, debilitating power. The children are opposed to the parents, and the parents to the children; brother totally disregards brother; and a brahmin will see another brahmin perish with the greatest apathy. Yea, for the sake of a little gain, a brahmin will write against his gods, satisfying himself with this, that the sin belongs to his employer, and that he only does something to support himself. When to this are added their natural imbecility, and the enervating influence of climate, it will be evident that nothing is less to be apprehended than a steady, concerted

opposition to the spread of Christianity. Nothing will ever appear beyond that individual contempt and hatred of the gospel which are inseparable from the vicious mind.

“Instead of the introduction of Christianity endangering the safety of the state, the danger arises from the other side. No one unacquainted with the natives can know the heart of an idolater. We have about a hundred servants in our different departments; and they have been treated with a kindness which, in England, would have conciliated affection, and created attachment. But so far are these effects from being produced in them, that not an individual can be found amongst them who would not cheat us to any extent, or who would not plunder us of every thing we have, were it in their power. How can it be otherwise? Their religion frees them from every tie of justice. If their own benefit can be secured by any action, this renders it lawful, or at least venial, though it were fraud, robbery, or even murder. Often have we heard it affirmed that a robber who should spend the whole night in the most atrocious deeds, and secure plunder to the amount of a hundred rupees, would wipe off all the stain in the morning by giving one of them to a brahmin! Attachment to a master, a family, or a government of a different religion, is that which cannot be produced in the mind of a Hindoo while under the power of his gooroo or his debta. But if they lose caste, and embrace Christianity, not by force, but from pure conviction they become other men. Even those who, as it may prove, have not embraced it cordially, are considerably influenced by it. If once they lose caste the charm is broken, and they become capable of attachment to government.

“These remarks are abundantly proved by what is seen in our native converts. We have baptized above a hundred of them; and we dare affirm that the British government has not a hundred better subjects and more cordial friends among the natives of Hindostan. The gloomy and faithless demon of superstition is dethroned. They cannot fear a brahmin nor a debta as heretofore. While they feel an attachment to us to which they had been strangers, they are also cordially attached to the governors who protect them in the exercise of their religion, and whom they consider as their friends and brethren.

“Such is the *ease* with which Christianity, under the divine blessing, could be disseminated, that it may seem to some incredible. No public acts of government are necessary. It is not necessary that government should appear in the business; and much less that it should be at any expense whatever. If it be only understood that no one shall be forbidden to teach Christianity, and no one but

the *evil doer* receive interruption from the magistrate, the work will go on in the most gradual and yet effectual manner. God is raising up native converts of character and talents suited to it. It is possible for ten of these brethren to enter a district, to go unobserved through the principal towns, sit down in a private circle, gently reason, convey ideas of divine truth, and turn persons from darkness to light, nearly unobserved. Thus a town, a district, a country, could be leavened with the blessed gospel, almost without the knowledge of the wealthy and great, even of their own countrymen.

“The only thing necessary for European missionaries is that, as long as they *deserve* the confidence of government, they be permitted to fix their residence in those places which will enable them to exercise a necessary superintendence, and administer support to these native brethren; to visit the societies which are formed; and, as occasion offers, dispense with prudence the word of life. It were the easiest thing imaginable for government to obtain from European missionaries the most ample pledges of good behavior, and to withdraw its protection the moment they ceased to deserve it. A good man would feel a pleasure in giving such security; and, what is more, his being a good man would itself be a security.—What security could have been exacted from a Schwartz, equal to that which his own wise and benevolent heart afforded? Nor is this peculiar to Schwartz; it is the feeling of every real missionary.

“A permission to itinerate and form missionary stations in the country, so far from being injurious to the British government, would advance its essential interests. In every missionary it would have a friend; a friend whose influence and capacity of rendering service would be constantly increasing. What were the advantages which the English derived from one Schwartz in the Mysore country? And what would be the effect of their having at this moment a hundred Schwartz's in India, each with his train of pious, peaceable, loyal, and faithful disciples? These messengers of peace and love (and all others we give up) would endear to the inhabitants the very nation to which they belonged. Who are these, they would ask, that so manifestly seek our good, and not their own? The answer, that they are English, must exhibit an idea of the government and nation which the natives can never have displayed before their eyes too often.

“But, if a missionary could so far forget himself and his object as to cherish a spirit inimical to government, still, one would suppose, his own interest would correct him. To whom are he and his friends indebted for security? Without the protection of government, they would be contin-

ually in danger of being massacred. If, however, the folly of any one should render him insensible to these considerations, he must abide the consequences. Let him bear his own burden."

Sir, I cannot persuade myself that the East India Company will adopt the principles of Mr. Twining. They have too much good sense to be alarmed at every outcry, too much justice to ascribe danger to causes from which it never arose, and too much wisdom to banish men who have always approved themselves the faithful friends of their government. Whatever be the mind of individuals, I trust that neither they nor the British government, as a body, are prepared to prohibit the free circulation of the Scriptures, or the temperate propagation of Christianity.

I am aware, indeed, that persecution has of late made its appearance in our *West India* colonies and, if Mr. Twining and his party could succeed, there is too much reason to fear that we should see the same thing in the east; but I am also aware that, in the first instance, it was disallowed by HIS MAJESTY IN COUNCIL; and, though it has since been revived on a narrower scale, yet I trust it will not be permitted either in the west or in the east to accomplish its end.

It is not difficult, sir, to account for that aversion from religion which is so frequently found in men who have left their country at an early period in pursuit of a fortune. They neither understood nor believed the gospel when at home; and on going abroad took leave of Christian ordinances, and of all respect for them. They may wish, indeed, for certain reasons, to retain the name of Christians; but that is all: they cannot bear the thing, nor that any about them should be in earnest in the profession of it. But, whatever measures may be taken by men who have become aliens from that which is the glory of their country, I trust there will be found a sufficient number of the rulers and inhabitants of this land to counteract them. If not, let us talk as we may against French atheism, we are fast sinking into it.

If, sir, there be a God that judgeth in the earth, the danger lies in making HIM our enemy. It is a principle which cannot be disputed, however it may be disregarded, THAT WHATEVER IS RIGHT IS WISE, AND WHATEVER IS WRONG IS FOOLISH AND DANGEROUS. Sir, the tombs of nations, successively buried in oblivion, have this truth inscribed on every one of them. It was by "forbidding Christian ministers to speak unto the Gentiles that they might be saved, that the most favored nation upon the earth filled up the measure of its sins, and drew upon it the wrath of heaven to the uttermost!"

At a time, sir, when many and great nations are overthrown nations which have not possessed our privileges, and therefore have not incurred our guilt—when we are engaged in the most tremendous struggle that this country ever knew, a struggle for our very existence—and when, on certain occasions, we profess to fast and to humble ourselves before Almighty God, shall we raise from its slumbers the wicked system of PERSECUTION? "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?"

Mr. Twining may be disgusted at the idea of the eastern empire being given us by providence, for the very purpose of introducing the gospel (p. 25;) but, if it be so, it is no more than God's having formerly given it to Cyrus, "for Jacob his servant's sake."—Isa. xlv. 1—4. Men may scorn to be subservient to their Maker; but whether they consent or not, it will be so. The conquests of Rome made way for the introduction of Christianity into Britain; and those of Britain may make way for its general introduction in the east. Should Britain be friendly to this object, it may be the lengthening of her tranquillity; but, as an eloquent writer\* observes, "If we decline the illustrious appointment, God may devolve on some less refractory people those high destinies which might have been ours. 'Who knoweth whether we are come to the kingdom for such a time as this? If we altogether hold our peace at this time, then may there enlargement and deliverance arise to them from another place, and we and our father's house may be destroyed.'"

I am, sir, very respectfully yours,

ANDREW FULLER.

## SECTION II.

STRICTURES ON THE PREFACE TO A PAMPHLET ENTITLED "OBSERVATIONS ON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY."

THIS performance, though anonymous, has been generally ascribed to Major Scott Waring: and, as I understand that that gentleman has since publicly avowed himself to be the author, I shall consider him as such in the following remarks.

Mr. Twining's performance had scarcely any thing tangible about it. It was chiefly made up of quotations, with here and there a sentence distinguished by italics, or capitals of different sizes, according, it should seem, to the different degrees of suspicion and alarm which possessed the mind of the author. But Major Scott Waring attempts to

\* Mr. Wrangham's sermon, *On the Translation of the Scriptures into the Oriental Languages*, preached before the University of Cambridge, on May 10, 1807.—p. 11.



reason; and, as he certainly has entered into the subject *with all his heart*, we may hope from hence to ascertain the real strength of our adversaries.

Having given his preface a cursory review, I determined, before I sat down to answer it, to read through his pamphlet; and, on looking it over, I found that though the "Observations" related chiefly to things beside my province, yet they contained passages worthy of attention; especially when compared with others, and with the general design of his performance. A few of these I shall take the liberty to transcribe.

"For many centuries, we believe, Christian missionaries have resided in India, with the free consent of the native princes. These men were generally, if not universally, pure in their morals, and inoffensive in their conduct; and many of them highly respected by the princes of India, who allowed them to preach the gospel, and to make as many converts as they could to the Christian religion."—p. 9.

"Missionaries can do no mischief in India, if they are treated as formerly, neither encouraged nor oppressed; but, if men paid by the British government are encouraged to make converts to Christianity, our empire will be in danger."—p. 14.

"The missionaries now in India, or those who may go thither in future, should be treated by our government as they formerly were by the native princes. In that case they may be as zealous as possible, without doing mischief. Mr. Buchanan says that the Four Gospels have been translated, and liberally distributed. If that was done at the expense of the Bible Society in England, or of the other religious societies in Europe, the measure was laudable; but if at the expense of the Company, and from their press, it was most impolitic, and made use of, no doubt, by the sons of Tippoo Sultan, to excite the seapoys to mutiny. The true line for the British government to pursue is obvious; let missionaries make as many converts as they can, but give them no support on the one hand, nor discouragement on the other. Let us copy the example of the native princes in allowing the missionaries of this day to preach the gospel also, but there let us stop."—pp. 22, 23.

"No jealousy was ever entertained, either by Mahomedan or Hindoo princes, because missionaries were settled in their countries who now and then converted one of their subjects to Christianity. No jealousy will now be entertained of their having similar success, while the British government, which stands in possession of the power formerly enjoyed by the native princes, is contented merely with following their example."—p. 25.

As I have no concern in any plan which would be expensive to government, or would

require their interference in any way beyond simple protection to the missionaries, and that no longer than their conduct is found to be deserving of it, I have no dispute with Major Scott Waring on what he has here advanced. If he suspects Mr. Carey to be *paid* by government, or the translations in which he is engaged to be printed or circulated at their *expense*, I can assure him it is without foundation. The salary which he receives is not as a missionary, but merely as a professor of the Shanscrit and Bengalee languages. Government knows nothing of him, or his colleagues, as missionaries, any farther than, when mentioning certain literary works, to speak of those works as undertaken by "the protestant missionaries at Serampore." Mr. Carey's salary is the due reward of his labors as a literary man. It is true, he disinterestedly devotes all his savings to the work of spreading the gospel; but the same may be said of more than one of his colleagues, who have no connection with government, and whose avocations are productive of little, if any thing, less than his. And, whatever has been done by the missionaries in translating and circulating the Scriptures, has been done at the expense of societies and individuals. Whether any translations have been printed at the Company's press, I cannot speak with certainty. I think it is highly probable they have not; of this, however, I am certain, that those which are enumerated by Mr. Carey [in page 579 of this volume] were printed at Serampore. When it was determined to translate the Scriptures into all the eastern languages, government permitted them to advertize in their Gazette for subscriptions to the work: but, to argue from this that they had any pecuniary concern in the undertaking, is absurd; for, if so, what need was there to advertize for *private* subscriptions?

Upon the whole, it follows that what has been done is, in Major Scott Waring's opinion, "laudable," and was *not* made use of to excite the seapoys to mutiny. And here I might take leave of this gentleman, were it not for his preface, with the satisfaction of our labors having obtained his approbation and applause. For, as to what he says of the *hopelessness* of attempting to convert the Hindoos, that is to ourselves. We derive hope from a book with which he may be but little acquainted; and, so long as we do "no mischief," why should we be interrupted?

But, when I look into the preface, I find a new and a contradictory publication. Whether the "Observations" were written at so distant a period that he had forgotten them, or whether the late "intelligence from Madras" proved so alarming to him as to produce an entire change in his principles—whatever was the cause, there is cer-

tainly a most violent opposition between the one and the other.

Before we proceed to examine this extraordinary preface, which is nearly as large as the book itself, it may be proper to remark: that Major Scott Waring knows nothing of the effects of Christian missions in India of late years, but from the *report of their adversaries*. The reader will recollect what was quoted from Mr. Carey's letter of February 13, 1807 [in page 576 of this volume,] and the intimation there given of a number of persons who were at that time preparing to embark for Europe, with a view to spread the alarm at home. These are the men from whom the author derives his intelligence. "Various private accounts," says he, "from men of sense, observation, and character, mention," &c.—p. 1. And again, "I am assured, by gentlemen lately returned from India, that," &c.—p. xlii. These, or some gentlemen like-minded, have been endeavoring by private letters, during the whole of 1807, to excite suspicions against us. But, when told of these things, our answer has been, "Let us not be judged by private letters: let our adversaries come forward and accuse the missionaries; or, at least, give proof of their labors having been injurious."\*

I know not who these gentlemen are, and therefore can have no personal disrespect to any of them: but, whoever they be, I have no scruple in saying that their reports, as given in the performance before me, are *utterly unworthy of credit*. Of this the reader will be convinced, I presume, in the course of these remarks.

Major Scott Waring, as if conscious that private reports were of no use, unless to fill up the deficiencies of what is public and authentic, begins with the *Proclamation from the Madras Government, on Dec. 3, 1806*; that is, about six months after the mutiny at Vellore. This proclamation states that, in some late instances, an extraordinary degree of agitation had prevailed among several corps of the native army of that coast—that, on inquiry into the cause, it appeared that many persons of evil intention had endeavored, for malicious purposes, to impress upon the native troops a belief that it was the wish of the British government to convert them, by forcible means, to Christianity—that such malicious reports had been observed with concern to be believed by many of the native troops—and that they were utterly without foundation.—pp. i—v.

Such is "the alarming intelligence lately received from Madras." From hence Major Scott Waring takes occasion "humbly to

submit to the consideration of his majesty's ministers, the East India Company, and the legislature, a plan for restoring that confidence which the natives formerly reposed in the justice and policy of the British government, as to the security of their religion, laws, and local customs." And what is it? Nothing less than "THE IMMEDIATE RECAL OF EVERY ENGLISH MISSIONARY, AND A PROHIBITION TO ALL PERSONS DEPENDENT ON THE COMPANY FROM GIVING ASSISTANCE TO THE TRANSLATION OR CIRCULATION OF OUR HOLY SCRIPTURES."—p. xvii. These the author thinks "the most, and indeed the only, efficacious measures." That they would be efficacious there can be no doubt; and such would be the application of a guillotine for the cure of the head-ache; but whether it be just or wise is another question.

If I had written the "Observations," and had been afterwards convinced that the principles they contained were erroneous, I think I should not have sent out a new edition of them: or, if justice had failed to influence me, a regard to consistency would have prevented my publishing them and their refutation in the same pamphlet; but to publish that refutation *in the form of a preface* is beyond every thing. To preface his work by contradicting its leading principles is advertising his reader that he has sold him a bad commodity. Should his Majesty's ministers, the East India Company, or the Legislature, attend to this gentleman's performance, in what part are they to regard him? In the preface they are advised "immediately to recal every English missionary;" but, as they read on, they are told that "the true line for the British government to pursue is obvious; let Missionaries be as zealous as they may, and make as many converts as they can, provided they be neither encouraged on the one hand nor discouraged on the other, they can do no mischief." What then are they to do, unless it be to disregard the whole as nugatory?

And what have these English missionaries done, that they are to be immediately recalled; and these holy Scriptures, that they are not to be translated or circulated by any one dependent on the Company? Nothing. As to the former, it is not pretended that they had any hand in the tragical event at Vellore. On the contrary, they are expressly acquitted of it.—p. xi. And, as to the latter, no accusation has yet been brought against them. But evil-minded men, it seems, have taken occasion, from the increase of the one and the gratuitous circulation of the other, to misrepresent the designs of government; and, therefore, it is necessary to proceed to this extremity. The author, it must be acknowledged, has hit upon a happy expedient for suppressing the

\* Private intelligence is proper on some occasions; but, in cases of accusation, no man should be able to take away another's character without risking his own.

Scriptures: for, if he can once get the men who are employed in translating and circulating them recalled, there is no danger of their doing any further mischief. So long as they are locked up in an unknown language, all Asia may continue from generation to generation under the dominion of imposture.

But why must the missionaries be recalled *immediately*? It was said by a wise heathen, *Ye ought to do nothing rashly*. Permit us, at least, to ask a question or two before we are condemned.

In the first place: *WHEN were these misrepresentations made?* Is there any proof of their having existed *before* the mutiny, so as to have had any influence in producing it? None at all. But we are told that "it is *impossible*, impolitic as the measure was, that the mere change in the dress of the seapoys could have produced a general belief that the British government was resolved to compel them to embrace Christianity."—p. 1. I answer, there is no proof that such a *general belief existed*; no, not six months afterwards, when the proclamation was issued; for it was *then* alleged to have extended only to "several corps of the native army on the coast;" and *at the time of the mutiny* there is no proof of any other belief than what arose from the impositions. With what color of evidence can this writer pretend that "the *great increase* of English missionaries of late years, and the gratuitous distribution of our sacred Scriptures *throughout the whole country*," were *CONNECTED* with the impositions in dress, in the representations made to the seapoys, when in the same sentence he acknowledges those impositions to have *affected their religion*? Allowing it to be what he calls it, "a *religious mutiny*," yet the impositions in dress were competent to produce it. Had he not been determined to bring in these missionaries, and these holy Scriptures, at any rate, he would have concluded that the other causes were "sufficient to create the alarm," without any thing else being *connected* with them. But "various *private accounts* from men of sense, observation, and character, mention that the great increase of missionaries, the profuse and gratuitous circulation of the Scriptures, *added* to the change of dress, were represented as proofs of our resolution ultimately to compel them to become Christians."—p. 1. Ah that is it! Major Scott Waring knows of nothing antecedent to the mutiny; the proclamation knows of nothing; but "*private accounts from men of sense, observation, and character*," make known every thing. And what have they to say on this subject? They tell of the *great increase of English missionaries* of late years. It is possible there may be about fifteen or sixteen: but nine of them, by Major Scott Waring's own reck-

oning, are in Bengal, where no alarm worth mentioning has existed, except in the minds of Europeans. They also tell of "the gratuitous circulation of the Scriptures, *throughout the whole country*."—pp. x. 1. The truth is, I believe, that the gratuitous circulation of the Scriptures has been hitherto confined to Bengal. Thus much, at present, for the private accounts of these *men of sense, observation, and character*, but for whose information we could not have known of any misrepresentations being made to the seapoys, *prior* to the Vellore mutiny.

We ask, secondly, *Who were the authors of these misrepresentations?* The proclamation does not inform us; and probably government did not know, or they would have punished the offenders. But whether it be from the *private accounts* of these *men of sense, observation, and character*, or from some other source of information, Major Scott Waring makes it out that they were "disaffected natives of the Carnatic and the Mysore."—p. x. This, if applied to what took place *subsequent* to the mutiny, may have some truth in it, or it may not. The evil-minded persons referred to in the proclamation, who appear to have availed themselves of the mutiny to increase the alarm, might be disaffected natives, or they might be Europeans, who, from aversion to Christianity, and a desire to get the Scriptures suppressed and the missionaries recalled, suggested such things to the seapoys as might accomplish their end. It is remarkable that, in the very passage in which this writer speaks in so positive a strain of "the disaffected men of the Carnatic and Mysore" having taken advantage of our folly, and excited the troops to mutiny, he exonerates the sons of Tippoo Sultaun, whom he had before, with equal positivity, condemned. "We *know*," he had said in his observations, "that the mutiny was excited by the sons of Tippoo Sultaun, whose emissaries insinuated that the change which we wished to adopt in the dress of the seapoys was only a preparatory step towards the accomplishment of our great object, which was to compel them to embrace Christianity."—p. 8. But in the preface (p. x.) he says, "From later information I have reason to believe that the sons of Tippoo Sultaun are innocent of the charge preferred against them; but the disaffected men of the Carnatic and the Mysore *did* take advantage of our folly: and that they excited the troops to a *religious mutiny* is beyond a doubt." If this gentleman's *knowledge* be thus unfounded, though so very minute and particular that he would almost seem to have been an ear-witness, what is to be thought of his conjectures? and what to make of this last account more than conjecture I cannot tell. His eagerness to charge the disaffected natives looks as if *some other people* were suspected. Let us hear the other side.



Mr. Carey says, "India swarms with deists; and deists are, in my opinion, the most intolerant of mankind. Their great desire is to exterminate true religion from the earth. I consider the alarms which have been spread through India as the fabrications of these men. The concurrence of two or three circumstances, in point of time, namely, the massacre at Vellore, the rebellious disposition of the inhabitants in some part of Mysore, and the public advertisements for subscriptions to the oriental translations, have furnished them with occasion to represent the introduction of Christianity among the natives as dangerous."

Dr. Kerr's Report, dated Madras, July 23, 1807, twelve months after the mutiny, confirms Mr. Carey's statement. He clearly shows that, in his opinion, the evil-minded persons, who industriously circulated reports nearly allied to the above, were not natives, but Europeans, *hostile to religion and its interests*. "Various reports," says he, "have been industriously circulated, by evil-minded persons hostile to religion and its interests, that the natives would be alarmed were missionaries allowed to come out to India; but I feel myself authorized, by a near acquaintance with many of the protestant missionaries now in India, and a perfect knowledge of the respect which is entertained for them by all descriptions of the natives, to repeat what I have formerly stated to government, that these men are, and always have been, more beloved by the natives than any other class of Europeans; and it is to be accounted for on the most rational grounds,—that is, they learn their language intimately; they associate with them in a peaceable, humble manner, and do them every act of kindness in their power; while, at the same time, the example of their Christian lives produces the very highest respect amongst heathens, unaccustomed to behold such excellence amongst each other. The lives of such men in India have always been a blessing to the country, and I heartily wish that all such characters may be encouraged to come amongst us."

The above statements from Mr. Carey, and Dr. Kerr, I may venture to place against the *anonymous accounts of men of sense, observation, and character*; and, if they be true, they not only furnish an exposition to the labors of Messrs. Twining, Scott Waring, and Co., but fully account for those apprehensions which, it is said, "existed as late as March, 1807, three months after the date of the proclamation; and which induced the British officers attached to the native corps constantly to sleep with loaded pistols under their pillows."—p. xi. An event so tragical as that at Vellore would itself, indeed, suggest the necessity of such a precaution, and that for a considerable time after; and still more so when the flame was fanned by evil-minded

persons. Yes, reader, if these statements be true, it follows that the enemies of Christianity, after having themselves excited these alarms, are now actually attempting to transfer the responsibility for their consequences to the missionaries.

We ask, lastly, *let these misrepresentations have been fabricated when and by whom they might, Is it just, or wise, to recul those persons who are acknowledged to have had no concern in them, or to suppress the circulation of the Holy Scriptures on that account?*

A great outrage has certainly been committed. What was the cause? According to Major Scott Waring, the Madras government acted *absurdly*; first, in changing so suddenly a native to an English administration, and then in imposing such alterations in the dress of the seapoys as affected their religion. And when, in addition to this, they were told, by evil-minded persons, of the great increase of missionaries, and the gratuitous circulation of the Scriptures throughout the country, they believed government intended to compel them to become Christians; and, though the thing was not true, yet it was by no means *irrational* for them to believe it.—p. ix. x. Supposing this account to be correct, where is the *justice* of punishing men for their numbers being magnified, and their labors misrepresented by others? If an atonement be necessary, why select *them* as victims? If, indeed, the evil-minded incendiaries, who misrepresented their designs and those of government, could be detected, it might answer a good end to punish them; but, if this cannot be accomplished, let not the innocent suffer.

Major Scott Waring seems, indeed, to give up the *justice* of the measure; but yet contends for it as of "absolute *necessity*, seeing the proclamation had not lulled the suspicions of the people."—p. xi. Such are the Machiavelian politics of this gentleman. Could we suppose him to be sufficiently acquainted with the New Testament, we might suspect that he had taken up this opinion from Caiaphas, the Jewish high-priest, who advised the crucifixion of our Lord, on the principle of its being "*expedient* that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."—John xi. 49, 50.

"It is necessary to convince the natives," says this writer, "not only that we never did entertain the wild idea of compelling them to embrace Christianity, but that we have not a *wish* to convert them."—p. vi. It cannot be necessary to convince the natives that Major Scott Waring, and all who are like-minded with him, have not a *wish* to convert them; and as to others, who may entertain the idea of converting them *without compulsion*, it deserves to be considered whether the recalling of them would not have a contrary effect to that which is pretended. The recal of the missionaries, and the virtual sup-

pression of the Scriptures, would furnish the natives with an important subject of reflection. It would be a tacit acknowledgment, on the part of government, that, till instructed by the Vellore mutiny, they *had* entertained "the wild idea of compelling them to embrace Christianity;" but that *now* they have become sober and relinquished it! Whether such a measure would be attributed to *respect*, or to *fear*, and what effects it would produce on the army and the country, let common sense determine.

As the main design of this preface was to excite "his majesty's ministers, the East India Company, and the legislature," against the missionaries and their labors, the author, having improved the Vellore mutiny as far as he is able, proceeds to denounce these men, and all who have been in any way abettors of their dangerous designs. *The British and Foreign Bible Society*, who have aided them as translators; Mr. Brown and Dr. Buchanan, who have encouraged them; and Dr. Kerr, who is engaged in the same *cause* with them, all come in for a share of his censures.

"Dr. Buchanan conceives," says he, "that it is by no means submitted to *our judgment, or to our notions of policy*, whether we shall embrace the means of imparting Christian knowledge to our subjects or not."—p. xxv. The major probably thinks this a very *wild* opinion: yet it only amounts to this, that God is greater than man, and that what respects the promotion of his kingdom in the earth must not be rendered subservient to worldly interests. But this, he tells us, "was precisely the doctrine of the Spaniards and Portuguese, when they discovered the new world; and they extirpated millions of unfortunate men in propagating their doctrines by the sword." If there be any force in this remark, (which seems to be a favorite one,) it is because the persecuting conduct of these nations was *the legitimate and necessary consequence* of the doctrine in question. But why might they not have considered themselves as under indispensable obligation to impart the means of Christian knowledge, without being obliged to follow it with persecution? Does it follow, because they were not obliged to extend their religious principles by the sword, that we are not obliged to extend ours without the sword?

Many things are said on the impolicy of Dr. Buchanan's visit to the Syrian Christians, and that of Dr. Kerr to the Malabar coast. It seems to have given this writer serious offence that the governor of Madras should have given the epithet "important" to an inquiry relating to Christianity.—p. xxix. He calls it "the most trifling of all possible subjects connected with the welfare of our oriental empire."—p. xxxiii. He speaks of this empire as being "conquered by British valor."—p. xl. God and religion, therefore,

it should seem, can have nothing to do with it. No, let the missionaries go to Africa, to the South Sea Islands, or to the wilds of America; but let them not come hither! "O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court."—Amos vii. 12, 13. Yet this gentleman would be thought, after all, to be a Christian, and "trusts it will not be imputed to indifference for the eternal welfare of the people of India" that he advises what he does!

But as Dr. Buchanan and Dr. Kerr, if they judge it necessary, are able to vindicate themselves, I shall confine my replies to those particulars which more immediately concern me. Many things are said against "the English, and especially the baptist missionaries." Such, indeed, is the quantity of misrepresentation contained in these few pages, that, to correct it, it is often necessary to contradict every sentence. On this account, the reader must frequently dispense with the ordinary forms of quoting and answering; and consider those paragraphs which are marked with reversed commas as the words of Major Scott Waring, and those which are not as the answers to them. I do not accuse my opponent of wilful errors; but, if he be clear of them, his information must be extremely incorrect.

"We have now a great number of sectarian missionaries spread over every part of India."—p. xii. Those whom Major Scott Waring is pleased to honor with this appellation may amount to fifteen or sixteen, the greater part of whom reside at Serampore, near Calcutta, directly under the eye of the supreme government. "Mr. Carey the head of the baptist mission in Bengal, and his assistant missionaries, have been employed, since the year 1804, in translating the Scriptures into the various languages of India." It may have been from that period that the work of translating has been conducted on so extensive a scale; but for many years before that time Mr. Carey was engaged in the same undertaking. An edition of the New Testament, in Bengalee, was printed at Serampore in 1801, a copy of which is now in His Majesty's library. "Mr. Carey is employed in translating the Scriptures into the *Chinese* language."—p. xv. The Chinese translation is not the work of Mr. Carey, but of Mr. Johannes Lassar, a learned Armenian Christian, with other assistants. "As the different parts are translated, they are printed, as I understand, at the *Company's press*, attached to the College at Calcutta." If this were true, while no man is forced to read them, no danger could arise from it: but there is very little, if any, truth in it. The translations

of the missionaries have been printed at Serampore. "Specimens of these translations have been sent home by the provost." It seems, then, that they were not engaged in any thing of which they were ashamed. "The natives of India cannot be ignorant of these novel and extraordinary proceedings:—Especially while their most learned pundits assist in the work. "They can form no other conclusion than this, that, if we cannot *persuade*, we shall *compel* them to embrace Christianity." So long as no compulsion is used towards them, they have more sense than to draw such conclusions, or even to believe them when drawn for them by others whom they consider as men of *no religion*.

"In 1781, when it was a fixed principle of the legislature that we ought never to *interfere* with the religion, laws, or native customs of the people of India, a proposition for *free-schools* and *Christian missionaries* could not have been listened to."—p. xiii. There never was a period, since the British have had footing in India, in which either free-schools or Christian missionaries were considered as an *interference* with the religious opinions of the natives. If they were, why were Schwartz and his contemporaries tolerated? The truth is, the term "interference" has been adopted in this controversy to answer an end, and the idea which our adversaries endeavor to attach to it is altogether novel.

"The late bishop of St. Asaph, a sound and orthodox divine, and one of the main pillars of our good old Church of England, deprecated all such interference." He did so; and Major Scott Waring, with his *men of sense, observation, and character*, have, doubtless, in his lordship's decease, lost an able advocate. "The command of our Saviour to his apostles, to preach the gospel to all nations, did not, as he conceived, apply to us—and his opinion in 1781 was universal." Major Scott Waring may know that this was the opinion of the late bishop of St. Asaph; but he knows very little indeed of what were the opinions of the Christian world. "Since that period many very worthy and good men are of opinion that, as Christians, it is incumbent upon us to spread the Christian religion as widely as we possibly can; and highly, indeed, do I applaud their zeal, when it is exercised in countries where *we* have no political power." Whatever charges we may exhibit against Major Scott Waring, we cannot accuse him of not speaking out.

"I do not exactly know what are baptist missionaries. I believe they may be classed with Calvinistic methodists, to distinguish them from the Arminian methodists."—p. xv. We can excuse the author's ignorance on this subject: but when he tells us, in the same page, that there are "spread over

India, baptist missionaries, Arminian methodist, and united brethren missionaries," &c. &c., we see ignorance combined with something worse. The Arminian methodists have no mission in India, and never had. The united brethren have formerly had one at Serampore; but, I believe, at present they have none. Before this gentleman writes again, he would do well to consider the justness of the remark made by himself, and to apply it to other subjects, as well as politics: "In discussing political questions, a certain degree of acquaintance with the subject is supposed to be requisite."—p. 38.

"I am assured, by gentlemen lately returned from India, that, notwithstanding the very great increase of missionaries of late years, the case is not changed since my time; that they have not made a single Mahomedan convert, and that the few Hindoos who have been converted were men of the most despicable character, who had lost their castes, and took up a new religion because they were excommunicated."—p. xlii. I presume these *gentlemen lately returned from India* are the same persons whom this writer elsewhere denominates *men of sense, observation and character*. The reader will now be able to judge of the value of these boasted authorities. EVERY PARTICULAR IN THIS PARAGRAPH IS FALSE. There has been no such great increase of missionaries of late years as is pretended. There are Mahomedans, as well as Hindoos, who have been baptized. Out of more than eighty natives who had been baptized before May 25, 1806, only three had previously lost caste, eight were brahmins, and seven Mahomedans. The whole number which had been excluded for immoral conduct might amount to eight or nine. As nearly as I can make it out the above is a true statement. The reader may see a list of the baptized, down to Nov. 1804, in No. XV. Periodical Accounts—Pref. p. xiv. I can assure him that the missionaries might have had more proselytes than they have, if they would have received such characters as these men report them to have received; but their object is to make *converts to Christ*, and not proselytes to themselves. Indeed, so little are the assertions of this writer to be regarded, with respect to the character of the native converts, that it would be the easiest thing imaginable directly to confront them by the testimony of competent witnesses. Mr. J. Fernandez, a gentleman who came from India early in 1806, and who is now with Dr. Ryland at Bristol, makes the following declaration:—"There are several Mahomedan converts among the missionaries, and some very respectable Hindoos who have embraced Christianity. To the best of my recollection, there are but two at Serampore who had previously lost caste: these had been



for a long time reckoned Portuguese, and were not in worse circumstances than other people. Some of the highest class of brahmins have, to my knowledge, embraced the gospel, whom the natives call Mookoorja, Chattrja, Barridja," &c. As to what is said of their non-success, either by Major Scott Waring or the gentleman lately returned from India, I appeal to the common sense of mankind, whether, if they themselves believed what they say, they would raise such an opposition as they do. They tell us the natives are alarmed; but the alarm is with themselves. It is somewhat remarkable that infidelity, which has of late years threatened to swallow up Christianity, should in so short a time be alarmed for itself, and for its pagan and Mahomedan allies. A small detachment from the Christian army, clad in the armor of God, and operating as in a way of diversion, has caused their host to tremble, and to cry out to the civil powers to assist them by recalling these men.

This gentleman is sufficiently aware of the prejudice which exists against *protestant dissenters*, and knows how to avail himself of it. He can condescend to call the missionaries *sectaries* and *schismatics*.—pp. xliii.—xliv. And would he have liked them better, if they had been churchmen? No; for he speaks of certain gentlemen as "elased under that description of our clergy who are termed *evangelical*," and of their being all for "converting the Hindoos to Christianity."—p. xv. Clergymen of this description are, in his account, as bad as sectaries and schismatics. The truth is, it is *us Christians* that we incur his displeasure; only he judges it prudent to attack us under other names.

But these missionaries are also represented as "illiterate, ignorant, and as enthusiastic as the wildest devotees among the Hindoos."—p. xlv. The following extract from the speech of Sir George Barlow, published in a Calcutta Gazette Extraordinary, on Saturday, March 8, 1806, will prove that all men are not of Major Scott Waring's opinion. "I have received with great satisfaction the information that, under the patronage of the Asiatic Society, the society of protestant missionaries at the Danish settlement of Serampore, aided and superintended by the abilities of Mr. Carey, professor of the Shanscrit and Bengalee languages, has undertaken the translation of some of the most ancient and authentic works of literature in the former of these languages."

Of the missionaries sent out by the London society, I do not believe there is an individual who is either "*ignorant* or *illiterate*;" though, doubtless, as in all other bodies of men, there are diversities of talent and learning. And, with respect to *enthusi-*

*asm*, after what has been quoted from Major Scott Waring, no Christian need be offended at his calling him an enthusiast.

This gentleman has furnished himself with various reports from the missionary societies. Among others, he has met with a "Sermon," preached in May last before "The Society of Missions to Africa and the East," of which society admiral lord Gambier is a governor. It seems, then, that India is not *altogether* "thrown into the hands of schismatics." But at the end of this sermon is an account of a brahmin, as given by Mr. John Thomas, in the "Baptist Periodical Accounts."—Vol. I, pp. 22—26. Let any one that fears God read that account, and compare it with these remarks upon it. I had the curiosity," says he, "to inquire after Mr. Thomas and his convert, and I heard that they both died raving mad in Bengal."—p. xlvi. We may suppose this information, as well as the preceding, was received from the gentlemen lately returned from India. It is worthy of them. Parbotee, however, is neither dead nor insane. And Mr. Thomas, though his mind was deranged for a month or two at one period of his life, yet died sane and happy. Mr. John Fernandez, the gentleman before referred to, says, "Mr. Thomas was deranged for a short time; and after his recovery lived with my father at Dinagore for a considerable time before his dissolution, when he died very happy. As for Parbotee, I am almost certain that he is still alive. He was so, however, when I left India in 1806. I saw him myself."

It is remarkable that this gentleman is for tolerating the Roman Catholic missionaries, and all others, indeed, except "*those who possess this new mania for conversion*, so unaccountably taken up."—p. xlix. We perfectly comprehend him; and, I hope, shall profit by the hint. It signifies but little with him how many missionaries there are, nor by what names they are called, so that they are *not in earnest for the salvation of men*. We will follow his example:—while we adhere to that denomination which appears to us to approach nearest to the Scriptures, we will recognize the *Christian*, in whatever communion we may find him. We will rejoice in the good which is done by "The Society for promoting Christian Knowledge," even though they are offended with their missionaries, for nothing that we can conceive but their exercising the common duties of hospitality to ours.\*

\* See the last Report of the committee of this society, No. IV. p. 165. They acknowledge the documents they possess to be *quite insufficient* to enable them to form a judgment of the true ground of certain disorders; but "Missionaries from an Anabaptist Society, and from that called the London Missionary Society, have called upon them, and it seems received some countenance from

Major Scott Waring, among other missionary reports, has procured No. XVI. of the "Baptist Periodical Accounts," and proposes giving us some extracts from it. Before he does this, however, he presents us with a few particulars by way of introduction; but all, as the reader would suppose, gathered from this said No. XVI. First, he informs us that "nine English missionaries are employed by this society in Bengal alone."—p. liii. What a number then must they employ, the reader would suppose, in all the other provinces of India! It happens, however, that in no other province of Hindostan have they ever employed a single missionary. Whether the gentlemen lately returned from India informed the author of the great numbers of these missionaries scattered all over the country, or however he came by the idea, his mind is certainly full of it, and it has led him into a curious train of reasoning. "The jealousy and the alarm," says he, "which has pervaded the whole of the Carnatic and Mysore, has been but partially felt in Bengal, because [there] the efforts of the English Missionaries have hitherto not extended beyond a few inconsiderable villages, and the populous city of Dacca."—p. li. They have been more extensive then, it should seem, in the Carnatic and Mysore! The truth is, I believe, that NOT AN ENGLISH MISSIONARY HAS ENTERED EITHER OF THESE COUNTRIES. Nearly the whole of what has been hitherto done is confined to Bengal; for though the London society has five or six missionaries in other provinces, some of which may be near to the Carnatic, yet the time is so short that they have scarcely been able, at present, to acquire the languages. But in Bengal the baptist mission has existed for a number of years, and the labors of the missionaries have been much more extensive than our author would seem in this instance to apprehend: yet there these "alarms have been but partially felt!" Who does not perceive the consequence? THESE ALARMS ARE NOT THE EFFECT OF MISSIONARY EXERTIONS.

Major Scott Waring goes on to inform his reader of a number of particulars, in a manner as though he had collected them from our own report. Among other things, he speaks of Mr. Carey as "having apartments in the college for the reception of his brother missionaries when they visit Calcutta," and repeats the story of "Mr. Thomas and his convert Parbotee dying mad in Bengal."—p. 53. Did he learn these particulars from No. XVI. or from the gentlemen lately returned from India? It were singular indeed if a professor in a college had no apart-

them; and, therefore, this committee thinks proper to throw out a suspicion that they may have been the occasion of these evils!

ments in it, and were not at liberty to receive any person who may call upon him.

"In the company's list of college officers he is styled Mr. William Carey; but the Bible Society has given him the dignified title of *Reverend*."—p. liii. He might be called *Doctor Carey*, or *Professor Carey*. Whether either of these titles would be less displeasing to this gentleman I cannot tell. If not, whenever he has occasion to correspond with him, he may lay aside all titles, and call him, as I do, *Mr. Carey*. I can answer for it that it will give him no offence.

As to the attempts to prove from the missionaries' own accounts that they have "caused considerable *uneasiness* among the people of the villages," Major Scott Waring may make what he can of them. If he had given extracts, as he proposed, and referred to the pages, it would have appeared that no such sensation was ever produced *with respect to government*. It was confined, as Mr. Carey says, "to abusive language from a few loose persons;" or, at most, to ill treatment of the native converts, and which, in every instance, they have borne with Christian meekness and patience. No such thing as a disturbance, endangering the peace of society, has occurred. The "alarm" which the appearance of a European is allowed to excite (p. lviii.) respects him not as a missionary, but *as a European*; and it is for the purpose of avoiding this as much as possible that the labors of the native converts are encouraged. This writer seems to think it sufficient to discredit all missionary attempts that he can prove from our own accounts that we have strong prejudices to encounter, and judge it expedient, instead of violently attacking them, to proceed in as still and silent a way as possible.

A very heavy charge is preferred against one of the missionaries, as having *perverted* the words of our Lord: "Think you that I am come to send peace on the earth? I tell you nay." Yet nothing is alleged to prove it a perversion, except that the gospel inculcates the mild doctrine of "peace on earth, and good will to men."—p. lix. The *direct* influence of the gospel is no doubt what he says of it; but what if, owing to the depravity of men, it should in many instances occasion the most bitter enmity and opposition? Is the gospel accountable for this? Christian compassion has been known to excite the foulest resentment in some men. What then? Is Christian compassion ever the worse?

The remarks on the journey to Dacca (pp. liv. lv.) show what Major Scott Waring wishes to prove; but that is all. If what he calls "the proper line for the British government to pursue," had been pursued on that occasion, the young men had not been

interrupted. I say the *young men*; for it was not Mr. Carey, but Mr. *William Carey*, his second son, who accompanied Mr. Moore. "They distinguished," we are told, "between the brahmins and the people at large." Yes, they had reason to do so; for the people were eager to receive the tracts, but some of the brahmins were offended; and this is common on almost all other occasions. "Should we be mad enough to make the same destination, our destruction is *inevitable*." One would think, then, the destruction of the missionaries themselves would not only be inevitable, but immediate. As the brahmins are displeased with none but them and the native converts, if *they* escape, there is no cause for others to fear. The truth is, the common people are not so under the influence of the brahmins as to be displeased with hearing them publicly confuted. On the contrary, they will often express their pleasure at it; and, when the latter remain silent, will call out, "Why do you not answer him?" But "lord Clive and Mr. Verelst, in the year 1766, were not so mad as to advise a poor creature who had lost caste to abandon his ridiculous and idolatrous prejudices, and to embrace the true religion."—p. lvi. If I were to say they were not so wise and so good as to do so, I should be as near the truth; and my saying would bear reflection in a dying hour, quite as much as that of Major Scott Waring.

"We may conceive the narrow *bigotry* by which these men are actuated, by the conduct of Mr. [William] Carey and Mr. Moore to some native Christian catholics whom they met with in a village when they were driven from Dacca by the magistrate and collector." And what was it? Why, "to these poor catholics, they pointed out the *errors of Popery*, and warned them of the danger of *worshipping* and trusting to *idols*."—p. lx. And this is *bigotry*! Such bigots they certainly were and are.

To prove the absolute inutility of the dispersion of one edition of the New Testament, and of twenty thousand religious tracts, a letter from Mr. Carey is cited, which speaks of there being "but few months in which *some* were not baptized; of *three* natives having joined them the last month, and *two* the month before; but of their being under the necessity of excluding *several* for *evil conduct*."—p. lx. If Major Scott Waring be not more successful in his opposition than he is in his *proofs*, Christianity may still go on and prosper in India. I suspect it was from a conscious want of this important article, that he was obliged to fill up his pages with such terms as "bigots," "madmen," "mischievous madmen," &c. &c. There is nothing so provoking, to a man who is desirous of proving a point, as the want of evidence.

"In the course of several years, they have

made about eighty converts, all from the lowest of the people, most of them beggars by profession, and others who had lost their castes. The whole of them were rescued from poverty, and procured a comfortable subsistence by their conversion."—p. xli. That is, reader, thus say the *gentlemen lately returned from India*.—p. xli. I need not repeat the refutation of these falsehoods. Before, they were said *all* to have previously lost caste: but now it seems to be only *some* of them. Judge, reader, do these men believe what they say? But "the whole of them were rescued from poverty, and procured a comfortable subsistence by their conversion." A considerable number of the Christian natives live many miles from Serampore, and subsist in the same manner as they did before their baptism, and without any aid from the missionaries. The subsistence of others, who reside in the neighborhood of Serampore, is from the same employment as it was before they became Christians; and those who receive pay from the missionaries are such as are *employed* by them. Mr. John Fernandez says, "I have been present almost every time when the converts have professed their faith before the brethren, and have repeatedly heard the missionaries tell them that, unless they worked with their own hands, they would receive no help from them. Inquirers were always kept for some time on probation." Some of them were Byraggees, a sort of religious beggars: but they are no longer so when they become Christians. No one is supported in idleness. If any are bettered in their circumstances, it is by being taught to be industrious and frugal. But many of those whom our author calls "beggars by profession" lived in much greater fulness by that way of life than they do now by labor; and it is not very likely that they should have relinquished the one, and chosen the other, from interested motives. What is it that kindles the wrath of this man? If a word be spoken against the character of these people while they continue heathens, he is all indignant: but, if they become Christians, the foulest reproaches are heaped upon them. Is it because these beggars are become industrious, and cease to live upon the superstitious credulity of their neighbors, that he is so offended? Does he think the British government would be overturned if all the rest of the beggars were to follow their example?

But "one of the missionaries writes to England that a hundred rupees a month would support ten native converts with their families, and a still greater number of single brethren; which," he says, "is undoubtedly true, because the wages of our common servants are but three, four, and five rupees a month."—p. lxi. lxii. Why does not our author refer to the *pages* from whence he



takes his extracts? As this passage stands in his pamphlet, it conveys the idea that *every native convert with a family* costs the society ten rupees a month: but if the reader look into No. XVI. p. 171, from which the extract is taken, he will find that it is of native *preachers* that Mr. Marshman writes; who observes that, “while they are thus employed in disseminating the good seed, they cannot be at home supporting their families.” It is one thing, surely, to pay a man ten rupees for the support of his family, and his own travelling expenses; and another to give him the same sum as a common laborer at home.

Major Scott Waring may give as many extracts from our publications as he pleases; but he should not pervert the meaning. He may think us wild and foolish to lay out money in such undertakings; he may call it “*ridiculous* to talk of the perishing millions of India (p. lxii.) he may reckon compassion to a great city, wholly given to idolatry, a proof of the want of *common sense* (p. lxxv.) but let him do us the justice of allowing us to think otherwise. We are not surprised at his having no compassion for perishing idolaters, nor indeed at any thing else, unless it be his pretending, after all, to be a Christian; but let him not represent us as employed in bribing bad men to become hypocrites.

“Some of these converts have been expelled for gross immorality.” True, and what then? “Such I am confident would be the fate of the remainder, were not the missionaries afraid of being laughed at.” But why should he imagine this? Does he think the Hindoos *all* bad men? or do they become such when they embrace Christianity? And why should the missionaries be supposed to retain bad men in their society for fear of being *laughed at*? Had they feared this, they had never engaged in the work. Did they fear this, they would not exclude so many as they do: or, at least, would not report it in their letters. I may add, it is not long since they had a fair opportunity to have entirely *desisted* from their work; and that in a way that would not have incurred the laughter, but possibly the commendation of these men. They might also from that time have gone on to accumulate fortunes, instead of sacrificing every thing in a cause which they knew, it seems, at the same time to be hopeless. Surely these missionaries must be worse than madmen; and the government at Calcutta, and the Asiatic Society, cannot be much better, to think of employing them in translating works of literature.

Once more, “The new orders of missionaries are the most ignorant and the most bigoted of men. Their compositions are, in fact, nothing but puritanical rant, of the most vulgar kind; worse than that so much in

fashion in Great Britain, during the days of Oliver Cromwell.” We hope the author will furnish us with a specimen. Yes, here it is: “When Mr. [W.] Carey and Mr. Moore were at Dacca, they write on the Lord’s day as follows: *What an awful sight have we witnessed this day! A large and populous city wholly given to idolatry, and not an individual to warn them to flee from the wrath to come. As soon as we rose in the morning, our attention was unavoidably excited by scenes the most absurd, disgusting, and degrading to human nature!*” Judge, Christian reader, what a state of mind that man must possess who can call this language *vulgar rant*, and adduce it as a proof of *ignorance and bigotry!* “Could men possessing common sense,” he adds, “have written such nonsense as this is, unless blinded by enthusiasm? Had they discovered that a single Englishman was a convert to the Hindoo or the Mahomedan religion, they would have been justified in giving their sentiments *to him*, as to his apostasy from the true to a false and idolatrous religion; but to pour out such unmeaning and useless abuse on an immense population, which merely observed those forms and ceremonies which had been used throughout Hindostan for above 2000 years, is folly and arrogance in the extreme.”—p. lxxv. I wonder whether this writer ever read a book called the Bible, or heard of any of its language, excepting a few passages held up, perchance to ridicule, in some history of the times of Oliver Cromwell! I presume the reader has had enough: and, as all that follows is little else than a repetition of what has already been answered, interlarded with the usual quantity of low abuse, I shall pass it over unnoticed. I have seldom seen a performance, by a writer calling himself a *Christian*, so full of bare-faced infidelity. May God give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth!

## PART II.

We certify the king that if this city be builded, and the walls thereof set up by this means, thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

THE ADVERSARIES OF JUDAH.

Now Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, be ye far from thence: let the work of this house of God alone.

DARIUS.

## INTRODUCTION.

THAT apologies for Christianity should have been necessary in heathen countries is easily conceived: but an attempt of the kind in this country, and at this period of time, seems itself almost to require an apology.

Who would have thought that the sons of protestant Britain would so far degenerate as to become the advocates of paganism? or, though that were the case with a few individuals, yet who could have imagined that a number of men would be found who would have either the power or the resolution publicly to oppose the propagation of Christianity?

We may be told that the greater part of our opponents profess to be Christians, and that their opposition is merely on *political* considerations. I might meet them upon this ground, and might deny that the progress of the gospel in any country, or in any circumstances, can be unfriendly to its political welfare. But it would be compromising the honor of the gospel to rest its defence on this principle. If Christianity be true, it is of such importance that no political considerations are sufficient to weigh against it; nor ought they, for a moment, to be placed in competition with it. If Christianity be true, it is of God; and, if it be of God, to oppose its progress on the grounds of political expediency is the same thing as to tell our Maker that we will not have him to reign over us, unless his government be subservient to our temporal interests.

Should we be reminded that we are fallible men, and ought not to identify our undertakings with Christianity, nor to reckon every opposition to us as an opposition to Christ, this we readily admit. If we be opposed in relation to any other object than that of propagating the gospel, or on account of any thing *faulty* in us in the pursuit of that object, such opposition is not directed against Christianity, and we have no desire, in such cases, to identify our undertakings with it. Let it only be fairly proved that the missionaries are *intemperate and dangerous men*, and we will admit the propriety of their being recalled. But if no such proof be given, if the reports circulated against them be unfounded, if the alarms which have been spread in India be the mere fabrications of evil-minded Europeans, and if they themselves be men who work the work of God, an opposition to them may be found to be an opposition to Christ.

Let our adversaries, instead of declaiming against us, join issue with us on this point. Let them prove the missionaries to be *intemperate and dangerous men*, and their cause is gained.

We have only one petition to present to our judges; which is that *such effects as naturally arise from the preaching of the gospel among those who do not believe it, which always have arisen, even from the first preaching of the apostles down to our own times, and which terminate only on ourselves, may not be admitted in evidence against us*. Our adversaries allege that, according to our own accounts, the missionaries occasionally excite *uneasi-*

*ness*, and that the native Christians sometimes draw upon themselves *abusive* treatment. We do not deny that in a few instances this has been the case; but we say this effect is no more than what Christianity has always produced, in a greater or less degree, when addressed to unbelievers; and that so long as this uneasiness and abuse are merely directed against the parties, and are no more injurious to the British government than the preaching of Paul and Barnabas was to that of Rome, we ought not, on this account, to be censured. And if a few things of this kind be thrown aside, as irrelevant, we have no apprehension of a single charge being substantiated against us.

## SECTION I.

### REMARKS ON MAJOR SCOTT WARING'S LETTER TO THE REV. MR. OWEN.

THERE is a sympathy between kindred principles which is often unperceived by the party who favors them, but which may be expected to betray itself in speaking or writing upon the subject. How is it that our opponents are so anxious for the preservation of paganism and Mahomedism? They certainly have no intention of becoming the disciples of either, nor to convey any such idea to the public: but, when these systems are in danger, they have a feeling for them which they cannot conceal. How is it that Major Scott Waring should so readily find mottos for his pamphlets, in "Hints to the Public and the Legislature, on the Nature and Effect of Evangelical Preaching?" He professes to be no *sectary*, but a true orthodox churchman, believing in the doctrine of the trinity; nay more, considering the belief of that doctrine as the only thing essential to Christianity.—p. 107. Yet the author of these "Hints," if report be true, while he calls himself "a Barrister," is, in reality, a *Socinian dissenter*: but, being so *exactly of his mind with respect to evangelical religion*, his wanting what he accounts the only essential of Christianity is a matter of small account.

FINALLY: How is it that the cause of our opponents should be favored in most of the *Socinian* publications, and that they should be so happily united in their wishes for government not to tolerate *evangelical religion*? One submits "A Plan to his Majesty's Ministers, the East India Company, and the Legislature," proposing to "recall every English missionary;" another suggests "Hints to the Public and the Legislature, on the Nature and Effect of Evangelical Preaching." The language of both is, We know not what to do with these evangelical men, and therefore humbly request GOVERNMENT to take them in hand!—Yet these are the men who would be thought the friends, and almost the only friends, of reason and toleration!

If the major and his new ally have been accused of dealing too much in *reason*, we answer, with Dr. Owen, they have been unjustly treated; as much so as poor St. Hierome, when beaten by an angel for preaching in a Ciceroian style.

So much for the motto. As to the Letter itself, it contains little more than a repetition of things which have no foundation in truth, and which, I trust, have been already answered. The major having been so ably repulsed in his first object of attack, "The British and Foreign Bible Society," may be expected to direct his force somewhat more pointedly against the missionaries. We have his whole strength, however, in his former Preface. No new facts are adduced, nor new arguments from the old ones: almost all is repetition. Thus he repeats the base calumnies of our bribing beggars to become Christians; of our sending out thousands a year to support them; of our not having made one good convert; of the converts having lost caste before they were baptized, &c.—pp. 32, 87. And thus, seven times over, he has repeated the words of Mr. Marshman, on "an alarm being excited in a bigoted city by the appearance of a European missionary," which, after all, respects him not as a missionary, but merely as a European. The scope of Mr. Marshman's argument proves this: for he is recommending *native* missionaries, who, in conversing with their own countrymen, are listened to with attention, and excite none of that fear and reserve which are produced by the appearance of a foreigner.\*

If the *reviling* conduct of the inhabitants of a certain village, towards the missionaries or native converts, who bore all without resistance, proves the fault to have been with them, it will prove the same of other missionaries whom our author professes to respect, and of other native converts. If he will look into the Report of "The Society for promoting Christian Knowledge," for 1804, he will see an account of "an extraordinary conversion of several thousands, and of an extraordinary and unexpected *persecution* of the converts from their heathen neighbors, and particularly from some *men in office, under the collector*."—p. 145. Moreover, it will prove that the apostle Paul and our Saviour were accountable for the *uneasiness* which their preaching excited among the Jews, and for the persecutions which they met with on account of it. We may be told, indeed, that we ought not to compare ourselves with Christ and his apostles; and it is true that, in various respects, it would be highly improper to do so: but in things which are common to Christ and his followers it is very proper. Now this is the case in the present instance. The disciples of Christ were

given to expect that their doctrine would draw upon them the displeasure of unbelievers, in the same manner as that of Christ had done before them. "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."—John xv. 20. If Major Scott Waring had known any thing of the gospel and of its opposition to the vicious inclinations of the human heart, he could not have stumbled in the manner he has at Mr. Ward's application of the words of our Saviour in Luke xii. 51. He had introduced them before, and now he introduces them again and again.—pp. 80; 99. "Suppose ye that I am come to send peace on the earth? I tell you Nay." "These words," he says, "most evidently, considered with their context, apply to the destruction of Jerusalem, which our blessed Saviour predicted would happen before the generation then existing had passed away." So, then, Christ came to set fire to Jerusalem! But how was it *already kindled*? Almost any commentator would have taught him that these words have no reference to Jewish wars, but to Christian persecutions, which were predicted to take place at the same time. Neither do they express, as I have said before, what was the *direct* tendency of the gospel, which is doubtless to produce love and peace, but that of which, through man's depravity, it would be the *occasion*. In this sense Mr. Ward applied the text, in order to account for the persecutions which the native converts met with; and I should not have supposed that a man of Major Scott Waring's age and talents could have construed it into a suggestion that the natural tendency of the gospel is to produce division.

The major proposes to the Rev. Mr. Owen that they should "preserve the manners of gentlemen in arguing the question."—p. 4. Is it then becoming the pen of a gentleman to write as he has done of Mr. Thomas and the other missionaries? \* Or does he think

\* Having lately received a letter from a gentleman of respectability in Scotland, concerning the calumny on the memory of Mr. Thomas, I shall take the liberty of introducing it in this place, as a farther vindication of this injured character.

"Dear sir,

"An anonymous pamphlet † has this day fallen into my hands, which is ascribed to a gentleman who formerly held a high rank in the East India Company's military service, and of which it is the principal object to induce the East India Company to expel every protestant missionary from their possessions, and prevent the circulation of the Scriptures in the native languages.

"Among the numerous and virulent misrepresentations which this work contains, there is a most false and scandalous aspersion of the character of

\* See *Periodical Accounts*, No. XVI. p. 170.

† Major Scott Waring's Observations," &c.



himself at liberty, when dealing with *them* to put off that character? If his own motives be arraigned, or his Christianity suspected, he thinks himself rudely treated; yet, when speaking of men who secede from the established church, he can allow himself to insinuate that they do not act from principle.—p. 58.

As to the charges of “ignorance and bigotry,” which he is continually ringing in our ears, I refer to the answers already

the late Mr. Thomas, who was the first missionary of your society in India, which, from my personal acquaintance with that gentleman, I am enabled to contradict in the most positive manner, and which, from my regard for his memory, I deem it my duty so to contradict.

“The author asserts, in p. 46, and again in p. 51, of the preface, that Mr. Thomas *died raving mad in Bengal*. It is indeed true that Mr. Thomas was once afflicted with a temporary derangement; but it was a considerable time before his death. From the summer of 1796, till May 1801, I held an official situation in the Company’s civil service at Dinagopore; and, during the last six months of this period, I had very frequent intercourse with Mr. Thomas, and heard him preach almost every Sunday; and I most solemnly affirm that I never saw the least symptom of derangement in any part of his behavior or conversation. On the contrary, I considered him as a man of good understanding, uncommon benevolence, and solid piety.

“In May 1801, I quitted Dinagopore, and never again saw Mr. Thomas; but I had more than one letter from him between that time and his death, which happened, I think, in October, the same year. These letters, which are still in my possession, exhibit no signs whatever of mental derangement. In the last of them he wrote (with the calmness and hope of a Christian) of his own dissolution; an event which he thought was near at hand, as he felt some internal symptoms of the formation of a polypos in his heart.

“After Mr. Thomas’s decease, I had an opportunity of learning the circumstances of it from the late Mr. Samuel Powell, a person whose veracity none who knew him could question: and I never had the smallest reason to believe or suspect that Mr. Thomas was, in any degree whatever, deranged in mind at the time of his death. On the contrary, I always understood that he died in possession of his faculties, and of that hope which nothing but an unshaken faith in the gospel of Christ can give.

“It is not my present purpose to vindicate the *living* from the coarse and vulgar abuse of this anonymous author. This you have undertaken, and are well qualified to do; but as he has thought it necessary to insult the character of the *dead*, and wound the feelings of surviving friends; and as I am, perhaps, the only person now in Great Britain who can, from personal acquaintance with Mr. Thomas during the last year of his life, do any thing to rescue his memory from this unmerited insult, I should think it criminal to have remained silent on this occasion. And I am happy thus to make some return for the instructions I received from Mr. Thomas as a minister of Christ, and the pleasure I frequently enjoyed in his society and conversation.

“You are at liberty to make any use of this letter that you may think proper. Believe me to be, Dear sir, very sincerely yours,

“William Cunninghame.”

Glasgow, Jan. 15, 1803.

given in my *Strictures*. It is allowed that “Mr. Carey may be a good oriental scholar, and a good man; but he is narrow-minded and intemperate.”—p. 33. The proof of this is taken from the conduct of his *son* at Dacca. The mistake as to the person is excusable: but what was there in the conduct of either of the young men on that occasion which showed them to be narrow-minded or intemperate? They felt, though they were not apostles, for a great city wholly given to idolatry; for they had read in their Bibles that “idolaters cannot enter the kingdom of God.” This was narrowness! But when Major Scott Waring proposes to exclude all denominations of Christian missionaries from India, except those of the established church, I suppose he reckons this consistent with liberality.\*

With regard to *intemperateness*, I know of nothing like it in the conduct of these junior missionaries. They gave away tracts to those who came to their boat for them, and wished to have taken a stand in the city for the like purpose: but, being interrupted, they returned home; not declining, however, to do that which had been done for years without offence, during the administration of Marquis Wellesley—namely, to distribute tracts in the villages. As to the Marquis Cornwallis, or any other person, being absent from Calcutta, it had just as much influence in causing their journey as Major Scott Waring’s being at the same time, perchance, at Peterborough House.

But their language is *cant*. The major, however, might find plenty of such cant in the communications of Schwartz and his colleagues to “The Society for promoting Christian Knowledge,” if he would only look over the East India intelligence in their reports. These, he tells us, were missionaries in his time, and of them he approves: yet, if their letters were printed in our accounts, they would equally fall under his censure. The truth is, the language of a serious mind, formed on scriptural principles, will always sound like cant in the ears of such men as this author.

Major Scott Waring makes a curious distinction between a *gratuitous circulation* of the Scriptures and a *giving them to petitioners*. The former he opposes; but to the latter, he says, “no Christian can object.”—p. 48. Wherein then consists the mighty difference? In the one case they are offered for acceptance, if the party please; in the other, the party himself makes the application: but in neither is there any thing done

\* Such is the notion of *liberality* and *toleration* which I ventured to denounce in my Letter to the chairman of the East India Company; and I wish I were able to draw the serious attention of every friend to religious liberty in Britain to the subject. These men talk of liberty, while they are razing it to its foundation.

but with his full consent. No difference exists as to the effects; for, if an individual petition for a New Testament, as soon as the brahmins or other interested persons come to know it they will be just as *uneasy*, and as likely to *revile* him, as if he had received it without petitioning. But, I suppose, Major Scott Waring may think that if nothing were done, except in consequence of applications from the natives, nothing in effect would be done, and this would please him! After all, I question whether the greater part of the New Testaments which have been distributed have not been given as "a dole of charity to *petitioners*." An indiscriminate distribution would be throwing them away: it is therefore an object with the missionaries to give Testaments only to persons who *desire* them, and who are, therefore, likely to read them. So I hope we shall please better as we understand one another.

It seems to grieve the major that Christians of almost all denominations are united against him; but he and his colleagues have to thank themselves for this. Had their attack been directed merely against a few dissenters, they might have had some chance of succeeding: but it is so broad that no man, who has any feeling for Christianity, can view it in any other light than as an attempt to *crush it in our eastern possessions*. It is an attempt to stop the progress of the Bible; and therefore must be absolutely antichristian. Whether Major Scott Waring perceives his error in this respect, and wishes to repair it, or whatever be his motive, he certainly labors in this, his *second* performance, to divide his opponents. First, he would fain persuade them that he himself is a Christian, which it is very possible he may be in his own esteem; and, secondly, he would be very glad to single out these sectarian missionaries as the only objects of his dislike. It grieves him sorely that they should have been encouraged by clergymen. If they would but discard these men, I know not but they might obtain forgiveness for being evangelical. But, if not, he will do his utmost to prove that they are not the true sons of the church. "I never met with an *evangelical clergyman*," he says, "who had not a tender feeling for those who have deserted the church of England, though at one time conformists." Allowing this to be the case, he might have supposed it was for their holding *evangelical principles* in common with themselves, and not on account of their deserting the church. And, whatever feeling they might have toward those Christians who are not of their own communion, it is surely as pardonable as that which this author and his party have toward Mahomedans and heathens.

This writer seems to think that, unless the whole population of India were convert-

ed, nothing is done. If forty in a year were to embrace Christianity, that is nothing in his account. He should consider, however, that we believe in the immortality of the soul, and in the importance of eternal salvation. We should not think our labor lost, therefore, if we could be the instruments of saving half that number. We know, moreover, that the greatest and most beneficial events to mankind have arisen from small beginnings. Hence we pay no regard to such objections; and even the flouts and sneers of our adversaries are far from discouraging us. We compare them with those of "Sanballat the Haronite, and Tobiah the Ammonite," who were grieved exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. "What do these feeble Jews?" said the one: "will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? Even that which they build," answered the other, "if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall." Yet Nehemiah went on with the work, and the wall was built.

The author still continues to revile Mr. [Wm.] Carey, and Mr. Moore, for what they wrote in their journal at Dacca, calling it "downright nonsense;" and still speaks of them as "ignorant men," on account of it. The reader may see what this nonsense was, by only turning to p. 591. Reader, can you tell us wherein lies the nonsense of this language? for we are unable to discover it. Major Scott Waring has been told that, as the language of the young men was taken from the words of Scripture, in reviling them he blasphemeth the word of God. And what is his answer? As far as I can understand it, it amounts to this: The same things, which were very wise in Paul, and in our Saviour, are very foolish in these young men.—p. 89. But there may come a time when it shall appear, even to this gentleman, that *things* are the same, whether they be in an apostle or in any other man; and that he who revileth *the words of Christ* revileth Christ; and he that revileth Christ revileth Him that sent him.

## SECTION II.

### REMARKS ON "A VINDICATION OF THE HINDOOS, BY A BENGAL OFFICER."

SINCE the publications of Messrs. Twining and Scott Waring, another piece has appeared, entitled "A Vindication of the Hindoos from the Aspersions of the Rev. Claudius Buchanan, M. A.;" with a Refutation of the Arguments exhibited in his Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical Establishment for British India, and the ultimate Civilization of the Natives by their Conversion to Christianity. Also, Re-

marks on an Address from the Missionaries in Bengal to the Natives of India, condemning their Errors, and inviting them to become Christians. The whole tending to evince the Excellency of the Moral System of the Hindoos, and the Danger of interfering with their Customs or Religion. By a Bengal Officer."

This production surpasses all that have gone before it. Messrs. Twining and Scott Waring were desirous of being considered as Christians; but, if this writer does not formally avow his infidelity, he takes so little care to disguise it that no doubt can remain on the subject. After having ascribed the protestant religion to "reason" rather than revelation (pp. 9, 10)—pretended that the immortality of the soul was first revealed in Hindostan (p. 28)—questioned whether Christianity be at all necessary to the improvement of the Indian system of moral ordinances (p. 11)—preferred the heathen notion of transmigration to the Christian doctrine of future punishment (p. 47)—and framed a Geeta of his own in favor of purgatory (p. 48)—after all this, I say, and much more, he cannot, with any consistency, pretend to be a Christian.\*

If he believe in any thing pertaining to religion, beyond the dictates of his own reason, it is in the revelations of his "divine MENU." He is fond of calling these institutes by the name of *Scripture*, and reasons from them against our endeavoring to convince and convert the Hindoos.—pp. 15, 16, 22, 23. It is an unfortunate circumstance that the Hindoo religion admits of no proselytes; otherwise this writer must, ere now, have been invested with the honors of the *poitou*.

The gentleman complains of his want of "eloquence."—p. 3. There is, however, in his performance, much that tends to dazzle the mind of the reader. But, as he professes "to decline the factitious aid of false appearances," I shall attend only to facts, and to the reasoning which is founded upon them.

I must also be allowed to confine my remarks to what immediately relates to the *late Christian missions to India*. With an ecclesiastical establishment I have no concern. Thus much, however, I will say, the treatment of Dr. Buchanan, by this writer, is most indecent. Whatever were the motives of that gentleman, he cannot prove them to have been either mercenary or ambitious. Where then is the justice, or candor, of his insinuations? But why do I complain? Candid treatment is not to be expected from an *anonymous* accuser.

\* In the last two pages he has put marks of quotation to his own words, and represented them as the reasonings of the Hindoos!

This writer's pen appears to have been taken up on occasion of a manuscript falling into his hands, "professing to be a translation of an address to the inhabitants of India, from the missionaries of Serampore, inviting them to become Christians."—p. 1. From this address he has given several extracts; and the chief of his remarks, in the first part of his pamphlet, are founded upon it.

But, before he or Major Scott Waring had thus publicly animadverted on a private translation, they should have known a few particulars concerning it. How could they tell whether it was drawn up by the missionaries? Or, if it were, whether the translation were faithful? I can assure them and the public that it was *not* written by a European, but by a native; and that the translation is very far from being a *faithful* one. In referring to the former of these circumstances, I do not mean either to disparage the tract or the writer, nor to exempt the missionaries from having a concern in it. They doubtless approved of it, and printed it, and it was circulated as an address *from them*. All I mean to say on this point is, that some allowance should be made for the style or manner of address as coming from a Hindoo. At the same time it may be presumed that no Hindoo would call his own countrymen *barbarians*.

With respect to the *translation*, it was done by a person who did not choose to put his name to it, and apparently with the design of inflaming the minds of the directors and of government against the missionaries. Whether we are to ascribe his errors to this cause, or to ignorance, I shall not determine: but that the most offensive ideas contained in the translation are not in the original is a fact. Nothing is said in the tract itself about "their books of philosophy;" nor are they said to be "fit for the amusement of children." The Hindoos are not called "barbarians," nor their shasters "the shasters of barbarians," nor are they desired to "abominate them."

I have before me the translation from which this author appears to have taken his extracts, and another by Mr. John Fernandez, a gentleman who is now with Dr. Ryland at Bristol, and who will be answerable for its fidelity. I shall present the reader with the first 21 verses of both, in two opposite columns; and as the 14th, 15th, and 20th verses, are those which contain the supposed offensive passages, I shall give in them the original words in English characters, so that any person who understands the language may judge of both the translations. I have also authority to say that any person who can read Bengalee may have one of the original tracts by applying to Dr. Ryland.



*Translation from which the Vindicator appears to have taken his extracts.*

*Translation by Mr. John Fernandez.*

### THE MESSENGER OF GLAD TIDINGS.

### THE GOSPEL MESSENGER.

1. Hear, all ye people of the land, hear with attention, how ye may obtain salvation from hell, hard to escape!

2. No one is able to describe it! the thought of money and riches is vain.

3. All such things are calculated only for this life; let all men observe that this world is not eternal.

4. The enjoyment of all these goods is but for a short time; for at his death no one can take his riches with him.

5. He must resign all his garments, ornaments, and health, to his kindred; for after that he will have no corporeal form.

6. Know, all ye people, that after life comes death; and after death, the going to heaven or hell.

7. Unless you are cleansed from evil, you will not go to heaven; ye will be cast headlong into the awful regions of hell.

8. What sort of place hell is, or what are its torments, no one knows: no one is able to imagine.

9. Hell is full of inevitable sufferings, in the midst of fire never to be extinguished; its extinction will never come to pass.

10. Having fallen into it, brethren, there is then no salvation; its beginning and its duration are of infinite time.

11. With constant meditation, fear lest hereafter ye fall into this dreadful pit of hell; into that fire which cannot be quenched.

12. Form a remedy, O people, form a remedy; for without a remedy ye shall not obtain salvation.

13. In other sastras there is not any account of salvation; and yet how many discourses there are upon the rites and ceremonies peculiar to people of different countries.

14. Both Hindoos and musulmans have many sasters; most of which we have examined.

15. In none of them are to be found the principles of the true salvation: those your sastras are fit only for the amusement of children, and your books of philosophy are mere fables.

16. Formerly we ourselves had only such sastras; but, having obtained the great sastra, we flung those away.

1. Hear, O people of the world, hear with one mind; from hell tremendous, how will you find salvation?

2. None of you are inquiring about these things; incessantly mindful of rupees and cowries.

3. All these things are for this world; this is a transitory world; see every one.

4. These things are needful only for a short time: after death, riches will never go with you.

5. You will leave these riches, jewels, apparel, behind you: a stop being put to these things, they will be utterly useless.

6. Having once been born, you know you must die; after death you must go either to heaven or hell.

7. Without the pardon of sin you will never go to heaven; but headlong you will fall into the thick gloom of hell.

8. What hell is, what torments there are in it, you know not; therefore you are not concerned.

9. The dreadful hell is full of unquenchable fire; its extinction will never be!

10. Falling therein, brother, there is no deliverance: eternity's bound will only be its beginning!

11. Fear, lest you fall into this dreadful hell. Beware, O beware of this unquenchable furnace!

12. Take refuge in CHRIST, take refuge; without a refuge none will receive salvation.

13. In other shasters there is no news of redemption; they contain so many expressions of national rites and customs.

*Hindoo mosolmaner bohoo ache shastor tarhaboddonto moru korcenoo bistor.*

14. Hindoos and musulmans have many shasters; we have investigated them thoroughly.

*Prokrillo ooddhar totto nuheeka tahay balyanondo shastro seye oopokoll' har neyay.*

15. True search for deliverance (from the wrath to come) there is not in them; children-enticing shasters they are, like fabulous tales.

16. Ours were formerly such kind of shasters; but, finding THE GREAT SHASTER, we threw away the other.

17. The great sastra of religion contains glad tidings; for in it alone is to be found the way to salvation.

18. The great sastra of religion had not appeared here: some time since we obtained it, and have now brought it here.

19. Hear, hear, ye people, hear with due attention! Let him who is willing come, and we will cause it to be read.

20. Hereafter do ye and your brethren abominate the discourses of barbarians: the sastras of barbarians contain not the means of salvation.

21. If you and your brethren wish for the means of salvation, be attentive, and hear somewhat of an example, &c.—

The writer of the tract then proceeds to give a sketch of Scripture doctrine, &c.

The reader will here perceive that, instead of calling them barbarians, and telling them to abominate their barbarian shasters and discourses, the missionaries merely intreat them not to abominate the Bible as being what they term the shaster of the *Mleeches*, or *unclean*; for so they denominate all who are not of the caste. It was on this account that a brahmin urged another brahmin who had conversed with Mr. Thomas, and thought favorably of him, to go and wash his clothes; for, said he, he is *Mleech* (or *unclean*) if not filthy. The other replied, that filthy men did filthy deeds; whereas he could never say so of this Englishman, and he would not go and wash his clothes.\*

Thus has this tract not only been mistranslated, and its mistranslations largely quoted and descanted upon; but our adversaries have represented its circulation in India as that which must needs have provoked the natives to rise up against the missionaries. It was this that Major Scott Waring alleged as a reason why he should not have wondered if they had thrown them into the Ganges.† Yet when the truth comes to be stated, it appears that the inflammatory passages in the tract have been inserted by some unknown person, *engaged in the same cause with himself*. There is no proof that the tract itself, or any other tract, was ever known to give any such offence to the natives as to cause them to treat the missionaries ill, either in words or actions. I wonder what these men can think of a cause which requires such means to support it; and whether, when thus detected, they be susceptible of shame like other men.

It is not enough for them on the authority of an anonymous manuscript translation to

17. This holy book is the good news of salvation; the way of deliverance is in this alone.

18. The holy book was not made known here; some time ago we received it, now we have brought it hither.

19. Hear ye, hear ye, O people, hear with attention! Whosoever wish it is, come—we will cause you to hear.

*Mleech'ho bolee ghrinná pache korroho shobbáy mleech'ho shastro nóhhë ey tránner oopáy.*

20. Lest you should hereafter call it the barbarian's (shaster) and should hate it (this is not the barbarian's shaster, but a remedy for your salvation.)

21. A little of its contents we must declare: hear with your mind, if you wish for a remedy.—

accuse the missionaries of calling the natives "barbarians," &c., but Major Scott Waring must add, "this tract has been profusely circulated amongst the native troops in Bengal."—p. 117. It is impossible for me at this distance to be acquainted with every minute circumstance; but I am almost certain that there is no truth in this statement, and that the missionaries have never gone among the native troops on any occasion. If, however, it be true, let Major Scott Waring prove it. I challenge him to do so by any other testimony than that which, in a great number of instances, has been proved, I presume, to be utterly unworthy of credit.

It is owing to such base representations as these, particularly in the pamphlets of Major Scott Waring, that even the friends of Christianity, and of the missionaries, have thought themselves obliged in justice to concede that the latter may have been guilty of *indiscretions*. It is scarcely possible, while slander is flying about, as in a shower of poisoned arrows, and before they have been repelled, not to have our confidence in some degree wounded. But while I freely acknowledge that there *may have been* instances of indiscretion (for the missionaries are men,) I must insist that neither Mr. Twining, nor Major Scott Waring, nor the Bengal Officer, has substantiated a single charge of the kind.

The substance of the *Bengal Officer's* remarks may be considered under three heads; namely, the morality of the Hindoo system—the moral character of the Hindoos—and the conduct of the missionaries and of the native Christians.

OF THE MORALITY OF THE HINDOO SYSTEM.—"The religious creed of the Gentoo," says Professor White, in his Bampton Lectures, "is a system of the most barbarous idolatry. They acknowledge indeed one supreme God: yet innumerable are the subordinate deities whom they worship, and innumerable also are the vices and follies

\* See "Periodical Accounts," Vol. I. p. 22.

† "Observations," Preface, p. lvi.

which they ascribe to them. With a blindness which has ever been found inseparable from polytheism, they adore, as the attributes of their gods, the wickedness and passions which deform and disgrace human nature; and their worship is, in many respects, not unworthy of the deities who are the objects of it. The favor of beings which have no existence but in the imagination of the superstitious enthusiast is conciliated by senseless ceremonies and unreasonable mortifications—by ceremonies which consume the time which should be dedicated to the active and social duties, and by mortifications which strike at the root of every lawful and innocent enjoyment. What indeed shall we think of a religion which supposes the expiation of sins to consist in penances than which fancy cannot suggest any thing more rigorous and absurd; in sitting or standing whole years in one unvaried posture; in carrying the heaviest loads, or dragging the most weighty chains; in exposing the naked body to the scorching sun; and in hanging with the head downward before the fiercest and most intolerable fire?"—Sermon X. p. 12.

But our author tells a very different tale. He "reposes the Hindoo system on the broad basis of *its own merits*, convinced that on the enlarged principles of moral reasoning it little needs the meliorating hand of Christian dispensations to render its votaries a sufficiently correct and moral people, for all the useful purposes of civilized society."—p. 9. Could this be proved, it were no solid objection to Christian missions. To argue merely from what is useful to civilized society is to argue as an atheist. Civilized society is not the chief end of man. If there be an eternal hereafter, it must be of infinitely greater moment, both to governors and governed, than all the affairs of the greatest empire upon earth. This writer, when pleading the cause of "beggars by profession" (as Major Scott Waring calls the Hindoo byraggees when they have left that profession and become Christians) can allege that religion ought not to be subservient to mere worldly interest (p. 76); but, when his cause requires it, he can turn about, and contend that that which is sufficient for the purposes of civil society is all that is necessary. The cause of God and truth requires that such an atheistical principle should be repelled, otherwise I should have no objection to meet him even upon this ground, persuaded as I am that whatever is right for another life is wise for this.

But let us attend to "the excellence of the religious and moral doctrines of the Hindoos," as taught in *The Institutes of Menu*, and in other books. From these, especially the former, we are furnished with numerous quotations, occasionally intersper-

sed with triumphant questions; such as, "Are these tales for children?" "Are these the discourses of barbarians?"

On the *Institutes of Menu*, I would offer a few remarks:—

First: *Let them possess what excellency they may, they are unknown to the people.* The millions of Hindostan have no access to them. Sir William Jones did indeed persuade the brahmins to communicate them to him; and by his translation, and the aid of the press, the European world are now acquainted with them, as well as with other productions to which our author refers us: but to the Hindoo population they are as though they existed not. The lower classes are by their law subjected to penalty for hearing any part of the Vedas read. The young are not taught principles from this work; and it never furnishes a text for discoursing to the adult. There is, indeed, no such thing as moral education, or moral preaching, among the great body of the people. They know far less of the doctrines of *Menu* than the vulgar pagans of ancient Greece knew the writings of Plato. It is, therefore, utterly fallacious and disingenuous to quote this work as a standard of opinion or practice among the Hindoo people, seeing it is little more known to the bulk of them than if it had no existence.

Secondly: *Though there are some good sentiments in these Institutes, yet they contain a large portion not only of puerility, but of immortality, which this writer has carefully passed over.* Sir William Jones says of the work, that "with many beauties, which need not be pointed out, it contains many blemishes which cannot be justified or palliated. It is a system of despotism and priestcraft, both indeed limited by law, but artfully conspiring to give mutual support, though with mutual checks. It is filled with strange conceits in metaphysics and natural philosophy, with idle superstitions, and with a scheme of theology most obscurely figurative, and consequently liable to dangerous misconceptions. It abounds with minute and childish formalities, with ceremonies generally absurd, and often ridiculous; the punishments are partial and fanciful; for some crimes dreadfully cruel, for others reprehensibly slight; and the very morals, though rigid enough on the whole, are in one or two instances (as in the case of light oaths, and pious perjury) unaccountably relaxed."

The following specimen may serve as a proof of the justness of Sir William's remark, of its being a system of "priestcraft."

Ver. 313. "Let not a king, though in the greatest distress for money, provoke *brahmins* to anger, by taking *their property*: for they, once enraged, could immediately, by sacrifices and imprecations destroy him, with his troops, elephants, horses, and cars."

V. 315. "What prince could gain wealth



by oppressing those who, if angry, could frame *other worlds*, and regents of worlds; could GIVE BEING TO NEW GODS, and *mortals*?"

V. 316. "What man desirous of life would injure those by the aid of whom, that is, by *whose oblations*, WORLDS AND GODS PERPETUALLY SUBSIST; those who are rich in the learning of the Vedas?"

V. 317. "A brahmin, whether learned or ignorant, is a POWERFUL DIVINITY; even as fire is a powerful divinity, whether consecrated or popular."

V. 318. Even in places for burning the dead, the bright fire is undefiled; and when presented with clarified butter, or subsequent sacrifices, blazes again with extreme splendor."

V. 319. "Thus, although brahmins employ themselves in all sorts of mean occupation, they must invariably be honored; for they are something TRANSCENDENTLY DIVINE."\*

Our author would persuade us that the "Divine Spirit" is the grand object of Hindoo adoration: but he omitted to tell us that the brahmins are above Him, for that WORLDS AND GODS SUBSIST BY THEIR OBLATIONS, and they can GIVE BEING TO NEW GODS. Any person of common discernment may perceive, by this specimen, that, let these Institutes be of what antiquity they may, they are of *brahminical origin*; and that, in order to raise this class of men above the control of the civil powers, they not only give them "divinity," but elevate them "above all that is called God, or that is worshipped."

Thirdly: *Even those parts which our author has selected and quoted are very far from being unexceptionable.* On the two great subjects of the Unity of God, and the expiation of sin, what do the Vedas teach? What ideas are we to attach to the following language?—"Equally perceiving the supreme soul in all beings, and all beings in the supreme soul, he sacrifices his own spirit by fixing it on the spirit of God; and approaches the nature of that sole divinity who shines by his own effulgence."—If there be any meaning in this rhapsody, it corresponds with the atheistical jargon of Spinoza, confounding the Creator with the work of his hands.

That which follows is worse:—"The Divine Spirit alone is the whole assemblage of gods; all worlds are seated in the Divine Spirit, and the Divine Spirit, no doubt, produces by a chain of causes and effects, consistent with free will, the connected series of acts performed by embodied souls."—p. 26.

Such is their doctrine of "One Supreme Being!" Is then the infinitely glorious God to be not only associated but identified with the rabble of heathen deities, all which *sub-*

\* Sir William Jones's Works, Vol. III. pp. 378, 379.

sist in the oblations of the brahmins? Is his blessed name to be annihilated and lost in theirs? Better a thousand times were it to make no mention of Him than to introduce Him in such company. Though the last sentence cautiously guards the idea of human agency, so much indeed as to possess the air of modern composition; yet it is certain that the brahmins, on this principle, constantly excuse themselves from blame in all their deeds, as they have frequently alleged to the missionaries that *it is not they but God in them that performs the evil.*

What follows is still worse:—"We may contemplate the subtle æther in the cavities of his [that is God's] body; the air, in his muscular motion and sensitive nerves; the supreme solar and igneous light, in his digestive heat and visual organs: in his corporeal fluid, water; in the terrene parts of his fabric, earth. In his heart, the moon; in his auditory nerves, the guardians of eight regions; \* in his progressive motion, VISHNU; † in muscular force, HARA; ‡ in his organs of speech, AGNI; § in excretion, MITRA; || in procreation, BRAHMA." ¶

I presume the reader has had enough, and needs no reflections of mine. Let us hear the Vindicator of *image worship*. "It is true that in general they worship the Deity through the medium of images; and we satisfactorily learn from the Geeta that it is not the mere image, but the invisible Spirit, that they thus worship."—p. 44. And thus from Abulfazel: \*\* "They one and all believe in the unity of the Godhead; and, although they hold images in high veneration, yet they are by no means idolaters, as the ignorant suppose. I have myself frequently discoursed upon the subject with many learned and upright men of this religion, and comprehend their doctrine; which is, that the images are only representations of celestial beings, to whom they turn themselves while at prayer to prevent their thoughts from wandering: and they think it an indispensable duty to address the Deity after that manner."—p. 47.

If this reasoning be just, there never were any idolaters upon earth; for what is said of the Hindoos applies to the worshippers of Baal, and of all other heathen deities. But to call this *worshipping the Deity through the medium of images* is representing them as connected with Him. when, in fact, they are rivals of him in the hearts of his creatures.

\* Eight points of the compass.

† The preserver. ‡ The destroyer.

§ God of fire. || The Sun.

¶ The Creator.—p. 27.

\*\* Abulfazel was the prime minister of Ackbar, one of the Mogul emperors in the sixteenth century, who, perceiving the ill effects of Mahomedan persecution, endeavored to reconcile the different religious parties in the empire, and to persuade that of the court to think favorably of that of the country.

The invisible spirit to which their devotions are directed, according to this writer's own account, is CRISHNA (p. 45;) who is not God, but a deified creature that takes place of God: a dæmon, whose character, as drawn even in their own shasters, is lewd and treacherous. We might know from these their records, even though an apostle had not told us, that "*the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice TO DÆMONS, AND NOT TO GOD.*"

It has been common to speak of the Hindoos as acknowledging one Supreme Being, but as worshipping a number of subordinate deities; and I may have used this language as well as others. The terms supreme and subordinate, however, do not appear to be happily chosen. They might as well be applied to a lawful sovereign and a number of usurpers who had set up the standard of rebellion against him. Whatever subordination there may be among these deities with respect to each other, they are all opposed to the true God. What claims can He have, after those of *Chreeshna* are satisfied, who calls his "THE SUPREME NATURE, which is superior to all things?"—p. 45. Our author would wish him, no doubt, to be thought an attribute of the true God, or, as he calls him, "the preserving power of the Divinity;" but this he cannot be, for his character is immoral. If it be alleged that he is merely an imaginary being, and therefore neither the one nor the other, I answer, while he claims "a supreme nature," and is worshipped as possessing it, though he be nothing in himself, yet he is something to the worshippers, and answers all the ends of a conscious and active usurper of the throne of God.

After this, the reader will not be surprised to hear of "repentance, devotion, and pious austerities," as the means of expiating sin.—pp. 29, 36. We cannot wonder at such notions in benighted pagans; but that a writer who has read the New Testament should think of alleging them, as a recommendation of the system to the favorable regard of Christians, is a proof of his having either never understood what Christianity is, or forgotten it amidst the charms of idolatry. As to what these "devotions and austerities" are, be they what they may, when considered as an *expiation of sin*, they are worse than nothing. But the truth is, they are neither aimed to propitiate the true God, nor do they consist of anything which he requires at their hands.

Such are the excellences of the Hindoo system; such the arguments which the missionaries are challenged to answer; and such the faith which would be thought to erect her standard by the side of reason! Our author, after enumerating these and other glorious principles, asks, with an air of triumph, "What is it that the missionaries propose teaching to the Hindoos?" What

is it, in religious concerns, which they do not require to be taught?

He allows there are "many reprehensible customs among the Hindoos, the mere offspring of superstition;" but he contends that "they are not enjoined by the Vedas, and are chiefly confined to certain classes."—p. 60. "I have no hesitation," he says, "in declaring that *no branch whatever of their mythology, so far as I understand it, appears to merit, in the smallest degree, the harsh charges of vice and falsehood.*"—p. 97. Yet, to say nothing of things which it would be indecent to mention, Dr. Buchanan has quoted a number of authorities from their sacred books in favor of the burning of women, and in which such voluntary sacrifices are declared not to be suicide, but, on the contrary, highly meritorious.\* And the *Institutes of Menu*, as Sir William Jones observes, are unaccountably relaxed in regard of light oaths and pious perjury. But these things, and a hundred more, stand for nothing with our author, whose admiration of the general system leads him to forget, as trifling, all such imperfections. "Wherever I look around me," he says, "in the vast region of Hindoo mythology, I discover piety in the garb of allegory: and I see morality at every turn, blended with every tale: and, as far as I can rely on my own judgment, it appears the most complete and ample system of moral allegory that the world has ever produced!"—p. 97.

How shall we stand against this tide of eloquence? I will transcribe a passage from Dr. Tennant. "It is curious," says he, "to observe how the indifference, or rather the dislike, of some old settlers in India, is expressed against the system of their forefathers. It is compared with the Hindoo institutions with an affectation of impartiality, while, in the mean time, the latter system is extolled in its greatest puerilities and follies: its grossest fables are always asserted to convey some hidden but sound lessons of wisdom. They inveigh against the schisms, disputes, and differences of the western world, ascribing them solely to their religious dogmata. They palliate the most fanatical and most painful of the Hindoo rites, and never fail in discovering some salutary influence which they shed upon society. Wrapt up in devout admiration of the beauty and sublimity of the Vedas, they affect to triumph in their supposed superiority over the simplicity of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. This affectation is the more ridiculous, because it is indulged by those who pretend to great taste, and profound knowledge of Sanscrit learning." †

\* Memoir, p. 96.

† *Thoughts on the British Government in India*, p. 141. Note.

If the doctor's performance had not been written before that of the Bengal officer, we should almost have supposed he meant to draw his picture.

This author may suppose that a system so good-natured as to concede the divinity of Christ (p. 50) might be expected to receive some concessions in return: but he had better not attempt a compromise, for the systems cannot agree. If he be a heathen, let him cast in his lot with heathens. Let him, if he should get intoxicated, attend to the recipe of his "divine Menu;" let him, in order "to atone for his offence, drink more spirit in flame till he severely burn his body; or let him drink, boiling hot, until he die, the urine of a cow, or pure water, or milk, or clarified butter, or juice expressed from cow-dung."—p. 41. Let him, if he should be vicious, expect to become a dog, or a cat, or some more despicable creature; or, if he be virtuous, let him hope for his reward in the favor of Chrishna.—p. 46. But we are Christians, and have learned another lesson. We have been taught to revere the authority of Him who hath said "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God."

OF THE MORAL CHARACTER OF THE HINDOOS.—This is a subject of great importance in the present controversy; for, if Hindooism produce as good fruits as Christianity, the necessity of attempting the conversion of its votaries must, in a great degree, if not entirely, be set aside. It is a subject, too, in which our author has the advantage of us, as it must be more agreeable to the public mind to think favorably than unfavorably of a great people who form now a component part of the empire. Nothing but truth, and a desire to do them good, can justify us in disputing these favorable accounts.

Considering the importance of the subject, and the weight of testimony which our author must be aware he had to encounter, we may suppose he has brought forward all the proof of which he is capable. That the reader may be able to judge on the subject, I will first state the substance of the evidence on the other side, and then inquire what this writer has done towards overturning it.

I have already mentioned three or four testimonies in my Letter to the Chairman of the East India Company.\* These I shall not repeat.

Tamerlane the Great, when about to die, thus addressed his sons and statesmen:—"Know, my dear children, and elevated statesmen, that the inhabitant of Hindostan

cultivates imposture, fraud, and deception, and considers them to be meritorious accomplishments. Should any person entrust to him the care of his property, that person will soon become only the nominal possessor of it."

"The tendency of this my mandate to you, statesmen, is to preclude a confidence in their actions, or an adoption of their advice."†

"At Benares," adds Dr. Buchanan, "the fountain of Hindoo learning and religion, where Captain Wilford, author of the *Essays on the Indian and Egyptian mythology*, has long resided in the society of the brahmins, a scene has been lately exhibited which certainly has never had a parallel in any other *learned* society in the world.

"The pundit of Captain Wilford having for a considerable time been guilty of interpolating his books, and of fabricating new sentences in old works, to answer a particular purpose, was at length detected and publicly disgraced. As a last effort to save his character, he brought *ten* brahmins, not only as his compurgators, but to swear, by what is most sacred in their religion, to the *genuineness* of the extracts.‡ Captain Wilford would not permit the ceremonial of perjury to take place, but dismissed them from his presence with indignation."

Dr. Tennant, *late chaplain to his majesty's troops in Bengal*, has written very explicitly on the subject, not only stating facts, but pointing out their connection with the system. As his testimony includes the opinions of Sir James M'Intosh, Sir William Jones, and some other very respectable authorities, and as he himself cannot be accused of any strong predilection for missions, I shall transcribe a few pages from his account.

"The native character," he says, "however amiable in some respects it may appear, is frequently stained with vices directly hostile to society. The crime of PERJURY, *from the great defects of their religious system*, is remarkably prevalent, and in many instances renders the execution of justice difficult and impossible.

"The prevalence of this vice," says Sir James M'Intosh, "which I have myself observed, is, perhaps, a more certain criterion of a general dissolution of moral principle than other more daring and ferocious crimes, much more terrible to the imagination, and of which the immediate consequences are more destructive to society." "Perjury," adds Dr. Tennant, "indicates the absence of all the common restraints by which men

† Dr. Buchanan's Memoir, pp. 113, 114. "Marquis Cornwallis was never known, during his administration in India, to admit a native to his confidence. Under the administration of marquis Wellesley there is a total exclusion of native counsel."

‡ Asiatic Researches, Vol. VIII., p. 28.

\* See Part I., p. 758, of this volume.



are withheld from the commission of crimes. It is an attack upon religion and law in the very point of their union for the protection of human society. It weakens the foundation of every right, by rendering the execution of justice unattainable.

"Sir William Jones," continues he, "after long judicial experience, was obliged, reluctantly, to acknowledge this moral depravity of the natives of India. He had carried out with him to that country a strong prejudice in their favor, which he had imbibed in the course of his studies, and which in him was perhaps neither unamiable nor ungraceful. This prejudice he could not longer retain against the *universal testimony of Europeans*, and the enormous examples of depravity among the natives which he often witnessed in his judicial capacity."\*

Again: Having described the state of the country previously to its falling into the hands of the British, Dr. Tennant says, "thus, within the short space of a man's life, and almost in our own remembrance, the empire of India fell into anarchy and ruin; not from the external violence of foreign enemies, but from the *inveteracy and extent of corruption which pervaded the whole of its members.*"†

Again: "The boasted humanity of the Hindoo system, to all sentient beings, is but ill supported, when we come to a close examination of the customs which it tolerates, the precepts which it enjoins, or the actual conduct of its votaries. Though it was admitted that some of the above horrid customs are a violation of their written code, yet there are other practices equally shocking to which it affords its immediate sanction. The public encouragement held out to aged pilgrims who drown themselves in the Ganges, under the notion of acquiring religious merit, is equally repugnant with the practice already noticed to reason and humanity. No less than four or five persons have been seen drowning themselves at one time, with the view of performing a religious sacrifice of high value in their own estimation, and that of many thousands who attend this frightful solemnity.—The recommendation given to a favorite wife to burn herself on the same funeral pile with the dead body of her husband affords not an unfrequent spectacle of deliberate cruelty, which cannot, perhaps, be equalled in the whole annals of superstition.

"The cruel treatment of the sick, the aged, and dying, if not a precept, is a practical result of this degraded system, far more universal than any of those already mentioned: it is of a nature which the most moderate share of humanity would prompt any person

to use very zealous efforts to remedy. As soon as any mortal symptoms are discovered in the state of a patient by his physician, or by his relations, he is, if in Bengal, removed from his bed, and carried to the brink of the Ganges, where he is laid down with his feet and legs immersed in the river there, instead of receiving from his friends: any of the tender consolations of sympathy, to alleviate the pain of his departing moments, his mouth, nose, and ears, are stuffed with clay, or wet sand, while the by-standers crowd close around him, and incessantly pour torrents of water upon his head and body. It is thus, amidst the convulsive struggles of suffocation, added to the agony of disease, that the wretched Hindoo bids farewell to his present existence, and finally closes his eyes upon the sufferings of life.

"But waving these particular usages, some of which are perhaps abuses which have sprung out of their primitive institutions, it may be contended, on good grounds, that the general spirit of the system has itself a tendency, in many instances, to promote ignorance and encourage vice.

"In the Historical Fragments of the Mogul Empire, Mr. Orme has presented the public with a laborious and detailed exposition of all those defects of the Hindoo system. The author, in this work, conveys no very favorable impression of the Indian character; but his ideas are the result of personal observation: they are clear, forcible, and correct. Towards the close of his interesting disquisition, he thus sums up the general impression which the subject left upon his mind. 'Having brought to a conclusion this Essay on the Government and People of Hindostan, I cannot refrain from making the reflections which so obviously arise from the subject. Christianity vindicates all its glories, all its honors, and all its reverence, when we behold the most horrid impieties avowed amongst the nations on whom its influence does not shine, as actions necessary in the common conduct of life: I mean poisonings, treachery, and assassination, among the sons of ambition; rapine, cruelty, and extortion, in the ministers of justice.—I leave divines to vindicate, by more sanctified reflections, the cause of their religion and of their God.'—

"The Hindoo system makes little or no provision for the instruction of the great body of the people: a defect the more remarkable when we advert to the number and authority of its priesthood, and the great multiplicity and size of its sacred volumes. Their Vedas, Poorans, and other books held sacred, contain, it is said, a copious system of sound morality; and, from the specimens already translated, this must be partly admitted; but the truths contained in these writings are almost totally obscured and rendered useless by a vast mixture of *puerile fictions and fri-*

\* Thoughts on the British Government in India, p. 54.

† Ibid. 77.

*volous regulations.* And, besides, the canonical books of the Hindoos have always been regarded as a bequest too sacred to be committed to vulgar hands: to the far greater part of the community their perusal is strictly forbidden: closely guarded in the archives of the learned, to the great body of the people they remain, in the most emphatic sense, 'a dead letter.'

Of the ceremonies of brahminism, some are showy, many are absurd, and not a few *both indecent and immoral.* Its temples were formerly in some districts richly endowed; they are represented by all travellers as maintaining a number of priests and, what seems peculiar, a number of women consecrated to this service, who are taught to sing and dance at public festivals in honor of the god. The voluptuous indolence in which they are destined to spend their lives renders them totally useless to society; while the indecency of their manners gives room to suspect that they may injure it by their example.

"The temples themselves, which in other countries excite sentiments of reverence and devotion, are in India plished with images of fecundity, and of creative power, TOO GROSS FOR DESCRIPTION. Similar representations are also displayed by those images which, at certain times, are drawn through the streets amidst the dancing, noise, and acclamations of the multitude. The rath jatra, or riding of the gods, is a ceremony at once cruel and indecent.—The carriages on which their deities are then placed are of immense height, and supported on sixteen wheels; the whole drawn along by thousands of fanatics, some of whom fall down before these wheels, and, being instantly crushed, are, as they believe, put in possession of immortal bliss.

"It would be, perhaps, rash, after all, to affirm that the Hindoos are immoral and depraved in a degree *proportioned to the melancholy extent of their superstitious system*, though their minds are strongly withdrawn by it from feeling the due weight of moral obligations. Those [however] who are concerned in the police know well the frequency of fraud, robbery, and murder, as well as the great number of delinquents which have always rendered the prisons more crowded than any other habitations in India. It has not been from them, nor indeed from any class of men intimately acquainted with their manners, that the Hindoo character has received so many encomiums for its innocence and simplicity."

Speaking of their wandering religious devotees, he says, "Mr. Richardson, author of the Persian and Arabic dictionary, has characterized these vagrants, under the article *Fuker*, in the following manner:—"In this singular class of men, who in Hindostan

despise every sort of clothing, there are a number of enthusiasts, but a far greater proportion of knaves; every vagabond who has an aversion to labor being received into a fraternity which is regulated by laws of a secret and uncommon nature. The Hindoos view them with a wonderful respect, not only on account of their sanctified reputation, but from a substantial dread of their power. The fakere pilgrimages often consist of many thousands of naked saints, who exact, wherever they pass, a general tribute; while their character is too sacred for the civil power to take cognizance of their conduct.\*"

Many other testimonies might be produced. If the reader wish to see them systematically stated, he may find much to his purpose in Cuninghame's *Christianity in India.*" Chap. II.

We have now to examine what our author has advanced on the other side. Has he attempted to weaken this body of evidence, or to overcome it by testimonies more numerous or more credible? Neither the one or the other. He takes no notice of any thing that has been said by others; not even by Dr. Buchanan, though he was professedly answering his *Memoir*. And, as to the testimonies which he produces, lo, they are TWO . . . viz. HIMSELF and ABULFAZEL!

From *his own* knowledge he writes many things. He resided in India many years; has been much acquainted with the people; has gone into their temples, and never saw any thing indecent in them; has entrusted money and liquors to a great amount in the hands of Hindoo servants, and never found them unfaithful—but stop: we know not who this witness is: we cannot admit of *anonymous* testimony. No man, while he withholds his name from the public, has a right to expect credit any farther than what he advances may recommend itself. I must take leave, therefore, to set down all that he has related from his own knowledge as nugatory.

Let us examine the next witness. Abulfazel might be a great and enlightened statesman, and might be aware that the persecutions carried on against the Hindoos in the preceding reigns were impolitic as well as cruel. He might wish to praise them into attachment, and to soften the antipathies of the Mahomedans against them. Hence he might endeavor to persuade the latter that the former were "not idolaters," but, like themselves, "believers in one God, and withal a very amiable and good sort of people." But, whatever proof this may afford of Abulfazel's talents for governing, the *truth* of his statements requires to be

\* *Thoughts on the British Government in India*, § IX. X.

confirmed by more disinterested testimony ; and, where the whole current of European experience is against it, it can be of no account.

The reader will draw the inference, that the evidence of Hindoo depravity is not weakened in the least degree by any thing this writer has advanced.

OF THE CONDUCT OF THE MISSIONARIES AND THE NATIVE CHRISTIANS.—On this part of the subject our author is less profuse than his predecessor. There are a few passages in his performance, however, which require notice. He says, "If the conduct of the missionaries has here so unwisely forced itself on the attention of the public, and thus rendered them obnoxious to the displeasure of our government in the east, in having, unsanctioned by its authority, assumed the dangerous province of attempting to regulate the consciences of its native subjects, to the manifest tendency of disturbing that repose and public confidence that forms at this moment the chief security of our precarious tenure in Hindostan—if men, thus laboring for subsistence in their vocation, and under the necessity of making converts at any rate, in order to ensure the continuance of their allowances and the permanency of their missions, rashly venture to hurl the bigot anathema of intolerance at the head of the 'barbarian Hindoos,' and unadvisedly to vilify the revered repositories of their faith—we may find some color of excuse in the seeming necessity under which they act : but that a member of the English church," &c.—pp. 3, 4.

On this tedious sentence, or rather part of a sentence, I would offer a few remarks. 1. If the conduct of the missionaries has been forced on the attention of the public, it is their adversaries that have forced it. Nothing has been done by them or their friends, but in self-defence. 2. I do not understand how the *private request* of the governor-general for Mr. Carey and his colleagues, at a certain critical period, to desist from preaching to the natives, can be attributed to *displeasure*, when the acting magistrates who delivered the message acknowledged that "they were well satisfied with the character and deportment of the missionaries, and that no complaints had ever been lodged against them." 3. If, at the first outset, their undertaking was not sanctioned by authority, and if on that account they settled in the Danish territory : yet government, having known them, and being satisfied that they acted not from contumacy, but from the most pure, upright, and peaceable principles, has always been friendly to them. Under the administration of Marquis Wellesley they lived secure. 4. There never was an idea of their labors disturbing the confidence which the natives place in the British government, till Europe-

an adversaries suggested it. 5. The missionary labor of the men referred to is not for their own subsistence ; nor do they subsist by "allowances" from England. At all times this has not been the case ; but, at present, the remittances sent from this country are for another use. It is by their own literary labors that they subsist, which not only supply their wants, but enable them to devote a surplus for the propagation of the gospel. Did they act from mercenary motives, they might lay by their thousands, and return, as well as their accusers, in affluence to their native country. 6. If "the bigot anathema of intolerance," which this writer endeavors to hurl at the missionaries, hurt them no more than theirs does the Hindoos, there is no cause for alarm. But who could have imagined that an address to the conscience could have been represented as "assuming to regulate it;" and that a writer with the cant of toleration in his mouth could advocate the cause of intolerance?

This author tells us of "a circumstance having recently come to his knowledge that exhibits proof superior to a hundred arguments of the impropriety and dangerous consequences of injudicious interference with the Hindoos on the score of their religion."—p. 54. This "circumstance" must surely, then, be of importance, especially at a time when arguments are so scarce. And what is it? A native of Calcutta had lost caste ; he went to one of the missionaries, and was immediately baptized ; soon after this he became a preacher ; in addressing his countrymen, he provoked their resentment ; and, after being assaulted with clods and brickbats, narrowly escaped with his life. But here I must again take the liberty of reminding the gentleman that he is out of his province. An *anonymous* writer has no business to obtrude himself as a *witness*, but merely as a reasoner.

I know the first part of this story to be a fabrication, and I suspect the whole to be one : but, whether any part of it be true or not, it makes nothing for his argument. He might with equal justice accuse the missionaries of having been assaulted by him, and his friend the Major, with a volley of foul abuse.

All our opponents declaim on the danger of tolerating missionaries, and urge the necessity of an immediate suppression of their labors. Yet I cannot learn that the Hindoos, as a body, are an intolerant people. There may be, and doubtless are, exceptions ; but in general I have always understood that in this respect they differ widely from the Mahomedans. And, if this be true, how can they be offended with government for being of the same mind? Were they themselves an intolerant people, it might be expected that a government, to be acceptable to them, must not only protect them in



the exercise of their own religion, but persecute all who might endeavor to convince or persuade them to relinquish it. Such is exactly the line of conduct which our opponents mark out for the British government in India: but the Hindoos appear to desire no such thing; and, if they did, who does not perceive that it would be mean and degrading for any government in this manner to render itself the instrument of their intolerance? Whether, therefore, these men, in urging such advice on the different departments of the British government, consult their honor, or their own inclination, let those high authorities decide.

Such is the modesty of this writer that he allows "It would not *perhaps* become him to assume the province of dictating the means of suppressing these missionaries;" but he makes no scruple of asserting that "the government in India stands pledged to the honorable company, and to the empire at large, by every sense of imperious duty and by every consideration of safety to our countrymen abroad, by the most prompt and decisive interposition of their authority" to suppress them. He is also so good as to inform the government with what facility it may be effected, inasmuch as the Danish settlement of Serampore is now [probably] under our immediate control.—p. 170.

If government, whether in England or in India, be of opinion that the accusers of these missionaries have substantiated their charges against them, they can be at no loss for the means of suppressing them: but, if they should think it right to wait for better evidence than has yet appeared, I hope they may stand acquitted of violating their pledge either to the honorable company or to the empire at large.

### PART III.

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, unto the end of the world. Amen. JESUS CHRIST.

#### PREFACE.

It appears to be the design of Providence, by a succession of events, to effect a more marked distinction between the friends and enemies of religion than has, of late years, subsisted. Through a variety of causes they have long been confounded. As though there were no standard for either side to repair to, they have each mingled with the other in a sort of promiscuous mass.

The effect of this junction has been more unfavorable to the cause of Christ than to that of his adversaries; for as holy things

would not communicate holiness, but unclean things would communicate uncleanness (Haggai ii. 12, 13,) so it has been in respect to these commixtures. Ungodly men who have had to do with holy things have not thereby become holy; but godly men who have had to do with unclean things have thereby become unclean. Hence it appears to be the will of God, by his inscrutable providence, to effect a closer union among Christians, and a more marked separation between them and their adversaries. As though some decisive conflict were about to take place, the host on each side seemed to be mustering for the battle.

The French Revolution (that mighty shaking of the church and of the world) has been productive of this among other effects. Great numbers, who had before passed as Christians, perceiving infidelity to be coming into fashion, avowed their unbelief.\* Christians, on the other hand, of different denominations, felt a new motive to unite in defence of the common faith in which they were agreed.

The same effect has been produced by the sending out of missions to the heathen. The effort itself excited a correspondence of feeling, a communication of sentiment, and a unity of action, and that to a great extent: and now that success has, in some measure, attended it, it has drawn against it a host of adversaries. As the assembling of Israel before the Lord in Mizpeh (1 Sam. vii.,) though they had neither sword nor spear among them, excited the jealousy of the Philistines, and drew forth their armies in the hope of crushing them at the outset, so it is at this day. It is remarkable what a tendency the genuine exercises of true religion have to manifest the principles of men, and to draw them into a union, either on the side of Christ, or on that of his adversaries. You may now perceive Deists, Socinians, and others who retain the form of Christianity but deny the power, naturally falling into their ranks on one side, and serious Christians, almost forgetting their former differences, as naturally uniting on the other. I question whether there ever was a controversy, since the days of the apostles, in which religion and irreligion were more clearly marked, and their respective adherents more distinctly organized.

But is it *Christianity* that they attack? O no! It is *methodism, Calvinism, fanaticism, or sectarianism, &c.* And is it a new thing for the adversaries of religion to attack it under other names? Was it ever known that they did otherwise? The apos-

\* Many of these, however, when the rage of French principles began to abate, perceiving that they had mistaken the road to preferment, turned about, and assumed to be the patrons of *rational and orthodox Christianity!*

the Pahl was not accused as a zealous promoter of the true religion, but as a *pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition, and a ringleader of an obnoxious sect*. Unless we wish to be imposed upon by names instead of things, we can be at no loss to perceive that the prime object of their attack is THE RELIGION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Among those who contribute their aid in this important struggle, we shall find the *Edinburgh Reviewers* just now coming forward. It is one of the professed objects of these Editors to "use their *feeble* endeavors in assisting the public judgment on those topics to which its attention was actually directed." The attack on missions is preceded by one on *methodism*; \* for it would have been imprudent to have fallen abruptly upon the subject. Under this general term, the Reviewer professes to include, in one undistinguished mass, "the sentiments of the Arminian and Calvinistic methodists, and of the *evangelical* clergymen of the church of England!" These he describes as three classes of fanatics, very good *subjects* indeed, but "engaged in one general conspiracy against common sense and rational *orthodox Christianity!*"

These fanatics are denounced as maintaining "the absurd notions of a universal providence, extending not only to the rise and fall of nations, but to the concerns of individuals; the insufficiency of baptism, and of a participation in the customary worship of the country, without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, to denominate men Christians;" and what is worse, it seems, as "making a marked and dangerous division of mankind into the *godly* and the *ungodly!*"

The party seems to be extending too; and where it will end the Reviewer cannot tell, nor whether the evil admits of any cure. "All mines and subterraneous places belong to them; they creep into hospitals, and small schools, and so work their way upwards. They beg all the little livings, particularly in the north of England, from the ministers for the time being; and from these fixed points they make incursions upon the happiness and common sense of the vicinage." The Reviewer "most *sincerely* deprecates such an event; but it will excite in him no manner of surprise if a period arrive when the churches of the *sober* and *orthodox* part of the English clergy are completely deserted by the middling and lower classes of the community." They have not only made "an alarming inroad into the church," but are "attacking the army and the navy. The principality of Wales, and the East India Company, they have already acquired." And, what is more still, they have made their way into "the LEGISLATURE; and by

the talents of some of them, and the unimpeached excellence of their characters, render it probable that fanaticism will increase rather than diminish!"

What is to be done with these fanatics? Truly, the reviewer does not know. He "cannot see what is likely to impede the progress" of their opinions. He is not wanting in good will, but what can he do? He "believes them to be *very good subjects*; and has no doubt but that any farther attempt upon their religious liberties, without reconciling them to the church, would have a direct tendency to render them disaffected to the state." He thinks "something may, perhaps, be done in the way of ridicule;" but ridicule in some men's hands becomes itself ridiculous.

Ah, well may these reviewers talk of their "*feeble* endeavors in assisting the public judgment!" They have gleaned from the Methodist and Evangelical Magazines a portion of real weakness and absurdity, though several of their extracts are such only in their opinion; and with this, by their comments, they have mixed a larger portion of misrepresentation. The best use that the editors of those publications can make of the critique will be to be more cautious than they have been in some instances; but, while they pluck up the weeds, there is no need to plant the deadly nightshade in their place.

The reviewer proposes in a subsequent number to write an article on "Missions." By the foregoing specimen we can be at no loss what to expect at his hand.

It has been said of the "Edinburgh Review," that, "with a greater force of writing than the "Monthly," it unites at least an equal rancor against genuine Christianity, without that suspicion of Socinian and sectarian bias under which the other labors; while the barbarity, insolence, and pride, which it displays in almost all its criticisms, is sufficient to give it a prominence amongst the works of darkness." An attack on missions, from such a quarter, if not to their honor, cannot be to their dishonor; and, if made by the writer of this article especially, will, it is hoped, produce no ill effects.

## SECTION I.

### STRICTURES ON MAJOR SCOTT WARING'S THIRD PAMPHLET.

THE present performance is of a piece with this author's other productions. The quantity of repetition surpasses any thing that I have been used to meet with in writers of the most ordinary talents. The foul spirit which pervades it is much the same, upon the whole, as heretofore. It is true, there is much less acrimony towards many

\* No. XXII. p. 341.

of his opponents; but what is taken from them is laid upon the missionaries. The title of it might have been, *War with the Missionaries, and Peace with all the world besides*. The remarks on the critique of "The Christian Observer" are so many advances for a *separate peace*. The same may be said of his compliments to the members of the church of Scotland, to the Arminian methodists, to the united brethren, and to all indeed who have *not* sent missionaries to India. He has found some difficulty, however, in ranking under this head the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, whom he will not allow to have sent out any missionaries to India, but merely to have given pecuniary assistance; and that only, it seems, in former times. Their own reports, however, speak a different language: they express their desire of sending missionaries, provided any could be found to be sent.

The sum is, our author and his party are aware of their having erred in their first attack. By making it on so extended a scale, they shocked the feelings of the Christian world, and drew upon themselves their united and indignant censures. But what is to be done? Having committed an error, they must repair it as well as they are able; and there is no way of doing this but by endeavoring to divide their opponents. With all his antipathy to the Evangelical clergy, the major would make peace with them, and grant them almost any terms, so that they would be neutrals in his war of extermination against the missionaries.

Having requested a friend in town to furnish the major with the first part of my "Apology," he had no sooner dipped into it than he proclaimed in his preface that I had "put beyond the possibility of future doubt the correctness of his private information;" that is, by publishing Mr. Carey's letter, in which he speaks of *alarms which had been spread through India*. After this no person, he presumes, will venture to say that an alarm was not spread through India in 1806 and 1807, relative to missionaries.—p. vi. But whoever denied that an alarm was spread among Europeans throughout India? I knew that at each of the three presidencies these alarms had been industriously circulated, and strange reports added to them, as that the missionaries, or at least Mr. Carey, were imprisoned, &c. &c. It was of these alarms that I understood and still understand Mr. Carey to have written, and not any which were entertained by the native population of India, which is the point that our author's private information aims to establish. From the date of the Vellore mutiny, there can be no doubt of alarms having existed throughout the country among Europeans; and, in Mr. Carey's opinion, so far as they related to the plans of Christian missionaries, they were fabri-

cated by deists, who availed themselves of that and other circumstances to answer an end.

He adds "On the 13th of Feb. 1807, Mr. Carey writes, *A number of persons were preparing to embark for Europe with a view to spread the alarm at home*." Mr. Carey writes no such thing. Whatever merit or demerit there may be in that paragraph, it belongs to the apologist, and not to Mr. Carey. This, if our author had been a little less in a hurry, he must have perceived. Mr. Carey, instead of having communicated it, is supposed *not to be aware of it*. And though it is there intimated that a number of persons were at that time preparing to embark, *with a view to spread the alarms at home*, yet it was never imagined that this was their *sole view* in returning to Europe.

There is no difficulty in understanding the major, when he suggests that Mr. Carey must have included the governor of Ceylon, and the governor-general and council of Bengal among the deists who swarm in India, "because they have very effectually opposed the plans of the missionaries."—p. viii. Of the former I have heard nothing, except from our author, and therefore hope it may resemble many other things of his communicating. And as to the latter, if any such effectual opposition has been made as he appears to hope for, it is unknown to me. But, if it have, it is no new thing for deists so far to conceal their motives as to influence public measures, even those in which men of very different principles preside.

I have no inclination to follow this writer through one tenth of his wranglings and repetitions; nor is there any need of it. It will be sufficient if after a few general remarks I answer his most serious charges against the missionaries.

The major intimates that, if his assertion of Mr. Ward's having impiously perverted a passage of the holy gospel could be disproved, that were coming to an *issue*.—p. 22. If it were in the power of evidence to convince him on this subject, he would be convinced by what is alleged by "The Christian Observer." But the truth is, as Dr. Johnson is said to have bluntly expressed it, in answering an ignorant opponent, *We may offer evidence, but we cannot furnish men with understanding*.

It is still persisted in that missions, or Bibles, sent into a country where we had engaged to preserve to them the *free exercise of religion*, amount to a violation of the public faith.—p. 8. The free exercise of one religion then, it seems, is inconsistent with the free offer of another. The next proposal to government may be for the silencing of protestant dissenters; for, so long as they are allowed to preach in the country, the members of the national church, ac-



ording to his reasoning, have not the free exercise of their religion.

When converts to Christianity are mentioned, the major calls out, "Where are they? Who are they? I can find no account of them in the Missionary Reports."—p. 18. He speaks, however, in another place, of the "nonsense that we may read in the *Missionary Reports* relative to the success of the missionaries in making numerous converts to Christianity."—p. 33. If he has read the last four or five Reports of "The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," he must there have met with the largest portion of this kind of nonsense that has appeared of late years, particularly in the communications of Mr. Gericke. And, as he has examined the Baptist Periodical Accounts, he cannot have overlooked the list of the baptized in No. XV. down to Nov. 1804. He must there have seen several brahmins among them, and also several Mahomedans, and consequently have known his private accounts to be unfounded. But perhaps he will answer, as in p. 73, "This is an atrocious falsehood." We leave the reader to judge from what has been said, and what may yet be said, to whom the charge of falsehood belongs. Meanwhile, if our author be determined to disbelieve the accounts, let him disbelieve them; but let him not say they are not to be found in the Missionary Reports, and at the same time accuse those Reports of nonsense for relating them!

It is remarkable with what facility the major picks up the discordant principles of other men, and sews them together in a sort of patch-work. One while, the bishop of St. Asaph seemed to be his oracle: now, the barrister is every thing. Getting hold of him he can mimic the Socinian, and declaim against John Calvin. The bishop of St. Asaph would have censured him for traducing Calvin, for whom he professed a high respect. But, when a man has no principles of his own, what can he do? He had better not borrow those of others, however, till he knows how to use them.

By the frequent recurrence of such terms as *hot-headed maniacs*, *madmen*, *mad Calvinists*, *mad Baptists*, &c. &c., it would seem as if the gentleman himself was scarcely sober. Had this raving kind of diction been confined to his later publications, we might have ascribed it to the goadings of the Reviews; but, as it has been his strain of writing from the beginning, it must belong to his nature.

We have heard much of a certain *tract*, which calls the natives "barbarians, and their shasters barbarian-shasters," and of some thousands of it being distributed among the native troops, and other inhabitants of Bengal. At length we are told that the missionaries, with all their activity, *did not visit one military station*; that their abusive tracts

were distributed *once* at Berhampore among the native troops, and that the copy now in England was given by one of our seapoys to his officer.—p. 129. We are much obliged to the major for being so explicit. He may tell us, in his next piece, who translated it; for he seems to be quite in the secret. At present, I can only observe that, by his account, this obnoxious tract appears to have been scattered among the troops by thousands, if not without hands, yet without a single visit from the missionaries!

The major has not yet finished his labors in defaming the memory of Mr. Thomas. "A man," he says, "whom Mr. Thomas puts down as a brahmin, a man of title, was, in fact, a servant of Mr. Thomas, an outcast of society. This fellow, Parbotee, as he is called, robbed his master, Mr. Thomas, and ran away, and, as I understand, died mad at a distant period."—p. 75. For a writer, on the authority of men whom he will not name, thus to abuse the memory of the dead, is an outrage on decency. Parbotee was and is a brahmin, and never was a servant to Mr. Thomas. When will this man desist from retailing falsehood?

Speaking of missionary societies, he says, "There is also an Arminian Methodist society, and a society of the United Brethren, whose missionaries are well employed in pagan countries; *but they have wisely refrained from sending missionaries to India.*"—p. 85. Have they? Yet we are told in the preface to the "Observations," p. xv., that there are "spread over India Arminian Methodist and United Brethren missionaries," &c. &c. And in the letter to Mr. Owen we are assured that, "on most accurately looking over the preface, he could not discover either a misstatement or a misrepresentation!"—p. 117. Whether he discovered this, or whether he wrote both without discovering them to be contradictions, it is not for me to determine; but, if the latter were the case, I should not be surprised, for it is easy to perceive that, in many instances, he knows not what he writes.

"Mr. Marshman," says he, "was at Saugur during a great Hindoo festival, where at least 200,000 Hindoos were assembled. He preached to as many as could hear him, and he told the Hindoos that 'he did not come, like other Englishmen, to *take their money*, but to bring the jewel above all price, the grand offer of salvation.' The Hindoos became clamorous on their devotions being thus disturbed, and Mr. Marshman exclaimed, 'Well, since you decline it, remember that, as you have received the gospel, you have no longer any excuse for idolatry, but will be *damm'd everlastingly.*'"—pp. 36, 98.

It is the practice of this writer to make no references to the page or book from which he takes his extracts. In cases of accusation this is unpardonable, and is difficult to

be accounted for on any principle but that of a desire to escape detection.

The only visits to Saugur of which I have any remembrance, or can find any traces in the Periodical Accounts, are two. One may be found in No. XVI., pp. 225, 226; but in this there is no address to the Hindoos of any kind: his quotation, therefore, could not be taken from thence. The other is in No. XIV., pp. 513—522. Here there is an address to the Hindoos; and, as some of the words which are quoted are to be found in p. 521, I conclude it must be to this address that he refers.

On reading the whole account, and comparing it with that of Major Scott Waring's, I find in the latter a much larger portion of misrepresentation than of fact. Mr. Marshman was not the missionary who addressed the Hindoos, but Mr. Chamberlain; and the circumstance of their "becoming clamorous on account of their devotions being disturbed" is not in the account, and must, therefore, either have been taken from some other account, and without regard to truth applied to this, or be absolutely a fabrication. Nor is this all: There were no such words spoken as of his *being come to bring the jewel above all price, the grand offer of salvation*: nor did he exclaim, *Well, since you decline it, remember that, as you have received the gospel, you have no longer any excuse for idolatry, but will be damned everlastingly*. These are Major Scott Waring's words, and not those of the missionary. He may pretend that there were things said which are capable of this construction; but he has no right to quote his own constructions, be they just or not, as the words of another. I hoped before that the major, notwithstanding all his misstatements, had not been guilty of wilful errors; but really after this he hardly leaves one the power of placing any dependence on his veracity.

A great deal is said about the *number* of the missionaries. It is introduced in this pamphlet in no less than seven places. It is said that "the London Society maintain *thirteen* missionaries on the coast and in Ceylon, and one at Surat; and that *three of the number are women*."—p. 15. Are women then to be reckoned as missionaries? If so, we have considerably more than eleven in Bengal. But why did he not take in their children too? In reckoning the whole number of both the societies, sometimes they are twenty-three, and sometimes twenty-five, yet both are given as the number "now in India."—pp. 25, 81. To assist the gentleman in his future reckonings, I will put down the names and places of the missionaries of both societies.

Messrs. Carey, Marshman, Ward, Moore, Rowe, Robinson, and Felix Carey, at *Serampore*; Mr. Chamberlain, at *Culwa*; and Messrs. Mardon and Chater at *Rangoon*, in *Bur-*

*mah*. Besides them, there was Mr. Biss, but he died in 1807. Mr. *William* Carey, though he accompanied Mr. Moore to *Dacca*, is not at present a missionary. The number of missionaries, therefore, that we have now in the Company's territories is only *eight*.

The following extract of a letter from the Secretary of the London Society will show what are *their* numbers and situations. "All the missionaries we have in India are, Messrs. Cran and Desgranges, at *Vizagapatam*; Mr. Loveless, at the school at *Mudras*; Dr. Taylor, at *Bombay*; Mr. Ringletaube in *Travancore*; and Messrs. Vos, Erhardt, and Palm, in *Ceylon*.—Taylor never got to Surat, nor can he go at present; and he is not at all engaged as a missionary as yet, and never, I believe, preached one sermon to the heathen. None of those now in India have been at Ceylon; but those in Ceylon were first, for a few weeks, at *Tranquebar*. Loveless and Desgranges are married, as also the Ceylon missionaries; but, as their wives do not preach, they ought not to be called missionaries. We have heard nothing of Messrs. Vos, Erhardt, and Palm, being sent from Ceylon, and do not believe it."

Now, lest the major should again be out in his reckoning, I may inform him that the whole number of missionaries from this society in Hindostan is *five*; which, with the three who are or were in Ceylon, make eight; and which, added to the eight in Bengal, make *sixteen*.

Our author has furnished himself with the *baptist statement*, which seems to have afforded him much new light upon the subject. This statement, the reader should be informed, was drawn up in the spring of 1807, not to be sold, but circulated among the directors, and the members of administration. The design of it was to counteract the influence of a number of *private* letters which had then arrived from India against the mission; and I have no particular reason to doubt of its having answered the end.

Had the major known the particulars communicated in this statement sooner, he "should not have written one word about Bengal missionaries."—p. 60. We hope then he will learn, in future, to wait till he understand a subject before he writes upon it. It might be full as creditable to himself to do so, and some saving to the public. But we must not count too fast on the major's approbation. If he had not written, it had been, not from any satisfactory opinion of the missionaries' conduct, but from their being laid under an interdiction which he hopes may be sufficient to stop them in their career. It is possible, however, he might have written notwithstanding; for since he has seen the statement he has written nearly as much as he did before.

Our author, in going over the statement, finds the baptist society submitting to the

consideration of government the following proposition, as the opinion of the missionaries: "No political evil can reasonably be feared from the spread of Christianity now; for it has been publicly preached in different parts of Bengal for about twenty years past," without the smallest symptom of the kind." "But are the baptist missionaries," he asks, "or their society at home, authorized by law to determine whether or not a political evil is to be reasonably feared from the spread of Christianity in India?"—p. 69. Unless our being baptists deprives us of the right of all other subjects, we have just the same authority as Major Scott Waring, who also has said a great deal to government on what is reasonable and unreasonable. He states what he conceives to be good policy, submitting it to the consideration of those who are authorized to determine it, and we have done no more.

But the principal materials which our author finds in the baptist statement are such as enable him to accuse us, as he thinks, of *falsehood* and even of *rebellion*. These are certainly very serious charges, and, if we be unable to answer them, must sink us in the estimation of all honest men.

For our parts, we are not conscious of having been guilty of either of these crimes. So far as we know our own hearts, we have from the beginning exercised a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. If we be guilty, therefore, we must be under the grossest self-deception. And, as we never considered ourselves either as *liars* or *rebels*, neither have we been able to learn that any other person, high or low, churchman or dissenter, friend or enemy, has so considered us, till Major Scott Waring made the discovery.

"Not a single instance of disturbance has occurred," says Mr. Carey, "unless the abusive language of a few loose persons may be so called." To prove the falsehood of this statement, the major refers to the old story of a *universal alarm* being excited by their entering into a city or a village. One of these statements, he says, must be *false*. But, if the alarm mean nothing more than a sensation of fear arising from the presence of Europeans, there is no such thing as *disturbance* included in it. Our author has read the account of the journey to Saugur, † and might have observed that "the people were surprised to see Europeans amongst them, and that some appeared *afraid*:" yet at that time their errand was unknown. This *fear*, therefore, could not respect them as missionaries, but merely as Europeans.

\* Though Mr. Carey had been there only thirteen years, yet Mr. Thomas had publicly preached to the Hindoos in their own language for several years before.

† Periodical Accounts, No. XIV. p. 518.

Mr. Carey says, further, that "the missionaries on the coast reckon about forty thousand persons to have embraced Christianity." "This," says the major, "is another direct false assertion. Dr. Kerr admits, on the 7th of Nov. 1806, that *hitherto it is generally imagined few good converts have been made*."—p. 70. But, though this might be *generally imagined*, yet it does not follow that it was true, or that Dr. Kerr thought it to be true. Or, granting that he did, he might mean it only comparatively. Forty thousand people are but few when compared with the population of the country. In the letter addressed to Dr. Vincent, which was published in the report of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge of 1800, they are reckoned at "three thousand;" and since that time, according to the reports of that society, there have been great accessions; whole villages casting away their idols and embracing the gospel. Whether forty thousand be a just estimate, I cannot tell, and Mr. Carey does not determine; but, till I have some better proof of his want of veracity than has yet appeared, I can entertain no doubt of its being agreeable to the information he had received.

Thousands of heathens in Calcutta were willing to hear the gospel; "but we," says Mr. Marshman, "are forbidden to preach it." That is, in Calcutta, where they had preached it. "This assertion," says the major, "is false; they are allowed to preach it in Serampore, and in their own house in Calcutta." But the thousands who desire to hear it could not attend in either of those places. If Major Scott Waring want understanding, who can help it? But he should not charge that as false which arises from his own misconstructions.

To say that thousands of heathens are willing to hear the gospel, is, he says, "a false and wicked assertion, in the way in which the missionaries desire to be understood. Curiosity may draw, as it has done, thousands together to hear these men preach, but they are not likely, to use the elegant expression of one of the coast missionaries, to catch one (of the thousands) in the gospel net."—p. 72. The missionaries never desired to be understood as if thousands stood ready to embrace Christianity, but merely that they were willing and even desirous to hear it; and this, whatever were their motives, was the truth. As to the improbability of their being brought to believe it, that is only Major Scott Waring's opinion, and stands for nothing.

"We have baptized," says Mr. Marshman, "about a hundred of these people, and we dare affirm that the British government has not a hundred better subjects, and more cordial friends, among the natives of Hindostan." "This," says the major, "is a most atrocious falsehood. Of their hundred



converts, whom they have baptized in thirteen years,\* they have dismissed many for gross immorality.”—p. 73. The number of those who have been dismissed for gross immorality, however, is not so great as this writer would have it thought to be; but, be it what it may, Mr. Marshman says in the same page, “If they lose caste, and embrace Christianity, not by force, but from pure conviction, they become other men. *Even those who, as it may prove, have not embraced it cordially, are considerably influenced by it. If once they lose caste, the charm is broken, and they become capable of attachment to government.*”

But I am weary of contending with this foul opponent. It is time to bring this part of the subject, at least, to a close. As “the most atrocious falsehood” is charged on the missionaries, let us here come to an issue. We will not shrink from it. Let our judges satisfy themselves of the truth of our statements. We will hold ourselves obliged, whenever called upon by proper authority, to give proof of them. If falsehood be found on our side, let our missionaries be ordered out of the country as a set of impostors; but, if on the side of our accusers, let the burden which they have labored to fasten upon us fall upon themselves.

But our missionaries are accused not only of falsehood, but with being “in open rebellion.” This accusation is founded on their going out without legal authority, and by foreign ships—on their availing themselves of the protection of Denmark—and on their itinerating in the country without passports, and after a legal permission to do so was refused them.

It is easy to perceive that, on this subject, the hopes of our accuser begin to brighten. Like the Pharisees and the Herodians, he thinks he shall be able to entangle us, and bring us under the displeasure of government. Well, let him do his utmost. We acknowledge the above to be facts, let them affect us as they may. It is worthy of notice, however, that it is not owing to any thing which our accuser has written that these facts have been brought to light. The substance of them was contained in the *Statement*; which statement was, in fact, though not in form, respectfully submitted to the very parties to whom he wishes to accuse us. He is, therefore, a day too late. Our judges were in possession of the facts before he knew of them. There is nothing left for him to do as an accuser, but merely as counsel, to assist the judges in forming a decision, by his comments and learned arguments. And, with respect to these, we must take the liberty of wiping off a part of his coloring; and, truly it can be only a

part, for to remove the whole the pamphlet itself must be literally purified by fire.

The itinerating excursions, subsequent to the refusal of a legal permission in 1805, were not in *defiance* of government, but with their knowledge, and, I may say, their approbation. The refusal of the governor-general did not appear to arise from any disapprobation of the object, or of the means used to accomplish it, but merely from a hesitation whether the government in India were warranted *formally* to adopt the measure. There was no prohibition whatever at that time laid upon the missionaries, nor any intimation of even a wish for them to relax in their itinerating labors. On the contrary, when, from the hesitation before mentioned, the governor-general disapproved of a committee to superintend the translations, he nevertheless gave full liberty to advertize in the “*Gazette*” for voluntary subscriptions; and added, “Let the missionaries go on in their present line of action.”

Our accuser, not knowing what to do with this last sentence, contrives to throw it back a year, supposing the remark must have been made “prior to the autumn of 1805.”—p. 93. Certainly this supposition is necessary for his argument; but unfortunately it is not true. I cannot exactly refer to the date, but have no doubt of its being in 1806. Never till the 24th of August, in that year, was any thing like a prohibition given, and then it appears to have arisen more from apprehension than dislike; and consisted not in a written order from the governor-general in council, but merely in a private verbal message. If, therefore, the major flatter himself that Sir George Barlow is of the same mind with him and his party, he may find himself mistaken.

I may add that the protection of the Danish government was granted at the unsolicited recommendation of the late governor Bie, whose testimony to the good character of the missionaries was not only sent to his own government at Copenhagen, but the same things conveyed in a letter to the society in England in the following terms:—“Permit me to assure you that I do not consider the friendship and few civilities I have had it in my power to show your brethren here otherwise than as fully due to them. I have received them as righteous men, in the name of righteous men; and I shall never withhold good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of my hand to do it. I am happy in possessing them, and shall be more so in seeing their number increase.”—The missionaries have always acknowledged the kindness of the British as well as of the Danish government; and, though at one period they expressed their concern at being forbidden to preach to the multitudes who were willing to hear in Calcutta,

\* He might have said in *six*.

yet neither they nor the society have dealt in reflections, but have contented themselves with simply stating the facts, and the arguments arising from them; and this merely to counteract the underhand measures of their adversaries.

We ask only for a calm and candid hearing. We solemnly aver before God and our country that we are most sincerely attached to its constitution and government; that we regard its authority with sentiments of the highest respect, and hold ourselves bound to be obedient to its lawful commands. Obedience to the ruling powers we conceive to be enjoined in Scripture, where, however, an exception is expressly made in favor of those cases in which the commands of man are directly opposed to the revealed commands of God. These are cases which, in the course of human affairs, may occur; but which no good subject will love to anticipate before their actual occurrence. Supposing, however, the arrival of an emergence so painful, it surely would be somewhat harsh to stigmatize with the name of "open rebellion" the reluctant disobedience, in a particular instance, of those who are only yielding to a deliberate, sober, and conscientious conviction of their duty. The apostles exhorted all Christians, rather than renounce their faith or disobey the divine precepts at the command of the state, to "resist even unto blood;" but we have yet to learn that such injunctions were intended or received as instigations to *rebellion*.

Were it possible to conceive (we merely suppose the case) that the missionaries should be called to the hard duty of deciding between the service of God and obedience to man, we trust that they would be enabled to encounter, with resignation, the painful sacrifice imposed upon them; but we are thankful to say that they have as yet been spared so severe a trial.

Surely nothing but the most uncandid and bitter prejudice would represent the refusal of an *official* sanction to their itinerations as an imperative prohibition of them; or would class the missionaries as rebels merely because, being denied the formal protection of the governing power, they were content with connivance, or at least with uncovenanted toleration. Numbers of Europeans are to be found residing in India, though unaccredited by the company or the British governments; and we have never understood that all these were considered as in a state of "open rebellion." Yet we have no objection to be explicit, and will be free to confess that the legality of such a residence for the purposes of private emolument would in our view be more than doubtful, and that we should certainly abstain from it.

If, upon a candid consideration of all circumstances, it be found that we have, in some instances, deviated from the regula-

tions alluded to, it will be remembered that it has not been for any object of temporal advantage, the illicit pursuit of which it was doubtless the design of those regulations to prevent, though they are necessarily expressed in terms which give them a more general application. As far, indeed, as the deviation may, even under these circumstances, seem an irregular proceeding, so far we should certainly rest our defence of it on the nature and importance of the objects which it was intended to compass; and, in this mild and qualified case, should even appeal to the spirit of the principle which has been already mentioned—the principle of a conscientious preference of duty to all other considerations, however pressing.

With respect to the question of duty, we are aware that men may be prompted by delusive impulses and erroneous comments to measures of extravagance, justly censurable by civil authority. But we are governed by no such impulses. We have no notion of any thing being the will of God, but what may be proved from the Scriptures; nor of any obligations upon us to go among the heathen more than upon other Christians. If we be not authorized by the New Testament, we have no authority. And as to our *comments*, if they will not bear the test of fair and impartial scrutiny, let them be discarded, and let our undertakings be placed to the account of a well-meant but misguided zeal. The principal ground on which we act is confined to a narrow compass: it is the commission of our Saviour to his disciples, "Go—teach all nations;" which commission we do not consider as confined to the apostles, because his promised presence to them who should execute it extends "to the end of the world."

Our accuser is aware that the apostles and primitive ministers went every where preaching the gospel, even though it were at the risk of liberty and life; and this, he conceives, was right in them, because "they were expressly *commanded* to do so."—p. 80. His conclusion, that it is wrong in Christians of the present day, rests upon the supposition that the command of Christ does not extend to them; but we shall not allow him to build on these disputed premises.

That there were things committed to the apostles, *for them to commit to Christians of succeeding ages*, cannot be denied. Such must have been the great body of Christian doctrines and precepts contained in the New Testament; and, seeing the promise of Christ to be with his servants in the execution of the command reaches "to the end of the world," the command itself must have been of this description. Not that every Christian is obliged to preach, or any Christian in all places: but the Christian church as a body, and every member of it individually, is obliged to do its utmost in the use of those

means which Christ has appointed for the discipling of all nations.

To say that because we are not endowed, like the apostles, with the gift of tongues and the power of working miracles, therefore we are not obliged to make use of the powers which we have for the conversion of the world, is trifling, not reasoning. What proof or appearance of proof is there that the obligations of the apostles to preach the gospel to all nations arose from those extraordinary endowments? If our being unable to work miracles be a reason why we should not preach the gospel to all nations as far as opportunity admits, it is a reason why we should not preach it at all; or, which is the same thing, a proof that the Christian ministry, as soon as miracles had ceased, ought to have terminated. The institution of the Christian ministry is founded in the commission, even that commission which enjoins the teaching of all nations. And, if we leave out one part, we must, to be consistent, leave out the other. We ought either not to teach at all, or, according to our powers and opportunities, to teach all nations.

If we believe the Scriptures (and if we do not we are not Christians) we must believe that all nations are promised to the Messiah for his inheritance, no less than the land of Canaan was promised to the seed of Abraham; and we, as well as they, ought, in the use of those means which he has appointed, to go up and endeavor to possess them. It is not for us, having obtained a comfortable footing in Europe, like the Israelites in Canaan, to make leagues with the other parts of the world, and, provided we may but live at ease in our tents, to consent for them to remain as they are. Such a spirit, though complimented by some as liberal, is mean and inconsistent with the love of either God or man.

Our accuser, who will neither be a Christian nor let Christianity alone, represents the apostles as "authorized to act in defiance of magistrates," to "break the laws of the different countries they visited," to "despise the orders of men;" "but Christians now," he tells us, "are expressly directed to obey the powers that be." If the principle acted on by the apostles, "be admitted in these days," he thinks, "we must bid adieu to India."—pp. 53, 79, 80.

It would seem by this account of things as if the apostles, under a divine authority, trampled on all law and order among men, and, as far as their influence extended, actually "turned the world upside down." If it were not so, the conclusion that the same principle acted upon in these days would prove the loss of India is mere unfounded assertion. But were any such effects produced by the labors of the apostles? What colonies were lost to the Romans through them? Let the countries be named which

were ruined or injured by their preaching.

In attempting to fix a charge upon us, our accuser has libelled the apostles, and even their Master, as well as the Christians of all succeeding ages. Where did he learn that Jesus Christ authorized his apostles to act in defiance of magistrates, or to despise the orders of men? What proof has he that they ever acted on such principles? Was there any thing like this in the behavior of Paul before Felix, or Festus, or Agrippa? Such a spirit had no more place in his religion than our accuser has been able to prove it to have had place in ours. The apostles were commanded to break no laws but such as were inconsistent with their allegiance to Christ; and in breaking them they never acted with contumacy, but merely as impelled by a superior authority; bearing at the same time the consequences with meekness and fortitude, as their Lord had done before them. The principle on which they acted was that which HE had laid down for them when tempted by certain "hypocrites," with the intent of rendering him obnoxious to government (not that they cared for government, but were desirous of making it the instrument of their malice;) namely, "Render unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

What authority has our accuser for representing the apostles as enjoining on common Christians that subjection to civil government which they did not exemplify in their own conduct? Were not they themselves subject to the powers that were? Yes, in every thing save in what concerned their allegiance to Christ, and this reserve they made for all Christians. Why else did they encourage them to hold fast their profession under the most cruel persecutions; referring them to the last judgment, when God would recompense rest to them, and tribulation to those that troubled them? Could they have submitted their consciences to the ruling powers, they need not have suffered persecution; but they acted on the same principle as the apostles, who, instead of laying down one law for themselves and another for them, exhorted them to follow their example: "Those things," said they, "which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in us, do."

On the principle of our accuser, all those Christians of the first three centuries who had not the power of working miracles, though peaceable and loyal subjects in civil concerns, yet, not submitting their consciences to the ruling powers, were rebels. The same may be said of the English martyrs in the days of the first Mary. They could not work miracles any more than we, and pretended to no special commission from heaven to break the laws: but, while they manifested the utmost loyalty to the queen in civil matters, they felt themselves accounta-



ble to a higher authority, and submitted to be burnt alive rather than obey her mandates. These characters, whom all succeeding ages have revered as men of whom the world was not worthy, were loaded by the Bonners and Gardiners of the day with every epithet of abuse, and treated as rebels.

We may be told that the cases are dissimilar: they were put to death, but the whole that our accuser aims at is banishment; they suffered for avowing their religious principles at home, whereas we might have done this without his wishing to interrupt us. But this dissimilarity relates only to degree; the principle is the same. If, since the days of miracles, Christians have been under an obligation to submit to the powers that be in religious matters, the martyrs of seventeen hundred years have been, in fact, a succession of rebels.

Our accuser may think it a matter "not to be endured" that sectaries should compare themselves with these honored characters: \* but with his leave, or without it, we are *Christians*; and, though we should be less than the least of Christ's servants, yet we must aspire to act upon the same *principles* as the greatest of them.

What is there in these principles which affects the honor of government, or the peace and good order of society? Is it any disparagement to the highest human authorities not to interfere with the divine prerogative? On the contrary, is it not their highest honor to respect it? Those governments which, disregarding such men as our accuser, protect the free exercise of religious principle, will not only be prospered of Heaven, but will ever stand high in the esteem of the wise and the good, and when the ferment of the day is over be applauded by mankind in general.

A great deal is said by all our opponents on the *power of working miracles*, as though because we cannot pretend to this qualification we had no warrant to attempt the conversion of the heathen. "It is not to be endured," says our accuser, "that these men should be compared with the apostles who wrought miracles." And another wise-acre gravely suggests that "sectaries are not likely to have these extraordinary powers; as though, had we been churchmen, we might have stood some chance of at-

taining them! † It was the commission of Christ, and not the power of working miracles, that constituted the warrant of the apostles to "go and teach all nations." The latter was, indeed, an important qualification, and necessary to accredit the Christian religion at its outset; but, if it had been necessary to its progress, it would either have been continued till all nations had been evangelized, or the promise of Christ to be with his servants in the execution of the commission would not have extended to the end of the world.

If we arrogated to compare ourselves with the apostles, in distinction from other Christians, that indeed were not to be endured; but nothing is farther from our minds. If we compare ourselves with the apostles, it is not as apostles, but as Christians, engaged, according to the gifts which we possess, in the same common cause. That there were some things pursued by Christ and his apostles which require to be pursued by all Christians cannot be denied. Why else is our Saviour said to have "left us an example that we should follow his steps?" And why did the apostle exhort the Corinthians to be "followers of him, as he also was of Christ?" It might have been said of Paul, that for him to compare himself with Christ "was not to be endured;" and that with equal justice as this is said of us. He did not compare himself with Christ, though he imitated him in those things wherein he was set for an example; neither do we compare ourselves with the apostles, though we imitate them in those things wherein they are set for our example.

Nothing is more evident, to men who have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil, than that the cause of God is the same in all ages; and that, whatever diversity of gifts there may be among Christians, there is but one spirit. It is not on that wherein Christianity is diverse in different ages that we found our comparisons, but on that wherein it is the same in all ages. Whatever diversities there were as to spiritual gifts between Christ and his apostles, or among the apostles themselves, yet they each incurred the hatred and opposition of wicked men. The Lord of Glory himself was reproached as a *madman*, and the people who attended to

\* Considering the pains which have been taken to load us with the odium of *sectarianism*, it may be thought I should have done something towards removing it. The truth is, our opponents care not for the church, nor have they any dislike to dissenters, provided they be adverse to *evangelical religion*. All that they say, therefore, against us as sectaries, is for the mean and crafty purpose of working upon the prejudices of churchmen; and such vulgar abuse requires no answer.

† This suggestion is contained in a piece which has lately appeared, under the title of *The Dangers of British India from French Invasion and Missionary Establishments*. I see nothing in the pamphlet which requires an answer. Government will see to that part which refers to the danger of French invasion, whether they read this performance or not; and, as to what relates to the missionaries, it is a mere repetition of things which have been answered in the preceding pages.

him considered as fools for listening to his doctrine. He was also accused to government of *stirring up the people*, merely because he taught them throughout the country. Such also was the treatment of the apostles. So foreign were the things of which Paul discoursed from all the previous ideas of Festus, that, though he spoke only the words of truth and soberness, yet they appeared to the other to be *madness*. And the charges alleged against him, at another time, before Felix, were, that he was a *pestilent character, a mover of sedition*, and, what was worse still, a *ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes*. Now when we hear the same charges, for substance, alleged against us, at a distance of almost 2000 years, we cannot help concluding that, whatever disparities there are between Christ and the apostles and Christians of the present day, there are certain common points of likeness, and that all such reproaches prove nothing against us.

We do not wonder, however, that our adversaries should not be able to "endure" these comparisons; for they not only feel annoyed by them, but must needs perceive that, if *we* are compared to Christ and his apostles, *they* also will be compared to men of a very opposite character, and this they may not be able to "endure" any more than the other.

Another subject on which almost all our opponents dwell is the *impracticability* of converting the Hindoos. Most of them, as if to screen themselves from the suspicion of being averse to Christianity, acknowledge that if the thing were practicable it would be right. But, in the first place, they speak as though we expected the sudden conversion of the whole population of India; and as though nothing were done, unless it amounted to this; but we have no idea of the kind. If the work go on in a silent and gradual way, like the operations of a little leaven, as the kingdom of heaven has been used to go on, the whole lump may in the end, though not at present, be leavened. We say the leaven has begun to operate, and all we desire is, that its operation may not be impeded.

We perfectly agree with our opponents that the Hindoos can never be converted by mere *human means*, though we are equally persuaded they will never be converted without them. We no more think that "men can accomplish it," than they. We do not use such calculations respecting the expulsion of paganism and Mahomedism from India as might be used concerning the reduction of a country by a certain degree of physical force. Our hope arises from the promise of Christ to be with his servants in the execution of their mission to the end of the world. Nor can our adversaries con-

sistently object to this, since they also can talk of "the omnipotent power of heaven leading these people into the paths of light and truth," and even of "the outpouring of the Spirit" upon them. The difference is, they introduce divine influence as something miraculous, and for the purpose of superseding human means; we as an ordinary blessing, promised to the church in all ages, and to encourage the use of means. They argue from what the Almighty can do to what he *must* do, if ever the work be done; namely, convert them "in an instant:" we consider such talk as wild and visionary. Our opponents sometimes declaim against "the enthusiasm" of the missionaries; but nothing like this will be found in any of their communications. Surely they must be hardly driven, or they would not have attempted to conceal their opposition to the progress of the gospel under the mask of fanaticism.

Do they really think it more probable that God will convert a whole country "in an instant" than that they will be converted in the ordinary use of means? No, they expect no such divine interference, and, it may be, on this very account give it the preference. If the Hindoos *must* be converted, they had rather, it seems, that it should be done by the immediate power of God than by us; but it requires no great depth of penetration to perceive that it would please them better still were it to be done by neither.

## SECTION II.

REMARKS ON "A LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF CONTROL ON THE PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA."

My design in noticing this letter is more for the purpose of explanation than dispute. The "hints" suggested to those who are concerned in sending out missionaries to the east, so far as they relate to their peaceable temper and character, are very good. I can say, in behalf of the societies which have of late years sent out missionaries to that quarter, that it has been their aim, from the beginning, to act on the principle which the author recommends. The following are extracts from the Instructions of the London and the Baptist Societies.

TO THE MISSIONARIES GOING TO SURAT.

"It is peculiarly incumbent on you for your own comfort, and agreeable to the spirit and teaching of our divine Master, to avoid all interference both in word and in deed with the company's servants, government, and regulations. We cannot sufficiently convey what we feel on the high importance of this injunction, of abstaining

from all observations on the political affairs of the country or government, in your intercourse, and in your correspondence.—The very existence of the mission may be involved in an attention or inattention to this regulation!”

#### TO THE MISSIONARIES GOING TO BENGAL.

“Since that kingdom which we, as the disciples of Jesus, wish to establish, is not of this world, we affectionately and seriously enjoin on each missionary under our patronage that he do cautiously and constantly abstain from every interference with the political concerns of the country where he may be called to labor, whether by words or deeds; that he be obedient to the laws in all civil affairs; that he respect magistrates, supreme and subordinate, and teach the same things to others: in fine, that he apply himself wholly to the all-important concerns of that evangelical service to which he has so solemnly dedicated himself.

“Lastly: However gross may be the idolatries and heathenish superstitions that may fall beneath a missionary’s notice, the society are nevertheless persuaded that both the mutual respect due from man to man, and the interests of the true religion, demand that every missionary should sedulously avoid all rudeness, insult, and interruption, during the observance of the said superstitions; recommending no methods but those adopted by Christ and his apostles, viz. the persevering use of Scripture, reason, prayer, meekness, and love.”

The societies may not, in every instance, have succeeded according to their wishes; but, if any of their missionaries have betrayed another spirit, they have not failed to admonish them, and, if they could not be corrected, would certainly recal them. The mildness and gentleness of missionaries, however, does not require to be such as that they should not *refute and expose the evils of idolatry*. No man can be a missionary who is not allowed to do this. This has been always done by Mr. Schwartz and his colleagues (whom the author of the letter justly praises,) as is manifest from their communications to “The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge,” and of which the society have approved by communicating them to the public.

“Mr. Kolhoff,” say they, “in his intercourse with heathens, made it his business to give them a plain and comprehensive view of all the truths of our holy religion, and to prevail upon them to receive them, by representing the absurdity and sinfulness of their idol-worship, the happiness which would attend their obedience to the truth, and the judgments to which they would render themselves liable by a contempt of the only true God, and the offers of his mercy.”—Report of 1798, p. 134.

They also tell us of Mr. Pohle, another of their missionaries, “preaching daily the principles of Christianity to the natives of different religions, and especially the heathens, *refuting at the same time their errors.*” Yet he is said to have been “heard with joy and amazement.”—Report of 1796, p. 129.

The following extract of Mr. Kolhoff’s letter will furnish an apology for their earnestness, to those who may think nothing to be proper but simple instruction.

“Besides a multiplicity of superior deities, the heathens in this country have a great number of *infernal deities* (or rather *devils*,) whom they likewise make objects of their adoration. The worship or service done to these infernal deities, in order to render them propitious, consists in offering them sheep, swine, fowls, rice, plantains, and intoxicating liquors, which is always done either in a garden, or in a chapel built in a grove, without the city or village. After offering the sacrifice, the priest, and the people by whom the sacrifice is brought, sit down to feast themselves on the things offered.

“Such a sacrifice was offered by some heathens in the month of July last, near a village twelve miles to the south of Tanjore. Having offered their sacrifice, they sat down to the succeeding entertainment, in which the priest, having made too free with the intoxicating liquor, very soon became like a wild beast, and murdered two persons who were near him, with the instrument with which he had killed the victims. Others endeavored to save themselves by flight, but he pursued after them, murdered a woman, wounded six others, and very likely would have proceeded in his murderous business, if the inhabitants of the village had not brought him down with their sticks, and disabled him from doing further mischief. He was taken a prisoner to Tanjore, and died in his confinement of the wounds he got from the inhabitants. Oh, that the heathens would open their eyes to see the dreadful consequences of forsaking their Maker, and doing the devil’s drudgery!”—Report of 1798, p. 132.

“I believe,” says the author of the Letter to the President of the Board of Control, “that in Bengal the matter has been much the same as on the coast, and that no dissatisfaction has, for perhaps a century, been produced by the preaching of the missionaries, catholic or protestant, with the exception of only a recent instance of disgust, very naturally excited among some Hindoos, from being (if I am rightly informed) coarsely reproached by some vulgar zealot, with the worship of *murderers, liars*, and so forth.”—pp. 9, 10.

I very much suspect that this gentleman has been misinformed, even as to this exception. No such communication has reached



me; and if any one of the missionaries had, by the use of such language, excited disgust, I think either myself or some other member of the society would have heard of it. If it were "a *fact*, and a matter of *notoriety* in India," it is somewhat extraordinary that when, on account of the alarms produced by the Vellore mutiny, Mr. Carey and his colleagues were *requested* to desist from preaching to the natives, the magistrates at Calcutta, who delivered that request, should have made no mention of it; and still more so that they should have declared themselves "well satisfied with their character and deportment," acknowledging that "no complaint had ever been lodged against them." But the number of private reports which have of late been circulated is sufficient, for a time, to shake the confidence even of those who are friendly to the object. We can only repeat what we have said before, "Let us not be judged by private letters: let our adversaries come forward and accuse the missionaries, or at least give proof of their labors having been injurious."

There is, doubtless, a manner of representing things which tends not to convince, but to provoke. If any thing of this kind can be proved against the missionaries, we shall by no means defend it. To charge a company of Hindoos directly with the worship of murderers, liars, &c., must be very improper; but it is possible for a charge of this kind to be urged in a less offensive manner. Supposing a brahmin to be in the company, and that, in encountering the missionary, he should appeal to the shasters for the lawfulness of idol worship; would it be improper for the missionary calmly to prove from those shasters that the very gods which they command to be worshipped are there described as the most vicious characters? This, I believe, has been done, and that with good effect. Nor did I ever hear of an instance of any Hindoo being provoked by it, except the brahmins, who were thereby confounded before the people.

With respect to inculcating "the less controverted principles of Christianity," I do not believe that the missionaries have ever so much as mentioned to the converted natives, and certainly not to the unconverted, any of the controversies of European Christians. On the contrary, they teach them what they conceive to be simple Christianity, both in doctrine and practice; and were any thing like a disputatious spirit to arise among them, (which, I believe, has never been the case,) they would utterly discourage it.

The fears which this writer seems to entertain of "confounding the people with a variety of discordant opinions and sects" are, I trust, without foundation; but, as I shall have occasion to notice this subject more particularly in the next article, I shall here pass it by.

What this author means, and who he can refer to, by "churches overflowing with converts, who do no honor to the cause, but serve rather as a stumbling-block than an incitement to the conversion of others," I know not. Major Scott Waring, in his *third* pamphlet, understands him as agreeing with him, that "the hundred converts made in thirteen years by the *Bengal missionaries* have injured the cause of Christianity in India."—p. 136. After this, I must say, the author is called upon by every consideration of truth, justice, and religion, and in the name of each I hereby call upon him, through some public medium, to explain his meaning. The accusations of Major Scott Waring, and his associates, reflect no dishonor; but when taken up as sober truth by a writer who appears to be not only a man of veracity, but friendly to religion, they become of consequence, and require to be either substantiated or retracted.

We may have more hope of the conversion of the Hindoos, and consequently more zeal, than this author. We certainly do hope, by the good hand of God upon us, to produce something more than merely "an increased esteem for Christianity" among the heathen: but so far as his advice goes to recommend temperate men and measures, it meets our cordial approbation.

This writer recommends to government that "the number of missionaries should be limited, and that they should be required to enter into covenants with the company, calculated to insure their prompt obedience to the restraints which it may be found necessary to impose upon them." It is possible this gentleman may have formed his idea of the number of the missionaries from the reports circulated in such pamphlets as those of Major Scott Waring, as if "a great number of sectarian missionaries were spread over every part of India." If he had known that this great number does not exceed *sixteen*; and that the greater part of them reside at Serampore, under the immediate eye of the supreme government, he would scarcely have thought of such a proposal. As to "covenanting with the company," the quotation from Mr. Marshman\* proves their willingness to give every possible security for their peaceable and good behaviour.

The sum of this gentleman's advice is, that, "with the growing zeal of this country for Indian conversion, the vigilant control of the India government should keep pace." A vigilant control and a system of intolerance sound very much alike. I hope, however, he does not mean such control as would impede the work itself; and, if no more be meant than a restriction from intemperate language and behaviour, such restraints, I trust, will not "be found necessary to be imposed upon them."

\* See pp. 580, 581, of this volume.

## SECTION III.

## REMARKS ON THE PROPRIETY OF CONFINING MISSIONARY UNDERTAKINGS TO THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

I AM aware that on this part of the subject I have strong prejudices to encounter, especially from those who know little or nothing of protestant dissenters, except from the opprobrious names given them by their adversaries.

Of an ecclesiastical establishment for India I say nothing. We shall rejoice in the success of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Whether such an establishment take place, or not, I am persuaded no force will be used towards the natives; and I should not have suspected a desire to exclude protestant dissenters, had it not been expressly avowed in a late discourse before one of our universities.\* There are thousands, I am persuaded, in the national church, who would utterly disapprove of the illiberal wish, and whose hearts would revolt at the idea of recalling men of approved talents and character, who, with great labor and perseverance, have in a measure cleared the ground and sown the seed, to make way for others to go after them who should reap the harvest. Attached as they are to the church of England, they would not wish, in this manner, to promote her interests. They would, I presume, consider such a measure as strictly *sectarian*; that is, establishing a party at the expense of the general interest of the church of Christ.

But, should churchmen of this description be out-numbered by others of a different mind, we appeal from them to the temperance, the wisdom, and the justice of GOVERNMENT. A government distinguished by its tolerant principles, and which guards the rights of conscience even in Mahometans and heathens, will not, we trust, exclude protestant dissenting missionaries from any of its territories, especially men of learning and character, against whom not a single charge of improper conduct has ever been substantiated.

Dr. Barrow says, "Missionaries of various interests, or parties, ignorantly or wilfully differing in their comments, their opinions, and their designs, should not be suffered to appear amongst those whom we wish to convert." Surely Dr. Barrow might have supposed, from the disinterested labors of these missionaries, and from the good understanding which they have always endeavored to cultivate with Christians of other denominations, that they had no "design" in view but that of extending the Christian religion; but

that if they differ from him, or others, in some particulars, it may arise from other causes than either ignorance or obstinacy.

He adds, "If we permit the ministers of various sects and denominations, Lutherans and Calvinists, Arminians and Baptists, to inculcate their respective tenets without restraint, the unlettered Indian will not be able to determine what that Christianity is which we would persuade him to embrace; and the more learned, convinced that the doctrines of all our teachers cannot be equally true, may be led to conclude that all are equally false." Plausible as this reasoning may appear on paper, experience and fact are against it. There never has been, and I trust never will be, such an opposition in the doctrine of the missionaries as to furnish any stumbling-block to the natives. According to the reasoning of this gentleman, if "the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge" had sent out an English clergyman as a missionary to India, they must at the same time have recalled Schwartz, Gericke, and their fellow-laborers, as being "Lutherans."

The errors which exist in the Christian world, to whomsoever they belong, are doubtless an evil, and tend to obstruct the progress of the gospel. Could we be all of one mind, and that the mind of Christ, we might hope for greater success; but, seeing this is not the case, what are we to do? Surely there is no necessity for our all sitting idle; nor yet for one party, which happens to be established by civil authority, to exclude the rest.

Let us suppose an *agricultural* mission among the American Indians. Fifteen or sixteen experienced farmers are sent to teach the people how to cultivate their lands. After a few years' trial, some good fruits arise from their instructions. But a certain theorist, sitting at home, finds out that these men are not all perfectly of one opinion as to the best modes of husbandry; and therefore proposes to recal them, and to send others in their place. Common sense would, in this case, check the presumption. It would say, Let these men alone. There is no such difference between them as materially to affect the object. There is room enough for them all, so that no one will need to interfere with his neighbor. Even the less skilful among them will do good, perhaps as much as those whom you would send in their place, and who, after all, might be as far from unanimity as they are.

Such is the extent of the British empire in the east that, if we could divest ourselves of the sectarian spirit of "desiring to boast of other men's labors," no two denominations of Christians need interfere, and all might be helpers one of another. But though it were otherwise, and the evils alleged were allowed to arise from it, yet the measures proposed by this writer would not diminish them. It is by subscribing "the creed of

\* See Dr. Barrow's *Sermon before the University of Oxford*, Nov. 8, 1807, pp. 13, 14.

the national church" that he wishes all who engage in this work to be united: but the unanimity produced by subscribing a creed, however good that creed may be, is little more than nominal, and therefore could have no good effect on thinking heathens. They would soon discover that there had been almost as many different "comments and opinions" about the meaning of the creed, as about the Scriptures themselves; and that as great an opposition existed among those who had subscribed it as between them and others who had not subscribed it.

The truth is, if we wish to convert heathens to *ourselves*, we must do as the church of Rome does, set up for infallibility, and withhold the Scriptures from the people, lest they should read and judge for themselves. But, if we wish to convert them to *Christ*, we shall put the Scriptures into their hands, as *the only standard of truth*, and teach them to consider all other writings as in nowise binding on their consciences, nor even as claiming regard any farther than they agree with them. By this rule let them form their judgments of us, and of our differences, should they deem it worth while to inquire into them; but the aim of a true missionary will ever be to divert their attention from such things, and to direct it to "the truth as it is in Jesus."

It cannot be very marvellous to them that fallible men should not be perfectly of one mind. Whether they be pagans or Mahomedans, they know very well this is not the case with them; and, though the Christian religion professes to contain one consistent doctrine, yet it were highly presumptuous to encourage in them the hope of finding this any where in perfection, save in the holy Scriptures. However proper it may be for a church to express the leading articles of its faith in a creed, yet to make that creed "A RULE OF CONDUCT, AND A STANDARD OF TRUTH, TO WHICH APPEALS IN DOUBT AND CONTROVERSY ARE TO BE MADE," is to invade the divine prerogative, and to make void the word of God by our traditions. I have too high an opinion of the Reformers to suppose that they ever intended a composition of theirs to take place of the oracles of God. Should such an idea be held up to the Hindoos as that which was delivered in this sermon, it were indeed to cast a stumbling-block in their way: but if we be contented with giving them the word of God as *the only standard of faith and practice*, and with being ourselves, in all we say or do among them, measured by it; no material evil will arise to them from our differences.

To this may be added, if no great temptations of a worldly nature be held up as motives, it may be presumed that few will engage in the work but those whom the love of Christ constraineth: but between

such men the differences will not be very important; and, as they know one another, those differences may be expected to diminish.

Dr. Barrow recommends "one uniform and general attempt, *to the exclusion of all others, where we have the power to exclude them*, to be made by the ministers of the national church, under the authority and regulations of an act of the legislature."

And how many ministers of the national church does Dr. Barrow think would engage in this undertaking? If there be a sufficient number to justify his proposal, why do they not supply the episcopal mission on the coast of Coromandel? The worthy successors of Schwartz have long proclaimed the harvest in India to be great, and the laborers to be few. Scarcely a report of the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge" has appeared since the death of that great man, without calling out for more missionaries.

"Mr. Gericke," says the society, "laments the want of more assistance at Tanjore. How happy a thing, he observes, would it be if God were to furnish a faithful missionary for the assistance of Mr. Kolhoff, and another or two for the congregations southward of Tanjore. It is delightful to see the growth of the Tanjore mission, and the southern congregations dependent upon it. The inhabitants of whole villages flock to it. What a pity that there are not laborers for such a delightful harvest! At Jaffna, and all the coast of Ceylon, there is another great harvest. We have sent such of our native catechists as could be spared; but many are required for that extensive work."

Such was the Report in 1803; and did any of the ministers of the national church offer themselves for the service? I believe not; but we are told that "applications had been repeatedly made to the professors at Halle in Saxony to furnish the society with some new missionaries."

The Report in 1804, among other things, gives the cheering intelligence of "the inhabitants of four villages being unanimous in their resolution of embracing the Christian faith; and of their having put away their idols, and converted their temples into Christian churches." It is added by Mr. Gericke, "It seems that if we had faithful and discreet laborers for the vineyard of the protestant mission on this coast, to send wherever a door is opened unto us, rapid would be the progress of the gospel."

The following is the answer which the society was enabled to make to these solemn and impressive calls: "It is with concern that the society still has to report that no suitable supplies of new missionaries have yet been heard of; to succeed the good men who have finished their course."



If we look to the next year, 1805, we find "The society cannot *yet* report that any new missionaries have been engaged in Europe to carry on the work of promoting Christian Knowledge in the East Indies, although many efforts have been used to find out suitable persons to be employed in this labor of love."

In the Report of 1806 the complaints are repeated; but no mention is *yet* made of any new missionaries; and none in that of 1807, just published.

I do not reflect upon the English clergy. There are many among them who, I am persuaded, would willingly engage in any service which appeared to be their duty; but who, from the purest motives, might consider themselves called to labor in another quarter. Neither do I reflect upon the society; for how can they send out missionaries till there are missionaries to be sent? I only ask, how could Dr. Barrow, with these facts before his eyes, preach and write as he did? How could he propose to take the *whole* work of evangelizing India into the hands of the ministers of the national church, when that *part* of it which had a special claim upon them was known to be standing still, in a manner, for want of assistance?

Let there be what excellence there may in the established church, (and far be it from me to wish to depreciate it,) it is not thence *exclusively* that we are to look for the accomplishment of this work. To furnish a sufficient number of suitable men for so great an undertaking is not in the power of any one denomination, established or unestablished; nor, as I suspect, of the friends of Christianity in all of them united: but if, like her that anointed the Lord's feet, we *do what we can*, we shall be approved.

For many ministers and members of the established church I feel a most sincere regard; and sorry should I be to wound their feelings. It is a circumstance that has afforded me pleasure, in this otherwise disagreeable controversy, that its tendency is to unite the friends of Christianity in a common cause. If, in my remarks on the episcopal mission in the east, I have seemed to interfere in concerns which do not immediately belong to me, it is because I have found it necessary, in order to repel the propositions of a writer whose avowed intolerance knows no limits but the want of power!

Whatever this gentleman may allege in behalf of "one uniform and general attempt, to be made by the ministers of the national church exclusively," "the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge" cannot, with any consistency, second the motion. They must know that such a proposal, whatever it

may appear on paper, could not be reduced to practice. And surely it is not too much to infer that, if it be right and desirable to introduce Christianity among the Hindoos, others should be allowed to take part in the work as well as they, especially as there is no desire of interfering in any of their labors. Let the church of England do what it can. Let it send out ministers who are willing to spend and be spent in the work, and we with all our hearts shall pray for their success. From missionaries of this description we should have no apprehensions. Such men would not wish to "exclude" those who are already employed, whether they could fully accord with them or not. Their language would be, "Let there be no strife between us, for we are brethren! Is not the whole land before us? If you will go to the left hand, then we will take the right; or if you depart to the right hand we will go to the left." Nay more, their language already is, "GOD BLESS ALL MISSIONARY INSTITUTIONS! MAY THE WORK OF GOD PROSPER IN ALL THEIR HANDS!"\*

For our parts, observing of late years that Christianity itself was powerfully assailed, we have, in a manner, laid aside inferior objects, and made common cause with the Christian world. We have been less attentive to the things in which we differ from other Christians than to those wherein we are agreed; and to the best of our abilities have joined with them in defending the common faith. Our zeal has not been expended in making proselytes to a party, but in turning sinners to God through Jesus Christ. It was in pursuit of this object that we first engaged in missionary undertakings. We had no interest to serve but that of Christ. It was in our hearts to do something for his name among the heathen; and, if it might be, to enlarge the boundaries of his kingdom. Such also we know (as far as men can know each other) were the motives of our brethren, the missionaries. And, now that it hath pleased God in some measure to prosper our way, it is our humble, respectful, and most earnest entreaty . . . HINDER US NOT!

We ask not for any temporal advantage, any participation in trade, any share of power, any stations of honor, or any assistance from government: we ask merely for permission to expend such sums of money as may be furnished by the liberality of Christians, earned chiefly by the sweat of the brow, in imparting the word of life to our fellow-subjects in Hindostan.

\* See the Rev. Basil Wood's Sermon, prefixed to the last Report of the Committee of the Society for Missions to Africa and the East, pp. 175—178.

## APPENDIX.

RECENT TESTIMONIES TO THE CHARACTER  
OF THE MISSIONARIES.

Extracts of a Letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Sandys (who, after twenty-two years' service in India, returned in 1804) in answer to one addressed to him since the veracity of the missionaries has been called in question by Major Scott Waring.

"FROM my acquaintance with Messrs. Carey, Ward, Marshman, &c., before I left India, I feel a repugnance to answer the question on their veracity. I can believe that, as all men are fallible, they in some of their impressions and relations may have been mistaken; but, as to their veracity, I do not, cannot, dare not doubt it. I can also readily conceive that a common village tumult in India may in England be considered as a very serious affair: but an English mob and an Indian mob are very different things. A missionary may go with a small boat thirty or forty miles to a village market, sit down, converse, and afterwards preach. Perhaps some brahmin will oppose him. This introduces the Hindoo idolatry; and, while he remains calm, they will become vociferous. As he proceeds to his boat, the boys may be encouraged to throw mud at him; but no personal injury follows; and the missionary, as he is going away, may be asked by a villager when he will come again and hold conversation with his brahmin: but this is all.

"Having served at different times in various staff departments of the army, particularly in Mysore, under the marquis Cornwallis, I had a great variety of people, of different castes, under my direction, and had full opportunity of observing their customs and manners.

"I never heard of any thing worthy of being called a tumult or disturbance occasioned by the missionaries while I was in India, which I think I should if there had been any; and I do not believe that any of their addresses to the natives, either in words or writing, would produce any serious effect of the kind, provided there were no actual interruption of their customs. At the encampment near Surat, a Bengal brahmin sepoy (a soldier of the priest order) went to the river to perform his ablutions, and to say his prayers, according to custom, in the water. Another sepoy, of the Bombay establishment, going into the stream before him, at the same time and for the same purpose, mudded the water. As soon as the brahmin perceived it, he instantly left the river and ran to his battalion, calling out that he was contaminated and had lost his caste. The respective battalions to which the parties belonged immediately took arms,

and, had not their officers exerted themselves with great energy and prudence, the consequence must have been dreadful; but through their interference the business was settled.—The Bombay sepoy might have said what he pleased to the brahmin *standing on the bank*. He might have inveighed against him in the most bitter terms, and told him that his caste was better than his: the brahmin, I believe, would have returned only a smile of contempt. It is not talking to them, or endeavoring to persuade them, but actual interference that will excite mutiny and disaffection. In all the instances of dissatisfaction that I remember, this has been the case.

"A little before my return, I and some others were in company with a Christian native, called Petumber, a very eloquent man. He told us that he had in preaching to his countrymen occasionally met with abuse, but that in general they heard him with attention. In crossing a river, he said, he passed one of his old acquaintances, a brahmin, who was washing, and praying to his gods, to whom he spoke of the absurdity of his worship. The brahmin only pitied him, and told him that with his caste he had lost his senses. Thus they parted without any thing like anger on either side: but, had Petumber passed the stream above him, religious hatred and revenge would have followed. As to talking about religion they are fond of it: it is only when they are interrupted or contaminated that they are seriously offended."

Extracts of a Letter from WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM, Esq., late assistant judge at Dinagopore, on the same occasion as the foregoing.

"If Mr. Carey be accused of *falsehood*, and if I were called upon to state what I think of this charge, my sensations respecting it would be those of any ingenuous person well acquainted with the great Howard, had he been called upon to vindicate that philanthropist from the charge of *inhumanity*. I am as well convinced as I can be of any thing which is not the subject of consciousness, that Mr. Carey is totally incapable of being guilty of any falsehood or misrepresentation whatever.

"During the last two years of Mr. Carey's residence in the Dinagopore district, he was well known, not only to me, but to all the gentlemen in the company's civil service in that station. He possessed, I can safely say, the cordial friendship of some, and the good opinion of all.

"In particular, I know that the gentleman who held the office of judge and magistrate of that large and important district had a very high esteem and respect for Mr. Carey's

character, which he showed by every proper mark of polite attention. And of that gentleman, the unspotted integrity and the merits as a public servant are well known, and have, I believe, been acknowledged by every successive government of Bengal, from Lord Cornwallis's to Sir George Barlow's. While Mr. Carey resided in the above district, his conduct was uniformly quiet and irreprehensible; and, had it been otherwise, I, from my situation as registrar of the civil court of Dinagopore and assistant to the magistrate, must have known of it.

"After I quitted Dinagopore, in 1801, my personal intercourse with Mr. Carey became more frequent. I had also an opportunity of becoming well acquainted with Mr. Ward, and knew Mr. Marshman, though, from this last gentleman's being more confined by his duties as a schoolmaster, I seldom saw him.

"I shall say nothing of Mr. Carey's religion, because it is not that which is the subject of dispute: but I will say that the unaffected simplicity of his manners, the modesty of his demeanor, his good sense and information, his unwearied industry, and the general excellence of his character, did, as far as I had an opportunity of observing, procure to him the esteem of all those Europeans to whom he was known.

"I also frequently conversed with Hindoo and Mahomedan natives, rather of the better sort, upon the subject of Christianity and the probable success of the mission, and they generally discussed these things with much freedom. As far as I can recollect, I never in any conversation of this kind heard Mr. Carey or any of the other missionaries mentioned with disrespect. On the contrary, I believe their characters were highly respected even by the natives, who, with all their faults, generally form pretty just estimates of the characters of Europeans who reside among them, and are by no means backward in giving their sentiments thereupon.

"Though I did not personally know the native converts, I can safely affirm, from my acquaintance with the character of the missionaries, that their testimony respecting those converts ought to be received, and that full credit should be attached to it. It is a most unfounded calumny to assert that the missionaries have received immoral characters, knowing them to be such, into the church. I am certain they would receive no such characters."

[The two following letters were published by the author in a separate form, at a subsequent period to the above; but, as they form an appropriate conclusion to the subject, it is deemed advisable to give them a place in this appendix.]

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE PETITIONERS\*  
TO PARLIAMENT FOR RELIGIOUS TOLERATION IN INDIA: A LETTER TO JOHN WEYLAND, JUN., ESQ., OCCASIONED BY HIS LETTER TO SIR HUGH INGLIS, BART., ON THE STATE OF RELIGION IN INDIA.

Sir,

I HAVE read with interest your Letter addressed to Sir Hugh Inglis, Bart., "On the state of Religion in India." Having been for twenty years past the secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, the society which sent out the present Dr. Carey and his colleagues, it is natural that I should be interested in whatever may affect the important question now pending in parliament.

The dispassionate, candid, and for the most part judicious strain in which you have written, sir, deserves acknowledgment.—I have no hesitation in saying, it appears to me to come nearer the point at issue than any thing that I have met with.

Those gentlemen who assert that "as the Hindoos and the Christians worship one great Creator, it is indifferent whether the adoration be offered to him through the pure medium of Christianity or through the bloody and obscene rites of the Indian idolatry," you very properly deem incompetent to judge on the subject. The British legislature I trust will never so dishonor itself as to entertain the question whether the Christian religion be preferable to that of Juggernaut.

As to what you have written, sir, of an *ecclesiastical establishment*, that is not my immediate concern; but if it be so conducted as to "take a share in the conversion of the heathen," and do not interfere with the labors of those who are unconnected with it, it will be entitled to our Christian regards, no less than our undertakings are to those of pious episcopalians. The efforts of individuals and societies unconnected with the establishment are those which immediately concern me, and a large proportion of the petitioners.

Many of your remarks on this part of the subject, sir, are candid and liberal. Your short and conclusive proof that "no danger is to be apprehended from these efforts, because no danger ever *has arisen*, though the practice has been going on for centuries, and during the period many thousands

\*By the title given to these pages, the author means no more than to express his own principles, and what *he conceives* to be the principles of the petitioners in general. Having observed, by conversing with several gentlemen, that the object of the petitions was understood to be something incompatible with the security of government, he wished, as far as he was able, to remove those impressions, and to give a true statement of what he conceived to be their object.



of natives have been converted," must approve itself to every candid and enlightened legislator.

It is here, sir, that I wish to offer a few remarks on your proposed regulations, and to state what I consider as the principles of the general body of the petitioners.

In order to be a competent judge of the question at issue you reckon a man must be "free from enthusiasm, either for or against Christianity." You do not mean by this that he should be "deficient in a warmth of gratitude for the benefits of Christianity;" but merely that, while he engages in real earnest in the propagation of the gospel, he is not to be regardless of good sense and sound discretion. That there are enthusiasts of this description is very possible; but I hope to be believed, when I say that, of all the persons I have conversed with on the subject, I have never met with such a one. Persons whose principal attention is turned to the conversion of the heathen, and who are but little acquainted with its political bearings, may dwell more on the former and less on the latter; but I never heard such an idea as this suggested, that "we have nothing to do but to pour into India all the evangelical knowledge and zeal we can export, and leave the result to Providence." Many of the petitions have expressed a wish for all *prudent* and *peaceable* means to be used; and, where this has not been expressed, I believe it has been invariably understood. It is not to *prudence*, sir, that the petitioners have any objection; but merely to *that species of prudence that would not scruple to subject, nor even to sacrifice, Christianity to political expediency.* Ought a nation, sir, to set up its power and temporal prosperity as the supreme end, and to require that nothing be done within the sphere of its influence but what appears consistent with, if not calculated to promote, this end? Is not this to "sit in the seat of God?" See Ezek. xxviii. 1—10.

Dr. Carey and his colleagues, sir, are acknowledged by the marquis Wellesley (in a late speech, said to have been delivered in the house of lords) to be "*quiet, prudent, discreet, orderly, and learned men:*" yet no men on earth are farther from admitting such a principle as the above than they. We may be prudent without being irreligious. Dr. Marshman has proved that, if the British government be friendly to Christianity, it *will* by this insure its own prosperity; for "*whatever is right is wise:*" but to befriend Christianity itself in subserviency to our worldly interest were to turn that which is good into evil, and, instead of "placing us under the divine protection," might be expected to procure our overthrow. If God be what we are in the habit of calling him, the *Supreme Being*, he must be treated as *supreme*, or we cannot hope for his blessing.

You allege that "the ultimate conversion of these heathens depends, under God, upon the duration of the British dominion." That the British dominion may be the appointed means of enlightening the eastern world, as the Roman dominion was of enlightening Britain, is readily admitted. This may be the design of Providence in connecting them. It is also allowed that, on the supposition of British dominion being used for the amelioration of the condition of the natives, its duration is very desirable, and must needs be desired by the friends of Christianity: but I cannot allow the prevalence of the kingdom of Christ to depend on the duration of *any* earthly government. The duration of a government may depend upon its befriending the kingdom of Christ: but, if it refuse to do this, deliverance will arise from another quarter. The great system of God, as revealed in prophecy, will be accomplished: *the nation and kingdom that refuses to serve Him will perish.*

I am persuaded, sir, that you have no intention to reduce Christianity to a state of mere subserviency to civil policy, and that, if you perceived this consequence to be involved in any thing you had advanced, you would retract it. "I do certainly," you say, "go a little beyond Machiavel," who was for holding religion in veneration as the means of preserving government. Yet you speak of our being "bound as a Christian country to impart the blessings of Christianity, only *so far as it can be done with safety to our dominion.*" Be assured, sir, I have no desire to endanger British dominion, nor the most distant idea that the labors of missionaries will have any such tendency. If they have, however, it will be an event of which history furnishes no example. But why set up the safety of our dominion as the supreme object, to which every thing else, even the imparting of the blessings of Christianity, must give way? If there be any meaning in our Saviour's words, "He that saveth his life shall lose it," is not this the way to ruin that very dominion you are so anxious to preserve? It was to prevent the Romans from coming to take away their place and nation that the Jews were persuaded to crucify the Lord of glory—a measure which brought on them the very evil that they dreaded.

Review, sir, your proposed regulations for confining missionaries to a particular *district*, and sending them away by a summary power upon proof of any evil consequences, not only arising, but "*likely to arise*, from their presence." Does not this suppose that you have *adversaries* to deal with, such as Shimei was known to be by Solomon; who, therefore, must be confined and watched with a jealous eye, and who require to be punished on the ground of mere apprehension? Does it not proceed on the principle that every

thing must be subservient to political expediency? Why should you not treat missionaries as *friends* till they prove themselves to be enemies? If they *prove* to be such let them be sent home at our expense; or let us be informed, and we will recal them. Of all the missionaries that have gone to India, how many has the government found that deserved the name of enemies? I believe not one. But their zeal, it has been said, may betray them into *indiscretions*. It may; we have never heard, however, of any such indiscretions as those of which military gentlemen have been guilty, in *cutting off men's beards and shooting their monkeys*. But allowing that religious zeal may betray them into some indiscretions, and this we do not deny; yet let them be treated as you would treat a *friend*; that is, let them be told of their indiscretions, of which it may be they are not aware at the time. A few such words would go much farther with these men than a jealous eye or severe animadversion. A *friendly feeling*, sir, in this case, is every thing. Suppose a missionary stationed up the country; he gives the Scriptures to those who ask for them, and preaches, or rather converses, with the natives (for their addresses are not harangues, but are frequently interrupted by inquiries.) The Hindoos are attentive, and desire to hear more; but two or three Mahomedans, to whom it is almost natural to be of a bitter, persecuting spirit, are displeas'd, and get a letter of complaints written to government. If government be *friendly*, it will hear both sides before it judges; if not, the missionary will be immediately ordered away. Such, sir, appears to be the summary process which your proposed regulations would justify.

Why should imaginary dangers, unfounded in a single fact during the experience, as you say, of centuries, be made the ground of legislative control? Surely, sir, your apprehensions of "a premature shock being given to the Hindoo opinions," while yet you acknowledge that "no danger ever *has arisen*," must have been excited by the reiterated representations of those persons whom you reckon incompetent to judge on the question. Why should a course of disinterested labors which in every instance of conversion adds a cordial friend to the British government, even though it were like the course of an apostle to be now and then the innocent occasion of a local disturbance, be view'd with so jealous an eye? Out of nearly *five hundred* persons who have embraced Christianity by means of our missionaries, we fear no contradiction when we say, that not one of them has proved himself any other than a loyal and peaceable subject.

If there be any danger of mischief arising from missionaries, it must affect *themselves* before it can affect government. In the

frolic of the officers who shot the sacred monkeys, government does not appear to have been so much as thought of; it was their own life, and that only, that was endangered; and so long as missionaries stand merely on their own ground, receiving no favor but what is common to good subjects (and this is all we ask,) it will be the same with them. If any danger arise, it will be to themselves; and of this, after all their experience, they have no apprehensions.

Some gentlemen cannot understand what we mean in our petitions, when we profess obedience to government in *civil* things only. We mean nothing more than to reserve our consciences for God, according to our Saviour's words, "Render unto Cesar the things which are Cesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." We have no reserves but these. Hinder us not in our efforts to carry into execution the commission of Christ, and we are not anxious about other things. We mean by obedience in all civil concerns as much as if we engaged to conduct ourselves in a loyal, orderly, and peaceable way. If it be objected that we are liable to act improperly in *religious*, as well as in civil concerns—we answer, If our conduct, even in the exercises of religion, be injurious to the peace of society, we should allow this to be a breach of civil obedience, and have no objection to be accountable for it: only let us not be punished on the ground of mere apprehension, nor treated but as being what we are—sincere friends to our country and to our species. I am, sir, respectfully yours,

ANDREW FULLER.

ANSWER TO AN ANONYMOUS LETTER FROM  
"AN OBSERVER," ON HIS OBJECTIONS TO  
FOREIGN MISSIONS.

I SHOULD not have thought it necessary thus publicly \* to notice an anonymous letter, had it not afforded me an opportunity of answering an objection to foreign missions, which has been more than once advanced—that of its *interfering with exertions in favor of our own countrymen*. I shall say but little of the gross misstatement in the letter, † as that my going to Scotland, in 1799, was to "witness the state of that country," and to

\* This article originally appeared in the *Theological and Biblical Magazine*, 1802.

† The following is a verbatim copy of this singular communication:—

"Rev. Sir,

"Various and costly have been the exertions made for the propagation of the gospel among foreign nations. However laudable this labor of love may be, yet very considerable blame is attached to it; since the probability of greater success was in favor of a region far less distant, and more deserv-

"concert measures for doing good;" that I did not "condescend" to halt, and preach, between York and Newcastle; and that "it cannot be said that one convert has been made" in foreign missions. Such assertions must have arisen from the want of information. My journey was merely owing to a kind invitation given me to go and receive the donations of a number of my fellow-christians, who were willing to contribute to the giving of the Holy Scriptures to a great nation which had them not, as all the country between York and Newcastle has. My excursion was not a preaching one, though I did preach, and that to the utmost extent of my power. If I had taken half a year, I might have stopped much oftener than I did: but then it is possible my own congregation would have reminded me that "charity begins at home." Whether success has, or has not, attended foreign missions, the accounts which have been printed of them, so far as human judgment can go in such matters, will enable us to decide.

The only question that requires attention is, *Whether the spirit which, within the last ten years, has prompted Christians of different denominations to engage in foreign missions, has been favorable or unfavorable to the propagation of the gospel at home?*—It is a fact

ing, if charity begins at home. The wilful neglect of so large a part of our own land is certainly unpardonable. It is true that many an expensive and fatiguing journey has been undertaken, from south to north Britain, which has been well repaid by that which has taken and is likely to take place. Yet you, sir, have rode post down to the Scotch metropolis, for the purpose of witnessing the state of that country, with a view to aid in concerting the best means by which good might be done: but neither yourself, nor others, who at least ought to have had more consideration, did condescend to halt by the way, either to preach or inquire into the truly deplorable state of ignorance and irreligion of that large and populous tract of country situated between York and Newcastle-upon-Tyne; or, in your flight back again to give one thought towards the reformation of Cumberland, or heathenish Westmoreland.

"If we may judge of the success which attended the labors of Paulinus, the first missionary sent into these parts from Rome, the most pleasing benefits would be the consequence, upon the application of proper means. Paulinus is said to have baptized, in one day, ten thousand persons in the river Swale, near Richmond in Yorkshire. The fair Otahaitan, the filthy Hottentot, and cruel East Indian, have each been sharers in missionary boon, at the expense of many thousands of pounds, many valuable lives, and the earnest labors of pious and zealous characters: and, after all this, it cannot be said that one convert has been made; when, in all probability, if a tenth part had been done in favor of our own nation, some scores, perhaps hundreds, would have been praising God and thanking you, which they might have done to all eternity.—That the time for the calling of the gentiles may be fast approaching is the earnest prayer of one who is no director in these matters, but only

"AN OBSERVER."

which cannot be disputed, that, within the above period, there have been far greater exertions to communicate the principles of religion to the heathenized parts of both England and Scotland than at any former period within the remembrance, at least, of the present generation. If I were to say they have been five times greater than before, I think I should not exceed the truth. Nor has that part of the kingdom to which the writer of the letter alludes been overlooked. And how is this fact to be accounted for? Will this friend to village-preaching unite with bishop Horsley, and say it is the effect of political motives; and merely a new direction of the democratic current, which was interrupted by the treason and sedition bills in 1795? If so, we might ask, How came it to commence two years before those bills were passed? How is it that it should have prevailed, not so much among those dissenters who took an eager share in political contention, as those who had scarcely ever concerned themselves in any thing of the kind? And, finally, How is it that it should have extended to other nations as well as Britain, and other quarters of the world as well as Europe? But I suppose the writer of this letter would not attribute it to this cause. How then will he account for it? The truth most manifestly is that the very practice of which he complains has been more conducive to that which he recommends than all other causes put together. It is natural that it should be so. A longing desire after the spread of the gospel, when once kindled, extends in all directions. The same principle which induces some to leave their native land, to impart the heavenly light, induces others to contribute and pray for their success: and, while they are doing this, it is next to impossible to forget their own countrymen, who, though they have access to the written word, yet live "without God in the world."

It is very singular that the example of "Paulinus" (I suppose he meant Austin the monk,) who came to Britain as a missionary from Rome, about the year 596, and is said to have baptized ten thousand people in the river Swale,\* should be alleged against foreign missions. Allowing Austin's converts to have been real Christians (which, however, is very doubtful,) according to the "Observer" there was "much blame attached" to his labors of love, since the probability of greater success was in favor of Italy; a country far less distant than Britain, and more deserving of his charity, which should have begun at home.

Unfortunately for this proverb, I do not recollect ever hearing it alleged but for a

\* Fox's *Acts and Monuments*, Vol. I., p. 132, 9th edition.



selfish purpose. Go and ask relief for some distressed object of a wealthy man. His answer is, "Charity begins at home." True, and it seems to *end* there. And, by the reasoning of this observer, his would do the same. So long as there are any sinners in Britain, we must *confine* our attention to them. A person of a contracted mind once objected to the exportation of our manufactures.

"We have many poor people in England," said he, "who are half naked, and would be glad of them; and charity begins at home." He was informed, however, by a merchant, that to send our commodities abroad is not the way to impoverish, but to enrich ourselves, and even to furnish the poor with clothing, by providing them with plenty of good employment.

## ESSAYS, LETTERS, &c.

ON

# ECCLESIASTICAL POLITY.

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### AN INQUIRY INTO THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

IN former times liberty of conscience and the right of private judgment in matters of religion were denied both by ecclesiastics and politicians. Of late they have been very generally admitted, and much has been said and written in their defence. But the nature and extent of these rights, in reference to religious society, have not been so clearly ascertained; and claims have been instituted which appear to be subversive of those very principles so often pleaded in their support.

The right of private judgment in matters of religion appears to be THE RIGHT WHICH EVERY INDIVIDUAL HAS TO THINK AND TO AVOW HIS THOUGHTS ON THOSE SUBJECTS, WITHOUT BEING LIABLE TO ANY CIVIL INCONVENIENCE ON THAT ACCOUNT. The subject in this view has been successfully supported by writers of ability, and the principle has been acted upon by the great body of nonconformists and dissenters of later times. There can scarcely be any doubt remaining with respect to the power of the civil magistrate to interfere with the religious sentiments and private judgment of the subject: this is now very generally and very justly exploded. But of late the subject has taken another turn, and men have pleaded not only an exemption from civil penalties on account of their religious principles, in which the very essence of persecution consists, but also that they are not subject to the control of a religious society with which they stand connected for any tenets which they may think proper to avow. The right of private judgment now frequently assumed is

*a right in every individual who may become a member of a Christian church to think and avow his thoughts, be they what they may, without being subject to exclusion or admonition, or the ill opinion of his brethren on that account.* Any thing that is inconsistent with this is thought to be a species of spiritual tyranny, and repugnant to that "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." But this appears to be highly extravagant, and is what no man can claim as a right. The following considerations are submitted to the reader.

First: The supposed right of the individual is *contrary to the principles on which Christian churches were originally founded.* Not only were those who disbelieved the gospel refused admission to a Christian church, but those who perverted the gospel, or maintained pernicious errors concerning it, were subject to admonition and exclusion. The apostle Paul directed that a heretic after the first and second admonition should be *rejected.* And, in his epistle to the churches of Galatia, he expressed a wish that those who troubled them by subverting the gospel of Christ and introducing another gospel were "cut off." The church at Pergamos is reproved for having those *among them* who held the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitans. If the churches of Galatia complied with the apostle's desire, their false teachers might have exclaimed against them as invading the right of private judgment, and with as much justice as some in later times have done against the censures of their brethren. And, had the church of Pergamos been formed on the principles above mentioned, they might have replied to the solemn message of our Lord in some such manner as the following: Why are we

blamed for having those *among us* who hold the doctrine of Nicolas? It is sufficient for us as individuals to think for ourselves, and leave others to do the same. We cannot refuse these men without invading the right of private judgment?

If it be objected that inspiration rendered the judgment of the apostles infallible, and that therefore their conduct in this case is not a rule for us, it may be replied that, if the apostles were infallible, the churches were not so, and the blame is laid on *them* for having neglected to exclude the characters in question. Besides, this objection would tend to prove that primitive Christians, on account of the infallibility of the apostle, *did not possess the right of private judgment*; and that the right sprung up in the church in consequence of our being all equally fallible! But this is contrary to the declaration of the apostle: "not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy." Hence it appears that admonishing or excluding from the primitive church those who held pernicious errors was not reckoned to be subversive of the right of private judgment; and the churches being exhorted to such discipline by the apostles was exercising no dominion over their faith.

Secondly: Not only is this supposed right of private judgment inconsistent with apostolic practice, but it is also *contrary to reason and the fitness of things*. All society is formed in mutual agreement. It is no less a dictate of common sense than of the word of God that "two cannot walk together, except they be agreed." No society can subsist unless there be some specific principles in which they are united. In political societies, these principles will be of a political nature: in civil ones, of a civil kind; and, in those of religion, of a religious nature. According to the degree of importance in which those principles are held by the parties associating, such will be their concern to maintain and act upon them; and the terms of admittance or continuance in such society must be regulated accordingly. If there be no definite principles in which it is necessary that a society should be agreed, but every member of it be at liberty to imbibe and propagate whatever notions he pleases, then all societies, civil, political, and religious, have hitherto been mistaken; for all of them have had in view the attainment of some specific object; and this is more especially the case with societies that are purely religious. A community must entirely renounce the name of a Christian church before it can act upon the principle here contended for; and those who entirely reject Christianity ought, nevertheless, to be admitted or retained in fellowship, if they *choose it*; seeing they have only exercised the right of private judgment!

Farther: If a Christian society has no

right to withdraw from an individual whose principles they consider as false and injurious, neither has an individual any right to withdraw from a society in a similar case; and then there is an end to all religious liberty at once.

Whether it be right for us to think the worse of any person on account of his erroneous principles must depend on a previous question; namely, whether he *be* either better or worse for the principles which he imbibes? If he be not, then it must be allowed that we ought not to think so of him; but, if he be, undoubtedly we ought to think of one another according to truth. To say that no person is better or worse in a moral view, whatever be his principles, is to say that principles themselves have no influence on the heart and life; and that amounts to the same thing as their being of no importance. But, if so, all those Scriptures which represent truth as a means of sanctification ought to be discarded; and all the labors of good men to discover truth, and of the apostles to disseminate it—yea, and those of the Son of God himself, who came into the world to bear witness to the truth—were totally in vain.

#### ON CREEDS AND SUBSCRIPTIONS.

It has been very common, among a certain class of writers, to exclaim against creeds and systems in religion as inconsistent with Christian liberty and the rights of conscience: but surely they must be understood as objecting to those creeds only which they dislike, and not to creeds in general; for no doubt, unless they be worse than the worst of beings, they have a creed of their own. The man who has no creed, has no belief; which is the same thing as being an unbeliever; and he whose belief is not formed into a system has only a few loose, unconnected thoughts, without entering into the harmony and glory of the gospel. Every well-informed and consistent believer, therefore, must have a creed—a system which he supposes to contain the leading principles of divine revelation.

It may be pleaded that the objection does not lie so much against our having creeds or systems as against our imposing them on others as the condition of Christian fellowship. If, indeed, a subscription to articles of faith were required without examination, or enforced by civil penalties, it would be an unwarrantable imposition on the rights of conscience: but, if an explicit agreement in what may be deemed fundamental principles be judged essential to fellowship, this is only requiring that a man appear to be a Christian before he can have a right to be treated as such. Suppose it were required of a Jew or an infidel, before he is



admitted to the Lord's supper (which either might be disposed to solicit for some worldly purpose,) that he must previously become a believer; should we thereby impose Christianity upon him? He might claim the right of private judgment, and deem such a requisition incompatible with its admission; but it is evident that he could not be entitled to Christian regard, and that, while he exclaimed against the imposition of creeds and systems, he himself would be guilty of an imposition of the grossest kind, utterly inconsistent with the rights of voluntary and social compact, as well as of Christian liberty.

In order to be a little more explicit on the subject, it may be necessary to offer the following remarks:—

First: It is admitted that no society has a right to make laws where Christ has made none.—Whoever attempts this, whether in an individual or social capacity, is guilty of substituting for doctrines the commandments of men, and making void the law of God by his traditions.

Secondly: The fallibility of all human judgment is fully allowed. A Christian society, as well as an individual, is liable to err in judging what are the doctrines and precepts of Christ. Whatever articles of faith and practice, therefore, are introduced into a community, they ought, no doubt, to be open to correction or amendment, whenever those who subscribe them shall perceive their inconsistency with the will of Christ.

Thirdly: whatever may be said on the propriety of human systems of faith, they are not to be considered as the proper ground on which to rest our religious sentiments. The word of God, and that alone, ought to be the ground of both faith and practice. But all this does not prove that it would be wrong for an individual to judge of the meaning of the divine word, nor for a number of individuals, who agree in their judgments, to express that agreement in explicit terms, and consider themselves as bound to walk by the same rule.

Fourthly: Whether the united sentiments of a Christian society be expressed in writing or not is immaterial, provided they be mutually understood and avowed.—Some societies have no written articles of faith or discipline; but with them, as with others that have, it is always understood that there are certain principles a professed belief of which is deemed necessary to communion.

The substance of the inquiry therefore would be, whether a body of Christians have a right to judge of the meaning of the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, and to act accordingly? That an individual has a right so to judge, and to form his connections with those whose views are most congenial with his own, will not be disputed: but, if so, why have not a society the same right? If Christ

has given both doctrines and precepts, some of which are more immediately addressed to Christians in their social capacity, they must not only possess such a right, but are under obligation to exercise it. *If the righteous nation which keep the truth* be the only proper characters for entering into gospel fellowship, those who have the charge of their admission are obliged to form a judgment on what is truth, and what is righteousness; without which they must be wholly unqualified for their office.

If a Christian society have no right to judge what is *truth*, and to render an agreement with them in certain points a term of communion, then neither have they a right to judge what is *righteousness*, nor to render an agreement in matters of practical right and wrong a term of communion.

There is a great diversity of sentiment in the world concerning morality, as well as doctrine: and, if it be an unscriptural imposition to agree to any articles whatever, it must be to exclude any one for immorality, or even to admonish him on that account; for it might be alleged that he only thinks for himself, and acts accordingly. Nor would it stop here: almost every species of immorality has been defended and may be disguised, and thus, under the pretence of a right of private judgment, the church of God would become like the mother of harlots—“*the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.*”

It is a trite and frivolous objection which some have made against subscriptions and articles of faith—that it is setting bounds to the freedom of inquiry, and requiring a conformity of sentiment that is incompatible with the various opportunities and capacities of different persons. The same objection might be urged against the covenanting of the Israelites, (Neh. x. 29,) and all laws in society. If a religious community agree to specify some leading principles which they consider as derived from the word of God, and judge the belief of them to be necessary in order to any person's becoming or continuing a member with them, it does not follow that those principles should be equally understood, or that all their brethren must have the same degree of knowledge, nor yet that they should understand and believe nothing else. The powers and capacities of different persons are various; one may comprehend more of the same truth than another, and have his views more enlarged by an exceedingly great variety of kindred ideas; and yet the substance of their belief may still be the same. The object of articles is to keep at a distance, not those who are weak in the faith, but such as are its avowed enemies. Supposing a church-covenant to be so general as not to specify one principle or duty, but barely an engagement to adhere to

the Scriptures as a rule of faith and practice, the objection would still apply; and it might be said, One man is capable of understanding much more of the Scriptures than another, and persons of more enlarged minds may discover a great deal of truth relating to science which the Scriptures do not pretend to teach: why, therefore, do we frame articles to limit the freedom of inquiry, or which require a conformity of sentiment incompatible with the opportunities and capacities of persons so differently circumstanced? The objection, therefore, if admitted, would prove too much. The powers of the mind will probably vary in a future world; one will be capable of comprehending much more of truth than another; yet the redeemed will all be of one mind, and of one heart.

Every one feels the importance of articles, or laws, in civil society; and yet these are nothing less than expositions or particular applications of the great principle of universal equity. General or universal equity is that to civil laws which the Bible is to articles of faith; it is the source from which they are all professedly derived, and the standard to which they ought all to be submitted. The one are as liable to swerve from general equity as the other from the word of God: and, where this is proved to be the case in either instance, such errors require to be corrected. But as no person of common sense would on this account inveigh against laws being made, and insist that we ought only to covenant in general to walk according to equity, without agreeing in any leading principles, or determining wherein that equity consists; neither ought he to inveigh against articles of faith and practice in religious matters, provided that they comport with the mind of God in his word. If articles of faith be opposed to the authority of Scripture, or substituted in the place of such authority, they become objectionable and injurious: but, if they simply express the united judgment of those who voluntarily subscribe them, they are incapable of any such kind of imputation.

THOUGHTS ON THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE APOSTLES PROCEEDED, IN FORMING AND ORGANIZING CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, AND REGULATING VARIOUS RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

[Written in April, 1804, for the use of the Brethren at Serampore.]

VARIOUS {disputes} have arisen among Christians respecting the form, the order, and the organization of the church of Christ. It is from different apprehensions on these subjects that most of our religious denominations have arisen. Having been often called upon to give advice in certain cases, and to ground it on scriptural authority, I

have been led to examine with some attention what the Scriptures teach us concerning them.

It has appeared to me that some, in looking for scriptural authority for whatever is done in Christian churches, expect too much; while, on the contrary, others expect too little. It is a fact, which must strike every attentive reader, that the manner in which the greater part of the worship and forms of the New Testament is prescribed is very different from that of the Old Testament. Moses was commanded to do all things according to the "pattern" showed him in the mount: but no such pattern is given us in the gospel respecting the form and order of Christian worship. All, or nearly all, we know of the matter is from the narrative of facts, as stated in the Acts of the Apostles, and from certain counsels addressed to ministers and churches, in the apostolical epistles.

In each of these, several things are *incidentally* brought to light: but express injunctions, like those under the law, are rarely to be found. We have no particular account, for instance, of the original formation of a single church, nor of an ordination service, nor in what order the primitive worship was generally conducted. What then shall we say to these things? Shall we infer that all forms of worship and church government are indifferent, and left to be accommodated to time, place, and other circumstances? This would open a door to human inventions, and to all the corruptions which have defaced the church of Christ. Nevertheless, this we may infer—that to attempt to draw up a formula of church government, worship, and discipline, which shall include any thing more than *general outlines*, and to establish it expressly on New-Testament authority, is to attempt what is utterly impracticable.

The general outlines or principles of things may be collected, and these will apply to particular cases. This, I apprehend, is all that we are warranted to expect. If, for example, we look for either precept or precedent for the removal of a Christian pastor from one situation to another, we shall find none. But we are taught that, for the church to "grow unto a holy temple in the Lord," it requires to be "fitly framed together."—Ephes. ii. 21. The want of *fitness* therefore, in a connection, especially if it impede the growth of the spiritual temple, may justify the removal of a minister. Or, if there be no want of fitness, yet, if the material be adapted to occupy a more important station in the building, this may also justify its removal. Such a principle may be *misapplied* to ambitious and interested purposes; but, if the increase of the temple be kept in view, it is lawful, and in many cases attended with great and good effects.

This example, instead of a hundred, may

suffice to show, if I mistake not, that the form and order of the Christian church, much more than that of the Jewish church, are founded on the *reason and fitness of things*. Under the former dispensation, the duties of religion were mostly *positive*; and were of course prescribed with the nicest precision, and the most exact minuteness. Under the gospel they are chiefly *moral*, and, consequently, require only the suggestion of general principles. In conforming to the one, it was necessary that men should keep their eye incessantly upon the *rule*: but, in complying with the other, there is more occasion for fixing it upon the *end*.

The form and order of the Christian church appear to be no other than what men, possessed of "the wisdom which is from above," would at any time very naturally fall into, even though no other direction were afforded them. That the apostles were supernaturally directed is true; but that direction consisted not in their being furnished with a "pattern," in the manner of that given to Moses; but in enduing them with holy wisdom, to discern and pursue on all occasions what was good and right. The Jewish church was an army of soldiers under preparatory discipline: the Christian church is an army going forth to battle. The members of the one were taught punctilious obedience, and led with great formality through a variety of religious evolutions. Those of the other, though they also must keep their ranks and act in obedience to command, yet are not required to be so attentive to the mechanical as to the mental, not so much to the minute observance of forms as to their spirit and design. The obedience of the former was that of children; the latter that of sons arrived at maturer age.

I have said that the form and order of the Christian church are *chiefly* moral, or founded in the fitness of things, as those of the Jewish church were *chiefly* positive: for neither the one nor the other will hold true universally. Some things pertaining to the organization of the latter were settled on the same principles as those of the former. The seventy elders, ordained to assist Moses, bore a near resemblance to the seven deacons chosen to assist the apostles (Num. xi.; Acts vi. :) both originated in the necessity of the case, and as such were approved of God. On the other hand, there are some things pertaining to the Christian church which are entirely *positive*; and, being clearly revealed, require to be obeyed with the same punctilious regard to the "pattern" given as was observed by Moses in constructing the tabernacle. Such are baptism and the Lord's supper. They were "ordinances" of God, and required to be kept "as they were delivered."—Matt. iii. 15; Luke i. 6; 1 Cor. xi. 2. But in many things pertaining to order and discipline, though

we are furnished with nothing more than general outlines, and are obliged to keep within them, yet in the filling up there is room left for the exercise of discretion and forbearance.

But, it may be asked, will not the considering of these things as *moral*, rather than *positive*, open a way for the introduction of human inventions into the church of God. Why should it? Though the greater part of what belongs to the organization and discipline of the church be founded in the fitness of things, yet the human mind in its present imperfect and depraved state is not of itself, and without divine direction, sufficient to perceive it. We have so much of the wisdom that is "from beneath" dwelling in us that we should be continually erring, if left to ourselves. It is not necessary indeed, in things of this nature, that we should be furnished with precepts and examples with the same minuteness as in positive institutions; but, without so much of one or other of them as shall mark the outlines of our conduct, we shall be certain to wander. If we were left without a revelation from heaven, our ideas of the universal rule of right and wrong would be very defective and erroneous. In whatsoever therefore the Lord hath condescended to instruct us, we are not at liberty to prefer *what may appear fit and right to us*; but, in like circumstances, are bound to follow it. If I plead for discretion and forbearance, it is only where the Scriptures do not decide; and where, consequently, it was thought sufficient by the Holy Spirit to put us in possession of general principles.

I. THAT THE FORM AND ORDER OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH WERE FOUNDED IN THE FITNESS OF THINGS WILL APPEAR, I PRESUME, FROM THE FOLLOWING CONSIDERATIONS.

1. The general principles expressly mentioned by the apostles as the rule of Christian conduct. "Let all things be done to *edifying*.—Let all things be done *decently*, and *in order*."—1 Cor. xiv. 26, 40. Whatever measures tended to build up the church of God, and individuals, in their most holy faith, these were adopted as the rule of their conduct, and rendered binding on them by the authority of Christ.—Moreover, whatever measures approve themselves to minds endued, as those of the apostles were, with the wisdom from above, as fit and lovely, and calculated to render the whole church effective (like that of good discipline to an army) in the propagation of the gospel; these are the rules by which the primitive Christians were governed. And however worldly minds may have abused them, by introducing will-worship and vain customs, under pretence of their *decency*, these, understood in their simple and



original sense, must still be the test of good order and Christian discipline.

2. The way in which the apostles actually proceeded, in the forming and organizing of churches, is a proof that they were guided by a sense of fitness and propriety.—When a number of Christians agreed to walk together in the faith and order of the gospel, they became a Christian church. But at first they had no *deacons*, and probably no *pastors*, except the apostles: and, if the *reason* of things had not required it, they might have continued to have none. But in the course of events they found new service rise upon their hands, and therefore must have new *servants*:\* for, said the apostles, “it is not *reason* that we should leave the word of God to serve tables: *wherefore* look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.”—Acts vi. 2, 3. In this process we see nothing like a punctilious attention to a positive institute, but the conduct of men who were endued with heavenly wisdom. All things are done “decently and in order,” and all “to edifying.” In the course of events, the apostles, who had supplied the place of pastors, would be called to travel into other parts of the world; and then, it is likely, the church at Jerusalem would have a resident pastor or pastors of their own.

And, as servants were appointed when actual service demanded, so the *number* of them would be regulated by the same rule. A large church or congregation, where much service was to be done, required *seven* deacons; and where they abounded not only in numbers, but also in spiritual gifts, they commonly, if not always, seem to have had a plurality of bishops or elders.—With respect to us, where the *reason* of the thing exists—that is, where there are churches whose numbers require it, and whose gifts admit of it—it is well to follow this part of their example: but for a small church to have more pastors than one appears to be as unnecessary as to have “seven” deacons. Such a rule would favor idleness, and prevent useful ministers from extending their labors. To appoint two or three to a station which might be filled by one must have a tendency to leave many other places unoccupied, and so contract instead of enlarging the kingdom of Christ.

3. The principles on which the apostles proceeded may appear by tracing the analogy between them and a company of Christian missionaries in the present day.—The term “apostle” signifies one that is *sent*. If we subtract the ideas of being sent immediately by Christ, of being endowed with extraordinary gifts and authority, suited to

the special purposes of primitive times, he will, for aught I see, be merely a Christian missionary. Let us then suppose a church, or society of Christians, to have in contemplation a mission to the heathen. One of the first things demanding their attention would be the selection of a number of suitable missionaries. Next, they would instruct them in the things necessary to their undertaking; and, after this, send them forth to preach the gospel.—Such was precisely the conduct of our Lord towards his disciples. He first selected them; then instructed them, during his personal ministry; and, after his resurrection, gave them their commission and a rich effusion of the Holy Spirit to qualify them for the undertaking.

The missionaries, arriving at the scene of action, would first unite in social prayer, and Christian fellowship: and this would constitute the first *church*. Thus the apostles, and those who adhered to them, first met in an upper room for prayer, preparatory to their attack on the world of the ungodly; and this little band of “one hundred and twenty” formed the first Christian church. And when sinners were converted, and joined them, they are represented as being “added to the church.”—Acts ii. 41—47.

Again: The first missionaries to a heathen country could not be chosen to the work by those to whom they were sent, but by him or them who sent them; nor would their influence be confined to a single congregation, but extend to all the societies that might be raised by means of their labors. It would be different with succeeding pastors, who might be raised up from among the converts. They would of course be chosen by their brethren, and their authority would be confined to the churches which elected them. Thus the primitive missionaries were not constituted apostles by the churches, but by receiving their appointment immediately from Christ; nor was their authority limited to any particular church, but extended alike to all. In this they differ from ordinary pastors, who are elected by the churches they are intended to serve, and whose authority is confined to that particular department.

Again: The first missionaries to a heathen country would be employed in the *planting* of churches, wherever proper materials were found for the purpose; and, if the work so increased upon their hands as to be too much for them, they would depute others, like-minded with themselves, whom God would qualify with gifts and graces to render them assistance. Some one person at least of this description would be present, in the formation and organization of every church, to see that “all things were done decently and in order.” And, if there were any other churches in the neighborhood of

\* A deacon signifies a *servant*.

that in which such an organization took place, their elders and messengers would doubtless be present; and, to express their brotherly concurrence, would join in it.

Thus the apostles planted churches; and, when elders were to be ordained, the people chose them, and they by the solemn laying on of hands invested them with the office.—Acts vi. 3; xiv. 23. And, when the work still increased upon their hands, they appointed such men as Timothy and Titus as Evangelists to “set things in order” in their stead.—Titus i. 5. In these ordinations and arrangements, a Paul or a Titus would preside. The other elders of the church, and probably of the sister churches, would unite in brotherly concurrence, and in imploring a blessing on the parties; and hence there would be the “laying on of the hands of the presbytery,” or elders.—1 Tim. iv. 14.

But as the missionaries would die, a question would arise: Who should be their successors; or, rather, on whom should the *general* concern of the churches devolve?—Strictly speaking, *there might be no necessity for any successors.* The Christian religion being planted by them might be continued by the native pastors, whom God would successively raise up; and who, if “faithful men,” would not only be concerned to edify and watch over their own respective charges, but would extend the knowledge of the truth, and plant new churches around them. In cases of difficulty, especially those of common concern, they would call in the advice of their brethren, as the first missionaries had done before them (Acts. xv.) judging in all things not as lords over a heritage, but as men who must finally give an account.

That this would be the case is more probable when it is considered that, though the first missionaries had an authority and an influence which no succeeding pastors would possess, yet it was exercised *only in things which it would be lawful for others to do as well as themselves.* They had no power but what required to be exercised in sub-serviency to the will of Christ, and for the edification of the churches; and if this rule be retained, and this end answered, it is of no account whether it be done by them or by the native pastors after their decease. If the former planted churches, set them in order, and presided at the ordination of elders over them, it was not because the same things would not have been *valid* if done without them, but because they would not have been done at all. Let but churches be planted, set in order, and scripturally organized, and whether it be by the primitive missionaries, or succeeding pastors, all is good, and acceptable to Christ.

Such, I conceive, is the state of things with respect to the apostles and succeeding

pastors. There never were any men, or set of men whatsoever, that were, properly speaking, *their successors.* Nor was it necessary that there should, seeing every thing which they did (excepting what was *extraordinary*, in which respect none *can* succeed them) was lawful for every pastor to do in his immediate charge.

If a necessity existed for any superior office or offices, it must be for the purpose of inspecting and preserving the general interest of the whole body: but even this would be more likely to be answered by occasional conferences among the elders.

II. THE FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS ARE OFFERED IN PROOF THAT THE OFFICE OF A SUPERIOR, OR OF A GENERAL SUPERINTENDANT IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, IS BOTH UNLAWFUL AND UNNECESSARY.

1. A bishop is the first permanent office in the Christian church. It was the highest title assumed for many ages after the apostles. But a bishop is no other than a presbyter, an elder, or overseer of a single congregation; as is evident from each of these names being given to the elders of the church at Ephesus, who met Paul at Miletus.—Acts xx. 17, 28. Any office therefore, in the present day, which claims the oversight of bishops, must be anti-scriptural.

2. It accords with the genius of Christianity that the churches be governed, and all their affairs adjusted, by mutual consultation and persuasion, rather than by coercion. But, where the power has been vested in one or more superior officers, it has commonly degenerated into a lording it over the heritage, and the people have gradually lost all interest in it. If Christ's kingdom were of this world, its officers might require to be invested with worldly honor, pageantry, and authority. Its members also must be governed “like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding.” But the great Head of the church has told his servants “It shall not be so amongst you.” On this ground there might be danger in what you propose in your letters, of having European missionaries as *superintendents* of the native pastors. You should indeed superintend them, but not so as to make it an *office*, or to set an example of lordly domination in future times among themselves.

3. The apostles in the exercise of their authority did not act separately from other elders, but in conjunction with them; by which means they gradually inured them to the discharge of the same duties among themselves after their decease. Paul laid his hands on Timothy, yet not as an individual, in the manner practised by diocesan bishops, but as an elder among other elders.—2 Tim. i. 6, comp. with 1 Tim. iv. 14.

In the planting and organizing of churches, the same things which were done by them were done by others appointed by them;

and had they been done by elders whom they had *not* appointed, provided the will of Christ had been properly regarded, they would not, I presume, have objected to their *validity*. This is certainly true, at least, in some particulars; and I see no reason why it should not be the same in all. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus, that he might "charge some to teach no other doctrine." But, if the Ephesian elders had been of themselves attached to the truth, neither Paul nor Timothy would have been offended with them for superseding the exercise of their authority.

The apostle also left Titus in Crete to "set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city." But, if the Cretans themselves had had sufficient wisdom and virtue to have regulated their own affairs by the word of God, would their "order" have been reckoned disorder? And had there been "elders" already ordained amongst them, who were competent to assist in the ordination of others, if we may judge from the tenor of apostolic practice, instead of objecting to the validity of their proceedings, both Paul and Titus would, "though absent in the flesh, have been with them in the spirit, joying, and beholding their order, and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ."

### III. I CONCLUDE THESE BRIEF REMARKS WITH A FEW REFLECTIONS ON SOME PARTICULAR DUTIES.

If such be the principles on which the primitive churches were founded, is it not more becoming for us to inquire into the *spirit, reason, or design* of various precepts, and adhere to it, than to be always disputing and dividing about the letter of them?

1. There are various precepts in our Lord's sermon on the mount which I am persuaded *were never designed to be taken literally*. For example, we are commanded to "swear not at all."—Matt. v. 33—37. Hence many good men have objected to the lawfulness of an oath before a magistrate: yet such oaths were not only allowed, but commanded by the law of Moses.—Deut. vi. 13. And our Lord declared that it was not his design, in any thing he here said, to destroy or set aside the law.—Matt. v. 17, 18. None of his answers were aimed against the law, but against the glosses of the pharisees upon it. But, to understand him as condemning all kinds of oaths, is to make him condemn the law. Nor is this all; it would go to condemn many things in his apostles which are written under divine inspiration, as in the following instances. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for ever," said Paul, "knoweth that I lie not."—"I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth."—"God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always

in my prayers."—2 Cor. xi. 31; i. 23. Rom. i. 9. Each of these is a solemn oath: yet we never think of their being sinful. The swearing which our Lord forbids relates to our ordinary "communications," which should be "yea, yea, or nay, nay." It is this which is forbidden by the apostle James, when he says, "Above all things, my brethren, swear not, lest ye fall into condemnation."—James v. 12. Though a barren and profane vice, it was very common among the Jews, and is equally so among many who call themselves Christians.

Again; Instead of avenging ourselves, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," we are commanded "not to resist evil." Did our Saviour mean by this to censure the law, as appointed of God (Exod. xxi. 24—27,) and as administered by the civil magistrate? That would be to "destroy the law," and not to fulfil it. His design was doubtless to forbid private retaliation and revenge, which the Jews had attempted to justify by a perversion of the divine command. He did not complain of the law in the hands of the magistrate, nor forbid his followers appealing to it where public justice was concerned; but they must do nothing from a principle of revenge, or for the sake of retaliation.

If the command "not to resist evil" were understood literally, and without any restriction, and we were literally obliged "when smitten on one cheek to turn the other also," our Saviour himself would have erred in not setting the example, when he was smitten before Pilate; for instead of submission he remonstrated: "If I have spoken well, why smitest thou me?"—Luke vi. 29. John xviii. 23. But though our Lord's command is not to be taken literally, yet, if we attend to the spirit of it, we shall find it to contain a very important lesson: it teaches us that we had better suffer insults and injuries, and even the repetition of them, than undertake to avenge ourselves. It is the principle, rather than the act, which he means to enforce: yet there are cases in which the act itself would be right and praiseworthy.

Unbelievers affect to ridicule this precept; yet who ridicules the conduct of Themistocles, the Athenian general, who in a council of war had the cane of Eurybiades shaken over his head; and who, instead of resenting it, exclaimed, "Strike, but hear me!" This instance of magnanimous patience saved his country. And may not a Christian have a still greater end in view? If by his patience he should save his soul from death, however infidels may sneer, he will have a weightier crown awarded him another day than what was decreed for the noble Athenian. The cheerful sufferings of the holy martyrs in all ages have exemplified this principle. While they sought the salvation of mankind, the world hated them:



but, instead of rendering evil for evil, they practically said—Strike, but hear us!

Again: If our Lord's precepts on almsgiving and prayer were understood literally (Matt. vi. 1—6,) they would prove it unlawful to join in any public contributions for the poor, and to engage in public prayer: but it is not the *act* which our Lord has principally in view, but the *principle* or motive. His object was to condemn a spirit of ostentation, in the same way as we should understand another prohibition: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."—Matt. vi. 19. Some Christians have concluded from hence that all accumulation of property is contrary to the command of Christ. The ill consequences of such interpretation do not lie in their rendering men careless about the world, for there is but little danger of persons who have opportunities of acquiring wealth erring on that side; but the mischief is, they make men guilty of hypocrisy in setting them to devise methods by which they may go on in business like their neighbors, and yet find some salvo for their consciences by which to impose upon themselves. If it were the design of Christ to forbid all accumulation of property, why were the primitive Christians directed to "lay up something for the poor every first day of the week, according as God had prospered them."—1 Cor. xvi. 2. It will hardly be pleaded that they were to lay by for this purpose the whole of their gains; but, if not, they must have been allowed to labor and trade like other men. Moreover, if they were forbidden to increase wealth, why are they exhorted to diligence, "that they may have whereof to give to him that needeth?"—Ephes. iv. 28. On this principle also it would be wrong for parents to provide any thing for their children, which both reason and Scripture allow.—2 Cor. xii. 14.

Finally: If these words require to be taken literally, why should not others of a similar import be understood in the same way? "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink."—"Sell what ye have and give alms."—Matt. vi. 25; Luke xii. 33. Yet, if such a literal interpretation were reduced to general practice, it would destroy all distinction of property, and so of rich and poor. This, however, was not our Lord's design, or he would not have addressed men, much less good men, under the character of rich and poor.—James i. 9, 10. The accumulation of property, if arising from the blessing of God on our lawful occupations, and considered as a trust to be laid out for him, has nothing wrong in it. The danger is, what our Lord inveighs against, that of making a "treasure" of it, or setting our hearts upon it as an idol in the place of God, instead of considering all as his, and as requiring all to be employed for him, according to his revealed will. It

is the desire to be great, to shine, and to indulge in the pride of life, that is destructive to men's souls. This is the evil every where described by such language as the following:—"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."—"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."—James iv. 3; 1 Tim. vi. 9.

2. I observe the reason of some duties *uses in a greater or less degree by a change of circumstances.*—This remark, I am aware, is liable to great abuse. Some, under the pretence of accommodating Christianity to times and circumstances, may render it a mere temporising system, to be just what its professors may find it their interest or their inclination to have it be. Yet, after all, the fact cannot be called in question; and, if men will abuse it, they must take the consequence.

It is a fact that for a man in the times of the apostles to have had "his head covered" in public worship was reckoned to be "dishonoring his head;" for, by the custom which then prevailed, it was a sign of subjection.—1 Cor. xi. 4—7. But in our times the reverse is true; a being *uncovered* is the sign of subjection, and the being covered indicates some kind of superiority. Men are now generally uncovered in the time of worship, not for the purpose of maintaining their dignity, or superiority over the women; but, on the contrary, for avoiding the appearance of assuming too much in the presence of God, by seeming to refuse that honor to him which is paid to our superiors among men. The woman, on the other hand, was then required to be covered, as by the custom of those times it was a token of her subjection to the man. But, though our females still cover the head in public worship, it is not for this purpose, nor does it convey any such idea.

For the same purpose the hair of the man was shorn, and that of the woman worn at length. Each by the custom of the time and place was considered as distinctive of the sexes, which various important purposes in society, and even nature itself, required to be preserved. When the apostle asks, "Doth not even nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him; but if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her" (1 Cor. xi. 14, 15;) some have thought that, "by nature," he means no more than custom. This I apprehend is a mistake. President Edwards has happily expressed what appears to be the true meaning of this passage in the following words:—"It is custom which establishes any outward sign as a token of inward sentiment: therefore when it had established the wearing of long hair as the sign of a fe-

male, 'nature itself' taught that it was a shame for a man to appear in the known garb of a woman." The truth is, I apprehend, if the proper distinction of the sexes be preserved, by each appearing in that habit which the custom of the age and country makes the distinctive marks of them, the end aimed at by the apostle is fully answered.\*

#### A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF DISSENT.

FROM the first establishment of the church of England on its present basis, to this day, there have been dissenters from it: but, as all dissent is expressive rather of what is disapproved than of what is embraced, it is natural to suppose that the objects of disapprobation will be different in different persons. The English dissenters are commonly distinguished into three denominations: *presbyterians*, *independents*, and *baptists*: but there exists, and has existed nearly from the beginning, a distinction of greater importance, and more descriptive of their respective grounds of dissent, by which also they are reducible to three classes:—viz.

Those who have disapproved of the *doctrine* of the national church—those who approved of its doctrine, but were dissatisfied with the *degree of its reformation*—and those who also approved of its doctrine, but disapproved not only of particular parts, but of the *very principle of its constitution*.

Of the *first* description, there were individuals from the time of the Reformation in the reign of Edward the Sixth, to the revolution in 1688, several of whom were put to death for their principles: but till the eighteenth century their numbers appear to have been few. Whatever we may think of the doctrines which these people imbibed, no person who respects the right of private judgment, and the authority of him who reformed his own disciples when they would have called for fire from heaven upon his enemies, declaring that he "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them," can forbear to regret that the Reformation should at so early a period have been stained with blood.

Of the *second* description were the greater part of the *puritans* and *nonconformists*. They were presbyterians. They did not object to a national establishment of religion;

\* The remainder of this Essay, principally relating to the connection between baptism and the Lord's supper, is supposed to be lost. Some of the following treatises will, however, convey the author's sentiments on this subject.

Nearly allied to the subject of the preceding essay is a treatise *On Moral and Positive Obedience*, and another *On the Discipline of the Primitive Churches*. See *Circular Letters of the Northamptonshire Association*.

but rather wished to be comprehended in it, provided it had been framed after the model of other reformed churches, which they accounted more agreeable to the Scriptures. Hence, when they left the church, it was with reluctance, complaining of the terms of conformity, to which they could not conscientiously subscribe. The several attempts for compromising the differences, and admitting them into the national church, during the reigns of James the First and Charles the Second, respected dissenters of this description.

The *third*, and last class of dissenters, differed not from the established church in the main as to their doctrine, though they might not approve of being sworn to the belief of every particular in a human composition, especially of so large an extent as the *thirty-nine articles*. But with respect to its constitution, government, and discipline, their objections were far greater than those of their brethren. Its being an ally, and as it were a branch of the state, and comprehending the body of the nation, good and bad, appeared to them utterly inconsistent with the nature of "Christ's kingdom," which "is not of this world:" and of a Christian church, which in its own articles is said to be "a congregation of faithful men."

They had no antipathy to churchmen, but considered many of them as persons eminent in godliness; nor to this church in distinction from others, though there might be in them different degrees of good and evil: but their grand objection was to the church *considered as national*. The temporal power of bishops, the imposition of ministers, to the exclusion of the free election of the people, the mixture of godly and manifestly ungodly characters at the Lord's table, the corruption of worship, the total want of discipline, and all other deviations from primitive Christianity, appeared to them to be no more than might be expected, if circumstances admitted it, to grow out of a national establishment. They, therefore, peaceably withdrew from its communion, with the view of forming churches on the plan of the New Testament. But the leaders in the establishment considering themselves as *the true church*, and all who dissented from them as guilty of schism, being jealous whereunto this might grow, and having the civil power on their side, thought good to prevent them. In the reign of the famed Elizabeth, in the year 1593, several of them were actually executed on gibbets—not for any contempt of *civil* authority, for to this they professed and yielded all due obedience; nor for any *matter of wrong or wicked lewdness*, for their lives were unblameable: but for following what they believed to be the mind of Christ, regardless of *ecclesiastical* restraints. The rest fled to Holland for safety.

Among these exiles was Mr. John Robinson, a man who for gentleness, modesty, firmness, and solid wisdom, has been rarely excelled. He and his companions in tribulation were permitted to form a congregational church at Leyden, which is said to have consisted of *three hundred members*. About twenty-seven years after their residence in Holland, namely, in 1620, about a hundred of the younger members of the church went over to North America, and formed the settlement of New Plymouth; and, as every previous attempt to colonize that country had failed, they may properly be considered as the founders of the American empire.

Another of these exiles was the famous Mr. Henry Ainsworth, author of the "Commentary on the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Song of Songs." He was a teacher of another congregational church at Amsterdam.\*

To this *third* class belong the greater part of the English dissenters, who in the present day are denominated *Independents* and *Baptists*. It is true they have much relaxed in various points of church-government and discipline; some, perhaps, to their honor, and some to their dishonor; but the *principle* on which their churches are formed is congregational. The *latter* denomination have one additional reason for their dissent from the Established church above their brethren, namely, their disapprobation of infant baptism; and in which they also dissent from *them*.

Those who separate from the Established church on this ground, cannot, consistently with their principles, *complain* of the terms of conformity as being either too narrow or too wide for them; neither can they become *competitors* with it for worldly power. If the government should even offer to make theirs the established religion, however they might be obliged to them for their kindness, they could not accept it without relinquishing their first principles relative to church government.

Neither can they, without relinquishing the first principles of the system by which they are distinguished from other Christians, *persecute* any man for his religion, whatever that religion be. They may think and speak of men according to their true character; they may refuse all religious connection with them; they may expose their principles to just abhorrence; *but their hand must not be upon them*. They can neither call in the aid of the civil power

nor in any way deprive them of their rights: and this, not because they consider error as innocent, but as a species of guilt which is not cognizable by an earthly tribunal.

It has been remarked by American historians that there was a manifest difference, in respect of forbearance, between the government and colony of New Plymouth, who retained the principles of their beloved Robinson, and those of Massachusetts Bay, which consisted chiefly of dissenters of the *second* description, and who went over at different times, between the years 1624 and 1633. Other denominations had great cause to complain of the persecuting spirit of the latter, even though they themselves had fled from the persecutions of the English prelates: but of the former no such complaints were heard. Far be it from us, however, to insinuate of any one of these descriptions of dissenters of the present age that they are friendly to persecution. They, and we hope the most respectable part of episcopalians, have since learned that, in matters of religion, "to our own master we must stand or fall."

Once more: Dissenters of this description cannot, consistently with their original principles, be factious, turbulent, disaffected, or in any way inimical to the well-being of the *state*. It is a maxim familiar with their fathers, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Obedience, in all civil matters, "to the powers that were," was an essential article of their creed. In this obedience they did not, indeed, include an *approbation* of every particular measure: but neither did they so explain it away as to make it consist in a merely forced compliance with the laws, for fear of consequences; but in a voluntary, cordial, loyal, and dutiful demeanor. By how much they are impressed also with the truth that "Christ's kingdom is not of this world," by so much will they become dead to struggles for worldly power: leaving restless spirits to deal in cabals and intrigues, they will "seek peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Such, as far as we understand them, are the genuine principles of congregational dissent. We do not pretend to say that all congregationalists have uniformly acted up to them. Many do not understand the principles which they profess, and others act inconsistently with them. Our object is to exhibit them, not merely for the information of other denominations, but for the conviction of our own.

If the love of civil and religious liberty (which under God is the only security they have) has had too great a hold on some of their minds; and, in cases where they have conceived it to be in danger, has betrayed

\* Two of his Treatises, the one entitled *The Communion of Saints*, and the other *An Arrow against Idolatry*, have within a few years been reprinted at Edinburgh; to which are prefixed some account of the life and writings of the author.



them into language and behavior which, in the hour of serious reflection, they must condemn as unchristian; yet it is not in the power of their worst enemies to prove that they have ever entered into any of those conspiracies which appear to have existed of late years to overturn the government and constitution of the country. There may, indeed, have been individuals who have done this; for bad men are known to mingle in all societies: but even of such we have scarcely heard an instance.

There are certain violent men, who appear to be galled by the wholesome restraints of the state upon their persecuting spirit, and who are no less averse to the best, most laborious, and most useful clergymen in the nation, than they are to us, that make it their business to rake together every idle story, and to persuade their readers that dissenters, as a body, are enemies to the state. From such quarters, *village preaching* has been ascribed to *political* motives; and even *Sunday Schools*, as they are called, denounced as the seminaries of sedition. To all these charges we answer by asking for *proof*. In so large a body of men we cannot undertake to say there are no bad men; neither can our accusers say so of the Established church. Nay, more; we cannot undertake to vindicate all the conduct of those whom we may account good men. Only let it be *proved* of any village preacher, or school-master, or catechist, that he diffuses a spirit of disaffection to government among those whom he instructs, and if he be not discarded, or at least reprov'd, by his connections, as soon as they know it, let them bear the blame for ever.

"It may be objected," says Justin Martyr, in his Apology, "that some Christians have been convicted as evil-doers. Well, I will grant the objection, and more; not only that some, but many, and at different times, have been thus duly convicted upon a fair trial; but then I must tell you again that you condemned not the persons aforesaid as criminals, but as Christians. Moreover, we confess that, as all the sects in general among the Greeks went under the common name of philosophers, though extremely different in opinion, so truly among us the professors of this new wisdom, whether in reality or appearance only, go all by the same title, and are denominated Christians. Wherefore we pray that all those who are indicted by the name of Christian may be examined as to their actions; and that every person convicted may suffer as an evil-doer, and not as a Christian."

Such is our prayer as dissenters. If any man, or society of men, be guilty, let them bear their burden; but let them suffer as evil-doers, and not as dissenters.

## VINDICATION OF PROTESTANT DISSENT.\*

THE oppositions which have of late years been made to Christianity have happily induced its friends, of all denominations, to come to a better understanding with each other: forbearing contentions of less moment, they have joined their efforts in defending the common salvation. On this ground, evangelical dissenters, though their opinion of a national establishment of religion is the same as before, yet, from a regard to the doctrine, character, and usefulness of many of its ministers, have sincerely rejoiced in their labors. Evangelical episcopalians have also many of them laid aside smaller differences; and, whatever they might think of dissent, have esteemed the serious part of dissenters. Thus far the malignant influence of infidelity has not only been counteracted, but made to defeat itself.

But things have not operated in this way in every instance. In various late publications, by evangelical churchmen, great stress is laid on "regularity," by which seems to be meant, not only a strict regard to the forms and orders of the establishment, but the standing aloof from all dissenters, as "sectaries and schismatics." A piece in "The Christian Observer," said to be written by Mr. R., an aged and respectable clergyman in the north of England, goes so far as to dissuade ministers of his description from having any acquaintance with them. Such dissenters as Watts, Doddridge, and Guyse, received "*great advantage*," it seems, from their acquaintance with certain clergymen; and employed it in recruiting their congregations at the expense of the church! —Vol. I. No. III. p. 162.

It would seem, from such insinuations as these, to be dangerous for dissenters, however distinguished by talents or character, to come near these dignified men; for, if in their life-time they be treated with civility, they may expect to be reproached for it after they are dead! The celebrated work of Mr. Overton makes quite enough of this "regularity," and bears hard upon dissenters. "Sectaries and schismatics" are names pretty liberally bestowed upon them. The same may be said of the "Address of Mr. Robinson." Whether these gentlemen judge it *prudent* to take such measures, as feeling their churchmanship suspected by their irreligious brethren, and wish to establish it at our expense; or whatever be the reason, they seem of late, some of them at least, to

\* Written in reply to the charges of the Rev. Thomas Robinson, M. A., Vicar of St. Mary's, Leicester, in a pamphlet entitled, "A Serious Call to a Constant and Devout Attendance on the Stated Services of the Church of England."

be not a little desirous of renewing hostilities.

Before I proceed any farther, I desire it may be noticed that I have no personal antipathy to any one of these ministers; that I have the happiness to be acquainted with several of them, who, I am persuaded, are men of another spirit; that even those on whom I take the liberty of animadverting are esteemed by me, and many other dissenters, for their work's sake; that I have no desire to impeach their integrity, in adhering to the church; that I utterly dislike all such personal reflections, leaving the judgment of motives to God only; and, finally, that, whatever objections I may have to particular parts of the church, they are but little, compared to my aversion from its grand principle—that is, its being *national*, and *established*, and *directed by civil authority*.

I have no desire to “reproach or calumniate” Mr. R. for what he has written; nor do I blame him for defending the church as far as he is able, and trying, by fair argument and Christian persuasion, to induce his hearers, who have deserted her communion, to return: only let him not complain if others claim the right of examining the justice of what he advances. He speaks of “a host of disputants” appearing, when he, or any of his brethren, defend their own principles. To me it appears that, for a considerable time, dissenters have been nearly silent on these subjects; and that what has been written has been chiefly on the other side.

Mr. R. declares his “principal concern is with the persons who have left his ministry; that he desires to stir up no contention with others; that he casts no reflections on those who, from conscientious motives, separate from the church; and will enter into no altercations, nor answer the idle cavils of those who delight in strife.”—p. 5. Yet he stigmatizes dissenters in general as “sectaries,” and charges them with “schism.” It may be said, however, that this is only a necessary consequence of his being a churchman on conviction: and that, whether he dealt in such language or not, he must, to be consistent, entertain such thoughts of them. Admitting this apology, then, I will conclude Mr. R.’s aversion is not to *persons* but *things*, and, on this ground, will cheerfully join issue with him.

With respect to the persons addressed in Mr. R.’s pamphlet, I do not know that they should complain of him, unless it be for their “conscientiousness” being tacitly called in question. Their minister expostulates with them, and it becomes them to hear him candidly, especially when he professes to address them with “argument and exhortation, rather than with menace or reproof; assigning what appear to him the strongest reasons for conformity, and leaving them to their mature deliberation, entreating that they may

regulate their conduct only so far as they perceive their strength and importance.” This is fair and manly.

Mr. R. has done well also, before he exhibits the charge of “schism,” to undertake the *proof* of the church of England being “truly apostolical.” *If it be so*, and the justice of its claim on all Christians within the realm to consider themselves as its members can be substantiated, dissenters must, of course, be “sectaries and schismatics;” and though the state, from political clemency, may tolerate them, yet will they not be acquitted before a higher tribunal. If, on the other hand, *it be not so*; or, though it be, yet if it have no exclusive claim, either from God or man, to the membership of all Christians within the realm, it will follow that the names signify nothing more than they did in the mouths of the ancient enemies of the Christians, who stigmatized them as “the sect of the Nazarenes;” and that the only difference between those who call themselves *the church* and other Christians is, that, being of the sect which happens to be favored by the state, they are more particularly exposed to the temptation of assuming supercilious airs, and looking down upon their brethren with contempt.

I have said, If the church of England be truly apostolical in the main, yet, if it have no *exclusive claim* to the membership of all Christians within the realm, it may not follow that all dissenters are guilty of “schism,” or that they are any more deserving of the name of “sectaries” than episcopalians are, in countries where theirs is not the established religion. If the church of England were allowed to be “a part of the church of Christ,” (p. 28) why may not other churches be another part? Is it proveable that any of the primitive churches laid claim to the membership of all Christians within a certain tract of country?

But though, for argument’s sake, I have granted this, yet I do not allow it. I am persuaded that the church of England is *not* “a true apostolical church,” and have no objection to rest the lawfulness of dissent upon the issue of this question.

Mr. R.’s first argument for it is, “It conforms to apostolical example in the different *orders* of its ministers.”—p. 5. It might have been expected that, under this head, we should have been referred to *scripture proofs*. If Mr. R. could have told us in what parts of the New Testament we might find the offices of *arch-bishops*, *arch-deacons*, *deans*, *priests*, &c. &c. &c., there is little doubt but he would; but this he has wisely declined. Or, though the *names* cannot be found, yet, if what is done corresponded with what was done in the primitive churches, it might be said that the *spirit* of things is preserved; but the proof of this is not attempted. Or if the work of bishops and deacons in the

church of England, whose names are found in the Scriptures, could be proved to be the same as that which pertained to those offices originally, it would be in its favor, so far as it went; but neither is this attempted. Finally: If it had been proved that one set of pastors were subject to the control of another, who invested them with office and deprived them of it as occasion required, something had been accomplished; but neither is this attempted. Nor is a single passage of Scripture referred to on the subject, except 1 Cor. xiv. 26, 40: "Let all things be done to edifying"—"Let all things be done decently, and in order,"—which prove just as much in favor of popery as of modern episcopacy, and have been as often quoted for that purpose as for this.

What is it then that Mr. R. alleges in proof of his assertion? Hear him. "The subordination established among the clergy, and the share of power it has assigned to some of them over others, are REASONABLE AND EXPEDIENT, and such as ought not to be objected to, UNLESS THEY CAN BE PROVED TO BE CONTRARY TO DIVINE INJUNCTION." Mr. R. feels himself unable to prove them to be *any part of what God hath enjoined*; but thinks to come off with referring it to his opponents to prove them *forbidden!* Two-thirds of the superstitions of popery and paganism might thus be vindicated. The baptizing of bells is no more *contrary* to express divine injunction than the things for which Mr. R. contends.

"It is CONGENIAL WITH THE BRITISH CONSTITUTION." One would hope then it would be allowed not to be an essential *part of it*; for that would be making a thing to be congenial with itself. We admire the British constitution as a monument of human wisdom in civil affairs, and are thankful to live under its shadow; but we do not think it a model after which Jesus Christ formed the government of his church!

"The distinction of ministers into bishops, priests, and deacons—the general scheme of episcopal ordination and episcopal government, prevailed VERY EARLY IN THE CHURCH." How much of truth, or of untruth, there may be in this assertion, I shall not inquire: it is sufficient for my argument that this does not prove it to be "apostolical."

Were the primitive bishops *overseers* of other ministers, or of the flock of God? Were they *chosen* by a dean and chapter, on being nominated by the civil magistrate, or by the suffrage of the people? Did their authority extend over a country, including a number of congregations: or was it confined to one; or, at most, to that and the branches that pertained to it? When bishops became corrupt, did the purer part of the churches appeal to superior authority to get them removed; or did they only inform the apostles,

and the apostles themselves appeal to the churches? These questions must be resolved, before the church of England can be proved to be apostolical, even with respect to her officers.

If Mr. R. had been chosen to his present office by the suffrage of the congregation, instead of being presented to *the living* by a patron, he would have had an argument to plead with those who have deserted him which now he has not. As it is, he can only say, "I have solemnly pledged *myself* to attend to your spiritual concerns!"—p. 1.

Mr. R. opposes the *ordination* of the episcopal clergy to that of *self-sent* individuals among the sectaries.—p. 8, 10. But he must know this is not a general practice among us; and he might know that no communion is ordinarily held with such characters. If this practice were half as general among us, as what he wishes to be considered "accidental" in the church, there might be some appearance of justice in what he alleges.

In short, all Mr. R.'s arguments for the church of England being "apostolical" have hitherto been such as would equally apply to that of Rome. An advocate for that holy and apostolical church, as she also calls herself, could allege that she has her bishops, priests, and deacons; that the subordination of the people to the clergy, the clergy to the bishops, and the bishops to the pope, is "REASONABLE AND EXPEDIENT;" that all which "is essential" to the system is the appointment of one man of "eminent sanctity and sufficiency, to have the care of all the churches;" that this, and many other "decent and edifying" things, ought not to be objected to, unless they can be proved to be *contrary to express divine injunction!* Christian reader! Does any thing belonging to true religion require to be thus supported? Is this any other than *setting up men's threshold by God's thresholds, and their post by his posts?*

It may appear singular to some that, in proving the church of England to be apostolical, Mr. R. begins with the "order of her ministers," entirely passing over what the church is *in itself*. A church, we are told in the articles, is "a generation of faithful men," &c. Why then did he not undertake to prove that such was the church of England? that it was a *congregation* assembling together, like that at Corinth, *in one place*; and a congregation of *faithful men*, gathered out of an unbelieving world, and sufficiently distinguished from it? These things Mr. R. has not undertaken to prove, but confines himself to the *order of its ministers*. The *gold* of this temple seems *greater*, in his account, *than the temple itself*. What should we think of a lady, who should pretend to be queen of the realm; but, in-



stead of proving that she was the bride, the king's consort, she alleges the order and subordination of her servants? Would she not be told that this was a circumstance which might attach to a pretender as well as to the queen, and therefore proved nothing?

To the order of her ministers, Mr. R. adds the purity of her *doctrine*. Here I am willing to allow that, so far as respects the *written forms* of the church, it is in the main evangelical. I allow also that doctrine is an article of a thousand times greater importance than the orders of ministers, be they what they may. It is on this account that we heartily wish all who believe and preach these doctrines success.

There are two things, however, which require to be noticed under this head:—

First: It is possible to magnify articles of faith, of human composition, to the dishonor of the Scriptures, from their agreement with which arises all their value. It is not enough that what we believe is truth, but that we believe it *as a revelation from God*. To be attached to a set of doctrines, be they ever so true, because the church has taught them, is to put the church in the place of Christ. Our faith, in this case, would stand in the wisdom of man, and not in the power of God; and will be of no account to us, either here or hereafter.

Secondly: The articles of faith drawn up for the church are not *the church*, nor can it be collected from them, as Mr. R. says it can, "what those grand doctrines are in which *the church* would have all her members instructed and established."—p. 11. They might, and doubtless did, express what the church of England that *once was* would have; but not that which *now is*. It is not true that the church of England that now is would have any such thing. The church, if a church it be, is the great body of the bishops, clergy, and people: and they manifestly wish for the reverse of what the Reformers did; and, could they but fairly get rid of the articles, would reckon it a most desirable thing. Yet, by confounding the formularies of the church with the church itself, Mr. R. can go on to tell us what she believes, and what she teaches; though, if we except a comparatively small number of her clergy and members, she neither does the one nor the other.

To make this matter more plain, let us suppose one of our dissenting churches, which a century ago subscribed, as articles of faith, the substance of the assembly's catechism; but within the last fifty years (though the articles are still retained, and, for the sake of certain emoluments left to the Calvinistic interest in the place, are still subscribed) the minister and the body of the members are actually become Socinians—would Mr. R. allow of their being a sound

and apostolical church, with regard to doctrine, on the mere ground of the retention and subscription of the articles? And should a Calvinistic individual, fondly attached to the old place stand up in it with the articles in his hand and boast in this manner: "Possessed as she is of such a treasure as this of divine truth, who shall calumniate or oppose her?" (p. 14) would not Mr. R. pity his weakness, and feel indignant at the delusion by which he imposed upon himself and labored to impose upon others? It is not what a community retains in its books, but what is retained in the minds of its members, that determines what it is. "The body without the spirit is dead."

Thus we have seen the substance of what Mr. R. has to offer in proof of the church of England's being "apostolical." What follows chiefly consists of commendations of her forms and objections to those of dissenters. We will, however, proceed to examine the whole.

"The form of *common prayer*," he says, "in which you are called to join is truly excellent"—p. 14. There are doubtless many good things in it, but it is too much to pronounce upon it in this manner. To mention only one instance, if the *burial service* were abolished, and what should be said of the deceased were left to the dictates and feelings of Mr. R.'s own mind, I question whether he would utter what is there uttered, however "excellent" he may now profess to think it. But it is not my design to point out the faults of this book. If a liturgy must be used, it may answer the end, upon the whole, as well as another: if a church must be composed of a whole nation, and consequently the great body of its clergy as well as members be prayerless men, it may be necessary to frame prayers for them; and if to prayers were added sermons or homilies, it might be still better: but "a congregation of faithful men" needs not such securities. Mr. R. himself, when he meets with people of this description, and sometimes in public worship, can deal in "extemporaneous effusions," however contemptuously he can allow himself to speak of them in others. It is sufficient also for my argument that Mr. R. does not undertake to prove that the use of a liturgy formed any part of "apostolic" practice.

He proceeds, "We owe it to our country to comply with all its ordinances which are *not contrary* to a good conscience." By this Mr. R. must mean all ordinances relative to faith and worship, else it is nothing to his purpose. But on what authority is this position built? Christians were commanded to be "subject to every ordinance of man," even when under heathen governments, "for the Lord's sake."—1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. But surely it cannot be imagined that

these ordinances respected the modelling of Christian faith and worship. The apostle could not mean to give heathen magistrates any such authority, nor to subject Christians to it. The ordinances of man are explained in the context, of things civil and moral, which undoubtedly ought, in all ages and circumstances, to be obeyed by Christians, and that from a religious motive, or "for the Lord's sake;" but to apply it to the regulation of faith and worship is dishonorable to the only law-giver of the church. A church itself has no right to *make* ordinances of this kind, but merely to *interpret* and *declare* what they apprehend to be the mind of Christ; and such interpretations and declarations ought ever to be open to revision and correction, when judged to be at variance with his revealed will. To worship God "by the commandments of men" is itself forbidden in the Scriptures (Matt. xv. 6, Mark vii. 7,) and therefore is contrary to a good conscience." The interposition of human authority, in divine things, generally corrupts them; but, if not, yet it affects the nature of conformity to them. To believe a doctrine or conform to a mode of worship, even though each may in itself be right *on account of its being ordained of men*, renders it merely human religion, destroying the very principle of Christian obedience.

If the apostles in planting Christianity had acted upon Mr. R.'s principle, they would not have ordained the same things "in all churches;" but have framed a different formulary of worship in different countries. Their first business would have been to examine how much of the old materials of heathen superstition, many parts of which might not be contradicted by express divine injunction, would do to work over again; and what was the civil constitution of the country, that they might as far as possible accommodate things to the public mind. I do not wonder that Mr. R. should be partial to this principle: it is that of his church and of the church of Rome before her. Why is it that episcopacy has in it so much of popery, and popery of heathenism? The reason in both is the same. They each undertook to convert men *by nations*. Now, to bring a nation over to a new religion requires that as few alterations be introduced as possible, that old things be retained under new names, and that great sacrifices be made to popular humor. Thus popery, in numerous instances, was only heathenism in a Christian garb and episcopacy was no other than popery purged of its grosser evils.—But thus did not Paul. Wherever he established Christianity "old things passed away, and all things became new;" or, if not, it was the fault of the people, unauthorized by him. He taught Christians to consider themselves as *complete* in Christ; so as to need neither the

*additions* of heathen philosophy, nor those of Jewish ceremony; though each would doubtless recommend itself on the score of "decency," as not contrary to divine injunction, and as that which would give Christianity a respectable appearance.—Col. ii.

Mr. R.'s whole scheme rests upon *supposition*; namely, the *supposed* "eminent sanctity and sufficiency of bishops," and the *supposed* "solicitousness of civil governments to promote the interest of real Christianity."—pp. viii. 20. They are both of them, no doubt, supposable cases; such as have occurred, and may occur; but woe to the system that rests upon their being generally true! Far be it from me to think ill of men in the higher spheres of office, whether civil or ecclesiastical: the former I revere, as ordained of God; and towards the latter I desire to cherish all due benevolence; but, to suppose of either that which is not generally true, is deceiving both ourselves and them. Surely there is a medium between a spirit of "insubordination" to civil government, and inviting our rulers to frame laws and ordinances for the government of Christ's kingdom within their realm, and then flattering them for their pious intentions.

The episcopalians of this country have not been wanting in zeal for what has affected *their own interests and privileges*. When James II. published his declaration for liberty of conscience, thinking to introduce popery, and commanded the clergy to read it in all their churches, the great body of them refused. By this they said in effect, It appertaineth not unto thee, O king, to dispossess us of our privileges, and to give them to the ecclesiastics of Rome! I hope then we may be excused if we feel equally zealous for the *interest and exclusive authority of Jesus Christ*. If a government be solicitous to promote the interest of real Christianity, it should not be by making ordinances where Christ has not made them; but by protecting men in the exercise of a good conscience, and encouraging them to obey the ordinances already made in the holy Scriptures.

Mr. R. holds up the *piety* of the reformers: and we could hold up the piety of thousands who have refused conforming to their rules, as not answering to the model of the New Testament; and who were persecuted in almost every form on this account, and that by men who should have been "eminent for sanctity and sufficiency."

Mr. R. has hitherto argued chiefly in a way of *defence*; but, emboldened by his success, he now commences an *attack*. "Many strong objections," he says, "may be urged against a different ecclesiastical constitution."—p. 25. Let us hear them. "If you be solicited to depart from us, it will become

you previously to consider whither you should go." Very good. "Would any solid advantage be gained by the desertion of our ordinances, by the demolition of our establishment, and by the appointment of another system?—Ah! what incalculable evils would ensue!—How injurious to society and religion!" Mr. R., by "another system," must mean that of infidelity; and does he call this a different ecclesiastical constitution? I hope the persons whom he wishes to retain in communion are not inclined to this. "Insubordination and excessive profligacy" are consequences of leaving *Christian worship*, and not merely that of the *episcopal church*.

But allowing the best, that they thought of being *dissenters*, "What is that plan of worship," he asks, "what the government and principles of that religious society you are invited to join?"—Very good;—what are they?

"They," dissenters, I suppose he means, differ from each other as much as they do from the church,"—p. 26. If by "the church" were meant her doctrinal articles, he might have added, *and much more*.—But those things should not be alleged against dissenters which are common to all parties. It is marvellous that churchmen should pretend to be of one mind, and that at a time when the most ardent contentions divide them; one party maintaining that the articles mean this, another that, and a third that they have no meaning, but are merely articles of peace.\* Have we Arminians?—So have they:—Arians?—So have they:—Socinians?—So have they:—Traitors, ready, high-minded, lovers of their own-selves?—So have they. The only difference is, our churches being *independent* of each other, we have no general bond of connection, so as to compel us to hold communion with such people: but *they have*. We can, if so disposed, stand aloof from all these evils, and so escape the charge of being partakers of other men's sins: but *they cannot*; for the church is one, and indivisible, including all descriptions of men who choose to frequent her assemblies. Her barriers, which protect the sacred symbols of our Saviour's death themselves against interested infidelity and profligacy, are well known to be very feeble, and such as must, in various instances, give way to worldly expediency. If, indeed, a particular parish church, wherein a godly clergyman officiates were secluded from the rest of the nation, and he were not accountable for any thing which is done beyond the limits of his own immediate charge, the evil might be considerably lessened: but it is not so. *He that sweareth by this altar, sweareth by it and all things thereon*; actually holding fellow-

ship with all the avowed Arminians, and disguised Arians, Socinians, and infidels, who in different parts of the land are admitted without scruple to communion.

It is further objected that we "almost all agree in giving the supreme direction and control to the people." It seems, then, we are *agreed* in something; in an article too, in which, as ministers, we cannot well be accused of "*lording it over God's heritage*." Whether the power of admitting members be as safe in the hands of the people, in conjunction with their pastor, as in those of the pastor alone, or not; surely that of excluding offenders, by a solemn act of the whole body, is as consistent with apostolical order as prosecuting them for their sins in a spiritual court!—See 1 Cor. v. 4, 5. 2 Cor. ii. 6.

"They abolish all subscriptions to articles of faith." It is true we do not require our ministers to *swear* to them; looking upon the word of a Christian man to be as his oath. But it is not true of perhaps the major part of dissenters that they subscribe no articles.

Our public *catechisms*, which are used in instructing our children, and which, were they but established by *civil authority*, would be accounted to contain as great a treasure as the church articles, are much more believed and regarded among us than the latter are among them. But, besides these, many of our churches express their leading principles in writing, to which not merely the minister, as in the established church, but every member, subscribes his name. And, where this is *not* done, many of them are so attached to the Scriptures, and so well acquainted with one another, that no *practical* inconvenience arises from it. It is a fact that ought forever to silence our accusers that the ministers and members of the church of England, with all their boasted security against error in virtue of their articles, are become so degenerate that scarcely one in ten believes them: whereas dissenters, with all their want of security, do, two out of three at least, believe the doctrines contained in them! The church has more believers of her doctrines among dissenters than among her own members; and that notwithstanding the proportion of the former to the latter is probably less than as one to seven!

Yet "a society of Christians thus constituted, without *establishing* any test of orthodoxy, or forms of public devotion, though, at their first union they may be sound in the faith, upright in their views, and exemplary in their conduct, is likely to degenerate." *The word of Christ dwelling richly in them*, then, is no competent security, unless it be reduced to proper forms, and established by authority! It is true that, "from the corrupt tendency of the human mind," we are always in danger of degenerating; but that

\*See Overton's *True Churchman*.



Mr. R. should confine it to dissenters, and talk of its being "confirmed by indubitable facts," is passing strange. The church of England, owing to her excellent means of preservation, is in *no* danger, it seems, of degeneracy! The descendants of the first Reformers have *not* departed from their purity, either in faith or practice! The subscription of the articles by the clergy, though scarcely one in ten believes them, has preserved not only themselves, but the people who do not subscribe them from error! And buildings—I should have said "temples"—which have once been appropriated to the promotion of evangelical religion, are never known among them to be applied to opposite purposes!

"They leave the minister at large to offer up prayer and praise, according to the dictates and feelings of his own mind." Just so; and thus, for any thing that appears in the New Testament to the contrary, were the primitive ministers left. Where men are destitute of a praying spirit, it may not be safe to leave them "at large:" perhaps the more closely they are confined the better: but they that fear God have no need of being so treated. Those forms which Mr. R. so highly extols were originally the dictates and feelings of fallible individuals: and if it be, as he suggests, that "much evil results from such a mode," why does he himself practise it? Are the dictates and feelings of his mind, being "a man under authority," different from those of other ministers?

But the course of things among us tends to encourage "pride and contention." That these evils are too prevalent in our churches we shall not deny: they were so in the primitive churches, which also had their Diotrepheses as well as we. And is there no danger of clerical pride, and of many an official Diotrephes in the church? It deserves to be considered, whether the *peace* of which the church has to boast among her members, instead of being the fruit of meekness and brotherly love, be not rather the ease of indifference, and the stillness of ecclesiastical despotism. Where one man is all, the rest are nothing at all.

What is urged under Mr. R.'s last head is built entirely upon the validity of what was advanced before it. If the church of England be *not* truly apostolical—if her doctrines be neither believed nor taught by the great body of her clergy—if her forms be not binding on men's consciences, and ought not to be made so—if the ordinances of man, to which we are obliged to be subject, be confined to things of a civil and moral nature—the charge of "schism" falls to the ground.

I doubt not but that there are many of the people of God in the church of England; and perhaps Mr. R. will admit there may be some in the church of Rome; and that it is

their duty to "come out of her, that they partake not of her sins, and receive not of her plagues." It is far from my desire to attack the national church, or to interfere with its concerns, any farther than is necessary to vindicate the practice of dissent from the reproaches heaped upon it by such writers as Mr. Robinson. I will not, like some nonconformists, complain of her hard terms of admission; for if they were easier, or even abolished, I have no idea, at present, that I should covet to enter in. I regret not the loss of any advantages which I might there possess. Whatever be the articles and forms, or even the belief of a community, yet if it put itself under the control of the civil power in religious matters, for the sake of outward advantages, and acquiesce in the disposal of those advantages by interested patronage, *this itself* is a sufficient ground for separation. For, where things are thus conducted, "the souls of men" are become an article of merchandize; and the church is little other than an instrument of power and aggrandizement in the hands of worldly men. This would have been an insuperable objection to me, had I lived, and possessed my present views, in the purest times of the Reformation. Such a constitution must of necessity confound the church and the world. All the difference between those times and these is, they sowed the seeds, and we have seen the harvest. We see in the great body of the members of the community, *not saints, and faithful in Christ Jesus*, such as were the members of the primitive churches: but men of the world; men who would be ashamed to be thought "saints," and who scruple not to deride all spiritual religion. A community of this description is not a "congregation of faithful men;" and so, by the confession of the church itself, is not a church of Christ.

Whatever may be said of "schisms," or divisions, among Christians, they are things very different from *separations from the world*. From the latter we are commanded to "*withdraw ourselves*:" not "*altogether*" indeed, from men who make no pretence to religion; for then we must needs go out of the world; but from those who are *called brethren*, or profess to know God, but in works deny him. From such it is our duty to stand aloof, even in our ordinary intercourse; and much more in solemn communion at the table of the Lord.—1 Cor. v. 9—13.

In separating from the church of England we conform to the divine precept, "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness; and what communion hath light with darkness?"—"Wherefore come out from among them, *and be ye separate, saith the Lord*; and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons

and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Not that we consider the whole body as unbelievers: but if the greater part be such, and the principles on which they hold communion make no provision for excluding them, it amounts to the same thing in effect as if they were all such. If a part of the people of God themselves resolve to hold communion with unbelievers, we ought to *withdraw* from them, lest we be partakers of other men's sins. In so doing, we do not divide from them as *Christians*, but as "brethren who walk disorderly," refusing to follow them off their proper ground, or to assist them in breaking down the fences of the church, and so confounding it with the world.

If it be objected that the practice forbidden to the Corinthians was not their admitting unbelievers to commune with them in Christian ordinances, but their going to commune with unbelievers at heathen ordinances, this is granted: but the latter practice is forbidden on *principles* which equally forbid the former. The *impossibility* of Christian communion subsisting between them, and their being called to be *separate*, are each as applicable to the one as to the other.

If it be farther objected that—where men *profess* Christianity, we have no right to sit in judgment upon their hearts, but ought charitably to consider and treat them as *believers*,—I answer: If the thing professed were genuine personal Christianity, and there were nothing in the spirit and conduct of the party that rendered his profession incredible, this objection were valid; but where no pretence is made to any other than traditional assent, which in Turkey would have made them Mahomedans, and in China pagans; where faith is manifestly *dead*, being alone, or, what is worse, accompanied by the works of the flesh; where the very idea of being "born of God" is derided, and all spiritual religion regarded with contempt; to consider such persons as believers is an abuse of charity, and to treat them as such is to foster them in self-deception.

The *principles*, moreover, on which the Corinthians were forbidden to commune with unbelievers in theory, equally forbid our communing with unbelievers in practice. There can be no Christian communion in the one case, any more than in the other. "Light and darkness, righteousness and unrighteousness," are as impossible to be united here as there; and a *separation* from the world is as impracticable in the latter case as in the former. The *reason* also given for the divine precept applies in both instances. The apostle intimates that associations with the world, in religious matters, *straiten* believers, whom he wishes to be *enlarged*. Thus a lively animal is straitened in his efforts, by being unequally yoked with one that is tardy: and thus Christians are restrained from holy freedom, and the proper exertion of themselves

in the cause of Christ, by their connection with worldly men, who will always be throwing difficulties in the way of those pursuits in which they have no delight.

Finally: Notwithstanding what is constantly alleged of the *usefulness* of good men by continuing in the national church (and, if there they must be, I wish them to be a hundred times more useful than they are,) I am persuaded it will be found that it is hereby not a little impeded. If the people of God, while they proved themselves to be the cordial friends of civil government and good order in society, could be scripturally *separated* from the world, and act together like a band of men whose hearts God had touched, their usefulness would far surpass any thing that we have hitherto seen.

Infidels would not then have to reproach Christianity with being an engine of state, nor to object that the principal supporters of it were too deeply interested in its temporal advantages for their testimony to be regarded as impartial. This is the reason why the writings of a WILBERFORCE, and others who are called laymen, make so deep an impression upon the public mind, in comparison of those of dignified clergymen. Many among the evangelical clergy, I acknowledge, have proved themselves to be very disinterested. They are far from making so much of their time and talents as they might do in other pursuits. But the church of which they boast is as much a place of merchandize as the Royal Exchange. The disinterested testimony of a few people, who are united together, not by a sectarian, but a truly catholic spirit, and whose life comports with their doctrine, speaks a thousand times louder in the consciences of men than the decrees of a council, enforced by all the authority, ecclesiastical or civil, which the greatest nation, or all the nations of the earth, can muster up. The army of the Lamb, by which he will overcome his enemies, is not described as connected with the states of the respective kingdoms of the earth; but as a select band, acting immediately under his authority. *He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.*

#### ON THE PRESENCE OF JUDAS AT THE LORD'S SUPPER.

AFTER carefully reading the account of this matter by the four evangelists, it appears to me that Judas was *not* present at the Lord's supper, but went out immediately after the celebration of the passover; and that, if the contrary were allowed, it would not affect the order of the dissenting churches.

With respect to the former of these positions, MATTHEW speaks of Judas as being

present at the Paschal supper, but says nothing of his being present at the Lord's supper.—Ch. xxii. 19—30. The whole of what he writes is perfectly *consistent* with his leaving the company immediately after the former, and before the commencement of the latter; but it makes no mention of it.

The same may be said of the account given by MARK.—Ch. xiv. 16—26. JOHN is more particular. He tells us that, "having received *the sop*, he went *immediately out*."—Ch. xiii. 30. Now the act of dipping the bread in wine, and so eating it, pertained not to the Lord's supper, but to the passover. The bread and the wine were each distributed separately in the former, as is manifest from every account we have of it; but in the latter it was not so, as is clear from Matt. xxvi. 23; Mark xiv. 20. John's testimony, therefore, is very express, that the time of Judas's going out was immediately *after* the passover, and *before* the Lord's supper.

The only difficulty arises from the account of LUKE, who, after narrating the administration of the Lord's supper, says, "But behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is *with me on the table*."—Ch. xxii. 21. The whole force of the argument taken from this arises not from any thing *in the words themselves*; for "the table" may as well signify the paschal table as the Lord's table; but merely from the *order* in which they are placed in the narration. And, as to this, Calvin, who entertained the opinion that Judas was present, acknowledges nevertheless that, "though Luke hath set down this saying of Christ *after* the celebration of his supper, yet the order of time cannot be certainly gathered thereby, which we know was often neglected by the evangelists."

But whether Judas was present at the Lord's supper or not, it does not, as I conceive, affect the order of dissenting churches. It is no part of that order to sit in judgment upon the hearts of communicants, any farther than as they are manifest by their words and actions. It is as making a credible profession of Christianity that we are bound to admit them, and not on the ground of any private opinion that this profession is sincere. Should we feel in any case a secret dissatisfaction, owing to a want of that union of spirit which a profession of repentance towards God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ordinarily inspires; yet if what is professed be true religion, and we know of nothing that discredits the sincerity of the party, we are not at liberty to reject. Now such a communicant was Judas, allowing him to have been one. It appears by the other apostles applying the warning, given by Christ, to themselves in a way of inquiry, that they had no particular suspicion of him. And, as to his character being known to Christ as the searcher of hearts, he did not act upon that ground in his treatment of men,

but upon the ground of what they manifested themselves to be by their words and actions. If Christ's knowledge of Judas's character warrants the admission of unbelievers and known hypocrites into the church, it must also warrant the admission of them to the highest offices in the church: for "Jesus knew *from the beginning* who it was that believed not, and who should betray him."

## ON DISSENT.

THE longer a Christian lives, and the more he observes of what is passing before him, the more reason he will see for preferring a candid and impartial judgment of men and things. All parties in their turn declaim against prejudice and party zeal, but it is not from declamation that we must form our judgment. If we wish to know the truth, we must read those who think differently from us, who, whether they be impartial towards us or not, will be much more likely to detect our faults than we are to detect them ourselves.

These remarks have been occasioned by reading a critique on "The History of Dissenters," by Messrs. Bogue and Bennett, and some other kindred pieces, in "the Quarterly Review for October, 1813." This article, though manifestly written by one who is no more a friend to the puritans and non-conformists than he is to the present race of dissenters, and probably no more friendly to evangelical religion in the church than out of it, yet contains a considerable portion of impartiality towards individuals, and even his censures are often worthy of our attention. From reading this review, as well as from perusing the volumes reviewed, there is one truth of which I am fully convinced; which is, that both eulogy and censure are commonly bestowed with too little discrimination, and often applied to communities where they ought to be confined to individuals. If a few men excel in a community, such is the vanity of human nature that the whole must arrogate to themselves the praise; or if a few be guilty of impropriety, such is the invidiousness of party zeal that the whole must be censured on their account. Could we be more discriminate, both in our praises and censures, we should be much nearer the truth, and what we write would be far more likely to do good. We can consent for every man to have his due, and to bear his own burden; but are disgusted with those who are continually eulogizing their fathers that they may exalt themselves, and stigmatizing other men's fathers that they may depreciate their neighbors.

In reading the lives of the puritans and nonconformists, I read the lives of men of whom, with all their faults, the world was not worthy: but, if I be impartial, I shall



find many of the excellent of the earth who did not rank with either of them: and, among those who did, I shall find many whose principles and conduct it will not be in my power to vindicate. Hardly as the puritans were treated, if I had been one of them, and had held those intolerant principles which many of them avowed and carried with them into the new world, I do not perceive how I could have expected different treatment from others who were in power. I might have been treated more rigorously than I should have treated them, had I been in their place and they in mine; but the principle of intolerance is the same. That for which I should have suffered might also have been truth, while that for which I should have caused others to suffer might be pernicious error: but, in a question of this nature, I should have had no right to take this for granted, seeing it would have been judging in my own cause. My rule ought rather to have been, to "do unto others as I would they should do unto me."

I am not able to vindicate Messrs. Bogue and Bennett, whose praises and censures are both, as it appears to me, much too indiscriminate; but I can perceive that their reviewer, while chastising them, is continually exposing himself to censure for the same things.

He seldom detects a fault in his authors without endeavoring to fix it upon the whole body, by ascribing it to their *dissent*. Speaking of divisions and separations among dissenters, he says, "This evil grows out of the principle of dissent. The minister of an establishment has no temptation from vanity, or the love of singularity, or any mere worldly motive, to labor in insignificant distinctions: but amongst dissenters the right of private judgment is so injudiciously inculcated that the men who are trained amongst them learn not unfrequently to despise all judgment except their own." To say nothing of the temptations which the minister of an establishment *has*, though he may not have these, it is sufficient to reply,—If unlovely separations arise from an injudicious inculcation of the right of private judgment, let them be traced to that cause, and not to dissent: let them be ascribed to the *abuse* of the right of private judgment, but not to the principle itself, or to any necessary step in order to obtain it. An advocate for despotic government might object to the disorders of our popular elections, and to the violence of our parliamentary debates, and might tell us that in certain countries there is no temptation to such disorder and such violence: but we should readily answer,—They have temptations as bad, or worse, of another kind, and the right of choosing our representatives, and that of free parliamentary debate, are of such importance to the well-being of the

nation that the evils which they occasion are as nothing when compared with it. The right of private judgment in matters of religion is of such account that we cannot part with it without *making shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience*. As to the abuses of it, whoever is guilty of them, let him bear his own burden. The "schism which took place in the Evangelical Magazine" should not have been lugged in by this writer for an example, without having first made himself acquainted with the *true* cause of it.

If I dissent from antipathy to a particular clergyman, or for the sake of gratifying my own will, or to feed my own vanity, I am what this reviewer considers me—a *sectarian*; but, if I dissent for the sake of obtaining liberty to follow what I verily believe to be the mind of Christ, I am not a sectarian in the ill sense of the term, nor in any sense except that in which Paul avowed himself to be one. By this writer's own account, if I continue in the established church, I must make no "profession." That is, I must not profess to repent of my sins, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation: if I do, he will construe it into "a profession of being better than my neighbors," which he tells me is "inconsistent with Christian humility," and insinuates that the whole is "pharisaical hypocrisy." This is certainly speaking out; and standing, as it does, in direct opposition to the divine command of "coming out from among unbelievers, and being separate from them," renders it easy to determine the path of duty.

The writer censures Messrs. Bogue and Bennett for ascribing almost every thing vicious and persecuting to churchmen; yet he himself ascribes almost every thing sour, litigious, and splenetic to dissenters. He represents the intolerance of the puritans as if it were universal, and as if all that settled in America were of the same spirit. But (to say nothing of Roger Williams, whom he himself not only acquits, but applauds, as "the man whose name, if all men had their due, would stand as high as that of William Penn, as having begun the first civil government upon earth that gave equal liberty of conscience") there was a broad line of distinction between those puritans who founded the colony of New Plymouth, in 1620, and those who a few years after founded that of Massachusetts Bay. The former were the members of Mr. John Robinson, who had peaceably separated from the church of England, and with his friends retired to Holland, for the sake of liberty of conscience: but the Massachusetts people had never relinquished the principle of national churches, and the authority of the magistrate in matters of faith and worship. And it was among these people, and owing to this principle, that the persecutions in

America were carried on. Of this there is a full account given in "Backus's History of the American Baptists," Vol. I.; and, as the baptists bore a large part of those persecutions, they may well be supposed to know who were their persecutors, and what were their avowed principles.

The work of Messrs. Bogue and Bennett is considered by this writer as a fair specimen of dissenting principles in the present day, or as "representing the general temper of those to whom it is addressed." But, so far as I have had the means of judging, it is considered among dissenters in a very different light. Some few may admire it; but all that I have heard speak of it consider it as deeply tinged with party zeal and revolutionary politics, and as being rather a eulogy on their own denomination than a "History of Dissenters." I am not aware that the French revolution has promoted the cause of dissent; and, if it were so, an increase on such principles is of no value. Men may leave the national church, not on account of what is wrong in it, but of what is right, in which case dissent itself must be wicked. Dissent is not a cause for a Christian to rejoice in, any further than as it includes the cause of Christ. It is ground on which may be erected a temple of God or a synagogue of Satan.

That there are many among dissenters who feel that "moral expatriation" which the reviewer laments is admitted; but the same is true of churchmen. The numbers, however, of both, have of late years considerably diminished.—Dissenters must ever be friends to civil and religious liberty, as it is their only security: but they may be this without turbulence, or envy, or spleen, or any of those unamiable qualities which this writer attaches to dissent. I believe it will be found that from the beginning those dissenters who have separated from the church of England for the purpose of forming churches according to what they consider as the mind of Christ have been of a much more pacific spirit than those who, retaining the principles of national churches and the authority of the magistrates in matters of faith and worship, were always lingering after a comprehension in the establishment, and finding fault with particular ceremonies and forms that kept them out of it. That this was the case among the first settlers in America has been already noticed; and, so far as my observation extends, it is the case to this day. Those who dissent for the sake of being at liberty to follow up their convictions in promoting the kingdom of Christ will not be averse to the *civil* institutions of their country; and as to the *ecclesiastical*, unless called to defend themselves against the charge of schism, and such others as are heaped upon them, they would cherish no hostility.

Being allowed to follow the dictates of their own consciences, they are willing that others should do the same. They dissent, not so much from antipathy to what they desert as from love to what they embrace; and they love and pray for the government that protects them in the enjoyment of it.

They cannot approve of making the political prosperity of their country the *supreme* object of their pursuit, nor consent that the religion of Christ should be rendered *subservient* to it; and this, in the esteem of those who are otherwise minded, will often be ascribed to the want of patriotism: but a wise and good government will know how to distinguish a contumelious behaviour towards them from a conscientious obedience to God; and, while they properly resent the former, will not fail to respect the latter.

## STATE OF DISSENTING DISCIPLINE.

It may be difficult to determine whether the apostles of our Lord, in the first planting of Christianity, were more intent on the conversion of unbelievers or the building up of believers in their most holy faith. It is certain that both these objects engaged their attention.

In our times they have been thought to be too much divided. Towards the middle of the last century, several eminent men were raised up in the established church, whose labors were singularly useful in turning sinners to God: but whether it was from the advantages of their situation as churchmen, or whatever was the cause, they and others, who since their times have been a kind of half dissenters, have generally been considered as neglecting to form their societies after the model of the New Testament. And, congregations of this description having considerably increased, apprehensions have been entertained that the order and discipline of the Scriptures would in time fall into general disuse.

From a somewhat earlier date, many amongst protestant dissenters, too much attentive perhaps to the points on which they separated from the church and from one another, began to neglect the common salvation, and to render the general theme of their ministrations something other than Christ crucified. Even many of those who retained the doctrines of their forefathers preached them in so cold and formal a way that the spirit of vital religion seemed to be fled. Hence many serious people forsook them in favor of a more lively and evangelical ministry, even though unaccompanied with the discipline and government to which they had been used. Hence arose mutual jealousies, and the distinction of *regular* and *irregular* dissenters.

Such, alas! is the contractedness of the

human mind, that, while attending to one thing, it is ever in danger of neglecting others of equal if not superior importance. It is a fact which cannot be denied that many, who have exhibited the common salvation with great success to the unconverted, have at the same time been sadly negligent in enforcing the legislative authority of Christ upon their hearers: nor is it less manifest that others who have been the most tenacious of the forms of church government and discipline have at the same time been woefully deficient in preaching the gospel to the unconverted.

But is it not possible to *unite* these important objects, at least in a good degree, in the manner in which they were united in the primitive times? One should think it were as natural for a minister, and a people, where God is pleased to bless the word to the conversion of sinners, to be anxious for their edification, as for parents who are blessed with a numerous offspring to be concerned to have them properly fed, and clothed, and educated. It is not enough that a company of Christians unite in a preacher, and make a point of going once or twice in the week to hear him, and after having exchanged compliments with him, and a few of the people, depart till another Sabbath. That bids fair to be the true scriptural form of church government which tends most to promote brotherly love, which brings the members into the closest religious contact, and which is accompanied with the greatest faithfulness one towards another.

#### DISCIPLINE OF THE ENGLISH AND SCOT-TISH BAPTIST CHURCHES.

[Extracts from two letters to Mr. M'Lean, in 1796.]

As to our churches, it would be very wrong to plead on their behalf that they come up to the primitive model. It is our great endeavor as ministers (and we are joined by a good number of private Christians) to form them in doctrine, in discipline, in spirit, and in conduct, after the example of Christ and his apostles. But after all that we can do, if reviewed by the great Head of the church, and perhaps by some of his servants who may be unconnected with us, there would be a few, or rather not "a few things against us."

Till of late, I conceive, there was such a portion of erroneous *doctrine* and false religion amongst us that, if we had carried matters a little farther, we should have been a very dunghill in society. Nor can this leaven be expected to be yet purged out, though I hope it is in a fair way of being so.

In *discipline* there is a great propensity, in some churches especially, to be lax and negligent. In our annual associations we have been necessitated to remonstrate against this negligence, and to declare that, unless they would execute the laws of Christ upon disorderly walkers, we would withdraw from all connection with them: and such remonstrances from the associated churches have produced a good effect. It is not our practice, however, lightly to separate from churches or individuals. We consider the churches of Corinth and Galatia, and the great patience of the apostle amidst the most scandalous disorders; laboring to reclaim those whom others of less patience would have given up, and separated from; and wish as far as possible to follow the example.

Your observations on the difficulty of reforming an old church are very just, and on its being better in some cases to begin by a new formation. In this way we have proceeded in some places. Carey, for example, when he went to Leicester, found them a very corrupt people. The very officers had indulged in drunkenness, and the rest were discouraged; and so discipline was wholly neglected. After advising with his brethren in the ministry, brother Carey and the majority of the church agreed to renew covenant. Accordingly they appointed a day in which they would consider their former relation as extinct, and the church book should be open for the signatures of all who had heretofore been members, but upon this condition, that they subscribed at the same time a solemn declaration,—That they would in future execute and be subject to a strict and faithful discipline.

This measure had its effect. Almost all their loose characters stood out: or, if any signed, they were subject to a close watch in future. By these means the church was purged; and Carey, before he went to India, saw the good effects of it. A considerable revival in religion ensued, and many were added. Hence you may account for his language afterwards to the church at Leicester.\*

It is a great fault in some of our churches that they seem afraid to execute faithful discipline upon men of opulence. "The *cause*, they say, cannot be supported without them." To this I have more than once replied, That a cause which requires to be thus supported cannot be the cause of Christ; and your business is not to support the ark with unhallowed hands. If by executing Christ's laws *your* cause sinks, so be it; he will never blame you for that.

Another evil akin to this is a partiality for men of opulence, in the choice of *deacons*.

\* Periodical Accounts of the Baptist Mission, Vol. I. p. 132.



I consider not property, but the use that is made of it, as entitling to religious regard.

We do not fail publicly and privately to inculcate these things: but habits of this kind are not instantly, nor easily, eradicated.

You observe that "the commission of Christ is not fully executed, unless the converts are taught to observe 'all things, whatsoever he hath commanded;' and are brought into such a state of separation from the world, and of union and order among themselves, after the model of the apostolic churches, as puts them in a capacity for doing so."

To the whole of this I freely subscribe, whether we have attained to such a state of things or not. My views, and those of my brethren, are much the same as are expressed in Mr. Booth's "Essay on the Kingdom of Christ." I am not conscious but that it is my aim to inculcate and practise "all things, whatsoever our Lord hath commanded." Some of Christ's commands, however, I suppose, we interpret differently from you. If I am rightly informed, you consider "the washing of feet, the kiss of charity, &c.," as formally binding on all Christians: we do not. We consider neither of them as *religious* institutes, but merely civil customs, though used by Christ and his apostles to a religious end, as whatsoever they did, they did all to the glory of God. They were in use both among Jews and heathens, long before the coming of Christ. The one was a necessary service, the other a mode of expressing kindness. We conceive it was the design of Christ by these forms to enjoin a natural interchange of kind and beneficent offices, even so as "by love to serve one another." The usual forms of expressing this temper of mind were at that time, and in those countries, washing the feet, &c. Christ therefore made use of these forms, much the same as he made use of the customary language of a country, to convey his doctrines and precepts. But, as neither of these forms is ordinarily used in our age and country, to express the ideas for which it was originally enjoined, the ground or reason of the injunction ceases; a literal compliance with them would not now answer the original design, but would operate, we conceive, in a very different way. It seems to us, therefore, not only lawful, but incumbent, to substitute such signs and forms as are adapted to convey the *spirit* of the injunction, rather than to abide by the letter, since that is become as it were "a dead letter;" as much so as to disuse the original language of Scripture, and translate it into a language that can be understood. Herein we think we follow Christ's example; he used the forms and customs of his country to express kindness and humility; and we do the same. Whether we understand these commands,

however, or not, according to the mind of Christ, I hope, and for myself am certain, that we do not live in the known violation of them.

The grounds on which *you* plead for the washing of feet, I should have no objection to. If you will come and see me, and it be any refreshment to you, I will cheerfully wash yours; and not yours only, but, if the meanest Christian needed it, I do not feel that it would at all hurt my pride to gratify him. I have pride, as well as other sins, but I think it does not operate in that way. My objection to the kiss of charity is not that it is become so obsolete that people would not understand it as a token of affection, but being confined in England to express the affection of relations, or of the sexes, it would be understood accordingly. Let such salutations therefore be ever so pure in themselves, we should not be able to "abstain from the appearance of evil;" and many scandals and reproaches would be raised.

I have carefully, and, if I know my own spirit, candidly examined the New Testament concerning the *time* of administering the Lord's supper. The result is that I consider it as wholly *discretionary*, as much so as the times for various other duties. Such is the form of institution, as repeated by Paul.—1 Cor. xi. 25, 26. "This do ye, *as often* as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For *as often* as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." If any thing can be gathered from Acts ii. 42, which says that the disciples "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and *in breaking of bread*, and in prayers;" it is that it was done as often as they met together for worship; but this was much *oftener* than once a week; for they "continued *daily* with one accord in the temple, and the Lord added to them *daily* such as should be saved.—ver. 46, 47. From Acts xx. 7, we learn that "the disciples came together to break bread on the *first* day of the week;" but it does not follow that this was their practice on every such first day. It might be so; but, as Christ left the matter open, I suppose they acted accordingly. At Jerusalem, soon after the pentecost, it seems to me that they did it *oftener* than once a week; afterwards they *might* do it once a week. But, if Christ has not fixed it, neither should we, lest we go beyond the rule appointed us.

I think few can have a greater dislike to *titles* than I have among ministers. That of "brother" is most agreeable to me. My brother Ryland, without his own knowledge, desire, or consent, had a D. D. next to forced upon him. It was announced by Rippon in his register, and then people would call him by it; but I am persuaded he would much rather not have had it. He

is a very humble godly man, and he now submits to it, because he would not always be employed in resisting a piece of insignificance. For my part I think with you, but do not know whether any of my brethren think with me, that it is contrary to our Lord's prohibition: "Be ye not called Rabbi."

As to academical education the far greater part of our ministers have it not.\* Carey was a shoemaker years after he engaged in the ministry, and I was a farmer. I have sometimes however regretted my want of learning. On the other hand, brother Sutcliff, and brother Pearce, have both been at Bristol. We all live in love, without any distinction in these matters. We do not consider an academy as any qualification for membership or preaching, any farther than as a person may there improve his talents. Those who go to our academies must be members of a church, and recommended to them as possessing gifts adapted to the ministry. They preach about the neighborhood all the time, and their going is considered in no other light than as a young minister might apply to an aged one for improvement. Since brother Ryland has been at Bristol, I think he has been a great blessing in forming the principles and spirit of the young men. I allow, however, that the contrary is often the case in academies, and that when it is so they prove very injurious to the churches of Christ.

#### STATE OF THE BAPTIST CHURCHES IN NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

1. Out of the twenty-three churches in this county, nineteen are in villages, and four in market towns. Eleven are in connection with the Northamptonshire and Leicestershire association; the other twelve are in no association. The average number of members in each church is about seventy, and of hearers about three hundred.

2. There are no two of them which meet for worship in the same village or town in consequence of any division among themselves. Such things may be borne with in some instances rather than worse; but they are not among the things which are lovely and of good report. Such things have existed among these churches, but they exist no longer.

3. There are only three which meet for worship in towns where there are independent congregations, or any other preaching which is ordinarily considered as evangelical; and those are places so populous as to furnish no just ground of complaint on the score of opposition. If our object therefore

\* This is far from being the case in the present day.—ED.

had been to increase our number from other evangelical connections, rather than by conversions from the world, we have acted very unwisely in fixing on the places where we should take our stand. It is acknowledged that many members of pedobaptist churches have joined us in consequence of their being convinced of believers' baptism being the only baptism taught and exemplified in the Scriptures; and that many of our members owe their first religious impressions to the labors of a Hervey, a Maddox, and other evangelical clergymen, whose names are dear to them and to us all. But the number of persons of both these descriptions fall short of that of persons who have been in the habit of attending our worship, or have come over to us from the ranks of the irreligious.

4. Of those who are not in the association, three or four are what are called high Calvinists, holding the doctrines of election and predestination in such a way as to exclude exhortations and invitations to the ungodly to believe in Christ for salvation. The rest, whether in or out of the association, consider these doctrines as consistent with exhortations and invitations, as the means by which the predestined ends are accomplished. There are individuals of a different mind in the other churches; for we distinguish between high Calvinists and antinomians: with the former we do not refuse communion, but with the latter we do.

5. The greater part of these churches are not of very long standing. In 1689, when a meeting of the elders and messengers of more than one hundred baptist churches was held in London, there were no messengers from this county. It does not follow that there were no baptist churches in the county, but they certainly were very few and small. Half the present number at least have been raised within the last fifty years, and many of those which were raised before have much more than doubled their number since that period. The average clear increase of those churches in the county which are in the association during the above period is about seventy-five; and probably the clear increase of the churches not associated would be much the same. Several of those which are now flourishing churches were formerly small societies; some of them branches of other churches, supplied principally by gifted brethren not wholly devoted to the ministry, but laboring with their hands for their own maintenance, and that of their families.

6. If such has been the progress of things during the last fifty years, what may we not hope for in fifty years to come? Were the number of these churches even to continue stationary during that period—and were nothing reckoned on but a diligent perseverance in the stated means of grace,

only including occasional labors in adjacent villages, reckoning three generations to a century—a testimony will have been borne in each of them to a thousand, and in all of them to three-and-twenty thousand souls. And if on an average they may be supposed to contain fifty truly Christian people—for, though we admit none but those who profess and appear to be such, yet it cannot be expected that all are what they profess to be—each church will have reared seventy-five, and altogether seventeen hundred and twenty-five plants for the heavenly paradise.

But surely we need not calculate on their remaining stationary. If genuine Christianity does but live among them it will both “grow and multiply.” If it multiply only in the same proportion as it has done in the last half century, in respect to the number of churches, and of members in each church, it will increase considerably more than fourfold; and if from each of these churches should proceed only three or four faithful and useful ministers of the gospel—if especially there should arise among them only now and then “a fruitful bough”—say a Thomas, a Carey, a Marshman, a Ward, a Chamberlain, or a Chater—“whose branches run over the wall” of christendom itself; who can calculate the fruits? From a part of these churches, connected in association with others in the adjacent counties, within the last twenty years, has “sounded forth the word of the Lord,” into the very heart of heathen and Mahomedan Asia; and as the times foretold in prophecy, when “a little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation,” appeared to be fast approaching, it behoves us not only to “attempt,” but also to “expect great things.”

Our chief concern should be that we may not disqualify ourselves for possessing these lively hopes by a relinquishment of the doctrine, the worship, the discipline, the spirit, or the practice of vital Christianity. That God’s “way may be known upon earth, and his saving health among all nations,” our prayer should be, “God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause thy face to shine upon us.” We cannot impart that which we do not possess.

I have seen in those churches with which I have been most intimately connected many things which have endeared them to me. Particularly, a lively interest in evangelical, faithful, practical, and pungent preaching; an attention to things more than to words; a taste for the affectionate more than for the curious; a disposition to read and think rather than dispute; a spirit to promote the kingdom of Christ: in fine, a modesty, gentleness, and kindness of behavior. I have been thirty years pastor of one of them; and, if there has ever been an instance of unkind

or unchristian behavior towards me, I have forgotten it.

These things I have seen in some of our churches, and would fain consider them as the general feature. But truth obliges me to add, I have also seen things of another description. I have seen discipline neglected, apparently lest it should injure the subscription; and, if exercised, it has seemed to be more from regard to reputation in the eyes of men than from the fear of God. I have seen an evil in the choice of ministers; too much attention has been paid to the superficial qualification of a ready off-hand address, calculated to fill the place, and too little to those solid qualities that constitute the man of God, and the serious, faithful, and affectionate pastor. I have also seen, or thought I have seen, in the choice of deacons, more regard paid to opulence than to those qualifications required by the New Testament. I have seen too much of a worldly spirit, and a conformity to the maxims by which worldly men are wont to regulate their conduct.

I do not know that such things are more prevalent in these than in other churches; but, wherever they prevail, they will be a worm at the root of the gourd. It becomes us as ministers to inquire whether a large portion of these evils may not originate amongst us. If we were more spiritual, evangelical, and zealous in the work of God, things would be different with the people. We are apt to think that, if we have but made up our minds on the leading points of controversy afloat in the world, and taken the side of truth, we are safe; but it is not so. If we walk not with God, we shall almost be certain in some way to get aside from the gospel, and then the work of God will not prosper in our hands. Ingenious discourses may be delivered, and nothing advanced inconsistent with the gospel, while yet the gospel itself is not preached. We may preach *about* Christ himself, and yet not “preach Christ.” We may pride ourselves in our orthodoxy, and yet be far from the doctrine of the New Testament; may hold with exhortations and invitations to the unconverted, and yet not “persuade men;” may plead for sound doctrine, and yet overlook the things that “become sound doctrine.” Finally, we may advocate the cause of holiness, while we ourselves are unholy.

#### DECLINE OF THE DISSENTING INTEREST.

##### PART THE FIRST.

ON looking over some of the late numbers of the Protestant Dissenter’s Magazine, I observed a complaint of the dissenting interest being on the decline. It is true it was



not the first time nor the only place in which I had met with this complaint: I never before, however, found my thoughts so much engaged by this subject, or my mind equally inclined to make inquiry into it.

That the dissenting interest has declined in many places I have no doubt; but whether this be the case with the *general body* is the question. If it be, it becomes us to make ourselves acquainted with it, and with its causes, that if possible the malady may be lessened, if not entirely healed. Yea, though it should not be the case with the general body, but only with a considerable number of dissenters, yet, as "one member cannot suffer without the whole body suffering with it," it is an object well worthy of attention.

The present inquiry is naturally divided into two parts; one respects the *fact* itself, and the other the *reasons* of it. The present piece will be devoted to the former of these inquiries, which will be followed with a second, if it meets with approbation.

*Is it then a fact that the dissenting interest, taken in the whole, has, suppose I say for the last five-and-twenty years, been upon the decline?*

I do not pretend but that the subject has its difficulties, and it is very possible that I may be mistaken. The following observations are however submitted to the consideration of the reader:—

1. It cannot be doubted by persons of observation that the generality of the clergy of this country have of late years lost ground in the estimation of the common people. To say nothing of their ignorance of religion (the people being equally benighted may prevent their discovering this,) the oppressive disposition of great numbers of them in the article of *tithes*, their imperious carriage, and great inattention to morals, are matters that all men understand. On these accounts they enjoy but a small portion of the esteem of the people; and hence perhaps, in part, arises a disposition to hear dissenting preaching in almost every place where it is introduced. Whether it arises however from this cause or not, so far as my observation reaches, it is a fact that *there is a far greater disposition to hear dissenting preaching than there formerly was*. I have for some time been in the habit of preaching, on the Lord's day evening, in eight or ten villages round my situation, and never met with any interruption in so doing. The people attend with great decorum, from fifty to five hundred in number; and I have no doubt but such congregations might be obtained in a hundred villages as well as ten, provided ministers could be found that would go and preach to them. Popular prejudice, it is true, was kindled against the dissenters a few years ago, by the disputes concerning the repeal of the *Corporation and Test Acts*;

but this has now very nearly subsided. Men who enter deeply into party prejudices may continue much the same, but the common people think little or nothing about it.

2. That part of the clergy usually termed *evangelical* may be said to be more in a state of competition with the dissenters than any other; and the number both of preachers and hearers of this description has of late years much increased. Instead of considering this circumstance however as a matter of regret, many thinking people have rejoiced in it; and that not only on account of its being favorable to the salvation of sinners, but as that which will ultimately, and which does already, in measure, befriend the dissenting interest. They collect large auditories it is true; but they are very rarely composed of persons who leave our congregations. This is not the case however in the country. Their people are generally, and almost entirely, made up of persons who were always in the habit of going to the established places of worship, excepting some who attended nowhere. So far then we lose nothing by them. On the other hand, considerable numbers have been gained by their instrumentality, however contrary it may have been to their inclinations. As the situation of such clergymen is not determined by the choice of the people, it often falls out that, after they have labored in a place for a series of years, they are removed, and succeeded by others of a very different character. The consequence in almost all such cases is that *the people turn dissenters*. There may be some difference as to the operation of these causes between large cities and country towns and villages. On the removal of an evangelical clergyman from a parish church situated in the former, the people may not be under the like necessity to become dissenters as in the latter, seeing they can repair to others in the same city; and, where this is the case, they may be more likely to form a party, and keep up a kind of competition with the dissenters. But this is the case chiefly, if not entirely, in London, and a few other populous places. In the country, which includes the far greater proportion of dissenters, it is otherwise. I am acquainted with several dissenting churches, some of which have principally been raised, and others greatly increased, by persons coming from under what is termed evangelical preaching in the church of England.

Similar observations might be made on *the Wesleyan and other methodists*. It is rare that they gather materials at the expense of the dissenters. But as their hearers become truly religious, and begin to read and think for themselves, they are frequently known, either for the sake of better instruction or a purer discipline, to come off from their societies to ours. If I were in-

clined to act merely on the principles of a partizan (which God forbid I should) I would neither fret myself at their prosperity, nor use any under-hand means of persuasion to bring them over. There is no need of either: they will come of their own accord, if they are only treated by us as we wish to be treated by them; and the same might be said of the adherents of the evangelical clergy.

3. It may be difficult to ascertain, with any tolerable degree of precision, the increase or decrease of dissenters throughout the nation. I am not competent to decide upon the state of things respecting them, especially in the city of London. Of the country, however, that part of it in particular which falls under my own immediate observation, and still more of my own denomination, I think I can form a pretty accurate judgment. In the county where I reside, there are at this time, of one only of the three denominations of dissenters, twenty-four congregations. Twenty-five years ago, as far as my information extends, there were but seventeen. Three of these have since become extinct, but they consented to dissolve, and afterwards united with other dissenting congregations in the same towns: they are not lost therefore to the dissenting body. In their place ten new congregations have risen up. Respecting the other fourteen, I believe that none of them have, upon the whole, decreased, and seven of them have doubled, and some of them much more than doubled their number, during the above period.

I do not mention this as a specimen of the whole kingdom. It may not be so in all places. If it were, the increase of the dissenting interest would be very considerable; but I do suppose that nearly the same things might be said of several other counties, as well as of that where I reside. I cannot give a minute account of any of them, but I know of many new and large congregations in some neighboring counties. A respectable minister, of a different denomination from myself, who resides in one of them, lately assured me that he believed the number of dissenters in their county had within the last nine years increased a thousand.

4. If any estimate might be taken from the number of places of worship which have been raised within the last five-and-twenty years, I suppose there must be a considerable increase. It is true they have not all been new congregations, but a considerable number of them have. It is not by these as it is by an increase of buildings in general, in large cities and trading places. These may be accounted for without supposing an increasing population. An increase of wealth, though there should be no alteration as to the number of the people, will produce an increase of buildings. Add to this, that the

enclosing system having been carried to a greater extent during the present reign than in any former period, multitudes have been driven from the occupation of husbandry, and other employments dependent upon it, to settle in cities, or large trading and manufacturing towns; by means of which the buildings in those places are of course increased. I know of no causes which will equally account for the increase of places of worship, and therefore am inclined to think it implies an increase of the number of worshippers.

These are a few, and possibly but a few, of the mediums by which we may judge of the fact. Persons of more extensive information may perhaps add to their number, and throw additional light upon the subject. Yet, even from these alone, I am strongly inclined to think that *the dissenting interest, upon the whole, is not on the decline.*

#### PART THE SECOND.

In a former paper I offered a few reasons for doubting whether the dissenting interest be upon the whole in a state of decline. I admit, however, that some part of it is so; and the design of this paper is to inquire into the reasons or causes of it.

I have carefully looked over a sketch of a sermon on this subject which appeared in June last, and greatly approve many of the remarks of the worthy author. Indeed there is nothing in his performance but what I do approve, except his passing over matters of a doctrinal nature, and confining his recommendations merely to those of conduct. What I have therefore to offer may be considered as an addition to his remarks.

"I am not such an enemy to innovation," any more than your correspondent, "as to think every principle false which does not exactly accord with the creed of our forefathers; but can easily conceive that in the course of several years, in which this kingdom has been favored with the use of the sacred writings, some light may have been thrown upon some controverted points." Neither do I think that, because various points have been disputed since their time, we must needs be nearer the truth than they were; but, on the contrary, that it is very possible we may by such blasts as have been suffered to blow upon the church have moved in a degree from the purity of the gospel.

Though we have a right to deviate from our ancestors, provided we can prove them to have been in the wrong; yet, if the dissenting interest prospered in their hands, and has declined in ours, it affords a presumption, at least, that they were not in the wrong, and that a change of principle has been made to a disadvantage. It is a fact sufficiently notorious that the leading doctrines of the great body of the puritans and

nonconformists were,—the fall and depravity of human nature, the deity and atonement of Christ, justification by faith in his righteousness, and regeneration and sanctification by the agency of the Holy Spirit.—Now it is not for the sake of “retailing the calumnies of our enemies,” but from a serious concern for the welfare of the dissenting interest, that I ask, *Is it not a fact equally notorious that a large proportion of those dissenting congregations which are evidently in a state of declension have either deserted the foregoing doctrines, or hold communion with those who have?* I hope I need not repeat, what has so often been said by others, that there is something in these doctrines which interests the hearts and consciences of men, very differently from a mere harangue on the beauty, excellency, and advantages of virtue; or from any other kind of preaching where they are admitted.

What is the reason that the generality of the parish churches are so thinly attended? Is it any violation of Christian charity to answer, because the generality of the clergy do not preach the doctrine of the cross? There is nothing in their preaching that interests the hearts, or reaches the consciences of the people. They have “rejected the knowledge of God, and God hath rejected them from being priests to him.”—Hos. iv. 6. They are unconcerned about the souls of the people, and the people perceive it, and are not concerned to attend upon their ministry. The same causes will produce the same effects, whether out of the establishment or in it.

If we have rejected the *atonement* of Christ, it is not difficult to prove that we reject the doctrine of the cross, which is the grand doctrine that God hath blessed, and will bless, to the salvation of men. If we reject the *deity* of Christ, besides relinquishing the worship of him, which was manifestly a primitive practice, and withdrawing all well-founded *trust* in him for the salvation of our souls, we reject the only ground upon which an atonement can be supported, and, by resting all its efficacy upon divine appointment, render it “*possible* that the blood of bulls or of goats, or the ashes of a heifer, might have taken away sin.”—Heb. x. 4. If we reject the doctrine of “justification by faith” in the righteousness of Christ, we are on a footing with those Jews who “attained not to the law of righteousness, because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone.” And, if we reject the doctrine of *regeneration* and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, we need not expect him to set his seal to our labors.

There are some amongst us who do not reject these doctrines, but who nevertheless *hold Christian fellowship with those that do*; and this, if I mistake not, will tend greatly

to undermine their spiritual prosperity. Let no man be persecuted for his religious sentiments, not even an infidel or an atheist: but persecution is one thing, and declining to hold Christian communion with them is another. Socinians are more consistent than some who would be accounted moderate Calvinists. They plead for a separate communion; and a separate communion they ought to have. The ills which arise from a contrary practice are more than a few. If you admit into your communion, say four or five individuals, who reject the foregoing doctrines, you cannot, without appearing to insult those whom you have acknowledged as Christian brethren, dwell upon them in the ordinary course of your ministry. Generally speaking, there will be a bar to pulpit freedom; and you must either displease your friends, or hold the leading principles of the gospel as though you held them not.

I have no desire that any doctrine should be insisted upon in a litigious manner, or so as to supersede any other doctrine or duty of Christianity. But there are principles which ought to form the prominent feature of, I had almost said, all our discourses. It is a poor excuse for a Christian minister to make for his omitting in some way or other to introduce Christ, that *his subject did not lead to it*. There is not an important subject in divinity, either doctrinal or practical, but what bears an intimate relation to him. And I must say, if any of these important doctrines are withheld, as being of little importance, or because there are individuals in the congregation who disapprove of them, a blast will assuredly follow our labors.

Much has been said in favor of what is termed *liberality*, and enlargedness of heart: but perhaps it may not have occurred to some, that the Christian doctrine of enlargement differs widely from that which is generally inculcated in the present age. “O ye Corinthians,” says the apostle, “our mouth is open to you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompense in the same—be ye also enlarged.” And to what means does the apostle direct, for the accomplishment of so desirable an object? Does he desire them to extend their communion? Not so: but to contract it.—“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness, and what concord hath Christ with Belial, and what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?”—2 Cor. vi. 11—15.

This direction may to some persons appear highly paradoxical, yet it is founded in the reason and nature of things. For—(1) Christian enlargement depends upon “fellowship, communion, concord,” and a mutual participation of spiritual interests. If only a



single stranger enter into a society, there is at once a bar to freedom; and, if a number of them be admitted, a general silence, or what is next to silence, ensues. The company may be enlarged, but their communion is "straitened."—(2) A union in Christian fellowship with improper persons tends to impede the progress of good men in the divine life. It is, as the apostle supposes, like the "yoking" of a sprightly horse to a tardy ass: the latter will be certain to obstruct the activity and usefulness of the former.—(3) By such unions good men are frequently drawn into a sinful conformity to the world. The company we keep will ever have an influence upon our minds and affections, and will tend to transform us in a measure into the same likeness.

It may be objected that the apostle does not here forbid them to have fellowship with professed Christians of different sentiments, but with avowed unbelievers, or "infidels." This is true: but the general principle upon which he proceeds is applicable not merely to fellowship with professed unbelievers, but with nominal Christians of certain descriptions. This principle is, *that Christian enlargement is not accomplished by extending our connections, but by confining them to persons with whom we can have fellowship, communion, concord, and a mutual participation of spiritual interests.* There are few persons of serious reflection but who have seen and lamented the effects of a union between certain good men in the national establishment, and others of a very different character, with whom, on account of their continuing in the church, they are in the habit of associating. They are all professed Christians, and all unite together at the Lord's supper; but there is no more foundation for Christian fellowship than if the one were what they are, and the other avowed infidels. Some of these good men, it is true, withdraw from all intimate acquaintance with persons even in their own communion who do not discover a love to the gospel, and form their acquaintance amongst those who do: but others have been carried away and drawn into measures highly dishonorable to their Christian character, and injurious to their usefulness in the cause of God. Now the same reasoning will hold good out of the church as well as in it. If we form religious connections with persons in whom there is no proper foundation for "fellowship, communion, concord," and a mutual participation of spiritual interests, we in so doing become "straitened" rather than "enlarged."

Much has been said in favor of *unity of affection without a unity in principle.* But such affection, if it can exist, is very different from any thing inculcated by the gospel. Christian affection is "for the truth's sake that dwelleth in us." It does not appear to me, however, that it can exist.

From any thing that I have felt in myself, or observed in others, I cannot perceive any such thing as unity amongst men, except in proportion as they possess a congeniality of principles and pursuits. It is not possible in the nature of things that "two can walk together except they be agreed." They may not indeed be agreed in *all things*; but, so far as they disagree, so far there is a want of union; and the ground of affection between them is not those things wherein they are at variance, but those things wherein they are agreed. It argues great inattention to the human mind and its operations to suppose that there can be affection, unless it can be merely that of good-will, where there is no agreement. Those who plead for such affection are as much united in society by agreement in sentiment as other people, only *that* sentiment may be of a different kind. They may set aside an agreement in the great principles of the gospel as a ground of union, but they are certain to substitute something else in their place. They have their fundamentals and circumstantials as well as other people. Whatever things they are which deeply interest the mind, whether they be things evangelical or things political, things which relate to doctrine or things which affect the order, form, and discipline of the church, these are our fundamentals, and in these we shall ever require an agreement, while other things are dispensed with as matters of less importance.

I am a dissenter, and a rigid regard to Christ's kingly authority is in my esteem a sacred thing. For all the honors and emoluments in the establishment, I would not pollute my conscience by subscribing to its common prayer, or conforming to its unscriptural ceremonies. Yet I do not consider my dissent as the chief thing in religion. So to consider it would in my judgment be making it an idol; and, if this were general, the dissenting interest would cease to be the interest of Christ. But I am persuaded that at present this is not the case. May those things which are amiss amongst us be the objects of our attention, that we may not only repent, and do our first works, but strengthen the things which remain, and which are ready to die.

#### AGREEMENT IN SENTIMENT THE BOND OF CHRISTIAN UNION.

[Letter to the Rev. Samuel Palmer of Hackney, in 1796.]

I HAVE no partiality, certainly, for the established church. I believe it will come down, because it is inimical to the kingdom of Christ: yet I respect many churchmen, and shall not refuse preaching in their pulpits, provided I may go on in my own way.

Mr. Eyre pressed me to preach for him; and, by complying with his request, I materially served the mission.

As to *dissenters*, I consider a dissent from the church of England, or any other church, as affording no proper ground of religious union. The thing itself is merely negative. As dissenters we are not necessarily united in any thing, except that *we do not approve of the church establishment*. We may be enemies to the government of God, and the gospel of Christ; yea, we may be avowed infidels, and yet hold this. I therefore have no notion of throwing what little weight I may possess into the dissenting scale, merely *as such*; though, if other things were equal, I should certainly do so. These remarks have no respect to my conduct at Hackney, but are in answer to what you say on that subject in general.

The doubts which I expressed respecting your sentiments arose from no one's insinuations, but from reading a pamphlet which you published some years ago. It may now be fourteen years since I read it; but I then thought it too much in favor of indifference to what I esteemed important truth. Since then, you know, we have conversed together; and, from the whole, I was inclined to hope that your regard to what I accounted evangelical sentiments was greater than I had supposed it to be. And the general approbation which you have since bestowed upon my Letters on Socinianism left me no reason to doubt that, whatever might be your speculations on the modus of the divine subsistence, you did not reject either the atonement of Christ or his proper divinity. If I had reason to believe of any man that he did not call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, or rely upon his atoning sacrifice for acceptance with God, I could not acknowledge him as a Christian brother, or pay him any respect in a religious way. But, by whomsoever these great truths are cordially admitted, I trust it will ever be the desire of my heart to pray on their behalf with the apostle, Grace and peace be with them!

Now, however, you inform me that you "*reject no doctrine from any dislike to it.*" But, if I were satisfied that the worship of Christ is idolatry, I think I ought to reject it with abhorrence. I imagine however you mean that, supposing you are mistaken in any of these matters, it is not from any bias of heart, but from mere mistake. I own that I dare not say so respecting any mistakes of which I may be the subject. I reckon that such is the perspicuity of God's word that if I err on any important truth, or precept, it must be owing to some evil bias to which I am subject, though I am unhappily blinded to it.

You have "no precise ideas of the person of Christ, and you suppose that I have none." We may neither of us fully com-

prehend that mysterious subject; yet you will admit that there is a material difference between the ideas of one who calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus and one who does not, but considers him as merely a fellow creature.

You "despise the man who cannot maintain a brotherly connection with another, because he thinks for himself." I wish every man to think for himself, and also to act for himself; but if in the exercise of this right he thinks the Son of God an impostor, and his doctrine a lie, or lives in the violation of his commands, I think myself not only entitled, but bound, to withhold all brotherly connection with him of a religious nature; not because he thinks or acts *for himself*, but because in my judgment (and *my* judgment must be the rule of *my* conduct) he thinks and acts *wrong*. We may think and act for ourselves, and yet do both in such a way as shall subject us to the just abhorrence of every friend of truth and righteousness. The worst of beings thinks for himself: "when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh *of his own*."

You "do not desire the friendship of any one who makes a similarity of opinion the condition of it." I am not fond of calling the great articles of my faith "opinions." Faith and opinion are different things. If you mean *sentiment*, I acknowledge I *do* desire the friendship of many who make a similarity in the one the condition of the other, and am willing they should ask me any question they think proper concerning my faith. Nay, I may say farther, I wish to be on terms of religious friendship with no man, unless he be a friend to what I consider the first principles of the oracles of God. Nor can I persuade myself that you, notwithstanding your strong language, will "despise" me on that account. If it be so, however, I must bear it as well as I can.

Christian love appears to me to be, "for the truth's sake that dwelleth in us." Every kind of union that has not truth for its bond is of no value in the sight of God, and ought to be of none in ours.

You tell me, there are "those who consider *me* as unsound in other doctrines, but this does not diminish your regard for me." Perhaps not: it were rather singular to suppose it should. You have too much good sense, sir, to disregard me for what *other people think of me*. But, if you *yourself* thought me unsound, you would; or at least, I should say, you ought; and perhaps it may make you smile if I add, I should think the worse of you if you did not. As to *others*, who may think me unsound, I imagine they do not as such regard me; nay, I hope for their sakes that so far they disregard me. I may think they misjudge me, and may wish to set them right. I may think ill of their sentiments, as they do of mine; but, while they

judge me unsound, I neither expect nor desire their approbation. I had rather they should disesteem me than pretend to esteem me in a religious way, irrespective of my religious principles. All the esteem that I desire of you, sir, or of any man, towards me, is for the truth that in your judgment dwelleth in me, and operateth in a way of righteousness.

I have heard a great deal of *union without sentiment*; but I can neither feel nor perceive any such thing, either in myself or others. All the union that I can feel or perceive arises from a *similarity of views and pursuits*. No two persons may think exactly alike; but, so far as they are unlike, so far there is a want of union. We are united to God himself by becoming of one mind and one heart with him. Consider the force and design of Amos iii. 3, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" You might live neighborly with Dr. Priestley, but you would not feel so united with him in heart as if he had been of your sentiments, nor he with you as if you had been of his. You may esteem a churchman, if he agree with you in doctrine, and be of an amiable disposition; but you would feel much more united with him if in addition to this he were a dissenter. You may regard some men who are rigid Calvinists, on some considerations; but you would regard them more if they were what you account more liberal in their views, and more moderate towards others who differ from them; that is, if they were of your *mind* upon the doctrine of Christian forbearance.

Men of one age may have quarrelled about religious differences and have persecuted one another, as papists and protestants have done in France; and the same descriptions of men in another age may despise these litigations, as the French have lately done, and not care at all whether a man be papist or protestant, provided he enters heartily into revolutionary principles. But all this arises from their having substituted the importance of an agreement in a political creed in the place of one that is religious. Agreement in sentiment and pursuit is still the bond of union.—Even those who unite in church fellowship upon the principle of what they term *free inquiry*, or universal toleration, are in *that* principle agreed: and this is the bond of their union. They consider this as the all in all, and consent to exercise forbearance towards each other in every thing else. Such a communion, I confess, appears to be just as scriptural and as rational as if a number of persons should agree to worship together, but consent that every one should be at liberty to act as he thought proper, and so admit the universal toleration of every species of immorality. Nevertheless, even here,

a similarity of sentiments would be the bond of union.

You can unite with men "who are not exactly of your sentiments."—So can I—But that in which I unite with them is not any thing in which sentiment has no concern. It is *that wherein we are agreed* that is the bond of our union; and those things wherein we differ are considered as objects of *forbearance*, on account of human imperfection. Such forbearance ought undoubtedly to be exercised in a degree, especially in things which both sides must admit to be not clearly revealed, which are properly called opinions, and are little other than mere speculations. And, even in things which in our judgment are clearly revealed, there ought to be a degree of forbearance; much in the same way as we forbear with each other's imperfections of a practical nature, where the essential principles of morality are not affected.

You are "not a party man, and hope you never shall be, to please any set of people whatever." I hope so too; but I wish inflexibly to adhere to the side of truth and righteousness, so far as I understand them, in every punctilio, in order to please God.

"A decided judgment on some points," you consider as "unimportant, and think there is room for mutual candor." If those points are unrevealed, I say so too; but I do not consider either the deity or the atonement of Christ as coming under this description, and I hope you think the same. Without the former, we cannot with any consistency call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, which is the characteristic of a primitive believer; and without the latter, I need not say to you, sir, that the gospel is rendered of none effect. As to "candor," it is due to all men, even infidels and atheists; but candor will not lead me to treat them as objects of divine favor, but to speak the truth to them in love.

Possibly you may think it unfair to reason as I have done from practices to principles, and that we ought to make a wide difference between the one and the other. But the difference, as it appears to me, is only as the difference between root and branch. Faith is not a mere speculation of the understanding, nor unbelief a mere mistake in judgment. They are both of a moral nature, or salvation would not be connected with the former and final condemnation with the latter.

I ought perhaps to apologize for having written so much, in the manner I have done; but I think you will not take it amiss. The collision of thoughts from persons who have been in different habits and connections is sometimes of mutual advantage. If you should disapprove of my remarks, try and set me right, and you will be entitled to my grateful acknowledgments.



## ON ORDINATION.

## RE-ORDINATION, AND THE LAYING ON OF HANDS.

[To the Editor of the Biblical Magazine.]

It having been the practice of some dissenting ministers to receive ordination but once, it became a question at a meeting lately held in the country whether a pastor removing to another church should be re-ordained. The ministers about to engage in such a service, considering ordination not as a designation to the work of the ministry (of which they find no examples in the New Testament,) but as a solemn appointment to office in a Christian church, were of opinion that a previous ordination had no influence on an appointment to office in another church. They allowed that re-ordination is unprecedented in the New Testament; and so also is the removal of a pastor from one church to another: if the latter were found, they supposed the former would accompany it.

Some conversation took place at the same meeting also on the scriptural ground, for the laying on of hands in ordination. In favor of this practice it was alleged—1. That it appears to have been used in all ages of the church, where persons were set apart to sacred work.—Numb. xxvii. 18—20. That though often connected with the communication of extraordinary gifts, yet it was not always so. It is not certain that it was for this purpose that hands were laid upon the seven deacons of the church at Jerusalem (Acts vi. 6;) and it is certain that when the church at Antioch laid hands on Saul and Barnabas (Acts xiii. 3) it was not for this purpose, seeing they were possessed of extraordinary gifts already. In this case, they were ordinary persons who laid hands upon the extraordinary.—3. That when the laying on of hands was accompanied with the conferring of extraordinary gifts, it is doubtful whether they were imposed for that specific purpose only.—See Acts viii. 17—19, xix. 5, 6. 4. That ordination is expressed by laying on of hands: "Lay hands suddenly on no man," &c. But that which is used to express or describe a practice, would seem to be an important if not an essential part of it.

Two of your correspondents have honored me with their remarks on the above hints on ordination. If I add a few more, it is with no design to enter into any thing like contention on the subject. "Mr. Howe" was a great and good man; and, while he considered ordination as a designation to the Christian ministry, it is no wonder he should answer as he did. But I see no evi-

dence deducible from Acts xiv. 23 that this is the scriptural idea of it. Paul and his companions, having formed these believers into Christian churches, proceeded to organize them with proper officers. These elders or presbyters who were ordained by the suffrage of the churches were officers in those churches, and not merely Christian ministers appointed to preach the gospel wherever a door might be opened. Your correspondent C. speaks of "other passages which he forbears to quote." If he can produce an instance of ordination being a designation to the Christian ministry as such, his argument will be established, but not else.

Candor requires me to acknowledge, in reply to *Amicus*, that from what he has remarked on Acts xiii. 3, I suspect myself to have been under a mistake in supposing that the laying on of hands in that instance was by the church. My reason for thinking so was that the exercises of fasting and prayer were not likely to be confined to the prophets and teachers, and therefore not that of laying on of hands; but upon a review of the subject I incline to think that the latter was done by the prophets and teachers in the name of the church. The point however which was there attempted to be proved is not affected by this mistake. This was, that the laying on of hands was not always for the purpose of conveying extraordinary gifts; but, whoever they were that laid hands on Barnabas and Saul, it could not be for this purpose, since it is pretty evident that they were possessed of them before. I may add, I do not consider this as an instance of ordination, but of the designation of two Christian missionaries to the gentiles.

*Amicus* speaks of "Saul not being yet ordained an apostle." Surely he is here greatly beside the mark. Is not an apostle one immediately sent of Christ without any human authority? Did not Saul receive ordination to that office at the time of his conversion?—See Acts xxvi. 16—18, compared with Gal. i. 1, 12—17, and 1 Cor. xi. 1.

With respect to the general question on what grounds the practice of ordination rests among congregational churches, and wherein the essence of it consists, I am not prepared to enter into "a complete investigation of the subject;" a close examination of the Acts and the epistles with this point in view might possibly correct some of my ideas. At present I can only offer a few brief hints.

Viewing the subject as I do, namely, as a designation of a person to an office in a Christian church, I find that in such cases the church made the election, and the apostles and other elders set him apart with prayer (as I suppose) and the laying on of hands.—Acts vi. 3; xiv. 23. Titus i. 5. Such is the general ground of my practice

when I engage in an ordination. In doing this, I claim not to be a successor of the apostles, any otherwise than as every faithful pastor is such : nor pretend to constitute the party ordained a Christian minister, for this he was as being a *teacher* antecedent to his being ordained a pastor ; nor to impart power or "authority to administer gospel ordinances." It appears to me that every approved teacher of God's word, whether ordained the pastor of a particular church or not, is authorised to *baptize* ; and with respect to the *Lord's supper*, though I should think it disorderly for a young man who is only a probationer, and not an ordained pastor, to administer that ordinance, yet I see nothing objectionable, if, when a church is destitute of a pastor, it were administered by a deacon or an aged brother ; I know of no scriptural authority for confining it to ministers. Nay, I do not recollect any mention in the Scriptures of a minister being employed in it, unless we reckon our Lord one. I do not question but that the primitive pastors, whose office it was to preside in all spiritual affairs, *did* administer that ordinance as well as receive and exclude members ; but, as a church when destitute of a pastor is competent to appoint a deacon or aged brother to officiate in these cases, I know of no reason to be gathered from the Scriptures why they should not be the same in the other.

The only end for which I join in an ordination is to unite with the elders of that and other churches in *expressing my brotherly concurrence in the election, which, if it fell on what I accounted an unsound or unworthy character, I should withhold.* Though churches are so far independent of each other as that no one has a right to interfere in the concerns of another without their consent, unless it be as we all have a right to exhort and admonish one another, yet there is a common union required to subsist between them, for the good of the whole : and, so far as the ordination of a pastor affects this common or general interest, it is fit that there should be a general concurrence in it. It was on this principle, I conceive, rather than as an exercise of authority, that the apostles, whose office was general, took the lead in the primitive ordinations. When the churches increased, they appointed such men as Timothy and Titus to do what they would have done themselves, had they been present ; and, when all extraordinary officers ceased, the same *general* object would be answered by the concurrence of the elders of the surrounding churches. Though the apostles and other extraordinary officers in the church had an *authority* which no ordinary pastor, or company of pastors, possess ; yet in many things *they did no more than what would be lawful for others to do, if they could and would do it.* If they planted

churches, set them in order, and ordained elders over them, it was not because the same things would not have been *valid* if done without them, but because they would not have *been done.* Let but churches be planted, set in order, and scripturally organized ; and whether it be by apostles, evangelists, or ordinary pastors, all is good and acceptable to Christ. Paul left Timothy at Ephesus that he might "charge some that they taught no other doctrine." But if the Ephesian teachers had been of themselves attached to the truth, neither Paul nor Timothy would have been offended for their interference being rendered unnecessary. Titus was left in Crete, "to set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city:" but if things were but set in order, and proper elders ordained in the churches of Crete, it were no matter whether Paul the apostle, Titus the evangelist, or the wisest of their own elders, take the lead in it. Let them but have had wisdom and virtue enough in the island to have accomplished these ends, and Paul would have "rejoiced in beholding their order, and the steadfastness of their faith in Christ."

#### VALIDITY OF LAY ORDINATION.

WHILE I was at Aberdeen, I was waited upon by a deputation, consisting of the pastor, a deacon, and another member of a little baptist church, lately formed at New Byth, near Old Deer, Aberdeenshire. A baptist minister, now in Norfolk, was the episcopal minister at Old Deer, till the year 1799. At that time his views were altered concerning baptism : and he went to London, and was baptized by Mr. Booth. Soon after a baptist church of ten members, out of his former congregation, was formed in the neighborhood. The church then proceeded to choose one of their members to be their pastor ; and on March 26, 1803, they set him apart to that office by prayer. Some of the members however were not satisfied as to the validity of his ordination, seeing there were no pastor or pastors from other churches present to join in it. A few of them had communed together at the Lord's table ; but the rest stood aloof, merely on this account. Their errand to me was to request my judgment on the validity of his ordination ; and, if I thought it invalid, that I would come and ordain him.

I told them, if there had been any other pastors of churches within their reach, it would have been proper to request their concurrence and assistance ; and that, if I had been there at the time, I should have had no objection to join in prayer, and in the laying on of hands. But, as things were, I could not see how they could have acted otherwise than they had done. And, as to my now ordaining him, I could do no such

thing; partly because it would imply that I thought him not as yet their pastor, which was not true; and partly because it would convey an idea of my having to impart to another minister some power or authority, of which I had no conception. My advice was that they should all be satisfied with what was done.

#### ADMINISTERING THE LORD'S SUPPER WITHOUT ORDINATION.

[Address to a young Minister.]

RELATIVE TO YOUR question, I must say, it appears to me very wrong to administer the Lord's supper without ordination, as it goes to render void that ordinance. Ordination of elders, in every church, was a practice of the first churches (Acts xiv. 23,) and we should not make light of it. It is calculated to keep out unworthy characters from the churches.

There was a Mr. ———, that would have settled at ———, if we, as ministers, would have been at his ordination; but we knew the man to be of a bad character, and refused it. The consequence was, he stopped awhile, and then left, and went into ———, where he made great havock of some of their churches.

Ordination seems originally intended for guarding against bad characters (1 Tim. v. 22;) I have, therefore, been much concerned to see the practice of administering the Lord's supper obtain prior to it; which tends to set it aside; and will, I am persuaded, be a source of many mischiefs in the churches.

I am told of a very respectable church, which has lately fallen a prey to a designing man, whom they have ordained. As none of the neighboring ministers would attend, they determined to do without them. The consequence, I doubt not, will be mischiefs incalculable.—I do not suppose these would occur in your case; but you should not make light of an ordinance of Christ, and which, in other cases, may be of great importance.

#### ADMINISTERING THE LORD'S SUPPER WITHOUT A MINISTER.\*

[Substance of the reply given (in 1805) to a baptist church in Edinburgh, who, being destitute of a pastor, had communicated at the Lord's table without the assistance of a minister, and requested the author's opinion of the validity of their practice.]

I TOLD them that probably there were few of my brethren who might be of my mind; but I had long been of opinion that there

\* Though this article has no immediate connection with the subject of ordination, its insertion here is deemed advisable from its relation to the topic of the preceding piece, and its amplification of a sentiment expressed in p. 660.—Ed.

was no scriptural authority for confining the administration of the Lord's supper to a minister. I had no doubt but that the primitive pastors *did* preside at the Lord's table, as well as in the reception and exclusion of members, and in short in all the proceedings of the church; and that, where there was a pastor, it was proper that he should continue to do so. But that when a pastor died, or was removed, the church was not obliged to desist from commemorating the Lord's death any more than from receiving or excluding members; and that it was as lawful for them to appoint a deacon, or any senior member, to preside in the one case as in the other.

Neither did I recollect that any minister is said to have administered the Lord's supper, unless we consider our Saviour as sustaining that character at the time of its institution; and this silence of the Scriptures concerning the administrator appeared to me to prove that it was a matter of indifference.—Finally, I told them that it was not the practice of our English churches; that they, many of them, would send for the pastors of other churches to perform this office; and that I for one had often complied with such requests. I could wish however it were otherwise, and that every church, when destitute of a pastor would attend to the Lord's supper *among themselves*.

It is the practice of this and all the baptist churches in Scotland to commemorate the Lord's death *every* Lord's day. I do not think this to be *binding*, but am persuaded there can be nothing wrong in it, and that *probably* it was the practice of the primitive churches.

#### COUNSELS TO A YOUNG MINISTER IN PROSPECT OF ORDINATION.

Kettering, Aug. 30, 1810.

My dear Friend,

As it is very doubtful whether I shall be able to attend your ordination, you will allow me to fill up the sheet with brotherly counsel.

You are about to enter, my brother, on the solemn work of a pastor; and I heartily wish you God speed. I have seldom engaged in an ordination of late in which I have had to address a younger brother, without thinking of the apostle's words in 2 Tim. iv. 5, 6, in reference to myself and others, who are going off the stage.—“Make full proof of *thy* ministry: for I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand!” Your charge at present is small; but, if God bless you, it may be expected to increase, and of course your labors and cares will increase with it. If you would preserve spirituality, purity, peace, and good order in the church, you must live near to God yourself, and be diligent to feed the flock of God with evangelical truth. Without these, nothing good



will be done. Love your brethren, and be familiar with them; not, however, with that kind of familiarity which breeds disrespect by which some have degraded themselves in the eyes of the people, and invited the opposition of the contentious part of them; but that which will endear your fellowship, and render all your meetings a delight. Never avail yourself of your independence of the people in respect of support to carry matters with a high hand amongst them. Teach them so to conduct themselves as a church, that, if you were to die, they might continue a wise, holy, and understanding people. The great secret of ruling a church is to convince them that you love them, and say and do every thing for their good. Love, however, requires to be mingled with faithfulness, as well as faithfulness with love. Expect to find defects and faults in your members, and give them to expect free and faithful dealing while connected with you: allow them, also, to be free and faithful towards you in return. There will be many faults which they should be taught and encouraged to correct in one another; others will be proper subjects of pastoral admonition; and some must be brought before the church. But do not degrade the dignity of a church by employing it to sit in judgment on the shape of a cap, or a bonnet; or on squabbles between individuals, which had better be healed by the interposition of a common friend. The church should be taught, like a regiment of soldiers, to attend to discipline, when called to it, in a proper spirit: not with ebullitions of anger against an offender, but with fear and trembling, considering themselves, lest they also be tempted. Let no one say to another, Overlook my fault to-day, and I will overlook yours to-morrow;—but, rather, Deal faithfully with me to-day, and I will deal faithfully with you to-morrow.

I have always found it good to have an understanding with the deacons upon every case before it is brought before the church. Neither they nor the members have always been of my opinion; and where this has been the case I have not attempted to carry a measure against them, but have yielded, and this not merely from prudence, but as knowing that others have understanding as well as I, and may therefore be in the right. In this way I have been pastor of the church which I now serve for nearly thirty years, without a single difference.

A young man, in your circumstances, will have an advantage in beginning a church on a small scale. It will be like cultivating a garden before you undertake a field. You may also form them in many respects to your own mind; but, if your mind be not the mind of Christ, it will, after all, be of no use. Labor to form them after Christ's mind, and

you will find your own peace and happiness in it.

Mercy and truth attend you and the partner of your cares!

I am, &c.

A. FULLER.

#### ON THE APOSTOLIC OFFICE.

EUBULUS, in what he has written upon the apostolic office, having expressed a wish for the subject to be examined, I take the liberty of suggesting a few hints to his consideration.

Allowing the word *apostle* to signify a *missionary*, it does not seem to follow that calling an ordinary preacher, who is sent to publish the gospel among the heathen, by the latter name, is improper or "unscriptural."

The word *διακονια*, which is used of the office of a *deacon*, signifies to minister to the wants of others, or to serve. A deacon was a servant; but it does not follow that the application of the word servant to other persons as well as deacons is improper or unscriptural. A deacon was a servant of a *particular kind*; and such is the idea which the word conveys; but the term servant is more generic, and therefore is properly applied to persons who serve in other capacities as well as this. Every deacon was a servant, but every servant was not a deacon.

It should seem that the same may be said of *αποστολος*, the term used to express the office of an apostle. It signifies a *messenger* or *missionary*; but it does not follow that the application of either of these terms to other persons as well as apostles is improper or unscriptural. An apostle was a messenger, or missionary, of a *particular kind*; and such is the idea which the word conveys; but the terms *messenger* and *missionary* are more generic, and therefore are properly applied to any persons who are sent with a message to a distance. Every apostle was a messenger and a missionary, but every messenger and missionary was not an apostle. Epaphroditus was the *αποστολος*, or messenger, of the Philippians to Paul (Phil. ii. 25); and those who are called in our translation "the messengers of the churches" (2 Cor. viii. 23) are denominated by the same name, *αποστολοι*. The word also that is used for the sending out of ordinary preachers of the gospel among the heathen, properly means to *send on a mission*; and is the same (with only the difference of the verb and the noun) as that which is rendered *an apostle*. "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, *αποσταλασι*, they be sent? —Rom. x. 15.

Upon the whole, I hope EUBULUS will reconsider his censure of the translators, for naturalizing the term *αποστολοι*, when applied to those messengers immediately commissioned by Christ, by rendering it *apostles*, rather than translating it *messengers* or *missionaries*. The naturalization complained of resembles, in this instance at least, that of the common name by which we denominate the holy Scriptures, calling them *the Bible*, from *βιβλος*, *the book*. To have translated this, and called it *the book*, would not have distinguished it from certain *parts* of it, which also bear that name.—Matt. i. 1. But to call it *the Bible* suggests the very idea required; that is, the book by way of eminence, the book of books. So *αποστολοι*, if translated messengers, or missionaries, would not have distinguished the twelve disciples from other messengers, or missionaries; but, rendered *apostles*, it conveys the true idea; namely, that of messengers of an *extraordinary kind*, or messengers *by way of eminence*.

#### ON TERMS OF COMMUNION.

##### REMARKS ON INFANT BAPTISM AND INFANT COMMUNION.

[In reply to some papers written by the Rev. S. Newton, of Norwich.]

THE piece by "An Old Congregationalist" seems to invite an answer from both baptists and pædobaptists. If the following remarks be acceptable on behalf of the former they are at your service.

Whether or not I can convince your respectable correspondent (with whom, if I am not mistaken, I have some acquaintance) I hope he will allow what I advance to be "friendly," and as free from "the air of angry controversy" as he can desire.

That the plea for infant communion is equally valid with that of infant baptism you will not expect me to dispute. If I could be convinced of the one, I see no reason why I should scruple the other. If one of your pædobaptist correspondents should think proper to answer in behalf of his brethren, it will belong to him to point out the grounds for admitting the former while he rejects the latter. My share of the answer is merely to notice the arguments for infant communion taken from the Scriptures, or from other acknowledged duties.

We are accused at the outset of having, "without a divine precept, separated the children of believers from the church of God." To this I answer—1. Allowing them to have been in the church under the Old Testament, it does not follow that they should be members of churches under the New Testament. "A Congregationalist"

must admit of a very material difference in the constitution of the church under these different dispensations; so material as that the laws of admission to the one are no rule by which to judge of the other. If he will not, however, he must consider as members of the church, not only his own children, but all that are born in his house, or bought with his money. Or, if he refuse this consequence, he brings upon himself his own charge, of separating the poor servants from the church of God, without a divine precept. Should he in this case allege that there is no precept or example in the New Testament for admitting them, he would furnish an answer which is no less applicable to the other.—2. But, before the charge of separating the children of believers from the church of God had been preferred, it should have been *proved* that they, *as such, were ever in it*. Unless the whole Israelitish nation were believers, it could not be as the children of believers that their descendants were admitted to divine ordinances. If "the habits and practices of the Jews" prove any thing, they will prove too much, at least for a "Congregationalist." They will not only require the admission of servants born in the house, or bought with money, but the very constitution of the church must be national. Their children and servants must not only be admitted in infancy, but continue in full communion when adults, though there should be no proof of their being any other than graceless characters.

But we agree, it is said, "to take our children to family and public worship; to teach them to read the Bible with seriousness and attention, instruct them in catechisms and in private prayer; for all which they have no more understanding than for the Lord's supper." It is not however for want of *understanding* that we object to it, but the want of Scripture precept or example. If God had required it, or the first churches practised it, we should think ourselves as much obliged to bring our children to the Lord's supper as the Israelites were to bring theirs to the passover. It appears to me that great mistakes have arisen from confounding *moral obligations* with *positive institutes*. The former are binding on all mankind, and therefore require to be inculcated on every one within the reach of our influence: the latter are limited to a part of mankind, usually described in the institutions themselves. The one being founded in our relation to God and one another, and approving themselves to the conscience, require neither precept nor precedent, but merely a general principle which shall comprehend them; the other, having their origin merely in the sovereign will of God, require a punctilious adherence to what is revealed concerning



them. While we engage in what is purely moral, and what is therefore right for every one to engage in, we incur no relative guilt, whatever be the motives or even the manifest characters of those who unite with us, any more than in contributing with an irreligious man to the relief of the poor: but in what is positive, if the parties with whom we unite be virtually excluded by the institution, we are accessory to their doing what, in their present state of mind, they have no right to do. For want of attending to this plain distinction, some have gone so far as to refuse to engage in public prayer in a promiscuous assembly, and even to join in family worship, if any were present whom they accounted unbelievers. Proceeding on the same principle, the "Congregationalist" appears to me to err in the opposite extreme; arguing from our joining in what is right for all men that we ought to join in what the Scriptures limit to certain characters.

The appeal is next made to the New Testament. Here it becomes us to be all attention. "Were not the first churches composed of households?" That there were some households in them is clear; and we have some in many of our churches. But why did not the "Congregationalist" *prove* that some of them at least were infants? If he could have done this, all his other arguments might have been spared. It might indeed be supposed that households will ordinarily consist of some of this description; and, if we were not given to understand the contrary in these instances, the presumption might appear in favor of this supposition. But it so happens that each of these households appears from the Scripture accounts to have been composed of believers.—Acts xvi. 34—40. 1 Cor. i. 16; xvi. 15.

"Were not parents told, if they believed, they and their *house* should be saved?" The head of one family was thus addressed: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." But surely the meaning of this is that, if he and his house believed, they should all be saved. If Paul and Silas meant to say his house should be saved, though *he only* believed, why is it added in the next verse, "And they spoke unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house?" The pharisees seemed desirous of establishing their claim on the ground of having Abraham to their father: but John the baptist did not allow of it, but intimated that the axe was now laid to the root of the tree, and that every tree which brought not forth good fruit should be hewn down and cast into the fire. Who would have thought that "An Old Congregationalist" could have pleaded, not merely for the admission of children to Christian ordinances in virtue of the faith of

their parents, but for their being actually *saved*? I have heard of certain professors of religion in the fens of Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire who hold this opinion with great earnestness, and who on the ground of their forefathers' faith rest assured of salvation, whatever be their own characters; but I should not have expected such a notion to have found an advocate in your worthy correspondent.

"Is there an instance of an adult descendant of a believer that was admitted into the church throughout the whole of the New Testament?" Yes, several. All the households before mentioned were adults, and some of them were doubtless descendants from the heads of those families. But I suppose your correspondent means there is no instance of their being admitted *at a distance of time after their parents*; and this I believe is true. But it is equally true that there is no instance of a wife, a husband, or a child, being *converted after their partners or their parents*; cases which nevertheless, no doubt, frequently occurred. The truth is, the New Testament is a history of the first planting of the church, and not of its progress. If such evidence as this amounts to "a moral certainty" that children were received into the church with their parents, I am at a loss what to denominate uncertainty.

The Scriptures inculcate a strict and holy discipline, both in the church and in the family; and I cannot but consider it as a strong presumption against the practice for which your correspondent pleads that the command to "bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" is addressed not to ministers or churches, but to *parents*. Nor is there, that I recollect, in all that is said in the apostolic epistles, to parents or children, a word which implies the latter to have stood in the relation of church members.

There is some ingenuity in what is said in answer to *objections*; and if moral and positive duties must be confounded, and we are driven to reason from analogy on the one as well as the other, there may be some force in it. But, if positive institutes require Scripture precept or example, the want of these must needs be the grand, and, I suspect, the insurmountable objection.

STRICTURES ON THE REV. JOHN CARTER'S  
"THOUGHTS ON BAPTISM AND MIXED COMMUNION, IN THREE LETTERS TO A FRIEND; IN WHICH SOME ANIMADVERSIONS ARE MADE ON THE REV. ABRAHAM BOOTH'S APOLOGY."

THE "Pædobaptist" addresses his pamphlet to a baptist. The first letter gives the author's reasons for his own practice. The two others are in favor of a mixed communion between baptists and pædobaptists at



the Lord's table. We pass over that part of his piece which relates merely to baptism, with only observing that the author in pleading for sprinkling is not so convinced of it as to think his own side "exclusively right." In the second and third letters, where he pleads for mixed communion, it is observable too that he admits the principle of the strict baptists; namely, *that baptism is an indispensable prerequisite to fellowship at the Lord's table.* But he thinks that each may acknowledge the validity of the other's baptism, and endeavors to persuade his correspondent that he ought not, unless he can establish his claim to infallibility, to consider himself as *exclusively* right; that is, he would have him allow that those who have been sprinkled in infancy are baptized, though it may be in his judgment not in so scriptural a manner as himself. He censures Mr. Booth with some severity for assuming in his "Apology" that pædobaptists are *unbaptized*, and that their thinking themselves otherwise is a *false persuasion.* Finally, he disclaims any dominion over the faith of the baptists, and thinks the baptists ought to claim none over his.

To the above reasoning we suppose a strict baptist, it may be his correspondent, would answer nearly as follows: I feel obliged to you, dear sir, for your kindly inviting me and my brethren to unite with you in commemorating the death of our common Lord. I give you full credit for the brotherly affection by which you are influenced, and should be happy if this wall of separation could be removed, without our dispensing with an ordinance of Christ. As the ground of our union, you propose to me a principle which, if it could be admitted, would, I acknowledge, accomplish the end. But do you not perceive that, in admitting it, I must relinquish not merely my practice of strict communion, but my principles as a *baptist*, or if you please as an *antipædobaptist*, and either refuse to baptize any in future who have been sprinkled in their infancy, which the far greater part have been, or, when I do so, be guilty of *re-baptizing* them and thus become in reality, what I have hitherto disowned with abhorrence, an *anabaptist.*

In your last letter you say, "It is certainly just and right that each should act upon his own principles." And no doubt if a union were accomplished it must proceed on this ground. But your second and third letters require us to relinquish what is essential to our being *antipædobaptists*, and insist, as I just now said, on our either giving up the practice of baptizing those who have been sprinkled in their infancy, or becoming avowed *anabaptists.* If indeed our principles as *antipædobaptists* be unscriptural, they ought to be relinquished: but I do not perceive, from any thing you have advanced, that they are so: and, in pleading for mix-

ed communion, it is not your professed object to prove them so.

I make no pretence to being *infallibly* right, neither do you, I dare say, in any of your religious sentiments; yet there are many things in which you certainly consider yourself, and those of your mind, as *exclusively* so. In the same light I consider my views of baptism. You express astonishment and offence at Mr. Booth's saying that *in our judgment* you are unbaptized. But I am no less astonished that you who have known so much of us should yet have to learn that it is not possible for a baptist to consider you in any other light. The moment he does so he ceases to be a baptist. Yes, sir, in *our* judgment you are unbaptized; and our judgment must decide our practice. You have doubtless a right to judge for yourselves, and far be it from us to wish to deprive you of any part of that inalienable privilege; but in a question of communion, in every thing necessary to it, *which you allow baptism to be,* our judgment and yours must coincide.

If Mr. Booth had been reasoning with *you*, he would not have taken it for granted that you were baptized. But, when reasoning with the *baptists*, he had a right to do so; nor is there any cause for you to be offended at it. There would be an end of argumentation, if what is allowed on both sides of a controversy to be false may not be called so.

Admitting the validity of our baptism, you are willing to receive us to communion: while we cannot admit the validity of yours, and so cannot consent to commune with you. This you seem to think hard, and consider our conduct as claiming dominion over your faith. But on what ground is it that you admit the validity of our baptism? Is it merely because *we think* ourselves baptized? No; we are baptized in *your judgment*, as well as in our own. In receiving us, therefore, you are not obliged to act contrary to your principles. But the case is otherwise with us. We verily believe you to be unbaptized, not merely as being only sprinkled, but as receiving it at a time when you could not actively "put on Christ," which "as many as were baptized" in primitive ages did.—Gal. iii. 27. In receiving you, therefore, we must of necessity act contrary to our principles, by uniting with those at the Lord's table whom we believe to be unbaptized. The result is—the dispute between us on mixed communion is at an end. If we err, it is as baptists, by considering infant baptism as invalid.

You have no hope it seems of our ever coming together, unless we could allow your baptism to be valid; that is, unless we could retract the principles of *antipædobaptism.* There is one other way left, however, and that is, by your retracting those of

pædobaptism; and why should we not hope for the one as well as you for the other?

The controversy on strict and mixed communion, in respect of baptism, is reducible to three questions.—(1) Is baptism necessary to communion at the Lord's table? (2) Is a being immersed on a profession of faith necessary to baptism? (3) On whom does the duty of judging what is baptism devolve—on the party baptized, or on the church, or on both?

The first was denied by John Bunyan; but, being generally admitted by pædobaptists, they are not entitled to his arguments. Those who follow Bunyan are chiefly baptists who admit of mixed communion; and Bunyan himself was of this denomination. Against these Mr. Booth's Apology is chiefly directed.

The denial of the *second* is ground proper for pædobaptists. But if they make it good against the baptists, they convict them of error as *baptists* rather than as *strict* baptists.

Of the *third* much has been said by the friends of mixed communion, both among baptists and pædobaptists. None, we apprehend, will plead for a church being the judge of what is baptism, to the exclusion of the candidate. The question is therefore reduced to this: Is it for the candidate exclusively to judge what is baptism; or is it necessary that his judgment and that of the church should coincide upon the subject?

If baptism be *not* necessary to communion; or, though it be, yet if immersion on a profession of faith be *not* necessary to baptism; or, though it be, yet if the candidate for communion be the *only* party with whom it rests to judge what is baptism; then *the strict communion of the baptists seems to be wrong*.

But if baptism be necessary to church communion, and immersion on a profession of faith be necessary to baptism, and it be the duty of a church to judge of this as well as of every other prerequisite in its candidates; then *the strict communion of the baptists seems to be right*.

THOUGHTS ON OPEN COMMUNION, IN A LETTER TO THE REV. W. WARD, MISSIONARY AT SERAMPORE, DATED SEPT. 21, 1800.

"The colors with which wit or eloquence may have adorned a *false system* will gradually die away, sophistry be detected, and every thing estimated, at length, according to its true value."

*Hall's Apology for the Freedom of the Press.*

In answer to your question, "*Do not the bounds of scriptural communion extend to all who are real Christians, except their practice*

*is immoral, or they have embraced dangerous heresies?*"

There are three different grounds on which mixed communion is defended:—1. That baptism is not essential to church communion. 2. That, if it be, adult immersion is not essential to baptism. 3. That if neither of these be true, yet the right of judging what is and what is not baptism lies in the individual, and not in the community. The statement of your question proceeds upon the *first* of these grounds; to this, therefore, I shall confine my answer.

I observe you do not plead for communion with saints *as saints*; for, if so, you could not refuse it to any one, unless you thought him a wicked man; whereas your question allows that real Christians if they are guilty of immorality, or if they have embraced dangerous heresies, ought to be excluded. This they doubtless ought to be, and that partly for the honor of God, and partly for their own conviction. They are a kind of lepers, whom the people of God should require to be without the camp.

You admit that there are cases in which it is right for good men to be kept from church communion; but you conceive that this should be limited to cases of immorality and dangerous heresy. If there be any difference then between us it lies in your omitting to add a third case, viz. an *omission or essential corruption of instituted worship*. Without this, I do not see how you can justify your dissent from the church of England, or even from the church of Rome, provided you agree with them in doctrine and in morals, and were satisfied respecting the piety of your fellow-communicants.

You must admit that, so far as primitive example is binding, it has every appearance of establishing the necessity of baptism previously to communion; all that were admitted to church fellowship were in those times baptized. And it appears that the one was considered as necessary to the other. John, the harbinger of Christ, came to "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke i. 17), or to prepare materials for the kingdom of heaven, which he announced as being at hand. For this purpose he "baptized with the baptism of repentance" (Acts xix. 4.) saying unto the people that "they should believe on him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus."—Acts ii. 42. In other words, his object was to render them Christians and to baptize them. It was thus that they were "prepared for the Lord," or rendered fit materials for gospel churches. Peter said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." Paul, in all his epistles, takes it for granted that all Christians were baptized.—Rom. vi. 3, 5. Eph. iv. 5. Col. ii. 12. 1 Cor. i. 13; xii. 13. When baptism and the Lord's supper are

alluded to, it is in *connection* with each other.—1 Cor. x. 2, 3, 4.

You do not pretend that any of the primitive Christians were unbaptized. All you allege is from *analogy*, or that the apostles dispensed with various *other things*, which you suppose to have been of equal importance; and that, therefore, if some at that time had neglected to be baptized on some such principle as that on which the quakers now neglect it, they would have dispensed with this also. It is acknowledged that they did dispense with a uniformity in matters of circumcision and uncircumcision, of days, and meats, and drinks, and whatever did not affect the "Kingdom of Christ."—Rom. xiv. 17. But it appears to me very unsafe to argue from abrogated Jewish rites to New-Testament ordinances, especially as the one are opposed to the other. "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God."—1 Cor. vii. 19. Nor does it appear to me, from any thing that is said on the doctrine of *forbearance* in the New Testament, that the apostles would have dispensed with the omission of baptism. The importance of this ordinance, above every thing dispensed with in the primitive churches, arises from its being the distinguished sign of Christianity—that by which they were to be known, acknowledged, and treated as members of Christ's visible kingdom: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."—Gal. iii. 27. It is analogous to a soldier on his enlisting into his majesty's service putting on the military dress. The Scriptures lay great stress upon "confessing Christ's name before men" (Matt. x. 32;) and baptism is one of the most distinguished ways of doing this. When a man becomes a believer in Christ, he confesses it usually in words to other believers; but the appointed way of confessing it openly to the world is by being baptized in his name. If, therefore, we profess Christianity only in words, the thing professed may be genuine, but the profession is essentially defective; and, as it is not Christianity (strictly speaking) but the *profession* of it which entitles us to a place in Christ's visible kingdom, our claim to visible communion must of course be invalid.

Baptism is an act by which we declare before God, angels, and men, that we yield ourselves to be the Lord's; that we are *dead* to the world, and, as it were, *buried* from it, and *risen* again "to newness of life."—Rom. vi. 3, 4. Such a declaration is equal to an oath of allegiance in a soldier. He may be insincere, yet, if there be no *proof* of his insincerity, the king's officers are obliged to admit him into the army. Another may be sincerely on the side of the king, yet, if he refuse the oath and the royal uniform, he cannot be admitted.

To treat a person as a member of Christ's visible kingdom, and as being in a state of salvation, who lives in the neglect of what Christ has commanded to all his followers, and this, it may be, knowingly, is to put asunder what Christ has joined together.—See Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." By this language he hath *bound us*; though, not having said "he that is not baptized shall be damned," he hath mercifully refrained from *binding himself*.

To dispense with baptism as a term of visible communion is to connive either at a total neglect of an ordinance which by the authority of Christ is binding to the end of the world, or at a gross corruption of that ordinance; and in many cases at both: for there are great numbers who do not believe themselves to be baptized according to the Scriptures, who yet content themselves with the baptism they have. To connive at a *known* omission of the will of Christ must be wrong, and must render us partakers of other men's sins; yet I see not how this can be avoided on the principle you espouse, provided you account such persons to be real Christians.

But supposing them to be sincere in their attachment to pædobaptism, or that they really believe it to be the mind of Christ as revealed in the Scriptures; yet still if you admit them to the Lord's supper you must connive at what you consider as a *gross corruption* of the ordinance of Christ—a corruption that amounts to a subversion of every good end to be answered by it, and that has introduced a flood of other corruptions into the church. To me it appears evident that pædobaptism opened the door for the Romish apostasy; and that the church will never be restored to its purity while it is allowed to have any existence in it. The grand cause of the church's having been corrupted so as to become apostate was its being *MINGLED WITH THE WORLD*. Pædobaptism first occasioned this fatal mixture, and national establishments of religion completed it. The one introduced the unconverted posterity of believers; the other all the inhabitants of a country, considering none but pagans, Jews, and deists as unbelievers. The one threw open the door; the other broke down the wall. It is manifestly thus that the church and the world have been confounded, and will always be confounded, more or less, till pædobaptism is no more.

If you admit pædobaptists to communion, you will not be able for any continuance to secure your own principle—that none but "real Christians" should be admitted. It is like inviting a friend to your table whose company you value, but who cannot come without bringing his whole family with him.



In the earlier ages baptized children were actually and consistently admitted to the Lord's supper. In national churches they are still generally admitted I believe as they grow up, if no gross immorality appears in their conduct, and in some if it does. And even in congregational churches they are taught to consider themselves, either on account of their birth or baptism, or both, as *somehow members of the visible church*. Such an idea might in some measure be suppressed, where the great majority were baptists; but, by admitting members on your principle, it would soon be otherwise.

The religion of Jesus was never suited to the spirit of this world. Its subjects require to be *born again*, and to make an *avowal* of it. Therefore, when worldly men took it in hand, they knew not what to make of it, nor what to do with it, till they had framed it to their mind by explaining away these uncouth principles. Pædobaptism was of essential service to them in this business. Its language was, and still is, "One birth *will do*, at least for the kingdom of heaven upon earth, provided it be from a believing parent." And now, the great difficulty being removed, the smaller is easily surmounted. "There is no necessity for an open and public *avowal*; a little water in a private house *will do*." Thus the two grand barriers that should separate the church from the world are broken down.

The seven Asiatic churches are commended or censured in proportion to their purity. One thing alleged against the church at Thyatira was that she "suffered that woman, Jezebel, to teach and to seduce God's servants."—Rev. ii. 20. The allusion is doubtless to the wife of Ahab, who corrupted the pure worship and ordinances of God in her time, and mingled them with idolatry. Whoever they were that were thus denominated, it was doubtless some person or body of persons that strove to draw off the church from her purity, and to introduce for doctrines the commandments of men. It seems, too, that some of *God's servants* were seduced by her; good men, whom your plan of admission would have tolerated. And it is worthy of notice that the censure is not directed against her for doing so, but against the church for suffering it.

You allow immorality or dangerous heresy, even in good men, to be a just cause of a refusal of communion. But is not God as jealous of his sovereign authority as he is of his truth and holiness? The ruin of mankind was by means of the breach of a positive institution. The corruption of instituted worship forms a large part of anti-christianism, and is to the full as severely censured as its heresies and immoralities. Positive commands, like the bathing of Naaman in Jordan, are designed for the trial

of our obedience. And with respect to the gross deviation from the command in question, after it has once opened the door for the grand apostasy (an apostasy from which *we are not cleansed to this day*,) shall it be pleaded for as innocent, and ranked with meats, and drinks, and days? Rather ought we not to set our faces against the seductions of Jezebel; and, instead of conniving at *God's servants* who are seduced by her, to assure them that much as we love them, and long for communion with them, we must, while we have ears to hear, "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches?"—Rev. ii. 7.

#### STRICT COMMUNION IN THE MISSION CHURCH AT SERAMPORE.

[Letter to the Editor of the Instructor, Jan. 28th, 1814.]

I BY no means wish to obtrude myself on you or your readers; but the letter, by "A Pædobaptist," which you inserted in your paper of the 19th instant, calls upon me for an answer.

It is true that the baptist missionaries at Serampore do practise strict communion. It is also true that they did so from the beginning, till within the last three or four years, when they agreed to admit of open communion. After this the question was resumed and discussed. The result was that they determined to return to their original practice. As to any *injunction*, I know of none. Most of our churches in England practise strict communion, but do not "enjoin" it upon other churches; and I suppose it is the same with the churches at Serampore and Calcutta. They may recommend whatever they think right, without enjoining it.

I can easily conceive that these changes would cause some feelings among baptists differently minded on the subject, but cannot conceive why our pædobaptist brethren should take offence at it. Those baptists who practise open communion do not mean to acknowledge the validity of pædobaptism. Had they rather then be admissible into our churches as unbaptized in the account of their brethren, than not at all? If so, to be sure we ought to feel obliged by their good opinion of us; as, after all that they have said and written and done against us, they cannot really think ill of us.

But is it true that our pædobaptist brethren seriously wish us to practise open communion? I give them the fullest credit for desiring *as Christians* to be in fellowship with us, and with all other Christians; and this also is our desire as much as it is theirs. But, *as pædobaptists*, do they wish us to admit them to communion, *without acknowl-*

*edging the validity of their baptism?* This is the question; and from all that I have read of their writings on the subject, however they may complain of strict communion, they cannot answer in the affirmative.

Dr. Worcester, in his friendly letter to Dr. Baldwin, though he pleads for a free communion between baptists and pædobaptists, and avows it to be the object of his pamphlet, yet allows that "if professed believers are the only proper subjects for baptism, and if immersion be not a mere circumstance or mode of baptism, but essential to the ordinance, so that he who is not immersed is not baptized, the sentiment of strict communion would be sufficiently established." Now Dr. Worcester's premises are our most decided principles, and this whether we practise strict or open communion. He therefore admits our practice to be sufficiently established, and has only to complain of us for not allowing the validity of their baptism; that is, for being baptists.

The same is manifest from a review of Mr. Booth's Apology in the Evangelical Magazine. The reviewer makes nothing of free communion, *unless it were on the principle of admitting the validity of pædobaptism.* Those baptists who practise it, he leaves to defend themselves as they can. The result is, that the real objection against us respects us not as strict nor as open communionists, but as baptists. In other words, that the only open communion that would give satisfaction must include an acknowledgment of the validity of pædobaptism, which, for any baptist to make, would be ceasing to be a baptist.

THE ADMISSION OF UNBAPTIZED PERSONS  
TO THE LORD'S SUPPER INCONSISTENT  
WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT: A LETTER  
TO A FRIEND (IN 1814.)

*Advertisement.*

[THAT the following is a genuine letter, written by the hand of our much lamented friend Mr. Fuller, no one who is at all acquainted with his manner of writing will deny.

In making war upon the common enemy, he was always found in the foremost rank, always among the first to take the field. But, when he was called to animadvert on friends and allies, how strikingly different was his conduct!

In January last I received a parcel from him, enclosing a letter, in which he says—

"Dear Brother,

. . . . I have sent you Dr. Baldwin, which you may keep till I see you, if it be for half a year. Also a manuscript of my own . . . and I wish none to see it but yourself, and that no mention be

made of it. If any thing be written on the other side, it may, if thought proper, be printed, but not else.

Yours affectionately,

*Kettering, Jan. 16, 1815. A. FULLER."*

The above will justify me in withholding the letter till now; and the long-expected publication of Mr. Hall, which has just appeared, equally requires that I withhold it no longer.

The manuscript has many verbal corrections and interlineations, exhibiting proofs of the care and deliberation with which this letter was composed. It may be proper for me to say, the *title* was written by the author himself, and the whole is printed with that scrupulous fidelity which I have thought due to the writer, as to one of the greatest men of the age, and one of the brightest luminaries of the Christian church.

*Stepney, July 25, 1815.*

WILLIAM NEWMAN.]

*Letter, &c.*

Dear Sir,

THE long and intimate friendship that I have lived in, and hope to die in, with several who are differently minded from me on this subject, may acquit me of any other motive in what I write than a desire to vindicate what appears to me to be the mind of Christ.

So far have I been from indulging a sectarian or party spirit, that my desire for communion with all who were friendly to the Saviour has, in one instance, led me practically to deviate from my general sentiments on the subject: the reflection on which, however, having afforded me no satisfaction, I do not intend to repeat it.

You request me to state the grounds of my objections to the practice in a letter, and I will endeavor to do so. I need not prove to you that it is not for want of esteem towards my pædobaptist brethren, many of whom are dear to me. If I have any thing like Christian love in me, I feel it towards all those in whom I perceive the image of Christ, whether they be baptists or pædobaptists; and my refusing to commune with them at the Lord's table is not because I consider them as improper subjects, but as attending to it *in an improper manner.* Many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, who partook of Hezekiah's passover, are supposed by that pious prince to have "prepared their hearts to seek the Lord God of their fathers;" but, having eaten "otherwise than it was written," he prayed the Lord to "*pardon every one of them,*" and therefore could not intend that the disorder should be repeated.—2 Chron. xxx. 17—19.

I have been used to think that our conduct on such questions should not be gov-

erned by affection any more than by disaffection, but by a regard to the revealed will of Christ.

A brother who practises mixed communion lately acknowledged to me that "he did not think it was a question of *candor* or *charity*, but simply this, *Whether there was or was not an instituted connection in the New Testament between baptism and the Lord's supper*. If there was, we ought not, under a pretence of charity, to divide them: for surely Jesus Christ may be allowed to have had as much charity and candor as we!" Yet we hear a great outcry, not only from pædobaptists but baptists, against our want of candor, liberality, &c.; all which, if this concession be just, is mere declamation. To what purpose is it, too, that such characters as *Owen*, *Watts*, *Doddridge*, *Edwards*, &c., are brought forward in this dispute, unless it be to kindle prejudice? If it were a question of *feeling*, their names would doubtless have weight; but, if it relate to the revealed will of Christ, they weigh nothing. Is there, or is there not, an instituted connection between baptism and the Lord's supper, as much as between faith and baptism? If there be, we might as well be asked, how we can refuse to baptize the children of such excellent men, as how we can refuse to admit them to the Lord's supper. If a man call me a bigot, I might in reply call him by some other name; but we should neither of us prove any thing except it were our want of something better to allege. The question respects not *men* but *things*. It has been painful for me to "withdraw from a brother who has walked disorderly;" nevertheless I have felt it to be my duty to do so. I was not long since assured by a pædobaptist friend, that, "If I could think free communion to be right, I should be much *happier* than I was;" and it is possible that in some respects I might. If I could think well of the conduct of a brother whom I at present consider as walking disorderly, or if I could pass it by without being partaker of it, I doubt not but I should be the happier: but if that in which he walks *be* disorder, and I *cannot* pass it by without being a partaker of it, I had better be without such happiness than possess it.

The question of free communion as maintained by baptists is very different from that which is ordinarily maintained by pædobaptists. There are very few of the latter who deny baptism to be a term of communion, or who would admit any man to the Lord's supper whom they consider as UN-BAPTIZED. Some few, I allow, have professed a willingness to receive any person whom they consider as a believer in Christ, whether he be baptized or not. But this is probably the effect of the practice, so prevalent of late among pædobaptists, of decrying the impor-

tance of the subject. I have never known a pædobaptist of any note, who conscientiously adheres to what he thinks the mind of Christ relative to this ordinance, who would thus lightly dispense with it. The ordinary ground on which a pædobaptist would persuade us to practise free communion is that their baptism, whether we can allow it to be quite so primitive as ours or not, is nevertheless *valid*, and that we should allow it to be so, and consequently should treat them as baptized persons by admitting them to the Lord's table. It is on this ground that *Mr. Worcester* in his *Friendly Letter to Mr. Baldwin*, pleads for open communion.—He allows that if *Mr. Baldwin* could demonstrate that baptism is to be administered only in one mode and to one kind of subject, and that immersion is not a *mere circumstance* or mode of baptism, but essential to the ordinance, so that he that is not immersed is not baptized, his sentiment of close communion "would be sufficiently established."—pp. 8, 9. To the same purpose is the drift of the Reviewer of *Mr. Booth's Apology* in the *Evangelical Magazine*. But to admit the validity of pædobaptism would not overthrow strict communion only, but baptism itself as performed upon persons who have been previously baptized in their infancy. If infant baptism be valid, it ought not to be repeated; and he that repeats it is, what his opponents have been used to call him, an *anabaptist*. The ground of argument, therefore, does not belong to the *subject at issue*. Its language is, Do acknowledge our baptism to be valid, and allow that whenever you baptize a person who has been sprinkled in his infancy you re-baptize him;—that is, Do give up your principles as a baptist, in order that we may have communion together at the Lord's table!!!

Very different from this are the grounds on which our baptist brethren plead for free communion. As far as I am acquainted with them, they may be reduced to two questions. 1. Has baptism any such instituted connection with the Lord's supper as to be a prerequisite to it? 2. Supposing it has, yet, if the candidate consider himself as having been baptized, ought not this to suffice for his being treated by a Christian church as a baptized person; and does not an error concerning the mode or subjects of Christian baptism come within the precepts of the New Testament which enjoin forbearance, and allow every man to be "fully persuaded in his own mind?"

Let us calmly examine these questions in the order in which they are stated:—

First: *Has baptism any such instituted connection with the Lord's supper as to be a prerequisite to it?* No baptist will deny it to be a *duty* incumbent on believers, but he may consider it as having no more connection with the Lord's supper than other duties,



and the omission of it, where it arises from error, as resembling other omissions of duty, which are allowed to be objects of forbearance.

If there be no instituted connection between them, it must go far towards establishing the position of Mr. Bunyan, that "Nonbaptism (at least where it arises from error) is no bar to communion." If Mr. Bunyan's position be tenable, however, it is rather singular that it should have been so long undiscovered; for it does not appear that such a notion was ever advanced till he or his contemporaries advanced it. Whatever difference of opinion had subsisted among Christians concerning the mode and subjects of baptism, I have seen no evidence that baptism was considered by any one as unconnected with or unnecessary to the supper. "It is certain," says Dr. Doddridge, "that as far as our knowledge of primitive antiquity reaches, *no unbaptized person received the Lord's supper.*"—Lectures, p. 511. See Mr. Booth's Apology, sect. 1. The practice of Christians having been uniformly against us, I acknowledge, does not prove us to be in the wrong; but an opinion so circumstanced certainly requires to be well established from the Scriptures.

To ascertain whether there be any instituted connection between the two ordinances, it will be proper to observe the manner in which such connections are ordinarily expressed in the New Testament. It is not unusual for persons engaged in argument to require that the principle which they oppose should, if true, have been so expressed in the Scriptures as to place it beyond dispute. This, however, is not the ordinary way in which any thing is there expressed. Nor is it for us to prescribe to the Holy Spirit in what manner he shall enjoin his will, but to inquire in what manner he has enjoined it. A pædobaptist might say, If teaching be indispensably necessary to precede baptizing, why did not Christ expressly say so, and forbid his disciples to baptize any who were not previously taught? A Roman Catholic also, who separates the bread from the wine, might insist on your proving from the New Testament that Christ expressly connected them together, and required the one before and in order to the other.

To the former of these objections you would answer, Let us read the commission:—"Go, . . . teach all nations . . . baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . . and lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Is it not plainly the *order* of things as stated by our Lord Jesus Christ, you would add, that we are first to *teach* men, by imparting to them the gospel; then, on their believing it, to *baptize* them; and then to go on to *instruct*

them in all the ordinances and commandments which are left by Christ for our direction? Thus also to the Roman catholic you would answer:—Let us read the institution as repeated by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians,—“I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the night in which he was betrayed *took bread*: and, when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also *he took the cup*, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye *eat this bread*, and *drink this cup*, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.” You would add: How dare you put asunder the wine and the bread which Christ hath thus manifestly joined together? The former of these answers must, I think, be approved by every baptist, and the latter by every protestant. But the reasoning in both cases proceeds on the supposition that the ordinary way in which the mind of Christ is enjoined in the New Testament is by *simply stating things in the order in which they were appointed and are to be practised*: and that *this is no less binding on us than if the connection had been more fully expressed*. It is as clear in the *first* case as if it had been said, Go, first teach them the gospel; and, when they have received it, baptize them; and, after this, lead them on in a course of evangelical obedience.—And in the *last* case, it is no less clear than if it had been said, First take the bread, then the cup, and never partake of the one without the other.

But if this be just reasoning with a pædobaptist and a Roman catholic, why should it not be so in the present case? If the above be the ordinary mode of divine injunction, we can be at no loss to know what is enjoined respecting the duties in question. All the recorded facts in the New Testament place baptism before the celebration of the Lord's supper.

The first company who joined together at the Lord's table were all baptized. That Christ was so himself we are expressly informed; and of the disciples we are told that they baptized others (John iv. 2;) which would not have been permitted had they, like the pharisees and lawyers, refused to be baptized themselves.

The next mention of the celebration of the supper is in the second chapter of the Acts. The account given is, that every one of them was exhorted to “repent and be baptized,” and that they who gladly received the word “were baptized;” after which they were “added to the church,” and “continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in *breaking of bread*, and in prayers.”

The question put by the apostle Paul to certain disciples at Ephesus, who said they had not heard whether there were any Holy Ghost, "unto what then were ye baptized?" clearly intimates that there were no Christians in those times who continued unbaptized. He does not ask whether they had been baptized, taking this for granted, but merely to *what* they had been baptized.

The nature and design of baptism, as given us in the New Testament, shows it to have been the *initiatory* ordinance of Christianity. It was not, indeed, an initiation into a particular church, seeing it was instituted prior to the formation of churches, and administered in some cases, as that of the Ethiopian eunuch, in which there was no opportunity for joining to any one of them: but it was an initiation into the body of professing Christians. And, if so, it must be necessary to an admission into a particular church, inasmuch as what is particular presupposes what is general. No man could with propriety occupy a place in the army without having first avowed his loyalty, or taken the oath of allegiance. The oath of allegiance does not, indeed, initiate a person into the army, as one may take that oath who is no soldier; but it is a prerequisite to being a soldier. Though all who take the oath are not soldiers, yet all soldiers take the oath. Now baptism is that divine ordinance by which we are said to *put on Christ*, as the king's livery is put on by those who enter his service: and, by universal consent throughout the Christian world, is considered as the badge of a Christian. To admit a person into a Christian church without it were equal to admitting one into a regiment who scrupled to wear the soldier's uniform, or to take the oath of allegiance.

There are instances in the New Testament in which the word baptism does not mean the baptism by water, but yet manifestly alludes to it, and to the Lord's supper as *connected with it*; e. g. 1 Cor. x. 1—5. "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all *baptized* unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same *spiritual meat*; and did all drink the same *spiritual drink*; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness." The Corinthians had many amongst them who had polluted themselves with idolatrous practices, and yet presumed on being saved by Christ. The design of the apostle was to warn them, from the examples of the Jewish fathers, not to rely upon their having been partakers of the Christian privileges of *baptism and the Lord's supper* while they indulged in sin. The manner in which these allusions are introduced clearly shows the

*connection* between the two ordinances in the practice of the primitive churches.

Thus also in 1 Cor. xii. 13, we are said "by one spirit" to be "all *baptized into one body*, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and all made to *drink into one spirit*." The design may be to illustrate the spiritual union of all true believers in one invisible body, as originating 'in the washing of regeneration, and as being continued by the renewing of the Holy Spirit: but the allusion is, I conceive, to the ordinances of *baptism and the Lord's supper*; by the former of which they were initiated into the body of professing Christians, and by the other had communion in it. See Poole, Henry, and Scott on the passage.

From these instances, we have equal evidence that the two ordinances were connected in the practice of the first churches as we have of faith being connected with baptism, or of the bread being connected with the wine in the supper. The only difference between these cases is, that the one requires a part and the other the whole of a divine institution to be dispensed with. Is it for us to make light of the precepts of Christ, under the notion of profiting and edifying his people? If we have any ground to expect his presence and blessing, it is in "teaching them to observe *all things* whatsoever he has commanded" us.

But let us proceed to the second question, *Whether, if the candidate consider himself as having been baptized, this ought not to suffice for his being treated by a Christian church as a baptized person; and whether an error concerning the mode or subjects of baptism be not a subject of Christian forbearance, in which every one may be allowed to be fully persuaded in his own mind.*

That there are cases to which this principle will apply is certain. Concerning eating or not eating *meats*, and observing or not observing *days*, the apostle teaches that every man should "be fully persuaded in his own mind." "Who art thou," he asks, "that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.—Why dost thou judge thy brother; or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.—Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.—Hast thou faith? have it to thyself."—Rom. xiv.

These passages have often been alleged in favor of free communion between baptists and pædobaptists; and if the principle laid down by the apostle applies to that subject, though originally he had no reference to it, the reasoning of our brethren is just and right.

The case, I conceive, must have referred to the prohibition of certain meats, and the observance of certain days, under the *Jewish* law; which being no longer binding on

Christians, some would avail themselves of this liberty, and disregard them; others, not having sufficient light, would regard them. Had it referred to any customs of *heathen* origin, or which had never been, nor been understood to be, of divine appointment, it is not conceivable that those who regarded them should "regard them to the Lord." In this case, every man was allowed to judge and act for himself, and required to forbear with his brethren who might be otherwise minded.

That we are to apply this principle without restriction few will maintain. Should the first principles of the gospel, for example, be rejected by a candidate for communion, few who pretend to serious Christianity would think of receiving him. Yet he might allege the same arguments, and ask, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Why dost thou judge thy brother; or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.—Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.—Hast thou faith? have it to thyself." In this case, we should answer, that the language of the apostle was misapplied; and that it was not his design to affirm that Christians in a state of religious society had no right to judge of each other's avowed principles: for if so, he would not have desired some to have been cut off who troubled the Galatians.—Gal. v. 12. Nor would the church at Pergamos have been censured for having those amongst them that held pernicious doctrines.—Rev. ii. 14, 15. Private judgment is every man's birthright, considered as an individual; but, as a candidate for admission into a voluntary society, it is essential that there be an agreement, at least, in first principles: for "how can two walk together except they be agreed?"

And, as we are not so to apply this forbearing principle in matters of doctrine as to raze the foundations of divine truth, neither shall we be justified in applying it to the dispensing with any of the commandments of Christ. The meats and days of which the apostle speaks are represented as not affecting the kingdom of God. "The kingdom of God," he says, "is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."—ver. 17. But, if they had required a positive commandment of Christ to be dispensed with, they would have affected the kingdom of God, and the apostle would not have written concerning them as he did. In short, it is not just to argue from Jewish customs, which though once binding had ceased to be so, to Christian ordinances which continue in full force. The tone which the apostle holds in respect of those Jewish rites which ceased to be obligatory is very different from that which respects commandments still in force:

"Circumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God."—1 Cor. vii. 19. "I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them unto you."—1 Cor. xi. 2.

If to be baptized be a qualification requisite to Christian communion (which under this second question I have a right to assume) it is absurd to suppose that it belongs to the candidate exclusively to judge of it. It is contrary to the first principles of all society for a candidate to be the judge of his own qualifications. Apply it to any other qualification, as faith in Christ, for instance, or a consistency of character, and you will instantly perceive its absurdity. We must return to the first question: Is baptism prerequisite to the Lord's supper? If it be so, it must belong to the church to judge whether the candidate has been baptized or not. But the principle on which the apostle enforces forbearance is often alleged as applicable to this question.—"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye,—for GOD HATH RECEIVED HIM." It is doubtful whether receiving here means admission to communion. Mr. Booth has shown that this is not the ordinary meaning of the term: but allowing this to be the meaning, and that God's having received a person furnishes the ground and rule of our receiving him, still there is nothing in our practice inconsistent with it. If receiving a brother here denote receiving him into Christian fellowship, the meaning is, receive him to the ordinances, and not to one of them without the other. We are willing to receive all who appear to have been received of God to the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper: if we object, it is because they wish to be received to the one without the other, of which there was no example in the first churches. Let it also be particularly noticed, that our brethren who plead for receiving Christians as Christians receive them TO THE ORDINANCES AS UNDERSTOOD AND PRACTISED BY THEM, and this we do. If the prejudices of a pious catholic would permit him to request to join with them at the Lord's supper, they would, as we have often been told, receive him: but TO WHAT? Would they provide a wafer for him, and excuse him from drinking of the cup? No, they would say, we are willing to receive you to the Lord's supper, in the way we understand and practise it; but we cannot divide the wine from the bread without dispensing with an essential part of the institution. Such is our answer to a pious pædobaptist. We are willing to receive you to the ordinances of Christ, as we understand and practise them; but we cannot divide the one from the other without dispensing with an institution of Christ.

#### Objections.

It has been said that "we all practise a



worse mixed communion than that with pædobaptists; that we have *covetous* and other *bad characters* amongst us," &c. If we "bear them that are evil" in things of a moral nature, this is our sin, and we ought to repent of it, and not to argue that because we do wrong in one instance we ought to do so in another. If we omit to admonish and exclude manifestly wicked characters, it is of but little account that we are strict in regard to baptism; but, in reproving us, our Lord would not complain of our not being alike lax in things positive as we are in things moral, but of our not being alike strict in both. "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

There is, however, a wide difference between bearing with individuals, even in things which are evil, where that evil lies so much in the  *motive*  as to be very difficult of detection, and making it a  *rule*  to tolerate men in such vices. It was no reproach to Christ and his apostles to have had a Judas amongst them, though he was a "thief," so long as his theft was not manifested; but, had there been a  *rule*  laid down that covetousness and even theft should be  *no bar to communion* , the reproach had been indelible.

It has been said, "If our practice of strict communion be right, it ought to be to us an act of  *self-denial* , and not of pleasure, inasmuch as charity would be unable to take pleasure in excluding those from communion whom we consider as Christians." And this so far as it relates to men is true, but it is no less true of many other duties, in which we may be called to act differently from our brethren, and to reprove them.

"But in thus denying ourselves," it has been further said, "we deny some of the best feelings of the human heart." This I cannot admit. The best feelings of the human heart are those of love and obedience to God: and if I deny myself of the pleasure which fellowship with a Christian brother would afford me, for the sake of acting up to the mind of Christ, or according to primitive example, I do not deny the best feelings of the human heart, but, on the contrary, forego the less for the greater. It is a greater pleasure to obey the will of God than to associate with creatures in a way deviating from it.

We  *may*  act in this matter from temper or from prejudice, rather than from a conscientious regard to the mind of Christ; and they who oppose us  *may*  act from worldly policy, or a desire to court applause as candid and liberal men; but neither of these cases proves any thing.—The question is, whether, in admitting unbaptized persons to the Lord's table, we do not deviate from the mind of Christ.

I am willing to allow that open communion  *may*  be practised from a conscientious persuasion of its being the mind of Christ; and they ought to allow the same of strict

communion; and thus, instead of reproaching one another with bigotry on the one hand, or carnal policy on the other, we should confine our inquiries to the precepts and examples of the New Testament.—I am affectionately yours,

ANDREW FULLER.

#### ON INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

[In Reply to a Correspondent.]

THAT there are circumstances attending the worship of God, whether it be moral or positive, which are not the objects of divine appointment, I allow; such as the tunes in singing, and whether we baptize in a pool or in a river, or drink the wine at the Lord's supper out of a silver or pewter or wooden cup. Each of these is alike indifferent. I do not admit, however, that we have no example of uninspired preaching. On the contrary, we have no proof, that I remember, that even the apostles themselves were under the infallible inspiration of the Holy Spirit in their sermons, nor in all their writings; though they were in those which have place in the holy Scriptures. Be that as it may: If what every preacher advanced had been inspired, it would itself have contained the oracles of God; but in that case there would have been no propriety in that direction—"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."—1 Pet. iv. 11.

As to our using human compositions in singing, I have sometimes had my doubts whether we ought not to sing the poetical parts of Scripture set to sacred music. I should rejoice to see a book of such divine hymns introduced into all our churches, taking place of a vast load of trash and insipidity. If we had not hymns inspired, ready to our hands, any more than tunes, I should then think that the composing of the one as well as of the other was a circumstance of worship left to human powers. But be this as it may, whether the hymns we sing be a discretionary concomitant of worship or not, this cannot be said of instrumental music. It was from the first a subject of  *divine injunction* . The very passage which you have quoted proves this.—2 Chron. xxix. 25—28. You must have seen with what tender regard to divine authority it was introduced. It was "according to the command of David, and of God the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for so was the commandment of Jehovah by his prophets." If the writer had designed merely to guard against the idea of David's having done it of his own discretion, he could not have chosen words better adapted to his purpose; and indeed it manifestly appears that this was his design.

But, you say, instrumental music "was not instituted by any express command of

the ceremonial law ; that it has nothing in it of the nature of a positive institute, and cannot therefore be considered as abolished by the introduction of the gospel." To this I reply—

1. Its not being required by the law of Moses does not prove that it "was not instituted by any express command." You seem to be aware of this, and therefore have softened your position by adding the words, "the law of Moses."

2. Its not being required by the law of Moses does not prove that it was "not a part of the ceremonial law which is abolished by the gospel." A great number of the directions relating to the building of the temple, and the regulation of its worship, were ceremonial, though not commanded "by the law of Moses ;" and were all abolished when that temple ceased to exist.—See 1 Chron. xxviii. 11—19. These appendages to the temple could not survive the temple, and it appears that instrumental music was a kind of appendage to the sacrifices of those times. So it seems to be represented in 2 Chron. xxix. 25—28 ; and it was as much abolished when sacrifices ceased as the others were when the temple was no more.

3. If instrumental music was no part of ceremonial worship, it must have been *moral* ; for what has already been advanced proves that it was not a mere discretionary circumstance of worship, concerning which no commandment was given. That the vocal prasing of God is a moral duty, I allow ; but the use of instruments is not so. It is a practice which has every property of a positive institute, and not one, that I recollect, of moral obligation. That all duties, both moral and positive, are *commanded* of God, is true ; but what is moral is commanded because it is right, and the motive by which it is enforced is not the mere will of the legislator ; whereas that which is positive is right because it is commanded. The whole authority in the latter case rests upon the divine command, and this is the ground on which the practice of instrumental music is rested in the Scriptures. It was "according to the commandment of David, and of Gad, and Nathan—For so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets."—2 Chron. xxix. 25. This is a kind of language which is never used of *vocal* music, or of any other moral duty, but which exactly accords with what is said of other positive institutions ; particularly those which respected the appendages of temple worship.—2 Chron. viii. 14. Another thing by which moral and positive duties are distinguished is that the former are binding alike in all ages and nations ; but the latter, originating in divine appointment, are binding only at those places to which the appointment extends. Now you yourself say that instrumental music "was not in gen-

eral use till David's time, which was five hundred years after the law." If it had been a moral duty, it would have been obligatory at all times, before David's time as well as in it ; and we should have read of it, as I think we do of every moral duty, in the New Testament.

4. Your argument from the *worship of heaven* reminds me of the argument in favor of the surplice, from the heavenly inhabitants being clothed "in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints ;" to which Robinson replies, We are sorry to say it is all the righteousness that some saints have ! But, seriously, the heavenly employments and enjoyments are frequently illustrated by things borrowed from the Jewish ceremonial, which things were once right, but in our day would be "will-worship."—Col. ii. 23. The blessed above are said to be "made kings and priests unto God." In the same chapter in which we read of "harps" we also read of a "temple," and an "altar," in heaven.—Rev. xiv. 17, 18. But what would you think of an argument derived from this in favor of modern priests, temples, and altars ?

In short, instrumental music, the more I think of it, appears with increasing evidence to be utterly unsuited to the genius of the gospel dispensation. There was a glare, if I may so express it, which characterized even the divine appointment of judaism. An august temple, ornamented with gold and silver, and precious stones, golden candlesticks, golden altars, priests in rich attire, trumpets, cymbals and harps ; all of which were adapted to an age and dispensation when the church was in a state of infancy. But, when the substance is come, it is time that the shadows flee away. The best exposition of harps in singing is given by Dr. Watts—

"Oh may my heart in tune be found,  
Like David's harp of solemn sound."

I CANNOT forbear remarking the great similarity between your reasoning and that of episcopalians in favor of certain ceremonies to which the puritans objected. They did not pretend that they were *obligatory*, but merely *lawful* ; that they had been of divine authority under the former dispensation, and were now matters of discretion. If this were indeed the case, and they had followed the example of an apostle, they would have relinquished them when they proved an occasion of offence. When some of the Corinthians pleaded for the lawfulness of eating the good creatures of God, though they had been offered in sacrifice to idols, Paul replies, granting them their principle, "Meat commendeth us not to God : for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse." In a similar manner the puritans answered the



episcopalians. Uncommanded ceremonies, granting them to be lawful, commend us not to God: for neither if we use them are we the better, neither if we disuse them are we the worse; and, seeing they create much offence, they ought to be relinquished. And thus, though your principles should be true, your practice may be condemned. That for which you plead is confessedly not a duty. It commendeth you not to God: for neither if you make use of instruments are you the better, neither if you disuse them are you the worse; and, seeing the use of them occasions offence to many serious minds, it ought to be relinquished.

But as Paul, after granting the Corinthians their argument, and condemning their conduct even on that ground, proceeded to prove that *the thing itself was unlawful*; so I hope to prove the unlawfulness of instrumental music in Christian worship.

Instrumental music, I grant, was before the times of David; but if it was for the purpose of promoting civil joy, or when employed in divine worship, authorized by divine appointment, nothing favorable to your argument can be thence inferred.

Musical instruments were first invented by Jubal, a descendant of Cain, for the promoting of civil mirth; and to this purpose they have been employed in all ages and nations to this day. That they were used in the worship of God before the times of David is true; but it is also true that there was divine authority for it. Trumpets were appointed to be used on various occasions by the law of Moses (Lev. xxiii. 24; xxv. ix. Num. x. 1—10;) also the psaltery, the harp, and the cymbal. You suppose it was not their use in religious worship, but the manner of it, that was the object of divine appointment. The use of them, you suppose, was discretionary, and not appointed; seeing mention is made of them previous to their being employed in the temple service. But the phraseology of the passage in 2 Chron. xxix. 25 does not favor such an idea. Matthew Henry thus expounds it; "While the offerings were burning upon the altar, the levites sang the song of the Lord (ver. 27,) the psalms composed by David and Asaph (ver. 30.) with the musical instruments, which God by his prophets had commanded the use of." (ver. 25.) It is allowed, however, that the appointment of instrumental music, in the times of David, respected "the special purposes to which it should be applied: but this does not prove that it was not previously appointed for other sacred purposes.

You seem to take it for granted that nothing was appointed of God, unless that appointment was *express*; but God has not always conveyed truth in this manner. Though we read of no express appointment, but merely of things being ordered or done by *men who were divinely inspired*, yet the

same thing is in many cases clearly to be understood. We are not expressly told that God appointed the means of Naaman's cure, namely, his bathing seven times in Jordan; but, as a prophet of God directed him to it, we certainly conclude that he did so. The Spirit of God that was in the prophet directed it. Thus, though the use of the psaltery, tabret, pipe, and harp, in sacred things, be not expressly commanded till the times of David, yet, being used before his time as the means of prophetic inspiration, their being divinely appointed for the purpose cannot be denied.—1 Sam. x. 5. 2 Kings iii. 15.

I incline to think that the use of the *timbrel* by Miriam and the women of Israel was merely *civil*.—Exod. xv. 20. It was an instrument necessary to the *dance*, and mostly, if not invariably, connected with it. It does not appear to have been used in singing the song of Moses, but at certain intervals. On account of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, one while they sang praises, and another while Miriam and the women went forth with the timbrel and the dance. It was a great national deliverance; and civil joy, with the common expressions of it, were mingled with their praises of Jehovah. But, granting it was a part of *religious* exercises, it was introduced by one who in the very act is called "a prophetess," a name which is no were else ascribed to her; and no reason that I know of can be given for its being ascribed to her here, but that of intimating that she acted under divine authority. If, as you contend, it was a part of "discretionary" worship, the same must be said of *dancing*, which accompanied it; and then it would be lawful in our worshipping assemblies to introduce not only the pipe, but the dance.

"Positive institutions," you say, "were confined to time, place, manner, and other circumstances; but instrumental music was governed by such a variety of discretionary considerations as find no room in the institutes of judaism. It might be performed at any other time, as well as at the stated periods of public worship; in any place, and on various public occasions, which are not specified by any law." You will allow the offering of sacrifices to have been a part of instituted worship; yet there are almost all the varieties attending it as those which you have mentioned. Those of Abel, Noah, Abraham, and Jacob, were not "specified by the letter of any law;" but were offered on a great variety of occasions, and, prior to the time that the ark had rest, at as great a variety of places. Instead, therefore, you might say of the offering of sacrifice to God possessing every property of a positive institute, it does not appear to possess any of its essentials. The truth is that not one of the things you mention afford any proof for or against instituted worship; each



is equally applicable to *sacrifice* and *praise*, though the one is a positive and the other a moral duty.

Some of the *occasions* you refer to, in which instrumental music is used, might be merely *civil*. Such appears to be the going forth of Jephthah's daughter, with "timbrels and dances," on occasion of his victory over the Ammonites; and the female processions on occasion of David's having slain Goliath, and the Philistines being defeated. A band of Bengal music was sent before Messrs. Thomas and Carey in their curious procession to Bote Haut;\* to which, if I had been in their place, I should have had no objection, but rather have enjoyed it, as it was an expression of the civility and friendship of the Booteas. Others I allow were *religious*; as the bringing up of the ark, the building of the city wall, &c. But in these instances there are plain traces of divine authority, and such as indicate that instrumental music was approved of God, before the arrangement of the temple service. The music used on the former of these occasions must have been previous to this, as it was before the ark had rest. Yet the whole of that solemn procession was "before the Lord," even the exercise of dancing and playing, which exposed David to the revilings of Michal. This was his own defence against her.—2 Sam. vi. 21—23. God accepted the worship too, and punished the reviler. But, as Paul inferred from the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice that it was offered "in faith," so may we infer from the acceptance of the worship of David that it was performed in obedience to the divine will. The conduct of David in praising the Lord with instruments of music is more than once mentioned as a model of *divine authority* for after times. Not only did they follow his example in the times of Hezekiah, as being according to the commandment of God and his prophets (2 Chron. xxix. 25;) but, when the foundation of the second temple was laid, the levites are said to have "praised the Lord with cymbals, according to the ordinance of David, king of Israel."—Ezra iii. 10. And afterwards, when the wall of the city was built, the singers are described as having "the musical instruments of David, the man of God" (Neh. xii. 36;) which is a mode of speaking tantamount to their being ascribed to divine authority. The example of David need not have been alleged, if it had been a mere discretionary matter, and not the performance of a sacred duty.

But, admitting my position, you dispute the *application* of it to the case in hand; arguing that we are allowed to retain some things which are ceremonial, though not obliged to use them as formerly; and in-

stance in prostration, in certain times of worship, and certain garments. I do not know that prostration is ever made a part of instituted worship; it was a posture dictated by an humble spirit in all ages, and is still the same on various occasions. As to garments, we are allowed to use them in a mere civil way, as they were always used, but not as making any part of religious worship. We may wear a linen coat for coolness in summer, and a woollen one for warmth in winter; but, if we make them any part of religion, we sin. Such reasoning would justify all the fripperies of modern superstition, most of which may be traced to Jewish origin. The Jews were obliged to worship at certain times, and we may worship at those times. We must worship at some time, and that time may happen to be the same as theirs; but we are not at liberty to choose those times which were then of divine appointment. If we do, an apostle will be "afraid of us."—Gal. iv. 10, 11. Had you only affirmed that what was obligatory on the Jews is with us discretionary in *civil* concerns, I should have had no objection, no, not to instrumental music; but, if you make them a part of *worship*, you throw open a door to a flood of corruption.

Of the tribe of Judah, Moses "saith nothing" concerning priesthood. Hence Paul inferred there *was* nothing. Of priests, altars, sacred garments, and instrumental music in Christian worship, the New Testament "saith nothing." Is it improper then to infer that *no such things were known in the times of the first Christians*?

You perceive nothing in instrumental music contrary to the genius of the gospel. Another might say the same of *dancing*. But suppose you were to read in some ancient writer that it was the custom of the primitive churches, when assembled together for worship, to sing with psalteries and harps, and cymbals and organs, and to dance like David before the ark. Would you not suspect the veracity of the writer, or conclude that he had been misinformed? Yet why should you, if there be nothing in these things contrary to the genius of the gospel?

The New Testament speaks of praising God by *singing*, but farther it says not. "After supper they sang a hymn"—"I will sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also"—"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord."

Paul speaks more than once in his epistle to the Corinthians of instruments of music, but not as being used in religion. He describes them as necessary to war, but not to worship; and speaks of them in language of degradation, as "things without life, giving sound." If I have not charity, says he, I am as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

\* Period. Accounts of the Baptist Mission, vol. i. pp. 363, 364.

The history of the church during the first three centuries affords many instances of the primitive Christians engaged in singing; but no mention, that I recollect, is made of instruments. Even in the times of Constantine, when every thing grand and magnificent was introduced into Christian worship, I find no mention made of instrumental music. If my memory does not deceive me, it originated in the dark ages of popery, when almost every other superstition was introduced under the plea of its according with the worship of the Old Testament. At present it is most in use where these kinds of superstitions are most prevalent, and where the least regard is paid to primitive simplicity. I remember lately to have noticed a description of modern Paris, by one of their own writers. "If," says he, "you are attached to religious solemnities, you will find some of all sorts. Catholics, who offer up their prayers to the deity with the sound of musical instruments. Lutherans, who calmly listen to the lectures from the Bible and the gospel. Theophilanthropists, worshipping deists, who flourish in language, and sing as if they were at the opera."

I conclude with reminding you that on the principle of *discretionary* worship you may introduce the dance, and commence Welsh jumpers; the surplice, and become episcopalian; and even the mitre, and shake hands with his holiness. I doubt not but *your* discretion will keep you from these things; but, if there be no bar but discretion, I do not know what right you have to censure them in others.

#### THOUGHTS ON SINGING.

I HAVE long considered the manner in which our singing is conducted as equally contrary to Scripture and reason. The intent of singing is by a musical pronunciation of affecting truth to render it still more affecting. To accomplish this end, the music ought, at all events, to be adapted to the sentiments. As in common speaking there is a sound or modulation of the voice adapted to convey every sentiment or passion of which the human soul is at any time possessed, so I conceive it is in a considerable degree with regard to singing: there are certain airs or tones which are naturally expressive of joy, sorrow, pity, indignation, &c., and the grand art of psalmody seems to consist in applying these to the sentiments required to be sung. When David had composed a divine song, it was delivered to "the chief musician," who set it to sacred music; and the Levites and people would probably learn both the song and the tune, and sing them on the days appointed for public worship.

Our method of singing is the reverse of this. Some person who has a taste for music composes a *tune*, a *mere* tune, without

any sentiments to be expressed. He divides and subdivides his empty sounds into lines and bars, &c. The poet, instead of going before the musician, comes after him; and a hymn is conformed to the tune, instead of a tune to the hymn. The tune being composed to four, six, or eight lines, is applied to any song that is written in these respective measures, and repeated over, without any regard to the meaning, as many times as there are stanzas to be sung!

I do not mean to object to the division of music into parts or breaks, so as to afford proper places for pausing; but this division ought not to be uniform, but governed entirely by the matter to be sung. There ought, I conceive, to be no pauses in music, any more than in speaking, but at the conclusion of a sentence, or of some lesser break in the division of it; and the length of the pause ought to be governed by the meaning in some proportion as it is in reading. Those notes also which belong to words of but little meaning, the mere particles of speech, should be short; and those which belong to words of full meaning should be long and full of sound. Nothing can be more unnatural than for a congregation to dwell in a long-swalling sound upon such words as *that, in, and, from, to, &c.*, while they skip over words expressing the very burden of the song, as if they were of no account; yet this will frequently and almost constantly be the case while we make hymns to tunes, instead of tunes to hymns.

Our *anthems* appear to me to approach the nearest to the scriptural way of singing; only they possess too much levity for worship, and abound with a number of unnecessary, because unmeaning, repeats.

I have long wished to see introduced into the churches (and I almost believe it will be at some future time) a *selection of divine hymns or songs*, taking place of all human compositions. By divine hymns or songs, I mean the pure word of God translated without any respect to rhyme or number, after the manner of Lowth's Isaiah, and set to plain, serious, and solemn music, adapted to the sentiments.

It has been observed by some of the ablest critics that the spirit of David's psalms (and the same would hold true of the other poetic parts of Scripture) can never be preserved in a translation of them into modern verse; but in a translation like our common Bibles, or that of Lowth's Isaiah, it is generally allowed, I believe, that the spirit of them is well preserved. Why then do we not set them as they are to sacred music? It is of a thousand times more importance to preserve the spirit of a psalm or scripture song than to have it in numbers, even supposing a uniformity in numbers were of advantage.

What is the reason that *Handel's Messiah* has had so great an effect? It is in part

owing to the Scriptures appearing in their native majesty, without being tortured into rhyme and number, and set to music adapted to the sentiments. I do not mean to say that Handel's music is in general adapted to divine worship: it was not designed for it, but rather for a company of musicians who should display their skill. But the same words might be set to plain music without any of those trappings which recommend it to the attention of a merely musical audience. Such a sweetness and majesty is there in the poetic language of Scripture that if there were nothing offensive in the music it must needs recommend itself to a serious mind. Without disparaging the labors of any one, there is as great a disproportion between our best compositions and those of the Scriptures as between the speeches of Job and his friends, and the voice of the Almighty.

I am persuaded there are but few if any divine subjects upon which a hymn or song might not be collected from the poetic parts of Scripture. In many instances the whole song might be furnished from a single psalm or chapter: and in others it might be collected from different passages associated together and properly arranged.

#### EXAMPLES.

##### I.—A SONG OF PRAISE TO THE REDEEMER.

Taken from Rev. v.

[*Redeemed sinners signified by the living creatures and the elders.*]

THOU art worthy to take the book,  
And to open the seals thereof:  
For thou wast slain,  
And hast redeemed us to God by thy blood,  
Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;  
And hast made us unto our God kings and priests:  
And we shall reign on the earth.

[*Thousands of thousands of Angels join the Song with a loud voice.*]

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain  
To receive power, and riches, and wisdom,  
And strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!

[*The whole intelligent creation in full chorus.*]

Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power,  
Be unto him that sitteth upon the throne,  
And to the Lamb forever and ever!

[*Redeemed sinners close the song in humblest prostration.*]

AMEN.

The first should be sung, I think, with a soft tenor only, rather increasing in vigor and rapidity in the fifth and following lines;—the second in bold, loud, and animated notes, but not quick: there ought to be a full swell of sound to each of the seven ascriptions;—the third in full chorus, yet not so loud as the second, but more pathetic;—the last, in which they who began conclude the song, though it be only one word, yet the notes to it should express a heart full of humility and gratitude.

##### II.—ON RECOVERY FROM SICKNESS.

Taken from *Hezekiah's Song*.—Isa. 38: 10—20.

I said in the cutting off of my days,  
I shall go to the gates of the grave;  
I am deprived of the residue of my years.  
I said, I shall not see the Lord,  
The Lord, in the land of the living:  
I shall behold man no more,  
With the inhabitants of the world!

I reckoned till morning, as a lion  
So will he break all my bones:  
From day to night wilt thou make an end of me!  
Like a crane or a swallow, so did I twitter:  
I did mourn as a dove: \*  
Mine eyes fail with looking upward:  
Oh Lord! I am oppressed, undertake for me!  
What shall I say? He hath promised, and he hath performed;  
I shall go softly all my years,  
Remembering the bitterness of my soul!

O Lord, by these things men live,  
And in all these is the life of my spirit:  
So wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.  
Behold, for peace, I had great bitterness,  
But thou hast in love to my soul  
Delivered it from the pit of corruption:  
For thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

The grave cannot praise thee:  
They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

The living, the living, he shall praise thee:  
As I do this day.

The father to the children shall make known thy truth.

The Lord was present to save me.  
Therefore will we utter our songs,  
All the days of our life, in the house of the Lord.

I will conclude with two or three remarks:—1. It is impossible, whatever skill a person may have in music, to compose a tune properly without entering into the *spirit* of the song.—2. It is manifest, from these examples of sacred song, that the original singing was much of it *responsive*; and that justice cannot otherwise be done to it.—3. The criterion of a good tune is, not its pleasing a scientific ear, but its being quickly caught by a congregation. It is, I think, by singing, as it is by preaching: a fine judge of composition will admire a sermon which yet makes no manner of impression upon the public mind, and therefore cannot be a good one. That is the best sermon which is adapted to produce the best effects; and the same may be said of a tune. If it correspond with the feelings of a pious heart, and aid him in realizing the sentiments, it will be quickly learnt, and sung with avidity. Where this effect is not produced, were I a composer, I would throw aside my performance and try again.

\* I recollect, some years ago, when in a very dejected state of mind, hearing some turtle-doves cooing to one another. Their mourning notes made a deep impression upon my heart, their tones being, as I suppose, in unison with its feelings. Had I so much skill in music as to compose a tune to this song, I would engraft the very moan of the turtle to those words, *I did mourn as a dove*.



## MISCELLANEOUS

### TRACTS, ESSAYS, LETTERS, &c.

#### ON TRUTH.

AN ESSAY ON TRUTH; CONTAINING AN INQUIRY INTO ITS NATURE AND IMPORTANCE, WITH THE CAUSES OF ERROR, AND THE REASONS OF ITS BEING PERMITTED.

THE multifarious and discordant sentiments which divide mankind, afford a great temptation to scepticism, and many are carried away by it. The open enemies of the gospel take occasion from hence to justify their rejection of it; and many of its professed friends have written as if they thought, that to be decided amidst so many minds and opinions were almost presumptuous. The principal, if not the only use which they would make of these differences, is to induce a spirit of moderation and charity, and to declaim against bigotry.

To say nothing at present how these terms are perverted and hackneyed in a certain cause, let two things be seriously considered:—First, *Whether this was the use made by the apostles of the discordant opinions which prevailed in their times, even among those who “acknowledged the divinity of our Saviour’s mission?”* In differences among Christians which did not affect the kingdom of God, nor destroy the work of God, it certainly was; such were those concerning meats, drinks, and days, in which the utmost forbearance was inculcated. But it was otherwise in differences which affected the leading doctrines and precepts of Christianity. Forbearance in these cases would, in the account of the sacred writers, have been a crime. Paul “would they were even cut off” who troubled the Galatian churches, by corrupting the Christian doctrine of justification. And it is recorded to the honor of the church at Ephesus, that it “could not bear” them that were evil; but “had tried them who said they were apostles and were not, and found them liars.”—Gal. v. 12; Rev. ii. 2. Secondly, *Whether an unfavorable opinion of those who reject what we ac-*

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*count the leading principles of Christianity, supposing it to be wrong, be equally injurious with a contrary opinion, supposing that to be wrong?* To think unfavorably of another does not affect his state towards God: if, therefore, it should prove to be wrong, it only interrupts present happiness. We have lately been told indeed, but from what authority I cannot conceive, that “the readiest way in the world to thin heaven, and to replenish the regions of hell, is to call in the spirit of bigotry.” Far be it from me to advocate the cause of bigotry, or to plead for a bitter, censorious spirit, a spirit that would confine the kingdom of heaven to a party: but I do not perceive how this spirit, bad as it is, is productive of the effects ascribed to it. If, on the other hand, through an aversion to bigotry, we treat those as Christians to whom an apostle would at least have said “I stand in doubt of you,” we flatter and deceive them; which is really “the readiest way in the world to thin heaven, and to replenish the regions of hell.”

Surely there is a medium between bigotry and esteeming and treating men as Christians, irrespective of their avowed principles. Certainly, a benevolent and candid treatment is due to men of all denominations: but to consider all principles as equally safe, is to consider truth as of no importance.

Let us candidly inquire, Christian reader, whether, notwithstanding the diversity of sentiments in the Christian world, truth may not be clearly ascertained? Whether it be not of the utmost importance? Whether the prevalence of error may not be accounted for? And, lastly, Whether the wisdom, as well as the justice of God may not be seen in his permitting it?

#### *What is Truth?*

In attempting to answer this question, I desire to take nothing for granted but that Christianity is of God, and that the Scriptures are a revelation of his will. If Christianity be of God, and he has re-

vealed his will in the holy Scriptures, light is come into the world, though the dark minds of sinful creatures comprehend it not. It does not follow, because many wander in mazes of fruitless speculation, that there is not a way so plain that a wayfaring man, or one who "walketh in the truth," though a fool, shall not err. The numerous sects among the Greeks and Romans, and even among the Jews, at the time of our Saviour's appearing, did not prove that there was no certain knowledge to be obtained of what was truth. Our Lord considered himself as speaking plainly, or he would not have asked the Jews as he did, "Why do ye not understand my speech?" The apostles and primitive believers saw their way plainly: and though we cannot pretend to the extraordinary inspiration which was possessed by many of them, yet if we humbly follow their light, depending on the ordinary teachings of God's Holy Spirit, we shall see ours.

Truth, we may be certain, is the same thing as what in the Scriptures is denominated "the gospel"—"the common salvation"—"the common faith"—"the faith once delivered to the saints"—"the truth as it is in Jesus," &c., and what this is may be clearly understood by the brief summaries of the gospel, and of the faith of the primitive Christians, which abound in the New Testament. Of the former, the following are a few of many examples:—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost.—I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.—To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.—We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.—I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.—Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you *the gospel* which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and *wherein ye stand*; by which also ye are *saved*, if ye hold fast what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain: for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ *died for our sins* according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.—This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that *Christ*

*Jesus came into the world to save sinners*, of whom I am chief.—This is *the record* that *God hath given to us eternal life*, and this life is *in his Son*.—Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

If language has any determinate meaning, it is here plainly taught that mankind are not only sinners, but in a *lost* and perishing condition, without help or hope, but what arises from the free grace of God, through the atonement of his Son; that he died as our substitute; that we are forgiven and accepted only for the sake of what he hath done and suffered; that in his person and work all evangelical truth concentrates; that the doctrine of salvation for the chief of sinners through his death was so familiar in the primitive times as to become a kind of Christian proverb, or *saying*; and that on our receiving and retaining this depends our present *standing* and final *salvation*. If this doctrine be received, Christianity is received: if not, the record which God hath given of his Son is rejected, and he himself treated as a liar.

When this doctrine is received in the true spirit of it, which it never is but by a sinner ready to perish, all those fruitless speculations which tend only to bewilder the mind will be laid aside; just as malice, and guile, and envies, and evil speakings are laid aside by him who is born of God. They will fall off from the mind, like the coat of the chrysalis, of their own accord. Many instances of this are constantly occurring. Persons who, after having read and studied controversies, and leaned first to one opinion and then to another, till their minds have been lost in uncertainty, have at length been brought to think of the gospel, not as a matter of speculation, but as that which seriously and immediately concerns them; and, embracing it as good news to them who are ready to perish, have not only found rest to their souls, but all their former notions have departed from them as a dream when one awaketh.

Corresponding with the brief summaries of the gospel are the concise accounts given of the *faith* of the primitive Christians.—"Whosoever believeth that *Jesus is the Christ* is born of God."—"Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that *Jesus is the Son of God*?"—"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth *the Lord Jesus*, and believe in thine heart that *God hath raised him from the dead*, thou shalt be saved." The sacred writers did not mean, by this language, to magnify the belief of one or two divine truths at the expense of others; but to

exhibit them as bearing an inseparable connection: so that, if these were truly embraced, the other would be certain to accompany them. They considered the doctrine of the person and work of Christ as a golden link, that would draw along with it the whole chain of evangelical truth. Hence we perceive the propriety of such language as the following:—"He that *hath the Son*, hath life; and he that *hath not the Son*, hath not life."—"Who-soever *denieth the Son*, the same hath not the Father."

The doctrine and faith of the primitive Christians were summarily avowed every time they celebrated the *Lord's supper*. The leading truth exhibited by that ordinance is the same which John calls "the record;" namely, that "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Under the form of a feast, of which we are invited to take, to eat, and to drink, are set forth the blessings of the new testament, or covenant, and the medium through which they were obtained; namely, "the blood of Jesus, shed for many for the remission of sins;" and the way in which they must be received; that is to say, as a *free gift*, bestowed on the unworthy for his sake. If this simple doctrine were believed with the spirit of a little child, and lived upon as our meat and drink, we might take an everlasting leave of speculations of things beyond our reach; and that without sustaining the loss of any thing but what were better lost than retained.

#### *Importance of Truth.*

If the above remarks may be thought sufficient to ascertain what is truth, its *importance* follows as a necessary consequence. If, as transgressors, we be exposed to the eternal displeasure of our Maker—if a door of hope be opened to us—if it be at no less an expense than the death of God's only-begotten Son in our nature—if, through this great propitiation, God can be just, and the justifier of believers—finally, if this be the only way of escape, and the present the only state in which it is possible to flee to it for refuge, who, that is not infatuated by the delusions of this world, can make light of it? There is an importance in truth, as it relates to philosophy, history, politics, or any other branch of science, inasmuch as it affects the present happiness of mankind: but what is this when compared with that which involves their everlasting salvation? To be furnished with an answer to the question, "What shall I do to be saved?" is of infinitely greater account than to be able to decide whether the Ptolemaic or Copernican system be that

of nature. The temporal salvation of a nation, great as it is, and greatly as it interests the minds of men, is nothing when compared with the eternal salvation of a single individual.

But many, who would not deny the superior value of eternal salvation to all other things, have yet gone about to depreciate the importance of divine truth, and to represent it as having no necessary connection with either present holiness or future happiness. Such appears to have been the design of those well-known lines of Pope:—

"For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight:  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

And to the same purpose we have often been told in prose that *we shall not be judged at the last day by our opinions, but by our works*. If truth and error existed in the mind merely as *opinions*, or objects of speculation, they might possibly have but little influence upon us: but, if they be *principles* of action, they enter into the essence of all we do. Such is the influence of living faith, otherwise it could not be *shown by our works*:\* and such is that of the belief of falsehood, else we had not read of the word of false teachers "eating as doth a gangrene."† The *works* by which we shall be judged cannot mean actions, *in distinction* from their principles (for as such they would contain neither good nor evil), but *as connected with them*. All pretences, therefore, to separate the one from the other are as contrary to reason as to Scripture.

To render this subject more evident, let the following particulars be duly considered:—

First: *It is by the belief of truth that sinners are brought into a state of salvation*.—Great things are ascribed in the Scriptures to faith: but faith could have no existence without revealed truth as its foundation. Whatever importance, therefore, attaches to the one, attaches to the other. The great blessing of justification is constantly ascribed to faith, not as the reward of a virtue, but as that by which we become one with Christ, and so partakers of his benefits. While unbelievers, we have no revealed interest in the divine favor; but are declared to be under condemnation: but, believing in him, we are no longer "under the law," as a term of life and death, but "under grace." Hence it is that, in the gospel, as *heard and received*, we are said to *stand*. Take away evangelical truth, and you take away the standing of a Christian. Bereaved of this, the best man upon earth must despair of salvation.

\* James ii. 18. † Γαγγραινα, 2 Tim. ii. 17.



Secondly: *Truth is the model and standard of true religion in the mind.*—That doctrines, whether true or false, if really believed, become *principles* of action—that they are a mould into which the mind is cast, and from which it receives its impression—is evident both from Scripture and experience. An observant eye will easily perceive a *spirit* which attaches to the different species of religion; and which, over and above the diversities arising from natural temper, will manifest itself in their respective followers. Paganism, Mahomedism, Deism, apostate Judaism, and various systems which have appeared under the name of Christianity, have each discovered a *spirit* of its own. Thus also it was from the beginning. Those who received *another doctrine* received with it *another SPIRIT*: and hence we read of “the *spirit* of truth” and “the *spirit* of error.” He that had the one is said to be “of God,” and he that had the other “not of God.”—2 Cor. xi. 4. 1 John iv. 6.

Revealed truth is represented as “a *form* of doctrine” into which believers are “delivered.”—Rom. vi. 17. As a melted substance, cast into a mould, receives its form from it, and every line in the one corresponds with that of the other; so true religion in the soul accords with true religion in the Scriptures. Without this standard, we shall either model our faith by our own pre-conceived notions of what is fit and reasonable, or be carried away by our feelings, and lose ourselves among the extravagant vagaries of enthusiasm. Our views may seem to us very rational, or our feelings may be singularly ardent; and yet we may be far from being in the right. The question is, Whether they agree line to line with the divine model? God saith, in his word, “Seek ye my face.” If our hearts say unto him, “Thy face, Lord, will we seek,” then does line answer unto line; and this is true religion. Is it a leading feature of evangelical truth that it honors the divine character and government? It is the same with true religion in the mind. Does that manifest love even to enemies? So does this. Is it the object of the former to abase the pride of man? It is no less the nature of the latter to rejoice in lying low. Finally: Is the one averse from all iniquity, and friendly to universal holiness? The other, dissatisfied with present attainments, “presseth towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

Thirdly: *Truth is that which furnishes the motive for every exercise of true holiness.*—If once we are enabled to behold its glory, the glory of God in the face of

Jesus Christ, it changes us into the same image, begets and excites holy affections, and every kind of gracious exercise.—Hence we are said to *know* the truth, and the truth to make us free; to be *sanctified* through it, and *begotten* by it.—John viii. 32; xvii. 17. James i. 18.

It is not denied that there is much of what is called *mortality* in persons who know and believe nothing to purpose of evangelical truth. Honor, interest, and the habit of education, will induce men to shun open immoralities, and to comply with things which are reputable and praiseworthy. But though there be great cause for thankfulness to God, who, by his providence, thus restrains mankind from much evil; yet this is not holiness. Holiness is the love of God and one another; whereas this is mere self-love. All works and worship of this kind are no better than the offering of Cain, which, being without faith, could not please God.

And, as there may be a semblance of holiness without faith, so there may be a semblance of faith without holiness. The doctrines of the Bible, though in themselves practical, yet may be treated as mere speculations, and frequently are so by men who profess to believe them; and, where this is the case, instead of producing holiness, they may have a contrary effect; but this is owing to their being perverted. God’s words do good to the upright. There is not a sentiment in the living oracles but what, if received in the true spirit and intent of it, will contribute to the sanctification of the mind.

True religion is, with great beauty and propriety, called *walking in the truth*. A life of sobriety, righteousness, and godliness, is Christian principle reduced to practice. Truth is a system of love, an overflow of the divine *blessedness*, as is intimated by its being called “the glorious gospel of the *blessed* God:” a system of reconciliation, peace and forgiveness; full of the most amazing condescension, and of spotless rectitude. To *walk* in truth like this is to walk in love, to be tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven us; to be of the same mind with him who “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant;” and “to be holy in all manner of conversation.”

Such were the fruits of truth which were actually brought forth by the primitive believers; and such, in different degrees, notwithstanding the many defects and scandals which abound among us, are the fruits of it in true Christians to this day. Thousands of examples, both in earlier and later times, might be produced, in which men who previously walked

according to the course of this world, in rioting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, in strife and envying, on embracing the doctrine of Christ crucified have put off all these, and become, as it were, new creatures.

It is also worthy of special notice that, in every instance in which the primitive churches deviated from the *doctrine* of the apostles, they appear to have degenerated as to zeal and practical godliness. A careful review of the epistles to the Corinthians, the Galatians, and the Hebrews, who departed more than any other churches from the simplicity of the gospel, would furnish proof of the justness of this remark. It was not without reason that Paul observed to the Corinthians, "evil communications corrupt good manners;" by which he appears to have meant the communications of false teachers, who endeavored to undermine the resurrection, and other important truths. And such was the corruption of manners which accompanied these notions, that, degenerate as we consider ourselves, compared with the primitive Christians, if any one of our churches tolerated the same things, we should be almost ready to pronounce it a synagogue of Satan. Among other things they divided into parties, boasted of the talents of their preachers, connived at the most unnatural kind of fornication, went to law with one another, communed with idolaters at their temples, and profaned the supper of the Lord by appropriating it to purposes of sensual indulgence! Such were the fruits of error.

If we look into the epistle to the Galatians, who had been turned aside from the apostolic doctrine of justification, we shall find fruits of the same kind. They are described as *not obeying the truth*, as *foolish*, as in a manner *bewitched*; as having lost their former *zeal*, and rendered their Christianity a matter of *doubt*; as needing to have "Christ again formed in them:" and it is strongly intimated that they were guilty of *biting*, and as it were *devouring* one another, of "fulfilling the lusts of the flesh," and of coveting "vain-glory, provoking one another, and envying one another."—See chap. iii. 1; iv. 11, 19, 20; v. 7, 15, 16, 26.

If the Hebrews had not, in turning aside from the truth, been injured in their spirit and conduct, it is very improbable that such language as the following would have been addressed to them: "Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit saith, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years: wherefore I was grieved with

that generation, and said, they do always err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.—Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God!—Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin!" Neither is it likely, if no symptoms had appeared among them, that they would have been exhorted to "look diligently lest any man should fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up should trouble them, and thereby many be defiled; lest there should be any *fornicator*, or *profane person*, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right." Finally: It is not probable that so solemn a warning against whoredom and adultery would have been introduced, and the offenders cited as it were to the tribunal of God, if there had been no occasion for it in their own conduct.—Chap. iii. 7—13; xii. 12, 13, 15, 16; xiii. 4.

Whether these instances of the pernicious effects of error in the primitive churches be not in direct opposition to the modern notions before stated, let the reader judge. Nor are such things peculiar to the primitive churches. If you see men desert the principles before stated, or hold them in a corrupted sense, you may commonly perceive a change in their *spirit*. They may retain what is called character, in the eyes of the world; but the savor of godliness is departed. They may retain their zeal; but it will be confined to some little peculiarity, to the neglect of the common faith. There will be a want of that lovely *proportion* which constitutes the true beauty of holiness. A man who chews opium, or tobacco, may prefer it to the most wholesome food, and may derive from it pleasure, and even vigor for a time: but his pale countenance and debilitated constitution will soon bear witness to the folly of spending his money for that which is not bread.

Fourthly: *The love which the primitive Christians bore to one another was FOR THE TRUTH'S SAKE.*—2 John 2; 3 John 1.—Now that *for the sake of which* we love a person is considered as of greater importance than any thing else pertaining to him. It is that which constitutes his value in our esteem; and which if he abandon, we should no longer esteem him.

Here we may perceive what is essential to the true legitimate *charity* of the primitive Christians. Instead of regarding men irrespectively of their principles, they "knew no man after the flesh." John, who was the most loving, or charitable, perhaps, of all the disciples of Christ, is

so far from considering a departure from the truth as a light matter, and the subject of it as entitled to the same Christian affection as heretofore, that he expressly writes as follows: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ *hath not God*.—If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, *receive him not into your house*, neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed is *partaker of his evil deeds*." Would not such language, I ask, in our days be reckoned very uncharitable? It would. But this proves, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the common ideas of charity are antisciptural. Charity will not take it for granted that whosoever deviates from *our* views must needs deviate from the doctrine of Christ; but will carefully inquire at the oracles of God, what is truth? Yet there is no need of being ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of it. The lady whom John addressed was supposed to be able to distinguish between those who *brought the doctrine of Christ* and those who came without it: and so are Christians of the present day. Charity *hopeth all things*, and will always put the most favorable construction upon the motives of others that truth will admit; but without truth, as its ground and guide, it will not proceed.

Here also we may see the nature of Christian *unity*. It is not merely for two or more persons to be *agreed*; for this they may be in evil. This is mere party-attachment. It is natural for men to love those who think and act like themselves, and that *for their own sake*. But *Christian* unity is to love one another *for Christ's sake*, and *for the truth's sake* that dwelleth in them. Christ, as revealed in the gospel, forms the great point of union. A number of minds are drawn towards this point; and the nearer they approximate to it, the nearer they approach to a union with one another. If all true Christians were nearer to the mind of Christ, their differences would soon subside; and they would feel themselves, as they approached it, to be of one heart and of one soul.

Lastly: *Truth is the only solid foundation of peace and happiness*.—There are cases, it is granted, in which the mind may rejoice in error, or be distressed by truth. False doctrine will operate like opium, filling the imagination with pleasing dreams; but all is transient and delusive. Truth, on the other hand, when it barely commendeth itself to the conscience of a sinner, may render him extremely unhappy. Such was the effect of Judah's conviction of Christ's innocence: and such is the effect of similar convictions in the present times. But where truth takes

possession of the heart—or, as the Scriptures express it, where we "receive the love of the truth"—peace and joy accompany it. This is a fact established by history and experience, and is easily accounted for. Revealed truth carries in it a message of pardon, reconciliation, and eternal life; and all in a way honorable to the divine character and government. This, in itself, is good news; and to every one who, as a sinner ready to perish, receiveth it, is a source of solid and lasting happiness. Truth also pours light upon all the dark and mysterious events of time, and teaches us, while weeping over human misery, not to despond or repine; but, viewing things on a large scale, to rejoice in whatever is. It exhibits GOD upon the throne of the universe, ordering every thing for the best; and thus reconciles the mind to present ill, by pointing it to the good that shall ultimately rise out of it.

Contrast with this the horrible complaints of an infidel. "Who can, without horror, consider the whole earth as the empire of destruction? It abounds in wonders; it abounds also in victims; it is a vast field of carnage and contagion. Every species is, without pity, pursued and torn to pieces, through the earth, and air, and water! In man there is more wretchedness than in all other animals put together. He smarts continually under two sources which other animals never feel; anxiety, and listlessness in appetite, which makes him weary of himself. He loves life, and yet he knows that he must die. If he enjoy some transient good, for which he is thankful to heaven, he suffers various evils, and is at last devoured by worms. This knowledge is his fatal prerogative. Other animals have it not. He feels it every moment rankling and corroding in his breast. Yet he spends the transient moment of his existence in diffusing the misery which he suffers: in cutting the throats of his fellow-creatures for pay; in cheating and being cheated; in robbing and being robbed; in serving, that he may command; and in repenting of all that he does. The bulk of mankind are nothing more than a crowd of wretches, equally criminal and unfortunate; and the globe contains rather carcases than men. I tremble, upon a review of this dreadful picture, to find that it implies a complaint against PROVIDENCE; and *I wish that I had never been born!*"\* Such is the boasted happiness of unbelievers!

And, though we should not go these lengths, yet, if we forsake truth, by deviating materially from any of the great doctrines of the gospel, it will affect our

\* Voltaire.



peace. Error is the wandering of the mind when it thinks without a guide; the issue of which is "stumbling upon the dark mountains." It is possible, in such circumstances, that the stupor of insensibility may be mistaken for the peace of God; but, if the soul be once roused from its slumber, especially if it be the subject of any true religion, it will find itself miserable. As soon might we expect to find happiness in the mind of one who has lost his way, and knoweth not whither he goeth, as in a mind that has deviated from evangelical truth.

#### *Causes of Error.*

If truth be of this importance, it may be inquired, How are we to account for the great diversity of sentiment in the religious world? Whence is it that professing Christians, even the wise and the good among men, should be so divided?

It certainly is not owing to any thing in Christianity itself. This will be found, on the strictest inquiry, to be one consistent whole, and all its precepts tend to unity of judgment, as well as of affection. To this end were all the epistles addressed to the primitive churches. In some, the writers labor to establish them in the truth; in others, to reclaim them from error; in all, to promote a holy unanimity in principle and practice.

Yet, if we look to *fact*, we find that the churches, even in the purest ages, were never free from error. It was beyond the power of the apostles, inspired as they were, effectually to guard them against it. Of this the afore-mentioned epistles to the Corinthians, the Galatians, and the Hebrews, are standing proofs; and in after ages things were much worse. Those principles which at first were but the bud, or at most the blade, now became the full ear, and produced a harvest of corruption and apostasy. The history of Christianity, from that day to this, is the history of one continued struggle between truth and error; the mind of Christ, and the reasonings of flesh. Nor was this state of things unknown to the apostles: they saw, in their times, *the mystery of iniquity begin to work*, and by the spirit of inspiration foretold its progress. "In the latter times," say they, "some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons."—"In the last days perilous times shall come, in which men shall be lovers of their own selves: ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." And that, "as there were false prophets among the [Jewish] people, so there should be false teachers among [Chris-

tians], who would bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them; and bring upon themselves swift destruction."

What shall we say then? Shall we attribute the multifarious and discordant doctrines of past and present times to diversity of habits, educations, and connexions; to the various tastes and talents found among men; or to the frailty and imbecility of the human mind? These things may be allowed to have their influence: but it is not to them principally that the Scriptures attribute the corruption of Christian doctrine or worship.

There is an important difference between *diversity* and *contrariety*. The former belongs to men as men, which the latter does not. One man comprehends more of truth, another less; this has a talent for discovering one part of truth, and that another; but in all this there is nothing *discordant*, any more than in a diversity of features, or in the variegated face of the earth, which abounds in divers kinds of flowers, every one of which contributes to the beauty of the whole. It is not so with respect to truth and error, which are as opposite as right and wrong. True doctrines are the plants, and false doctrines the weeds of the church. They cannot both flourish in the same mind. The one must be rooted up, or the other will be overrun and rendered unproductive.

The causes which the Scriptures assign for the corruption of Christian doctrine are principally, if not entirely, of a *moral* nature. They represent evangelical truth as a holy doctrine, and as that which cannot be understood by an unholy mind. "The natural," or mere worldly wise, "man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." They are "hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes;" and thus "it seemeth good in his sight" whose mind it is to abase the pride of man. If the gospel had been "the wisdom of this world," the "spirit of this world" would have sufficed to understand it; and there would be no more errors concerning it than what arise from the imbecility of the human mind on all other subjects; but it is not: it is the wisdom that is from above, and therefore requires a state of mind suited to it; or, as the apostle expresses it, that "we receive not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may know the things which are freely given to us of God." Now, this being the case, so far as we attempt to judge, preach, or write of the gospel, under the

influence of mere worldly wisdom, or in any other than its own spirit, we are morally certain, in some way or other, to pervert it.

Here then are opened to our view *three* grand sources of error; namely, The number of unconverted or mere worldly-wise characters who intrude themselves or are intruded by others into the Christian ministry—the greater number of merely nominal Christians, whose taste calls for anti-scriptural preaching—and the large portion of unsanctified wisdom found even in godly men.

First : The great number of *unconverted ministers*. Far be it from me to judge of men otherwise than by what they manifest themselves to be. I abhor the spirit of our modern Antinomians, who would persuade us that they know good ministers from others by a kind of spiritual physiognomy; but who, if the tree be known by its fruits, have much more reason to judge themselves. Yet the personal religion of many preachers must be allowed by charity itself to wear more than a suspicious appearance; nor is it surprising that it should be so. If, in the purest age of the church, when there were but few attractions for covetousness and ambition, there were “men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith; men who had “the form of godliness, but denied the power thereof;” is it any wonder that there should be such in our times? And, as the introduction of almost every error among the primitive Christians is attributed to this sort of characters, is it not reasonable to expect that things should move on in the same direction?

An unrenewed person, whatever be his education, talents, or natural temper, can never fall in with Christianity as it is taught in the New Testament. If, therefore, he occupy a station in the church, he will be almost certain to transform religion so as to suit himself. This, it is clear, was the grand source of the Romish apostacy. No sooner was Christianity adopted by the state than it became the interest of worldly men to profess it. Ecclesiastical offices were soon filled, in a great degree, by unbelievers in disguise. The effect was, as might have been expected, the doctrine, worship, discipline, and spirit of the gospel were gradually lost, and a system of corruption was substituted in their place.

This has been a source of departure from the truth down to the present times; and that, in different degrees, among all denominations of Christians. If we look into the establishments of protestant-Europe, we shall find that, in spite of oaths and subscriptions, devised in former ages

for the security of orthodoxy, worldly men have a system of their own, and will explain their articles and creeds according to it. Or, if we look out of establishments, wherever worldly men are admitted to the work of the ministry, we shall find things much the same. Some of the greatest perverters of the gospel, during the last century, have descended from pious parents, who, fond of the idea of bringing up their children to the public service of God, overlooked the necessity of personal religion; presuming, as it would seem, that God would in due time supply that defect. The consequence was, the young men, finding evangelical truth sit uneasily upon them, threw it off, and embraced a system more suited to the state of their minds.

Observing these things among men of education, many serious people have contracted a prejudice against learning itself; and have preferred the preaching of the most illiterate, for the sake of a pure doctrine. But neither is this any security; for men of assurance and address, pretending to extraordinary light and marvellous inspirations, will often obtrude themselves upon the people and draw disciples after them, especially from among the unthinking and light-minded part of Christian professors. In them the words of Peter have been eminently fulfilled: “Speaking great swelling words of vanity, they have allured, through the lusts of the flesh, those that for a while were escaped from them who live in error.” Nor has their influence been confined to such characters: sincere people have frequently been misled by their specious pretences. When Judas, professing a solicitude for the poor, condemned an expression of love to Christ as an unnecessary piece of wastefulness, he drew away the other disciples after him. In short, men who have not the spirit by which the gospel was dictated, will not cleave to it. Some may err on this side, and some on that: some having greater talents may do greater injury to it, and others less; but all in one way or other will pervert it: and, where this is the case, “many will follow their pernicious ways; and the way of truth,” being confounded with them, “will be evil spoken of.”

Secondly : The great number of merely *nominal Christians*.—In the present state of things, the bulk of mankind are not governed by principle, but by custom—following the course of this world, whatever direction it may take. In one country they are heathens, in another Mahomedans, and in another Christians: in other words, they are of *no religion*. The effect of this is, that a large proportion of ministers are

certain to be nominated and chosen by men who have no taste for the searching, humbling, and holy doctrine of the gospel, but are utterly averse from it; and, where this is the case, it requires but little discernment to perceive what will be the general tone of preaching. Even in congregational churches, if the people, or the leading individuals among them, be worldly-minded, ambitious, or in any respect loose livers, they will not be at a loss to find preachers after their own heart. Thus error is propagated, and thus it was propagated from a very early period. "The time will come," said Paul to Timothy, "when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Thirdly: The large portion of *unsanctified wisdom found even in godly men*.—The wisdom of this world, as opposed to the wisdom of God, is not confined to mere worldly men. The apostle, after speaking of spiritual men as "judging all things," and as "having the mind of Christ," adds, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal; even as unto babes in Christ." And this, their carnality, is represented as rendering them unable to understand the great doctrines of Christianity, which are compared to *meat*, and as leading them to build upon the gospel-foundation a mixture, of "wood, and hay, and stubble;" all of which shall be burnt up another day, though they themselves are to be saved.—1 Cor. ii. 6, 7, 12, 15, 16; iii. 1, 2, 12—17.

There is a *slowness of heart* even in good men to believe what God has revealed, especially if it clash with their pre-conceived ideas. Such was the state of mind of the apostles themselves previously to the resurrection of their Lord: and such is the state of mind of great numbers among us. We often hear men in controversy talk of being open to conviction and willing to retract their sentiments if but fairly confuted: but such professions either mean but little, or at best indicate a great want of self-knowledge. Those who are the most open to conviction will commonly suspect themselves the most, and of course will not be very forward in the use of such language. If there were not a *slowness of heart*, both in receiving truth and relinquishing error, a large proportion of our controversies would soon be at an end.

#### *Reasons why error is permitted.*

The foregoing remarks may suffice to account for the prevalence of error, so far as *man* is concerned; but it may be farther inquired, Wherefore doth *God* permit it? Why is it that the beauty of the Christian church is suffered to be marred and its peace invaded by a succession of perpetual discords? This is an awful subject; and, if we were left to our own conjectures upon it, it would be our wisdom to leave it to the great day when all things will be made manifest: but we are not. The Scriptures of truth inform us that "there must needs be heresies, that they who are approved may be made manifest."

All the influences to which we are exposed, in the present life, are adapted to a state of probation, and to do us good or harm, according to the state of mind which we possess. We are not only fearfully made, but as fearfully situated. The evidence in favor of true religion is sufficient for a candid mind, but not for one that is disposed to cavil. If we attend to it simply to find out truth and obey it, we shall not be disappointed; but, if our souls be lifted up within us, the very rock of salvation will be to us a stone of stumbling. The Jews required a sign *in their own way*: "Let him come down from the cross," said they, "and we will believe him." If he had *publicly* risen from the dead, say modern unbelievers, none could have doubted it.—Yet he neither came down from the cross nor rose publicly from the dead; and let them say, if they please, that he could not, and that all his miracles were the work of imposture. It may be *our duty*, as much as in us lies, to cut off occasion from them who desire occasion; but God often acts otherwise. They who *desire* a handle to renounce the gospel shall have it. Thus it is that men are *tried* by false doctrine, and even by the immoralities of professing Christians.

The visible kingdom of Christ is a floor, containing a mixture of wheat and chaff; and every false doctrine is a wind, which he, whose fan is in his hand, makes use of to purge it. There are great numbers of characters who profess to receive the truth, on whom, notwithstanding, it never sat easily. Its holy and humbling nature galls their spirits. In such cases, the mind is prepared to receive any representation of the gospel, however fallacious, that may comport with its desires; and, being thus averse to the truth, God, in just judgment,



frequently suffers the winds of false doctrine to sweep them away. Such is the account prophetically given of the chief instruments in the Romish apostacy. The introduction of that mystery of iniquity is thus described: "Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Not only is *false* doctrine permitted, that it may sweep away hypocritical characters, but the *discordance* which appears among the professors of Christianity is itself a temptation to many, and that in divers ways. Some, who consider themselves as almost if not altogether infallible, are hereby furnished with a plea for *intolerance and persecution*. In this way it operated much in former ages, and a portion of it is still prevalent among us. You see, say they, whither this liberty of conscience will lead men. If they be left to themselves, and form their own notions of religion, there will be no end to their errors and divisions, and to the sects that will arise out of them. Thus the catholics attempted to discredit the reformation; and thus some protestants have endeavored to discredit congregational church government, as fruitful of sects and divisions. But, if either of them were required to prove that there is less error or opposition among themselves than among their neighbors, they might find it a difficult task. On one side, men find it necessary either not to think at all, or to conceal their sentiments; on the other, they speak and write their minds with greater freedom; but things are what they are, whether they be avowed or not. He who persecutes men for their errors may at last be found equally erroneous himself; but allowing that he is not, and that his creed is orthodox, yet he is far from being "sound in the faith," in the scriptural sense of the words. He "knoweth not what manner of spirit he is of." He may be willing to fight; but has yet to learn what are those weapons by which the soldiers of the Lamb are enabled to overcome.

Others, on the same ground, have *rejected all religion*. You cannot agree, say they, as to what is truth: settle it among yourselves before you attempt to trouble us with it. Very well: if you can satisfy your consciences with this evasion, do so. It will not avail you at death or judgment.

You will then be reminded that you did not reason thus in things to which your *hearts were inclined*; but applied with all your powers, and used every possible means to ascertain the truth for yourselves, and acted accordingly. On your own principles, therefore, will you be judged.

Others, who have not gone these lengths, have yet been tempted to despair of finding out what is the true religion. Amidst the opposition of opinion which continually presents itself before us, say they, how are we plain people to judge and act?—If you mean to intimate that it is vain for you to concern yourselves about it, that is the same as saying, it is vain to attempt any thing that is accompanied with difficulties, or to walk in any way that is attended with temptations; and this would lead you to stand still in other things as well as in religion. But, if it be the real desire of your soul to know the right way and walk in it, there is no reason to despair. Follow no man as your guide; but go to your Bible and your God, and there decide the question. You need not say in your heart, "Who shall ascend into heaven; or who shall descend into the deep?" The word is nigh thee. To read controversial books may, in many cases, be useful: but seldom when it is done with a view to decide the great question, What is the right way to everlasting life? A book, as well as a sermon, *may* be the means of affording such direction. But, when the mind is in a state of suspense, it is beyond all comparison the safest to consult the oracles of God. To launch into controversy, without having obtained satisfaction on the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, is to put to sea in a storm without a rudder. One great reason why men are "carried about with divers and strange doctrines" is—their "hearts are not established with grace." They have no principles of their own, and therefore are carried away with any thing that wears the appearance of plausibility.

But one of the worst inferences drawn from the discordant doctrines which abound in the world is, that doctrine itself is of little or no account. As intolerance and bigotry, under the specious name of zeal, distinguished former ages, so sceptical indifference, under the specious names of candor, liberality, and moderation, distinguishes this. This is the grand temptation, perhaps of the present times. It would seem as if men must either fight for truth with carnal weapons, or make peace with error; either our religious principles must be cognizable by human legislators, or they are neither good nor evil, and God himself must not call us to account for

them; either we must call men masters upon earth, or deny that we have any master, even in heaven.

It is a favorite principle with unbelievers, and with many professing Christians who verge towards them, that error not only has its seat in the mind, but that it is *purely* intellectual, and therefore *innocent*.—Hence they plead against all church censures, and every degree of unfavorable opinion on account of doctrinal sentiments, as though it were a species of persecution. But, if the causes of error be principally *moral*, it will follow that such conclusions are as contrary to reason as they are to Scripture.

The above remarks are far from being designed to cherish a spirit of bitterness against one another, as men, or as Christians. There is a way of viewing the corruption and depravity of mankind, so as to excite bitterness and wrath, and every species of evil temper; and there is a way of viewing them, that, without approving or conniving at what is wrong, shall excite the tear of compassion. It does not become us to declaim against the wickedness of the wicked in a manner as if we expected grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles: but, while we prove ourselves the decided friends of God, to bear good will to men. It becomes those who may be the most firmly established in the truth as it is in Jesus to consider that a portion of the errors of the age, in all probability, attaches to them; and, though it were otherwise, yet they are directed to carry it benevolently towards others who may err: "In meekness instructing those who oppose themselves; if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

Finally: There is an important difference between razing the foundation, and building upon that foundation a portion of wood, and hay, and stubble. It becomes us not to make light of either; but the latter may be an object of forbearance, whereas the former is not. With the enemies of Christ, we ought, in religious matters, to make no terms; but towards his friends, though in some respects erroneous, it behoves us to come as near as it is possible to do, without a dereliction of principle. A truly Christian spirit will feel the force of such language as the following, and will act upon it: "All that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours, grace be unto them, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.—Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity!"

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH DIVINE TRUTH IS COMMUNICATED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

It is a fact which must have struck every attentive reader, that God has not communicated his mind to us by giving us a set of principles, arranged in the form of a scheme; or that we have no such creed as formally includes all the things necessary to be believed in either the Old or New Testament. On the contrary, we see divine truth introduced rather incidentally than systematically. It is scattered from one end to the other, through all the historical, devotional, prophetic, and epistolary writings.

I have no intention to derive an argument from this, as some have done, against creeds and confessions of faith; nor do I conceive that such an argument can hence be fairly derived. We might with equal justice argue against the science of botany being reduced to a system, on the ground of herbs and flowers of the same kind not growing together, but being scattered over the earth in beautiful variety. The variegated face of nature is not marred by its productions being scientifically collected and arranged; on the contrary, its beauties are so much the better understood. Yet, with respect to the *actual position* of the products of nature, we must needs decide in favor of variety; and the same may be said of the actual position of divine truth in the holy Scriptures: the incidental manner in which it is commonly introduced gives it great energy and beauty. It may be worthy of attention to consider a few of the incidents and occasions on which some of the most important truths are introduced, and to notice the wisdom of God in his thus introducing them.

It is a truth which lies at the foundation of all religion, that there is a *first cause* and Creator of all things, visible and invisible. But this truth is never introduced, that I recollect, in the form of an abstract proposition. At the commencement of revelation it is rather supposed than asserted: "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." Moses does not expressly inform us that there was a God who existed prior to this, but leaves us to infer it; hereby intimating, perhaps, that this is so evident a truth that they who doubt it need reproof rather than information.

The perfections of God are taught abundantly in the Scriptures; yet I do not recollect a single instance where they are introduced merely as a proposition, without some practical end to be answered. When Abraham, through Sarah's unbelief and

impatience, had deviated from his usual conduct, in taking Hagar to wife, hoping thereby to see the divine promise fulfilled, Jehovah thus reproved him: "I am the *Almighty* (or *all-sufficient*) God. Walk before me and be thou perfect." When Israel despondingly exclaimed, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God," he was thus answered: "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the *everlasting* God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, *fainteth not, neither is weary?* There is no searching of his *understanding.*"

In this manner also we are taught the *moral government* of God, and the *accountableness* of rational creatures. These important truths, as they stand in the sacred page, do not barely meet our eyes, or our understandings, but our consciences. They give us no time to dispute: ere we are aware we feel ourselves arrested by them, as by an almighty and irresistible force. "They say, the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard. Understand, ye brutish among the people; and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth!"

Thus also are we instructed respecting the *fall* and *depravity* of human nature. We have no encouragement curiously to inquire beyond the fact; but we are told that "God made man upright, and he sought out many inventions." If we would wish to flatter ourselves, or our species, from a partial view of human virtue, we are instantly cut short, in being told that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one." And the substance of this is stated to induce our acquiescence in the doctrine of *justification* "by free grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

The doctrine of the *trinity* is never proposed to us as an object of speculation, but as a truth affecting our dearest interests. John introduces the sacred Three as witnesses to the truth of the gospel of Christ, as objects of instituted worship, into whose name we are baptized; and Paul exhibits them as the source of all spiritual good: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." Again: "The Lord direct your

hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

In this manner we are taught that great mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh," or the proper *deity* and *humanity* of Christ. One sacred writer announces, in prophetic language, "Unto us a *child* is born, and his name shall be called the *mighty God.*" Again he describes him as the *Lord God, coming with strong hand; yet feeding his flock like a shepherd, gathering his lambs with his arm, carrying them in his bosom, and gently leading those that are with young.* Another directs his followers to him, and says, "This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man who is preferred before me, for he was before me." A third draws from his quiver an arrow of conviction: "Ye have *killed the author of life!*" A fourth finds in it a motive of compassion to the murderers: "Who are Israelites, of whom as concerning the *flesh* Christ came, who is over all, *God blessed forever.* On one occasion, it is introduced to afford a pattern of humility and condescension: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." On another, it accounts for the wonderful extremes in his character: the sacred writer having exhibited him as God, whose "throne was forever and ever"—as having "laid the foundations of the earth," and declared the heavens to be the work of his hands—an objection might arise from his being well known to be a man, and to have lived among men. In answer to this he adds, "He was made a little lower than the angels.—The children being partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same.—In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a faithful and merciful High-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Finally: It is brought in at the close of the Revelation, to seal it with divine authority: "I Jesus have sent mine angel, to testify unto you these things in the churches. *I am the root and the offspring of David.*" What a majestic sweetness does this truth afford in these connections!

It is impossible to enumerate the various occasions on which the Scriptures introduce the doctrine of *atonement* by the death of Christ. This is, to the doctrines and precepts of the Bible, as the life-blood to the animal system. The first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians is often resorted to, as treating on evangelical bless-



ings: but there is a design which runs through that whole chapter, nay almost through the whole epistle, which is *to endear the name of Christ, and to exhibit the invaluable worth of his redeeming love.*—Are we blessed with all spiritual blessings? It is “in Christ Jesus.” Were we predestinated to the adoption of children? It was “by Jesus Christ.” Are we accepted? It is “in the Beloved.” Have we redemption, even the forgiveness of sins? It is “through his blood.” And so on. Christ crucified is the *substance* of the Jewish ceremonial, and the *spirit* of its prophecies; the theme of the Christian minister on earth, and the song of the blessed above!

It is not very difficult to discern the wisdom of God in introducing truth in such a manner. If every species of plants and flowers were to grow together, instead of being scattered over the earth, the effect would be very different, and much for the worse: and if all truth relating to one subject were to be found only in one book, chapter, or epistle, we should probably understand much less than we do. There are some divine truths which are less pleasant than others. Even good men have their partialities, or favorite principles, which would induce them to read those parts of Scripture which favored them, to the neglect of others. But truth being scattered throughout the Scriptures, we are thereby necessitated, if we read at all, to read the whole mind of God; and thus it is that we gradually and insensibly imbibe it, and become assimilated to the same image. The conduct of God in this matter resembles that of a wise physician, who in prescribing for a child, directs that its medicines be mixed with its necessary food.

Moreover: Scripture doctrines being introduced in some practical connection, we learn them in that connection. The occasions and ends of truth being associated in our minds with the truth itself, the great design of God in giving us a revelation, which is to sanctify our spirits and fit us for every good word and work, is more effectually answered. To one that has learned truth from the Scriptures, and in whom it dwells richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, it is scarcely possible to think of a doctrine but in connection with its correspondent duties, or of a duty without the principles by which it is enforced.

Once more: Truth being introduced in connection with some case or incident, it more readily occurs to us, when such case, or something similar to it, becomes our own. If, through distrust of the divine power and goodness, and with hope of bet-

ter accomplishing my object, I be tempted to turn aside from the straight-forward path of uprightness; having once read and felt the story of Abraham, and the admonition that was given *him* on that occasion, it is much more likely to occur to my mind, and to correct my folly, than if I had barely read that God was “Almighty,” or had only found a general admonition to “walk before him, and be perfect.” Or, if I be tempted to sink in despondency on account of dark and intricate providences, having read of the promises of God to Jacob, of his subsequent fears, and of the happy issue, such promises are much more likely to be a ready remedy than if I had barely read, unconnected with any particular case, that God *will surely do his people good*. In the one case truth is laid down, as it were, in abstract propositions; in the other, it is illustrated by particular examples.

## THE GREAT QUESTION ANSWERED.

“And he brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”  
—Acts xvi. 30, 31.

### PART THE FIRST.

THAT great numbers of people, even in this Christianized country, are ignorant of the way of salvation, is too evident to be denied. It is manifestly no part of their concern, any more than if they were in no danger of being lost, or there had never been such a thing as salvation heard of. Nor is this true only of weak and illiterate people: men, who in all other concerns are wise, in these things have no knowledge, or sense to direct them. The evil, therefore, cannot be ascribed to *simple* ignorance, which, as far as it goes, tends to excuse; but to being *willingly* ignorant; saying unto God, “Depart from us—we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.”

God, however, has a witness in every man’s conscience. Every man, whatever he may pretend, feels himself to be a sinner, and to need forgiveness. Ignorant and idolatrous as the Philippian jailer had been all his life, yet when death looked him in the face, he trembled and cried for mercy. And, if it were thus with the heathen, much more with those who have been educated under the light of revelation. The most careless and thoughtless cannot stand the approach of death. The courage of the most hardened infidel

commonly fails him at that solemn period.

Reader! Are you one of the many who scarcely ever think of these things; and whose chief concern is what you shall eat, what you shall drink, and wherewithal you shall be clothed? Let the anxiety of a heathen reprove you.

*If, like other animals, you were made only to eat and figure away for a few years, and then to sink into nothing, you might well throw aside every care, except that which respects your present gratification. But you are of an order of beings distinguished from all others in the creation. In your nature is united mortality and immortality; the dust of the ground, and the breath of the Almighty. Life to you is but the introduction to existence, a short voyage which will land you on the shores of eternity. You are surrounded by a number of objects, and feel an interest in each. You build houses, plant orchards, rear animals, and form to yourselves a home; but you are not at home. Your feelings associate with these things; but they are not fit associates for you. You may have a portion in all that is doing in your family and in your country; yea, in some sort, in all that is done under the sun: but this is not sufficient for you. The time draweth nigh when there will be an end to all these things, and they will be as though they had not been; but you will still live. You will witness the wreck of nature itself, and survive it; and stand before the Son of Man at his appearing and kingdom. Can you think of these things and be unconcerned?*

Or, though you be an immortal and accountable creature (as your conscience tells you you are, whenever you consult it, and sometimes when you would gladly shut your ears against it), yet, *if you had not sinned against your Maker*, there would be no cause for alarm. A sinless creature has nothing to fear from a righteous God. The approach of an assize, with all its solemn pomp, does not terrify the innocent: neither would judgment or eternity inspire the least degree of dread if you were guiltless. But you are a *sinner*, a corrupt branch of a corrupt stock. God placed, as I may say, a generous confidence in our species, and required nothing in return but love; but we have returned him evil for good. You, for yourself, are conscious that you have done so, and that it is in your very nature to do evil.

Or, though you be what is called a sinner, yet, *if sin were your misfortune, rather than your fault*, you might fly for refuge to the equity of your Maker. But this is not the case. Whatever may be

said as to the manner in which you became a sinner, and however you may wish to excuse yourself on that ground, your own conscience bears witness that what you are, you choose to be, and occasionally reproaches you for being so. You may speculate upon sin as a kind of hereditary disease, which is merely a misfortune, not a fault; but, if so, why do you feel guilt on account of it, any more than of the other? Why do you not also acquit others of blame, where the evil is directed against you? You do not think of excusing a fellow-creature, when he injures you, upon any such grounds as you allege in excuse of transgression against God. If the party be *rational and voluntary*, you make no farther inquiry; but, without any hesitation, pronounce him criminal. Out of your own mouth therefore shall you be judged. The inability that you feel to do good is entirely owing to your having *no heart* to it. It is of the same nature as that of an unprincipled servant, who cannot seek his master's interest, but is impelled, by his selfishness, to be always defrauding him. You would not hold such a servant blameless, nor will God hold you so. You are not destitute of those powers which render us accountable beings, but merely of a heart to make use of them for God. You take pleasure in knowledge, but desire not the knowledge of *his* ways; in conversation, but the mention of serious religion strikes you dumb; in activity, but in his service you are as one that is dead. You are fond of news; but that which angels announced, and the Son of God came down to publish, gives you no pleasure. All these things prove, beyond a doubt, where the inability lies.

Or, if sin should be allowed to be your fault, yet, if it were a *small offence*, an imperfection that might be overlooked, or so slight a matter that you could atone for it by repentance, prayers, or tears, or any effort of your own, there might be less reason for alarm; but neither is this the case. If sin were so light a matter as it is commonly made, how is it that a train of the most awful curses should be denounced against the sinner? Is it possible that a just and good God would curse his creatures in basket and in store, in their houses and in their fields, in their lying down and rising up, and in all that they set their hands to, for a mere trifle, or an imperfection that might be overlooked? If sin were a light thing, how is it that the Father of mercies should have doomed all mankind to death, and to all the miseries that prepare its way, on account of it? How is it that wicked men die under such fearful apprehensions?

Above all, how is it that it should require the eternal Son of God to become incarnate, and to be made a sacrifice to atone for it? But, if sin be thus offensive to God, then are you in a fearful situation. If you had the whole world to offer for your ransom, and could shed rivers of tears, and give even the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul, it would be of no account. Were that which you offered ever so pure, it could have no influence whatever towards atoning for your past guilt, any more than the tears of a murderer can atone for blood: but this is not the case; those very performances by which you hope to appease the divine anger are more offensive to him than the entreaties of a detected adulteress would be to her husband, while her heart, as he well knows, is not with him, but with her paramours. You are, whether you know it or not, a *lost sinner*, and that in the strongest sense of the term. Men judge of sin only by its open acts, but God looketh directly at the heart. Their censures fall only on particular branches of immorality, which strike immediately at the well-being of society: but God views the root of the mischief, and takes into consideration all its mischievous bearings. "Know thou, therefore, and consider, that it is an evil thing and bitter that thou hast done; that thou hast departed from the living God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts."

Finally: though your sin be exceedingly offensive to your Creator, and though you can make no atonement for it, yet, if you could *resist his power, escape his hand, or endure his wrath*, your unconcernedness might admit of some kind of apology. Surely I need not prove to you that you cannot resist his power;—what is your strength when tried? You may, in the hour of health and festivity, and when in company with others like yourself, look big, and put out great words, but they are words only. If God do but touch you with his afflicting hand, your strength and your courage instantly forsake you: and will you go on to provoke Omnipotence? "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, how wilt thou contend with horses? If in the land of peace thou hast been overcome, how wilt thou do in the swellings of Jordan?"—Neither canst thou "escape" his hand; for whither wilt thou flee? If, attentive to thy safety, the rocks could fall on thee, or the mountains cover thee, yet should they not be able to hide thee "from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."—"God hath beset thee behind and before, and laid his hand

upon thee. Whither wilt thou go from his Spirit? Whither wilt thou flee from his presence? If thou ascend to heaven, he is there! Or, if thou make thy bed in hell, behold, he is there!"—The only question that remains is, whether you can "endure his displeasure?" And this must surely be a forlorn hope! By the horrid imprecations which we so commonly hear from hardened sinners, who call upon God to damn their bodies and souls, it would seem as if they laid their account with damnation, and wished to familiarize it; as if they had made a covenant with death, and with hell were at agreement: but when God shall lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, these refuges of lies will suddenly be swept away.

Reader! "Can thine heart endure, and thine hands be strong, in the day that he shall deal with thee?" Think of the "wrath to come." If it were founded in caprice or injustice, supported by conscientious innocence you might possibly bear it; but, should you perish, you will be destitute of this. Conscience will eternally say *Amen* to the justice of your sufferings. If you had mere justice done you, unmingled with mercy, your sufferings would be more tolerable than they will be. If you perish, you must have your portion with Bethsaida and Chorazin. Goodness gives an edge to justice. The displeasure of a kind and merciful being (and such is the wrath of the Lamb) is insupportable.

If after having heard these things, and lived in a country where they are fully declared, you do not feel interested by them, you have reason to fear that God has given you up to hardness of heart, and that that language is fulfilled in you: "Go unto this people, and say, Hearing, ye shall hear, and not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing; and their eyes have they closed, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Remember that in old-testament times, when God blessed his people Israel with singular temporal blessings, he punished their transgressions mostly by temporal judgments; but, now that we are favored with singular spiritual privileges, the neglect of them is commonly punished with spiritual judgments.

But, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear, I will declare unto you the only way of salvation. That which was addressed to the Philippian jailer is addressed to you. "God hath so loved



the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He has given him not only to teach us the good and the right way, but to be made a sacrifice for sin, and as such to be himself the way. He suffered from the hands of wicked men; but this was not all: "it pleased the Lord to bruise him. He hath put him to grief," and made "his soul an offering for sin." He commanded his sword to awake against him, that through his death he might turn his hand in mercy towards perishing sinners. He hath set him forth "to be a propitiation to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." This is the only sacrifice which is well-pleasing to God. All that went before were of no account, but as they pointed to it; and all the prayers and praises of sinful creatures are no otherwise acceptable than as presented through it. It is not for you to go about to appease the divine displeasure, or to recommend yourself to the Saviour by any efforts of your own; but, despairing of help from every other quarter, to "receive the atonement which Christ hath made." To this you are *invited*, and that in the most pressing terms. He that made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, hath on this ground committed to his servants the ministry of reconciliation; and they as "ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you" by them, "pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

The blessings of pardon, peace, and eternal life, are compared to a feast or marriage-supper, which the King of heaven and earth hath made for his Son; and he hath commanded his servants to go forth, as to the highways and hedges, and to invite, without distinction; yea, to "compel them to come in." Nor is this all: you are exhorted and commanded to believe in Christ, on pain of damnation. All your other sins expose you merely to the curse of the law; but the sin of unbelief, if persisted in, will expose you, like the barren fig-tree, to the curse of the Saviour, from which there is no redemption.

Say not in thine heart, All these things I have believed from my youth up. You may indeed have been taught them, and have received them as a tradition from your fathers; but such faith is dead, and consequently unoperative. It is the same as that of the Jews towards Moses, which our Saviour would not admit to be faith. "If ye believed Moses," saith he, "ye would believe me, for he wrote of

me." It is no better than the faith of devils, and in some respects has less influence; for they believe and tremble, whereas you believe and are at ease.

But it may be you will say, I have examined Christianity for myself, and am fully persuaded it is true.—Yet it has no effect upon you, any more than if you disbelieved it, unless it be to restrain you within the limits of exterior decorum. Your faith, therefore, must still be "dead, being alone." Believing in Christ is not the exercise of a mind at ease, casting up the evidences for and against, and then coldly assenting, as in a question of science, to that side which seems to have the greatest weight of proof. To one whose mind is subdued to the obedience of faith, there is indeed no want of evidence; but it is not so much from external proofs as from its own intrinsic glory, and suitability to his case as a perishing sinner, that he feels himself impelled to receive it. The gospel is too interesting, and hath too much influence on our past and future conduct, to be an object of unfeeling speculation: It is a "hope set before us," which none but those who are "ready to perish" will ever embrace. To believe it is to renounce our own wisdom, our own righteousness, and our own will (each of which is directly opposed to it), and to fall into the arms of mere grace, through the atoning blood of the cross. If the good news of salvation be not in this manner believed, it signifies but little what speculative notions we may entertain concerning it; for, where there is no renunciation of self, there is no dependence upon Christ for justification; and, where there is no such dependence, there is no revealed interest in that important blessing; but the curses and threatenings of God stand in all their force against us.

If, after all your examinations you continue to make light of the gospel-feast, and prefer your farms, merchandizes, or any thing else before it, you will be found to have no part in it. Yet, be it known unto you that the feast shall not be unattended. Heaven shall not go without inhabitants, nor Christ without reward, whether you be saved or lost. The stone set at nought by man is nevertheless "the head of the corner." Consider then, take advice, and speak your mind.

#### PART THE SECOND.

HAD this question been addressed to the first genius upon earth, unacquainted with the gospel, it could not have been answered. Had it been put to all the great philosophers of antiquity, one by one, and to all the learned doctors among

the Jews, none of them could have resolved it to any good purpose. Nor, amidst all the boasted light of modern times, can a single unbeliever be found who would know what to do with it. Yet it is a question which arises in almost every man's mind at one period or other of his life, and a question that must be resolved, or we are lost forever.

Reader! it is possible this important question has already occupied your mind. An alarming sermon, a death in your family, a hint from a faithful friend, or it may be an impressive dream, has awakened your attention. You cannot take pleasure as formerly in worldly company and pursuits, yet you have no pleasure in religion. You have left off many vices, and have complied with many religious duties, but can find no rest for your soul. The remembrance of the past is bitter; the prospect of the future may be more so. The thoughts of God trouble you. You have even wished that you had never been born, or that you could now shrink back into non-existence, or that you were any thing rather than a man. But you are aware that all these wishes are vain. You do exist; your nature is stamped with immortality; you must go forward and die, and stand before this holy Lord God!

If these, or such like exercises occupy your mind, the question of the Philippian jailer is yours; and to you let me address a few directions included or implied in the answer.

If by this question you mean, What can you do to appease the wrath of God, or recommend yourself as a fit object of his mercy? What can you do as a good deed, or the beginning of a course of good deeds, in reward of which he may bestow upon you an interest in the Saviour? I answer, *Nothing*. An interest in Christ and eternal life is indeed given as a reward, but not of any thing we have done or can do: no, not by divine assistance; it is the reward of the obedience of Christ unto death. To us it is of mere grace, and as such must be received. Faith, though in itself a holy exercise of the mind, yet, as that by which we are justified, is directly opposed to doing. "To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt: but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." He that worketh seeks to obtain life and the favor of God in some way or other as a reward; but he that believeth receives it as a free gift to the unworthy. And let me apprise you that this is the state of mind you must be brought to, or you must perish

forever. So far as you think of doing any thing, call it what you may, with a hope of being pardoned and justified for its sake, so far you reject the only way of salvation, and have reason to expect your portion with unbelievers.

Let me deal freely with you. Yours is a most serious situation. The gospel-rest is before you; and, if you enter not in, it will be because of unbelief. You know the answer given to the jailer; and this is the only answer that can with safety be given to you. Consider and beware, as you regard your eternal salvation, that you take up your rest in nothing short of it.

But, in the first place, let me declare unto you the gospel of God, which you are directed to believe. If this meet your case—if, rightly understood, it approve itself not only to your conscience, but your whole soul—if it accord with your desires, as it undoubtedly does with your necessities—all is well, and well forever. I shall not trouble you with the opinions of men as to what the gospel is, nor even with my own, but direct you to the accounts given of it by him whose it is. The New Testament abounds with epitomes, or brief descriptions of it, delivered in such plain and pointed language that he that runs may read it. Such are the following: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.—This is a faithful saying (a truth of such importance as to have become a kind of Christian proverb), and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.—We preach Christ crucified.—I determined *not to know any thing* among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.—*This is the record*, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

It is not meant, by these brief descriptions of the gospel, that there is no other truth necessary to be believed; but that the doctrine of the cross, properly embraced, includes all others, or draws after it the belief of them.

The import of this gospel is, that God is in the right, and we are in the wrong; that

we have transgressed against him without cause, and are justly exposed to everlasting punishment; that mercy, originating purely in himself, required for the due honor of his government to be exercised through the atonement of his beloved Son; that with this sacrifice God is well pleased, and can, consistently with all his perfections, pardon and accept of any sinner, whatever he hath done, who believeth in him.

What say you to this? The truth of it has been confirmed by the most unquestionable proofs. It first began to be spoken by the Lord himself, and has been confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, with signs and wonders, and divers miracles. The witness of the three in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, is borne to this; namely, that "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son;" and to this also is directed the witness of the three on earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood. Can you subscribe to this great truth in all its bearings, and rest the salvation of your soul upon it? or do you doubt whether you be so guilty, so helpless, and in so dangerous a state as this doctrine supposes? Is it as one of the chief of sinners that you view yourself? or does it grate with your feelings to receive forgiveness in that humble character? In suing for mercy, are you content to stand on the same low ground as if you were a convict actually going to be executed? or does your heart secretly pine after a salvation less humiliating, in which some account might be made of that difference of character by which you may have been distinguished from the vilest of men, and in which you might be somewhat a co-operator with God? Does that which pleases God, please you? or does your mind revolt at it? It meets all your wants; but not one of your prejudices, proud thoughts, or vicious propensities: all these must come down, and be made a sacrifice to it. Can you subscribe it on these terms?

I am well aware that the great concern of persons in your situation is to obtain *peace of mind*: and any thing which promises to afford this, attracts your attention. If this gospel be believed with all your heart, it will give you peace. This is the good, and the old way; walk in it, and you will find rest for your soul: but it is not every thing which promises peace that will ultimately afford it. It is at our peril to offer you other consolation, and at yours to receive it.

Consider, and beware, I say again, as you regard your eternal salvation, that you take up your rest in nothing short of

Christ!—With a few serious cautions against some of your principal dangers, I shall conclude this address.

First: *Beware of brooding over your guilt in a way of unbelieving despondency, and so standing aloof from the hope of mercy.* Say not, my sins have been too great, too numerous, or too aggravated to be forgiven. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin:" believest thou this? You are not straitened in him; but in your own bowels. "God's thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor his ways as your ways: as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts higher than your thoughts, and his ways than your ways." On the sinner that returneth to our God he bestoweth *abundant* pardon. It is not, If thou canst do any thing, help me; but, "If thou canst believe—all things are possible to him that believeth." Of what dost thou doubt—of his all-sufficiency? "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Of his willingness? Ought not his gracious invitations to satisfy thee on this head? Can you imagine that he would proclaim, saying, "Whosoever thirsteth, let him come unto me and drink," and yet be reluctant to gratify the desires of those that come to him? Objections on the ground of the greatness of guilt and unworthiness may seem to wear the face of modesty and humility; but, after all, it becomes you to consider whether they be any other than the workings of a self-righteous spirit. If you could find in your heart to accept of mercy as one of the chief of sinners, all your objections would vanish in a moment. One sees in your very tears of despondency a pining after acceptance with God by something in yourself. Were they put into words, they would amount to something like this:—If I had but somewhat to recommend me to the Saviour, I could go to him with assurance; or, if I had been less wicked, I might hope for acceptance. And what is this but making good the complaint of our Saviour? "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life!" Such longing after something to recommend you to the Saviour is no other than "going about to establish your own righteousness;" and, while this is the case, there is great danger of your being given up to imagine that you find the worthiness in yourself which your soul desireth.

Secondly: *Beware of dwelling in a way of self-complacency on those reformations which may have been produced by the power of conviction.* This is another of those workings of unbelief by which many have come short of believing, and so of entering into rest. There is no doubt but your convictions have driven you from the com-



mission of grosser vices, and probably have frightened you into a compliance with various religious duties; but these are only the loppings off of the branches of sin: the root remains unmortified. It is not the breaking off of your sins that will turn to any account, unless they be broken off by *righteousness*; and this will not be the case but by believing in Christ. The power of corruption may have only retired into its strong holds, from whence, if you embrace not the gospel way of salvation, it will soon come forth with increased energy, and sweep away all your cobweb reformations. Nay, it is very possible, that, while the "lusts of the flesh" have seemed to recede, those of the *mind*, particularly spiritual pride, may have already increased in strength. If, indeed, you dwell on your reformations, and draw comfort from them, it is an undoubted proof that it is so; and then, instead of being reformed, or nearer the kingdom of heaven than you were before, your character is more offensive to God than ever. Publicans and harlots are more likely to enter into it than you.—Besides, if your reformations were ever so virtuous (which they are not, in his sight by whom actions are weighed), yet, while you are an unbeliever, they cannot be accepted. You yourself must first be accepted in the Beloved, ere any thing that you offer can be received. "It does not consist with the honor of the majesty of the King of heaven and earth to accept of any thing from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law, till that condemnation be removed."

Thirdly: *Beware of deriving comfort from the distress of mind which you may have undergone, or from any feelings within you.* Some religious people will tell you that these workings of mind are a sign that God has mercy in reserve for you; and that if you go on in the way you are in, waiting as at the pool, all will be well in the end: but do not you believe them. They have no Scripture warrant for what they say. It is not your being distressed in mind that will prove any thing in your favor, but the issue of it. Saul was distressed, as well as David; and Judas as well as Peter. When the murderers of our Lord were pricked in their hearts, Peter did not comfort them by representing this their unhappiness as a hopeful sign of conversion; but exhorted them to "repent and be baptized, every one of them, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." And thus it was with Paul and Silas, when the jailer was impressed with fear and dismay: they gave him no encouragement from thence, but preached Jesus Christ as the only source of hope. If one who had slain a man in Israel had

stopped short of the city of refuge, and endeavored to draw comfort from the alarm which he had felt lest the avenger of blood should overtake him, would he have been safe? There is no security to you, or to any man, but in fleeing immediately to the gospel-refuge, and laying hold of the hope set before you. If you take comfort from your distress, you are in imminent danger of stopping short of Christ, and so of perishing for ever. Many, no doubt, have done so; and that which they have accounted waiting at the pool for the moving of the waters has proved no other than settling upon a false foundation. Indeed it must needs be so; for as there is no medium, in one that has heard the gospel, between faith and unbelief, he that does not believe in Jesus for salvation, if he have any hope of it, must derive that hope from something in himself.

Fourthly: *Beware of making faith itself, as an act of yours, the ground of acceptance with God.* It is true that believing is an act of yours, and an act of obedience to God. Far be it from me that I should convey an idea of any thing short of a cordial reception of the gospel being accompanied with salvation—a reception that involves a renunciation of self-righteousness, and a submission to the righteousness of God. But if you consider it as a species of sincere obedience which God has consented to accept instead of a perfect one, and if you hope to be justified in reward of it, you are still "going about to establish your own righteousness" under an evangelical name. This is the commandment of God, that ye believe on the name of his Son. Faith is an act of obedience to God, yet it is not as such that it justifies us, but as receiving Christ, and bringing us into a living union with him, *for whose sake alone* we are accepted and saved. If you truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, you will think nothing of the workings of your own mind, but of his work who came into the world to save the chief of sinners.

Finally: *Beware of taking comfort from any impulse, or unfounded persuasion that your sins are forgiven, and that you are a favorite of God.* Many are deceived in this way, and mistake such a persuasion for faith itself. When a sinner is driven from all his former holds, it is not unusual for him, instead of falling at the feet of Christ as utterly lost, to catch at any new conceit, however unscriptural and absurd, if it will but afford him relief. If, in such a state of mind, he receive an impression, perhaps in the words of Scripture, that God has forgiven and accepted him, or dream that he is in heaven, or read a book

or hear a sermon which is favorable to such a method of obtaining relief, he eagerly imbibes it, and becomes intoxicated with the delicious draught. The joy of hope being so new and unexpected a thing, and succeeding to great darkness and distress, produces a wonderful change in his mind. Now he thinks he has discovered the light of life, and feels to have lost his burden. Now he has found out the true religion, and all that he read or heard before, not affording him relief, is false doctrine, or legal preaching. Being treated also as one of the dear children of God, by others of the same description, he is attached to his flatterers, and despises those as graceless who would rob him of his comforts, by warning him against the lie which is "in his right hand."

I do not mean to say that all consolation which comes suddenly to the mind, or by the impression of a passage of Scripture, any more than by reading or hearing, is delusive. It is not the *manner* in which we obtain relief that is of any account, but *what it is that comforts us*. If it be the doctrine of the cross, or any revealed truth pertaining to it, this is gospel-consolation; but, if it be a supposed revelation from heaven of something which is not taught in the Scriptures, that is a species of comfort on which no dependence can be placed. A believer may be so far misled as to be carried away with it; but, if a man has nothing better, he is still an unbeliever.

To conclude: If ever you obtain that rest for your soul which will bear the light, it must be, not from any thing within you, but by looking out of yourself to Christ as revealed in the gospel. You may afterwards know that you have passed from death unto life by the love you bear to the brethren, and by many other scriptural evidences; and, from the time of your embracing the gospel remedy, you may be conscious of it, and so enjoy the hope of the promised salvation; but your first relief, if it be genuine, will be drawn directly from Christ, or from finding that in the doctrine of salvation through his death which suits your wants and wishes as a perishing sinner.

## THE AWAKENED SINNER.

[A Correspondence between Archippus, a Minister of the Gospel, and Epaphras, a young man who had been one of his hearers.]

### LETTER I.

[Epaphras to Archippus.]

My dear Sir,

FOR several years past, you know, I

have sat under your ministry. Having lately been removed by providence beyond the reach of it, many things, which made but little impression upon my mind at the time, have been called to remembrance. My heart often sinks at the thought of the non-improvement of my former mercies, and trembles lest those solemn warnings and tender exhortations which I have heard from you should, on a future day, bear witness against me.

You have more than once talked on the concerns of my soul; but I could never be free to answer you. Indeed I did not like to hear of the subject. It always struck a damp upon my spirits, and rendered your company, which otherwise was very agreeable, a burden. But now, seldom seeing your face, I feel a wish to open my mind to you; and the rather because the salvation of my soul has of late concerned me more than at any former period.

Though you were well acquainted with my person, you knew but little of my character, or of the things which were at work in my mind. I have been guilty of many evils from my youth. I have also been the subject of occasional convictions; and strange thoughts have passed my mind concerning religion. When about twelve years of age, the death of several persons around me impressed my mind with solemn reflections about my own future state. I conceived of God as an almighty being; but had no just ideas of his moral character. It appeared to me that, being stronger than we, his will must be our law. I saw no justness or fitness in its being so; but, as we were unable to dispute with him, it must be so. I entertained many hard thoughts of his government, on the ground of our first parent being constituted the head of his posterity, and of the consequence of his sin as affecting us. Sometimes I wished I had never been born: but then again it would recur to me, born I am, and die I must, and after death is a judgment! At other times, my thoughts would turn to the only hope set before us, the salvation of Jesus Christ. I conceived of him, however, as coming into the world, not to satisfy the injured justice of God, but to make us amends for the injury we had received from Adam's transgression, and to give us, as it were, another chance for our life. I thought God must know that he had dealt hardly with us; and, therefore, was constrained by equity to do as he did, in giving his Son to die for us; and that, if he had not done this, we should have had just cause for complaint, whatever we might have as it was.

I read in the Scriptures of the necessity of repentance and conversion; and many thoughts passed through my mind on this

subject; but I generally postponed a serious attention to it to some future day. I formed resolutions of amendment, and fixed times when I would return to God by repentance; but, as the former seldom proved to be of any account in the hour of temptation, so the latter passed over, and left me where I was. About this time I fell into company, which often drew me into a breach of the sabbath. During the summer season, we used to walk in the fields, to the neglect of public worship. I could not do this, however, without its being followed by keen remorse. Such was the bitterness of my soul on one of these occasions that I invoked the curse of the Almighty upon myself, and wrote it upon the walls of a building near the outside of the town, if I passed that building any more on the sabbath day, to the neglect of his worship.

I now began to think myself a little better; but still suspected I was not right at heart. The words of Christ to Nicodemus would in a manner strike me dead, "Ye must be born again!" The ideas which I formed of the new birth, as nearly as I can remember, were, that I must be in some very deep distress, next to despair; and in that state of mind a voice from heaven, or something like it, was to set me at liberty. I used to go alone into the fields in an evening, and there weep over my condition, and pray that I might be converted; but it always seemed to me that God would not hear me. At length I began to despair. I thought I never should be converted, and so must perish forever. Sometimes I thought of giving up all concern about it, and enjoying the pleasures of life while I could; but as I knew not how to shake off my uneasiness, I thought I would try *another year*, and wait and pray . . . peradventure by that I might be converted.

During this year I was often beset with thoughts like these—Perhaps, after all, there is nothing in religion; perhaps the Bible is nothing more than the invention of some great man, to keep the world in order; perhaps the Mahomedans have as good ground to believe in the Alcoran as we have in the Scriptures; perhaps there is no hereafter; perhaps there is no God.—My heart, I believe, would willingly have received these principles, shocking as they are; but my conscience would not suffer me to do it. I even took pains to convince myself of their falsehood, by walking out into the fields in a star-light evening, viewing the heavens, and inferring thence the being of a God; which, when admitted, the reality of religion followed as a necessary consequence.

About this time I read "Alleine's Alarm to the Unconverted." He said, "There were some who thought themselves converted, but were not so; and others who thought they were not converted, but were so. I overlooked the alarming part of the treatise, and caught hold of this, gathering from it some sort of hope that the latter might possibly be my case. My year was now expired; and, though I had a few hopes, I felt no ground for any satisfactory conclusion. I thought I must be better than I was: yet how to make myself so I knew not.

But my sheet is full; I therefore at present subscribe myself yours with much respect,  
EPAPHRAS.

## LETTER II.

[Epaphras to Archippus.]

My dear Sir,

LET me presume upon your patience, while I resume the narrative of my past exercises of mind. When about fourteen years of age, I remember, as I was one morning musing by myself, and thinking of the number and magnitude of my offences, the bitter pangs of despair seized me. *Iniquity*, said I, *will be my ruin*. A sigh, as from the bottom of my heart, succeeded this exclamation. But, all on a sudden, I seemed to hear as it were a voice from heaven, saying to me, "Sin shall not have dominion over thee; for thou art not under the law, but under grace." I instantly burst into a flood of tears, and went on weeping for joy, till my weeping powers seemed to be exhausted. In reflecting upon this, I thought, I am now surely converted; this must be the new birth. I was the subject of transporting joy, and confidence of having found the pearl of price.

From what I have heard you say concerning impressions, even in Scripture language, where it is not the truth contained in the words, but the idea of their being an extraordinary revelation from heaven made to the soul of the forgiveness of its sins, I have no reason to suppose that your thoughts of this singular part of my experience will accord with what at that time were mine. Indeed, from what followed, I have no reason to think favorably of it myself, for within a few hours all was forgotten, as though it had not been; and, what is worse, I returned to my sins as eagerly as ever, and lived several years after this in the unbridled indulgence of almost every species of iniquity that came within my reach.



It is true, I could not sin without occasional pangs of remorse, and such as were very bitter; but my heart was set on evil. I formed intimacies with dissolute young people, and did as they did. I drew many into my wicked courses, as others had drawn me into theirs; and, having never made any profession of religion, I felt the less concern. I seemed to consider religion as a kind of discretionary service. Those who made profession of it I thought were obliged to act accordingly; but others, except so far as they might be induced to attend to it for their own safety, were at liberty to give scope to their inclinations.

My heart was so hardened by repeated acts of sin that God was scarcely in any of my thoughts. His all-piercing eye did not restrain me. There was a poor godly man, however, one of my father's laborers, whose eye and ear used to strike me with terror. If at any time I had been reading, or had gone a few miles to hear a sermon, or any thing else that looked like religion, I used to imagine that he looked upon me with complacency and hope: but, when I had been indulging in sin, I thought I saw in his face the very frowns of heaven. It was a strange and singular regard that I felt for this poor man. His good opinion was what I desired above that of all other persons. When he has been going to worship on a Lord's-day morning, I have run with eagerness to overtake him; yet when in his company I had nothing to say. If ever I wished for riches, it was that I might be able to confer them upon him.

Within the last year my concern has been renewed. Having been deeply engaged in a very ungodly piece of conduct, which was publicly known, I dreaded nothing so much as meeting the eyes of this poor man. He, however, said nothing to me; and I suppose thought no more of it than he would of seeing evil fruit growing upon an evil tree: but my mind from that time became habitually wretched. Like Sampson, I strove to shake myself, and to do as at other times; but my strength was gone: the joy of my heart was fled. From this time, many of my open vices were relinquished: the love of sin, however, was not subdued. On the contrary, in proportion to the restraints under which my convictions laid me as to some evils, such was the strength of my inclinations towards others. For two or three months together, it was common for me to indulge in sin in an evening; and when I waked in the morning to be overwhelmed with guilt and horror. In the hour

of dejection I would resolve against future compliances. In some few instances I kept to my resolutions; and when I did so I had peace; as also when at any time I had wept over my sin, and bemoaned my miserable condition, I enjoyed a kind of secret satisfaction: but when my resolutions failed me, as they mostly did in the hour of temptation, all my peace and comfort would forsake me. I have learned, by these things, that there is no help in me; and that, if God were to forgive me all that is past, I should in one hour destroy my soul.

Formerly I used to sin away my convictions; but have not been able to do so of late. Conscience has seemed to follow me wherever I have gone, or rather, like an angel of God with a drawn sword in his hand, to meet me in my wicked courses. Indeed, I am now afraid of losing my convictions, knowing that eternal ruin must be the consequence in that case, whatever it be as it is.

O sir! I am a miserable sinner. My crimes have been much more numerous and aggravated than you or any of my friends can have imagined. I have long known myself to be a sinner; but now I feel it. I often repeat to myself the lamentations of a sinner as described by Mr. Mason—

“ I have been Satan's willing slave,  
And his most easy prey;  
He was not readier to command  
Than I was to obey.  
If any time he left my soul,  
Yet still his work went on;  
I've been a tempter to myself:  
*Ah, Lord, what have I done !”*

I sometimes think I feel the wrath of God, as an earnest of hell, kindled already in my bosom. My former hopes, instead of affording me any encouragement, work despair. It seems to me presumptuous, after so many base and repeated relapses, to hope for mercy. When I look into the Scriptures, I see, as I have long seen, that except I repent, and believe in Christ, I must inevitably perish: but alas! loaded as I am with sorrow, my heart is too hard to repent; and as to faith, and the prayer of faith, they are things foreign from the state of my mind. I would give the world, if I had it, to be possessed of them: but O, I cannot, I dare not, believe; I am unworthy of mercy. I fear I am a reprobate, of whom God hath determined to make an example, and therefore that there is no hope for me. My heart has often revolted at that awful doctrine; and now it overwhelms me. I know you will feel

for me: but whether any relief can be afforded to a soul like mine I know not. Let me conjure you, however, to be plain with me, and tell me, without reserve, what you think of my case; and, if you have any counsel to offer, let me entreat you to impart it.

I am, with unfeigned respect, yours, &c.  
EPAPHRAS.

### LETTER III.

[Archippus to Epaphras.]

My dear young Friend,

THE narration with which you have favored me has deeply interested my feelings on your behalf. My desire and prayer to God for you is that you may be saved. In the early workings of your mind I see much of the enmity and error of the human heart. Your thoughts of God and his government, Christ and his gospel, and of the nature of conversion, are the thoughts of many much older than you: but they are not the better on this account. These are among the "imagination and high thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God," and require to be "cast down, and every thought to be brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ."

Your temptations to disbelieve the Bible, and even the being of God, were no more than the ordinary operations of a depraved heart, disturbed by the light of the gospel having made its way into the conscience. Your vows and endeavors to repent and be converted appear to have arisen from a mixture of slavish fear and self-righteous hope. You were not sorry for your sin, nor wished to be sorry, from any dislike you bore to it; but you trembled at the wrath to come, and wished to become any thing that you might escape it; and, not knowing the deceitfulness of your own heart, you flattered yourself that, by putting on a good resolution, you could bend it into a compliance with the will of God.

I need not say much concerning the *impression* by which your mind was filled with joy. You yourself seem sufficiently convinced, by what followed, that it was not conversion, but a blossom without fruit. Those who conclude, from such feelings, that they are in a state of salvation, are objects of pity.

Concerning your late and present distress, I feel much for you; not only in a way of sympathy, but of concern for the *issue*; for many persons have been as deeply distressed about their salvation as

you appear to be, who have yet taken up their rest in something short of Christ; which is a much more dangerous state than that from which they were first awakened, and, if persisted in, will render their case less tolerable than if they had lived and died in ignorance.

Your sins, you say, "are much more numerous and aggravated than I or any of your friends can have imagined." Doubtless you have been guilty of things which neither I nor any other creature can have been privy to: but I apprehend that, at present, you have but a very imperfect sense of them. So far from thinking that you view the evil of your way in too strong a light, I am persuaded you are a *thousand* times more wicked in the sight of God, whose judgment is according to truth, than ever you have yet been in your own sight; your heart condemns you; but "God is greater than your heart, and knoweth all things!"

I write not thus to drive you to despair: for, though your sins were ten times more numerous and more aggravated than they are, while the good news of eternal life, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, is held up to you, there is no reason for this. You have learned, you think, "that there is no help in you." Be it so; it does not follow that there is none *without* you. On the contrary, it is by a thorough and practical knowledge of the one that the other becomes acceptable. If the help that is provided without, therefore, give you no relief, I am constrained to think it is because you are not yet brought to despair of help from within.

Let me speak freely to you of *the gospel of Jesus Christ*. You may think this to contain no *news* to you: but I am persuaded that hitherto you have neither understood nor believed it. Your despair is like that of a man who gives himself up for lost without having tried the only remedy. You have prayed for mercy, but *hitherto you have asked nothing with a pure respect to the atonement of Jesus*. Ask in his name, and you shall receive, and your joy shall be full.

Consider well the following passages of Scripture, as expressing the sum of the glorious gospel of the blessed God: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.—This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.—I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, unless ye have believed in vain—how that Christ died for our sins according to the

Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.—The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified.—I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.—God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech men by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.—The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.—By him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.—Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—Him that cometh, I will in nowise cast out."

This, my dear friend, was the all-efficacious doctrine by which the pressure of guilt was removed from thousands in the times of the apostles, and has been removed from millions in succeeding ages. When a perishing sinner inquired, "What must I do to be saved?" the answer was at hand, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This was the plenteous *redemption* which even Old-testament sinners embraced by faith. These were the water, the wine, and the milk, which they were freely invited to buy, "without money, and without price." This is the wedding supper, which the Lord hath prepared, and concerning which he hath declared, "All things are ready; come ye to the marriage."

But, you will say, I have read and considered, and believed, all this long ago; and yet I am not relieved. I remember Saul, on a certain occasion, said to Samuel, "I have performed the commandment of the Lord:" but Samuel answered, "What meaneth, then, this bleating of the sheep in mine ears; and this lowing of the oxen which I hear?" That you have read these things, and thought of them, may be admitted; but, if you have believed them with all your heart, how is it that I hear of peace and satisfaction arising from tears, and moans, and a compliance with resolutions? How is it that the magnitude of guilt, instead of leading you to confess it upon the head of the gospel sacrifice, and to sue for *mercy* wholly in his name, should induce you to despair? How is it that your being *unworthy* of mercy is made an objection to believing? Indeed, my young friend, these are but too manifest indications that hitherto you have been going

about to establish your own righteousness, and have not "submitted to the righteousness of God;" a course which, if not relinquished, will ruin your soul. The overthrow of the Jews, in the times of our Saviour and his apostles, was owing to this. They were anxiously concerned about religion; they "followed after the law of righteousness;" yet they attained it not: and wherefore? "Because they sought it not by faith; but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at that stumbling stone!" It is not the magnitude of your sins that will prove a bar to your salvation: if there be any bar, it will be your unbelief. "If thou canst believe—all things are possible to him that believeth!"

I am apprehensive that you have never yet cordially admitted the humbling import of the gospel. It is not your believing from the tradition of your fathers that there was a person called Jesus Christ, who came into the world about eighteen hundred years ago, and who is in some way or other the savior of sinners. The gospel is a divine system; the wisdom of God in a mystery. It implies a number of important truths to which the corrupt heart of man is naturally averse; and cannot properly be said to be believed while they are rejected or overlooked. Such are the equity and glory of the divine law, and the guilty, lost, and perishing condition of those who have transgressed it. More particularly, that God is worthy of being loved with all their heart, however depraved that heart may be; that our transgressions against him have been *without cause*; that we are justly deserving of his eternal displeasure; that there is no help in us, or hope of recovery by our own efforts; finally, that we are utterly unworthy of mercy, and must be saved, if at all, by mere grace. These truths are plainly *implied* in the doctrine of *atonement* and of a *free* salvation; and without admitting them it is impossible we should admit the other. While we conceive of ourselves as injured creatures, and of the gift of Christ and of salvation by him as the recompense for the injury, it is no wonder we should imagine it to be confined to the comparatively worthy, or the least criminal, and so begin to despair as we perceive the magnitude of our guilt. Or, if in words we disavow all merit, and confess ourselves to be in a helpless and hopeless condition, yet we shall view it as our misfortune rather than our sin, and ourselves as more deserving of pity than punishment. And, while this is the case, our supposed love to the Saviour is certain to operate at the expense of the Lawgiver.



You acknowledge that in your earlier years such notions possessed your mind. Let me intreat you to consider whether they have not still a place in you, and whether your present unhappy state of mind be not chiefly to be ascribed to them. If you do not admit what the gospel necessarily implies, and that in a practical way, so as to act upon it, how can you admit the thing itself? There is no grace in Christ's laying down his life for us, and bestowing salvation upon us, but upon the supposition of the justice of the divine government, and therefore we cannot perceive any; for it is impossible to see that which is not to be seen. But if you perceive the rectitude of the divine character and government, and feel yourself to be a justly condemned sinner without help or hope, or a single plea to offer in arrest of judgment, the gospel will appear in its glory, and all its blessings will be welcome to your heart. Thus, knowing the "only living and true God," you will know "Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent;" hearing and learning of the Father, you will come to the Son: and thus, after every self-righteous effort has been tried in vain, you will, ere you are aware, "repent and believe the gospel." Then you will no longer conceive of God as a being who avails himself of his almighty power to awe you into silence; but as one who has righteousness on his side, on account of which "every mouth will be stopped, and all the world be guilty" before him. Then, instead of being overwhelmed and driven to despair by the doctrine of election, it will appear not only equitable but the only source of hope. You will perceive that what would have been just towards all mankind cannot be unjust towards a part of them: and, feeling yourself divested of all claim, unless it be to shame and confusion of face, you will throw yourself at the feet of sovereign mercy. I do not say you will be *willing to be saved or lost, as it shall please God*. Some worthy men have worked themselves and others into a persuasion that they were the subjects of such resignation: but resignation of this kind is not required at our hands, as it would be inconsistent with that importunity for the blessing with which we are encouraged to besiege the throne of grace, and even with love to God itself, which cannot possibly be reconciled to be everlastingly banished from him, and to live in enmity against him. But this I say: you will feel and acknowledge that God might justly cast you off for ever; and that, if he accept and save you, it must be purely of undeserved mercy.

You say you *dare not believe*. If you mean that you dare not entertain the per-

suation of your being saved in your present condition, that may be very proper; but has God any where revealed that you shall? If not, such a persuasion would not be faith but presumption. That faith which has the promise of eternal life has revealed truth, and particularly the gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ, for its object. And dare you not believe this? Rather, how dare you disbelieve it? How will you "escape if you neglect so great salvation?" Is it presumption to take God at his word? Is it presumption to renounce your own righteousness, and submit to the righteousness of God? Is it presumption to believe that Christ "is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him?" Rather, is it not the greatest of all sins to question these truths, after all that God has said in confirmation of them?

But you will answer, That at which I hesitate is embracing the *promises, with application to myself*. You are not required or allowed to take the promises in any other than their *true meaning*. So far as that meaning includes *your case*, so far you are warranted to apply them to it, and no farther. For example: if you return to the Lord you have a right to conclude that you as readily as any sinner in the world shall receive abundant pardon; if you come to Jesus, you shall in no wise be cast out; but neither these promises nor any other hold up any assurance of salvation to the impenitent and unbelieving. First believe the promises to be what they profess to be, true, great, and precious, to the renouncing of every other foundation of hope; and then the consciousness of this will afford a ground of persuasion that the blessings contained in them are your own.

But you add, you *cannot* repent, and *cannot* believe. Consider, I beseech you, what it is that hindereth; and whether it be any thing else than the latent enmity of your heart to God. If you loved him, surely you could repent; nay, surely you could not but repent, and mourn for all your transgressions against him: surely you could not be insensible to the glory of Christ, and the way of salvation by him. You love yourself, and *can* mourn on your own account; but for all that you have done against him you *cannot* be grieved! You love yourself, and would give the world, if you had it, to escape the wrath to come: but, for all that the Saviour has done and suffered, you can perceive no loveliness in him! You can see no glory in being pardoned for the sake of his atonement; no comeliness in him, no beauty that you should desire him! Do I misrepresent the case? Let conscience answer.

O, my dear young friend, do not cover

your sin, nor flatter yourself that the bar to your salvation does not lie in your own heart. With the secret purposes of God you have nothing to do as a rule of conduct: the things that are revealed belong to you; and these are, that you should repent of your sins and believe in Christ alone for salvation. If you be not found an unbeliever, you need not fear being found a reprobate. I am yours, with much affection,

ARCHIPPUS.

#### LETTER IV.

[Archippus to Epaphras.]

My dear Friend,

SEVERAL months have elapsed since I wrote to you, and I have received no answer. Am I to interpret your long silence as an intimation that you do not wish for any further correspondence with me on the important subject of your last? If I felt no concern for your eternal welfare, I might not only so consider it, but remain as silent on my part as you do on yours. But I must write at least this once. When I think of your situation, I feel somewhat as the apostle did towards the Galatians—a “travailing in birth that Christ may be formed in you.”

In looking over the copy of my last, I acknowledge I have felt some misgivings of heart. I am sometimes ready to ask, May it not appear to him as though I were unfeeling? Though what I wrote was, according to the best of my judgment, the truth of God, yet was there not too much use of the probe for a single letter? Might I not have dwelt less on the searching, and more on the consolatory? Yet, after all, I am not sure that I ought. But as the apostle, after addressing a searching epistle to the Corinthians, had many conflicts in his own mind concerning the issue, and at times half repented, so it is with me. Yet what counsel or direction have I to offer, which has not already been offered? If the free grace of the gospel, or the all-sufficient redemption of Jesus Christ, would comfort you, I could joyfully enlarge upon them. The provisions of mercy are free and ample. “All things are ready:” millions of sinners have already come to the marriage, “and yet there is room.” If there were only a *peradventure* that you should be accepted, that were sufficient to warrant an application. Thus the lepers reasoned in their perishing condition: “Why sit we here until we die? If we say we will enter into the city, the famine is there; and, if we

sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall into the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and, if they kill us, we can but die.” Thus also reasoned Esther: “I will go in unto the king, which is not according to law; and, if I perish, I perish!” But in applying to the Saviour of sinners there are no such peradventures. To cut off every objection, he has proclaimed with his own lips, “Ho! every one that thirsteth, let him come unto me and drink!”—“Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!”—“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that *asketh receiveth*; and he that *seeketh findeth*; and to him that *knocketh it shall be opened*!”

But to all this you repulsively answer, I cannot repeat, I cannot believe. What then can I do?—If the doctrine of the cross contain no charms which can attract you, it is not for me to coin another gospel, nor to bend the Scriptures to the inclination of man’s depraved heart. We must bend to them, and not they to us; or, if not, they will be found to be true, to our confusion.

I am aware that persons in your condition desire above all things to be soothed and comforted by something else than the gospel. They imagine themselves to be willing to be saved in God’s way,—as willing as the impotent man that waited at the pool was to be made whole: therefore they wish to be directed to wait and hope in the way that they are in, till it shall please God to release them, as by the moving of the waters. It is also grateful to them to be encouraged, on the ground of their *present distress*, to hope that God has mercy in reserve for them; for that it is his usual way first to convince of sin, and afterwards to impart the joys of salvation. A company of gentlemen (on board a ship that touched at one of the southernmost parts of South America) had a mind to make a short botanical excursion. They accordingly ascended one of the mountains. Ere they were aware night came on, and a very cold fog. They felt an unusual propensity to sleep: but a medical friend, who was with them, strongly remonstrated against every indulgence of the kind, as they would be in the utmost danger of never waking again. What would you have thought of this gentleman’s conduct, if, instead of urging his companions to escape from the mountain, he had indulged them in their wishes? The Scriptures declare that “he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of

God abideth on him:" and surely we ought not to contradict this declaration, either by directing to the use of means short of believing, or encouraging those who use them to hope for a happy issue. The crucifiers of Christ were in great distress; but Peter did not encourage them to take comfort from this, but directed them to repent and be converted—to repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, for the remission of sins. The Philippian jailer was in great distress; but Paul had no comfort for him on this ground, nor any counsel to offer but believing in Jesus.

A necessity is laid upon me, and woe is me if I preach not the gospel! I have not deviated from this point in what I have hitherto written; nor will I deviate, whatever be the consequence. Wherefore? Because I love you not? God knoweth! I am determined not to know anything but Jesus Christ and him crucified! If this doctrine fail to relieve you, the cause must be looked for, not in the want of encouragement, but of desire to embrace it. But, O my dear young man, consider Jesus Christ, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession! As one that has tasted that the Lord is gracious, though a perishing sinner like yourself, I do most heartily recommend him to you. I was brought low, and he helped me! The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord, O Lord I beseech thee, deliver my soul! By happy experience I can bear witness that gracious is the Lord and righteous: yea, our God is merciful. He delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. O taste and see that the Lord is gracious! The eyes of many are upon you: saints and angels stand ready to embrace you as a brother, as soon as you shall embrace their Lord. The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and he that heareth saith, Come; and Jesus himself, who testifieth these things, exalted as he is in the highest heavens, closes the invitation, saying, "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." Pore no longer on your misery: look no longer for any worthiness in yourself: but, as an unworthy sinner, rely for acceptance with God on the righteousness of Christ alone. This is the good old way in which believers in every age have walked: walk therein, and you shall find rest unto your soul. I am your affectionate friend,

ARCHIPPUS.

## LETTER V.

[Epaphras to Archippus.]

My dear Sir,

My mind has been for some time in so confused and unhappy a state, that though I felt my obligations to you, and by no means intended to slight your kindness, yet I knew not how to answer you. I rather felt a wish to be secluded, at least for a time, that I might bemoan my case by myself in secret.

Your first letter, I must say, yielded me no comfort. On the contrary, it wounded me not a little. I confessed to you that I had been a great sinner; you persuaded me that I was much worse than I imagined. I acknowledged the hardness of my heart, and the prevalence of my unbelief; you attributed both to my being destitute of the love of God. I wanted relief, and you cut off every source of consolation save that which arises from faith in Christ, of which I had told you I felt myself incapable. When I considered my inability to believe, however, I did not mean that I could not believe the gospel; I supposed I could and did believe that: you have shown, however, that in this I was mistaken. My heart, it seems, is that of an infidel. Alas for me! instead of obtaining any relief, such things sink me deeper and deeper into despondence. Your letter seemed to be a kind of message from God; but it was a message of death. After reading it I felt myself locked up as it were in a dungeon, and loaded with inextricable chains. I could find no words to vent the sorrow of my heart but those of the weeping prophet. "He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travail. He hath set me in dark places as those that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out; he hath made my chain heavy. Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer!" In such a state of mind, you will not wonder that I should have no heart to write.

Since that time, however, I have conversed with different persons, and have heard different ministers; from one of whom, especially, I obtained what I could never obtain before—*encouragement*. As you may suppose, it was impossible wholly to conceal my unhappiness of mind from those about me. One day I fell in company with a gentleman of very respectable appearance. He, observing in my countenance an habitual dejection,



and learning, it should seem, by some means the cause of it, wished to offer me a little advice. I heard what he had to say; but it did me no good. He observed that there was such a thing as being righteous over-much; that he did not apprehend I had been a greater sinner than other men; and that if I were sober, just, and devout in moderation, all would be well enough at last. I had too much light to be imposed upon by this. I thought I saw plainly that though he might be a gentleman and a scholar, yet he had not learned to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

After this I met with a poor man who appeared to be very zealous in religion. On perceiving my unhappiness, he was very desirous that I should go with him to his place of worship. He told me that their minister would pray for me, and give me the best of counsel; and that great numbers of people in my case had, on going to hear him, obtained relief. They had gone, he said, under the most pungent distress, but had come away pardoned, and justified, and full of joy. He moreover cautioned me against the licentious and horrible doctrines of imputed righteousness, invincible grace, and predestination. I heard what he said, and it appeared to me that he was very sincere in his way: but I thought I had long ago experienced what he called a being pardoned and justified; namely, a strong impression upon my mind, even in the words of Scripture, that I was so, which yet have proved delusive. And as to his warnings, though I had felt many inward struggles against those doctrines, yet I could never persuade myself to think them any other than scriptural. I went, however, two or three times to hear at the place which he recommended: but though they might be very good people, yet the religion which they taught appeared to me exceedingly superficial and enthusiastic. I saw, plainly enough, that almost any kind of unhappiness concerning one's future state would be admitted as godly sorrow; and any sudden impression that should fill the mind with joy would be deemed the joy of the gospel. My conscience, therefore, would not suffer me, however desirable consolation would have been to me, to take up my rest with them.

One day I was induced to hear a stranger who preached an occasional sermon near to where I reside. In the course of his sermon he spoke much of the duty and privilege of prayer; and, when addressing himself to the unconverted, observed that they had no power of themselves to turn to God through Christ; but they could pray to the Lord for grace to enable them to do

it; and, if they did so, he would hear them, and grant them the thing they prayed for. At first I caught at this idea, as appearing to exhibit something that was more within my reach than repentance and faith themselves: but, when I came to the trial, I found it was only in appearance; for unless I prayed in *faith*, that is, with an eye to the Saviour in all I asked, God would not hear me. But to pray in faith could not be more within my reach than faith itself. I thought of you at the time; and that this was a kind of language that you would not use, on account of its implying that a sinner is not to be exhorted *immediately* to repent and believe in Christ, nor to any thing spiritually good; but merely to what may be done without repentance, and without faith, as the means of obtaining them.

If I understand your sentiments, you would direct an unconverted sinner to pray, and to pray for spiritual blessings, as Peter did the sorcerer; but it must be *with* repentance, and *in the name of Jesus*; that is, it must be the prayer of penitence and faith. I also was conscious to myself that I was equally able to repent and believe in Christ as I was *sincerely* to pray for grace to enable me to do so; and that, if I could once find a heart for the one, I could for the other.

I pass over some other interviews and sermons, and proceed to relate what has been more interesting to my heart than any thing else. One Lord's day morning, I was very much dejected, owing to some struggles of mind about embracing the scheme of *universal salvation*. Having read a publication in favor of it, my heart would gladly have acquiesced; but my judgment and conscience would not suffer me. I saw clearly that that doctrine could never be embraced without offering the most indecent violence to the holy Scriptures. Indeed, I was conscious that I should never have thought of believing it to be true, if I had not first wished to have it so.

These thoughts, however, sunk me into the deepest despondency, as they seemed to darken a gleam of hope which, though faintly, I cherished. In this dejected state of mind, I went to hear a minister whom I had more than once heard spoken of as singularly evangelical, and his preaching as being much in an experimental strain. I attended both parts of that day, and once or twice more, before I obtained any relief. As he generally addressed himself to believers, and dwelt upon the privileges and blessings to which they are entitled, I did not, at first, feel interested in his discourses. At length, he took his text from Matt. xi. 28: "Come unto me, all ye that

labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I was glad to hear the passage named, as I hoped that something might now be said suited to my case. I knew I was weary and heavy laden to a great degree, and rest for my soul was the very thing I wanted. He proposed first to notice the *characters* addressed; and, secondly, the *blessings to which they were invited*; or, as he explained it, which *belonged to them*. Under the first head of discourse he distinguished sinners into *insensible and sensible*, and endeavored to prove that it was the latter only who were here invited to come to Christ. He mentioned several other invitations, as "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat, yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price."—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."—"The Spirit and the bride say, Come, —and let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Each of these passages was explained in the same way, as descriptive of the spiritual thirst of a soul made sensible of its wants.

I was apprehensive, at first, that this distinction would exclude me from having any part or lot in the matter; but when the minister came to explain himself, and to depict the case of the weary and heavy laden, he entered so fully into my experience that all my apprehensions were removed. I was conscious that I was just that poor miserable creature that he described, who had long been seeking rest, but could find none. He warned us against making a *righteousness* of our tears and moans, but insisted that they were *evidences* of a work of grace; proving from God's promises to the "poor in spirit," to the "broken-hearted," and the like, that there was hope in Israel for such characters; and that these their distresses were sure signs of their future deliverance, for that whom the Lord wounded he healed, and whom he killed he would make alive.

After worship was over, I could not forbear speaking to the minister, and thanking him for his discourse; and, the greater part of the congregation being withdrawn, I opened my mind freely to him, told him how long I had been under distress of mind, and that I could never before obtain relief. A few of his most intimate friends were present, who also heard what I said. They affectionately smiled, and congratulated me on my having been brought under an evangelical ministry, and by means of it found rest unto my soul. Nor did they scruple to say that the reason why so many of God's dear children were held in bondage for so long a time was that the

pure gospel was withheld from them, and a kind of linsy-woolsey doctrine substituted in its place. I confess my heart had some misgivings at that time, fearing lest I should be cheered by flattering words, instead of the water of life. I told them that I dare not at present consider myself a converted man; but that I hoped I should be such. They answered me with a smile, intimating that such thoughts were a sign of grace; and that there was no doubt but that in waiting at the pool of God's ordinances I should obtain all that peace and joy which my soul desired.

On my return home, I cannot say that I was wholly free from apprehensions; but my heart was greatly lightened of its load. I have attended at the same place ever since; and have often been encouraged in the same way. I am not without my doubts and fears lest my peace should prove unfounded; and, by a careful re-perusal of both your letters, I perceive that, if your principles be true, it is so. Yet surely my hope is not all in vain! I tremble at the thought of sinking again into the horrors of despondency. I am yours, with much respect,

EPAPHRAS.

## LETTER VI.

[Archippus to Epaphras.]

My dear young Friend,

IF I have been interested by your former letters, I must say I am doubly so by your last. Your case appears to me to be delicate and dangerous. Yet I feel myself in a very unpleasant situation. I cannot speak the truth without its having the appearance of a want of feeling towards you, and of something like invidiousness towards those with whom you associate. If I could remain silent with a good conscience, I should certainly do so.

It afforded me pleasure to learn that you had refused consolation from several of those sources which heal the hurt of a sinner slightly, crying, "peace, peace, when there is no peace;" but, without taking upon me to decide upon the personal religion of the parties, I must declare my firm persuasion that you have not refused them *all*. I cannot think a whit the better of a ministry on account of its being spoken of as "singularly evangelical." Such language frequently means no more than that a preacher is very orthodox in his own esteem, or, at most, that his preaching is singularly adapted to soothe and comfort his people. But these things are no proof that it is the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. I do not deny the character of good men, or of gospel ministers, to

all who have advanced doctrines like those by which you were comforted; but I am persuaded that, in respect of these principles, they are anti-evangelical. I have no desire, however, to impose my opinion upon you. Believe neither of us any farther than what we advance accords with the oracles of God.

*What is it, I would ask, that has given you relief?* Is it any thing in the gospel? any thing in the doctrine of the cross? If so, rejoice in your associates, and let your associates rejoice in you. If it be so, you have no reason to "doubt or fear," or cherish any "misgivings of heart." That consolation which proceeds from these sources is undoubtedly of God. But, you will ask, is there no true consolation but what is derived *directly* from the doctrine of the cross? may we not be comforted by a consciousness of that in our own souls to which God has promised everlasting life? I answer, We certainly may: the Scriptures point out many things as evidences of a work of grace; and, if we be conscious that we are the subjects of them, we are warranted to conclude ourselves interested in eternal life. But it becomes us to beware of reckoning those things as evidences of grace which are not so, and to which no promises are made in the word of God. If the account which you have given be accurate, the evidence from which your encouragement was drawn was mere *distress*—distress in which your "heart was too hard to repent," and under which you "*could not believe.*" Yet, on account of this distress, you have been complimented with possessing a "broken heart, a poor and contrite spirit;" and the promises made to such characters have been applied to you. If these things be just, a hard heart and a contrite spirit may be found in the same person, and at the same time. To this may be added, though believers derive consolation from a consciousness of that within them to which the Scriptures promise everlasting life; yet this is not the way in which the Spirit of God *first* imparts relief to the soul. The first genuine consolation that is afforded is by something *without* ourselves, even by the doctrine of the cross: whilst this is rejected or disregarded, we are unbelievers, and cannot possibly be the subjects of any disposition or exercise of mind which is pleasing to God, or to which he has promised salvation; and, consequently, cannot be conscious of any thing of the kind.

The first relief enjoyed by the manslayer was from a city of refuge being provided: after he had entered in, he would derive additional consolation from knowing that he was within its gates: and

thus it is that *rest to the soul* is promised to them that *come to Jesus,—take his yoke—and learn his spirit.* But the rest which you have found was not by *coming to him* as weary and heavy laden, but from a consciousness that you *were* weary and heavy laden, and by being taught that this was a true sign of future deliverance. You have found rest, it seems, without coming to Jesus that you may have life!

If indeed your spirit is "poor and contrite"—if it be a grief of heart to you to reflect on your conduct towards the best of beings—if a view of the cross of Christ excite to mourning, on account of that for which he died—then is thy heart with my heart; and with the greatest satisfaction I can add, give me thine hand. Yes; if so, your heart is with God's heart, with Christ's heart, and with the heart of all holy beings; and all holy beings will offer thee their hand. But in this case you not only *can*, but *do* repent and believe in Jesus. The question is, *Is that distress of soul* which is antecedent to all godly sorrow for sin, and in the midst of which the sinner is not willing to come to Jesus "as utterly unworthy that he may have life, any evidence of a work of grace? If it be, Saul during his last years, and Judas in his last hours, were both gracious characters. If ever men were weary and heavy laden, they were: but neither of them came to Jesus with his burden—neither of them found rest for his soul.

Consider, I beseech you, whether that distress of soul which has preceded and issued in true conversion be ever represented in the Scripture as an evidence of a work of grace; or whether the parties were ever comforted on that ground. Do re-peruse the cases already referred to, of Peter's address to the murderers of Christ, and that of Paul and Silas to the jailer.

Consider impartially whether the distinction of sinners into *insensible* and *sensible*, with a design to exclude the former from being the proper objects of gospel invitation, be justifiable. A *compliance* with the invitation doubtless implies a just sense of sin, and a thirst after spiritual blessings; and so does a compliance with the divine precepts; but it does not follow that either the invitations or the precepts are improperly *addressed* to sinners, whether sensible or insensible. Those who *made light* of the gospel supper were as really and properly invited to it as those who accepted it. Those also who were invited to buy and eat, to buy wine and milk without money and without price, are described as spending their money for that which was not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not. The same invitation which, in the begin-



ning of that chapter, is given in figurative language, is immediately afterwards expressed literally, and runs thus—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The *thirst*, therefore, which they are supposed to feel, could be no other than the desire of happiness, which they vainly hoped to assuage in the enjoyments of this world; but which God assures them could never be assuaged but by the blessings of the gospel, the sure mercies of David. The invitation of our Saviour to the weary and heavy laden, is manifestly a quotation from Jeremiah vi. 16, and the people who were there invited to stand in the ways and see, to inquire after the old paths, and the good way, and to walk therein, with the promise that they should find rest to their souls, were so far from being sensible of their sin that they impudently answered, "We will not walk therein." To confine the invitations of Scripture to *sensible* sinners, and to hold up the blessings of the gospel as *belonging* to them, before, and as the ground of their compliance, is to pervert the word of God.

But why do I thus write? Is it because I want to plunge my dear young friend into the gulf of despondency? Far be this from me! My desire is to draw him off from all false dependences, and to lead him, if it might be, to rest upon the Rock of Ages. Is it consolation that he wants? Let me remind him of what I have said before. If he be willing to relinquish every other ground of hope, and to embrace Jesus as the only name given under heaven and among men by which we can be saved, there is nothing in heaven or earth to hinder it. I have no desire to persuade you that you are not in a converted state. It may be that what you have said of your being unable to repent or believe in Christ was the language of despondency. Hardness of heart and unbelief are found even in unbelievers themselves, and are frequently the objects of lamentation. There are seasons especially in which it may seem, even to a good man, as if he were void of all tenderness of heart, and all regard for Christ. Whether this was your case at that time, or not, I feel no regret for having directed you, as a perishing sinner, to believe in Jesus for salvation, rather than encouraged you to think the best of your state, from any supposed symptoms of grace that might be found in you. I would do the same with any religious professor who should be in a state of doubt and darkness respecting the reality of his religion;

for, if there be any true religion in us, it is much more likely to be discovered and drawn forth into actual exercise by an exhibition of the glory and grace of Christ than by searching for it among the rubbish of our past feelings. To discover the small grains of steel mixed among a quantity of dust, it were much better to make use of a magnet than a microscope.

An exhibition of the name of Christ is that by which the thoughts of the heart are revealed. To him, therefore, as a guilty and perishing sinner, I must still direct you. If you be indeed of a broken and contrite spirit; if true grace have a being in your soul, though it be but as the smoking flax, his name will so far be precious to you. To him your desires will ascend; in him they will centre; on his righteousness all your hope of acceptance with God will be placed; and, when this is the case, you will find rest to your soul.

I am yours, with sincere affection,

ARCHIPPUS.

#### SPIRITUAL PRIDE: OR THE OCCASIONS, CAUSES, AND EFFECTS OF HIGH-MINDEDNESS IN RELIGION; WITH CONSIDERATIONS EXCITING TO SELF-ABASEMENT.

##### INTRODUCTION.

As there is nothing pertaining to holiness which renders us more like our Lord Jesus Christ, than lowliness of mind, so there is nothing pertaining to sin which approaches nearer to the image of Satan than *pride*. This appears to have been the transgression for which he himself was first condemned, and by which he seduced our first parents to follow his example. It was insinuated to them that they were kept in ignorance and treated as underlings, and that, by following his counsel, they would be raised in the scale of being: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

All the evil that is in the world is comprehended in three things—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Each of these cardinal vices implies that man is alienated from God, and that all his affections and thoughts centre in himself: but the last is the most subtle in its influence. It consists in THINKING MORE HIGHLY OF OURSELVES THAN WE OUGHT TO THINK. It is a mental flatulency that pervades all the soul, and puffs it up with vain conceits. It is visible to all about us, but to us invisible. It seizes those revenues of

glory which are due to God, and applies them to selfish uses. Strength, beauty, genius, opulence, science, the success of labor, and the achievements of enterprise, are all perverted to its purpose. Finally : It renders man his own idol : he worshippeth the creature more than the Creator ; he sacrificeth to his own net, and burneth incense to his own drag.

But the particular species of pride which I shall attempt to delineate is that which is *spiritual*, or which has religious excellence, real or supposed, for its object.

Religion is not the only object by which religious professors may be elated ; but the elatedness occasioned by it is that only which is denominated *spiritual pride*.

### SECTION I.

#### THE OCCASIONS, OR OBJECTS, OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE.

THOUGH a considerable part of the following remarks will have respect to the faults of good men ; yet not the whole of them : spiritual pride is not confined to spiritual men. The subject of it indeed must needs be, if not a professor of religion, yet a religious man in his own esteem, but that may be all. One of its principal operations is in a way of *self-righteous hope*, which is the reigning disposition of millions who have no just claim to the character of religious ; and, as this is a species of spiritual pride which appears at a very early period, it may be proper to begin with this, and proceed to others in the order in which they are commonly manifested.

The likeness which is drawn by our Saviour of the Pharisees in his time, bears a minute resemblance to the character of great numbers in every age : all their works are done to be seen of men, and constitute the ground of their hope of acceptance with God. The sentiments of their hearts in their most devout addresses to their Maker, if put into words, would be to this effect : " God, I thank thee that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." It is not common for those who pay any regard to the Scriptures expressly to arrogate to themselves the honor of making themselves to differ. Most men will thank God that they are what they are ; and the Pharisee did the same. Many will now acknowledge, in addition to this, that their hopes of being accepted of God are " through the merits of Jesus Christ : " but it is not by such language that a self-righteous spirit is to be disguised. Nor is it peculiar to those whom we call decent

characters " to trust that they are righteous, and despise others ; " for the same spirit may be seen in the most profligate of mankind. Judging of themselves by others, they derive comfort ; for they can always find characters worse than their own. Reprove a common swearer, and he will thank God he means no harm ; for he is frank and open, and not as that liar. Convict a liar, and he will argue that in this wicked world a man cannot live if he always speak truth ; and he is not a thief. The thief pleads that he never was guilty of murder ; and even the murderer was provoked to it. Thus they can each find worse characters than their own : the motto of each is, " God, I thank thee that I am not as other men."

A minister of the church of England was some years since appointed chaplain to a certain charitable asylum, where his constant business would be to visit and converse with persons who, by their own misconduct, were reduced to the most deplorable condition. On receiving his appointment, he thought within himself, I shall have one advantage, however : I shall not have to encounter a self-righteous spirit. But on entering upon his office he soon perceived his mistake, and that there was no less pharisaism in these dregs of society than among the more refined and sober part of mankind.

Much of this spirit is seen *under the convictions and alarms of awakened sinners*. The conflicts of mind by which many for a long time are deprived of all peace and enjoyment are no other than the struggles between the gospel-way of salvation and a secret attachment to self-righteousness. When terrified by the threatenings of the word, or the near approach of death, the first refuge to which the sinner usually betakes himself is the promise of amendment. He vows to reform, and this affords him a little ease. For a time, it may be, his gross vices are relinquished ; he carefully attends to religious duties ; and, while this lasts, he flatters himself that he is a better man, and supposes the Almighty is no less pleased with him than he is pleased with himself. If he rest here, his pride proves his eternal overthrow.

But it may be his rest here is short. It commonly proves that the vows and resolutions thus made are like the morning cloud and the early dew that goeth away. A new temptation to some old sin, which was not mortified, but had merely retired during the present alarm, undoes all. Now remorse and fearful apprehension take possession of the soul, not only on account of its having sinned against greater light than heretofore, but

for destroying its own refuge. The gourd is smitten, and the sinner, exposed as to a vehement east wind, fainteth. Yet even here spiritual pride will insinuate itself and offer a species of false comfort. While he is weeping over his sins, and bemoaning the unhappiness of his case, that he should thus undo all his hopes, a soothing thought suggests itself, Will not the Almighty have compassion on me for these penitential tears! surely my mournings will be heard, and my lamentations go up before him! Many have stopped short here, and, it is to be feared, have missed of eternal life!

But it may be he is disturbed from this repose also. Conscience becomes more enlightened by reading and hearing the word. He is convinced that neither tears nor prayers, nor aught else but the blood-shedding of the Saviour, will take away sin; and that there is no way of being saved by him but by believing in him. Yet a thought occurs, Can such a sinner as I believe in Christ? Would it not be presumption to hope that one so unfit and unworthy as I am should be accepted? This thought proceeds upon a supposition that some degree of previous fitness or worthiness is necessary to recommend us to the Saviour, which is repugnant to the whole tenor of the gospel, and so long as it continues to influence our decisions, will be an insuperable bar to believing.

Self-righteousness, at some stages, will work in a way of *despair*. The sinner, finding that no duties performed in impenitence and unbelief are any way available, or in the least degree pleasing to God—that no means are pointed out in the Scriptures by which a hard-hearted sinner may obtain a heart of flesh—and that, nevertheless, he is told to repent and believe in Jesus, or perish forever—sinks into despondency. Hard thoughts are entertained of God. He thinks he has taken all possible pains with himself; and, if what he possesses be not repentance nor faith, he has no hopes of ever obtaining them. God, it seems to him, requires impossibilities, and can therefore be no other than a hard master, reaping where he has not sown and gathering where he has not strawed. The religious efforts of some, like those of the slothful servant, end here. All is given up as a hopeless case, and the things which their hearts, amidst all their convictions, have been lingering after, are again pursued.

To come to Jesus as a sinner *ready to perish*, justifying God and condemning self, suing for mercy as utterly unworthy, as one of the chief of sinners, pleading mercy merely for the sake of the atonement, is a hard lesson for a self-righteous

heart to learn. The shiftings of pride in such cases are fitly expressed by the sinner's "going about" to establish his own righteousness, and not submitting to "the righteousness of God." Like the priests of Dagon, he will set up his idol as long as he can possibly make it stand. But if ever he obtains mercy he must desist. There is no rest for the soul but in coming to Jesus. And, if he be once brought to this, all his self-righteous strivings, and the hopes which he built upon them, with all his hard thoughts of God for requiring what in his then present state of mind he *could not* comply with, will appear in their true light, the *odious workings of a deceitful and deceived heart*.

Such, and many other, are the workings of spiritual pride in the form of a self-righteous spirit under first awakenings: but it is not in this form only, nor at this period only, that it operates. You may have obtained rest for your souls in the doctrine of the cross; you may have communicated your ease to others, joined a Christian church, and may purpose to walk in communion with it through life: but still it becomes you to be upon the watch against this as well as other evils to which you are exposed.

The apostle, in giving directions for the office of a bishop, objects to a "novice," or one newly converted to the faith; and for this reason, "lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." It is here plainly implied that the early stages of even true religion, in persons possessed of promising gifts, are attended with peculiar temptations to high-mindedness. Alas, what numerous examples of this are daily apparent in young ministers! The transition, in many instances, is great: from a dejected state of mind to become guides of others, or from obscure circumstances to be elevated to the situation of a public teacher, attracting the smiles and applauses of the people, is what few young men are able to bear. When alone, conversing with God, or with their own souls, they can see many reasons for self-abasement; but when encircled with smiling crowds, and loaded with indiscreet applause, these thoughts evaporate. Every one proclaims the preacher's excellence; and surely what every body affirms must be true! In short, he inhales the incense, and becomes intoxicated with its fumes.

Such a man, we sometimes say, possesses talents, but he is aware of it. In one sense a man must needs be aware of it. Humility does not consist in being ignorant of our talents, be they what they may; but in being properly impressed with the *end* for which they are given.



The attention of a vain mind is fixed upon the talents themselves, dwelling on them with secret satisfaction, and expecting every one to be sensible of them no less than himself. Hence it is that the most fulsome adulation is acceptable. Hungering and thirsting after applause, he is ever fishing for it, and the highest degrees of it, when bestowed, strike but in unison with his own previous thoughts. Hence the flatterer, whom others can easily see through, appears to be a sensible and discerning man, who has discovered that of which the generality of people around him are insensible. Not so the humble. His attention is not fixed so much upon his talents as on the use which is required to be made of them. Feeling himself accountable for all that he has received, and conscious of his unspeakable defects in the application of them, he finds matter for continual shame and self-abasement. In this view the greatest of men may consider themselves as the "least of all saints," and unworthy of a place among them.

Vanity of mind, so far as it relates to our behavior towards man, will frequently effect its own cure. It is certain to work disgust in others, and that disgust will be followed by neglect, and other mortifying treatment. Thus it is that time and experience, if accompanied by a moderate share of good sense, will rub off the excrescences of youthful folly, and reduce the party to propriety of conduct. And, if there be true religion as well as good sense, such things may be the means of really mortifying the evil, and may teach a lesson of genuine humility: but, where this is wanting the change is merely exterior. Though the branches may be lopped off, the root remains, and is strengthened by time, rather than mortified. Youthful vanity, in these cases, frequently ripens into pride and overbearing contempt.

From the earliest ages of Christianity, those who were possessed of spiritual gifts and official situations in the church, were in danger of being elated by them. Though the eye cannot in truth say to the hand, "I have no need of thee, nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you;" yet, if there had not been something nearly resembling it in the church, such language would not have been used. Neither would the primitive ministers have been charged not to "lord it over God's heritage," if such things had never made their appearance. The primitive churches had their Diotrophes, who cast out such as displeased him (3 John 9, 10); and such men have not been wanting for successors in every age. This lust of domination has

sometimes been formed in preachers, and sometimes in men of opulence among private members; but commonly in persons, whether preachers or hearers, who were the least qualified for the exercise of legitimate rule. The churches of Christ, as well as all other societies, require to be governed, and he has prescribed laws for this purpose; but no man is fit to govern but he that is of a meek and lowly disposition. *The greatest of all must be the servant of all.* The authority which he maintains must not be sought after, nor supported by improper measures; but be spontaneously conferred on account of superior wisdom, integrity, and love.

There are various other things, as well as official situations, which furnish occasion for spiritual pride. Members of churches being equal, as members, with their pastors, may assume a kind of democratic consequence, and forget that it is their duty to honor and obey them that have the "rule over them in the Lord." If ministers are called the servants of the churches, it is because their lives are laid out in promoting their best interests; and, when this is the case, they are entitled to an affectionate and respectful demeanor. To be a servant of a Christian church is one thing, and to be a slave to the caprice of a few of its members is another. *Whatever it be in which we excel, or imagine ourselves to do so, there it becomes us to beware lest we be lifted up to our hurt.* Those differences which are produced by religion itself may, through the corruptions of our nature, be converted into food for this pernicious propensity.

Those who name the name of Christ are taught to relinquish the chase of fashionable appearance, and to be *sober and modest in their apparel and deportment*: but, while they are renouncing the pride of life in one form, let them beware that they cherish it not in another. We have seen persons whose self-complacency, on account of the plainness of their apparel, has risen to a most insufferable degree of arrogance; and who have appeared to be much more affected by a ribbon or a bonnet on another's head than by all the abominations of their own hearts. The genuine "adoring" of the Christian is not that of putting on of apparel; no, not that which is plain, any more than that which is gaudy; "but the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." To value ourselves on account of outward finery, which, where it is followed, is commonly the case, is offensive to God, and inconsistent with a proper attention to the inner man: but to value ourselves for the con-

trary may be still more so. The former, though a proof of a vain and little mind, yet is never considered, I suppose, as an exercise of holiness; but the latter is: great stress is laid upon it, and commonly to the neglect of the weightier matters of religion. In short, a righteousness is made of it, which of all things is most odious in the sight of God.

Those who name the name of Christ are taught also to *demean themselves in such a manner* as will naturally inspire respect from persons of character, and this may become a snare to the soul. Religion, by changing the course of a man's conduct, often raises him to a much superior station in society than he occupied before. From being a drunkard, a liar, or in some form a loose character, he becomes sober, faithful, and regular in his conduct. Hence he naturally rises in esteem, and, in some cases, is entrusted with important concerns. All this is doubtless to the honor of God and religion; but let us beware lest a self-complacent thought enter our heart, and we be lifted up to our hurt. This species of pride will frequently appear in a scornful behavior towards others who are still in their sins, and in a censorious and unforgiving spirit towards such members of the church as have conducted themselves with less regularity than ourselves. A lowly mind will drop a tear over the evil courses of the ungodly, and, feeling its obligations to renewing and keeping grace that hath made the difference, will find matter even in a public execution for humiliation, prayer, and praise. The falls of fellow-christians will likewise excite a holy fear and trembling, and induce a greater degree of watchfulness and supplication, lest we should in a similar way dishonor the name of God; and, if called to unite with others in the exercise of scriptural discipline, it will be with a spirit of tenderness; not for the purpose of revenge, but of recovery. Seest thou a man whose resentments rise high when another falls, who is fierce and clamorous for the infliction of censure, and whose anger cannot be otherwise appeased, there is little reason to expect that he will stand long. He "thinketh he standeth:" let him "take heed lest he fall!"

He whose character is established by a steady and uniform conduct is doubtless worthy of our esteem: but, if with this he be unfeeling towards others less uniform, there are three or four questions which it might be well for him to consider. First: Whether the difference between him and them be owing so much to the prevalence of Christian principles as to other causes. It may arise merely from a difference in *natural temper*. The sin

which easily besets them may be of a kind, which exposes them to the censures of the world; while his may be something more private, which does not come under their cognizance. It may arise from a greater regard to *reputation* in him than in them. Some men pique themselves much more than others upon the immaculacy of their character. But these are motives which if weighed in the balances will be found wanting. Secondly: Whether a censorious spirit towards those who have fallen does not prove that we arrogate to ourselves the difference and depend upon ourselves for the resisting of temptation. We may "thank God" in words that we are "not as other men," and so did the pharisee; but we may be certain while this spirit prevails that God is not the rock on which we rest. Thirdly: Whether arrogance and self-dependence be not as odious in the sight of God as the greatest outward vices, and whether it be not likely that he will give us up to the latter as a punishment for the former. We might have thought it a pity that so eminent a character as Simon Peter, one that was to take so important a part in spreading the gospel, should not have been preserved from so shameful a denial of his Lord. He prayed for him that *his faith should not fail*: why did he not pray that he should be either exempted from the trial, or preserved from falling in it? Surely if his self-confidence had not been more offensive to Christ than even his open denial of him, it had been so; but, as it was, rather than he should be indulged in spiritual pride, he must be rolled in the dirt of infamy.

God abhors the occasional exercises of self-confidence in his own people, and still more the habitual self-complacency of hypocrites. I remember a professor of religion, a member of one of our churches, who for a series of years maintained a very uniform character. He was constant in his attendance on all opportunities. At his own expense he erected a place of worship in his village for the occasional preaching of the gospel. Few men were more respected both by the world and by the church. To the surprise of every one that knew him, all at once he was found to have been guilty of fornication. The church of which he was a member excluded him. From this time he sunk into a kind of sultry despondency, shunning all company and conversation, and giving himself up to melancholy. His friends felt much for him, and would often represent to him the mercy of God to backsliders who return to him in the name of Jesus. But all was of no account: he was utterly inconsolable. His sorrow did not appear to be of that kind which, while it weeps for sin,

cleaves to the Saviour; but rather like "the sorrow of the world" which "worketh death," was accompanied with a hard heart, and seemed to excite nothing unless it were a fruitless sigh. I well recollect having some conversation with him at the time, and that his state of mind struck me in an unfavorable light. It appeared to me that the man in the height of his profession was eaten up with spiritual pride; that God had let loose the reins of his lust to the staining of his glory, and that now, looking upon his reputation as irrecoverably lost, he sunk into despair. A few years after, when his friends had begun to despair of him, all at once he wanted to come before the church and be restored to his place. In his confession little was said of the evil of his sin, or of the dishonor brought upon the name of Christ by it; but of certain extraordinary impulses which he had received, by which the pardon of his sin was sealed to him. The church, though with some hesitation, received him. They were soon under the necessity, however, of re-excluding him, as from that time he became a most self-important and contentious Antinomian.

God in calling sinners by his grace has given great proof of his sovereignty, passing over the wise and prudent and revealing himself to babes; the mighty and the noble, and choosing the base; yea, the devout and the honorable, and showing mercy to publicans and sinners. This is, doubtless, of a humbling nature, and its design was that "no flesh should glory in his presence." But even in this case there is an avenue at which spiritual pride may insinuate itself; and it seems to have found its way among the believing gentiles. Hence the following language: "Boast not against the branches; but, if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, the branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith: be not high-minded, but fear." It is easy to perceive how the same thoughts may be admitted in weak, ignoble, and once profligate characters who have obtained mercy, while others more respectable are yet in their sins.

Moreover, the Christian religion tends to enlighten and enlarge the mind. Men that have lived a number of years in the grossest ignorance, on becoming serious Christians, have gradually obtained a considerable degree of intelligence. They have not only been spiritually illuminated, so as to read the Scriptures as it were with other eyes, and to discourse on divine subjects with clearness and advantage; but have formed a habit of reading

many other useful publications and of thinking over their contents. All this is to the honor of Christianity; but through the corruption of the heart it may become a snare. It is true that spiritual knowledge in its own nature tends to humble the soul both in the sight of God and man; but all the knowledge that good men possess is not spiritual; and that which is so, when it comes to be reflected upon in unworthier moments, may furnish food for self-complacency. Neither are all whose minds are enlightened by the gospel, and whose light is so far operative as even to effect some change of conduct, good men: we read of some who "escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour," who were afterwards entangled and overcome. —2 Peter ii. 10. An influx of knowledge to some men, like an influx of wealth to others, is more than they are able to bear, and, if they have not the grace of God at heart as a balance, they will certainly be overset. A disposition for raising difficulties and speculating upon abstruse and unprofitable questions, a captiousness in hearing, an eagerness for disputing, and an itch for teaching, are certain indications of a vain mind, which at best is but half instructed, and, in many cases, destitute of the truth. Such characters are minutely described by Paul in his first epistle to Timothy: "Give no heed," saith he, "to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in faith. The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm."

If a little knowledge happen to unite with a litigious temper, it is a dangerous thing. Such characters are the bane of churches. If they might be believed, they are the faithful few who contend for the "faith once delivered to the saints:" but they know not what manner of spirit they are of, nor consider that there is a species of "contention" that "cometh only by pride." There were men of this stamp in the times of the apostle Paul, and whose character he described, with the effects produced by their wrangling. "Such a one," saith he, "is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions, and strifes of words, whence cometh envy, strife, railings, evil-surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth." It is to be hoped that some who have manifested this litigious spirit may not be altogether



“destitute of the truth;” and it may be worthy of notice that the persons referred to by the apostle are not *thus* denominated, but are supposed to kindle the fire which “men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth” keep alive. It is doubtful, however, if not more than doubtful, whether the description given of *them* will admit of hope in their favor. But if it will, and the same hope be admitted of some litigious spirits in our times, it is doubtless a very wicked thing to furnish the enemies of religion with brands, as I may say, wherewith to burn the temple of God.

Another branch of this species of pride is seen in the conduct of professors who will *take such liberties, and go such lengths in conformity to the world, as frequently prove a stumbling-block to the weak and the tender-hearted.* If reproved for it, they are seldom at a loss in vindicating themselves, attributing it to a more liberal and enlarged way of thinking, and ascribing the objections of others to weakness and a contractedness of mind. Thus some men can join in the chase, frequent the assembly room, or visit the theatre, and still think themselves entitled to the character of Christians, and perhaps to a place in a Christian church. A case nearly resembling this occurred in the primitive times. The heathen sacrifices were accompanied with feasts, at which the people ate of that which had been offered to their gods. When a number of Corinthian idolaters, who had always lived in this practice, became Christians, it proved a snare to them. They seem to have thought it hard to be obliged to deny themselves of these social repasts. Some of them ventured to break through; and, when spoken to on the subject, pleaded that the “idol was nothing,” and therefore could have no influence on the food; adding that they were not so void of “knowledge” as not to be able to distinguish between the one and the other. Paul, in answer, first reasons with them on *their own principles.* You have knowledge . . . what do you know? That an idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one. Very well: we know the same. You, it seems, by your superior discernment, can partake of the food simply as food, without considering it as offered to an idol, and so can preserve your consciences from being defiled. Be it so; yet *there is not in every one this knowledge.* Granting, therefore, that the thing itself, as performed by you, is innocent; it becomes an occasion of stumbling to others. Your mental reservations are unknown to them: while, therefore, you preserve your consciences from guilt,

theirs may be defiled in following your example. And why boast of your *knowledge?* “knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.” And if any one think that he knoweth any thing, “he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.”

Having thus condemned their vain conduct, even upon their own principles, the apostle proceeds to show that it is *in itself sinful*, as participating of idolatry. “Flee from idolatry! I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion* of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the *communion* of the body of Christ? Behold Israel after the flesh, are not they who eat of the sacrifices *partakers* of the altar? What say I then? that the idol is any thing? But this I say, that the things which the gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons! Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?—Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

This admirable counsel will serve as a universal test of right and wrong. Instead of vindicating fleshly indulgences, and priding ourselves on the superiority of our knowledge to that of others, before we engage, let us look seriously ask ourselves whether that which we are about to do be capable of being done “to the glory of God.” We can take exercise, and enjoy agreeable society, with various other things, for the purpose of unbending and recreating the mind. By these means we are enabled to return to the duties of our stations with renewed vigor. In such cases we should feel no difficulty in asking a divine blessing upon them to this end. But can we pursue the chase, frequent the theatre, or unite at the card-table, with such an object in view? Dare we pray for a divine blessing to attend these exercises before we engage in them? If not, they must needs be sinful.

Moreover, Christianity confers great and important *privileges* upon those who embrace it. “To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” They are “justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” However they may have been estranged from God, and every thing that is good, they are now “no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” The various distinctions of “male and female, rich and poor, bond and free,” are here of no account, “all are one

in Christ Jesus." This is, undoubtedly, one of the glories of the gospel, and that which proves it to be a religion framed for man. In its own nature it is also adapted to fill the soul with humility and gratitude. The natural language inspired by a proper sense of it is, "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" But even this may be converted into food for spiritual pride. To be raised from worse than nothing, and placed among "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty," is a wonderful transition; and, if contemplated in an unfavorable state of mind, may prove the occasion of evil. A place and a name in a Christian church, though in the esteem of some persons reproachful, yet in that of others may be honorable; and the party may be much more affected by it in this than in the other. Members of churches have been known to be more than a little vain of the distinction. In some it has operated in a way of turbulence; leading a member to watch with an evil eye every measure that did not originate with himself, as if it were aimed to raze the foundations of all religion. In others it has operated in a way of meanness. Pleased with the familiarity and friendly treatment which, while their conduct is uniform, they receive from men of superior stations, they have no principle of their own; their study is to please others, rather than to show themselves approved unto God. The same persons, if guilty of any thing which exposes them to censure, commonly discover far more concern for the *dishonor* of the thing than for the sin of it: and their confessions wear the appearance, not so much of the humble acknowledgments of a contrite spirit, as of the abject cringings of a mind terrified at the idea of losing its consequence.

From an idea of the honor and privileges attached to Christianity, some have been tempted to look down upon their carnal connexions as though they were beings of an inferior nature. Religious children have been in danger of losing a proper filial respect towards their irreligious parents, and religious servants towards their irreligious masters. Indeed, we have heard heavy complaints against religious servants. Some have resolved, on this account, to employ none of them. I hope this is far from being a general case. Within the sphere of my observation there are, I am persuaded, more respectable families who prefer them than otherwise. I may add, that such complaints too often proceeded from persons who either are prejudiced against religion, or who possess but a small portion of it. Nor are their declarations confined to servitude; but gen-

erally extended to all dealings with religious people. I have heard men of extensive connexions in the world, however, speak a very different language. "Of mere professors," say they, "we have no opinion; but give us men of religion to deal with: others may be held by their honor, and their interest; but that is all: a religious man is a man of principle." But true it is that many have acted as though their extraordinary hopes and privileges as Christians tended to free them, in some degree at least, from the ordinary obligations of men; and as though it were beneath them to respect and honor those persons who are destitute of piety. The repeated injunctions of the New Testament on this head, while they acquit Christianity of the evil, imply that Christians are, nevertheless, in danger of falling into it.

Nor is this spirit confined in its operation towards the *irreligious*: among Christians themselves, in their behavior towards one another, it too often intrudes itself. The parent and the children, the master and the servant, the magistrate and the subject, being all on an equal footing in the house of God, there is danger of the latter forgetting the inequality when out of it, and disregarding that order and subordination which are essential to the well-being of society. If we indulge in high-mindedness, it will be natural to dwell in our thoughts upon that relation wherein we stand upon even ground with another, rather than upon that wherein we are beneath him; and thus a parent, a master, or a magistrate, will not be honored by us in these relations, on account of his being a fellow-christian. If nothing like this had existed in the times of the apostles, it is not likely we should have had the exhortation in 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor; that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren: but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort."

To the above may be added *privileges and advantages which, though of a worldly nature, are accidentally attached to religion*. The circumstance of being of a party or denomination which has the sanction of authority, or the greatest numbers, or people of the greatest opulence and respectability belonging to it, is frequently known to furnish occasion for spiritual pride. What airs have some men assumed on account of their religion happening to be established by law, and what an outcry

have they made against schism, as though the true church and the true religion were to be known by human legislation; not considering that the same legislature establishes different forms of religion in different parts of the empire; and that episcopalians, therefore, are no less schismatical in Scotland than presbyterians and other dissenters in England. What airs also have some men assumed among dissenters on account of their denomination, or the congregation where they have attended, being distinguished for its opulence; as if, since the times of our Saviour and his apostles, things were turned upside down, and that which was then a matter of no account was now become all in all.

Even where persons are of the same denomination, the mere circumstance of a *regular and strict adherence to its rules*, though of little or no importance, becomes the occasion of a sort of spiritual pride. We have heard much of the *regular* clergy, and of the regular dissenters too, who each value themselves and despise others whom they consider as irregular, though, in many instances, they be men whose worth is superior to their own.

Nor is this spirit apparent on one side only. If some are lifted up by being of that party which has the greatest number, others are no less so in being of that which has the smallest. To despise the multitude, and to pique themselves on being among the *discerning few*, is common with men who have nothing better on which to ground their self-esteem. Pride will also find footing to support it in being *irregular*, as well as regular. The contempt with which some affect to treat all forms and rules, and those who adhere to them, is far from being to their honor, and bears too near a resemblance to the spirit of Diogenes, who trampled upon the pride of Plato, and that, as Plato told him, "with greater pride."

## SECTION II.

### THE CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL PRIDE.

THE operations of this principle may not only be traced by those things which furnish occasion for it, but by other things which have a *direct and positive influence in producing it*. The occasion and the cause must not be confounded. The one is the object upon which pride fastens, and which it perverts to its use; the other is the principle by which it is produced. The apostle himself was in danger of being "exalted above measure, through the abundance of revelations that were given him:" not that those revelations tended

in their own nature to produce this effect; but, like all other good things, they were capable of being abused through the remains of indwelling sin. To be the occasion of spiritual pride reflects no dishonor; but that which in its own nature causes it must needs be false and pernicious. The principal sources of this overwhelming stream will be found among the dark mountains of error and delusion.

It may not be in our power to determine with certainty whether the spiritual pride which we see in others *originates* in their religion or operates *notwithstanding* it; but, if we be only able to show that the former *may possibly be the case*, we shall at least furnish grounds for self-examination; and, if withal it can be proved that certain notions have a natural tendency to produce that very effect which is manifest in the spirit of those who avow them, we shall thereby be able to judge with some degree of satisfaction what is true and false religion. That which worketh lowliness of mind is from above; but that which produces self-complacency is assuredly from beneath.

It requires also to be noticed that these things may prevail in *different degrees*. The religion of some is *wholly false*; and spiritual pride compasseth them as doth a chain: that of others is *partly* so; and they are greatly affected by it: but the tendency is the same in both.

Once more: It requires to be noticed that the prevalence of true or false religion in individuals cannot be ascertained with certainty by the truth or falsehood of their *professed creed*. This may be true, and we, notwithstanding, be essentially erroneous; or, on the other hand, it may include much error, and yet the principles which really govern our spirit and conduct may be so different that the truth may nevertheless be said to dwell in us. Such cases may, however, be considered as rare—a kind of exception from a general rule.

It is a general truth, manifestly taught in the Scriptures, that spiritual pride is fed by false religion. All the false teachers of whom they give us an account were distinguished by this spirit. "They loved to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they might be seen of men.—They loved the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.—There was a certain man called Simon, who beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one.—I will come unto you shortly, and not know the speech of them that are



puffed up, but the power: for ye suffer if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.—Let us not be desirous of vain-glory: if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.—As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, constrain you to be circumcised.—Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.—Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.—Presumptuous are they, self-willed; they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.—When they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.—Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence, receiveth us not.”

It should seem, from hence, that though all spiritual pride does not arise from false religion, yet all false religion produces spiritual pride. The best of men, and those who adhere to the best of principles, are in danger of this sin: but as there is a wide and manifest difference between sinning and living in sin, so it is one thing to be occasionally lifted up, and that at a time when the great principles we imbibe are in a manner out of sight, and another to be habitually intoxicated with self-complacency, and that as the immediate *effect* of our religion. See you a man whose meditation, preaching, or writing, produces *humble charity, a pure heart, a good conscience*, and you may expect to find in him *faith unfeigned*. But if you perceive in him a fondness for unprofitable themes of discourse, which “minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith,” with a forwardness to *affirm what he does not understand*, you may be almost certain that he has “swerved from the truth, and turned aside to vain jangling.”

As true religion principally consists in “the knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent,” or in just sentiments of the *Lawgiver* and the *Saviour* of men; so almost every species of error will be found in the contrary. If we err in our conceptions of the divine character, it resembles an error at the outset of a journey, the consequence of which is that the farther we travel, the farther we are off. Without a proper sense of the holy excellence of the divine nature, it will be impossible to perceive the fitness of the law which requires us to love him with all our heart. Such a

requirement must appear rigorous and cruel. Hence we shall be disposed either to contract it, and imagine that our Creator cannot now expect any thing more at our hands than an outward decency of conduct; or, if we admit that perfect love is required, we shall still perceive no equity in it, and feel no manner of obligation to comply with it. The law will be accounted a task-master, and the gospel praised at its expense. In both cases we shall be blinded to the *multitude and magnitude of our sins*; for, as where no law is there is no transgression, so in proportion as we are insensible of the spirituality or equity of it, we must needs be insensible of the evil of having transgressed it. And thus it is that men are whole in their own esteem, and think they need no physician, or one of but little value. Thus it is that degrading notions are entertained of the Saviour, and diminutive representations given of his salvation. In short, thus it is that justification by free grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, either becomes inadmissible, or, if admitted in words, is considered as a victory over the law, and as exonerating from all obligations to obey its precepts. Here, or hereabouts, will be found the grand springs of spiritual pride.

It is difficult to conceive whence the notion of *sinless perfection* in the present life, and all the spiritual pride that attaches to it, could arise, unless it was from ignorance of the glorious holiness of God, the spirituality of his law, and the corruption of the human heart. A proper sense of these truths would impel the best character upon earth to exclaim, with the prophet, “Wo is me, I am a man of unclean lips!”

And how is it that an obligation to love the Lord supremely, and with all our hearts, should be so hard to be understood? Yet few think themselves obliged to love him. “We are *sinners*,” say they, “and *cannot* love him! and if we now and then yield him a little formal service, though it be by putting a force upon our inclinations, we imagine we do great things, nearly as much as ought to be required of us, and much more than many do whom we could name!”

Thus the sin of not loving God from our heart, and our neighbor as ourselves, is made nothing of in the world, though it be the fountain and sum of evil. The conscience itself is so defiled that, if we manifest but a decent behavior in our relations among men, it very nearly acquits us. We claim a kind of exemption from every thing else. And whether it be by the dint of repetition with which this claim has been preferred, or whether those

who ought to resist it be themselves too much inclined to favor it, so it is, that too many ministers give it up, contenting themselves with exhorting their hearers to things with which they *can* comply consistently with reigning enmity to God in their hearts—to things which contain nothing truly good in them, and which a sinner may therefore perform through his whole life, and be shut out of heaven at last as “a worker of iniquity.” There is not a precept in the Bible that can be obeyed without love, or with which a man may comply and be lost forever: to exhort sinners, therefore, to things which merely qualify them for this world, or even to reading, hearing, or praying, in such a manner as cannot please God, is deviating from the Scriptures, and yielding up the first principles of moral government to the inclinations of depraved creatures. In short, it is no better than to enforce the *tithing of mint and cummin, to the neglect of judgment, mercy, and the love of God.*

On this sandy foundation rests the whole fabric of *self-righteous hope*, and all the spiritual pride which attaches to it. So long as we are blinded to the spirituality and requirements of the divine law, we are in effect *without the law and alive* in our own conceit: and, while this is the case, we shall see no necessity for salvation by free grace through a mediator, nor any fitness in it. Seeking to be justified, as it were, by the works of the law, we shall continue to stumble at the stumbling-stone. But when the *commandment*, in its true extent, comes home to the conscience, we find ourselves the subjects of abundance of sin, of which we never before suspected ourselves; and then, and not till then, we *die*, or despair of acceptance with God by the works of our hands.

We are clearly and expressly taught what that doctrine is which excludes boasting; and, by consequence, what it is that nourishes and cherishes it. “Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. *Where is boasting, then?* It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.—Not of works, lest any man should boast.” But if, in direct opposition to this, men be taught, and induced to believe, that Christ came into the world only to give us good instruction, and set us a good example—that

there is no need of any atonement, for that “Repentance and a good life are of themselves sufficient to recommend us to the divine favor”—and that “all hopes founded upon any thing else than a good moral life are merely imaginary;”—where is boasting now? Is it excluded?

Moreover: Though the divinity and atonement of Christ be allowed, yet if men be taught and induced to believe that the grand object obtained by his death is that *repentance, faith, and sincere obedience should be accepted as the ground of justification, instead of sinless perfection*, the effect will not be materially different.\* On this principle the gospel is as really a covenant of works as the law, only that its terms are supposed to be somewhat easier. Nor is boasting excluded by it. The ground of acceptance with God, be it what it may, must be that which is made our *plea* for mercy. If faith, *considered as a virtue*, be that ground, we may then plead it before God, as *that for the sake of which we hope to be saved*; and, if this be not boasting, nothing is. This, I am persuaded, no real Christian ever did, or dares attempt. Many good men, I doubt not, have been entangled with these disputes in theory: but, when upon their knees, it is *in the name of Jesus* that their petitions for mercy are presented, and for *his sake only* that they hope for their sins to be forgiven them. Faith, in the one case, is paying a composition, and all that in such circumstances ought to be required: but faith, in the other case, is acquiescing in the bestowment of mercy as a free and undeserved favor; not as the reward of any thing good in us, but of the obedience and death of the Saviour. The intercession of Christ, in the first instance, would be an apology for the well-disposed, resembling that which he offered for Mary of Bethany—*They have done what they could*: but, in the last, it is what the Scripture denominates it, an intercession for *transgressors*. Here the divine government is justified, the conduct of sin-

\* This seems to have been the idea of bishop Butler. “The doctrine of the gospel,” he says, “appears to be, not only that he [Christ] taught the efficacy of repentance; but rendered it of the efficacy which it is, by what he did and suffered for us; that he obtained for us the benefit of having our repentance accepted unto eternal life: not only that he revealed to sinners that they were in a capacity of salvation, and how they might obtain it; but moreover, that he put them into this capacity of salvation by what he did and suffered for them; put us into a capacity of escaping future punishment, and obtaining future happiness.” See his *Analogy*, Part II. Chap. V., p. 305. [The worthy prelate seems, however, to have taken refuge in more scriptural views in the hour of death.—ED.]



ners condemned, and the all-prevailing worthiness of the intercessor alleged as the only ground, or reason, for the sake of which mercy should be bestowed. Thus it is that, while officiating as the advocate of *sinner*s, he sustains the character of "Jesus Christ the righteous." Finally: Influenced by the former of these statements, I feel myself on respectable terms with my Creator; though not sinless, yet entitled to mercy, as doing my best: influenced by the latter, I approach my Creator as *a sinner ready to perish*, without a single plea for mercy but what arises from his own gracious nature, operating through the atonement of his Son. And through my whole life, whatever be my repentance, my faith, or the sincerity of my obedience, I never ground a single plea on any of these things as a procuring cause of mercy, but invariably desire that I may be "found in him."

There is another species of spiritual pride, very different from any thing which has yet been described, and which originates in what some would call *the extremes of orthodoxy*; but which might, with greater propriety, be termed *gross heterodoxy*, or *false notions of the doctrines of grace*.

I have said it arises from *false views of the doctrines of grace*; and this I am persuaded is the case even where the most orthodox language is retained. The same terms may be used, by different persons, to express very different ideas. Thus it is that the doctrines of election, the atonement, justification by imputed righteousness, efficacious grace and perseverance in a life of faith, are held fast in words, but in fact perverted.\*

#### REMARKS ON TWO SERMONS BY W. W. HORNE, OF YARMOUTH.

[A letter to a friend.]

My dear Friend,

You have sent me two sermons by William Wales Horne, entitled "The Faith of the Gospel Vindicated," requesting my opinion of them. Why did you wish to impose upon me the task of reading such a performance? I suppose it was owing to your being a Norfolk man, and feeling interested in any thing that is done among the churches in that part of the kingdom. I hope this is not a fair sample of Norfolk divinity. If it be, they

are low indeed! It would appear, however, that the author is a man of some consequence, at least in his own eyes, as, by the motto he has chosen, he seems to consider himself as *set for the defence of the gospel*.

Defence implies attack. Has any body in Norfolk then been attacking what he calls the gospel? So it should seem; and I should almost suspect from some passages that the assailants were in his own congregation. He certainly appears to be out of humor with some of them.—p. 32. Indeed, I entertain a hope for their sakes that this may be the case; for it is grievous to think that a people sustaining the character of a Christian church should suffer themselves to be imposed upon by such flimsy, incoherent, and erroneous preaching, and reckon it the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Of Mr. Horne I know nothing, save from this publication. He seems disposed, however, to give his readers all the information he can respecting *himself*, and this, even in his title-page. From thence we learn, First, That he is not only a preacher (which we might have gathered from his publishing "Sermons"), but a "minister of the gospel." Secondly, that he is not an ordinary minister, but one who is peculiarly qualified to repel the attacks of adversaries; "set," like an apostle, "for the defence of the gospel." Thirdly, That he not only preaches and defends the gospel, but does all "extempore;" that is, without writing or studying his discourses before he delivers them. Fourthly, That though he neither writes nor thinks himself in order to preaching, yet such is the importance of what he delivers, that "James Murden," a short-hand writer, sits and takes down his discourses, by which means they are preserved for the benefit of posterity. Finally, On the back of the same leaf, we are given to understand that if the public will come forward, and, by a liberal subscription, secure him in a pecuniary view, he will give them a whole volume of these sermons, containing 300 pages, all on the most "interesting and edifying subjects." Whether all this information was *necessary*, especially that which relates to the sermons being "delivered extempore," some persons may doubt: thus much, however, may be acknowledged, that if from this time we remain ignorant of Mr. Horne's extraordinary talents, and be either uninterested or unedified by his writings, it must be our own fault.

After a great deal said about faith, in which the belief of the truth is frequently confounded with the truth believed, and much declamation against error, in which

\* It is supposed that the conclusion of this Essay is identical with certain parts of the treatise on Antinomianism, as, in the first edition of the works, the reader is referred for the remainder to the Introduction and Part II. of that piece. See Vol. II., p. 102., present edition.—Ed.



we are after all left to guess wherein it consists, the preacher at length comes to the point which he appears to have had in view; or (as he does not *think* beforehand) to the point which was impressed upon his mind at the time; that is to say, that *faith is not the duty of either sinners or saints.*

Mr. Horne asserts that "men in nature's darkness have nothing to do with the faith of God's elect." He does not mean by this that they are destitute of it, for that would be saying no more than his opponents would admit; but that they have no *right* to believe in Jesus Christ. This he attempts to prove from their being under a covenant of works. "The law," he says, "is their first husband; and till they become dead to him they cannot be married to another (that is, to Christ by faith), without being called *adulteresses.*"—p. 26. If this reasoning were allowed to be solid, it would affect only those who are in "nature's darkness;" whereas Mr. Horne's position is, That faith is not the duty of any man, of believers any more than of unbelievers. "It is not," he says, "a duty which God requires of his people, but a grace which he gives them."—p. 26. But the reasoning itself is false. That sinners are alive to the law as a covenant of works is too true; but that the law in that character is alive to them is not true.

The covenant of which the apostle speaks, in the passage alluded to, is that which was made with Israel at Sinai, to which they as a nation were bound by divine authority till the coming of Christ, but which being then abolished, they were no longer under obligation to adhere to it as a covenant, but were at liberty to embrace a new and better dispensation. This was applicable to the Jews, to whom the apostle addresses himself as to them *who knew the law*, but is totally inapplicable to gentiles, who never were married to the law. But, whether the covenant of works be considered as made with Israel at Sinai or with man in innocence, it is no longer in force; that is to say, it is dead. In the former view, it was rendered null by the introduction of the gospel: "For in that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." In the latter view it must have ceased from the time of man's apostasy. The law has no promise of life to a single transgressor, and never had; but merely a threatening of death. God is not, therefore, in covenant with sinners, nor they with him: they are not under a covenant of works; but merely under the curse for transgressing it. Thus, taking the covenant which way

we will, it is dead; and therefore, on Mr. Horne's own principle, sinners ought to be dead to it; and, in virtue of the free invitations of the gospel, are at liberty to be married to another.

A *desire to be under the law* is not now an attachment to a divine constitution, nor is there any regard to God's law in it; it is merely a proud and unbelieving reluctance to admit that we have broken the law, and a vain desire to be still claiming life as the reward of our own good deeds. In short, it is no other than an attachment to the idol of our own righteousness; and we might as well infer that while a sinner is *joined to idols* he has no *right* to desert them, and return to God, as that he would be found guilty of spiritual adultery by coming off from all dependence on self, and believing in Jesus Christ. If this doctrine were true, our Saviour, instead of complaining of the unbelieving Jews that they *would not come to him that they might have life*, ought to have commended them for their fidelity to their "first husband." Nay, if this doctrine be true, I see not why Mr. Horne should exclaim as he does against people being of a pharisaical or self-righteous spirit; they ought rather to be commended for their chaste adherence to the law, as to their own proper husband.

Mr. Horne tells us of some who "strive to enter in at the strait gate, and are not able;" and that the reason why they are not able is that they "do not strive *lawfully*, or consistently with the mind and will of God, not coming to God in his own lawful and appointed way." "The Jews of old," he says, "strove to enter in, but were not able; because they strove, like our modern pharisees, to enter in by the works of the law."—Rom. ix. 32, 33. (p. 7.) Very good: but how can these things hang together? If coming to God by Jesus Christ, and not by the works of the law, accord with the "mind and will of God," and be God's "lawful and appointed way;" how can it be *unlawful* to walk in it? On the other hand, if the law as a covenant be the proper husband of the unconverted, and they ought faithfully to adhere to him, and not to come to God by Jesus Christ, on pain of being called "adulteresses," why complain of them for striving *unlawfully*, and tax them with losing a prize by this their unlawful conduct with which, after all, they had "nothing to do?" "Self-righteous thoughts and imaginations," says he, "are as inimical to the attributes of the Deity, and as offensive to the Lord of glory, as the immorality of the profligate part of mankind." And yet they have no *right* to relinquish them by believing in Jesus Christ! "A

self-righteous sinner," he adds, "is in open rebellion against the Lord, and against his anointed Son." And yet he has no *right* to be reconciled to him, or to come to him that he might have life! "The spirit of the self-righteous is directly opposite to that humility, self-abhorrence, and self-abasement requisite in poor, undone, rebellious sinners, when coming before a God of immaculate purity."—p. 42. And yet, strange to tell, they *ought* to be of this spirit, and not of that which renounces these self-exalting notions and depends entirely on Jesus Christ, lest they be called "*adulteresses!*" In most cases, gross inconsistencies are reckoned blemishes: whether they will be so in this, I cannot determine. As the preacher does not profess to think before he speaks, contradiction may, for aught I know, be here in character.

"Whatever may be thought of universal exhortations, I am bold to assert," says Mr. Horne, "that not one of the self-righteous are invited to come to Christ.—Christ "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."—p. 26. Of Mr. Horne's "boldness" there is certainly no doubt: but "wherein he is bold (I speak foolishly) I am bold also." The self-righteous Jews were invited to the gospel-supper before the gentiles. And, though they *made light of it*, yet the kingdom of God at that time *came nigh* unto them. The same characters were exhorted "while they had the light, to believe in the light, that they might be the children of light." Now, whether we should hearken to God's word, or to the "bold" assertions of Mr. Horne, let Christians judge.—But Christ "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." True; and he came into the world to *save, not the righteous, but sinners*; yet Paul and many other self-righteous characters were saved by him; not, however, *in* their self-righteousness, but *from* it: and thus it is that self-righteous characters are *called* to relinquish their vain hopes, and to come to Jesus as *sinners* for salvation.

"Faith," says Mr. Horne, "is not a natural grace: it is no duty of the law." Having no idea what a "natural grace" is, unless it were some ornament of the body or mind, I can make no answer to the former part of this assertion. As to the latter, it is true that obedience to the law and faith in Christ, as *mediums of obtaining life*, are in the Scriptures opposed to each other. The one receives justification as a reward, the other as a free gift to the unworthy, wholly out of respect to the righteousness of another.

It is on the *medium of obtaining life* that the apostle speaks, when he says, the law is not of faith. "The just," says he, "shall *live* by faith." And "the law is not of faith; but the man that doeth them shall live in them." Justification by obedience to the law was entirely distinct, therefore, from justification by faith in Christ; the one would be by works; the other is by grace.

It does not follow, however, that the law, *considered as a standard of right and wrong*, is opposed to faith, or that it does not require it. It is manifest that faith is a part of the *revealed will* of God, being commanded in the Scriptures. "Repent and believe the gospel."—"While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."—"This is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ." If these commandments have not their root in the moral law, which requires every creature to love God under every manifestation by which he shall at any time make himself known, they must be the requirements of the gospel, under the form of a *new law*; a principle which has been generally rejected by the friends of evangelical truth.

"Had faith," says Mr. Horne, "been a duty of the law, the Jews of old would have obtained that which they sought after (the peculiar favor of God); for they sought it by the works of the law. But faith was not of the law, and therefore they could not obtain it.—p. 27. By this reasoning, it would seem as if the carnal Jews really complied with the divine law; going to the utmost of its requirements, and this without finding faith in Christ among them, because it was not there to be found. But has Mr. Horne yet to learn that in all the attachment of the carnal Jews to the works of the law there was no real conformity to any divine precept? "For the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Mr. Horne considers faith as the "gift, or work, of God's Holy Spirit;" and therefore concludes that it cannot be a duty. I have no dispute with him as to faith, and every thing else which is truly good in a fallen creature, being of grace: but it does not follow thence that it is not a duty; for there is no good performed in the world but that which grace produces. If, therefore, nothing be the duty of sinners but that which may be done without the grace of God, it is not their duty to do any thing good: and, if so, all their alienation of heart from God and goodness is not their sin; nor does it require forgiveness.—"Is it the duty of the unconverted

man," asks Mr. Horne, "to make himself a new creature in Christ; to give himself the Holy Ghost?" No; but it is his duty to be that which nothing short of the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit can make him.

Finally: "If evangelical faith be a duty, the believer may glory, and boast himself against the unbeliever."—p. 31. If it were a duty with which he complied *of his own accord, making himself to differ*, he might; but not else. I suppose Mr. Horne reckons himself a believer, and have done some good in the world, by preaching and "defending the gospel;" and does he glory on this account? He may; but he cannot have *so learned Christ, if so be he have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus*.

If I could have access to the churches in Norfolk who are connected with Mr. Horne, I would affectionately and earnestly entreat their attention to the subject. Not that I wish them to embroil themselves and one another in furious contentions. Far from it! I should be very sorry to hear of any minister, whom I considered as embracing the truth, following Mr. Horne's example. It is not by converting the pulpit into a stage of strife, nor by availing ourselves of the silence which decency imposes upon an audience to pour forth personal invective, that truth is promoted. Such conduct may pass with some people for faithfulness; but in reality it is as mean as it is injurious. It is by reading, by calm and serious reflection, by humble prayer, and by a free and friendly communication of our thoughts to one another in private conversation, that truth makes progress.

I do not wish the churches in Norfolk, or any where else, to be engaged in unprofitable disputes; but, if I could have access to them, I would address them in some such manner as the following:—

Be not led away, my brethren, by vain men. Judge for yourselves. If you choose to examine the subject to which Mr. Horne refers you, read, and read impartially, what has been written upon it.\* Or, if things of a controversial nature be disagreeable to you, read the lives of an *Edwards*, a *Brainerd*, and a *Pearce*; and *know—not the speeches of them that are puffed up, but the power*. Above all, read your Bible, and carefully notice whether these things be so. Inquire whether the Scriptures do not exhort, admonish, and persuade sinners to those very things

\* Particularly, Booth's *Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners*; Scott on *The Nature and Warrant of Faith*; and a work entitled *The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation*.

which, where they exist, are ascribed to the grace of God. Do not take it for granted that you are *sound in the faith* because such preachers as Mr. Horne exhort you to hold fast your present sentiments. That faith is sound, and that only, which accords with the Scriptures, and finds a use for every part of them. The Scriptures are not written systematically; yet they contain materials for a system. They resemble the stones which were wrought for the building of the temple, previously to their being laid in it: each was prepared for its proper place, and adapted to form a part of a beautiful whole. Some of these materials might have been worked up in any one of those "high places" which were a snare to Israel, or even in a "temple for Moloch;" but no other building than that which was erected according to the divine pattern delivered to Solomon would have found a use for all. That fabric in which every material finds its place is the true temple of God.

Many writers and preachers have formed their favorite schemes, or adopted them from others, and been very eager in defending them: but, in so doing, a great part of the Bible has been thrown aside as useless, and has rarely been mentioned but for the purpose of explaining it away. Arminianism can find but little use for the doctrinal part of Paul's epistles, in which free, discriminating, and effectual grace, is clearly taught; and false Calvinism looks with an evil eye on the exhortations, warnings, and invitations to the unconverted, in the four evangelists, and the Acts of the Apostles. Is not this a plain proof that neither of these systems is evangelical? That, I say again, is the true gospel which gives to every part of Scripture its fair and full meaning; and, if the views we have hitherto entertained will not do this, we ought to conclude that, whatever we may have learned, we have yet to learn "the truth as it is in *Jesus*."

Judge impartially, my brethren, whether the doctrine taught by Mr. Horne, and others, will admit of such exhortations to the unconverted as occur in the preaching of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles. If the language in which they address their carnal hearers were uttered in your pulpits, and nothing added by the preacher to explain away its force, would you not begin to suspect him of error? Yet your so doing ought in reality to make you suspect yourselves; and to fear lest, while you think you are doing God service, you should be found fighting against him.

In calling the doctrine defended by Mr. Horne *false Calvinism* I have not miscalled it. In proof of this, I appeal to the



writings of that great reformer, and of the ablest defenders of his system in later times—of all indeed who have been called Calvinists till within a hundred years. Were you to read many of Calvin's Sermons, without knowing who was the author, you would be led, from the ideas you appear at present to entertain, to pronounce him an Arminian; neither would Goodwin, nor Owen, nor Charnock, nor Flavel, nor Bunyan, escape the charge. These men believed and preached the doctrines of grace; but not in such a way as to exclude exhortations to the unconverted to repent and believe in Jesus Christ. The doctrine which you call Calvinism (but which, in reality, is antinomianism) is as opposite to that of the Reformers, Puritans, and Nonconformists, as it is to that of the apostles.

We do not ask you to relinquish the doctrine of salvation by grace alone: so far from it, were you to do so we would, on that account, have no fellowship with you. We have no doubt of justification being wholly on account of the righteousness of Jesus; nor of faith, wherever it exists, being the free gift of God. On such subjects we could say with Job, "We have understanding as well as you; we are not inferior to you; yea, who knoweth not such things as these?" But we ask you to admit other principles, equally true, and equally important as they are; principles taught by the same inspired writers, and which, therefore, must be consistent with them.

Doctrinal sentiments will have a great influence on the whole of our religion. They will operate powerfully in the forming of our spirit, and the regulation of our conduct. Many people have complained of the unchristian spirit discovered by Mr. Huntington and his followers. "We have not so much objection," say they, "to his doctrine; but such an awful degree of spiritual pride and rancor runs through all he writes—." For my part, I never make such complaint: I should as soon complain of thistles and thorns for their bearing prickles. Mr. Huntington's spirit compares with his doctrine; and, if we receive one, we must receive both.

False doctrine will "eat as doth a canker:" in individuals it will produce self-importance, self-will, and almost every other selfish disposition; and, if admitted into churches, it will be followed by a neglect of faithful discipline, and holy practice. Such have been the effects of that doctrine for which Mr. Horne contends in many of the churches in the midland parts of the kingdom; and such, it is to be feared, have been its effects in some of yours.

Though the apostles of our Lord renounced all dependence upon the works of the law for justification, yet they did not "make void the law, but established it; accounting it "holy, just, and good;" and "delighted in it after the inner man:" but many preachers, who are eager in defending these principles, do not scruple to disown it entirely as a *rule of life*; and, though Mr. Horne has not done this, yet he continually confounds what the Scriptures distinguish, applying that which is spoken of the law as a *covenant*, or *term of justification*, to that which respects it as the *eternal standard of right and wrong*. But those who scarcely ever mention the law of God without disrespect are not far from disowning it as a rule of life; and those who disown it as a rule of life can hardly be expected to walk by it. Far be it from me to deal in indiscriminate censure. That good men have favored these principles, I have no doubt: and, where the heart is upright, an erroneous sentiment, though it be very injurious, will not be the great governing principle of life. It is also allowed that bad men will be found under every form of religious profession. But, so far as my observation extends, there is a much larger proportion of such characters among ministers of this description than any others who are accounted evangelical. Many of them are not only known to be loose in their general deportment, but seem to have laid aside all honor and conscience towards the churches. Some, not having any stated employment (as well they may not), wander up and down the country, as if for a piece of bread, sowing the seeds of dissension, and raising a party for themselves, in every place where they come. Others, when invited to preach to a church on probation, after having divided and scattered it by their violence, have been necessitated to leave it; and, finding no other people who would employ them, have frequently been known to retire with a party of their adherents, and to set up an opposite interest in the same place, to the great injury and reproach of religion. Yet these men, if they may be believed, are each "set for the defence of the gospel."

From the pen of an apostle and prisoner of Jesus Christ such language was proper; but the "words of the wise" are not *fitted in the lips* of every one. Whether these men wish to imitate Mr. Huntington, who takes for his motto the words of Job, "The root of the matter is found in me," or whether it be natural to them to proclaim to the world the high opinion they entertain of themselves, I cannot determine: but this is certain, that if they and he had each studied to imitate a cer-

tain impostor, who "bewitched the people, giving out that *himself was some great one*," they could scarcely have acted in stricter conformity to his exauple.

I have little or no acquaintance with your ministers; but I know something of those in other parts of the country who embrace the doctrine taught by Mr. Horne, and have reason to believe that their preaching is mostly composed of ludicrous rant and idle declamation. The principal objects against which they declaim are pharisaism and the devil; and the method taken to persuade their hearers that they are the greatest enemies to both is *telling them that they are so!* As to the forner, if it consists in *trusting that we are righteous, and despising others*, perhaps there are few religious professors who can prefer a better claim to it than themselves. And, as to their boasting and brandishing against the latter, what serious mind, nay, what mind possessed of common understanding, can endure it? It may furnish the ignorant and light-minded with a laugh; but every man of sense must be disgusted by it. To hear the low and vulgar jokes which they are continually uttering against the grand adversary of God and man, both in the pulpit and out of it, one might be tempted to conclude that, instead of being his enemies, they were on terms of more than ordinary intimacy with him. Mr. Merryman may have high words with his master, for the amusement of the audience; but he will not hurt him: they understand one another. Sure I am, Satan has no objection to be thus treated.

*So they have preached, and so too many have believed.* Brethren, "Prove all things, hold fast that which is good! And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, soul and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

## THE MORAL LAW THE RULE OF CONDUCT TO BELIEVERS.

[A letter to a friend.]

My dear Brother,

You requested me to give you my reasons, in the brief compass of a letter, for considering *the moral law as the rule of conduct to believers*. It is painful that a question of this nature should ever have been started among professing Christians; but this, and other things of the kind, are permitted, that they who are approved may be made manifest.

You do not wish me, my dear brother, to encounter the foul dogmas of our pulpit-libertines; but to state a few plain,

scriptural evidences, which may be useful to some serious minds, who have been entangled in the mazes of their delusions.—Before I proceed to this, however, it will be proper to make a remark or two in a general way.

First: There is no dispute on the ground of our acceptance with God. We are not justified on account of any thing inherent, whether before, in, or after believing; but merely for the sake of the righteousness of Christ, believed in and imputed to us. As a medium of life, or (as our divines commonly express it) as a covenant, believers are dead to the law, and the law to them, being united to another husband.

Secondly: The question is not whether the whole of Christian obedience be *formally* required in the Ten Commandments. Certainly it is not. Neither the ordinance of baptism, nor that of the supper, is expressly required by them; and there may be other duties which they do not, in so many words, inculcate;—but the question is, whether it be not *virtually* required by them, and whether they be not *binding* on believers. If we allow our Saviour to be a just expositor, the sum of the Ten Commandments is *the love of God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and of our neighbor as ourselves*; and this includes all the obedience that can possibly be yielded by a creature. If we love God with all our hearts, we shall comply with every positive institute and particular precept which he hath enjoined in his word; and all such compliance contains just so much obedience as it contains love to him, and no more. Let an instance of Christian obedience be produced, if it can, which is not comprehended in the general precept of love.

In objecting to the perfection of the Ten Commandments, our adversaries would seem to hold with an extensive rule; but the design manifestly is to undermine their authority, and that without substituting any other competent rule in the place of them. In what follows, therefore, I shall endeavor to prove both the authority and perfection of the law; or that the commandments of God, whether we consider them as ten or two, are still *binding* on Christians, and virtually contain the whole revealed will of God, as to the matter of obedience.

First: To prove that the Ten Commandments are binding, let any person read them, one by one, and ask his own conscience as he reads whether it would be any sin to break them. Is the believer at liberty to have other gods besides the true God? Would there be no harm in his making to himself a graven image, and falling down to worship it? Is it any less

sin for a believer to take God's name in vain than for an unbeliever? Are believers at liberty to profane the sabbath, or to disobey their parents, or to kill their neighbors, or to commit adultery, or to steal, or to bear false witness, or to covet what is not their own? Is this, or any part of it, the liberty of the gospel? Every conscience that is not seared as with a hot iron must answer these questions in the negative.

Secondly: It is utterly inconsistent with the nature of moral government, and of the great designs of mercy, as revealed in the gospel, that believers should be freed from obligation to love God with all their hearts, and their neighbors as themselves. The requirement of love is founded in the nature of the relation between God and a rational creature; and cannot be made void so long as the latter exists, unless the former were to deny himself. The relation between a father and son is such that an obligation to love is indispensable; and should the son, on having offended his father, be forgiven and restored, like the prodigal in his family, to pretend to be free on this account were an outrage on decency. Every one must feel that his obligations, in such a case, are increased, rather than diminished.

Thirdly: It was solemnly declared by our Saviour, "that he came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it;" yea, "that heaven and earth should pass away, but not a jot or tittle of the law should fail." A considerable part of his Sermon on the Mount is taken up in pointing out the true meaning of its particular precepts, and in enforcing them upon his disciples. To the same purpose the apostle Paul, after dwelling largely on justification by faith in Christ, in opposition to the works of the law, asks, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." But, if the law ceases to be binding on believers, Christ did come to destroy its authority over them; and faith does make it void in respect of them. The faith of those who set Moses and Christ at variance has manifestly this effect: it is therefore in opposition to the faith taught by our Saviour and the apostle Paul.

Fourthly: In executing the great work of redemption, our Saviour invariably did honor to the law: it was written in his heart. He did not ask for the salvation of his chosen at the expense of the law; but laid down his life to satisfy its righteous demands. Now, the essence of true religion is for the "same mind to be in us which was in Christ Jesus." Hence he prayed that they all might be *one*, as the Father was in him, and he in the Father,

that they might be *one* in both. The Lawgiver and the Saviour were one: and believers must be of one mind with the former as well as with the latter; but if we depreciate the law, which Christ delighted to honor, and deny our obligations to obey it, how are we of his mind? Rather, are we not of that mind which is "enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be?"

Fifthly: The apostle, in what he writes to the Romans and Galatians (two epistles in which he largely explodes the idea of justification by the works of the law), enforces *brotherly love as a requirement of the law*. "Love one another," says he, "for love is the fulfilling of the law—Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another; for all the law is fulfilled in one word: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." If the liberty of the primitive Christians consisted in being delivered from an obligation to obey the precepts of the law, the reasoning of the apostle was self-contradictory: Ye are not obliged to love one another because God in his law requires it; therefore, love one another, because God in his law requires it!!

Sixthly: If the law be not a rule of conduct to believers, and a perfect rule too, they are under no rule; or, which is the same thing, are lawless. But, if so, they commit no sin; for "where no law is, there is no transgression;" and in this case they have no sins to confess, either to God or to one another; nor do they stand in need of Christ as an Advocate with the Father, nor of daily forgiveness through his blood. Thus it is that, by disowning the law, men utterly subvert the gospel. I am aware that those who deny the law to be the rule of a believer's conduct, some of them, at least, will not pretend to be lawless. Sometimes they will profess to make the gospel their rule; but the gospel, strictly speaking, is not a rule of conduct, but a message of grace, providing for our conformity to the rule previously given. To set aside the moral law as a rule, and to substitute the gospel in its place, is making the gospel a new law, and affords a proof how antinomianism and Neonomianism, after all their differences, can occasionally agree. The Scriptures teach us that "by the law is the knowledge of sin:" which clearly implies that there is no sin but what is a breach of that rule. Hence sin is defined "the transgression of the law." But, if sin be the transgression of the law, the authority of the law must be still binding; for no crime or offence attaches to the breach of a law which is abrogated or



repealed; nor can it be known by such a law how much any man hath sinned, or whether he hath sinned at all. Moreover, if there be no sin but what is a transgression of the law, there can be no rule binding on men which is not comprehended in that law.

Seventhly: The apostle writes as if there were no medium between being under the law to Christ and without law.—1 Cor. ix. 21. If we be not the one, we are the other. Paul declares himself under *the* law to Christ, which implies that Christ has taken the precepts of the moral law as the first principles of his legislative code. Believers, therefore, instead of being freed from obligation to obey it, are under greater obligations to do so than any men in the world. To be exempt from this is to be without law, and, of course, without sin; in which case we might do without a Saviour, which is utterly subversive of all religion.—I have been told that believers are not to be ruled by the law, but by love; and that it is by the influence of the Spirit that they are moved to obedience, rather than by the precepts of the law. To this I answer—1. If a believer be ruled by love in such a way as to exclude obligation, this is the same as if a son should say to his father, I have no objection to oblige you, Sir: I will do your business from love; but I will not be commanded! That is, what he pleases he will do, and no more.—No parent could bear such an answer from a child; and how can we suppose that God will bear it from us! “If I be a father, where is my honor?”—2. The question is not, What *moves* or *causes* obedience?—but, What is the *rule* of it? It is allowed that all true obedience is caused by the influence of the Holy Spirit; but that to which he influences the mind was antecedently required of us: He leadeth us “in the way that we should go.”—3. If the influence of the Holy Spirit on the mind be made the rule of obligation, and that influence be effectual, it will follow that believers are without sin; for whatever they are effectually influenced to do they do; and, if this be all they are obliged to do, then do they comply with their whole duty, and so are sinless. Thus, methinks, we have arrived at a state of sinless perfection by a sort of back way! But let us not deceive ourselves: “God is not mocked; whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

After all, my dear friend, evidence, even that which is drawn from the word of God, will have little or no influence on minds which have drank deeply into these corrupt principles. Where men have found out the secret of happiness without

holiness, there is something so bewitching in it, that you might almost as well encounter insanity as hope by reasoning to convince them. Indeed, I know of no character to whom the words of the prophet, though spoken immediately of idolaters, will more fully apply: “He feedeth on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” There are, however, degrees in this kind of infatuation; and I doubt not but many sincere minds have been infected with it. If some of this description should be recovered, it is worth our utmost attention; and even those whose prejudices are the most inveterate are not beyond the reach of omnipotent grace.

## STRICTURES ON SOME OF THE LEADING SENTIMENTS OF MR. R. ROBINSON.

### LETTER I.

#### ON THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH AND A RIGHT BELIEF OF IT.

My dear Friend,

WHEN we consider the shortness of time, and the variety of weighty concerns which call for our attention during that transitory period, you will agree with me that whatever has not some degree of importance attending it has no claim upon our regard. Every object certainly deserves regard in proportion to its importance. If, then, truth and a right belief of it are things of no importance, or at most of very little, they can assuredly lay claim but to a small share of our attention. But if, on the other hand, truth—*divine* truth, I mean—should prove to be a matter of great, yea, of the highest importance, then inattention to it would be a conduct chargeable with the greatest culpability. Were you and I of that fashionable opinion—“that it matters not what we believe, if our lives be but good,”—all attempts to investigate religious sentiments, it should seem, would be to no purpose; for why need I put myself to the trouble of writing, and you of reading what I write, if, after all, it is very immaterial what we think or believe in these matters?

Though I know you have no such ideas of things, yet, seeing that *the importance of truth* is itself a truth on the belief of which our attention and attachment to all other truths depends, you will allow me to begin by establishing that.\*

\* If I am not mistaken, this is Mr. R.'s grand defect. He has all along professed himself, I suppose,

I have sometimes wondered why it should be thought more criminal to disobey what God commands than to dislike what he declares. Certainly, if any master of a family came into his own house and told a plain tale from his own knowledge, and if any of the family were to affect to doubt it, he would take it as ill as if they refused to do what he commanded. Yea, for aught I know, more so; for to call in question his integrity would probably be more heinous in his view, than merely to disregard his authority.

There are two passages of Holy Writ that have especially struck my mind on this subject. One is, that solemn piece of advice given by the wise man: "Buy the truth, and sell it not." He does not name the price, because its value was beyond all price. As when we advise a friend to purchase some very valuable and necessary articles, we say, "Buy it, give what you will for it, let nothing part you." So here,—Buy it at any rate! It cannot be too dear! give up ease, wealth, or reputation, rather than miss it! part with your most darling prejudices, preconceived notions, beloved lusts, or any thing else that may stand in the way! And, having got it, make much of it—*sell it not!* no, not for any price! make shipwreck of any thing rather than of faith and a good conscience! part with life itself rather than with divine truth!—But why so tenacious

a Calvinist; but never seems to have been in earnest in preaching or writing on these principles—never seems to have acted as though he thought they were of importance. How differently has he acted concerning the principles of nonconformity, and some other favorite subjects! How coldly has he treated those in comparison with these! Besides acknowledging Arians and Socinians as "mistaken brethren," and choosing rather to be "a frozen formalist" than "set on fire of hell," as he terms it, he openly avows his belief of the innocence of mental error; which, I think, is full as much as to avow the non-importance of truth.

Here, by the by, I think it must require a very large stretch of charity to acquit him of manifest known sophistry. After having called those who deny Christ's divinity "mistaken brethren," he supposes no objector would say, But all this argues great coldness to your Lord! and in reply his words are—"I would rather be frozen into a formalist, than inflamed with the fire of hell: in the first case I should be a harmless statue; in the last a destroyer like the devil."—See his *Plea for the Divinity of Christ*, near the conclusion. Surely, he must know this to be a *evade* and *sophistical*. Could he be ignorant of a *medium* between cool indifference and a criminal heart? If he be, woe be to him! Need he be told that the Word of God requires us to contend *earnestly*, though not angrily, for the faith? His answer is a vindication of one extreme by exclaiming against another. As though a man should say, when reproved for sloth, Better be a sluggard than a robber; for in that case I should do a world of mischief! True; but is there no *medium*? And is not that *medium* the position which every man ought to occupy?

of truth, if after all it is of little or no *importance*?

I remember not many years since hearing a minister preach at a certain ordination from Heb. x. 23: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." In enforcing his subject he made use of what might be supposed to be the *call of the martyrs from heaven*. He represented one as crying to us, "Hold it fast; I died in a dungeon rather than forego it." "Hold it fast!" says another, "I bled for it." "Hold it fast!" says a third, "I burned for it." These sentiments and motives, I own, met with my warmest approbation. But if, after all, it matters not what we believe, why all this ado?

The other passage that has especially struck my mind is that memorable commission of our Lord, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." He that believeth—what? The gospel, no doubt, which they were commissioned to preach. As if he had said, Go preach the gospel: he that shall receive your message, and evidence it by a submission to my authority, shall be saved: but he that shall reject it, let him see to it—he shall be damned!—This is very awful, and ought to excite us, instead of playing with truth and error, seriously to examine whether we be in the faith!

What is believing the gospel but heartily admitting what it implies and what it declares? What but admitting that God is an infinitely amiable being, and that his law is "holy, and just, and good?" for, otherwise, the sacrifice of Christ for the breach of it would have been unjust and cruelty. What but admitting that sin is an infinite evil, and that we are infinitely to blame for breaking God's law without any provocation? for, if otherwise, an infinite atonement would not have been required: God would have accepted some other sacrifice rather than have given up his own Son. What but admitting that we are utterly depraved and lost, lying entirely at God's discretion? If he save us alive, we live; or if we have our portion with devils, with whom we have sided against him, he and his throne are guiltless. This is implied in the gospel of a crucified Saviour; for, if we had not been utterly lost, we had not needed a Saviour—at least, such a great one. In fine: what is it but admitting that the plan of redemption is a plan full of infinite glory, the device of infinite wisdom, the expression of infinite love, the work of infinite power, and the display of infinite glory, justice,

and faithfulness?—a plan originating in the heart of God, effected by means the most astonishing, and productive of ends the most glorious!—no less glorious than the eternal honor of its author, the triumph of truth and righteousness, the confusion of Satan, the destruction of sin, and the holiness and happiness of a number of lost sinners which no man can number!—a plan this, therefore, “worthy of all acceptance!” worthy of being approved and acquiesced in with all the heart! These, I think, are some of the principal truths which the gospel exhibits; and who-soever really believes them shall be saved.

On the other hand, what is it to *disbelieve* the gospel, but to remain under a persuasion that God is *not* such an infinitely amiable being as to be worthy of being loved with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength?—that therefore his law is too strict, and, if it must extend to the heart, too broad, requiring more than ought to be required, especially of fallen creatures?—that consequently a breach of it is *not* so very criminal as to deserve damnation?—that, if God were to damn us, it would be a very hard and cruel thing?—that we are *not* so depraved and lost but that, if God were but to deal fairly with us, we should do very well without a Saviour, or at least without such a Saviour and such a salvation as is altogether of grace?—that there is *no* such excellence in the Saviour that we should desire him, *no* such glory in his way of salvation that we should choose it—so choose it, however, as to be willing to have our pride mortified, and our lusts sacrificed to it!—in fine: that there is no need for such an ado about the concerns of our souls—no need to become new creatures, to be at war with all sin, and to make religion our daily business? This I take to be nearly what the Scriptures mean by *unbelief*. However, be my ideas of the gospel right or wrong, that affects not the present question; for, be the gospel what it may, the belief of it has attached to it the promise of salvation, and the disbelief of it the threatening of damnation.

You have observed, I dare say, that it is very common to represent truth, and the belief of it, as of small account, and morality as all in all; nay, more, that the preaching of the former is the way to subvert the latter. And yet how easy were it to prove that this is no other than destroying the means in order to effect the end! Whatever may be pretended, I believe it will be found that all sin springs from error, or the belief of some falsehood; and all holy actions from the belief of the truth. The former appears in that

the will of man is so constituted as never to choose any thing but an apparent good. It is impossible we should chuse what appears to us at the same time and in the same respects unlovely. Therefore whenever we choose evil we must believe evil to be lovely; that is, we must believe a falsehood. This the Scripture represents as calling “evil good, and good evil.” And thus all vice springs from error, or false views of things.

On the other hand, whatever there may be of what is called morality, there is no real obedience to God, or true holiness, in the world, but what arises from a conviction of the truth. Does holiness, for instance, consist in love to God? what love can there be to God, but in proportion as we discern the infinite excellency of his nature? Does it consist in abhorring sin? How can we do this any further than we understand and believe its odious nature? Does it consist in repentance for sin? certainly there can be nothing of this, but as we understand the obligations we are under, and the unreasonableness and vileness of acting contrary to them. Or does it consist in prizing salvation? this will be in proportion as we believe our lost estate. From whence spring those heavenly virtues of fear, contentment, diligence in divine ordinances, acquiescence in the will of God, humility, &c., but from a conviction of the truth? God proclaims before the universe “I AM THE LORD!” This truth realized, or heartily believed, begets a holy fear towards this fearful name. God in his word declares the vanity of all things under the sun, and the weight of future bliss. A belief of these truths damps inordinate anxiety, and raises our desires after a glorious immortality. God declares that a day in his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. A belief of this will make us earnest and constant in our attendance—will make us leave our farms and merchandize, and all, to come and worship in his house. God has promised “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee:”—that “they who trust in the Lord and do good shall dwell in the land, and verily they shall be fed.” A belief of this calms and composes the mind under the darkest providences. Thus it was with the prophet Habakkuk.—Hab. iii. 17, 18. God has told us concerning ourselves that we are “a generation of vipers,”—a race of abominable and filthy beings. A belief of this humbles us in the dust before him. In fine, he has told us that to us belongs nothing but “shame and confusion of face.” A belief of this would prevent peevishness under adverse providences. Under the belief of such a declaration we should not wonder if God



made us as miserable as we have made ourselves sinful. What in this world ever filled a soul with greater humility than a realizing view of a holy God filled Isaiah?—Isa. vi. Then, as in a glass, he beheld his own deformity. It was this that made him exclaim, with the deepest self-abasement, “Woe is me! for I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts!” Is it not a “beholding of the glory of the Lord” (which is no more than discerning and believing the truth, for God is glorious whether we believe it or not) that changes into the same image?—2 Cor. iii. 18. And is not our being made like Christ at last ascribed to our “seeing him as he is?”

In short, I believe it will be found that truth wants only to be universally realized in order to produce universal holiness. Should it be asked, Then why is not universal holiness found in good men who believe the truth? the answer is, Though they believe the truth, they believe not the whole truth, nor perhaps do they wholly believe any truth. When they shall be *perfectly* delivered from “an evil heart of unbelief,” they shall possess perfect holiness.

You will naturally reflect—if these things are so, what an important thing is truth; and what awful evils are error and unbelief; and yet how prevalent are they in the world, and even in the best of men! True; and I will add one more reflection, and that is, if your thoughts coincide with the sentiments expressed in this letter, you will not only be open, but eager to hear any thing that may tend to bring it to light.

## LETTER II.

### ON THE CRIMINALITY OF MENTAL ERROR.

My dear Friend,

IF what has been already said be just, there will be no difficulty in maintaining our ground here. For, certainly, the belief of that which ought to be bought and held fast at any rate cannot be a matter of indifference. An error which has no less than eternal damnation threatened against it must be criminal, and that in a high degree.

One main article in Mr. Robinson’s creed is, that the Bible knows nothing of mystery, but is a plain book—so plain as to be level with the common sense of mankind. Whether the Scriptures contain any thing mysterious, or not, it appears to me altogether a mystery that any man

of common sense should maintain two such opposite positions as *the simplicity of the Scriptures* and *the innocence of mental error*: asserting that the Bible is so plain a book that nobody, without either neglecting or doing violence to common sense, can mistake its meaning; and yet that even a thousand errors concerning this plain book are altogether innocent!\*

I agree with Mr. R. in believing that, upon the whole, the Bible is a plain book, adapted to the common understandings of mankind; and that men in general may understand all they are required to understand, *if their hearts are rightly disposed*. At the same time, there are things revealed in the Scriptures which must be to us incomprehensible; as the incarnation of the Son of God, which even an inspired apostle declares to be “a great mystery.” There are some things also in the prophetic writings which can never be fully understood till their accomplishment. But then our not comprehending these things is not criminal, though the little attention we devote to them may be.

In proportion, however, as the Scriptures are plain, and easy to be understood, must be our criminality, if we be endowed with common sense, in not understanding them. If the way of salvation is so plain that “a wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein,” then the errors of men concerning it cannot be *innocent*. And the same is true of the preceptive parts of Scripture. If error arise not from the obscurity of Scripture, from its being beyond the capacity of men in general, it must arise from other causes; and what these can be besides *indifference, indolence, carelessness, prejudice, pride, or aversion*, I know not.

\* “The New Testament is a book so plain, and the religion of it so easy, that any man of common sense might understand it if he would.” A person who has examined a Scripture doctrine, “and cannot obtain evidence of the truth of it, is indeed in a state in which his knowledge is imperfect; but his imperfection is innocent, because he hath exercised all the ability and virtue he has, and his ignorance is involuntary; yea, perhaps he may have exercised ten times more industry and application, though without success, than many others who have obtained evidence.”—*General Doctrine of Toleration, &c.*

“Any man of common sense might understand it if he would;” and yet many such men may examine it, “with all their ability and all their virtue,” and “not obtain evidence!” This is a mystery, let what will be plain. And such a man’s imperfection is innocent, because he hath exercised all the ability and *virtue* he has! If our obligations are to be measured by the degree of *virtue* we possess, the way to get clear of all obligation is to become totally abandoned to vice. Far be it from me to attach to others more blame than I would acknowledge belongs to myself, if I continue in error. We are all imperfect; but let us not call our imperfections *innocent*.

“Why do ye not understand my speech?” said our Lord to the Jews. Was it because it was not *important* enough to demand their attention, or because it was not *plain* enough to meet their capacities!—No. Mark the answer. Why? “Because ye cannot hear my word.” What, then, were they *naturally* deaf!—No. That had been their felicity. Better have *no* ears, than ears and *hear* not. Their deafness was like that of the adder, that “*will not* hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely.” Then would they not *listen* to his discourses! This does not appear. But they could not *receive* his doctrine. This is the import of the answer. And *why* could they not receive it? Evidently because of their pride, prejudice, and love of sin. The pride of their hearts could not bear the doctrine which represented them as slaves to ignorance and sin, and proposed their being made free by the knowledge of the truth. With a haughty, contemptuous air, they spurn the proposal; replying, “We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?” Their prejudice in favor of their old religion hardened them against conviction, and their love of sin set them against that gospel which laid the axe at the root of that evil tree. Our Lord, in effect, told them so. “Ye are of your father, the devil, and the deeds of your father ye will do.” As if he had said, You would rather continue slaves to Satan than that “the Son” should make you free!

There seems to be a beautiful propriety in our Lord’s parable of the sower. It is observable that, of the four sorts of ground, only one received the seed so as to bring forth fruit; and that one is explained of persons who have “good and honest hearts:” plainly implying that, if men’s hearts were but honest, they would be sure to embrace the word of God. Indeed the nature of divine revelation is such that its rejection implies a dishonest heart. For instance, does the word of God set forth the rights of Deity, and human obligation? This is what an honest heart loves. That heart cannot be honest which does not rejoice in every one having his due, and consequently in God’s having his. Does it represent man as having forfeited all claim to the goodness of God? An honest heart will acquiesce in this, and be willing to receive all as a free donation. Does it exhibit such a way of salvation as provides for the honor of injured Majesty? This is sure to be embraced by an honest heart: such a mind could not bear the thought of being saved at the expense of righteousness.

To desire to receive mercy in any other than an honorable way indicates a dishonest heart. Whoever, therefore, does not cordially approve and embrace the salvation of the gospel, the reason is plain.

Perhaps it will be said, these things are spoken of *wicked* men, and indicate the criminality of *their* errors. But surely the errors of *good* men arise from different causes. Surely they may be innocent. It must be allowed that good men have errors in judgment, as well as in practice; but that the former, any more than the latter, are *innocent*, does not appear. I wish not to think worse of any man’s errors than I do of my own, or of him than of myself, for being in error. No doubt I have mistaken apprehensions of some things, as well as other people; though wherein is unknown to me: but I would abhor the thought of pleading *innocence* in such affairs. If my mistakes, be they what they may, do not arise from the obscurity of Scripture, they must arise from some other cause. It is vain to allege that our errors arise from *weakness*; for the Scriptures can be no otherwise plain and easy than as they are level with common capacities. If the Scriptures were written for the bulk of mankind, and yet the generality of men are too *weak* to understand them, instead of being plain and easy, they must be essentially *obscure*.

The truth is, *our* mistakes; as well as the ignorance of wicked men, arise from our *criminal dispositions*. We are too *careless* about truth, and so do not search for it “as one searcheth for hid treasure.” Prov. ii. 1—9. Or we are *self-sufficient*, and think ourselves competent to find out the truth by our own ingenuity and mere reason; and so neglect to pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Or we are *prejudiced* in favor of preconceived notions, and so are apt to stifle evidence. The prejudices of mankind, of both bad and good men, are almost infinite. There is not a mind in the world without prejudice, in a greater or less degree. And these are the causes why the truth of God’s word is not believed and obeyed. We might as well plead *weakness* for not obeying God’s commands as for not believing his declarations. The one, as well as the other, is a *moral* weakness; and that, strictly speaking, is not weakness, but *wickedness*. Doubtless, there is such a thing as *excusable* weakness, both in reference to obeying God’s commands and to believing his sacred truth. If a man be *afflicted*, so as to be incapable of attending the house of God, or if he be detained by the afflictions of others, the command for publicly worshipping God ceases, at that time, to be binding. The same may

be said of *mental debility*. If a man be in any way deprived of reason, his weakness, in proportion as it prevails, excuses him from blame, in not understanding and believing the truth. Nay, I think persons of *extremely weak capacities* are comparatively excusable. If they be *weak in other things*, as well as in religion, we are bound not to impute it to the want of a disposition, any farther than their weakness in both may be imputed to the want of diligent application. The same may be said of persons who never had *the means*, or the *opportunity*, of knowing the truth. The heathen will not be condemned for rejecting the gospel, unless they have, or might if they would have heard it; but for rejecting the light of nature.—Rom. i. 18—25.

But I believe, if we examine, we shall find the far greater part of our ignorance and error to arise from very different causes—causes of which our Lord complains in his own immediate disciples: “Oh, fools, and *slow of heart* to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” Our ignorance and errors, like theirs, are owing in a great degree to that dulness to spiritual things of which the best Christians have sometimes reason to complain. The Lord Jesus, so remarkable for his tenderness, and especially to his disciples, would not have rebuked them so severely for an error wherein they were blameless. Besides, they were prejudiced in favor of another system. They had been long dreaming of an earthly kingdom, and, it is to be feared, of the figure they were to cut in it. Their pride, therefore, and carnal-mindedness, tended greatly to warp their judgments in this matter; so that all Christ had said (and he had said much) about his death and resurrection seemed to stand for nothing. Their foolish minds were so dazzled with the false ideas of a temporal kingdom that they were blinded to the true end of Christ’s coming, and to all that the prophets declared concerning it.

Mr. R. says, “Variety of sentiment, which is the life of society, cannot be destructive of real religion. Mere mental errors, if they be not entirely innocent in the account of the Supreme Governor of mankind, cannot, however, be objects of blame and punishment among men.”\*

So far as this relates to a cognizance of the *civil powers*, or *any powers* which inflict *civil penalties*, we are perfectly agreed. But I suppose Mr. R. means to extend it to the opinion and behavior of churches towards individual members. If, for instance, a member of a church were to become a *Socinian*, and the church were to

blame him for what they accounted apostacy from the truth, and ultimately, if he continued in this error, were to exclude him, this would include a part of what is meant by “*blame and punishment among men*.” And though it is expressly said, “*A heretic reject, after the first and second admonition*,” Mr. R. would deny that the church had any right to judge, in respect to others, what is heresy.† Herein I am of a different opinion: but as I may consider this subject more particularly in my next letter, on Liberty, I shall now offer a few more remarks on the above passage.

“Variety of sentiment is the life of society.” True, as one person discovers one *truth*, and another, another; as one views the same truth in this light, and another in that; and so all together become serviceable to each other: but this does not prove that a variety of *false sentiments* does any good. I greatly query if Mr. R., or any one else, would hold this, when it affected *themselves*. Suppose, for instance, a variety of sentiment concerning his character as a minister: one thinks he is a *worthy minister of Christ*, as well as a learned, ingenious man, and an honor to the dissenting interest; another thinks him, though *very* ingenious, not equally *ingenuous*; and a third, for variety’s sake, might suggest that his principles were even *pernicious* in their tendency. Now it is very doubtful if Mr. R., however he may admire variety of sentiment, would in his heart consider *this* variety of sentiment good, either in itself, or as tending to enliven society. It is a question if he would not greatly prefer that people should plod on, in the old dull path of *uniformity*, and all cordially *agree* in believing him to be an honest man. And, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, this uniformity of sentiment *ought* to exist. But why in this case only? Why should not people be obliged to *unite* in thinking highly and honorably of the Lord and Saviour of men, as well as of a creature of yesterday?

“But Mr. R. does not *positively* affirm the *entire* innocence of mental error in the account of the Supreme Governor of mankind.” True; but he writes as if he thought it *very nearly* innocent, and as if it were very doubtful whether it is not

† This is not mere supposition. It is well known that Mr. R. espoused the cause of some who were expelled from the Homerton Academy for what the tutors of that institution thought heresy. Of their principles I know little or nothing, and therefore cannot judge: but Mr. R. has not only endeavored to vindicate them from the charge of heresy, but he has also denied that the Society has any right to judge *what is heresy*.



entirely innocent: and in one sense, it seems, it is *beneficial*, as tending to enliven society.

“But he guards his language, by saying *mere* mental error; by which, may he not mean such errors only as arise from *mental weakness*, and not from disposition?” If so, we are agreed as to its innocence. But, if so, he would not have scrupled to assert its *entire* innocence in the account of the Supreme Governor of mankind. It is plain, therefore, that by *mere mental error* he means errors which have there existence in the *mind* merely, or which relate to *principles*, in distinction from those which relate to practice. If he were accosted by a Calvinist, he might illustrate his meaning by an error respecting “the weight of the shekel,” or an error in “chronology,” or something of that kind: but follow him into the company of Arians and Socinians, and then his meaning extends to their peculiar sentiments! This is founded on *fact*, and not on supposition. Indeed, it is plain by his writings, life, and conduct, that he means to include Arianism and Socinianism. But to call these *mere* mental errors, in the *innocent* sense of the phrase, is begging the question: it is taking for granted what remains to be proved, that such sentiments (if they be errors) are in that sense merely mental. Certainly it cannot be pleaded, in behalf of the generality of those who embrace these sentiments, that they are not endowed with the use of *reason*, or that they are persons of *weak natural capacities*, or that they have not *opportunity* to obtain evidence.

Should it be said that some of them have given proof of their being honest and sincere, by their frankness in declaring their sentiments, and relinquishing worldly emoluments for the sake of enjoying them; I answer, in the words of Waterland, “A man may be said to be sincere—1. When he speaks what he really thinks truth. 2. When he searches after truth with impartiality and perseverance.” The former, we believe, many of these gentlemen possess; and we think it very commendable, far preferable to a mean-spirited concealment, or a doubtful and ambiguous declaration of sentiment. But to believe that *any* who fundamentally err, whether they or ourselves, “search after truth with impartiality and perseverance,” is do disbelieve the promise of God, who declares, “the *meek* will he guide in judgment; the *meek* will he teach his way.”

I wish it to be considered whether, if not the whole, a great part of divine truth may not be included under some such general topics as these; viz. Truth concern-

ing God, Christ, ourselves, sin, the world, heaven, hell, &c. Now, of which of these is it innocent for me to think falsely? Am I at liberty to think more meanly of *God* than he has revealed himself!—Can I think him such a one as myself, without offending him? May I think more meanly of *Christ* than the word of God exhibits him? Can I detract from his excellence, and be blameless? Am I allowed to think more highly of *myself* than the word of God represents me? Can I be bloated up with false ideas of my own super-excellence, and be innocent? May I think better of *sin* than it deserves? Must I not view it as it is represented in the Bible? Am I at liberty to put a false estimate on *the good things of this life*? Is not too low an estimate of them ingratitude, and too high an estimate idolatry? And can either of these be innocent? May I undervalue *the life to come*? Or ought I not, seeing God has called it a “weight of glory,” to give it its weight in determining my pursuits? Lastly, seeing that God has threatened *everlasting destruction* to the finally impenitent, am I at liberty to qualify these terms, and accommodate them to my own wishes and feelings, and so administer comfort to God’s enemies, *as such*? Am I not bound to believe that God *means* what he says? May I presume that the threatenings of the Bible were never *intended* to be executed, but were uttered merely to frighten the vulgar? Ought I not to believe that God is as much in earnest when he threatens as when he promises? If the Bible is a *plain* book, can I misunderstand it and be *innocent*?

Let me conclude with one remark more. Much has been said, of late years, about the Scriptures being *the only rule of faith*, in opposition to all rules of human imposition. In this I agree. But let it be considered whether the avowal of the *innocence of mental error* be not a virtual denial of the Scriptures being *any* rule of faith at all. According to this sentiment, faith seems to have *no rule*—at least none that is *obligatory*; for there can be no obligation where deviation is no crime. If mental error be innocent, the mind can be subject to no law; and if the mind, which has so great an influence on the soul, and with which the will and all the other powers constantly act in concert—if this be without a law, it can be of very little consequence to the Supreme Legislator whether any thing else in man be left under his dominion or not. While we are so jealous, then, lest others should infringe on our liberty, it becomes us to tremble lest we infringe on the divine authority. And while we are ex-

claiming, "Call no man master," let us not forget, "One is our Master, even Christ."

### LETTER III.

#### ON LIBERTY.

My dear Friend,

It has long been the opinion of many persons, who are by no means unfriendly to liberty, that Mr. Robinson's notions of it are licentious and extravagant; and in this opinion I cannot help concurring.

Liberty seems to consist in *the power of acting without control or impediment*. But the term, being relative, must be understood in relation to the different objects which are supposed to be impediments.

Some have defined liberty *the power of doing what we pleased*; and this definition will doubtless apply to every kind of liberty except *moral*. But moral liberty, which is of greater importance than any other kind of liberty, does not consist in this. Though we *do as we please* in the exercise of moral liberty, this is not that by which it is distinguished from other things; no, not from *moral slavery* itself. Moral slavery is not that state in which a person is compelled to act *against his will*; but rather a state in which he is impelled to act against his *conscience*. A person may have the power of doing *what he pleases*, to the greatest possible degree, and yet be totally destitute of moral liberty, being a perfect slave to his own appetites.

Some persons, perhaps justly, have classed liberty under four kinds—physical, moral, civil, and religious. *Physical* liberty is the power of doing what we please without any natural restraints or impediments. If our actions are not the free result of our choice, that is, if they are directed or impeded by an influence contrary to our will, we are destitute of this liberty. *Moral* liberty is the power of doing what is right, without being impeded by sinful dispositions or passions. A libertine, with all his boasted freedom, is here a perfect slave. "While they promise themselves liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." *Civil* liberty, as it is commonly understood in Britain, is freedom from all fear of punishment contrary to law, and from subjection to any laws but those to which a man himself, by his representatives, gives consent. *Re-*

*ligious* liberty is the power of forming our religious sentiments, and conducting our religious worship, agreeably to the dictates of our consciences, without being liable to civil penalties.

Now, suppose Mr. R.'s notions of *civil* and *religious* liberty he just, yet surely he makes, if not too much of these, yet too little of that which is of far greater importance—*moral* liberty. This is the liberty of which the Scriptures chiefly speak; this is the glorious liberty of the gospel. This is that of which every unregenerate man is destitute, being a slave to sin and Satan. This is the liberty with which *the Son* makes us free; without which all other liberty is but a shadow and an empty boast. This is implied in the reply of our Lord to the boasting Jews, who said they were never in bondage to any man: "If *the Son* make you free, then are ye free indeed." It is allowed, indeed, that *religious* liberty, or a freedom to think and act according to our consciences, without fear, is of great value, and perhaps we none of us prize it sufficiently; but what is this to *moral* liberty? Suppose a man liberated from the tyranny of sin and Satan, and deprived of all religious and civil liberty, groaning under the yoke of powerful persecution, would he not be in an unspeakably better situation than another man possessed of all the liberty he desired, whose soul was enslaved to sin?

Is it not strange, then, that whenever Mr. R. finds the term *liberty* in the New Testament he should reduce it to a simple liberty of doing as we please! And is it not passing strange that "the glorious liberty of the sons of God" should be thus explained?—Rom. viii. 21. Mr. R., having given us several quotations on the text from Greek and Latin writers, sums up the whole in English, by adding—"The amount, then, is this: The heathens expected some great revolution to be brought about by some extraordinary person about St. Paul's time. St. Paul was well acquainted with their opinion: it is natural, therefore, to suppose that the apostle would speak on this article, and direct the eyes of the pagans to Jesus Christ. The passage is capable of such a meaning, and it is highly probable that this is the sense of it. The gentiles are earnestly looking for *such a liberty* as the gospel proposes to mankind." "The question is," continues Mr. R., "what liberty the gospel does bestow on mankind." Very good; and now let us see what his "glorious liberty of the sons of God" amounts to. "In days of yore," says he, "divines were not ashamed to affirm that liberty of judging and deter-

mining matters of faith and conscience was a prerogative of the papal tiara"—and so on; a long story of this kind, for four or five columns, reducing "the glorious liberty of the sons of God" to a mere liberty of "judging and determining for ourselves in matters of faith and conscience:" a freedom from the control of creeds and systems—as though it did not signify what we imbibed so that we acted *freely*." Suppose this freedom were included, yet surely it is not the whole of the meaning. Probably the apostle alluded especially to the redemption of the bodies of believers at the resurrection. But, if Mr. R. were right in applying the passage to the Gentile world, surely he might have conceived of a more glorious liberty than that of thinking and acting for ourselves—a *moral liberty*—a freedom from the bondage of sin and Satan, particularly from the slavery of idolatry and superstition. This were a liberty worth while for the Son of God to come from heaven to bestow.

Mr. Robinson might be right in censuring the bishops for "sacrificing Christianity to save episcopacy;" but let him beware of undervaluing moral liberty for the sake of that of which he is so tenacious, of an inferior kind. Christianity is of greater importance than nonconformity. A remark of Mr. Whitfield, when he had attended one of the synods of Scotland, and had heard one of the associate presbytery preach, may not be inappropriate:—"The good man," says he, "so spent himself in talking against prelacy, the common-prayer book, the surplice, the rose in the hat, and such like externals, that when he came to the latter part of his subject, to invite poor sinners to Jesus Christ, his breath was so gone that he could scarce be heard." This passage Mr. R. introduces into his *arcana* with great approbation, and adds—"This will always be the case: *that* learning, eloquence, strength, and zeal, which should be spent in enforcing 'the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith,' will be unprofitably wasted on 'the tithing of mint, anise, and cummin'—on discarding or defending a bow to the east, or a rose in the hat."—p.109. How far this describes Mr. R.'s subsequent conduct, I leave you to judge.

But not only has he neglected weightier things in defending those of inferior importance, but it appears to me that his notions of liberty are latitudinarian, unscriptural, and unreasonable.

Though, in regard to men, we are at liberty to act and think as we please in matters of religion, this is not true in regard to God. He requires us to believe

the truth, as well as to obey his commands. He has given us a rule of faith, as well as of practice, and requires us to think and act according to it; and, moreover, it is at our peril that we allow ourselves in the contrary. This, however, is a distinction which I never knew Mr. R. to have made; though I could scarcely have thought he would have avowed the contrary, had he not told me in conversation that *no man was bound to believe the gospel*—that their only duty was to examine it—and that to make it their duty to believe, as well as to examine, would destroy their liberty, and render their errors criminal! But what can be made of such a liberty as this, unless it be a *divine right to do wrong*? This Mr. R. ridicules in politics (Claude, vol. ii. p. 42): is it not a pity he should retain it in divinity?

Further: there is a material difference between my being at liberty to believe and act in religious matters without being accountable to the civil authorities, or to any fellow-creature as such; and my having a right, be my religious principles what they may, to a place in a Christian church. If I act with decorum in my civil capacity, I have a right, whatever be my religious principles, to all the benefits of civil government; but it does not therefore follow that I am entitled to the privileges of the house of God. Mr. R. blames the church of England for not allowing avowed Socinians to continue in its service and receive its emoluments (Claude, vol. ii. p. 212): and not long since, unless I am misinformed, he declared in public company, at an ordination, that no church had a right to refuse any man communion, whether he were an Arian, a Socinian, a Sabelian, or an Antinomian, provided he was of good moral character.

If, however, this notion consist with either Scripture or common sense, I must confess myself a stranger to both. The church of God is represented as a city—a city with walls and bulwarks; a city with gates, of which they themselves have the care and keeping.—It is true they are commanded to open the gates—but to whom? To the righteous nation "who keep the truth." These, and these only, are to enter in.—Isa. xxvi. 1, 2. I know the objection Mr. R. would make to this; viz. Who is to be judge what is truth? But, on this principle, we may doubt of every thing, and turn sceptics at once; or else consider that to be truth which any man thinks is truth. But if it be indeed so difficult to ascertain the truth as that we must needs give over judging in that matter, and that must pass for truth which every person thinks to be such, then surely the Bible cannot be such a plain book



as Mr. R. represents. Besides, we might on the same principle refrain from judging between right and wrong; for there are various opinions about these, as well as about truth and error. Suppose, for instance, a person were to apply to a Christian church for communion who approved and practised polygamy, or who should think that Scripture sanctioned concubinage, and therefore practised it; upon this principle, the church must be silent, for, should they object to such practices as immoral, it might be replied—"I think they are right; and who are *you*, that *you* should set up for judges of right and wrong in *other men's* conduct?—Mr. R. therefore need not have been so squeamish in his proposed reception of Arians and Socinians as to provide for their good moral character. Upon his principle, the want of character ought to be no objection, provided they are so abandoned in vice as to believe that evil is good, or so versed in hypocrisy as to say they believe so, whether they do or not.

I do not see how the church at Pergamos could have been blamed by the Lord Jesus for *having those among them* that held the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, unless they were authorized, and even required, to judge of right and wrong, truth and error, in relation to those whom they received as members. On Mr. R.'s principles, they might have excused themselves in some such manner as this:—"Lord, we never apprehended we had any thing to do in judging of the doctrines that people held who became members with us: we came together upon the liberal principles of universal toleration, and never expected to be called to account about any one's sentiments but our own, whatever we were for these." But, in reply to all such pleas as this, it is sufficient to say—"Thus saith He that hath the sharp two-edged sword, I have somewhat against thee."

As to the bugbear frequently held up—that if we presume to judge in these matters we assume to ourselves infallibility, to what does it amount? On this principle all human judgment must be set aside in civil as well as in sacred things. No man, nor any set of men, can pretend to this; neither need they. It is sufficient that they act to the best of their capacity, availing themselves of all the means of information they possess. All men, undoubtedly, are fallible: it becomes them, therefore, to judge with meekness and fear; and to consider that our decisions are not final—that they must all be brought over again, and themselves be tried with them at the great assize! But does it thence follow that all human judgment must be laid aside? Surely not.

The great outcry that Mr. R. has made of our Lord's words—"Call no man master," &c., is no more to his purpose than the other. Surely it is one thing to dictate to a man what he shall believe, and persecute him if he does not; and another to require a union of principles, in order that we may unite with him in church fellowship, and have communion with him in the ordinances of Jesus Christ. As an individual, we have nothing to do with him: to his own Master he standeth or falleth; and we the same. But, if he propose to have Christian fellowship with us, it is right that we should inquire whether his principles so far coincide with ours as that the end proposed may be accomplished. Is there not a wide difference between my persecuting, or wishing to persecute, a deist, and refusing to unite with him in church fellowship?

I believe also that Mr. R.'s principles are as opposed to *right reason*, to *common sense*, and to the *rules of society in general*, as they are to Scripture.

In *large societies*, the government of a nation for instance, they are obliged to be very general, and cannot maintain such a regularity as in societies of less extent. But even here some unity of sentiment is required. Suppose a Jacobite, for example, were to insist that king George was not the rightful possessor of the throne, would he have a right to form one of his majesty's ministry? And suppose he were to express his intention, if opportunity offered, of uniting to dethrone him, would not the government have a right to banish him the kingdom? Whether they would invariably use their right is another thing; but the right itself they would undoubtedly possess.

In *smaller societies*, where persons unite for the sake of obtaining certain ends, it is always expected that they should agree in certain leading principles necessary to the accomplishment of those ends. Hence there is scarcely a society without *articles* testifying the agreement of the members in certain fundamental particulars. Suppose, for example, a *common club*, united for the purpose of assisting each other in time of affliction. It is supposed to be a leading principle of such a society that the lesser number of members should, in all matters of debate, submit to the greater; and another, that a certain sum of money should be paid by each member at certain times. Now, just suppose any one member should dissent from the rules; common sense suggests the necessity of his being convinced or excluded. But it seems a Christian society has not the authority of a common club!

It cannot be difficult to prove that a union of faith respecting the proper deity

of the Great Author of our religion, and the object of our worship, is of quite as much importance in religious society as any of the above in civil society. Surely, the dethroning of the Son of God, by the denial of his essential divinity, cannot be less pernicious in the gospel dispensation, than the denial of his majesty's authority, and the endeavor to dethrone him, would be in these realms.

Some of the grand ends of Christian society are, unitedly to worship God—to devote ourselves to the blessed Trinity by Christian baptism—and to acknowledge the atonement made by the Redeemer, by a participation of the ordinance of the Lord's supper. But what union could there be in worship where the object worshipped is not the same—where one party believes the other to be an idolater, and the other believes him to be a *degrader* of Him who is “over all, God, blessed forever?” What fellowship could there be in *the Lord's supper*, for instance (not to mention baptism), where one party thought sin to be an infinite evil—that they, being the subjects of it, deserved an infinite curse—that no atonement could be made but by an infinite sacrifice—that the sacrifice of Christ was such, and an instance of infinite grace and love—and that the design of the sacred supper is to revive in our minds these affecting truths;—and where the other party believed none of these things—had no conception that sin was so great an evil as to deserve infinite punishment, or to need an infinite atonement—that, in fact, they are not such great sinners as to need not only a Saviour, but a great one! That what is to the one “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” is to the other foolishness, and an insult, forsooth, upon his dignity!

If ever any professed Christians differed in the *essentials* of religion, Calvinists and Socinians do. I wish to conduct myself towards a Socinian no otherwise than I believe a Socinian ought to conduct himself towards me, on the supposition that I am in error. Dr. Priestley acts more consistently, and more like an honest man than Mr. R. He denies the propriety of Unitarians and Trinitarians uniting together in divine worship, and exhorts all of the former class to form separate societies. This I cordially approve; for verily, whatever esteem we may entertain for each other as men, *in religion* there can be no harmony. Either we are a company of idolaters, or they are enemies to the gospel—rendering the cross of Christ of none effect. Either they are unbelievers, or we are at least as bad—rendering to a creature that homage which is due only to the

Creator; and, in either case, a *union* is the last degree of absurdity.

Whatever then, my dear friend, Mr. R. or any one else may suggest, under the specious pretence of liberality of sentiment, I trust you and I shall ever give heed to the better reasonings of an inspired apostle:—“What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? and what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.”

#### LETTER IV.

##### ON THE NECESSITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT FOR THE RIGHT UNDERSTANDING AND BELIEVING THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

My dear Friend,

I DO not know, from any thing Mr. R. has *written*, unless it be his sermon on “The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures,” that on the subject of the present letter there is any difference between his sentiments and my own. That sermon, which I read some time since, appears to me to contain some things, obscurely expressed, of which, I confess, I can form very little judgment. But I have been lately informed by a friend of unquestionable judgment and veracity, and who was far from being prejudiced against Mr. R., that such sentences as this not unfrequently escape him:—“What more than common sense is necessary to understand the holy Scriptures? Not the Holy Spirit; for then Judas could not have understood them.” So also, I have been informed, by equally good authority, that he denies any thing of a *principle* being created or produced in the soul in the regeneration. In the sermon just alluded to he seems to ridicule the idea: “A positive act of power (he says) would produce an occult quality, for which we have no name, and of which we know no use.”—Occasional Sermons, V. p. 98.

However, if he would adhere to what he says in his notes to Claude, vol. ii. p. 320, I am inclined to think we should agree. “*The Holy Spirit proposeth truth in the Scriptures, and formeth, in those who believe, dispositions to admit it.*” By this, it would seem as if he thought something more than common sense was necessary to the reception of divine truth; viz. *dispositions formed by the Holy Spirit*. With this I am perfectly satisfied. What ideas some may have entertained of the production of a divine principle I know not; but

the whole idea I have of it is, that it is the *formation of a disposition*.

With this representation of the work of the Spirit I am satisfied. For aught I see, it is clear and comprehensive. And I only wish Mr. R. would adhere to it. It supposes *three* things, on each of which I shall offer a few remarks:—1. That holy dispositions are necessary, in order to the admission of Scripture truth. 2. That men by nature have no such disposition. 3. That the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary to produce it.

First: *Holy dispositions are necessary in order to the admission of Scripture truth*. This, I think, Scripture and common sense concur to prove. Really and properly to understand any writer, it is necessary that we enter into his spirit, sentiments, and feelings. Thus, to understand Sir Isaac Newton, we must have a *taste for philosophy*: otherwise, though we understand the words and sentences abstractedly, we shall never enter into his spirit and views. The writings of a philosopher must be *philosophically discerned*. So, without a *taste for poetry*, we shall never enter into the views and feelings of a Milton; *his* writings must be *poetically discerned*. And, by a parity of reasoning, properly to understand the inspired writers, we must enter into *their* views and feelings, and be, in a sort, inspired too. We must have, in some degree, the same spirit in reading as they had in writing. Hence the apostle Paul, in perfect agreement with the principles of right reasoning and common sense, declares that the things of God, which are spiritual things, must be *spiritually discerned*. To suppose the Scriptures within the comprehension of an abandoned, vicious mind, would be to their reproach, rather than to their praise—a far greater reproach than would attach to the writings of the most profound philosopher, were they supposed to be within the comprehension of an idiot. It would be to the eternal dishonor of the sacred writings, if they did not exhibit a beauty and a life utterly incomprehensible to an unholy mind, and to which such a mind is an absolute stranger.

Secondly: *Men by nature have no disposition to admit divine truth*. The gospel contains a system of principles directly levelled against the evil bias of the human heart. Wherever divine truth is admitted, pride must be abased, lust be mortified, and every sinful enjoyment abandoned. No wonder, therefore, that the carnal mind should be indisposed to the reception of this truth. It would be a much greater wonder if it were *not* thus indisposed. But this aversion blinds the understanding, and warps the judgment. Take, for ex-

ample, four or five Scripture truths—the evil of sin—the justice of God in punishing it with everlasting destruction—the unspeakable love of God in the gift of his Son—the grace of God in saving sinners—and the beauty and bliss of a holy life. Now what unholy mind can receive these truths? He that receives one will receive all; but he that is blind to one will be blind to all.

Common sense proves a number of dispositions necessary to the right understanding of divine truth, of which Scripture and experience prove men by nature to be destitute. One thing absolutely necessary is an *earnestness of spirit* after it. We must have a *heart* to know God.—Jer. xxiv. 7. We must search for divine knowledge as one searcheth for hid treasure. “If thou wilt *incline* thine ear unto wisdom, and *apply* thine heart to understanding—if thou *criest* after knowledge, and *liftest up thy voice* for understanding—if thou *seekest* her as silver, and *searchest* for her as for hid treasures—then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”—Prov. ii.

But he that is under the dominion of sin is generally under the dominion of *carelessness* and *indifference* to divine truth; and, so long as this is the case, all the common sense in the world will be of no avail. A *price* is, indeed, put into his hand to get wisdom: but it is a price *in the hand of a fool*, seeing he has *no heart* to possess it. His attention is absorbed by carnal objects: what cares he for religion? Hence the complaint—“Whom shall he teach knowledge? whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are *weaned* from the milk, and *drawn* from the breasts.” So long as people are *careless* about spiritual things, and know no pleasure beyond that of drinking at the fountains of sensual enjoyments, “precept may be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line,” over and over again; but they will not hear.—Isa. xxviii. 7—13.

Or suppose carelessness and sensual indulgences be not the obstacle—suppose a diligent attention to the acquirement of religious knowledge—still how many want a spirit of *meekness*, *openness to conviction*, *self-diffidence*, and *impartiality*! all which are necessary to a right understanding of divine truth. The Bereans not only searched the Scriptures daily, but received the word with *readiness of mind*. God declares “the *meek* he will guide in judgment; the *meek* he will teach his way.” But the natural man, with all his common sense, is not emptied of *self-sufficiency*. On the contrary, his heart puffeth him up; and while he “thinketh he knoweth any



thing, he knoweth nothing as he ought to know." This, I apprehend, was the case with Balaam and Judas, and every other naturally but not divinely enlightened sinner. With all their knowledge, they know not God; nor can they, in such a state of mind, enter into the spirit of his word.

I have sometimes wondered that the words of the apostle Paul should seem so difficult to be understood:—"The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them; for they are spiritually discerned."

Any man may affirm, and no man misunderstand him, or doubt the truth of the assertion,—that a *careless* man cannot find out knowledge, that a *self-conceited* man cannot be wise, or that a man under the influence of *prejudice* will not ascertain the truth: why, then, should the words of the apostle be accounted mysterious, and their truth be called in question, or explained away?

In any common quarrel among men, it is sure to be the case that he that is in the wrong is blind to truth and reason. To a bystander the matter appears plain; but should he attempt to mediate between the parties—to reason with the offender, and convince him of his evil—he will soon find that a *right spirit* is necessary to render his mediation successful. The man cannot see this, nor understand that; he cannot perceive wherein he was to blame in this thing, or so much in fault in the other. And why? Surely not for want of a natural capacity; for he is exceedingly ingenious in finding excuses. Should the mediator proceed on the supposition of the man's being wholly and greatly to blame, and require satisfaction to be made, proposing, however, from his regard for the offender, as well as to equity, to make satisfaction for him, only insisting that the offender should acknowledge the offence, and ask pardon; so long as the man indulged a *wrong spirit*, this would be inexplicable. True, he must admit the generosity of the mediator; but he cannot see what necessity there is for such a proposition, and especially why so much should be made of it: and as to his falling under, and asking pardon, these are terms to which he cannot submit, and the propriety of which he cannot discern. Should these terms be proposed to him in writing, it is a hundred to one but he puts some other meaning upon the words than that apparent to an impartial person, and so excuses himself. If, however, the offended party be a person of power, so that the offender must yield, self-interest may dictate a feigned submission; but, after all, he will secretly think the whole an unfair procedure. The application of this to the

quarrel between God and the sinner, the mediation of Christ, and the reception given to it by the unregenerate, is perfectly easy. The sinner has no disposition to see things in their true light.

Thirdly: *The work of the Holy Spirit is necessary to produce a right disposition for the reception of the gospel.* This accords with our Lord's representations to Nicodemus. We have no reason to think that this "ruler of the Jews" was destitute of common sense. Yet Jesus told him that, unless he was born again, he could not see the kingdom of God. If ever we have a heart to know God, it must be of God's giving.—Jer. xxiv. 7. A man may read his Bible, and be mightily pleased with himself for the discoveries he makes by the mere dint of common sense; but, if he have no other perception, with all his ingenuity he will be blind to its *real glory*. Our own times furnish us with too many exemplifications. Let us tremble, lest we grieve the Holy Spirit by undervaluing his influences. If those who think they can do without the Spirit were left to their own ingenuity, He would be just, nor could they complain. I wish our character be not drawn in that of the *Laodiceans*: "Thou sayest I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; but knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." May we hearken to the counsel given to that deluded people, and apply to the true source of all spiritual light, for "eye-salve that we may see." They were wonderfully enamored with their *discernment*; but Christ pronounced them *blind*. They had applied to a wrong source for light. If they wished for knowledge worth obtaining, they must apply to *him* for it. Oh that we had a heart to hearken to this counsel!

You will not understand, by what I have written, that I think there is *nothing* in the Scriptures which a man may discern by common sense without the Holy Spirit. Doubtless this is the case with many of the facts of Scripture. All I mean to affirm is that *there are truths in the Holy Scriptures—truths, too, which constitute the essence and glory of the gospel—truths the discernment and belief of which form the essence of true religion, which cannot be admitted without an answerable disposition; and that this disposition must be produced by the Holy Spirit.*

Whoever may think lightly of his influences, and fondly imagine they can do without them, may it be your prayer and mine—"Take not thy Holy Spirit from me"—"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

## LETTER V.

ON THE CANONICALNESS OF SOLOMON'S  
SONG.\*

My dear Friend,

It is an important observation of an inspired writer, "Happy is the man who condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth." Such is the darkness, and such are the prejudices, of the present state, that a consistent character is a rarity. I am naturally led to these reflections by a survey of the course pursued by Mr. R. in relation to the word of God. It is well known that, for many years, he has levelled all his artillery against the practice of sacrificing Scripture to creeds and systems. So far he has done well; but, alas! how much easier is it to ridicule the foibles and propensities of others than to keep in subjection our own. Here, I think, he has failed. There *was* a time when he did *not* hold that there is nothing mysterious in Scripture; as witness the postscript to his Plea for the Divinity of Christ, on mystery. But of late years two capital articles of his creed are, "*That the Scriptures contain in them nothing mysterious—nothing but what common sense alone is sufficient to understand; and that to explain them in a way of allegory is all froth and nonsense.*" He lately preached a sermon from Micah ii. 5, which was taken down in short-hand, in which he pronounced, among other things, that "Rome first attached the idea of mystery to religion." Now it is easy to see that, if Solomon's Song be a Divine allegory (which it certainly is, if canonical), it bears very hard upon both these positions. As to the first, I suppose, that Mr. R., with that great share of common sense of which he is undoubtedly possessed, would find some things here, like what Peter said of some things in Paul's epistles, "hard to be understood." And as to the latter, if this Song be divine, it must either be entirely neglected, or an allegorical style of preaching, occasionally, is unavoidable.

That I have not misrepresented Mr. R.

\* Before these letters were penned a review of "Williams on Solomon's Song" had appeared in the "Biblical Magazine," containing the following query—"Had Solomon in writing this poem any spiritual intention in reference to the Messiah, or was it *accommodated* by some pious teachers in the Jewish church to illustrate the sublime connection between the Son of God and his church, as the domestic relation of Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael, do that of the two covenants?" To this Mr. Fuller wrote a brief reply, which it is not thought necessary to retain in the present edition of his works, as it is embodied and every topic more amply discussed in this letter.—ED.

is evident from his own words, in his Dissertation on Preaching, prefixed to the second volume of Claude: "The fathers were fond of allegory; for Origen, that everlasting allegorizer, had set them the example. I hope they had better proofs of the canonicalness of Solomon's Song than I have had the pleasure of seeing." The amount of which is, "The fathers were fond of allegory—Solomon's Song supported them in it—I do not like allegory—I reject Solomon's Song."

Far be it from me to countenance all that has appeared in the world in the way of *spiritualizing* Scripture, as it is called. Whether the "fathers," or the children, were the publishers, it matters not. Doubtless the greater part deserves no better name than that of "*froth and nonsense.*" Yet there are parts of Scripture which cannot, without doing violence to "*common sense,*" be understood otherwise than as types or allegories. The whole Jewish ceremonial, if thus understood, bespeaks the wisdom of its author, has an intrinsic glory, and answers to the New Testament exposition of it. But if otherwise, to say the least, it must have been an intolerable load of *unmeaning ceremonies.*

One would think that no Christian could doubt whether the *sacrifices* under the law were instituted for the purpose of pointing to the great sacrifice under the gospel; or that the manna of which the Israelites partook, and the water of which they drank, had a typical allusion.—1 Cor. x. 3, 4. And if any entertain doubts whether their *ceremonial purity* (consisting in eating none but *clean* creatures—in their priests wearing none but *clean* garments—and in their frequent *washings*) were intended to typify *moral purity*, they may have those doubts removed, if they wish, by inquiring of an inspired apostle. Compare 1 Peter i. 16 with Lev. xi. 44.

To account for these ceremonial injunctions, as Mr. R. does in his "Christian Doctrine of Ceremonies," by suggesting the necessity of linen garments, frequent washings, &c., because they had so much "*butchery and dirty work to do,*" is neither to the honor of God, nor of his people Israel. To suppose the Most High to deliver such injunctions and prohibitions, and to annex such awful penalties, in accommodation to a system of "*butchery,*" is not much to the honor of his character, or his consummate wisdom. And to suppose that the people of Israel did not know how to do "*dirty work,*" without such a body of laws and penalties to instruct and awe them, is not much to the credit of their common sense. I submit to you whether the apostle to the Hebrews

had not a much better notion of things when he styled the whole Jewish ceremonial "a shadow of good things to come!"—Heb. x. 1. And what but an allegorical meaning can be attached to the forty-fifth Psalm! The "King," of whom David sang can be none other than the Son of God.—Heb. i. 8. And throughout the whole Psalm he is described under precisely the same character as in Solomon's Song.

But, not longer to exercise your patience, by remarks on types and allegories in general, allow me to offer a few reasons why I think the Song of Solomon an allegory.

It is allowed on all hands that this song was esteemed canonical by the Jewish church before and at our Lord's coming. This is evident from its being retained in the Septuagint; and nothing appears that in the least degree invalidates the conclusion that it was always received by the Jews as authentic.

There are two things which render this fact of weight in determining the question:—1. *That to the Jewish church, until their rejection of the Messiah, were committed the oracles of God* (Rom. iii. 2); to keep them, no doubt, from all additions and diminutions. Now, had they betrayed their trust, surely our Lord would not have overlooked a matter of such importance. Since, therefore, he never charged them with any such thing, there is every reason to conclude that in this matter they were blameless. It is true, they invented a number of traditions, by which they made void the law of God: but they never pretended that these were *Scripture*, but simply what they were—the *traditions of the Rabbies*. For making void the law, by these traditions, Jesus rebuked them in the severest terms; but he never once hinted that they had corrupted, added to, or diminished from the *Scriptures*. On the contrary, 2. *Jesus and his apostles, in addressing the Jews, appealed to those very Scriptures of which they had possession, for the truth of their doctrine*. "Search the Scriptures," said our Lord, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of me." By *Scriptures* undoubtedly they must have understood him to mean *all the books, at that time in their hands, accounted canonical*. Had he meant any thing else, he should, and doubtless would, have explained his meaning. For Christ to inveigh so sharply and so frequently as he did against traditions, which were never pretended to be canonical, or a part of the inspired writings, and at the same time know that the Jews had added a mere love-song to the sacred canon, and

yet say nothing about that—but on the contrary, by appealing to their Scriptures in the bulk, *allow* their purity—is most unaccountable, quite unworthy of such a Divine Instructor, and past all belief. The same may be said of the apostolic declaration, "All Scripture is given by inspiration," &c. By "all Scripture" the apostle must have meant to include either *all* those books which the Jews accounted canonical, or only a *part* of them. If the former, the point is granted; and the apostle may be considered as *setting his seal to all the writings of the Old Testament*. If the latter, then it became him, as an inspired guide, to detect and expose the forgery, and not to speak of the Scriptures in the gross, knowing that so idle an affair as a mere love-song was universally received as a part of them.

In fine, if the Song of Solomon is a corrupt addition to the Bible, either Christ and his apostles were *ignorant* of the fact, or thought it *unimportant*, or *designedly avoided* its exposure. The *first* of these suppositions is totally inadmissible, unless we deny the omniscience of the Son of God, and the inspiration of the apostles. The *second* would imply that they were indifferent to the great end of their mission, viz. to *seal up the vision of prophecy*, and to perfect the holy canon; and render null and void all those solemn charges and awful threatenings, to those who should presume to *add to* or to *take from* it. And, to suppose the *last*, is deliberately accounting Christ and his apostles a company of impostors: and then, to adopt Mr. R.'s own words on another occasion (Plea for Divinity of Christ, p. 50, First edition), "What becomes of all their fine professions of declaring the *whole* counsel of God—of keeping back *nothing* that might be profitable—of imparting *their own souls*—and so on? Are not all these rather romantic?"

I have no doubt that the *veil, covering, or coloring* of this Song, is borrowed from an *Epithalamium*, or marriage song. This certainly appears to be carried on throughout, as it is also in the forty-fifth Psalm; and probably the speakers introduced, in addition to the bridegroom and the bride, allude to the *companions* who usually attended at Jewish marriages. Yet it is easy to see, in several expressions scattered, probably on purpose, throughout the Song, marks of its sacred meaning; expressions which are totally inapplicable to any thing but what is divine. This is observable in many of the Psalms, particularly in the sixteenth, wherein are many things applicable to David, and which the reader would naturally apply to him, without thinking of Christ. But, as he pro-



ceeds, he finds *some things* which *cannot* apply to David—such as that God would not suffer his Holy One to see corruption; but show him the path of life; in his presence, fullness of joy; and at his right hand, pleasures for evermore. Hence it is evident that, though many things were true of David, yet the main design of the Holy Ghost was, under the form of a prayer of David, to furnish a glorious prophecy of the Messiah—his resurrection, ascension, and glorification at the right hand of the Father. Thus the apostles Peter and Paul understood it, and thus they reasoned from it.—Acts ii. 25—36; xiii. 35—37. Other instances, equally in point, might be quoted, but this is sufficient. And so here, in this Song of Solomon, it is easy to observe (and that without the help of a wild imagination) a *divine glory*, the beams of which are too bright not to be seen through the veil, too resplendent for all this covering to conceal.

To begin with the introduction of the poem—“The Song of songs, which is Solomon’s.” It is allowed, I suppose, whether it be canonical or not, that Solomon was the author. Now, for him to compose a song abounding with idleness and impurity, which is insinuated of this, and to style it “the Song of songs,” that is, the most excellent of all songs, bears hard on his character either as a *good* or a *wise* man. If he knew the whole was dictated by wantonness, and yet, by setting out with such high pretensions, gave the reader to expect great and glorious things, he was an impostor. Or, if he did not intend any imposition, but really thought his poem, though not a Divine allegory, yet a *most excellent song*, then it proves him, so far from being the *wisest* of men, little better than a fool: for however, in some parts, it may abound with finer language, equal, and perhaps superior, to any other human composition, yet the *self-commendation* which, upon this principle, runs through the whole, renders it in the last degree fulsome and disgusting. “I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley—white and ruddy—the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely,” are expressions, I will venture to say, impossible to drop from the pen of any mere creature, if applied to himself, but a stark fool. And either of the above suppositions would invalidate, not this song only, but the book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes; which are referred to as canonical by an inspired apostle. Compare Heb. xii. 5, 6, with Prov. iii. 11, 12. And not only so, but the Old Testament, as such, would be invalidated, for representing him as a *wise* and *good* man.

Many other things are uttered in this

Song, of which I may instance a few, which *cannot* comport with the idea of a mere love-song. For example: in chap. i. 4 the bride is represented as saying to her beloved, “The *upright* love thee.” This, if applied to Christ, is eminently true, and conveys this glorious sentiment—that such is the excellence of his person, character, and conduct, that every “upright” heart must needs love him. But apply this to mere creatures, and what uprightness of character is required? Especially apply it to Solomon, and some of his associates—I presume *they* were not pre-eminently “upright” that loved him!

Immediately after, the bride is represented as calling herself “*black*, but *comely*.” and, by black, it is evident she meant the very opposite of comely; seeing she further compares herself to the black and beggarly “tents of Kedar,” as well as to the beautiful curtains of Solomon. This, if applied to the church of Christ, sets forth, in the most lively manner, her external *meanness and deformity* in the estimation of the world, and her *spiritual beauty* in the eyes of Christ. Thus, in the forty-fifth Psalm, the king’s daughter is represented as “all glorious within.” But apply the language to a female as such, and I see not how she *could* be both black and comely, repulsive and beautiful; and, if this were possible, it is scarcely conceivable that she should so freely *acknowledge* her uncomeliness, any more than that, consistently with modesty, she should sing of her beauty. Especially apply this to one of Solomon’s wives; and it is scarcely conceivable that she should be a *sun-burnt vineyard keeper*!

Again: in the ninth verse, the bridegroom is represented as comparing his bride to “a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariot.” This, if applied to the church of Christ, is a fine representation of her *union, order, and activity*, in her social capacity. But how a female, as such, can be likened to a *company of horses*, I am at a loss to conceive.

Again: the bride is represented as endeavoring to endear her beloved to others, setting him forth in all his beauty; and the consequence is, they are taken with him; and instead of the scornful question, “What is thy beloved more than another beloved?” they change their note, and ask very respectfully, “Where is thy beloved, that we may seek him with thee?” This, if applied to Christ and the church, is a beautiful representation of that concern which occupies every pious breast that others should know and love the Saviour as well as themselves, of their

eagerness to proclaim his excellencies, and of the good effects which frequently follow, as in the case of the woman of Samaria. But, to apply it to one of Solomon's wives endeavoring to excite the admiration of others, is most extraordinary, and far enough from the way in which female affection ordinarily works!

Again: the bridegroom, in expressing his admiration of the bride, declares her to be "terrible as an army with banners." How this could be a recommendation of one of Solomon's wives I cannot conceive. But apply it to the church of Christ, and it beautifully sets forth the terror with which their testimony, attended with *unity, order, zeal, and inflexible piety*, strikes the enemies of God. Mary, queen of Scots, declared that she feared the prayers of John Knox more than an army of ten thousand men!

"But is it not an *unseemly* allegory?" I answer by asking, *Is there any thing unseemly in virtuous love?* Has not the Holy Ghost made use of this imagery throughout the Scriptures? The forty-fifth Psalm will stand or fall with this Song.—See also John iii. 29; Ephes. v. 23—32. Moreover, did not the Holy Ghost, in inspiring the sacred writers, make use of their natural propensities, so that each writer wrote according to his turn and taste? Thus David, who had a taste for music, tuned his harp, and wrote an inspired Psalm book. John, who was naturally amiable, treated largely on love. And Solomon, who was famed for wisdom, wrote the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Nor was this the only prominent feature in the character of Solomon. God had made him susceptible of the tenderest and most endearing affections, which, under the dominion of virtue, are productive of the happiest social effects. And under the dominion of virtue these affections in Solomon, doubtless, were for a time; and during that time he was inspired to compose this Song.

"But does it not contain *indelicatc* imagery?" Suppose it should appear so in our age and country, it does not follow that it was so when and where it was written. It is well known that words become indelicate in one age which were in another considered pure. Words are but arbitrary signs, and their meaning varies according to the variations of custom. Custom, which is governed by ten thousand accidents, may affix ideas to a word in one age which in another it never included. There are words which our fathers used in English which would offend a

modern ear, and which would now convey very different ideas from what they did then. It is also well known that *eastern* imagery is widely different from ours, in respect of what we account delicacy, as well as boldness. They would have scorned, if I may so say, to have truckled to our finical rules. If we reject all the Scriptures which do not accord with these rules, we must reject much more than Solomon's Song.

Mr. R. enumerates a long list of Scripture phrases which he accounts indelicate to repeat in this age and country, and tells of a young clergyman of his acquaintance to whom the mention of some such in a sermon had well nigh proved an emetic!—Claude, vol. ii. p. 32. I must confess, I am so attached to Scripture phraseology that I am not so apt to sicken at the sound as some people may be. Mr. R. has much better expressed my mind on this subject in another page of the same volume (p. 341), where, speaking on "*finical delicacy*," he says, "We may observe, on the one hand, that purity and simplicity of manners are generally accompanied with a blunt, rough, rank speech; and, on the other, that depravity of manners generally hides itself under an affected refinement and delicacy of style. The old prophets spoke bluntly, but they were very holy. Modern courtiers speak refinedly; but they are, behind the curtain, extremely vicious."

However, as he has selected a number of expressions to be excluded from the pulpit, without rejecting the books whence they are taken as uncanonical, why should he not do the same by Solomon's Song? Two or three passages at most would have sufficed. Or if a whole book must be rejected, on account of its containing such and such expressions, why does he not reject the other parts of Scripture, and commence deist at once?

Surely I might appeal to all *serious* Christians whether the reading of this poem has had an improper influence on their minds. I believe, were it not for some wanton would-be-wits, encouraged, I am sorry to say, by such critics as Mr. R., the sentiments of this sacred song would never have been so awfully perverted. *Holy men* have, in all ages, found in it a *holy tendency*—a tendency to raise in their minds a flame of genuine and ardent affection towards *Him* who is the subject of the Song—"The chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely!"—"To the pure all things are pure!"

## LETTER VI.

ON THE INFLUENCE OF SATAN UPON THE  
HUMAN MIND.

My dear Friend,

IN reply to your observations on the influence of Satan on the human mind, I am free to acknowledge that it is a subject of such a nature that in speculating upon it we may presently lose ourselves. But this is true of every subject connected with the operations of spirit.

To the opinion of Mr. R. on this subject I was not wholly a stranger; nor, probably, are you ignorant that it is one of the ænets of Dr. Priestley and the modern Socinians. That writer thus expresses himself:—"The word *devil*, or *Satan*, in the Old and New Testaments, signifies only the principle of natural or moral evil, personified by a well-known figure in rhetoric. The devil is only an allegorical personage."

I presume Mr. R. would not go quite so far as Dr. P., to deny the *existence* of evil spirits; yet he is very little behind him in denying their *influence* on the human mind.

It is no contemptible instance of Satan's policy to get the notions of his existence and influence exploded; well knowing that, in that case, no prayers would ascend to heaven, and no vigilance be exercised on earth, against his allurements. Nothing would discover more admirable policy in a thief or a murderer, who was prowling about the outskirts of a town for the purposes of plunder, than to quiet the alarms of the people by procuring the circulation of an opinion, either that no such person existed, or that, if he did, he could not possibly enter their houses; in fact, that the whole was a popular prejudice, invented by designing priests, and perpetuated by a few old women, to frighten the vulgar.

It is allowed that the devil has no power over our minds without divine permission; yea, further, that he has no such power over us as to draw us into *sin* without our own consent. I will not say that he cannot suggest sinful thoughts without our consent; but certainly he cannot, without our consent, draw us into sin. If we yield not, we may be said to be *tempted*, as Christ was; but *sin* does not consist in being tempted, but in *falling in* with the temptation.

Farther, it is allowed that the principal and immediate objects of our dread ought to be the snares and allurements of the world.—These are sometimes called temptations, being the means adopted by the god of this world to draw away the heart.

But not a fish that swims need fear the most subtle and expert fisherman, *provided it keep clear of his nets and baits*.

Once more, it is allowed that the doctrine of Satanic influence has been greatly *abused* by some who profess to maintain it; as when they consider themselves merely passive, and that all the evil of their minds is to be charged upon foreign agency; thus imputing all their wickedness to the devil, for the purpose of exonerating themselves. But this is no proof that the doctrine itself is not true. Multitudes abuse the doctrine of *human depravity*; and by imputing their sinful conduct to their poor wicked hearts, or to the old man, as they express themselves, endeavor to elude the blame. But shall we, on this account, deny that doctrine? Surely not.

You will receive my present thoughts on Satanic influence under three observations.

First—*The language of Scripture on this subject is such that nothing but an absolute impossibility of its being understood literally should render any other sense admissible.*

The language of inspiration, it must be allowed, not only represents the devil as a real, intelligent agent, but describes him as having an influence on the human mind. Among others, let the following passages be seriously considered: "The god of this world blindeth the minds of them that believe not.—The prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.—Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.—That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil who are taken captive by him at his will.—For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.—Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat.—Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.—Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil: for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness (or wicked spirits) in high places."

In considering the above testimonies, it is only necessary that Satanic influence, literally speaking, is *possible*; and no man ought to dispute it, unless he can prove it *absolutely impossible*. But by what mediums will that be attempted? Can it be proved that Satan *cannot* communicate ideas to the human mind? That simple finite spirits can convey ideas to *each other*, and influence *each other*, cannot be denied,



without denying the possibility of reciprocal communication between angels, and between the spirits of just men made perfect. And that simple spirit can influence spirits *dwelling in bodies* cannot be denied, without denying the influence of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men. If there be any impossibility in the matter, it must consist in this: for a *finite* simple spirit to convey ideas to another spirit *dwelling in flesh*. But wherein consists the impossibility of this! He that can prove it so, let him undertake it. But let him reflect that, in proving this, he will also prove that there has been no fellowship between the spirits of just men made perfect and the spirits of Enoch, Elijah, and our Lord; for *their* spirits inhabit bodies. On this principle the translation, instead of the death, of Enoch and Elijah, is a disadvantage rather than a privilege; and the resurrection of our Lord's body must occasion, for the present, an unspeakable loss to the church above. I am inclined to think the man is not yet born who will undertake to prove the *impossibility* of Satanic influence on the human mind.

I have been given to understand that Mr. R. does not reject the sentiment on the ground of its impossibility, but rather on *this* principle:—that there is *no need* to impute that to infernal agency which can be accounted for in a more simple way." Now, if we had no other source of information on the subject than our own observation, this maxim might be a good one: but if *God has told us* that Satan has an influence on the human mind—(and this, if words have any meaning, he most certainly has)—that ought to put the matter out of all doubt. Otherwise it will amount to this:—That though God declares that such things are the effects of such causes, yet there is no need for *believing* this, provided we can discover what we conceive to be a more simple way of accounting for them! And that, having made this important discovery, we are at liberty to explain away the literal sense of the Scriptures, and understand them metaphorically! But this is setting up our own wisdom as the standard whereby to try the wisdom of God, which is the very essence of Socinianism—the main pillar on which their system rests. Thus they metaphorize the *WORD*, or *SON* of God, in the first chapter of the gospel of John, and every thing else that stands in their way. This is the rock on which they split. Mr. R. himself says, "The difference between the Socinians and our churches, on this article, seems to be this: we apply reason to the *evidences* of revelation; and they to all its *doctrines*; according to us, reason has done its office when it has ob-

tained evidence *that God speaks*; according to them, reason is to *reject what is spoken, if they cannot comprehend it.*" *Claude, Vol. I. p. 153.*

In short, considering the plain import of the fore-cited passages to any reader of common sense and common honesty, if no such influence existed it would be difficult to vindicate the writers from being either ignorant men, carried away with vulgar prejudices; or, what is worse, designing impostors, pretending to use great plainness of speech, when, at the same time, the whole current of their writings tended much more to deceive mankind, and to conjure up a number of imaginary bugbears, than to convey solid and useful instruction. Mr. R. himself adopts this reasoning on another subject. See his "Plea for the Divinity of Christ;" the first two arguments from the language of the New Testament.

Secondly:—*If the Scriptures on this subject are not to be understood literally, but metaphorically, the influence of Satan meaning no more than moral evil—then the writers must have been metaphor-mad.*

According to this they first metaphorize things into persons, and then again metaphorize these persons into things! It is well known that the devil, in his influence upon men, is represented under the names of a serpent, a lion, fowls of the air, &c. These representations, if descriptive of the influence of a real intelligent agent, are proper and beautiful. They are metaphors. But, if they are intended to describe a mere principle of moral evil, where is the beauty, where the propriety? Is it not all confusion? First, moral evil is personified, or converted into a devil; and then this devil is metaphorized into a serpent, a lion, &c.

To suppose Christ, in his explication of the parable of *the sower*, for instance, when he was stripping it of its parabolical clothing, and giving the plain, literal meaning, to explain one dark metaphor by another equally dark, is most extraordinary. "When any one heareth the word, and understandeth it not," says he, "then cometh *the wicked one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in the heart: this is he which received seed by the way side." A very curious explanation indeed, on this principle! The wicked one taking the word out of their hearts must have been quite as obscure as the fowls of the air devouring it—an explanation which itself needed explaining!

The same might be observed of the parable of *the tares*. It is said that, while men slept, the enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. In giving the plain and real meaning of this

parable, our Lord said, the enemy that sowed them was the devil. This, we may presume, he thought sufficiently plain. But, if Satan has no influence on the mind, this was *perplexing* the subject, not explaining it.

In fine, it is easy to see from hence that the *existence* and the *influence* of evil spirits must stand or fall together. If the one is metaphorical, so is the other. The word of God speaks as explicitly and unequivocally in favor of the latter as of the former; and, if the one be abandoned, so must the other. And thus the Scripture account of "angels who kept not their first estate being reserved to everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day," may be all nothing.

There may be no such beings in reality; the whole may be metaphorical. And, in that case, the whole testimony of Scripture is reduced to uncertainty; and hell, yea, heaven itself, may be an eastern metaphor—a poetic fiction!

Thirdly:—*If a series of actions take place, which discover some great design, we naturally suppose an agent equal to those actions, as exercising such design.*

Every design must have a designer; every contrivance a contriver. Thus we prove the being and superintending providence of God. We see a creation—a system full of design; and we conclude that there must be a creator. We see also, in the affairs of the world, a wonderful combination of events, operating in many cases without the knowledge of those who are instruments in bringing them to pass, and concurring to produce the most astonishing results; and hence we infer that there must be a Supreme Being, who sits at the helm of affairs, and controls the whole with an invisible hand.

Now just apply this reasoning to the case in hand. The *opposition* carried on against the cause of God, from the very beginning, bears evident marks of *design*—of design far superior to theirs who were the visible and immediate instruments.

When God instituted *sacrifices*, to teach mankind the necessity of an atonement, they were presently *perverted to purposes of idolatry*.

When all people were become idolaters, and God separated a people to himself, to serve him, every measure was adopted to *oppose and crush that people*. Thousands of them were murdered in Egypt in infancy, and the remainder cruelly oppressed. When in the wilderness, enchantments and divinations were employed to *curse* them. And, from their first settle-

ment in Canaan until the coming of the Messiah, the surrounding nations were leagued together against them. Jerusalem especially, the place where Jehovah had fixed his name, was the mark of their hot displeasure. "Raze it—raze it to the foundation!" was their cry.

A most marked opposition was discovered to the great corner-stone of the church—*Christ Jesus*. When he came into the world, the children of a whole town must be slain, in the hope of slaying *him*. When he entered on his ministry, an especial effort was made to draw him into sin, to taint his holy mind with distrust, presumption, and vain-glory; and, when that temptation failed, the main object was to get him dispatched.

After his ascension, every opposition that could be made to the *church of God* was pursued with greediness. Persecution raged in the first three centuries with relentless fury, carrying off its thousands and tens of thousands by the most cruel deaths. At a very early period, heresies and animosities found their way into the bosom of the church. Even the apostles were fully employed in stemming the torrent; and, after their decease, a variety of corrupt notions and idle ceremonies tarnished the glory of the church, and introduced that flood of iniquity—the papal apostacy.

The same mighty mischief has been planned and executed against the church ever since. In every age, they have been desolated by cruel persecution, poisoned by pernicious principles, or torn in pieces by intestine divisions.

If ever any opposition can be said to be carried on by *design*, surely this must. An opposition so long in duration, and maintained so uniformly, and by such complicated and opposite measures, could not have been conducted without an *intelligent agent* at the head of it. And, if any credit is to be given to the word of God, such an agent does exist. Of this we have, in the word of God, several striking intimations.

The *perversion of sacrifices* to idolatrous purposes appears very much like a design on the part of Satan to draw off the attention of mankind from the Lord Messiah. Indeed, this seems to be intimated by the sacrifices of idols being designated by an inspired apostle—"The sacrifices of devils." 1 Cor. x. 20, 21.

The *opposition of the nations to Israel* may be ascribed to the same cause. In the days of David they repeatedly made war against them, but in vain; for we read that "the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went." But, when Satan could obtain no advantage over Israel

by the sword of his heathen vassals, he took the field himself; and the next news we read is, that "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." He vented his malice against them by moving their chief to sin, and to sin of such a kind as should provoke the Lord to diminish their numbers. And it proved that, by drawing David into sin,—inflating his heart with pride on a review of his numerous forces, Satan slew more Israelites in a few days, than his vassals, the heathen princes, could in a succession of years. 1 Chron. xviii. 13; xxi. 1.

The efforts that were made to draw Christ into sin, as recorded in the fourth chapter of Matthew, are expressive of the same design. They were natural, from one whose main object was to overthrow the work of human redemption. It might be supposed he would try all he could to undermine the foundation of the church, well knowing that in that case the structure must fall. This is intimated in that memorable saying of our Lord—"On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The crucifixion of Christ is also attributed to the devil, who is represented as entering into Judas, for the purpose of getting the Son of man betrayed into the hands of sinners. Tormented, it seems, with the success of our Lord, and perceiving that his gospel was silently insinuating itself into the hearts of men, he determines to get him dispatched out of the way. Every circumstance of this tragical affair unfolds design, all bearing on one point—the crushing of the rising interest.

Just suppose Satan to have reasoned thus with himself:—What shall I do? If I let him alone, the world will believe in him. I cannot draw him into sin: he has baffled me at every effort. I will get him dispatched; and the more effectually to make an end of him, and of all future attachment to him, I will get him executed in the most shameful manner. He shall be hanged as a common malefactor, at the place of public execution; so that his name shall be had in execration to the end of time. Yea, and that his memory may be covered with everlasting infamy, I will stir up his own countrymen, the Jews, the only religious people in the world, to put him to death: and not merely the rabble, but the sanhedrim, the scribes and pharisees, the very gods of the people, whose reputation is such that all the world will conclude that if he had not been a malefactor he had ne' been put to death—and thus I hope to overcome him! Were we to suppose, I say, that Satan had reasoned thus, the supposition

would only correspond with the facts of the case.

This, moreover, seems to be intimated in those Scriptures which speak of the sufferings of Christ—as "the hour and power of darkness—breaking the serpent's head—spoiling principalities and powers—making a show of them openly—triumphing over them in his cross."

It was glorious, indeed, that at *the very hour* when hell was just ready to burst forth into triumph, then it should receive its fatal shock; and that *those very means* which were designed to crush the Lord Jesus and his rising interest, and overturn the work of human redemption, should be made to subserve the overthrow of Satan's empire, and lay the foundation of that very work which they were intended to destroy! This was killing Goliath with his own sword—this was making a show of him indeed!

The persecution that raged against the church, and the heresies that were introduced, are also ascribed to the devil, and equally marked by design. It was said to the church at Smyrna—"The devil shall cast some of you into prison." And the persecutions which raged are represented as a flood coming out of the mouth of the great red dragon, that old serpent called the devil and Satan, against the woman and her seed. Rev. ii. 10; xii. 9, 14—17. Not, indeed, that Satan assumed the office of justice of the peace; but he stirred up his vassals, as he had previously moved Judas, to betray the Lord.

When, in the days of Constantine the Great, the Roman empire became Christian, and so an end for a time was put to persecution, then the devil betook himself to another method. Popery, that *mystery of iniquity*, which had long begun to work, now made its appearance, and was soon openly revealed, in a grand though gradual apostacy. 2 Thess. ii. 7, 8. Arianism, Pelagianism, and the whole farrago of popery, soon overrun the church. False doctrines are called the *doctrines of devils*; and the beast of Rome is said to receive his power from *the dragon*. 1 Tim. iv. 1; Rev. xiii. 2.

And now I leave you to judge, and to consider whether those who deny the influence of evil spirits on the human mind are very far from denying the influence of the Good Spirit, and whether the one way not very naturally pave the way for the other. Indeed, if it be just to metaphorize the Scriptures in the one case, it is equally just in the other. They do not speak more fully and decidedly of the one than they do of the other. Paul was sent forth to turn men "from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God."



Acts xxvi. 18. But, if the power of *Satan* be a metaphor, the power of *God*, in delivering men from it may be so too. In short, if such a liberty is to be taken in metaphorizing Scripture in this instance, it may in any other; and then nothing will be able to stand before it. There is not a doctrine in the Bible but might be thus metaphorized away.

I have made my observations with freedom. My desire is that you should do the same in perusing them. Read them, not with the partiality of a friend, but with the non-prepossession of an indifferent person. I may in some things be mistaken. Receive nothing but in proportion to evidence. Though you are bound implicitly to believe *God*, you are not bound so to believe me or any other creature. Whether all I have said be approved or not, believe me, I am, and desire to remain, your sincere friend,

ANDREW FULLER.

#### ON SPIRITUAL DECLENSION AND THE MEANS OF REVIVAL.

It is a matter of complaint too common, as well as too well founded, that the bulk of Christians in the present age are very deficient in spirituality, and come far short of the primitive Christians in a close walk with God. We lament over our unfruitfulness, our want of growth in grace and increasing conformity to Christ. Complaints of this kind, if they arise from the integrity of our hearts, are necessary and proper; but complaining alone will not effect a cure. *We may sigh and go backward to the last period of our lives.* One necessary means of effecting a cure is to inquire into the *cause* or *causes* of the complaint. An investigation of this nature may, through a divine blessing, answer some good end upon the minds of those whose desire it is to be searched and tried, that every evil way may be detected.

It is not here intended to inquire into all the different causes of unfruitfulness, but only to point out a few of those which are the most obvious. That which I shall insist upon in this paper is, THE WANT OF A PROPER REGARD TO THE WORD OF GOD. It has been the pleasure of God to "magnify his word more than all his name;" and, if we are under the influence of a right spirit, we shall magnify it too. It is by the knowledge of its sacred truths that we are freed from the slavery of sin, and our spirits sanctified. In it, as in a glass, "we behold the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of God."

In almost all the remarkable declensions in the church of God, a neglect of the Scriptures has been at the root. On the contrary, in all the seasons of revival and reformation, the Scriptures have been the grand means of their being brought about. During the long and wicked reign of Manasseh, the book of the law of the Lord was lost, was lost even in the temple; and then it was that idolatry prevailed: when Josiah came to the throne, and a reformation was brought about, the lost book was found, and read, and regarded. During the captivity, the word of God seems to have been neglected. In the times of Ezra and Nehemiah, a glorious reformation was brought about; but by what means? The sum of the account is this: *Ezra and his companions stood upon a pulpit of wood, read the law, and gave the meaning; and the people understood the law, and wept bitterly, and entered into a covenant with their God.* Religion was reduced to a low state at the time of our Lord's coming; and one cause assigned for it was, that the pharisees, by their traditions, had "made void the law of God." On the contrary, the glorious revival which then succeeded, by the ministry of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles, was by means of their disseminating the true knowledge of God as revealed in the Scriptures. It is true, they themselves were inspired, but yet even the Lord Jesus Christ appealed to the word, calling upon his hearers to "search the Scriptures." To what can we attribute the great anti-christian apostasy, but to a disregard of the word of God? The original cause, as prophetically given us by the apostle himself, was this, "*Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.*" The foundation of popery was laid in a disregard to the Bible, and an overweening attachment to traditions and unscriptural ceremonies. As the apostasy ripened, the Scriptures were neglected; and at length, when it arrived to its height, they were utterly discarded, being absolutely forbidden to be read by the common people in their own language. On the contrary, by what means was the glorious reformation effected? Was it not by translating, exposing, and preaching the Scriptures? From the foregoing facts, we ought at least to suspect that a want of regard to the holy Scriptures lies at the foundation of our departures from God.

There are several ways in which a want of proper regard to God's word is discovered. I shall mention three in particular:—

First: By a neglect of reading, medi-

*tating*, and *praying* over it. We have great advantages for knowing the mind of God. He hath told us all his heart. Our advantages are superior, not only to heathens, who walk in the dark, without a revelation, but to those of the church of God itself in any former period. Old-testament saints valued the Scriptures "more than thousands of gold and silver," more than their necessary food; and yet they had but a small part of the sacred canon to what we have. That which has crowned all, and brought life and immortality to light, was then wanting. The most glorious of all the displays of God has been added since their death. Christians themselves, in former ages, had not our advantages. Till the art of printing was discovered, it must have been very difficult for many families to obtain a Bible; and no doubt a great number of Christians, who were generally a poor people, were denied the pleasure of having those sacred books in their families. Since then circumstances are altered; we have now, through a kind providence, the most easy access to the Scriptures. But whether we have more of a spiritual understanding into the mind of God than our predecessors had may be questioned; yea, whether the word of God, upon the whole, is read more now by Christians than it was then, may be a matter of doubt. Does not its being common and easy of access seem to diminish its value in our eyes? Are we not apt to think light of it, as Israel did of the manna when rained in plenty round their tents?

The sacred Scripture is a rich mine abounding with substantial treasures; but it is a mine that must be *worked*. If we would read it to advantage, it must be with *prayer* and *meditation*. "My son," said the wise man, "if thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." A blessing is pronounced upon the man "who meditates in God's law by day and by night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, which bringeth forth fruit in its season." If any think to excuse themselves by alleging that they were never taught to read; I answer, if they were interested in a common will, or testament, they would never think of remaining ignorant of its contents. If they could not read, they would procure some person to read it to them; or, if that could not be done, rather than not know its real meaning, they would be at some considerable pains

to learn to read it themselves. Now shall all this regard be shown to a common will, and that spontaneously of our own accord; and no more respect be paid to the invaluable testament of our dying Redeemer? Where then is the sincerity of our religious profession? "Where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also."

Secondly: By not reading it for the ends and purposes for which it was written. What those ends are, we are expressly informed in the book itself. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for *doctrine*, for *reproof*, for *correction*, for *instruction in righteousness*." To read the Scripture for *doctrine* is to learn our religious sentiments from it, and form them by it. So far as we are under the influence of prejudice, or receive systems on human authority; and go to the Scriptures not so much with a desire to be instructed in what we know not as to strengthen ourselves in what we have already imbibed, be it right or wrong; so far we exercise a sinful disregard to the Scriptures, and many justly be given up of God to our own deceptions. If we read the word of God to any good purpose, we must suppose beforehand that we do not know every thing, that we are liable to error in judgment and evil in practice; how else shall we read it for *reproof* or for *correction*?

If we set up our *own reason*, so as to resolve to admit of nothing as divine truth but what shall be within its comprehension, we despise God's word, and cannot be said to read it either for *doctrine* or *correction*. It is not enough that we "call no man master;" we must have "one master, even Christ." Our *own reason* is also another word for our *own creed*; and we are as much in danger of being ruined by our own creed as by that of another man. It matters not by what name we call it, our reason or our creed; if the infallible dictates of the Holy Spirit are to give way to this, adieu to all religion. Where such presumption begins, it may truly be said, religion ends.

In reading the *preceptive* part of Scripture, it will be but of little use to us, unless we read it with an intention and determination, through divine assistance, to form our conduct by it. To read for *instruction in righteousness* is the same thing as searching to know what is the good, perfect, and acceptable will of God, with a design to do it, let it grate ever so much with our carnal inclinations. It answers but a poor end to read a chapter once or twice a day in the family, merely for the sake of decency, without so much as an intention of complying with what shall be found to be the mind of God.

If our judgment or conduct is formed

by *dreams, visions*, or supposed *immediate revelations from heaven*, and not by the plain meaning of the word of God as it stands in our Bibles, then do we slight the word of God, and God may justly give us up to our own delusions. It is no just plea in behalf of these supposed revelations, that they often come *in the words of Scripture*. If we infer any thing from certain words of Scripture being impressed upon our mind, either in favor of ourselves, or for the guiding of our conduct, which cannot be proved to have been the meaning of Scripture independent of that impression, it is no other than real enthusiasm, and will in the great day be found to be a disregard and perversion of the Scripture itself.

Thirdly: By forming a low opinion of the *importance of the truths contained in it*. It seems to be very much the spirit and opinion of the present age that it matters not how polluted the fountain is, if the streams are but pure: but the question is, whether the streams *can* be pure, if the fountain is polluted. Actions materially good and beneficial to society may flow from a heart at essential variance with the doctrines of revelation; but it wants proof that any action can be truly good and acceptable in the sight of God, unless it originate in evangelical principle. On the contrary, the Scripture is express, that "without faith it is impossible to please God."

Some good people have contracted a strange prejudice against the doctrines of the gospel, accounting them *dry and uninteresting* matters. They like *experimental* religion the best, they tell us. But I do not understand the distinction of religion into doctrinal and experimental after this sort. I would ask such a person, What is experimental religion? Is it any other than *the influence of truth upon the mind* by the agency of the Holy Spirit? You love to *feel* godly sorrow for sin; so do I: but what is godly sorrow for sin but the influence of truth upon your heart? Is it not the consideration of the *great evil of sin, its contrariety to what ought to be*, its being committed against *light, love, &c.*, that dissolves your heart in grief? Were you not to realize these *truths*, it would be impossible for you to weep over your sins. But you love to feel joy and peace in believing; so do I: but must you not have an object to believe in? Take away the great doctrine of the atonement, and all your faith, joy, and peace, are annihilated. Much the same might be said of other gospel doctrines: instead of being opposed to experimental religion, they are essential to its existence. That some doctrinal

sermons have been *dry and uninteresting* is granted; but that must have been the fault of either the preacher or the hearer. If Scripture doctrines were delivered in their native simplicity, and heard with a heart suitable to their importance, they could not be *dry*: they must be like the doctrine of Moses, which "dropped as the rain upon the grass, and as the dew upon the tender herb."

There is another prejudice against the doctrines of the gospel in the minds of many people. They imagine them to be unfriendly to practical religion. That practical religion may be neglected through an excessive attachment to favorite opinions, is allowed; but if we imbibe and inculcate the truths of the gospel according to the lovely *proportion* in which they stand in the Bible, and adhere to them, not because we have once imbibed them, but because God hath revealed them, such a reception of the truth, and adherence to it, instead of enervating practical godliness, will be found to be the life of it. Doctrinal, experimental, and practical religion are all necessarily connected together: they can have no existence separate from each other. The influence of truth upon the mind is the source of all our spiritual feelings, and those feelings are the springs of every good word and action.

The above are some of the different ways in which we are liable to be wanting in our regard to the word of God; and, in proportion as these prevail, it is natural to suppose we shall be wanting in *spirituality and communion with God*: instead of growing in grace, we shall dwindle like the unwatered plant in the drought of summer. This may be expected on *two* accounts. *First*: As an awful chastisement for our sin in such disregard. God's word is indited by his Holy Spirit: a want of proper regard to that word must therefore be one of those evil things by which the Spirit of God is *grieved*; and, where that is the case, it is natural to suppose he will withdraw his reviving, fruitifying influences, the consequence of which will ever be a discernible want of spirituality. I call this an *awful* chastisement; and such it is, because of a spiritual kind. As the Holy Spirit is the sum of spiritual good, so his withdrawal is the completion of every spiritual evil. When David was threatened with the loss of all that was dear to him, he deprecated this more than any thing beside: "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me!" "Wo unto them," saith the Lord, "if I depart from them." *Secondly*: As a natural consequence of it. God's word is that to those who "meditate in it by



day and by night" which "the rivers of waters" are to a tree planted by their side. It is that by means of which they "bring forth fruit in their season." From the want of a spiritual and experimental acquaintance with God's word proceeds a *want of religious principle*; and this seems to be the case of multitudes of professors in the present age. From want of religious principle proceeds a more than ordinary liability to *errors in judgment*: the house that was *empty*, though swept and garnished, was ready for the reception of unclean spirits. From errors in judgment proceed *errors in spirit and conduct*; if once the truths of God sink into disesteem, his precepts in the spirituality of them will not continue to be regarded. Little sins, as they are accounted, will be indulged, and the most difficult and self-denying duties neglected. And then, if things come to this, that we give way a little, we shall soon go further: want of universal obedience will soon lead to a universal want of obedience; and thus, if infinite mercy prevent not, we shall *wax worse and worse*. This is no other than the high road to apostasy, towards which it is to be feared great numbers of professors are verging, and in which great numbers are already walking! Happy should I be if any one by these hints might be led to reflection, and recover himself out of the snare of the devil, by whom he is led captive at his will!

I have only one thought more to add. If a regard to the word of God is of such great importance to Christians, what must it be to *ministers*! A defection in a private character nearly terminates in himself; but a defection in a minister may affect many thousands. If as ministers we sink into a disregard for divine truth, to say the least, we shall not preach it with that ardor which is necessary, if at all. It becomes us to tremble, and to inquire whether the defections among our people be not owing in part to the wholesome truths of God being withheld from them, or delivered in a languid and careless manner; and, if so, it behoves us farther to consider how we shall endure that cutting rebuke: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children!"

In the last paper, it was supposed that one cause to which declensions in religion might be imputed was a *disregard to the word of God*: in this I shall attempt to prove that another cause is *the manner in*

*which we attend to the duty of PRAYER*. Prayer is the ascending of the heart to God. It is one of the ordinary means of our communion with God. A great part of the religious life consists in the exercise of it, either in public or in private, either vocal or mental. It may be supposed that our spiritual prosperity will bear some proportion to the degree of fervor and constancy with which this duty is attended to. All our spiritual life is derived from Christ, as that of the branch is from the vine; and prayer is that by which we receive of his fulness grace for grace. If this duty is either restrained before God, or performed in a careless, carnal manner, our souls must of course dwindle away and lose their fruitfulness.

But, as the persons to whose consideration these papers are humbly recommended are such as profess godliness, I shall take it for granted that they make a point of prayer, and shall say nothing of its being omitted, but confine my remarks to *the manner in which it is performed*.

It is a fact, to which I suppose many can subscribe, that it is very common for us to pray to the Lord, and yet for our prayers to remain unanswered. We pray, for instance, that the kingdom of Christ may increase in the world, and yet we see but little of that kind taking place: that our sins may be forgiven, and yet sin remains upon our consciences from time to time; and we lose it, not so much by its being blotted out by God's pardoning mercy, as worn out by our own forgetfulness: that our graces may be lively and active, yet we remain wretchedly insensible and formal: in a word, that we may enjoy communion with God, and conformity to him; and yet the degree that we possess of either is so small that we have reason to be greatly ashamed, and to tremble lest it should be said of us at last, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?"

But how is it that our prayers should be thus unanswered? "Is the Lord's arm shortened, that it cannot save; or his ear heavy, that it cannot hear?" Or is he slack concerning his promise of hearing and answering the prayers of his people? None of all these; he himself has told us the reason: "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss." "If I regard iniquity in my heart," said the Psalmist, "the Lord will not hear me." Let the following questions be seriously considered.

First: *When we pray, do we really and earnestly desire what we pray for?* It is awful to think of approaching the Searcher of hearts without meaning as we speak; and yet it is to be feared that a spice of this solemn mockery runs through many

of our petitions. It were well for such persons as always pray in a *set form* of words to examine whether they mean what they say. It is granted that a person *may* as really pray in the words of others, provided they do but express his case, as in his own; but cases are so numerous in different persons, and so various in the same person at different times, that it is not to be expected that any set of words of human composition should fully answer the end proposed by it. Nor is formality in prayer confined to those who use a form. Persons who pray extempore may fall into a habit of repeating words without meaning, or words which, however good and proper in themselves, are not the expressions of the heart. Prayers offered up in public are very liable to this abuse, and that both in the speaker and bearer. The speaker is under a temptation to forget the God he approaches, and to consider himself barely as in the hearing of men, and so to ask, not for such things as he really desires, but such as next occur to his mind, as things, if I may so speak, *that will do to be prayed for*; and the hearer is apt to consider himself as not immediately concerned in the petitions of another, and so to indulge his mind in wandering after other things; whereas, by joining in public prayer, we solemnly profess to unite with it: he that prays is to be considered as the mouth of the assembly to God.

There is one considerable evidence that we do not mean what we say in many of our approaches to God, and that is the want of what the apostle calls *watching unto prayer*. If a poor man in real necessity ask relief at a rich man's door, he will not think it sufficient to repeat over a few words and return without an answer: no, he *watches* and looks with longing expectation after that for which he has been petitioning. And if the party to whom he applies should have previously invited him, and even laid his commands upon him whenever he is in want to repair to him, the poor man in that case will not be so apt to consider his applications so much in the light of duties as privileges. It is easy to apply this to our approaches to God. Are we of such a spirit in those approaches as to reckon them a privilege, or do we satisfy ourselves with having gone through the exercise, and performed, as we think, our duty, without waiting, or scarcely thinking of our petitions being granted? When we say *Amen, so be it*, at the close of our prayers, do we really desire that so it *should be*? It is a dangerous state of mind to be praying daily for keeping and quickening grace, and yet to be easy without it; to rest contented with asking com-

munion with God, instead of enjoying it. The least that can be supposed in such cases is that God will punish our indifference, not to say our hypocrisy, by withholding the blessings for which we make request.

Secondly: *Are we not apt to be less earnest in matters wherein we should take no denial, than in others wherein it would become us to be submissive?* There are two sorts of mercies for which we have to pray; mercies which God hath *not* bound himself to bestow, even though we pray for them in ever such a right spirit—and mercies which he *hath*. Of the former class are all our earthly comforts, and some things in the religious life: of the latter are all those spiritual blessings essential to salvation. David prayed for the life of his child: God did not reprove him for praying, yet neither did he grant him his request. David desired also to build God a house: God took it well that it was in his heart, yet he denied him the thing he desired. In neither of these cases had God promised to grant the desire of his servant, and he saw fit to counteract it: but, in respect to spiritual and eternal blessings, God has bound himself to grant the desire of the righteous, and to perfect that which concerns his praying people. Now, if things are so, it is easy to see that when we are praying for the one sort of blessings a peculiar submission to the will of God becomes us, which is not required in the other. If we pray, with Jabez, to have our coast enlarged in temporal things, we ought to feel a contented mind, and submit to God, though our prayers should be unanswered: but, if we are praying for an interest in Christ as our spiritual and everlasting portion, contentment of mind is not there required. God does not require us to be willing to be lost forever; for that would be the same thing as to be willing to be forever employed in cursing and blaspheming, instead of blessing, his holy name. Again, if we adopt the latter part of the prayer of Jabez—"O that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me!"—if by *evil* we understand the evil of affliction, a resignation to the will of God becomes us; but, if by *evil* we understand the evil of sin, resignation would then become criminal. But, if we inspect the generality of our prayers, I am afraid there is more resignation, as it is accounted, in respect to the enjoyment of spiritual blessings, where it is not required, than there is in temporal blessings, where it is required. In those things wherein we should take no denial, we are too easy; but, in those wherein resignation would become us, we are too urgent. The phrase "If it be thy will," which so often occurs in

prayer, is perhaps more frequently applied to things in which God requires us to be all importunity than to things wherein such language would be suitable.

Thirdly: *When we pray for good things is it always to a good end?* It is possible we may go to God, and really desire the things we ask, and yet, not desiring them to a good end, we fail of obtaining our desires. We may pray for blessings upon our worldly engagements, and it is very right we should do so; but such prayer may be merely for the purposes of sensual gratification. Thus the apostle James speaks, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." And thus the Lord charged Israel, before they entered into the promised land, saying, "I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear." If these be our ends, our prayers can be no other than abomination in the sight of God. We may even pray for the success of the gospel, and it is doubtless right that we should do so; but it is possible such desires may be uttered, not out of regard to the prosperity of Christ's cause, but of *our own*; and, if so, it is a low and carnal end, and we cannot expect that God should hear us.

Fourthly: *When we confess our sins, and pray to be restored, do we really lament them, and mean to forsake them?* I fear too many of our petitions are unanswered, because they do not arise from godly sorrow. We confess from custom or conscience, but do not feel our hearts go out against the sin, so as to return to the Lord with all our soul. Confession is of the nature of a solemn oath, an oath of abjuration; and it is awful to think that we should ever use it without a desire and determination to forsake! Where this takes place, it is no wonder that prayer for the forgiveness of sins and communion with God should be unanswered. This is regarding iniquity in our hearts; and then we are assured the Lord will not hear us.

Fifthly: *When we pray for divine direction in matters of faith or practice are we sincerely determined to follow the dictates of God's word?* We may pray to be led into all truth, and yet feel a prejudice in favor of sentiments already imbibed, and against others which may be proposed: in this case, while we pray and search the Scriptures, we shall feel a secret wish to have them speak according to our preconceived ideas of things, not knowing how to endure the shame of having been mistaken. Much the same may be said of things which relate to *practice*. There is such a thing as to go to God for direction in doubtful matters, not with a resolution

to be determined by the word of God, but with a hope to find God's word in favor of our inclinations. This was the motive of Ahab in sending for Micaiah, to know whether he should go up to Ramoth-Gilead to battle; and of the Jews left in Judea, to know whether they should tarry there, or go down to Egypt. In both these cases they had determined what to do: their asking counsel of God, therefore, was mere hypocrisy. "Son of man," said the Lord to Ezekiel, concerning such characters, "these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say, Thus saith the Lord God, Every man—that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumbling-block of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols."

Sixthly: *Are we not greatly wanting in what may be called religious public spirit, in our prayers?* It is a fact that a great number of Christians in the present day are perpetually harassed in determining the reality of their own Christianity: they are all their life-time poring upon that subject, and perhaps die at last full of fear and anxiety. The primitive Christians do not seem to have been so much troubled with these thoughts as with their want of conformity to Christ. Christ taught his disciples to approach *daily to God as their Father*; and, by the accounts we have, it would seem they generally did so: but such sweet freedom is now rarely to be found, even among the godly. How is this to be accounted for? There is no doubt that such darkness of mind is in a degree pitiable, and that such persons require to be dealt with in a way of wisdom and tenderness. It is a thought, however, that deserves consideration, whether one great cause of this darkness of mind may not arise from *an excessive attention to our own safety*, to the neglect of *the glory of God* and the prosperity of Christ's kingdom. Christ enjoins us to pray, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come," before we ask for the forgiveness of our sins, or even for our daily bread. A person that is employed in scarcely any thing else but recollecting former evidences for the purpose of being able to answer the question, Am I a Christian? is not likely to gain his object. The means he pursues tend to defeat their own end. Self-examination, however necessary in a degree, yet, if attended to to the neglect of other things, is like the conduct of a man in trade, who should spend three-fourths of his time in casting



up his accounts that he may determine whether he has gained or lost. It is doubtless very desirable to enjoy a full satisfaction respecting our interest in Christ, and such a satisfaction is to be enjoyed in the present life; but the question is, What are the means by which it is to be obtained? Like reputation, and some other things, to pursue it as an end is the way to lose it. If we care so little about God's glory as to pray scarcely at all for the advancement of his kingdom in the world; but are continually taken up about our own safety, it is right that God should so order things as that we should be disappointed. If we wish for satisfaction on that head, it must be sought only as a *secondary object*. If we were to seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, these would be among the things that would be added unto us. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee."

Lastly: *Do we ask blessings wholly in the name of Christ?* I do not mean to ask whether we conclude our prayers in so many words, but whether we come to God under a full persuasion of our utter unworthiness, knowing and feeling that while we implore the best of blessings we deserve the heaviest of curses; and desiring all to be given, not for our sakes, but wholly for the sake of Christ. We have reason to believe that if our prayers were more presented in the name of Christ they would be more successful, seeing that it stands on sacred record *whatsoever we ask IN HIS NAME, it shall be given us.*

In the last paper, I considered the manner in which the duty of prayer is attended to as one considerable reason of spiritual declension: in this I shall propose to consider another cause, as contributing to the same end: it is that of *sin lying on the conscience unlamented*. When the apostle Paul wrote his First Epistle to the church at Corinth, they were sunk into a most wretched condition indeed. With admirable faithfulness, wisdom, patience, and tenderness, he wrote that epistle with a view to reclaim them. Many of them were reclaimed: but some, it seems, continued insensible, which induced him, when he wrote his Second Epistle to that church, to express himself thus: "I fear lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you; and that I shall bewail many who have sinned already, and have not repented of their deeds."

Sin, if not habitually lamented, and removed by repeated applications to the cross of Christ, is like poison in the bones: it rankles within us, and is destructive of our soul's prosperity. So long as sin re-

mains unlamented, so long we have an habitual liking to it; and so long, to say the least, God has a controversy with us. To assist any one who wishes to make strict inquiry into this matter, I would state a few *evidences* by which it may be known whether we have sinned and not repented, and point out *the danger* of such a condition.

If there is any particular evil to which we have been especially addicted, and that evil is still *persisted in*, we may be certain that we have not lamented it sufficiently, or to any good purpose. Saul confessed his sin unto David; but his persisting in it but too plainly proved that he never truly repented of it. How often soever we may have confessed our sins before God, if these confessions are not attended with a forsaking of them, we are none the nearer, but perhaps the farther off: it is an awful state of mind indeed to be able to persevere, at the same time, in sinful indulgences and religious exercises.

Farther: Though we should refrain from the evil as to practical compliance, yet, if such refraining arises from mere *prudential considerations*, we may certainly conclude that we have never truly repented of it. If the bias of the heart is towards an evil, and we are withheld merely, or principally, by regard to our reputation, or worldly interest, or fear of hell, and not by the fear and love of God, our condition is very dangerous. If, when we are plied with temptation, the arguments we use to repel it are taken, not so much from its evil nature, or its God-dishonoring tendency, as from the consequences it will produce, let us tremble: surely we stand upon the brink of a tremendous precipice. "That man," says Dr. Owen, "who opposes nothing to the seduction of evil in his own heart, but fear of shame among men, or hell from God, is sufficiently resolved to do that evil if there were no punishment attending it; which, what it differs from living in the practice of sin, I know not!"

Again: Suppose we have been guilty of no one particular sin, either of commission or omission; yet we have accumulated a load of guilt by small degrees. This is the more likely to go unlamented, because, being contracted by little at a time, it has obtained a place in the heart almost unnoticed. But as little and repeated colds, when they settle upon the constitution, will in the end bring on a fit of sickness, so will these little neglects and indulgences bring on a sore disorder upon our souls. There is not a day passes but we are contracting fresh guilt: unless therefore we maintain an habitual communion with Christ, daily bewailing our sins at the foot

of his cross, we may certainly conclude that we have sinned and not repented.

Farther: If past evils are *remembered* with pleasure and approbation—if the thoughts and imaginations are fed by dwelling upon them—or if we can take a pleasure in *speaking* of our former sinful exploits, though it may be at the same time we would be thought to disapprove of them—these are but too forcible a kind of evidence that we have not yet repented of our deeds. To say the least, if we have repented, we have again made the evils our own, by a re-commission of them in the mind; which requires renewed repentance, and application to Christ, as otherwise we are as much under the guilt of them as ever. True repentance is attended with a holy *shame*, a shame that will teach us to wish our evil ways annihilated, and the very name of them buried in oblivion. There are some sins which expose us to shame among men; and these it is natural for us to wish to have buried in forgetfulness, whether we repent of them or not: but there are others, very offensive to God, which yet will gain the applause of men; and here it is the temptation in question lies. True repentance will make us ashamed to repeat these, as well as others. “Thou shalt remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.”

In fine: If we have not with holy abhorrence confessed and rejected our sin, we have not yet repented of it. There is such a thing as the conscience being habitually burdened with guilt, and the spirit depressed with long-continued dejection, and yet the soul not be brought to a thorough contrition. The heart seems now ready to dissolve, but yet not altogether come to a point. Such a state of mind is tenderly described by David in the 32d and 38th Psalms. Both these psalms were probably written after his repentance for his remarkable fall; and in them he describes, not only the breakings forth of godly sorrow but the previous operations of his mind during the time of his lying under the guilt of that great sin. “When I kept silence,” saith he, “my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer! Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.”—“My wounds stink and are corrupt, because of my foolishness.” Now he comes to the crisis: “I am ready to halt; my sorrow is continually before me! I will declare my iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin!”

The state of mind last described is far less dangerous than any of the above, because it promises to come to a speedy and happy issue; but yet things are never safe till the soul, dissolved in grief, lies prostrate at the feet of Jesus. We have reason to think that a great deal of remorse of conscience and depression of mind may come on and go off again; and there is nothing that we have greater reason to dread than a being so given up of God as that the guilt of our consciences shall *wear* away by degrees, instead of being *washed* away by an application to the blood of Christ.

A few additional observations, on the *danger* of having sinned and not repented, shall close this paper. In the first place, *it weakens and enervates our graces*, and by consequence *spoils our usefulness*. Godliness, in all its lovely forms, is a tender plant: sin indulged in the soul, like weeds in the garden, will impoverish it, and cause the tender plant to dwindle away. Righteousness and unrighteousness cannot flourish together. Experience but too plainly proves that carnality indulged damps the flames of love, kills holy resolution, joy and peace fly before its malignant influence, hope sickens into fear, and faith loses sight of invisible realities. When this is the case, of what use are we? what in the family? what in the church? what in the world? where is now the savor with which our spirit and conversation should be attended? Alas, we are but too much like salt that has lost its savor, fit for neither the land nor the dunghill!

Farther: *It cuts off all communion with God*. The joys of salvation were withdrawn from David when he withdrew from God. It is well if prayer and all close dealing with God is not neglected; or, if we approach to God in form, still while iniquity is regarded in our hearts, the Lord will not hear us. We may go morning and evening, and oftener; but the Lord is not there! The pleasures of religion are fled. Our soul is removed far off from peace, and we shall soon have forgotten spiritual prosperity. There are only two states of mind which we now alternately experience: we are either locked up in *insensibility*, or pierced with *self-reflection*.

Again: *It gives Satan a great advantage over us*. It tempts the tempter to apply to us with renewed force. While sin lies unlamented upon the conscience, we are like a besieged city, enfeebled by famine, sickly, and without a heart to resist; and this must needs invite the besieger to renew his onsets. It is by resisting the devil that he flies from us.

and so, *vice versa*, by dropping resistance he is encouraged to approach towards us. This in fact is the case with us: while sin remains unlamented, there are generally more temptations ply the mind than at other times. When Sampson slept and lost his strength, the Philistines were soon upon him. And now put these all together: our strength gone, the Holy Spirit departed, and temptation coming upon us with redoubled force: alas! where are we? Well did the Psalmist exclaim, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,—and in whose spirit there is no guile."

Again: Secret sins indulged will, in all probability, soon become *manifest and open*. It is not in human nature to be able for a long continuance to conceal the ruling bias of the heart. It will come out in some way or other, and it is fit it should. A wise providence has so ordered it that the heart and conduct shall not be at perpetual variance. It is worthy the character of a holy and a jealous God to show his abhorrence to secret sin, by suffering the party to be rolled in the dirt of public reproach. If we regard not the honor of God's name, can we wonder if he regards not the honor of ours? "Him that honoreth me, I will honor; but he that despiseth me shall be lightly esteemed."

Once more: Does it not hereby become a matter of doubt how it is with us as to *our state before God*? Though no true Christian will ever sink into total apostasy, yet while sin is unlamented we are in the direct road to it, the same road that those have trod who have apostatized. They once thought themselves right as well as we, and began to sin by little and little: yes, they went on, and presumed it may be that they should be some time or other *restored*: but, instead of that, have gone on and on, till death has cut them off, and beyond the grave they have found their dreadful disappointment.

These things should make us tremble, and consider the danger of trifling with sin, and presuming upon being reclaimed, and so making ourselves easy in impenitence. If we go on in sin, have we not reason to think things were never right with us from the first? If the waters are naught, does it not seem to indicate that the spring has never been healed?

HAVING, in the three foregoing papers, pointed out some of the *causes* of spiritual declension, I come now to inquire into the *means of revival*. But, before any thing can be said by way of direction, two or three things must be premised.

1. That in the use of all means we consider them but as *means*, place no depend-

ence upon them, but entirely upon the Spirit of God as the first cause. We can of our own accord find the way out of God's path, but if left to ourselves we shall never find the way in again.

2. If we have so backslidden from the Lord as to live in the indulgence of any known sin, whether of omission or commission, that we *immediately put away* these idols, and that without reserve. God will not hear us while iniquity is regarded in our hearts. If any or all of those things pointed out in the foregoing papers as causes of declension are so indeed, those causes must be lamented and forsaken, or depend upon it the effects will not be removed.

3. In whatever mode we have departed from God, that there be a *real desire of returning* to him again. Without this, all directions will be in vain, and all means without effect. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." It may be we are *accustomed* to live without close communion with God, and are almost *contented* with such a kind of life. Perhaps we *lay our accounts* with going through life without habitual close walking with God. If so, I only say this, Let us not at the same time lay our accounts with dwelling forever with him at last.

But, if the above three things may be supposed, there are then other scriptural directions which may be given. That which I shall insist upon in this paper is as follows: *That we closely consider the evil nature of that sin which is committed after our conversion to God*.—As our first return to God begins with conviction of sin, so must every other return. The ordinary means of obtaining conviction of sin, together with a mournful sense of it, is by seriously and closely reflecting upon its evil nature and aggravating circumstances. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."—"Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities, and for your abominations."

Perhaps we cannot obtain a more affecting representation of the evil of our backslidings from God than that which is given us by the prophet Jeremiah, in his address to Israel, contained in the second chapter; and, as advice from such a quarter comes with divine authority, I do not think I can do better than to refer the reader to Jer. ii. 1—13, on which I shall now make a few remarks.

From this affecting passage we may observe *four* things in particular, which are represented as aggravating those sins



which are committed after we have known the Lord; they are committed in violation of the most solemn *vows*, without any the least *provocation*, are expressive of the blackest *ingratitude*, and the most extreme and singular *folly*.

First: They are committed in violation of all those *solemn vows and covenant engagements* which we made and into which we entered at our first conversion. Not only was there a covenant between the Father and the Son before time, but as well there is a covenant between Christ and his people in time.

Conversion is a marriage wherein (with reverence be it spoken) Christ resigns up himself with all he is and has to us, and we resign ourselves, with all we are and have, to him. Such a union is here alluded to. The love we bore to Christ at that time might fitly be called *the love of our espousals*. Was there not a time when we scarcely wished for any other pleasure than what was to be enjoyed in communion with himself and his saints—when his name was as ointment poured forth—when we loved the very image of it? And, when we have seen those who we thought bore most of that in their spirit and conduct, has it not been as though we had seen an angel of God? Was there not a time when closet exercises were reckoned our highest privileges—when the return of public ordinances was waited for with eager expectation—in short, when we took Christ's cause for our cause, his people for our people, his will for our law, his glory for our end, and himself for our portion? Now these were times from whence we may each say, "Thy vows, O God, are upon me!" But have we not since then strangely forsaken him? How is this? Did we love him too well then? Is he not as worthy now as then? If a prince espouse a poor miserable outcast, and give himself with all he is and has to her, and only require her heart in return, shall she refuse him that? shall she be the first that shall be dissatisfied? must she go after other lovers, and that in spite of all her solemn vows? And yet may each backslider say, Thus it has been with me! "O, my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art *my Lord*;" thou hast taken him for thy lawgiver and thy portion: how is it that thou shouldst bow down to other lords, and seek satisfaction in that which is not God?

Secondly: Whatever departures from God have taken place, they have been *without any provocation whatever*, on his part. "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?" This is a question that ought to cut us to the very soul, and open every

spring of sensibility and self-abhorrence! While we were in open rebellion against him, was he wanting in *forbearance*? When he saw us in our impoverished and ruined condition, and gave his own Son to die for us, did he act an *unfeeling* part toward us? Was it hard on our side that Christ should be "made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him?" Since we have been engaged in his service, has he been a *hard master*? Has his yoke been galling to us? Did he ever prove to us a barren wilderness, or a land of drought? Was ever the path of obedience a barren path? Is it better with us now than formerly? Has he been a *churlish father* to us? Did he ever refuse us free access to him in a time of need? When we have asked for bread, did he ever give us a stone? When he has smitten us, was it not always with a mixture of mercy, and all to do us good in the latter end? Whenever we have returned to him with our whole heart, has he not been always ready to receive us, and to bury all in forgetfulness?—Methinks I hear him appeal to the very *rocks and mountains* (as being less insensible than we) for the equity and goodness of his cause: "Hear, O ye mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel: O, my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me!" Alas, what shall we say unto the Lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us belongeth confusion of face, as it is this day!"

Thirdly: Sins after conversion are attended with circumstances of peculiar and horrible *ingratitude*.—This was a part of God's charge against Israel. He had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, had led them through the wilderness, through a *dangerous, barren, and lonesome* wilderness; "a land of deserts and of pits; a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; a land where no man passed through, and where no man dwelt." He had brought them also into a plentiful country; but they had polluted it, and even made his heritage an abomination. It is true, God has not done the self-same things for us as he did for them: he has not given Egypt for us, nor Ethiopia for our ransom; but he has given what is of infinitely greater account—his own blood! Neither has he redeemed us from Egyptian thraldom; but he has "delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

We never were supported by miracle, in the dangerous, barren, and lonesome deserts of Arabia; but we have been led and supplied by a kind hand, both in a way of providence and grace, through a wilderness equally lonesome and barren, and much more dangerous. We never were possessed of the land of Canaan, that plentiful country, that rest for the weary Israelites; but we were born in a country but little inferior to it, even as to the enjoyments of this life; and the *rest* of gospel-privileges into which we are entered, with a glorious inheritance into which we hope to enter, abundantly transcend every thing of that sort, and lay us under far greater obligations. If we have any thing ingenuous left in us, surely a spirit and conduct that has slighted and dishonored a God of such love as this, must, on reflection, deeply wound us.

Fourthly: Such departures from God are expressive of the most extreme and singular *folly*. The Lord charged Israel with folly; and such it doubtless was. We should think so of any people who, in want of water, should remove their tents from an overflowing fountain, and promise themselves a greater fulness by settling in a desert, and hewing out cisterns which, after all, could hold no water. And yet this is no more than we have done, as well as Israel. We have sought happiness in the creature, to the neglect of God; and all created comforts, when possessed in that way, are but broken cisterns. We have found them so: let us be ashamed of our folly, and return to the fountain of living waters.

Departing from God, and indulging ourselves in sinning against him, is a kind of exchange, but it is a foolish one; it is an exchange of liberty for drudgery and slavery, of peace of conscience for bitter remorse, of joyfulness and gladness of heart for sorrow and anguish, and of abundance of all things for hunger, thirst, nakedness, and want of all things. It is a being weary of the government of the Prince of peace, whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light, and a putting our necks under the iron yoke of a tyrant, which tends to our destruction.

Israel was not only charged with folly, but with *singular* folly. "Pass over the Isles of Chittim, saith the Lord, and see, and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit!" There are some foolish people in the world who never know when they are well, but will always be changing and exchanging, though they always con-

tinue to lose by it. To be compared to these were enough to shame us; but this is not the worst. Notwithstanding the fickleness of the human mind in lesser matters, they seem in general, each nation, to be firm to their gods, even though they were no gods; so firm, I suppose, that, if they could have exchanged wood for silver, or stone for gold, they would not have complied. But Israel, the only people upon the earth who had a God worth cleaving to, Israel must be the only people who desire to change! Well may it be added, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be ye horribly afraid!" Shall the people of the only true God, and only they, prove untrue?

But, alas! we wonder at the sottish stupidity of Israel, and forget that in them we see our own picture. Extreme and singular as their folly might be, in their idolatries, it was not more so than is ours, when we feel reluctant to draw near to God in close communion, and fly for happiness to sensual and carnal gratification.

As one great cause of our departures from God has been supposed to be a neglect of the word of God, it will ill become me, in writing on the means of returning to him, to forget to make use of that unerring guide. Hence it is that I have endeavored, as much as possible, to introduce some particular part or parts of the word of God, as the ground of what has been advanced on every subject.

There is much advice given in Scripture respecting the return of backsliders, both as individuals, and as collective bodies. But that which I shall here notice is the counsel of Christ to the church at Ephesus, who had fallen under rebuke for having left their first love. "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent; and do the first works."

The first thing observable in this piece of sacred counsel is, that we *remember from whence we are fallen*. This might have a tendency to convince us of our sad defects, if we were to compare our spirit with that of the *primitive Christians*, and consider the difference. They are frequently described as "little children," denoting, no doubt, their littleness in their own eyes, their love one to another, their readiness to forgive injuries, their modesty, and above all their godly simplicity. Like little children, they were unacquainted with the arts of dissimulation and intrigue. "Laying aside all malice, and guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings, as new born babes they desired and fed upon the sincere milk of the word, and grew thereby."

Is there nothing in this picture of a primitive Christian that makes us blush? Sure I am, it ought, whether it does or not. In them surely we must see and "remember from whence we are fallen."

Another picture of primitive Christianity is given us in Acts ii. 42. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers. From this account we may learn, 1. That primitive Christians looked upon *soundness in the faith* as of great importance. They were strangers to that spirit of indifference to truth which loves to represent its doctrines as mere matters of speculation, and insinuates that "*it matters not what a man believes, if his practice be but good.*" They would have trembled at the thought of deviating from that gospel which had been made the power of God to their salvation. 2. That the fellowship which they maintained with one another arose out of a *union of sentiments in apostolical doctrines*. They were full of charity; but their charity was not of that kind which led them to have fellowship with men of all principles. They loved the souls of men too well to deceive them by countenancing what they believed to be pernicious and destructive errors. 3. They exercised a religious regard to the *positive institutions* of Christ, as well as to the doctrine of salvation through his name. They not only listened to his instructions as their Prophet, and relied upon his atonement as their Priest, but cheerfully complied with his institutions as their King. 4. They were men that dwelt much with God in *prayer*. Having obtained mercy themselves, they joined in supplicating the divine throne for the salvation of others. Nor did they confine their devotions to the church, but carried them into their families and their closets. Let this lovely picture of primitive Christianity be closely reviewed; and let us, by this means, "remember from whence we are fallen, and repent."

Farther: It might be of use to compare our spirit and conduct with that which prevailed at the *Reformation*. It may be difficult to ascertain with precision the difference between that age and the present. But there are two things which I think may be pointed out, which are self-evident. 1. The *principles* they imbibed and preached were very different from what at this time generally prevail. The doctrines which the generality of the Reformers held were such as follow: a trinity of persons in the Godhead; the deity and atonement of Christ; justification by faith; predestination; efficacious grace; the certain perseverance of the saints, &c. These doc-

trines they preached, and looked upon them as consistent with a free and unreserved address to unconverted sinners. How far the body of the reformed churches are gone off from them, I need not say. It is true, the Reformers imbibing these or any other sentiments is no proof of their being divine: but there is one thing that deserves notice, viz. their *moral tendency*. Have not the reformed churches, in proportion as they have forsaken the doctrines of the Reformers, forsaken also that purity, zeal, and ardor, that uprightness before men, and close walking with God, for which they were distinguished? 2. Their *attachment* to what they accounted divine truth was very different from ours. To maintain the doctrines and ordinances of Christ, in their primitive simplicity, they hazarded the loss of all things; and great numbers of them actually resigned their lives rather than give them up. It was to enjoy these that they threw off the yoke of popery, and claimed the right of private judgment. We also claim this right, and so far we do well; yea, herein we exceed them, particularly in allowing to others that right which we claim for ourselves. But, though we understand religious liberty better than they did, yet it is too evident we make a much *worse use* of it. Instead of using it as a *means* for obtaining truth, great numbers among us rest in it as an *end*. Religious liberty, however equitable and valuable it is in itself, is certainly of no farther use *to us* than as it is applied to the discovery of truth, and the practice of righteousness. But the spirit of the present age is to boast of the liberty of thinking for ourselves, till we lose all attachment to religious principles, except an overweening one towards our own conceits, be they right or wrong: and this is the same thing as to boast of a means till we have lost the only good end to be answered by it. The temper of the present age, so far as I have had opportunity to observe it, is loudly to cry up the right of judging for themselves, which undoubtedly all men ought to have: but then they very unjustly infer from this that it matters not what they believe, if they are but sincere in it; that is, if a man's thoughts are but his own, it matters not whether they be right or wrong! Another false inference which they draw is that because they have a right to think for themselves, without being called to account for it by their fellow-creatures, therefore they have the same right in regard to the Governor of the world. The indifference of truth and error being thus admitted, the mind becomes susceptible of any thing that offers; and thus the great truths of revelation are slighted, perhaps,



if for no other reason, because they occupied a place in the creeds of their forefathers. A comparison of times, on these subjects, may assist us in *remembering from whence we are fallen*.

Once more: It would be profitable to recollect the *best parts of our lives, and compare them with what we now are*. Think, backsliding Christian, what an effect those sacred truths have had upon your heart, which since, it may be, you have held with a loose hand, and have been almost inclined to abandon; think what delight you have taken in those ways which you have since neglected; what abhorrence you have felt against those sins in which you have since thought there was no great harm, and so have yielded to them; how you have been grieved when you have seen other Christians degenerate into carnality, sloth, pride, or worldly-mindedness: think—ah! where shall I stop? Do not forget to ask your soul, at the close of every thought, *Is it better with me now than then?* We are not only counselled to “remember from whence we are fallen,” but also called on to “repent.”

Repentance is a godly *sorrow* for sin; and, if ever there be any true revival of religion, it must originate in this. When Judah returned to the Lord, after their captivity, it was with bitter weeping: “Going and weeping, they sought the Lord their God.” There can be no well-grounded peace or joy restored to our mind while the idols of our hearts remain unlamented. God insists upon these being given up; and that, not in a way of secret reluctance, but with holy abhorrence. Nor are we called upon to lament merely on account of positive acts of sin, but even for our sins of *omission*—because we have “forsaken our first love.”

Some professing Christians seem to have no notion of any obligation that they are under to love Christ and divine things. It is the work of God, say they, to affect our hearts, and enable us to love Christ; we cannot command the influence of the Spirit, nor keep our own souls alive. This is very true, but not in the sense in which they plead it. The hearts of men, even of the best of men, are so very bad that unless a kind of perpetual miracle be wrought in them their love will be sure to expire. To preserve alive a spark in the midst of an ocean would not be so great a wonder as preserving the love of Christ in our hearts. But if nothing be obligatory on us but what we *can do of ourselves*, or, in other words, what we, in this our corrupted state, *can find in our hearts to do*, it must follow that we are not obliged to do any good thing whatever; for “without Christ we can do nothing;” and so it must

follow that we have no cause for self-reflection for the contrary, but have a good right to make ourselves easy, and to be contented with that degree of love and holiness which we have, seeing it is such a measure as God pleases to bestow upon us. But, in this case, there could be no propriety in the church at Ephesus being rebuked for having left their first love, or called upon to repent for it. Repentance, if genuine, will lead us to the other part of Christ’s advice; namely, “Do the first works.” The first works are the works of the best ages of the church, and the best times in our life. If there be any considerable revival in the church, or in the souls of individuals, it will be when the diligence, disinterestedness, tenderness of conscience, generosity, and faithfulness of those times are imitated.

In the last paper I attempted to point out some of the means of returning to God, founded on the advice given to the church at Ephesus: in this I shall make a few observations upon the address to the church at Laodicea; whose character, I am afraid, bears but too near a resemblance to that of the present age. The address of Christ to that *lukewarm* and *self-sufficient* people is as follows: “Thou sayest, I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear: and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent.”

Laodicea seems to have been a place of trade. Trade usually produces riches; and riches, pride, indifference in divine things, and spiritual wretchedness. There were *three* things of which these people had very wrong notions; namely, *riches*, *beauty*, and *discernment*. They thought an increase of goods made them *rich*; that the splendid figure which on that account they cut among the churches made them *beautiful*; and that their philosophical knowledge, it is probable, made them *wise*. But they had been for each of these commodities, if I may so speak, to a wrong market; namely, to the world. If they would possess either, they are told to deal with Christ for it. The counsel of Christ is as if he had said, Trade with me. Part with all your own frippery for spiritual things, and learn to derive these from me. They are articles with which none else can supply you. Count

my grace your *riches*, and part with your dress for it; my righteousness your *ornament*, and part with your own for it; and my word and Spirit that which is able to make you *wise* unto salvation; and come to me as fools in your own eyes.

Britain, like Laodicea, is a place of trade: trade has produced riches; and riches, pride, indifference, and spiritual wretchedness. If there is any people therefore in the world to whom the counsel to Laodicea is applicable, rather than to others, it seems to be the churches of Britain. What is addressed to them, therefore, I shall understand as if it were immediately addressed to us.

The principal thing contained in this counsel is that we DEAL WITH CHRIST; and this is the subject with which I shall close this paper. As Christ is the only way to which we are to point lost sinners to repair for salvation, so he is the only way in which we can make any progress in real religion. "As ye have received Christ Jesus," says the apostle, "so walk ye in him." Neither is there any other way of returning to God, when we have backslidden from him. To return home to God is to return to a close walk with him, to a serving him "acceptably, and with godly fear;" and, to this end, we must "have grace;" but there is no way of obtaining grace, but by dealing with Christ. "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" and it is "out of his fulness that we all must receive, and grace for grace."

Christ is a believer's *life*; the bread of life, the water of life, the tree of life, the vine that communicates life to the branches. Each of these metaphors implies that we cannot live at all spiritually without union to him; so neither can we be lively and fruitful, without close communion with him. If we be strengthened "with might in the inner man," it must be by Christ's "dwelling in our hearts by faith," or, in other words, by his having place in our thoughts, desires, and best affections.

Those three things concerning which the church at Laodicea was counselled—namely, spiritual *riches*, spiritual *beauty*, and spiritual *discernment*, can neither of them be obtained but by dealing with Christ. It is not enough for us to be once interested in pardoning and justifying grace: if we would be *rich* in the sight of God, we must be dealing with Christ as guilty self-condemned sinners for forgiveness and acceptance. It is not enough that we reckon upon going to heaven when we die: our conversation must be there even now; there must be a correspondence kept up between Christ and our

souls, or we shall be *poor* and *miserable* indeed! Nor is it enough that we confess our sanctification, or spiritual *beauty*, to come from him: there must be a daily dealing with Christ for the mortification of sin, and for the increase of grace and peace. Our garments are not to be "made white," or beautiful, but by being "washed in the blood of the Lamb." There are very few if any of us who are sufficiently sensible of our entire dependence upon Christ for sanctification. But whatever methods we may take to promote it short of dealing with him they will not do. We may become beautiful in our own eyes, like Laodicea; but shall be miserable and naked in the sight of God.

What is the reason of the multitude of contradictory sentiments at this day, even upon the great doctrines of the gospel, which are written in the Scriptures so plain that "he that runs may read" them? Is it not for want of dealing with Christ for wisdom? We may think, and reason, and dispute all our life-time; but unless we become fools in our own eyes, and rely upon the *word* and *Spirit* of God for instruction, we shall be wretchedly blind to the real glory of the gospel. Spiritual things must be "spiritually discerned." Without this eye-salve, whatever be our conceit of ourselves, we shall not be wise. It is by an unction from the Holy One that we know all things, and without that unction we "know nothing as we ought to know it." We are not to abandon either thinking, reasoning, or on all occasions even disputing; but to take heed that they be so exercised as not to interrupt, but promote, our correspondence with Christ.

There are certain *sentiments* and *feelings* which are necessary and encouraging in our returning to God; such as a deep sense of the evil nature of sin, godly sorrow for it, and a hope of forgiveness on our return; each of which is produced and promoted by a dealing with Christ.

Where can we learn the evil of sin so as it is to be seen in the death of Christ? True, it is to be seen in the glass of the law, and in the moral character of God; but it never was seen, nor can be seen, in so odious a light as that in which it appears on Calvary. And here indeed it is that we not only see the evil of sin, but view the law and moral character of God in all their glory. What an idea must it afford us of God's displeasure against sin to see him pouring out his wrath upon his dear and only-begotten Son, exposing him whom he loved more than all the creation together to ignominy and death, rather than suffer it to go unpunished! Christian, the more thou art acquainted with Christ, the more bitter, unnatural, disin-

genous, and shameful, will thy sin appear to thee.

What will open the springs of godly sorrow for sin like an intimate and close dealing with Christ? If any thing will dissolve the hardness of our hearts, it is the consideration of his dying love. If we are brought to "mourn as one that mourneth for an only son, and to be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born," it is by "looking upon him whom we have pierced." Come, backsliding Christian, come but to the Saviour's feet, and thou shalt soon be able to wash them with thy tears.

Finally: What can afford us any *hope* and *encouragement* to return to God, but the name of Christ? It is in him alone that we can obtain forgiveness. He is the advocate with the Father, to whom they that have sinned are encouraged to look for relief. It was his blood in which David prayed to be washed from his uncleanness and blood-guiltiness. Under all our guilt, darkness, and confusion, let us not despair. We have an "intercessor for transgressors before the throne; a faithful and merciful High Priest, who was tempted in all points like unto us, yet without sin; and in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Let us consider how he interceded for those that were "in the world." "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world: holy Father, keep them!" Think of the Lord's having "laid upon him the iniquity of us all;" even of such as "like sheep have gone astray, and turned every one to his own way"—of his being "able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him," seeing he "*ever liveth* to make intercession for us." Think how he expostulates with us, invites us to return in the most melting language, and stands with open arms to receive us: "O that there were such a heart in them; that they would love me and fear me, and keep all my commandments always!—O that my people had hearkened to my voice; then had their peace been as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea!—Set thee up way-marks, make thee high heaps; set thine heart toward the highway, even the way that thou wentest!—Return, O thou backsliding children, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord.—Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips; for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.—I will heal your backslidings; I will love you freely. I will be as the dew unto Israel; and he shall grow as the lily, and cast

forth his roots as Lebanon.—Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?—I am like a green fir tree; from me is thy fruit found."

If this, or any of the foregoing papers, should be the means of reclaiming any from the error of their ways, either mental or practical—if they should tend to excite either myself or others to a closer walk with God, I shall enjoy the satisfaction of not having written in vain.

#### THE BACKSLIDER: OR AN INQUIRY INTO THE NATURE, SYMPTOMS, AND EFFECTS, OF RELIGIOUS DECLENSION, WITH THE MEANS OF RECOVERY.\*

"I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo! it was all grown over with thorns; nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction."

SOLOMON.

WHETHER the present age be worse than others which have preceded it, I shall not determine; but this is manifest that it abounds not only in infidelity and profligacy, but with great numbers of loose characters among professing Christians. It is true, there are some eminently zealous and spiritual, perhaps as much so as at almost any former period: the disinterested concern which has appeared for the diffusion of evangelical religion is doubtless a hopeful feature of our times; yet it is no less evident that others are in a sad degree conformed to this world, instead of being transformed by the renewing of their minds. Even of those who retain a decency of character, many are sunk into a Laodicean lukewarmness. Professors are continually falling away from Christ; either totally, so as to walk no more with him; or partially, so as greatly to dishonor his name. Alas, how many characters of this description are to be found in our congregations! If we only review the progress of things for twenty or thirty years past, we shall perceive many who once bid fair for the kingdom of heaven now fallen a prey to the temptations of the world. Like the blossoms in the spring, they for

\* This treatise was occasioned by the writer's observing several persons, of whom he had formerly entertained a favorable opinion, and with whom he had walked in Christian fellowship, having fallen, either from the doctrine or practice of pure religion. A view of their unhappy condition made a deep impression upon his mind. If he has been enabled to describe the case of a backslider to any good purpose, it has been chiefly owing to this circumstance. He hopes that, though it was written with a special eye to a few, it may yet be useful to many.



a time excited our hopes; but a blight has succeeded: the blossom "has gone up as the dust," and the "root" in many cases appears to be "rotteness."

It is one important branch of the work of a faithful pastor to strengthen the diseased, to heal the sick, to bind up the broken, to bring again that which is driven away, and to seek that which is lost.—Ezek. xxxiv. 4. If these pages should fall into the hands of but a few of the above description, and contribute in any degree to their recovery from the snare of the devil, the writer will be amply rewarded. It is a pleasure to recover any sinner from the error of his way; but much more those of whom we once thought favorably. The place which they formerly occupied in our esteem, our hopes, and our social exercises, now seems to be a kind of chasm, which can be filled up only by the return of the party. If a child depart from his father's house, and plunge into profligacy and ruin, the father may have other children, and may love them; but none of them can heal his wound, nor can any thing satisfy him, but the return of "him that was lost."

In pursuit of this desirable object, I shall describe the nature and different species of backsliding from God—notice the symptoms of it—trace its injurious and dangerous effects—and point out the means of recovery.

#### ON THE GENERAL NATURE AND DIFFERENT SPECIES OF BACKSLIDING.

ALL backsliding from God originates in a departure of heart from him: herein consists the essence and the evil of it. "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know, therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that *thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God*, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts." But the degree of this sin, and the modes in which it operates, are various.

The backsliding of some is *total*. After having made a profession of the true religion, they apostatize from it. I am aware it is common to consider a backslider as being a good man, though in a bad state of mind: but the Scriptures do not confine the term to this application. Those who are addressed in the passage just quoted had not the fear of God in them, which can never be said of a good man. Backsliding, it is true, always suppose a *profession* of the true religion; but it does not necessarily suppose the existence of the thing professed. There is a "*perpetual* backsliding," and a "drawing back

*unto perdition*."—Jer. viii. 5; Heb. x. 39. Such characters were Saul, and Ahitophel, and Judas. Many persons have in a great degree declined the practice of religion who yet comfort themselves with an idea that they shall be brought to repentance before they die; but this is presumptuously tempting God. Whosoever plunges into this gulf, or continues easy in it, under an idea of being recovered by repentance, may find himself mistaken. Both Peter and Judas went in; but only one of them came out! There is reason to fear that thousands of professors are now lifting up their eyes in torment, who in this world reckoned themselves good men, who considered their sins as pardonable errors, and laid their accounts with being brought to repentance; but, ere they were aware, the bridegroom came, and they were not ready to meet him!

The nature and deadly tendency of sin is the same in itself, whether in a wicked or in a righteous man: there is an important difference, however, between the backsliding of the one and that of the other. That of the hypocrite arises from his "having no root in himself;" therefore it is that in the time of temptation he falleth away: but that of the sincere Christian respects the culture of the branch, and is owing to unwatchfulness, or remissness in duty. The former, in turning back, returns to a course which his heart always preferred: the latter, though in what he does he is not absolutely involuntary, for then it were innocent; yet it is not with a full or perfect consent of his will. He does not sin *wilfully*: that which he does *he allows not*: it is against the *habitual disposition* of his soul: he is not himself, as we should say, while so acting.\* Finally: The one, were it not for the remorse of conscience which may continue to haunt him and disturb his peace, would be in his element in having made a full renunciation of religion; but this is not the case with the other. A life of deviation and distance from God is not his element, nor can he enjoy himself in it. This difference is remarkably exemplified in the cases of Saul and David. The religion of the former never appears to have fitted him: he was continually acting awkwardly with it, and presently threw it aside. If, in addi-

\* It is usual to denominate a character by his habitual, or ruling disposition, and not by occasional deviations from it. Thus when we hear of him who was famed for *meekness* speaking *unadvisedly* with his lips, we say, This was not Moses; or of him who was distinguished by his courageous avowal of his Lord denying with oaths that he knew him, we say, This was not Peter. Both these great characters, in these instances, acted *beside themselves*: It was not they, as it were, but sin that dwelt in them. See Heb. x. 26. Rom. vii. 15—25.

tion to this, he could have forgotten it, and lived without being terrified by the apprehension of consequences, he would doubtless have been much the happier for having cast it off. But, when the latter had sinned, he was not like the raven which went forth of the ark, and came no more; but like the dove which could find no rest for the sole of her foot till she returned. The thirty-second and thirty-eighth psalms express the wretchedness of his mind till he confessed his sin and obtained mercy.

But, whatever difference there be between a partial and a total departure from God, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the party himself, at the time, to perceive it. So long as any man continues in a backsliding state, the reality of his religion must remain uncertain. He may not be without hope, nor ought he to be without fear. The Scriptures know nothing of that kind of confidence which renders men easy in their sins. Paul stood in *doubt* of the Galatians, and they ought to have stood in doubt of themselves. The species of backsliding are various: some respect doctrine, others practice; but all are the operations of a heart departing from the living God.

In some, a backsliding spirit first appears by a *relinquishment of evangelical doctrine*. Where truth is treated merely as a matter of speculation, or as an opinion of no great moment, it is not *held fast*; and, where this is the case, it is easily surrendered. If a plausible book in favor of deism, or any of those vain systems which nearly approach it, fall in their way, they are ready to yield; and by reading the performance a second time, or conversing with a person who favors it, they make shipwreck of their faith, and are driven on the rocks of infidelity. Such was the process in the days of the apostles: those who "received not the love of the truth," were given up to "believe a lie."—2 Thes. ii. 10, 11.

If these departures from evangelical principles were closely examined, it would be found that they were preceded by a neglect of private prayer, watchfulness, self-diffidence, and walking humbly with God; and every one may perceive that they are followed with similar effects. It has been acknowledged, by some who have embraced the Socinian system, that since they entertained those views they had lost even the gift of prayer. Perhaps they might draw up and read *an address to the Deity*; but they could not pray. Where the principles of the gospel are abandoned, the spirit of prayer, and of all close walking with God, will go with it. The confession of Peter that Jesus "was the Christ, the Son of God," is thought to be that which our Lord denominates the *rock* on which he would

build his church. We are sure that the belief of this article of faith was required as a kind of test of Christianity: and who can look into the Christian world with attention, and not perceive that it still continues a sort of key-stone to the building? If this give way, the fabric falls. Backslidings of this nature are infinitely dangerous. He that declines in holy practice has to labor against the remonstrances of conscience: but he that brings himself to think lightly of sin and meanly of the Saviour (which is what every false system of religion teaches) has gone far towards silencing the accusations of this unpleasant monitor. He is upon good terms with himself. The disorder of his soul is deep; but it is of a flattering nature. The declension of serious religion in him is no less apparent to *others* than that of the constitution by a consuming hectic: yet, as is common in such cases, the party himself thinks he shall do well. In short, "the light which is in him is darkness;" and this is the greatest of all darkness!

In others, a departure of heart from God is followed by *falling into some gross immorality*.—There are instances in which a sudden misconduct of this sort has been overruled for the awakening of the mind from its stupor, and divesting it of its self-confidence. It was manifestly thus with the apostle Peter. The stumbling of such persons is not that they should fall; but rather that they should stand with greater care and firmness. But the greatest danger arises from those cases where some lust of the flesh has gradually obtained an ascendancy over the heart; so that when the subject of it falls, in the eyes of the world, it is only appearing to be what he has long been in secret; and the first wrong step that he makes, instead of alarming him, and occasioning his going aside to weep bitterly, is only the prelude to a succession of others. This is not the fall of one who is "overtaken in a fault;" but of one who is entangled in the net of his own corruptions. One sin prepares the way for another. Like the insect infolded in the spider's web, he loses all power of resistance, and falls a prey to the destroyer. Some have fallen sacrifices to intemperance, not by being overtaken in a single act of intoxication, but by contracting a habit of hard drinking. First, it was indulged in private, perhaps under some outward trouble, instead of carrying it to a throne of grace. In a little time its demands increased. At length it could no longer be kept a secret; reason was enslaved to sense, and the Christian professor sunk below the man! Others have indulged in impurity. Intinacities which may have arisen from

nothing worse than a few improper familiarities—yea, which in some instances have originated in religion itself, have been known, through the corrupt propensities of the human heart, which turns every thing it touches into poison, to produce the most fatal effects. Passions of this sort once kindled will soon possess all the soul. They leave no room for any thing that should resist them: not only consuming every spiritual desire and holy thought, but banishing from the mind even the sober dictates of reason, reducing the most exalted characters to the rank of *fools in Israel*. Near these rocks are seen many a floating wreck; and among these quicksands numbers who once bade fair for the haven of everlasting life.

Another way in which a departure from God very often operates is by *the love of the world*.—It is not uncommon for persons who once appeared to be zealous, affectionate, and devoted to God, when they come to be settled in life, and to enter into its necessary avocations, to lose all heart for religion, and take no delight in any thing but saving money. This, it is true, is not generally considered by the world as disreputable; on the contrary, provided we be fair in our dealings, it is reckoned a mark of wisdom. “Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.” Such a one, say they, is a discreet man, and one that knows how to secure the *main chance*. Yet the Scriptures are very decisive against such characters. This is the sin which they denominate “the lust of the eye.” The cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life, are described as *choking the word*, and rendering it unfruitful. It is worthy of special notice that, when our Lord had warned his followers “to take heed and beware of covetousness,” the example which he gives of this sin is not of one that was a plunderer of other men’s property, an unfair dealer, or an oppressor of the poor; but of a “certain rich man whose ground brought forth plentifully;” and whose only object appeared to be, first, to acquire a handsome fortune, and then to retire from business, and live at his ease. This also appears to be the character which is *blessed by wicked men*, but *abhorred of God*.—Psa. x. 3. A man who deals unfairly with men gains not their blessing, but their curse. Men in general regard only themselves: so long, therefore, as any person deals justly with them, they care not what his conduct is towards God. But it is affecting to think that the very character which they bless and envy, God abhors. The decision of heaven is nothing less than this, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in

him.” So far is the love of this world from being the less dangerous on account of its falling so little under human censure, that it is the more so. If we be guilty of any thing which exposes us to the reproach of mankind, such reproach may assist the remonstrances of conscience, and of God, in carrying conviction to our bosoms; but of that for which the world acquits us we shall be exceedingly disposed to acquit ourselves.

It has long appeared to me that this species of covetousness will, in all probability, prove the eternal overthrow of more characters among professing people than almost any other sin; and this because it is almost the only sin which may be indulged, and a profession of religion at the same time supported. If a man be a drunkard, a fornicator, an adulterer, or a liar—if he rob his neighbor, oppress the poor, or deal unjustly—he must give up his pretensions to religion; or, if not, his religious connections, if they are worthy of being so denominated, will give him up: but he may “love the world, and the things of the world,” and at the same time retain his character. If the depravity of the human heart be not subdued by the grace of God, it will operate. If a dam be placed across some of its ordinary channels, it will flow with greater depth and rapidity in those which remain. It is thus, perhaps, that avarice is most prevalent in old age, when the power of pursuing other vices has in a great measure subsided. And thus it is with religious professors whose hearts are not right with God. They cannot figure away with the profane, nor indulge in gross immoralities: but they can love the world supremely, to the neglect of God, and be scarcely amenable to human judgment.

And whatever may prove the overthrow of a mere professor may be a temptation to a good man, and greatly injure his soul. Of this the case of Lot, when he parted with Abraham, furnishes an affecting example. When a situation was put to his choice, “he lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where;” and he took up his residence in Sodom. He had better have dwelt in a wilderness than among that debauched people; but he consulted worldly advantages, and the spiritual well-being of his family was overlooked. And what was the consequence? It is true, he was a righteous man, and his righteous soul was grieved with the filthy conversation of the wicked from day to day: but he could have very little influence over them; while they, on the contrary, found means of communicating their odious vices to his family. Some of



his daughters appear to have been married while in Sodom; and, when the city was to be destroyed, neither they nor their husbands could be persuaded to make their escape, and so probably perished in the overthrow. The heart of his wife was so attached, it seems, to what she had left behind, that she must needs *look back*; for which she was rendered a monument of divine displeasure. And as to his two single daughters, though they escape with him to the mountain, yet they had learnt so much of the ways of Sodom as to cover his old age with infamy. This, together with the loss of all his substance, was the fruit of the "well-watered plain," which he had fixed his eyes upon, to the neglect of his spiritual interest. Yet how frequently is the same part acted over again! In the choice of settlements for ourselves, or our children, how common is it to overlook the immorality of the place, the irreligiousness of the connections, or the want of a gospel ministry; and to direct our inquiries only to temporal advantages! From the same principle, also, many have dealt largely in speculation, and plunged into engagements far beyond their circumstances. The hope of making a fortune, as it is termed, by some lucky hit, draws them into measures which ruin, not only themselves, but many who confide in them. That mere worldly men should act in this manner is not a matter of surprise; but that men professing to fear God should imitate them . . . "this is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation."

Farther: Many have fallen sacrifices not only to the love of the world, but to a *conformity to it*.—These are not the same thing, though frequently found in the same person. The object of the one is principally the acquisition of wealth; the other respects the manner of spending it. That is often penurious; this wishes to cut a figure, and to appear like people of fashion. The former is "the lust of the eye;" the latter is "the pride of life." We need not affect singularity in things indifferent; but to engage in the chase of fashionable appearance is not only an indication of a vain and little mind, but is certainly inconsistent with pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. The desire of making an appearance has ruined many people in their circumstances, more in their characters, and most of all in their souls. We may flatter ourselves that we can pursue these things, and be religious at the same time; but it is a mistake. The vanity of mind which they cherish eats up every thing of a humble, serious, and holy nature: render-

ing us an easy prey to temptation, when solicited to do as others do in an evil thing. A Christian's rule is the revealed will of God; and, where the customs of the world run counter to this, it is his business to withstand them, even though in so doing he may have to withstand a multitude, yea, and a multitude of people of fashion: but, if we feel ambitious of their applause, we shall not be able to endure the scorn which a singularity of conduct will draw upon us. Thus we shall be carried down the stream by the course of this world; and shall either fall into the gulf of perdition, or, if any good thing should be found in us towards the Lord God of Israel, it will be almost indiscernible and useless. In short, such characters are certainly in a backsliding state, whether they be ever recovered from it or not. The case of the Laodiceans seems to approach the nearest to theirs of any thing which in Scripture occurs to me. They were "neither cold nor hot;" neither the decided friends of Christ, nor his avowed enemies: they could not relinquish the world in favor of religion, yet neither could they let religion alone. They were vainly puffed up with a notion of their wealth, their wisdom, and their finery; saying, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing:" but, in the account of the faithful and true witness, they were "poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked." Such a decision ought to make us tremble at the thought of aspiring to intimate people of fashion.

Finally: There is another species of departure from God which it becomes me to notice, as many in the present age have fallen sacrifices to it. This is, *taking an eager and deep interest in political disputes*.—The state of things in the world has of late been such as to attract the attention, and employ the conversation, of all classes of people. As success has attended each of the contending parties, the minds of men, according to their views and attachments, have been affected; some with fear and dismay, lest their party interests should be ruined; others with the most sanguine hopes, as if the world were shortly to be emancipated, war abolished, and all degrees of men rendered happy. This is one of those strong winds of temptation that occasionally arise in the troubled ocean of this world, against which those who are bound to a better had need to be on their guard. The flattering objects held out by revolutionists were so congenial with the wishes of humanity, and their pretences to disinterested philanthropy so fair, that many religious people, for a

time, forgot their own principles. While gazing on the splendid spectacle, it did not occur to them that *the wicked*, whatever name they assumed, *would do wickedly*. By observing the progress of things, however, they have been convinced that all hopes of the state of mankind being essentially meliorated by any means short of the prevalence of the gospel are visionary, and have accordingly turned their attention to better things. But some have gone greater lengths. Their whole heart has been engaged in this pursuit. It has been their meat and their drink: and, this being the case, it is not surprising that they have become indifferent to religion; for these things cannot consist with each other. It is not only contrary to the whole tenor of the New Testament, but tends in its own nature to eat up true religion. If any worldly matter, however lawful in itself, engage our attention inordinately, it becomes a snare; and more so in matters that do not come within the line of our immediate duty. But if, in attending to it, we are obliged to neglect what manifestly is our duty, and to overleap the boundaries of God's holy word, let us look to it: beyond those boundaries is a pit, in which there is reason to fear great numbers have been lost. There were many, in the early ages of Christianity, who "despised government," and were "not afraid to speak evil of dignities:" but were they good men? Far from it. They were professors of Christianity, however: for they are said to have "escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of Christ:" yea, and what is more, they had attained the character of Christian *teachers*. But of what description! "False teachers, who privily brought in damnable heresies, denying the Lord who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction—whose *ways*, though followed by many, were *pernicious*, occasioning "the way of truth to be evil spoken of." To copy the examples of such men is no light matter.

When a man's thoughts and affections are filled with such things as these, the Scriptures become a kind of *dead letter*, while the speeches and writings of politicians are the *lively oracles*: spiritual conversation is unheard, or, if introduced by others, considered as a flat and uninteresting topic; and leisure hours, whether sitting in the house or walking by the way, instead of being employed in talking and meditating on divine subjects, are engrossed by things which do not profit. Such are the rocks among which many have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.

Whatever may be the duty of a nation in extraordinary cases, there is scarcely any thing in all the New Testament inculcated with more solemnity than that individuals, and especially Christians, should be obedient, peaceable, and loyal subjects; nor is there any sin much more awfully censured than the contrary conduct. It requires not only that we keep within the compass of the laws (which is easily done by men of the most unprincipled minds), but that we honor and *intercede with God* for those who administer them. These duties were pressed particularly upon the Romans, who, by their situation, were more exposed than others to the temptation of joining in factions and conspiracies, which were almost continually at work in that tumultuous city.

Nor does the danger belong exclusively to one side. We may sin by an *adherence* to the measures of a government, as well as by an opposition to them. If we enlist under the banners of the party in power, *considered as a party*, we shall be disposed to vindicate or palliate all their proceedings, which may be very inconsistent with Christianity. Paul, though he enjoined obedience to the existing government, yet was never an advocate for Roman ambition; and, when addressing himself to a governor, did not fail to "reason on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." It is our duty, no doubt, to consider that many things which seem evil to us might appear otherwise, if all the circumstances of the case were known; and therefore to forbear passing hasty censures: but, on the other hand, we ought to be aware of applauding every thing that is done, lest, if it be evil, we be partakers of other men's sins, and contribute to their being repeated.

While some, burning with revolutionary zeal, have imagined they could discover all the wonderful events of the present day in Scripture prophecy, and have been nearly blinded to the criminality of the principal agents; others, by a contrary prejudice, have disregarded the works of the Lord, and the operations of his hand. Whatever may be said of means and instruments, we must be strangely insensible not to see the hand of God in the late overturnings among the papal powers; and if we be induced by political attachment, instead of joining the inhabitants of heaven in a song of praise, to unite with the *merchants of the earth* in their lamentations, are we not carnal? There is no need of vindicating or palliating the measures of men, which may be wicked in the extreme; but neither ought we to overlook the hand of God.

The great point with Christians should be, an attachment to government *as gov-*

ernment, irrespective of the party which administers it; for this is right, and would tend more than any thing to promote the kingdom of Christ. We are not called to yield up our consciences in religious matters, nor to approve of what is wrong in those which are civil; but we are not at liberty to deal in acrimony, or evil speaking. The good which results to society from the very worst government upon earth is great when compared with the evils of anarchy. On this principle it is probable the apostle enjoined obedience to *the powers that were*, even during the reign of Nero. Christians are soldiers under the King of kings: their object should be to conquer all ranks and degrees of men to the obedience of faith. But, to do this, it is necessary that they avoid all those embroilements and disputes which retard their main design. If a wise man wishes to gain over a nation to any great and worthy object, he does not enter into their little differences, nor embroil himself in their party contentions; but, bearing good-will to all, seeks the general good: by these means he is respected by all, and all are ready to hear what he has to offer. Such should be the wisdom of Christians. There is enmity enough for us to encounter without unnecessarily adding to it.

If a Christian be under the necessity of siding with a party, undoubtedly he ought to act in favor of that which appears to him the best; but even in this case it is not becoming him to enter with eagerness into their disputes. Let worldly men, who thirst after preferment, busy themselves in a contested election—(they have their reward)—but let Christians, if called to appear, discharge their duty, and retire from the tumultuous scene.

By entering deeply into the *party* contentions of the nation, religious people will be charged, on both sides in their turn, with disloyalty; and, it may be, not always without a cause. Fifty years ago that party was out of power which at present is in power. At that time the charge of disloyalty was directed against them; and they were then denominated *patriots*. It is possible that many who now seem to abhor a spirit of disaffection towards administrative government would be themselves not the best affected were the other side to recover its authority. But, if we enter into the spirit of the gospel, though we may have our preferences of men and measures, we shall bear good-will to all; and, whoever be at the head of affairs, shall reverence “the powers that be.” Whatever be our private opinion of *the men*, we shall respect and honor *the rulers*. That loyalty which operates only with the prevalence of a party, whichever it be, is

at a great remove from the loyalty enjoined by the Scriptures.

By standing aloof from all parties as *such*, and approving themselves the friends of government and good order, by whomsoever administered, Christians would acquire a dignity of character worthy of their profession, would be respected by all, and possess greater opportunities of doing good: while, by a contrary conduct, they render one part of the community their enemies, and the other, I fear, derive but little spiritual advantage from being their friends.

#### ON THE SYMPTOMS OF A BACKSLIDING SPIRIT.

IT was reckoned a matter of consequence in cases of leprosy, real or supposed, that the true state of the party should be examined, and judgment given accordingly: and by how much a moral disease is more odious, contagious, and dangerous, than one that is natural, by so much is it more necessary to form a true judgment concerning it. Every spot was not a leprosy; and every sinful imperfection in a Christian professor does not denominate him a backslider. Paul had to lament the *body of death*: he had not attained, nor was he already perfect; yet he *pressed forward*; and while this was the case he could not be said to draw back. On the other hand, every departure from God must not be reckoned a mere imperfection which is common to good men. We are extremely apt, in certain cases, to flatter ourselves that our spots are only the spots of God’s children, or such as the best of men are subject to, and therefore to conclude that there is nothing very dangerous about them. We do not pretend to deny that we have our faults: but are ready to ask, “What have we done so much against thee?” This self-justifying spirit, however, so far from indicating any thing favorable, is a strong mark of the contrary. It is said of Ephraim, “He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich: I have found me out substance: in all my labors they shall find none iniquity in me that were sin.” A more finished picture of a modern oppressor could not be drawn. He studies to keep within the limits of the law, and defies any man to impeach his character: he has imperfections, but they are only such as are common to good men: there is nothing criminal to be found in him: yet he is carrying on at the time a system of iniquity.

The apostle Paul speaks of a certain



state of mind which he feared he should find in the Corinthians: that of their "having sinned, and not repented of their deeds." This it is which denominates a man a backslider; and which, so long as it continues, deprives him of any scriptural foundation for concluding himself interested in forgiving mercy.—What are the particular symptoms of this state of mind is the object of our present inquiry.

If our departing from the Lord have issued in some outward misconduct, there is no need of inquiring into the proofs of it, as the thing speaks for itself: but, if its operations have been at present only internal, the inquiry may be highly necessary, that we may become acquainted with our condition, and that the disease may be healed ere it finishes its operations. Farther, though it may be out of all doubt that we have sinned, yet it may be a matter of uncertainty whether or not we have repented: if we imagine we have when we have not, the consequence may be of the most serious nature. Let the following observations, then, be attended to.

First: *If religious duties are attended to rather from custom or conscience than love*, we must either never have known what true religion is, or, in a great degree, have lost the spirit of it.—It is possible that we may have been guilty of no particular outward evil, so as to have fallen under the censure of the world, or of even our nearest connections, and yet have so far lost the spirit of religion as to be really in a backsliding state. The exercises of prayer, reading the Scriptures, hearing the word, and giving something to the poor, may be kept up in form, and yet be little, if any thing, more than a form. The church of Ephesus was not accused of any particular outward misconduct; but they had "*left their first love.*" Where this is the case, however, much will be neglected, especially of those parts of duty which fall not under the eye of creatures. It is supposed of the church just referred to, that they had relaxed, if not in the actual performance, yet in the manner of performing their religious exercises; therefore they are exhorted to "*repent, and to do their first works.*" A departure from our first love is commonly the first step of a backsliding course. Perhaps, if the truth were known, there are few open falls but what are preceded by a secret departure of heart from the living God.

Secondly: *If we have fallen into any particular sin, which exposes us to the censures of our friends, and instead of confessing it with sorrow are employed in defending or palliating it*, it is a certain proof that we are at present under the

power of it.—There are some sins that cannot be defended; but there are others which will admit of much being said on their behalf; and it is admirable with what ingenuity men will go about to find excuses where self is concerned. People that you would hardly think possessed of common sense will, in this case, be singularly quick-sighted, discerning every circumstance that may make in their favor, or serve to extenuate their fault. The cunning of the old serpent, which appeared in the excuses of our first parents, seems here to supply the place of wisdom. This self-justifying spirit is a very dangerous symptom: while it continues there is no hope of a good issue. We read of the *deceitfulness* of sin; and truly it is with great propriety that deceit is ascribed to it. Perhaps there are few persons who are employed in justifying their failings, but who are first imposed upon, or brought to think, some how, that they are, if not quite justifiable, yet very excusable. Sin, when *we* have committed it, loses its sinfulness, and appears a very different thing to what it did in others. David's indignation could rise against the man that had taken a ewe-lamb, while to his own conduct, which was much more criminal, he was blinded! When any sin is committed by *us*, it is common for it to assume *another name*; and by means of this we become easily reconciled to it, and are ready to enter on a vindication of it. Covetousness will admit of a defence under the names of prudence, industry, or frugality; conformity to the world may be pleaded for as an exercise of sociability and good breeding; unchristian resentment, as necessary self-defence; foolish levity, as innocent mirth; malignant contentions, as zeal for the truth; and indifference to the truth, as candor, or liberality of sentiment.

Thirdly: *Though we do not defend or palliate our sin in words, yet, if we continue in the practice of it*, we may be certain we have not repented.—All true repentance is followed by a *forsaking* of the evil, and, where this effect is not produced, there can be no scriptural ground to hope for forgiveness. There are sins, as before observed, which will admit of no defence. If a person be convicted of them, he can do no other than own himself in the wrong, or at least be silent: yet he may feel no sorrow on their account, nor scarcely any intention to forsake them. When Samuel reproved Saul for his rebellion against the commandment of the Lord, assuring him that God had rejected him from being king, and had given the kingdom to a neighbor of his that was better than he, he was confounded, and compel-

led to say, "I have sinned:" yet the only concern he discovered was on account of having lost his *honor*; and, as soon as he suspected who was his rival, he sought to slay him. Even Solomon discovered a very similar disposition. Instead of lamenting and forsaking the sin for which he had been reproved, as soon as he knew that Jeroboam had been anointed by the prophet Ahijah, he "sought to kill him." A sullen silence under reproof, and a perseverance in the evil, are certain signs of a hard and impenitent heart.

Fourthly: *Though we should refrain from the practice of the evil, yet, if it be only a temporary effect of conviction, there is no true repentance.*—It is very common for persons, when they first fall into any gross sin, to feel ashamed and alarmed, to wish they had not acted as they have, and to resolve that they will do so no more: and this, though the love of the evil be the same, and on the first temptation that returns it is committed again, is nevertheless frequently mistaken for repentance. When Saul's life was spared by David, and his groundless malice against him detected, his heart seemed to relent: he felt ashamed, owned his sin, lifted up his voice and wept, and promised to do so no more; but this was not repentance. David appears to have suspected it at the time; for he would not trust himself in his hands; but gat him up into the hold: and the event justified his conduct. The first opportunity that offered, Saul returned to the folly that he had condemned.—A temporary abstinence from evil may also be produced by some *alarming providence*. When judgments overtake us, and conscience tells us that it is the hand of the Lord stretched out against us for our sin, the mind is appalled with fear, and so ceases to be in a state to pursue its favorite devices. But if, as soon as the pressing hand of providence is removed, the heart returns, like a spring, to its former position, there is no reason to consider its temporary depression as containing any true repentance.

Dr. Owen has expressed these sentiments with that unction of spirit, and deep insight into the human heart, which is peculiar to himself:—

"There are two occasions," says he, "wherein men who are contending with any sin may seem to themselves to have mortified it.—First, when it hath had some sad eruption to the disturbance of their peace, terror of their consciences, dread of scandal, and evident provocation of God. This awakens and stirs up all that is in the man, and amazes him, fills him with abhorrency of sin, and himself for it; sends him to God, makes him cry out

as for life, to abhor his lust as hell, and to set himself against it. The whole man, spiritual and natural, being now awakened, sin shrinks in its head, appears not, but lies as dead before him. As when one that hath drawn nigh to an army in the night, and hath killed a principal person, instantly the guards awake, men are roused up, and strict inquiry is made after the enemy; who, in the mean time, until the noise and tumult be over, hides himself, or lies like one that is dead, yet with firm resolution to do the like mischief again upon the like opportunity.—Secondly: In a time of some judgment, calamity, or pressing affliction. The heart is then taken up with thoughts and contrivances of flying from the present troubles, fears, and dangers. This, as a convinced person concludes, is to be done only by relinquishment of sin, which gains peace with God. It is the anger of God in every affliction that galls a convinced person. To be quit of this, men resolve at such times against their sins. Sin shall never more have any place in them; they will never again give up themselves to the service of it. Accordingly sin is quiet, stirs not, seems to be mortified; not indeed that it has received any one wound, but merely because the soul hath possessed its faculties whereby it should exert itself, with thoughts inconsistent with the motions thereof; which when they are laid aside, sin returns again to its former life and vigor. Of this we have a full instance in Psa. lxxviii. 32—38: 'For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the most high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.' I no way doubt but that when they sought and returned, and inquired earnestly after God, they did it with full purpose of heart, as to the relinquishment of their sins. This is expressed in the word *returned*. To *turn*, or *return*, unto the Lord is by a relinquishment of sin. And this they did *early*, with earnestness and diligence; but yet their sin was unmortified for all this (ver. 36, 37): and this is the state of many humiliations in the days of affliction, and a great deceit in the hearts of believers themselves lies oftentimes herein."\*

\* On *The Mortification of Sin in Believers*. Chap. V.

When a professor of religion has fallen into some odious vice, and wishes to shelter himself from the censures of his connexions, you will often hear him allege, "I have *repented*:" whereas it amounts to little more than the shame and alarm above described, as his after conduct very frequently proves. Indeed it is not of the nature of true repentance to *talk* of having repented, and especially for the purpose of evading a faithful censure.

Fifthly: *Though we should refrain from the open practice of the sin, and that for a continuance, yet, if it be merely from prudential or selfish considerations, we may be certain that we have not yet repented it.*—Though we had no religion, and pretended to none, we might find various inducements to refrain from gross immoralities. They affect our interest, our health, and our reputation: it is on such principles that mere worldly men will guard against them; and, if we act from the same motives, wherein are we better than they? Or if the dread of future punishment may be supposed to have some influence upon us, this is a very different thing from the fear of the Lord, which is to *hate* evil. And, where the motives for abstaining from any evil are merely prudential or selfish, we shall abstain from very little more than that which falls under the eye of creatures. Our watchfulness will respect little, if any thing, more than outward actions. The daily care of our lives will be, not how we shall please God, but how we shall conceal the prevailing dispositions of our hearts from those about us—a task this as difficult as it is mean; for whatever occupies our thoughts and affections will on various occasions, notwithstanding our utmost care, escape us. Looks, gestures, manner of speaking and acting, as well as words and deeds themselves, betray what is predominant within. Hence it is that we generally deceive ourselves in these matters. We often fancy our character to be unknown when it is well known: and, if it were otherwise, all is naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Of this we may be certain, that while our chief concern is to hide our sins from those about us, should we be summoned to give an account of our stewardship, it will appear that *we have sinned, and not repented of our deeds*; and wherein this differs from going down to the grave *with our guilt upon our heads* it is difficult to say.

Sixthly: *If we take pleasure in talking of the evil, or in dwelling upon it in our thoughts, it is a certain sign of the same thing.* True repentance works in a way of silent shame and self-abasement: "That thou mayest remember and be confounded,

and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." When men can talk and even write of their former wicked courses with lightness, it is a certain proof that, whatever repentance they have had, they do not *at present* repent of it: and though nothing be said or written, yet if such things occupy our thoughts, imaginations, and affections, it is much the same. A mind full of this must needs be *lacking* of those spiritual exercises which render us that we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and those that are such are fitly enough described as having "forgotten that they were purged from their old sins." If old sins are thought of with new delight, they are re-acted and persisted in; and, where this continues to be the case, the guilt of them must remain upon us, and may be found upon our heads when we go down to the grave.

Lastly: *If we trifle with temptation, or be not afraid of putting ourselves in the way of it, or even of being led into it, we may be certain that at present we have not repented of our sin.*—It is a saying almost grown into a proverb, He that is not afraid of temptation is not afraid of sin; and he that is not afraid of sin must needs be in danger of being destroyed by it. If, after having been repeatedly drawn into sin by associating in certain companies, or certain pursuits, we can, nevertheless, run into them again without fear, we cannot possibly have repented of our deeds. Nay, more, though we should fear to plunge ourselves into temptation, yet if, when providence brings us into such situations and companies, our hearts secretly rejoice in it, this is no less an evidence of our impenitent state than the other. True repentance will not only teach us to shun the way of evil, but to be averse to every avenue that leads to it. If, therefore, we either run into temptation, or are glad when we are led into it, we are, beyond all doubt, under the power of it.

#### ON THE INJURIOUS AND DANGEROUS EFFECTS OF SIN LYING UPON THE CONSCIENCE UNLAMENTED.

It is a dangerous thing to fall into sin, whether secretly or openly; and the effects of it, sooner or later, will certainly be felt: but to continue in it is much more so. A very heavy threatening is denounced against God's open enemies for their *persisting* in sin: "God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as *goeth on still* in his trespasses." But the same thing, in persons who have known



the way of righteousness, must be abundantly more offensive. "He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not be correct?" There is a remedy at hand of God's providing; a "propitiation for our sins;" and it is declared "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." But if, instead of confessing our sins on the head of this propitiation, and imploring mercy in his name, we sink into hardness of heart, neglect prayer, shun the company of the faithful, and efface the remembrance of one sin only by the commission of another, what have we to expect?

I am aware that it is one of the devices of Satan, after having drawn a soul from God, and entangled him in the net of his own corruptions, to persuade him that the prayer of faith, in his circumstances, would be presumption, and that it is much more modest and becoming for him to stand aloof both from God and his people. And if by faith were meant what some would seem to understand by it, a working up ourselves into a persuasion that, owing to the immutability of God, all is safe and right, whatever be our spirit or conduct, it would be presumptuous enough: but genuine faith in Christ is never out of season. The greater our sin has been, the greater reason there is for us to confess it upon the head of the gospel sacrifice, and to plead for mercy in his name. We may not be able to go as Christians, but this affords no reason why we should not go as sinners.

The injury and danger of such a state of mind will appear from a consideration of the effects which it produces, and must continue to produce, if not healed by a return to God by Jesus Christ.

First: *It will necessarily deprive us of all true enjoyment in religion, and, by consequence, of all that preservation to the heart and mind which such enjoyment affords.*—The principal sources of enjoyment, to a Christian that walketh spiritually, are communion with God and his people: but, to him that is out of the way, these streams are dried up; or, which is the same thing in effect to him, they are so impeded as not to reach him. Guilt, shame, darkness, and defilement have taken possession of the soul; love is quenched, hope clouded, joy fled, prayer restrained, and every other grace enervated. It becomes the holiness of God to frown upon us under such a state of mind, by withholding the light of his countenance; and, if it were otherwise, we have no manner of desire after it. Such was the state of David after he had sinned and before he had repented: the joys of God's salvation were far from him. The thirty-second and thirty-eighth Psalms appear to have been written, as has already been observed, after his re-

covery: but he there describes what was the state of his mind previously to it. There is much meaning in what he sets out with in the former of these psalms: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile!" He knew the contrary of this by bitter experience. Guilt and defilement had eaten up all his enjoyment. "When I kept silence," saith he, "my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." It does not appear that he fully desisted from prayer; but there was none of that freedom in it which he was wont to enjoy. It was *roaring* rather than praying; and God is represented as disregarding it. In the thirty-eighth Psalm, he speaks of the rebukes of God's wrath, and the *chastening of his hot displeasure*; of his *arrows sticking fast in him, and his hand pressing him sore*: of there being *no soundness in his flesh, because of his anger*; nor *rest in his bones, because of his sin*. There is one expression exceedingly appropriate: "My wounds stink and are corrupt, because of my foolishness." A wound may be dangerous at the time of its being received; but much more so if it be neglected till the humors of the body are drawn towards it. In this case it is hard to be healed; and the patient has not only to reflect on his heedlessness in first exposing himself to danger, but on his *foolishness* in so long neglecting the prescribed remedy. Such was the state of his mind, till, as he informs us, he "acknowledged his transgressions," and was "sorry for his sin."

And, as there can be no communion with God, so neither can there be any *with his people*. If our sin be known it must naturally occasion a reservedness, if not an exclusion from their society. Or, if it be unknown, we shall be equally unable to enjoy communion with them. Guilt in our consciences will beget shame, and incline us rather to stand aloof than to come near them; or, if we go into their company, it will prove a bar to freedom. There is something at first sight rather singular in the language of the apostle John; but upon closer inspection it will be found to be perfectly just: "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another."

But, if we are deprived of fellowship with God and his people, from what can we derive consolation? If we have only had a name to live, and been dead, the joy arising from vain hope may possibly

be supplied by carnal pleasures. We may drown reflection by busying ourselves in worldly pursuits, mingling with worldly company, and, in short, returning "like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire:" but, if we have any true religion in us, we cannot do this; and then what is there under the sun that can yield us relief!

Nor shall we be deprived merely of the enjoyments of religion, but of all that preservation to the soul which they afford. The *peace of God* is represented as that which keeps, or fortifies, *our hearts and minds*. Without this, the *heart* will be in perpetual danger of being seduced by the wiles, or sunk by the pressures, of this world; and the *mind* of being drawn aside from the simplicity of the gospel.

Secondly: *It will render us useless in our generation*.—The great end of existence with a good man is to live to him who died for us and rose again. If God bless us, it is that, like Abraham, we may be blessings to others. Christians are said to be the salt of the earth, and the light of the world; but, while we are in the state above described, we are as "salt that has lost its savor," which is "good for nothing;" or as a light that is hid under a vessel. Of what use, with respect to religion, are we in our families, while this is the case? Neither servants nor children can think well of religion, from any thing they see in us; and when we go into the world, and mingle among mankind in our dealings, in whose conscience does our conversation or behavior plant conviction? Where is the man who, on leaving our company, has been compelled by it to acknowledge the reality of religion? Or, if we occupy a station in the church of God (and this character may belong to a minister no less than to another man), we shall do little or no good in it; but be as "vessels in which the Lord taketh no pleasure." There is a threatening directed against vain pastors, which ought to make a minister tremble. "Wo to the idol shepherd, that leaveth the flock! The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened." Perhaps one of the greatest temptations to backsliding in ministers may lie in this way: being selected from their brethren, and chosen to the office of public instructors, they are in danger of indulging in self-valuation. A man may labor night and day in his study, and all to get accomplished that he may shine before the people. Where this is the case, the preacher is his own *idol*, and it may be that of the people. He feels also little or no regard to the charge which he has undertaken, but is ready to desert it when-

ever a difficulty arises, or any opportunity offers of improving his circumstances. The consequence is, the sword of the Lord is upon *his arm*—he does no manner of execution in his work; and upon his *right eye*—whatever proficiency he may make in science, or polite accomplishments, he has but little if any spiritual understanding in the things of God. This character may respect ungodly preachers, such to whom the Jewish nation were given up for their rejection of Christ; but there is no sin committed by the most ungodly man of which the most godly is not in danger.

Thirdly: *We shall not only be useless, but injurious to the cause of Christ*.—Indeed, it is impossible to stand neuter in this cause. If we do no good, we shall do harm; not only as cumberers of the ground, occupying that place in society which might be better filled by others, but as giving a false representation of religion, and diffusing a savor of death among mankind. If our domestics infer nothing favorable to religion from our conduct in the family, they will infer something unfavorable; and, if there be but little good to be seen in our example, it is well if there be not much evil; and this will surely be imitated. Who can calculate what influence the treachery, unchastity, and murder, committed by David, had upon his family! We know that each was acted over again by Amnon and Absalom. And thus many a parent has seen his own sins repeated in his posterity; and perhaps, if he had lived longer, might have seen them multiplied still more, to his shame and confusion.

The servants of God are called to bear testimony for him: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord of hosts." This is done not merely by words, but by deeds. There is a way of bearing witness to the reality and importance of religion, by a zealous perseverance in it; to its dignity, by our firmness; to its happy influence, by contentedness and cheerfulness; and to its purity, by being holy in all manner of conversation: and this is a kind of testimony which is more regarded than any other. Men in common form their opinion of religion more by what they see in the professors of it than by the profession itself. Hence it was that David by his *deed* is said to have given "great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." They were not contented with reproaching him, but must speak against God and religion on his account. In this view he considered his sin when he was brought to repentance for it. "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight."—"Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of

Jerusalem." If his sin had not greatly dishonored God's name, and, as it were, broken down the walls of Zion, such language would not have appeared among his lamentations. Things operate much the same to this day. Whatever evil is done by a professor, it is ascribed to his religion. In this view we may justly consider our unchristian conduct as bearing false witness of God; for it is giving false representations of his gospel and government to the world. A grasping, selfish spirit is saying to those around us, that, after all which we have professed of living by faith in a portion beyond death, the present world is the best, and therefore we are for making sure of that, and running all hazards as to the other. In like manner, a cruel and revengeful disposition towards those who have offended us is saying that Christianity, after all its professions of meekness and forgiveness of injuries, renders its adherents no better than others. And, when a Christian professor is detected of having privately indulged in the lusts of the flesh, the conclusion that is drawn from it is that there is nothing in religion but outside appearance, and that in secret religious people are the same as others. It is impossible to say how much such conduct operates to the hardening of men in sin, to the quenching of their convictions, to the weakening the hands of God's servants, and to the stumbling of persons who are inquiring the way to Zion.

These things, if we be mere professors, may have but little effect upon us. We do not care for God's being dishonored, provided we do but get pardoned at last: but, if there be any true religion about us, it will be otherwise. An ingenuous mind will feel more for the dishonor which he has done to Christ, and injury to his fellow-creatures, than for the reproach which he has brought upon himself.

Fourthly: *We are in the utmost danger of falling into future temptations, and so of sinking deeper, and falling farther from God.*—So long as sin remains upon the conscience unlamented, it is like poison in the constitution: it will be certain to operate, and that in a way that shall go on more to kill all holy resolution, to harden the heart, and to defile the imaginations and desires. "Whoredom and wine, and new wine, take away the heart." It was from sad experience of the defiling nature of past sin that David, when he came to himself, prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

A mind thus enfeebled, stupified, and defiled, must needs be in a very unfit condition to resist new temptations. The inhabitants of a besieged city, who are

weakened by famine and disease, and discouraged by a number of disaffected persons within their walls, have no heart to resist, but stand ready to listen to the first proposals of the besiegers.

And in proportion as we are disabled for resistance, it may be expected that the tempter will renew his attempts upon us. If Satan has any influence upon the human mind, it may be supposed that he acts with design, and knows how to avail himself of the most favorable seasons to effect his purpose. And this we find to be true by experience. In proportion as we have yielded to temptation, it will rise in its demands; solicitations, greater in number and in force, will ply our minds. As a resistance of the devil will be followed by his *fleeing from us*, so, on the contrary, a non-resistance of him will be followed by renewed and stronger attempts upon us. One sin makes way for another, and renders us less able to resist, or to return to God by repentance. When once the thief has gained admission into our habitation, he will bid us defiance. "Innumerable evils will compass us about, and our iniquities take hold upon us, so that we shall not be able to look up: they will be more than the hairs of our heads: therefore our hearts will fail us." Samson first yielded to his sensual desires; after this to the intreaties of his Delilah; who, in proportion as she found him pliant to her wishes, increased in her assiduousness, till at length he lost his hair, his liberty, his eyes, and his life.

If we be mere professors, these considerations may affect us but little: we shall continue the willing slaves of our own corruptions, hoping it may be, nevertheless, that we shall some time be brought back again, till, at some unexpected hour, we are taken out of the world. But, if there be any good thing in us toward the Lord God of Israel, this part of the subject must alarm us; for, of all the methods which God takes to punish sin, there is none more awful and more dreaded by a good man than that of being *given up to sin*.

Fifthly: *So long as sin remains upon the conscience unlamented, we are in danger of eternal damnation.*—It may be thought by some that such language is inconsistent with the final perseverance of believers: but it is manifest that our Lord did not so teach the doctrine of perseverance as to render cautions of this kind unnecessary. He did not scruple to declare even to his own disciples, that whosoever should say to his brother, Thou fool, should be in danger of hell fire—that, if they forgave not men their trespasses, neither would God forgive theirs—and if



a right hand, or a right eye, caused them to offend, it must be cut off, or plucked out, and that lest the whole body should be cast into hell.

The object at which sin aims, whether in believers or unbelievers, is *death, eternal death*; and to this it has a natural and direct tendency. The apostle James, in a very affecting manner, describes its process. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." If it does not in all cases come to this issue, it is not because of its being different as to its nature or tendency in some persons to what it is in others, but because a timely stop is put to its operations. Only let it go on without repentance till it has *finished* its work, and eternal death will be the issue.

Whatever we are, so long as sin lies unlamented upon the conscience, we can have no scriptural foundation to conclude that we are Christians. No real Christian, it is true, will prove an apostate; yet, while we are under the influence of sin, we are moving in the direction which leads to apostacy. If we are contented with a relaxed state of mind, what ground can we have to conclude that it is not our element, or that we have ever been the subjects of true religion? If the waters continue to be naught, it is a sign that the spring has not been healed. There is no reason to think that Judas himself laid his account with such an issue of his treachery as actually came to pass. During the ministry of our Lord, while he kept the bag, and sometimes made free with its contents, it is probable he nevertheless reckoned himself a good man. He saw many failings in his fellow disciples, and in all other good men; and he might think this to be his. When he had covenanted with the chief priests, it does not appear that he expected his master would be eventually taken and crucified. When they were about to lay hands on him, he had often passed through the midst of them, and gone his way; and he might suppose that it would be so again. "When therefore he saw that he was condemned," he was thrown into a state of terrible amazement, and in the issue "went and hanged himself." Such was the process of an apostate, and such his end. Surely it behoves us to take heed how we trifle with those things, the end of which is death!

## ON THE MEANS OF RECOVERY.

WERE it not for the hope of being instrumental in saving some from the error of their way, and of inducing others to a greater degree of watchfulness, I should not have written the preceding pages. It can afford no satisfaction to expose the evil conduct of a fellow sinner, or to trace its dangerous effects, unless it be with a view to his salvation or preservation.

It is natural for those who have fallen into sin, unless they be given up to a rejection of all religion, to wish, on some considerations, to be restored. A backsliding state is far from being agreeable. Hence it is that many have prematurely grasped at the promise of forgiveness, and said to their souls, "Peace, peace, when there was no peace." It is desirable that we be recovered from our backslidings; but it is not desirable that we should think ourselves recovered when we are not so.

As there are many ways by which a convinced sinner seeks peace to his soul, without being able to find it, so it is with a backslider. Self-righteous attempts to mortify sin, and gain peace with God, are not confined to the first period of religious concern. Having, through the power of alarm, desisted from the open practice of sin, many have labored to derive comfort from this consideration, without confessing their sin on the head, as it were, of the gospel sacrifice. Their sins may be said rather to have been *worn* away from their remembrance, by length of time, than *washed* away by the blood of the cross. But this is not recovery: the hurt, if healed, is healed slightly; and may be expected to break out again. The same way in which, if we be true Christians, we first found rest to our souls, must be pursued in order to recover it; namely, "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." This is the way to which the Scriptures uniformly direct us. "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This was the way in which David was recovered. He confessed his sin with deep contrition, pleading to be purged "with hyssop that he might be clean, and washed that he might be whiter than snow." By this language he could not mean that his sin should be purged away by any thing pertaining to the ceremonial law, for that law made no provision for the pardon of his crimes: he must, therefore, in-

tend that which the sprinkling of the unclean with a bunch of hyssop, dypt in the water of purification, was designed to prefigure; which, as we are taught in the New Testament, was the purging of the conscience, by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus."

This is the only way in which it is possible to find rest to our souls. As "there is no other name given under heaven, or among men, by which we can be saved," so neither is there any other by which we can be restored. What ever be the nature of our backsliding from God, this must be the remedy. If it be a *relinquishment of evangelical principles*, we must return to the way, even the highway whither we went. Paul "travailed in birth" for the recovery of the Galatians; and in what did he expect it to consist? In "Christ being formed in them." He also strove to bring back the Hebrews; and all his labors were directed to the same point. His epistle to them is full of *Christ*, and of warnings and of cautions against neglecting and rejecting him. If any man have been perplexed concerning the deity or atonement of Christ, let him humbly and carefully read that epistle: and, if his heart be right with God, it will do him good. If our departure from God have issued in *some gross immorality*, or in *the love of the world*, or in *conformity to it*, the remedy must be the same. It is by this medium, if at all, that the world will be crucified unto us, and we unto the world. If we have no heart to repent, and to return to God by Jesus Christ, we are yet in our sins, and may expect to reap the fruits of them. The Scriptures give no counsel to any thing short of this. They are not wanting, however, in directions that may lead to it, and considerations that may induce it. What these are, I shall now proceed to inquire.

In general I may observe, The Scriptures assure us of the *exceeding great and tender mercy of God*, and of *his willingness to forgive all those who return to him in the name of his Son*.—It is necessary that we be well persuaded of this truth, lest, instead of applying as supplicants, we sink into despair. If an awakened sinner, under his first religious concern, be in danger of this species of despondency, a backslider is still more so. His transgressions are much more heinous in their circumstances than those of the other, having been committed under greater light, and against greater goodness: and, when to this is added the treatment which his conduct must necessarily draw upon him from his religious connections, he may be tempted to relinquish all hopes of recovery, and to consider himself as an out-

cast of both God and man. Unhappy man! Thy breach may be *great like the sea*, and the language of an awakened conscience may suggest, "Who can heal me?" Yet do not despair. "Hear what God the Lord will speak.—He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly." Hear what he speaks to the backsliding Israelites, reduced by their sins to the most deplorable state of guilt and wretchedness. "The Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands; but, if *from thence* thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul: when thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God), he will not forsake thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he swore unto them." The pardoning mercy of God towards those who return to him by Jesus Christ is not limited by such measures as are framed by creatures in their treatment of one another, or by such expectations as, on this account, they are apt to form. There are circumstances which may render it almost impossible for forgiveness to be exercised amongst men; and therefore men are ready to think it must be so with respect to God. But "with the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption." He will not only pardon, but pardon *abundantly*: "for his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts.—The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all sin*.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from *all unrighteousness*." The threatenings against the *unpardonable sin* itself do not affect the truth of these merciful declarations; for that sin is all along described as excluding *repentance* as well as forgiveness.—Heb. vi. 6. The party is supposed to be given up to hardness of heart. If, therefore, we *confess* our sin with contrition, we may be certain it is not unpardonable, and that we shall obtain mercy through the blood of the cross.

But the great question is, *How shall we repent of our sins, and return to God by Jesus Christ?*—Undoubtedly it is much easier to get out of the way than to get in again; to lose the peace of our minds than to recover it. Sin is of a hardening

nature; and, the farther we have proceeded in it, the more inextricable are its chains. But, however this be, we either do desire to return, or we do not. If *not*, it will be in vain to address any directions to us. It is right, indeed, for the servants of Christ to point them out, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear, and there leave them; but as to any hope of our recovery, while such is the state of our minds, there can be none. If we can think of our sin without grief, and of the cross of Christ without any meltings of spirit, there is great reason to fear that our "hearts are not right in the sight of God," but that we are yet in the "gall of bitterness, and the bonds of iniquity." If, on the other hand, we *do* desire to return; if, like Israel in the days of Samuel, we "lament after the Lord," we shall readily hearken to every direction given us in his word.

If my reader, supposing him to have backslidden from God, be in such a state of mind, it is with a mixture of hope and tenderness that I attempt to point out to him the means of recovery. Or, should it even be otherwise, I will, nevertheless, endeavor to show him the good and the right way, that at least I may deliver my own soul.

First: *Embrace every possible season of retirement for reading the holy Scriptures, especially those parts which are suited to thy case; and accompany it with prayer.*—God's word hid in the heart is not only a preservative against sin, but a restorative from it. It both wounds and heals: if it rebukes, it is with the faithfulness of a friend; or, if it consoles, its consolations carry in them an implication which, if properly understood, will melt us into repentance.

Read especially *those parts of Scripture which are addressed to persons in your situation*, as the second chapter of Jeremiah; or which express the desires of a returning sinner, as the twenty-fifth, thirty-second, thirty-eighth, fifty-first, and hundred-and-thirtieth Psalms. You may not be able to adopt all this language as your own: but it may be useful nevertheless. To read the genuine expressions of a contrite heart may produce at least a conviction of the disparity between the frame of mind possessed by the writer and yourself; and such a conviction may be accompanied with a sensation of shame and grief.

It is also of importance that you read the Scriptures *by yourself*. To read a portion of them in your families is right, and ought not to be neglected; but there is a wide difference, as to personal advantage, between this and reading them alone.

Your mind may then be more at liberty for reflection; you can read and pause, and think, and apply the subject to your case.

It is of still greater importance to *unite prayer with it*. Reading the word of God and prayer are duties which mutually assist each other: the one furnishes us with confessions, pleas, and arguments; while the other promotes solemnity and spirituality of mind, which goes further towards understanding the Scriptures than a library of expositions.

It was in one of these seasons of retirement that David put up this petition, "I have gone stray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments." He seems to have had in his thoughts the condition of a poor, wandering sheep, that had left the flock, and the rich pastures whither it was wont to be led; ranging rather like a native of the woods, than one which had been used to be led, and fed, and protected by an owner. Bewildered by its own wanderings, entangled in the thorns and briars of the wilderness, and exposed to beasts of prey, it feels its forlorn condition, and bleats after the shepherd of the flock! Is there nothing in this that may suit thy case? Yes, thou art the man! Thou hast gone astray like a lost sheep, got entangled in thine own corruptions, and knowest not how to find the way back: yet it may be thou hast not *forgotten his commandments*, nor utterly lost the savor of those happy days when walking in them. Let thy prayer then be directed, like that of the Psalmist, to the good Shepherd of the sheep, "Seek thy servant!"

Prayer is a kind of religious exercise which is necessary to accompany all others. "In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Solemn approaches to God are adapted to impress the mind with a sense of sin, and to inspire us with self-abhorrence on account of it. It was by a view of the holiness of God that Isaiah felt himself to be "a man of unclean lips;" and by conversing with him that Job was brought to "abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes." The very exercise of prayer carries in it an implication that *our help must come from above*; a truth which, in all cases, is highly necessary for us to know, and with which, in this case especially, we cannot be too deeply impressed. We easily get out of the way; but, if ever we return to it, it must be by his influence who "restoreth our souls, and leadeth us in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake."

To tell a person who is out of the way



that he has no help in himself, and that if ever he get in again it must be by the restoring grace of God, may seem, to some people, paradoxical and disheartening: but it is a truth, and a truth which, if properly understood and felt, would go farther towards our recovery than we at first may apprehend. Paul found that "when he was weak then he was strong;" and many others have found the same. The more we are emptied of self-sufficiency, the more sensibly shall we feel our dependence, and the more importunately implore that the Lord would save us as it were from ourselves, and restore us "for his name's sake."

This was the way in which we at first found rest for our souls, and this must be the way in which we recover it. An awakened sinner frequently labors hard after peace, without being able to obtain it. Wherefore? Because he seeks it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, stumbling at that stumbling-stone. In all his labors there is a large portion of self-righteous hope, or an idea that God will pity him on account of his painful endeavors to please him. But this is like had flesh in a wound, which must be eaten out before it can be healed. If ever he obtain peace, it must be by utterly despairing of all help from himself, and falling, as a sinner entirely lost, into the arms of sovereign mercy. This is *walking* "in the good old way," which brings *rest to the soul*; and the same sense of our insufficiency which is necessary to find rest in the first instance is equally necessary to find it in all that follow.

We may pray from year to year, and all without effect. It is only "the prayer of faith" that succeeds; the distinguishing characteristic of which is, under a sense of there being no help in us, to lay hold of the mercy and faithfulness of God, as revealed in the gospel. David for a time "groaned," and even "roared, by reason of the disquietness of his heart;" but he obtained no relief from this. On the contrary, he sunk deeper and deeper into despondency. At length, he betook him to another *manner* of praying. "Out of the depths cried I unto thee." . . . and thou heardest my voice!" We find him here pleading the exceeding greatness of God's mercy, and the plenteousness of his redemption. Here he found rest for his soul!—Jonah also, for a time, was in much the same state. With a conscience so far awakened as to deprive him of all enjoyment, he retired to the bottom of the ship; and, wearied with the load of his guilt, slept away his time. Even the horror of a tempest did

not awaken him. At length, being roused and reproved by heathens, and marked out by lot as the guilty person, he confessed who he is, and what he had done, and advises them to cast him into the sea. Humanity, for a time, struggles with the elements, but in vain—he must be cast away. Think what a state of mind he must at this time have possessed! He is thrown into the deep, is swallowed by a fish, and retains his reason even in that situation; but no light shines upon his soul. Conceiving himself to be on the point of expiring, his heart sighed within him, "I am cast out of thy sight!" But, ere the thought had well passed his mind, another struck him . . . "Yet will I look again towards thy holy temple!" He looked, and was lightened: "Out of the belly of hell cried I unto thee, and thou heardest my voice!"

Secondly: *Reflect on the aggravating circumstances of thine offences, or on those things which render it AN EVIL AND BITTER THING to have departed from the living God, and to have sinned against him in the manner thou hast done.*—Every return to God begins with reflection. "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."—"Commune with thine own heart upon thy bed, and be still." If the God against whom I have sinned had been like the idols of this world, I might have been justified in departing from him: but I have acted the part of the backsliding Israelites, who were the only people who had a God worth cleaving to, and yet were the only people distinguished by their fickleness. The world cleave close enough to their gods, which yet are no gods: but I have committed these two evils, at which the heavens are astonished; I have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed to myself cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water! If the service of the Lord had been a heavy yoke, and if the way of his commandments had been an unfruitful and miserable path, I might have some plea for deserting it: but what have I gained, except guilt, and shame, and wretchedness, by leaving him? Was he a barren wilderness to me, or a land of darkness? How can I answer his tender, yet cutting expostulations—"O my people, what have I done unto thee? wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me!"

If I had been born and educated a benighted pagan, a deluded Mahomedan, or a superstitious papist—if the oracles of God had been withheld from me—or if I had lived all my days in a state of ignorance and insensibility, like multitudes in my native country—the sins that I have committed had been little in comparison

of what they now are. I have verged near to the unpardonable sin. It is against *light* and *love* that I have offended. He has been as a husband unto me; but I have forsaken him, and have gone after other lovers. Yet he still invites me to return . . . . And what hindereth? I am not straitened in him, but in my own bowels. Lord save me from myself! Surely "I will return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now."

Thirdly: *Reflect on the goodness of God in having hitherto borne with thee, and preventing thy sins from fully operating according to their native tendency.*—It is a common observation that one sin leads on to another. Of this, history and experience furnish many tragical examples. The sauntering indolence of David occasioned his adultery. Adultery, when committed, must be concealed, and this leads to treachery and intrigue. When these fail, recourse is had to murder. And when the murder is effected, to carry on the concealment, the event must be attributed to providence—"The sword devour-eth one as well as another!" The connection between uncleanness and blood is strongly marked in the history of human crimes. A large proportion of those who have been publicly executed for the one were induced to perpetrate the horrid deed as a covert to the other. And hast thou been tampering with these vices; playing at the hole of the cockatrice den? How is it that death and hell have not ere now swallowed thee up? Behold that wretch who went but yesterday to suffer the just vengeance of his country, for having murdered the object whom he had first seduced; and see what thou mightest have been! Is it not owing to singular mercy that thy sins have been restrained from their wonted and deadly issues?

It may be, some who have been companions, or at least contemporaries with thee in the first stages of sin, have meanwhile been suffered to make more rapid progress. Their follies have ended in infamy, while thine have been restrained, and comparatively hid. And is it possible, while the public voice has been raised against them, thou hast joined it? "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" If the recollection of such things leadeth thee not to repentance, it is a dark sign of a *hard and impenitent heart*, "treasuring up to itself wrath against the

day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

Fourthly: *Reflect on the state and exercises of thy mind in former times.*—This was the counsel of the apostle to the Hebrews, who, disheartened by persecution, were half inclined to go back again to Judaism: "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after that ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." This was the counsel of our Lord himself to the churches of Ephesus and Sardis: "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent."—"Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." Ask thine own soul, Are there no seasons of tenderness in my life which it would be for my profit to recall to mind? I have professed repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; and was it only a profession! Was there not a time when my sins were more bitter to me than death, and more dreaded than hell? How is it that I have turned again to folly? Has sin changed its nature, or become less odious? Rather is not the change in me? Was there not a time when the word of the Lord was precious to my soul—when my sabbaths were my happiest days, and godly people my chosen companions? Whence this lamentable change? Is Christ or the gospel less precious than heretofore? I once thought that, if I might but be found in him, and live forever with him, and those that love him, I should not care what I lost or suffered in the present world. And was I all this time deceiving myself? Were my repentance, and faith, and hope, and love, and joy, all counterfeit? I endured reproaches and losses, as I supposed, for his name sake; and is it all *in vain*? Must I at last be separated forever from him, and have my portion with unbelievers? "O Lord, have mercy upon me, a most wretched caitiff, and miserable sinner! I have offended both against heaven and earth, more than my tongue can express! Whither then may I go, or whither shall I flee? To heaven I may be ashamed to lift up mine eyes, and on earth I find no place of refuge, or succor. To THEE, therefore, O Lord, do I run: TO THEE do I humble myself. O Lord, my God, my sins are great; but yet have mercy upon me, for thy great mercy. The great mystery, that God became man, was not wrought for small or few offences. Thou didst not give thy Son unto death for little sins only; but for all the greatest sins of the world; so that the sinner returns to thee with his whole heart, as I do here at this present. Wherefore have mercy on

me, O God, whose property is always to have mercy. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for thy great mercy. O Lord, I crave nothing for my own merits, but for thy names sake, that it might be hallowed thereby, and for thy dear Son Jesus Christ's sake."\*

This part of our Lord's counsel would apply not only to those who have fallen into gross immoralities, but to such as have deserted the *principles of the gospel*. It was asked the Galatians, through what medium it was that they first "received the Spirit; by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith." This question proceeds upon the principle of that being the true doctrine which is productive of the best effects; and by the manner in which it is introduced, "This *only* would I learn of you," it is intimated that the solution is of *itself* sufficient to determine what the true doctrine is. And what are the effects produced by a relinquishment of the doctrines usually denominated evangelical? Nay, I might say, by only a hesitation concerning them? I appeal to those who have made the trial. Have you the same joy and peace in believing your present principles as you had in your former ones? Can you, or do you, go to a throne of grace with the same holy freedom as heretofore? Do you feel an equal concern for the salvation of your poor ungodly neighbors? Rather is not the far greater part of your zeal consumed in laboring to make proselytes of serious Christians to your new way of thinking? Does the society of those who are like-minded with yourself afford that inward satisfaction which you once enjoyed in the fellowship of those whom you are now taught to pity as enthusiasts? If, while professing these things, you were strangers to them, you may answer these questions in the affirmative: but, if otherwise, you will not. "Remember from whence you are fallen, and repent!" "Remember how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent."

Fifthly: *Set apart special times to humble yourself before God by fasting and prayer.*—Extraordinary cases require the use of extraordinary means. When a great army was coming against Jehoshaphat, it is said, "he feared, and *set himself* to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." But the loss of the

soul is of more account to you than the temporal overthrow of a country was to him. When Judah, for its backslidings, was under the frowns of God in Babylon, and had been so for about seventy years, Daniel says, "I *set my face* unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes." The apostle Paul plainly intimates that there are times wherein we are required to "give ourselves to fasting and prayer." And surely there can be no times in which these means are more necessary than when we have got out of the way, and desire to recover it. There is much meaning in the words, "He *set himself* to seek the Lord;" and "I *set my face* unto the Lord God." They denote something more than the ordinary exercises of prayer; even a special fixedness of the thoughts, purposes, and desires, to a particular object: and God has usually honored those extraordinary approaches to him, when influenced by a pure motive, with success. It is true, we may attend to duty in a superstitious, or self-righteous spirit; resting in it as an end, instead of using it as a means: but this is not *setting our face unto the Lord God, or seeking him*. A day devoted to God in humiliation, fasting, and prayer, occasionally occupied with reading suitable parts of the Holy Scriptures, may, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, contribute more to the subduing of sin, and the recovery of a right mind, than years spent in a sort of half-hearted exercises.

Sixthly: *To prayer it is necessary to add watchfulness.*—Our Lord unites these together as an antidote against temptation. It has sometimes been one of the devices of Satan, after a backslider has been drawing near to God, and strongly soliciting for mercy, yea, after a time has been set apart for this particular purpose, to ply him afresh with some powerful temptation: and while his mind has been unsuspecting, and, it may be, thinking itself to be somewhat secure, on account of having so lately been engaged in earnest devotion, he has been surprised and overcome! The consequence, as might be expected, has been a future neglect of prayer, under the idea that it must have been mere hypocrisy before, and would now be adding sin to sin. Instead of depending upon spiritual frames for preservation, and especially when they are over, perhaps we ought to expect that our comforts should be succeeded by conflicts. We know it was so in several cases recorded in the Scriptures. Immediately after drinking at the smitten rock at Rephidim, Israel was called to fight with Amalek. Paul's thorn in the flesh succeeded to extraordinary revelations. Our Lord himself went up from

\* That which is included in reversed commas is a part of the prayer of archbishop Cranmer; who, through fear of man, had denied his faith, but was, notwithstanding, burned to death. When brought to execution (which was at Oxford, on March 21, 1556), he uttered the above prayer; and, on the flames approaching him, first thrust into the fire the hand with which he had signed his recantation.



Jordan into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.

Seventhly: *In your approaches to the Saviour, let it be under the character in which you first applied to him for mercy, that of a sinner.*—If you attempt to approach the throne of grace as a good man who has backslidden from God, you may find it impossible to support that character. The reality of your conversion may be doubtful, not only in your apprehension, but in itself. Your approach, therefore, must not be as one that “is washed, and needeth not, save to wash his feet:” but as one who is defiled throughout, *whose hands and head*, and every part need to be cleansed. Do not employ yourself in raking over the rubbish of your past life in search of evidence that you are a Christian. You will not be able, in your present state of mind, to decide that question: nor would it be of any service to you if you could decide it. One thing is certain: you are a *sinner*, a poor, miserable, and perishing sinner: the door of mercy is open; and you are welcome to enter in. Let your past character then have been what it may, and let your conversion be ever so doubtful, if you can *from this time* relinquish all for Christ, eternal life is before you.

The Laodiceans, who, though composing a Christian church, were doubtful characters, are counselled to deal with Christ in the same manner as *sinners* deal with him, for *riches*, for *righteousness*, and for heavenly *wisdom*.

Lastly: *In all your supplications, be contented with nothing short of a complete recovery.* It is possible you may obtain so much ascendancy over your evil propensities that they may seem to be slain before you; or, at least, that you are in no particular danger of yielding to them any more; and yet you may not have recovered that holy rest in God, that sweet peace which arises from confessing our sins upon the head of the gospel sacrifice. But while this is the case there is no security against their revival. The first temptation by which you are assaulted may afford lamentable proof that they are yet alive. Nothing will serve as a preservative against the risings of evil propensities, short of *walking with God*. There is much important truth in that declaration of the apostle, “This I say, then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” Sin is not to be opposed so much directly as indirectly; not by mere resistance, but by opposing other principles to it, which shall overcome it. It is not by contending with the fire, especially with combustible materials about us, that we shall be able to

quench it; but by dealing plentifully with the opposite element. The pleasures of sense will not be effectually subdued by foregoing all enjoyment; but by imbibing other pleasures, the relish of which shall deaden the heart to what is opposite. It was thus that the apostle became “dead to the world by the cross of Christ.” Do not, therefore, reckon thyself restored till thou hast recovered communion with God. David, though the subject of deep contrition, yet was not contented without gaining this important point. Till then the poison would still, at times, be rankling in his imagination. Hence arose the following petitions: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit.” Make these petitions thy own; and, if God grant the thing that thine heart desireth, go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee!

## ON THE PROGRESSIVENESS OF SIN AND OF HOLINESS.

[To the Editor of the Biblical Magazine.]

### THE PROGRESS OF SIN.

WHEN our Saviour spoke of his making men free, the Jews were offended. It hurt their pride to be represented as slaves; yet slaves they were—and such is every sinner, however insensible of it, till Christ has made him free. And, the longer he continues in this state, the more he is entangled, and the less capable he becomes of making his escape. Sin is a master that will not suffer its slaves to rest, but is always hurrying them on from one thing to another, till, having finished its operations, it bringeth forth death. The way of sin is a way in which there is no standing still—a kind of down hill road, in which every step gives an accelerated force, till you reach the bottom. Such is the import of those emphatic words of the apostle, “Ye were servants to iniquity, unto iniquity.”

To be a servant to iniquity is descriptive of the state of every unconverted sinner. All may not be subject to the same kind of evils: one may be enslaved to drunkenness, another to uncleanness, another to covetousness, another to fashion, and another to self-righteous pride; but these are only different forms of government, suited to different tempers and constitutions: all are servants to iniquity;

and all who continue such are impelled in a manner to go on in their work, "servants to iniquity, unto iniquity." The proofs of this tendency to progression will appear in the following remarks.

First: He that yields himself a servant to sin, in any one of its forms, admits a principle which opens the door to sin in every other form. This principle is, that the authority of God is not to be regarded when it stands in the way of our inclinations; if you admit of this principle, there is nothing to hinder you from going into any evil which your soul lusteth after. You may not, indeed, commit every bad practice; but, while such is the state of your mind, it is not the fear of God, but a regard to man, or a concern for your own interest, safety or reputation, that restrains you. If you indulge in theft, for instance, you would, with the same unconcern, commit adultery, robbery, or murder, provided you were tempted to such things, and could commit them with the hope of escaping punishment. It is thus that he who transgresses the law in one point is guilty of all: for He that forbids one sin forbids all: and a deliberate offence against Him in one particular is as really a rejection of his authority as in many.

Moreover, if the mind be unrestrained by the fear of God, a regard to man will have but a feeble hold of it. Sin, in various shapes, will be frequently indulged in secret; and, being so indulged, it will soon break out into open vices; for it is not in the power of a man, with all his contrivances, long to conceal the ruling dispositions of his soul. When king Saul had once disregarded the divine authority in his treatment of the Amalekites, there were no bounds to the evil workings of his mind: full of jealousy, envy, and malignity, he murders a whole city of innocent men, repairs to a witch for counsel, and at last puts an end to his miserable life.

Secondly: Every sin we commit goes to destroy the principle of resistance, and it produces a kind of desperate carelessness. Purity of mind, like cleanliness of apparel, is accompanied with a desire of avoiding every thing that might defile; and, even where this has no place, conscience, aided by education and example, is a great preservative against immoral and destructive courses; but, if we once plunge into the vices of the world, emulation is extinguished. The child that is accustomed to rags and filth loses all shame, and feels no ambition to appear neat and decent.

The first time a person yields to a particular temptation it is not without some struggles of conscience; and, when it is

past, his soul is usually smitten with remorse; and, it may be, he thinks he shall never do the like again; but temptation returning, and the motive to resist being weakened, he becomes an easy prey to the tempter. And now the clamors of conscience subside, his heart grows hard, and his mind desperate. "There is no hope," saith he, "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go." Under the first workings of temptation he set bounds to himself; "Hitherto," said he, "I will go, and no further:" but now all such promises are of no account. The insect entangled in the spider's web can do nothing: every effort it makes only winds another thread round its wings; and, after a few ineffectual struggles, it falls a prey to the destroyer.

Thirdly: Every sin we commit not only goes to destroy the principle of resistance, but produces an inordinate desire after the repetition of it; and thus, like half an army going over to the enemy, operates both ways against us, weakening our scruples, and strengthening our propensities.—This is manifestly the effect in such sins as drunkenness, gaming, and fornication. It is one of the deceits of sin to promise that, if we will but grant its wishes in this or that particular, it will ask no more, or to persuade its deluded votaries that indulgence will assuage the torrent of desire: but, though this may be the case for a short time, sin will return with redoubled violence. It rises in its demands, from every concession you make to it. He that has entered the paths of the destroyer can tell, from experience, that it is a thousand times more difficult to recede than to refrain from engaging. The thirst of the leach at the vein, and of the drunkard at his bottle, are but faint emblems of the burnings of desire in the mind in these stages of depravity.

Fourthly: If we yield to one sin, we shall find ourselves under a kind of necessity of going into other sins, in order to hide or excuse it.—This is a truth so evident that it needs only to be stated in order to be admitted. Examples abound, both in Scripture and common life. When sin is committed, the first thing that suggests itself to the sinner is, if possible, to conceal it; or, if that cannot be, to excuse it. Adam first strove to hide himself in the trees of the garden, and, when this refuge failed him, it was *the woman*, and the woman *that God gave to be with him* too, who tempted him to do as he did. Nearly the same course was pursued by David. Having outraged decorum, he first betakes himself to intrigue, in hope to cover his crime; and, when this failed him, he has recourse to murder; and, this being ac-

accomplished, the horrible event is, with an air of affected resignation, ascribed to Providence: "The sword devoureth one as well as another!" Nor is this the only instance wherein that which has begun in a wanton look has ended in blood. What numbers of innocent babes are murdered, and one or both of their unhappy parents executed, for that which is resorted to merely as a cover for illicit practices!

Fifthly: Every act of sin tends to form a sinful habit; or, if already formed, to strengthen it.—Single acts of sin are as drops of water, which possess but little force; but, when they become a habit, they are a mighty stream which bears down all before it. The *drunkard* had no natural thirst for strong liquors. Some worldly trouble, or the love of loose company, first brought him to make free with them; but, having once contracted the habit, though he knows he is every day wasting his substance, shortening his life, and ruining his soul, yet he cannot desist. Even under the power of stupefaction, he calls for more drink: his very dreams betray his lusts. "They have smitten me," says he, "and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again."—The *gamester*, at the first, thought but little of doing what he now does. He fell in company, it may be, with a card-party, or had heard of a lucky adventure in the lottery, or known a person who had made his fortune by a successful speculation in the stocks. So he resolves to try a little of it himself. He succeeds. He tries again; ventures deeper, and deeper, with various success. His circumstances become embarrassed; yet, having begun, he must go on. One more great adventure is to recover all, and free him from his difficulties. He loses; his family is ruined; his creditors are wronged; and himself, it is not impossible, driven to the use of such means of support as shall bring him to an untimely end!—The *debauchee* was once, it may be, a sober man. His illicit connections might originate in what were thought at the time very innocent familiarities. But, having once invaded the laws of chastity, he sets no bounds to his desires. "His eyes are full of adultery, and he cannot cease from sin."

Sixthly: When the sinner becomes thus besotted in the ways of sin, there are commonly a number of circumstances and considerations, besides his own attachment to it, which entangle his soul, and, if infinite mercy interpose not, prevent his escape. He has formed connections among men like himself . . . . His interest will suffer . . . . His companions will reproach him . . . . The world will laugh at him. Many in such circumstances have been the subjects of strong convictions, have shed many tears, and professed great desire to return

from their evil course; yet, when it has come to the test, they could not recede: having begun and gone on so far, they cannot relinquish it now, whatever be the consequence.

Reader, is this, or something like it, your case? Permit a well-wisher to your soul to be free with you. Be assured you must return or perish forever, and that in a little time. Infidels may tell you there is no danger; but when they come to die they have commonly discovered that they did not believe their own words or writings. "Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth;" and before Him you must shortly give an account. Will you plunge yourself into the pit from whence there is no redemption? That tremendous punishment, is represented as not prepared originally for you, but for the devil and his angels. If you go thither, you in a manner take the kingdom of darkness by force.

Let me add, It is not enough for you to return, unless in so doing you return to God.—"Ye have returned, but not unto me, saith the Lord." If I felt only for your credit and comfort in this world, I might have contented myself with warning you to break off your outward vices, and cautioning you against the inlets of future evils. Animals, though void of reason, yet, through mere instinct, fly from present danger. "In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." The fishes of the sea avoid the whirlpool. And shall man go with his eyes open into the net? Will he sail unconcerned into the vortex of destruction? But it is not from present danger only, or chiefly, that I would warn you to flee. My heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may be saved from the wrath to come. Know, then, that though you should escape the grosser immoralities of the world, yet you may be still in your sins, and exposed to eternal ruin. Your danger does not lie merely nor mainly in open vices. Satan may be cast out with respect to these, and yet retire into the strong holds of proud self-satisfaction. It is not the outward spot that will kill you, but the inward disease whence it proceeds. "From within, even from the heart, proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies." Every out-breaking of sin in your life is a proof of the inward corruption of your nature. If this fountain be not healed, in vain will you go about to purify the streams. I mean not to dissuade you from breaking off your sins; but to persuade you to break them off "by righteousness." But the only way in which this is to be done is that to which our Saviour directed in his preaching . . . . "Repent and believe the gospel." All reformation short of this is only an exchange of vices. But if you can, guilty and unworthy as you are, renouncing all other



hopes and dependencies, believe in Christ, you shall be saved. His blood was shed for sinners, even the chief of sinners. His obedience unto death was so well-pleasing to God that any sinner, whatever has been his conduct or character, that comes to him in *his* name, pleading his righteousness and his only, will be accepted for his sake. He has not only obeyed and died for such as you, but is now at the right hand of God, carrying into effect the great ends of his incarnation, life, and death. "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

If, reader, thou canst embrace this doctrine, it will heal thy malady. If from thine heart thou canst receive salvation as of mere grace, through the redemption of Jesus Christ, it is thine own. If thou canst confess thy sins upon the head of this sacrifice, "God is faithful and just to forgive thy sins, and to cleanse thee from all unrighteousness." God makes nothing of thy reformations, prayers, or tears, as a reason why he should accept and save thee; but every thing of what his Son has done and suffered. If thou canst be of his mind, making nothing of them in thy pleas and hopes for mercy, but every thing of Him in whom he is well pleased, eternal life is before thee. And, at what time this doctrine shall give peace to thy troubled soul, it shall purify thy heart in such a manner that all thy former ways shall become hateful unto thee, and sobriety, righteousness, and godliness shall be thy delight.

But if thy heart be still hardened in sin: if Jesus, and salvation by grace through his name contain nothing attractive, but rather offensive to thy mind . . . . Know this, "There is no other name given under heaven, among men, by which thou canst be saved; and the remembrance of thy having once in thy life at least been told the truth may not a little embitter thy dying moments.

Happy are all they who returning, in the name of Jesus Christ, to his Father and their Father, his God and their God, are made free from sin, and have their fruit unto holiness! They too are *progressive*, but it is in a course the opposite of that which has been set before the reader. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." The service of God shall become more easy to him; truth shall appear more evident; the marks of his conversion shall multiply; his character shall strike its roots deeper; the hope of his perseverance shall continually renew its strength; and sorrow and joy, retirement and society, the dispensations of providence and the ordinances of grace, shall all contribute to make him more meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

#### THE PROGRESS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

HAVING offered a few thoughts on the progress of sin, in your last number, the following may be considered as a counterpart. Righteousness is no less progressive than unrighteousness. As, in the one case, sinners are "servants to iniquity *unto iniquity*;" so, in the other, believers are "servants to righteousness *unto holiness*."

Some, I am aware, have denied that sanctification is progressive; but this, if they understand what they say, is only a proof, I fear, that they are strangers to it. The following remarks may serve to show the tendency of true holiness to aspire after perfection, however far we may be from attaining to it.

First: The right discharge of any one duty supposes a principle which will lead us to be holy in all manner of conversation.—Strictly speaking, there is no duty performed, nor any thing done by a sinner that is well-pleasing to God, till, repenting of sin, he believes in Jesus for salvation. This is the turning point which gives a new direction to his future course; all before it is worse than nothing. When, therefore, the Jews inquired of Christ "What shall we do to work the works of God?" the answer was, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." It is on this principle that the apostle declares of him that "doeth righteousness" that he "is righteous." A single act of righteousness proves that the subject of it is created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. But, where this is the case, there is that in the mind which tends to universal holiness. A few insulated services may satisfy a formalist; but he that believeth in Jesus has his heart enlarged, and runs with delight in the way of his commandments. It is not the inquiry of such a person how low a degree of spirituality will consist with true religion, but how high a degree of it is attainable in this state of imperfection. The religion of a mere professor resembles the legs of the lame, which are not equal. In the house of God he weeps and seems to be all devotion; but if a poor man, or even a poor Christian, call at his door, his heart is shut against him. Or, it may be, he prides himself in his generosity; but then he is dead to every thing spiritual and heavenly-minded. Not so the true Christian; his religion is uniform. In him, the fear of God produces good will to men; and his charity to men operates in harmony with zeal for truth, for righteousness, and for God. When a mere professor has once established his religious character, he will commonly sit down to rest, and leave the young people to be zealous in their turn, as he thinks he has been sufficiently in his; but love will go on to "bring forth fruit *in old age*." When the

Lord had given David rest round about from all his enemies, he is said to have "sat in his house;" not, however, in a state of indolence, as though he had done enough, but meditating what more he could do for God, now that new opportunities were afforded him. "See now," said he to Nathan, "I dwell in a house of cedar; but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." And more than twenty years afterwards, when he was old and grey-headed, and nature worn out with troubles in his family and his kingdom, he still resolves to "go in the strength of the Lord God, and to praise him more and more."

Secondly: Every duty rightly performed prepares the heart for the discharge of other duties.—It was a remark of the great and good Mr. Whitfield, and there is no man's lips whom it would have better fitted, "that the more a man does for God the more he may." Gracious dispositions strengthen and increase by exercise. The chariot in full motion surmounts hills of difficulty with much less effort than at its first outset. The truth of these remarks is most sensibly felt in exercises of self-denial, and in the influence of private on public duties. Every act of self-denial for Christ's sake is a victory over temptation, and every such victory doubles our strength for a future onset. Thus, also, the spiritual and retired exercises of the closet prepare the mind for those of the family, and both have a tendency to fit us for those of the house of God. A little religion, it has been said, and with much propriety, will make a man miserable; but much will make him happy. It is by following the Lord fully, like Caleb and Joshua, that we enter into the gospel rest.

Thirdly: Every degree of holiness tends to an increase of spiritual knowledge, which in return produces more holiness.—It has been a question much disputed whether holiness leads to the knowledge of the truth, or the knowledge of the truth to holiness; but both are true: "He that doeth God's will, shall know of his doctrine;" and, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory—by the Spirit of the Lord." The influence of each upon the other is as that of capital and interest in trade. Capital is a stimulus to interest, and interest increases capital. The influence which humility has, for instance, upon a discovery of the mind of God in his word, and upon the increase of true religion in the soul, is beyond all calculation. God will "guide the meek in judgment; the meek will he teach his way." He giveth "more grace" to the humble.

Fourthly: Holy acts tend to form and strengthen holy habits, which constitute the highest degrees of holiness.—In one sense every person who is the subject of true re-

ligion possesses a holy habit: religion with him is not occasional, but an habitual pursuit. But the term is more properly applied to those fixed dispositions of the soul which are the effect of repeated exercises. God has so formed the mind that a number of acts of the same kind, whether good or evil, shall give a tone or direction to it: by this righteousness is encouraged and sin is punished. Every exercise of repentance goes to form an habitual tenderness of conscience, and abhorrence of that which is evil; and every exercise of faith tends to a *life of faith* on him who loved us, and gave himself for us. The more we read the holy Scriptures, the more we shall imbibe their spirit, and be formed by them as by a model. It is thus that the word of Christ dwells richly in us in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. It is worthy of notice that the general strain of apostolic exhortation is directed to *habitual* religion. "Simplicity in giving, diligence in ruling, cheerfulness in showing mercy, love without dissimulation, abhorrence of evil, cleaving to that which is good, being kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord: rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality;" are all expressive, not of one or two particular acts, but of a *life* of devotedness to God, and kindness to men. And, whatever acts the apostles exhorted to, they were considered only as so many steps in a race, each of which contributed to its success, or to the winning of the prize.

Fifthly: Holy habits are friendly to a life of communion with God, by which the soul becomes more and more meetened for the inheritance of the saints in light.—"He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in God, and God in him." The ecstasies of some, whose walk is manifestly carnal, worldly, fleshly, and even devilish, arise from a fire of their own kindling. But he whose consolations are accompanied with a close walk with God, and render him more and more watchful, diligent, and circumspect, he it is that walks in the light of God's countenance. The enjoyment he finds in the commandments of God enlarges his heart: and, his heart being enlarged, he runs with greater pleasure in the way of his commandments.

From the whole we see: 1. The vast importance of a *right beginning* in religion. If we be wrong in the outset, the farther we go the farther we are off: but, entering in at the door of the sheepfold, we shall go in and out, and find pasture. The reason why so many are not progressive in religion is the want of this. Having no connection with Christ, they bring forth no fruit, and,

as dead branches, are taken away, having no oil in their vessels, the lamp soon expires. 2. The importance of every act of holiness, or duty performed with an eye to the glory of God.—It tells, as I may say, in the divine life. It tends to accumulate a store of heavenly wealth, and to meeten us for employments and enjoyments in another and better world.

A FEW PERSUASIVES TO "A GENERAL UNION IN PRAYER" FOR THE REVIVAL OF RELIGION.\*

[Addressed to all who love and long for the coming of Christ's blessed kingdom, and whose hearts may be inclined to unite in seeking its welfare.]

Christian Brethren!

THE business for the promotion of which these few hints are with all due respect recommended to your candid attention is such that we are persuaded you will cheerfully unite in it. Indeed it would be unfriendly in us to suspect your readiness to so good a work. Nevertheless, considering the backwardness and inattention common to us all in this world, you will not think it superfluous in this case to urge a few motives, for the purpose of stimulating us to wrestle hard with God. We wish you then and ourselves with you, seriously to attend to the following considerations:—

1. Consider *Christ's readiness to hear and answer prayer, especially on these subjects.* We are greatly mistaken if we imagine our Lord Jesus takes no pleasure in his own work, but is loth to prosper it, and only is persuaded by us, or does it to oblige us. He takes infinitely more pleasure in it than we do; and, when he does it in answer to our prayers, it is that we may be encouraged and that his favors may be thankfully received. Christ takes care to let us know how ready he is to hear prayer, especially in behalf of his own cause, in that he directs us to pray for these blessings; yea, he even commands us to pray for the coming of his kingdom before we ask for our daily bread; and to "seek first the *kingdom of God*, and his righteousness," promising that "all other things shall be added unto us."—Matt. vi. 33.

Indeed it may well be supposed that Christ's heart is in this work; for he laid down his life as a ground whereon to rear the structure. The foundation of this glorious kingdom was laid in blood,—not, like too many earthly kingdoms, in the blood of the conquered, but in that of the conqueror. Yes, he died that he might live and see a numerous seed of converts; and might pro-

long his days, or lengthen out his holy and happy kingdom. When he ascended into heaven, and took the government of all worlds into his hands, it was with a view to the carrying on of this blessed cause. He became Head over all things, but it was to the church, that he might cause every thing to subserv her welfare.

And now having thus died to lay the foundation of his kingdom, and thus long presided over all the kingdoms of the world to ripen things for it, it would be very strange indeed if he were indifferent about it! So far from that, nothing seems to lie so near his heart. He is pleased to look upon the conversion of sinners as reward enough for all his sorrows—as sufficient to make him forget all his trials! As a woman, as soon as she is delivered from travail, remembers no more the anguish for joy that a man-child is born into the world, so it is said "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied!" Yes, Christians, so far is he from being reluctant to grant us these requests, that he is pleased in these matters not only to command us to ask, but to represent himself as waiting to be gracious; yea, as being at our command, as ready to bestow these mercies whenever we shall earnestly pray for them. "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me!" See how intent he is upon what concerns his sons, and the work of his hands. O, let us not be backward on our part.

2. Consider *what the Lord has done in times past, and that in answer to prayer.* When Israel, who was God's church at that time, was in Egypt, and things looked very dark indeed, they cried, and the Lord heard their cry, and came down to deliver them. Their deliverance was the extending of Christ's kingdom; and God overthrew Pharaoh and all his host for setting themselves against it. The church in after ages, when in her low estate at Babylon, is represented as making use of this as a plea with God. Thus they cry to him, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep: that hath made the depth of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?" And was their prayer answered? Yes; the Lord presently replied, "I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared; *the Lord of hosts* is his name!"—Yea, as a kind of echo to their request, "Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury—Thus saith thy Lord *Jehovah*, and thy God that

\* This was the author's first publication. See vol. I. p. lvii. ED.



pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again."—See Isa. li. 9, 17, 22.

While Judah groaned beneath Babel's yoke, Daniel set his face three times a-day towards Jerusalem; at length his prayers and supplications are heard, and an angel is sent to comfort him, yea and to inform him that at the beginning of his supplications the commandment in favor of Judah came forth. And now God's conduct towards Pharaoh and all his host shall be acted over again towards Belshazzar and his. Yes, he not only gave Egypt and Ethiopia, but Babylon for their ransom.

The church of God was reduced exceedingly low just before the coming of Christ, but what was the conduct of those few that were on God's side? Some of them are distinguished by the character of those who "*looked for redemption in Jerusalem,*" and others are said to have "*continued in prayer night and day.*" At length, through the tender mercy of God, their prayers were answered, and "*the day-spring from on high visited them!*"

Just before that great out-pouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the church was in a low and disconsolate condition, having lost Christ's personal presence: however, they united with one accord in ardent prayer, in an upper room, to the number of about a hundred and twenty. Presently, their light broke forth as the morning—a little one becomes a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. Thousands are converted by a single sermon, and Satan falls before the gospel of Christ like lightning from heaven—May we not make the same use of these glorious works of God, with some others in that day, as Judah did in Babylon of what God had done for them in Egypt?—O, let us pray to the Lord Jesus that the work may be carried on; that Antichrist may be consumed with the Spirit of his mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of his coming; that the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and that he may reign forever and ever.

3. *Let the present religious state of the world be considered to this end.* Christianity has not yet made its way, even in name, over one-fifth part of the world. Out of about one thousand millions, who are supposed to inhabit our globe, not above one hundred and seventy millions profess the Christian name; all the rest are heathens, Jews, or Mahomedans; and, of those who do profess it, the far greater part are either of the apostate church of Rome or of the Greek church, which is nearly as corrupt. Add to this, what great numbers of real heathens abound in Christian lands, and un-

believers even in the congregations of the faithful. Surely it is high time for us to awake out of sleep, and to send our united cries to heaven in behalf of our fellow-creatures!

4. *Consider what God has promised to do for his church in times to come.* For an absolute impossibility we can have no hope, and for what God hath declared shall never come to pass we can have no warrant to pray; but, when we pray for the spread of Christ's kingdom, our object is clogged with neither of these difficulties. On the contrary, it is accompanied with the strongest assurances of success. Let us not imagine that God has yet done all he intends to do for his church; or that Christ has yet seen of the travail of his soul so as to be satisfied. Besides the various promises referred to in the foregoing pages, the first setting up of Christ's kingdom is compared to a little stone, cut out of a mountain without hands, but which should in time break in pieces all the rest, and become "*a great mountain, and fill the whole earth.*"—Dan. ii. 35. The king himself compared this his blessed kingdom in its infancy to a "*grain of mustard-seed,*" the least of all seeds, but when grown the "*greatest of all herbs;*" implying, no doubt, that his kingdom in its beginning was apparently the most weak and despicable of any kingdom; but before it should be finished it should be the greatest, most glorious, and extensive, of all the kingdoms that were ever set up—greater than that of Alexander himself, and more durable than that of Rome.—Matt. xiii. 31, 32, 33. In the same place, he compares it to a little leaven which a woman put into three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. Glorious thought! Christ has been leavening the world for many a hundred years, by the preaching of the Gospel; and yet, awful to think, what a great part of it continues unleavened to this day! But O, blessed be God, it shall not be given up till *the whole is leavened!* Forlorn as the state of the heathen world is, our Lord Jesus has asked them for his inheritance and he will have them, even the *utmost parts of the earth* for his possession.—Psalm ii. 8. O, blessed period! when Jew and Gentile, the fair European and the sun-burnt African, with men of every other description, shall all unite to serve the Lord.

Must it not be very reviving to see those branches that have been so long broken off the olive-tree, because of unbelief, grafted in again?—to see them return, and, with the bitter tears of reflection, "*seek the Lord their God, and David their king,* and fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days?"—Hos. iii. 5. Yes, verily, the receiving of them back again shall be to the gentiles like "*life from the dead!*"—Rom. xi. 15. Then shall they be restored to their

own land, and no more be exposed to the hostile attacks of quarrelsome neighbors as heretofore, but "Israel shall be with Egypt and with Assyria a blessing in the midst of the land; whom Jehovah of Hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."—Isaiah xix. 23, 25. Then those glorious things spoken of the city of God, in the eighty-seventh Psalm, shall be accomplished.—We shall see "Rahab and Babylon, Philistia and Tyre, with Ethiopia," given to the church. "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God."—Psalm lxxviii. 31. O, what encouragement is here to pray! How long these things will be we know not; but this we know, we are nearer by above two thousand four hundred years than the church was in Isaiah's time, and even then they that made mention of Jehovah were charged, saying, "Keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."—Isaiah lxii. 6, 7. Let us never forget that Jehovah connects the fulfilment of his own promises with the fervent supplications of his people. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."—Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

5. *If we have any regard to the welfare of our countrymen, connections, and friends, let that stimulate us in this work.* Let us remember we have not only heathens, and Jews, and others abroad, to pray for; but few of us are wholly unconnected with heathen neighbors, heathen relations, or stubborn and unbelieving children. Let these be borne in the arms of prayer before the Lord. Though they can claim no pity from God, yet they have a right to ours, because we were in the same condition. Let our pity then be extended to those who have none for themselves, and our prayers ascend for such who as yet call not upon God's name. Though there be no reason why God should save our children, relations, or friends, before others, yet there is a reason why we should seek their salvation before others, because they are particularly put under our care, or stand in connection with us.

To neglect to carry our children to Christ for a blessing from want of love, if such a thing could be in a good man, would be more cruel than the ostrich in the wilderness! So were it possible for a Christian to be amongst wicked neighbors and wicked relations, and seeing he is safe himself, care nothing about them, surely he must be beside himself! How unlike would this be to the spirit of his Lord and Saviour—he wept over those who wept not for themselves! O, Christians, for your country's sake, your neighbors' sake, your friends' sake, yea, your enemies' sake, as well as for the honor of Christ, seek the welfare of Zion, and pray for the extending of his kingdom in the world!

6. Consider that *what is requested is so very small.* The Lord does not ask us in this case for our silver or our gold, which, if he did, it were but a trifle to give.—He does not require us to sacrifice our lives, families, or friends, in support of his cause, which, if he did, it is no more than multitudes of the best men that ever the world saw have complied with,—but he only says, "Give me thine heart!" Seek the prosperity of His interest who died for yours—of that interest with which your own is so inseparably united—yea of that interest which is your own; for Christ and you have no separate interests.

As to the times for public prayer, nothing can be less burdensome than once in a month—but what did I say, burdensome?—God forbid that any employment of this sort should ever prove a burden! It is hoped it will be attended to as a privilege rather than merely as a duty. It is hoped that Christians will feel a pleasure, and find a benefit, in these meetings, that will induce them of their own accord to meet together more frequently than this proposes, either on Lord's-day mornings, or on any convenient opportunities, for the same most desirable purposes.

7, and lastly. *It will not be in vain, whatever be the immediate and apparent issue of it.* Could we but heartily unite and make an earnest effort, there is great reason to hope great good might follow. Whenever those glorious out-pourings of God's Spirit shall come, all over the world, no doubt it will be in answer to the prayers of his people.—But, suppose we should never live to see those days, still our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. God would be glorified; and is this of no moment? It would convey this piece of intelligence to the world, that God has yet some hearty friends in it, who will continue to pray to him in the darkest times.—But this is not all: our petitions may prove like seed in the earth, that shall not perish, though it may not spring up in our days. Thus the "prophets labored, and the apostles entered into their labors" (John iv. 38); and what if we should be the sowers, and our posterity the reapers, shall we grudge at this? As great an honor at the last day, perhaps, may attend Isaiah, who hardly knew who had believed his report, as Peter, by whose sermon thousands were converted in an hour.—But neither is this all.—There are different degrees of prosperity bestowed upon different parts of Zion, and these favors are often granted to those particular communities where most ardent prayer, love, and holiness prevail.—Add to all this, the prosperity of our souls, as Christians, is generally connected with an earnest pursuit of God's glory and Christ's kingdom. Consolation, like reputation, will not do to be sought directly and for its own sake. In

that case it will flee from us. But let us seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to us. One great reason perhaps of so many Christians going so destitute of divine comfort is because they care about scarcely any thing else; God therefore justly withholds it from them. If they were more to seek his glory and the extending of his kingdom in the world, they would find consolation come of its own accord. He that cannot lie, speaking of his church, hath said, "*They shall prosper that love her.*"

## THOUGHTS ON CIVIL POLITY.

### ON ATTACHMENT TO GOVERNMENT.

[Written in March, 1808.]

THE question proposed for discussion is, — *Whether the obedience to Civil Government required in the Scriptures includes ATTACHMENT.*

It certainly does not include attachment to any thing but what is declared to be "an ordinance of God;" nor to any person or persons, but as officers executing that ordinance. It does not necessarily include an attachment to the constitution of a country, which, when compared with others, may be very oppressive and unjust; nor to particular measures, which may be equally so. But even in such cases there is an "honor" due to government, which in its worst forms is preferable to anarchy; and which, notwithstanding the most unjust procedures, is still in itself the ordinance of God. It is thus in parental authority. The duty of a child to obey a parent who may be harsh and unkind is not obliterated; nor is it enough for him to yield the obedience of fear, out of regard to his own interest. He ought to do it from a conscientious regard to the will of God, who has made him his parent. A violent father once fell foul upon his son, a young man about twenty years of age. The son made no other resistance than to ward off the blows, and said, "I could do what I please with you; but you are my father!" Such is the spirit which ought to be cherished towards the worst civil government. The young man not only conformed to those orders which his father might give him, but felt an attachment to him as a father; and was not to be driven from his duty because the other had forgotten his.

All this proceeds upon the supposition of our living under the worst of governments, which is so far from being the truth that almost any one would think it the best in Europe, if not in the world. A large proportion of those who have left their country, under a contrary impression, have seen cause to repent of their folly and ingratitude. The

civil liberty contained in the British government is the very cause of its being worse thought of and spoken against, by one part of its subjects, than that of any other country. Were one of these in France, and even a member of the legislature, he must not open his mouth in the manner he does in England. It is a part of our civil constitution to admit of free debate; and an opposition to the administration of the day, though generally conducted on mere party principles, is considered upon the whole as a salutary check on men in power. It is a mode of balancing evils, by suffering one set of them to weigh against another. Hence it is that a Tory administration in England, being watched by Whigs, would not be materially unfriendly to liberty; and Whigs, if not watched by Tories, would soon become as bad as the other. But while these parties are invariably assailing their rivals, in hope of supplanting them, it is not for the wise and the good to enlist themselves under their respective standards, or to believe half what they say. If, within my remembrance, only a tenth part of what has been foretold by the opposition interest had been true, we should ere now have ceased to be a nation.

Oh but, say some, we are going fast to ruin! Provisions rise, farms let for double and treble what they did, and the taxes are enormous. And what does the rise of provisions and of land prove, except that the country is full of money? All buying and selling is only an exchange of commodities; and according to the quantity and demand for any article such is the price. To say that provisions are dear is only saying that money is cheap. Oh, but it is not money, it is paper. So long however as the nation is solvent, and can pay its debts, paper is the same as money. With respect to the amount of taxes, it is not of much account so long as we have the means of paying them. A London tradesman might say, My rent and taxes are so high in the city, I'll go and take a farm or a house in the woodlands! Such in effect has been the reasoning of some of our emigrants. Yet, it may be asked, do we not live better, wear better clothes, and occupy more comfortable dwellings than our forefathers did? and whether, where one fortune was gained a century ago, there be not six or seven now? These things may seem nothing to those who are complainers by profession; for if God should have determined for our ingratitude and other sins to bring us under a foreign yoke, as he has brought the continent of Europe, we shall then know our present advantages by the loss of them.

To form our opinion of the measures of government, by daily reading one class of the opposition papers, is much the same as judging of them from the philippics of the French *Moniteur*; or making up an opinion



of the mission to the east, by purchasing and reading all the pieces of Major Scott Waring! If we choose to be deceived, deceived we shall be and ought to be. If I am attached to government *as government*, irrespective of the men who administer it, I shall be willing to find their measures right, and unwilling to find them otherwise, unless compelled so to think by evidence. I shall never take pleasure in traducing it, nor in hearing it traduced. If in any case I think it in the wrong, I shall speak of it, if at all, with regret. But if I choose to enlist under the banners of a systematic opposition, and to learn all that occurs from their report, I shall presently enter into their prejudices, and become their dupe. They are fighting for a substance indeed, but I for a phantom. So when these patriots get into power, I wonder and admire, and am then attached to government, not because the New Testament enjoins it, but because my favorites bear rule; and thus, both when they are out of office and when they are in, I am out of the way of Christian obedience.

How can I be said to honor magistrates, while I view all their actions through the representations of men whose interest it is to supplant them; discrediting every thing good, and believing every thing evil? "Bonaparte," said one of the opposition prints, "is conciliating people of all religions; but our government is going to convert the Hindoos to Christianity!" Is not such a suggestion sufficient to show what these men are? It is well enough known that our government are not going to convert the Hindoos, and that, if they let those men alone who would endeavor to convert them, it is all that can be said or hoped of them. How utterly unprincipled and base therefore must such a writer be! Yet from these men some people form their ideas of the government that protects them. If I must judge of public measures, let me judge righteously and not by appearance, or from personal regards.—John vii. 24.

Government may have done wrong in pursuing certain measures, but it is not from their being accused of it by interested men that we ought to believe it. Those who are now in power were lately in opposition, and then they were patriots, and every thing was going to ruin. There never was a period in British history when, in the opinion of what is called the opposition, let that opposition be on which side it might, the nation was not going to ruin; and when its humble adherents did not think so. The New Testament tells us, "they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing." Now a small acquaintance with things will enable us to perceive that they who attend continually to one thing may in a hundred instances have reasons for their conduct of which those who only

attend to it as an occasional amusement are very incompetent to judge. Let a disaffected member of a Christian church judge of the measures of its officers, and he will find them all wrong. Should he also be desirous of gaining an ascendancy, and can persuade a few others to judge of those measures through the medium of his representations, it is easy to imagine what sort of treatment the pastor and his colleagues would be likely to receive at their hands. The minister might feel indignant, and say to his friends, This man wants to be in power, and the rest are his dupes. We attend continually upon this very thing, and do to the best of our ability. But these men neither know our reasons, nor wish to know them; but, having set us down as bad, conclude that nothing we do can be right.

What is that "honor" and "obedience" due to government, and that prayer to God "for all who are in authority," which the Scriptures enjoin (Rom. xiii. 1—7; 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2; Titus iii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 13—17,) but an attachment to them as magistrates, irrespective of their party? We cannot pray for them as we ought, unless we feel a sincere attachment. There needs not a greater proof of this than the base perversions of God's word which have been made on this subject by some disaffected men. I pray for kings and rulers as men, says one, the same as I pray for other men. Yes, but you are required to pray for them *as men in authority*. Well, says another, I can pray that God would restrain their iniquity, and prevent their doing mischief, that good people may lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty. Would you then presume thus to pervert the oracles of God? Can you say that the exhortation in 1 Tim. ii. 2, proceeds on the supposition that civil governors are the parties which you are to pray God to restrain? Does it not rather suppose, what is manifestly true, that the great body of wicked men around you would persecute and destroy you as Christians, were they not prevented by the civil power? The exhortation is to intercede *for* kings, and *for* all that are in authority; but this would be interceding *against* them.

Without attachment there is no such thing as *obedience*, whether to parents, husbands, masters, ministers, magistrates, or to God. A disaffected person may abstain from conspiracies and seditious conversation from mere prudential motives: but in all this there is not a grain of honor or obedience. He who thinks otherwise, and imagines that an outward compliance with the laws is all that ought to be required of him, only proves himself to be given up in a great degree to a mind void of judgment. Let such a one ask himself as a father, a husband, a master, or a minister, whether a mere outward compliance with his direc-

tions would satisfy him. By the same means he may find an answer to all his other objections. What! says an undutiful child, you think, I suppose, every thing is right that my father does.—No, you reply, your father is a man like other men, and has his faults; but it is not for you to expose them. He is your father, and you are commanded of God to honor and obey him in all his lawful commands.—What! and am I bound to esteem him, and to feel attached to him, when he has all along been my enemy, doing every thing for my hurt? The answer is, such a supposition is as unnatural as it is undutiful. Have you not contracted this prejudice by associating with persons who have an end to answer by supplanting him in your esteem?—For me to esteem or be attached to him would be the same thing as to be attached to what is wrong.—Surely this objection can arise from nothing but perverseness. You know there is no necessity for this, and no one wishes it. You seem to forget that he is your father, and to think of him only as a bad man; but these thoughts arise from your listening to evil counsel, intended for sinister ends to lower him in your estimation.—Well, I cannot help it.—Such also might be the answer of the worst of beings.

A disaffected heart will lead men to talk of providence, so far as it favors their wishes, but renders them blind to it in every other view: some have pleaded that providence has favored the arms of France, and they have subdued their enemies before them; it is folly, therefore, to resist them. But, if it be true that providence has favored the military power of France, it is no less true that the naval power of England has been equally favored and destined of providence to check the inordinate ambition of our rival and our enemy; and, but for this, liberty would find no asylum upon earth. Yet, were I a subject of the French government, I should think it my duty, while I experienced its protection, to cherish a sincere attachment, and to pray for its prosperity in all its lawful undertakings, whatever I might think of the private character of those by whom the government is administered. I should think it wrong to magnify the faults of such a government, even though I could do it with safety to myself, or to read only those accounts of it which came from a quarter where a systematic opposition was carrying on against it. How much more then ought I to be attached to a legitimate government, under whose protection the church of God, for more than a century, has had an opportunity to live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty?

Surely you cannot account for my imbibing these sentiments, but by supposing that I have learned them from the Scrip-

tures. You know me too well to impute to me a spirit that would cringe to any man. You know also that I have no temporal interest to serve, and no prejudices to gratify. If I have any political predilections, they are on the side of whiggism. It is true, I have lately perceived some infidels amongst them, giving into a persecuting spirit against evangelical religion, and have denounced them in my Letter to the Chairman of the East India Company. And I should not be surprised to find the greater part of them holding these principles when it comes to the trial: but, if it be so, it would be a mortification to me as belonging to the whig interest. On this account, as well as others, I have said nothing against them as a political party, but have contented myself with attacking the principle.

It is a fact, of which few will doubt, that great numbers are attached to government because they are hired, both in church and state. It is no less a fact that great numbers are disaffected because they are not hired. I accuse neither the one nor the other by the lump; but who can doubt that the cause of disaffection in thousands is that they are not treated in all respects as their fellow-subjects; and that, in the present reign especially, the political party which has been used to favor dissenters and the cause of religious liberty has been kept out of power; this party has ever maintained a war, as all parties do, against their opponents. They have their newspapers, by which they give their own representations of every thing done by the other. They are not scrupulous to state things as they are, but as they appear to their own prejudiced and violent minds. If any person forms his ideas according to these statements, he will soon become an inconsiderate partizan, laying aside not only the Christian, but the man of sober sense, who views both these parties as aiming to supplant the other; and, therefore, though he may hear what both advance, and may think it necessary on the whole that the one should watch the other, yet, in forming his own judgment of men and things, will take neither of them for his guide.

#### REFLECTIONS ON THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

[Extracts of a Letter written during the alarm of an Invasion in 1803.]

I HAVE been much struck of late in reading the Epistle of Jude; and think I see there the very character of some of our modern democrats. 1. They were wicked men; yet they crept in unawares amongst religious people.—ver. 4. 2. They were apostates from the truth, after the example of the devil himself.—ver. 5, 6. 3. They

were lascivious characters, given over to fornication and all uncleanness.—ver. 7. 4. They were despisers and depreciators of civil government, using language concerning their superiors which an angel dare not use of Satan himself.—ver. 8, 9. 5. Their real object, whatever were their pretences, was the hope of plunder and of power.—ver. 11. 6. The admission which some Christians gave them into their churches was to their reproach.—ver. 12. 7. They are characters whose society we should avoid as we tender our own salvation; for the course which they steer leads to perdition.—ver. 12, 13.

[A correspondent having intimated that as the descriptions referred to apostates *from the truth*, and the cases of *Cain*, *Balaam*, and *Corah*, were cited by the apostle as a warning to his contemporaries, the allusion could not be to political but religious disobedience, Mr. Fuller replied as follows.]

It is certainly true that “the error of Balaam,” Jude 11, was not *Jacobinism*, and that the sin of Cain and of Corah was not committed against *civil* government. But, on a re-perusal of the Epistles of Peter and Jude, it does not appear to me that civil government can justly be *excluded* from the things against which these men set themselves. There is nothing surprising that they should despise and set themselves against *all* that which set itself against their lusts, which every species of legitimate authority did, whether civil or ecclesiastical. It is thus interpreted by all the expositors and lexicons to which I have access. They admit indeed that the passage referred to in 1 Pet. ii. 10 proves a part of their opposition and contempt to have been directed against Christ, and the authorities in his church; but consider other parts of it as directed against civil government. The term rendered “government or dominion,” in 2 Pet. ii. 10, and Jude 8, is never applied, I believe, to ecclesiastical authority, but either to that which subsists among the different orders of angels, or to civil government amongst men.—Ephes. i. 21; Col. i. 16.

Christ, it is true, exercises all authority and dominion; but the *dignities* which they blasphemed do not seem to relate to his spiritual authority. Moreover, the argument used by the apostle Jude, in ver. 9, seems to imply that the authority, or dominion, against which these men set themselves, had in it a *mixture of evil*, which afforded them a handle for running it down. Jude’s answer is, Be it so, that it has a great many evils attending it, as administered by wicked men; yet an archangel, when speaking to the worst of beings, did not dare to use such language as theirs. The answer sup-

poses that to exist which did not exist in Christ’s spiritual government, nor yet in the ecclesiastical government of the church at that time; but which might well be supposed to exist in the imperial government of Rome, under which the early Christians suffered so much persecution.

#### INFLUENCE OF THE CONDUCT OF RELIGIOUS PEOPLE ON THE WELL-BEING OF A COUNTRY.

THE 21st of September, 1803, was fixed upon, by several dissenting ministers in London, as a day of fasting and prayer on account of the state of the nation; and they expressed a wish that their brethren in the country would unite with them. Being at one of those meetings in the country, I was forcibly struck with an idea suggested in a passage of Scripture which was read on that occasion. It was Isai. v. 5: “And now, go to: I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.”

I had often heard it observed, from the intercession of Abraham in behalf of Sodom, and other Scriptures, that God might spare a country for the sake of the righteous few; but never recollect hearing it noticed before that the sins of professing Christians might also be the principal cause of a nation’s overthrow. Certainly the *church* is here represented as God’s vine, the grand object of his care. He *fences* it by his providence, cultivates it by the means of his grace, and looks that it should bring forth grapes, or fruit to his glory. But if instead of this it bring forth wild grapes, what inducement can he have to continue the fence?

I am more afraid, said the minister on the above occasion, on account of the sins of my country, than from the threatenings of the enemy: and I am much more afraid for the sins of professing Christians in my country than I am for those who are openly profane. It is true they are wicked, and will not go unpunished: but God does not *look* to them for fruit in such a manner as he does to us. If the *hedge* be taken away, and the wild boar of the wood suffered to enter in and destroy, I fear it will be principally, though not wholly, on our account. Our ingratitude, lukewarmness, worldly-mindedness, animosities, divisions, scandals, and other evils, may be more offensive to God than all the wickedness of the land besides.

If these remarks be just, what a weight lies upon the religious part of a nation; who either prove, like Paul, the salvation of them that sail with them; or, like Jonah, the principal cause of the storm!



## POLITICAL SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

I HAVE been much edified by some things which appeared in print, respecting the present state of our country, especially by those which have been directed against what may with propriety be called political self-righteousness. I am persuaded this is a sin which cleaves closer to men, and even religious men, at the present time, than most of us are aware of; and that we are more in danger from it than from almost all our national sins put together.

I have heard it said in conversation, when the sins of the nation have been mentioned as a ground of fear, True; but we are not so bad as our enemies. Mr. Robert Hall, in his fast sermon lately published,\* has shown, with great force of evidence, the folly of this way of speaking. "The thing itself," considering our religious advantages, he observes, "is very doubtful; and, if it were otherwise, it has been common with the great Disposer of events to punish a nation that has had a portion of true religion in it by one that has been utterly irreligious, though afterwards he has poured out his wrath upon the latter."

I have heard it still more frequently said, "The Lord has many praying people in this country; surely therefore he will not deliver us up." A praying people may indeed avert the divine judgments; but, if we trust to the efficacy of our prayers, we shall be more likely to bring them upon us. This notion has been well combated by another correspondent; and my soul unites with his in trembling for the consequences of our religious self-complacency. Alas, our navy and our army, it is to be feared, will too generally trust in themselves: but let not them that fear God do so too. Our brethren in distant countries may hope the best of us; the good minister at Berlin may be allowed to mention "the numbers whose prayers continually rise to God in this country;" but we must not depend upon them ourselves, for this will render them of none effect.

There is a passage in that admirable book, the "Holy War," which I could scarcely ever read without tears. When Mansoul, in the day of her distress, had drawn up a petition to Emanuel, a question arose, by whom it should be sent. "Now," says the writer, "there was an old man in the town, and his name was Mr. Good-deed, a man that bore only the name, but had nothing of the nature of the thing. Now some were for sending him; but the recorder, Conscience, was by no means for that; for, said he, we now stand in need of and are pleading

for mercy; wherefore, to send our petition by a man of his name, will seem to cross the petition itself. Should we make Mr. Good-deed our messenger, when our petition cries for mercy? Besides, quoth the old gentleman, should the prince now, as he receives the petition, ask him and say, What is thy name? and nobody knows but he will, and he should say, old Good-deed, what think you that Emanuel should say but this: Aye, is old Good-deed yet alive in Mansoul? Then let old Good-deed save you from your distresses.—And, if he says so, I am sure we are lost; nor can a thousand old Good-deeds save Mansoul."

We subscribe to all this in matters which respect our eternal salvation, but it is no less applicable to things of time. Instead of religious people flattering themselves with the idea of being the bulwark of their country, it becomes them to take heed lest they prove the contrary. Though the religious people in a nation may, by their interest with heaven, be its greatest blessings; yet there are cases in which they may prove the reverse. To Paul was given, not only his own life, but the lives of all them that sailed with him: but Jonah had well nigh been the destruction of those that sailed with him. God does not look for those things, as I may say, from the ignorant and ungodly, as he does from them that know him. It is their province to stand between God and their country: but if they be loose, light-minded, vain, or worldly, what is to be expected? We may declaim against the wickedness of the slave-trade, and many other things: but are there not with us, even with us, sins against the Lord our God?

Thus spoke the Lord by his prophet. "The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy; yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them: I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath."—Ezek. xxii. 29—31.

God's ancient people were compared to a vine, and their country to a vineyard: this vine was cultivated with great care and expense, and a hedge of defence was set about it. But, when he looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes. What was the consequence? "Go to, saith the Lord, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be beaten up: and I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down."—Isai. v. 5. If God's vine bear no fruit, the wall that protects it may be expected to be broken down on its account; and thus our unfruitfulness may not only

\* "Sentiments proper to the present Crisis." Oct. 19th, 1803.

dishonor God, and injure ourselves, but render us a curse to our country.

I write not thus to promote dismay. I have never for a moment been the subject of such a feeling; but to cut up, as far as may be, self-righteous hope, and to excite that humble and holy trembling which becomes sinful creatures, whether in respect to this world, or that which is to come.

#### ON THE PROPER AND IMPROPER USE OF TERMS.

NOTWITHSTANDING the number of words found in every language, they are far from being equal to the number of ideas in the human mind. Hence it is that one and the same term has a variety of meanings; hence also arises the distinction between the proper and improper, the literal and figurative, use of terms. The word אֲבִיב, abib, the first in the Hebrew lexicon, signifies (1) *verdure*, or greenness, Job viii. 12: (2) an ear of corn on its first appearance, being then of a *green* color, Lev. ii. 14: (3) a month in the Jewish year, falling somewhere about March or April, when corn in that country began to *ear*.

Here we see the progress of language, and the causes of different ideas being affixed to the same term. When a name is wanted to express an idea, men do not think of making a new one; but call it by something already known, to which it bears a *resemblance*; and as this resemblance is frequently confined to one leading property, and sometimes to one that is not so, it hence comes to pass that the more objects a term is applied to, the farther it commonly advances from the original idea. In mentioning the month Abib, for example, a Jew would think nothing of *greenness* or *verdure*, which is its true and primary meaning; but merely of the time of his forefathers coming out of Egypt, and of the institution of the passover. Yet, in arguments from the meaning of Scripture terms, it becomes us to ascertain the true, primitive, or proper sense, and to measure all secondary and figurative applications by it as a standard. It appears to me that many important errors have been introduced and defended for want of attending to this rule, which is dictated by common sense. Instead of defining a term according to its proper and primary meaning, and resting nothing upon its secondary or figurative applications, any farther than they accord with it, the reverse has been the practice. The proper meaning has been made to give way to the figurative, rather than the figurative to the proper.

#### EXAMPLES.

1. *The Universalist*, finding the terms used to express the duration of future punishment

frequently applied to things which *have an end*, endeavors from thence to set aside the evidence of its eternity. That is, he grounds his argument on the secondary and figurative application of terms, to the setting aside of that which is primary or proper. Thus *αἰών*, though its proper meaning is *always being*, is made to mean no more than *age* or *ages*; and *αἰώνιος*, though it literally signifies *everlasting* or *endless*, yet is said to mean no more than *age-lasting*. Thus, instead of measuring the secondary sense of words by the primary, the primary is measured and excluded by the secondary, which goes to exclude all just reasoning and to introduce everlasting wrangling. It were just as reasonable to contend that the English word "turnpike" signifies a road made by act of parliament, though it is so called merely in a way of contraction, and because such roads have toll-gates, and such gates a turnpike for the accommodation of foot passengers.

2. *The adversaries of the doctrine of atonement* have taken the same method. "By a *sacrifice*," says Dr. Taylor, "is meant a symbolical address to God, attending to express before him the devout affections, by significant emblematical actions; and, consequently, whatever is expressive of a pious and virtuous disposition may rightly be included in the idea of a sacrifice; as prayers, thanksgivings, expenses, labors, &c." It is easy to see that the *primary* notion of a sacrifice is here explained away, or lost in the crowd of secondary meanings; by which any thing may be proved or disproved, as the writer pleases.

3. Let it be dispassionately and impartially considered whether the principal objections brought against the ordinance of *baptism* being administered exclusively by *immersion* do not originate in the same cause. The word βαπτίζω, it is said, will not *always* agree with the idea of immersion. It is applied to the *effusion* of the Holy Spirit, and to some other things wherein immersion is inadmissible. Be it so: still it amounts to no more than this, That the term βαπτίζω, like almost every other term, has its secondary and figurative sense. Its *proper* and *primary* meaning is allowed, by the most learned pædobaptists in all ages, to be that which the antipædobaptists contend for; and this is the only meaning which ought to be called in to settle the dispute. By the contrary method, it were easy to prove that the English word immersion does not mean dipping or plunging: for, if a person be very wet by rain, it is common to say he is immersed, merely because he is as wet as if he had been immersed.

To generalize the meaning of a term, in order to include its secondary or figurative senses, is the way to lose its true and proper sense; and, if applied universally, might

go to undermine all the great doctrines of Christianity.

The rule of fair and just reasoning, with respect to the use of terms, as I have always understood it, is, *That every word be taken in its literal and primary sense, unless there be any thing in the connection which requires it to be taken otherwise.* Now apply this rule to the foregoing examples, and the result will be this—

The *Universalist* must either deny that the proper or primary meaning of *αιων* and *αιωνις* is *always being* and *eternal*; or else prove that, when these terms are applied to the duration of future punishment, *there is something in the subject which requires them to be taken, not in a proper, but improper sense.*

The *adversaries of the atonement* also must either set aside the proof that the proper and primary notion of a sacrifice includes in it the idea of *expiation*, or show cause why this meaning should not attach to it when applied to the sacrifice of Christ.

Thus also those who object to *immersion*, as being the only proper mode of baptism, should either disprove what has been acknowledged by more than *eighty* of their most learned writers,\* that the native and proper signification of the word is to dip or plunge; or show cause why it should not be taken in this sense when applied to the ordinance in question.

[The insertion of the foregoing piece in the *Theological and Biblical Magazine* called forth the animadversions of the Rev. Samuel Greatheed. The remaining parts consist of replies to his objections.]

The animadversions of your correspondent require a reply, not so much on account of what relates to baptism as to the general principle which he attempts to overturn. Mr. Greatheed will give me credit that I had no unkind design against my pædobaptist brethren; but he must excuse me in saying, if pædobaptism will keep bad company, it must take the consequences.

By "measuring the secondary and figurative application of a term by that which is proper or primary," I did not mean to suggest that the primary sense is to be invariably retained; but merely that it ought to be so, *unless there be any thing in the connection which requires the contrary.* The primary, literal, or proper sense of a word, is its true sense, and the *standard* of all others which it may bear by way of figure or allusion. My mind is sufficiently expressed by Dr. Williams. "The improper or figurative use of terms," says he, "does not alter the literal sense: otherwise the very foundation of figures and allusions would be

destroyed." The rule also which I have laid down is the same as his: "It is not fair nor agreeable to the just rules of criticism," he says, "to interpret the words of an author allusively, improperly, and metaphorically, *except when plain necessity urges.*" †

I do not deny that the figurative sense of a term may, in many cases, be equal, and even of superior importance, to the literal one. If, for instance, we were to understand the first promise, "he shall bruise thy head," of a descendant of Eve occasionally killing a serpent; the meaning would be puerile, in comparison of what it is generally, and no doubt justly, applied to. But here *the connection requires a departure from the literal meaning.* Let the same be proved of any other term, and I acquiesce.

Your correspondent does not wish to set aside the primary meaning of a term, in favor of one that is figurative, "when it can be clearly ascertained;" but in various cases he thinks it is "very difficult to decide, of two senses, which is its primary and which its figurative meaning." I suppose he intends to say that words in a long course of time change their meaning; and that the original sense, or that which was attached to a term in the earliest usage, may be lost. There may, for aught I know, be some truth in this remark; but it does not appear to me to affect the argument. Allowing it to be so, and that what was at first only an allusive or figurative sense may have become the earliest sense with which we are acquainted, yet, as all words are mere arbitrary signs of ideas, that which is the secondary sense of a term might have been its primary sense, provided it had been so applied; and, if the primary sense be lost, the secondary of course may become primary. In other words, it may become by general consent the *obvious* sense of the term, there being no anterior idea excited in the mind when it is expressed. If then we can ascertain what was the *obvious* meaning of the word *at the time when the author wrote*, we thereby ascertain, to every purpose of just reasoning, what is its primary or proper meaning, and ought to abide by it *unless the connection requires a different one.* If this cannot be ascertained, there is no certain conclusion to be drawn from the word, any more than from "selah" in the Psalms, and we ought to rest no argument upon it.

With respect to the notion of the universalists, which is chiefly founded upon the supposed ambiguity of the terms *αιων* and *αιωνις*: your correspondent half concedes to them that these terms might originally express only a limited duration. He cannot decide, as it would seem, whether they were

\* See "*Booth's Pædobaptism Examined*," vol. I. ch. 2.

† "*Antipædobaptism Examined*," vol. II. p. 146.



"primarily used of visible or invisible objects." At least, he does not choose to rest his opposition to that system upon such a ground. Yet every lexicographer that I have seen makes no scruple of asserting that the *proper* meaning of *αιων* is *always being*, or *eternity*; and of *αιωνιος* *everlasting*, or *endless*. It is an opinion, I am aware, which has been advanced by great authorities, that terms which now signify spiritual and invisible objects were originally applied to those which are sensible and visible. But, however true this may be in many cases, it will not hold good in all.

Mr. Locke, in what he says on this subject,\* argues as if he thought language to have been a human invention, and that men learned it by slow degrees: whereas it was manifestly concreated with man from the beginning. We might as well argue from the gradual progress of strength and knowledge in an infant that Adam must have been created a child, and have grown in wisdom and stature as we do, as that all the names, by which he expressed spiritual and invisible objects were first applied to those which are sensible and visible. On this principle we must either suppose him to have had no ideas of his Creator, of his own immortality, or of endless life; or, if he had, that he had no terms by which to express them. But neither of these suppositions will consist with the important station which he occupied, or the account which is given of his communion with JEHOVAH ELOHIM. To what visible or sensible object, I ask, could the names of the everlasting God be applied, before they were applied to him?

Mr. Greatheed thinks the meaning of a word "may be made perfectly clear and certain by the connection in which it stands. For example: when the word *everlasting* is applied to God, it always signifies *without end*: when applied to a hill, it can only mean of long duration." To the same purpose says the Universalist, "Where a word is used in relation to different things, the subject itself must determine the meaning of the word." Whether the absurdity of this position has not been proved beyond all reasonable contradiction in my sixth letter to Mr. Vidler, and in the seventh and eleventh letters of Mr. Jerran's Review,† the reader of those pamphlets will easily determine.

If *αιων* an *αιωνιος* with their corresponding words in Hebrew, be allowed to have been originally applied to limited duration, and this to be their *proper* meaning, I acknowledge myself unable to prove, *from the use of these terms*, the doctrine of eternal punishment or of eternal happiness, or even of the eternal existence of God. I might conclude, indeed, with Mr. Greatheed that *everlasting*, as applied to God, plainly signi-

fies *without end*. This, however, would not be proving the eternity of God from the word everlasting being applied to him; but merely that everlasting in this case means endless because of its being applied to God, whom we know; *from other sources of evidence*, to be eternal. Thus the terms by which endless duration is commonly expressed in the Scriptures are reduced to silence, proving nothing but what can be proved by the subject without them.

Your correspondent thinks that "when the term everlasting is applied both to the states of the righteous and the wicked, after the day of judgment, nothing but the most inveterate prejudice can interpret it in different senses." Allowing this to be a solid argument, it only proves that the doctrine may be defended from other sources of evidence as well as from the proper meaning of the term; but it is giving up the argument from that source. It is allowing that the term everlasting stands for nothing, unless *you* can prove from the connection that it must mean endless: whereas, by the other mode of reasoning, the word itself, wherever it occurs, establishes the doctrine, unless *they* can prove from the connection that the proper sense is inadmissible. But farther: the above is only *argumentum ad hominem*, which is adapted to silence an opposer rather than convince him. I do not say it is unfair reasoning with persons who hold the eternity of future rewards; but universalists, rather than admit of eternal punishment, will call this in question. This is actually done by Mr. Vidler;† and, if we concede with your correspondent that the word *αιωνιος* itself proves nothing, I acknowledge that I do not perceive how the doctrine of endless punishment, or of endless rewards, is to be maintained from Matt. xxv. 46. We must, as far I see, relinquish that important post, and fly to some other source of evidence. We may assert that "the term being applied to the states of the righteous and the wicked *after the day of judgment* requires it to be taken in the sense of endless: but we should be told this is begging the question; the very point at issue being whether every thing that takes place after the day of judgment be endless.

Respecting *baptism*, your correspondent "willingly admits that I might introduce that topic for no other reason than that it appeared to me an apt illustration of the rule I was endeavoring to establish for the interpretation of Scripture, and hopes that I shall as readily give him credit for a proper motive in entering a protest against such an application of my principle." As to *motives*, I had no other than a desire to ascertain what is truth; and I give him credit that such is his. But why must not the princi-

\* *Essay on Understanding*, book iii. chap. 1.

† *Letters to a Universalist*.

† *Letters to Mr. Fuller*, p. 95.

ple in question be applied to pædobaptism as well as other things? He does not mean to suggest, I presume, that this subject is exempted from examination by the courtesy of the country. If the principle be false, or misapplied, I hope we shall be able to discover the fallacy, or wherein the mis-application consists.

Mr. Greatheed calls in question two things: (1) Whether the word βαπτίζω primarily signifies to immerse. (2) If it do, whether this be the *only* meaning that ought to be called in to settle the dispute. With respect to the former, my assertion may, as he observes, be "too comprehensive to be supported by due evidence in your publication." I was aware of this at the time, and therefore referred to Mr. Booth's "Pædobaptism Examined," vol. i. chap. 2, where no fewer than *eighty-two* of the most learned pædobaptists acknowledge the *native primary or proper* meaning of the word to be IMMERSION. Your correspondent, in answer, refers to Dr. Williams's "Antipædobaptism Examined;" and I in reply may refer to Mr. Booth's "Defence." The reader who wishes to examine this subject to the bottom will find, I presume, in these three performances all that is necessary for the purpose.

Your correspondent asks, in the second place, "If the primary meaning of the word βαπτίζω were to immerse, yet why should that be the *only* meaning called in to settle the dispute?" I answer—(1) Because, as Dr. Williams says, "It is not fair, nor agreeable to the just rules of criticism, to interpret the words of an author allusively, improperly, and metaphorically, *except when plain necessity urges.*" Let it but be proved that plain necessity urges the proper meaning of βαπτίζω, when applied to the ordinance of baptism, to be given up in favor of one that is improper, and I consent to call it in. (2) Because, as Mr. Greatheed himself allows, "the primitive sense of a term, *when it can clearly be ascertained*, ought not to be accommodated to any of its figurative applications:" and that it can easily be ascertained in this case is granted in the supposition. All secondary and figurative meanings, therefore, by his own concession, ought to be excluded in the settling of this controversy.

But your correspondent supposes that though the word βαπτίζω should be allowed primarily to mean immersion, yet a secondary or improper sense of the term might be that on which the primitive Christians acted. "Wherefore is it impossible, he asks, that the first Christians should have used the term with as little idea of immersion, even had that been its primary sense, as the Jews had of *greenness*, when they spoke of the month Abib?"—Nothing that I have advanced supposes this to be "impossible."

But it lies upon my friendly opponent to prove that *it must have been so*: otherwise, according to Dr. Williams's and his own acknowledgment, it is "unfair, and contrary to the just rules of criticism," to suppose this to have been the case. I can prove that when the term abib is applied to a month *it must needs be taken in a figurative sense*, as it would involve an absurdity to translate it as in Job viii. 12, by the abstract term *greenness*. Let him prove the same *necessity* for affixing a figurative meaning to βαπτίζω, and his point is gained.

Mr. Greatheed goes farther: he affirms that "when the term βαπτίζω is specifically used for the initiatory ordinance of the gospel dispensation its application *must be admitted to be figurative.*" Indeed! But wherefore? If instead of this assertion, which appears to me to be utterly unfounded, he had given evidence of it, it had been to purpose. Let him but *prove* that the word, when applied to baptism, *requires to be understood in a secondary or improper sense*, or that to understand it properly would involve an absurdity; and, I say again, his point is gained. If he succeed in proving this, however, he will disprove what he says he has "long since been led to apprehend—that its primary meaning is not immersion." I suppose he means *ablution*; for if the primary meaning of βαπτίζω be ablution, and baptism were originally administered by immersion, the term, with respect to that ordinance, must have been applied in its literal, and not in a figurative sense.

Your correspondent intimates that some things in my last tended to "provoke asperity." Nothing was farther from my design: but if, by what I considered a stroke or two of pleasantry, I have excited any such feelings, I sincerely beg his pardon, and will endeavor to avoid every thing of the kind in future. It never was my intention to rank pædobaptists with Universalists or Socinians, in the manner which his note represents; but merely to point out their agreement *in one principle of reasoning*; and I should think, notwithstanding his assertion, he would be sorry to be put to the proof of it.

With respect to the principle of interpretation, he thinks, "nothing is more necessary than to bring into *one point of view* the variations in my manner of stating it." By this it would seem that I have shifted my ground, and in effect conceded the matter in dispute. At first, my statement was thus expressed: "In arguments from the meaning of Scripture terms, it becomes of importance to ascertain the true, primitive, or proper sense, and to measure all secondary and figurative applications by it as a standard." Afterwards, it seems, I *modified* this principle, requiring only that every word be

"taken in its literal, primary, or proper sense, unless there be any thing in the connection or in the subject which *requires* it to be taken otherwise." And, lastly, I am contented with saying, "If we can ascertain what was the obvious meaning of the word *at the time when the author wrote*, we thereby ascertain, to every purpose of just reasoning, what is its primary or proper meaning." Whether any "change has occurred in my judgment on this subject, or whether we have only misunderstood each other," he does not determine; but seems to think that, as to the general principle, we are now nearly agreed.

In answer, I must say, there is no alteration in my judgment: the whole, therefore, must be attributed to misunderstanding. With respect to the *first* statement, it never entered my mind that all words are to be understood literally, or properly; but merely that the literal is the *standard* sense, or that all allusive meanings are to be measured by that to which they allude. But the answers of Mr. Greethead proceed upon the supposition that I was pleading for the primitive sense of the term "being *invariably* adhered to." It is only on this supposition that what was afterwards said could be considered as "a modification of my principle." The truth is, I held no principle that required modifying. I never for a moment thought of maintaining any other idea than that every word should be taken in its literal, primary, or proper sense, unless there be any thing in the subject that requires it to be taken otherwise. In proof of this, I could refer to two pamphlets, of which you know that I approve; and in which this subject is more fully handled than can be expected in these papers.\*

With respect to my *last* "variation," as it is called, it was merely in answer to an *exception which he had made to a general rule*, owing to the difficulty in many cases of ascertaining which is the primitive and which the figurative sense of a word. To this I answered, that where the primitive sense of a word was *lost*, or became uncertain, it was sufficient for all the purposes of just reasoning to consider the *obvious* idea conveyed by it at the time when the author wrote as its primary meaning. But this can have nothing to do with words whose primitive meaning is *not* lost, and therefore nothing to do with the present dispute. The amount of all that I have stated is this:—the primary, literal, or proper meaning of words, is their standard meaning, and that which always ought to be adhered to, *unless* there be any thing in the connection which requires a departure from it; and, should a case occur in which it cannot be clearly decided what was its primitive meaning, it is

sufficient to ascertain what was its obvious meaning at the time when the author wrote.† —In all this I can perceive no "variation" of judgment.

To allow of an expedient, in a particular case, is very different from adopting it as a general rule, where that case does not exist. I have contended, and do still contend, that the primitive meaning of the terms *αιωνικος* and *βητριζω* is not lost; that it can be "clearly ascertained;" and, consequently, that a recourse to the sense in which they are used in the New Testament, *in order to determine it*, is unnecessary, and contrary to fair reasoning. I have no doubt of what would be the issue of an impartial inquiry, even upon that ground; but there is no justice in setting the meaning of a word afloat, when the ordinary methods of decision in all cases have fixed it.

Surely my respected opponent will not deny that the proper meaning of *αιωνος* is "clearly ascertained" to be *always being*, and that of *αιωνικος* to be *everlasting*. Is it not to be lamented, then, that he should undermine the argument against the Universalists from this ground, and endeavor to rest the doctrine of endless punishment on the term *αιωνος* being so "obviously used in the New Testament to denote what is strictly everlasting that he is not aware of any instance in which the connection requires a different sense to be admitted?" Were I a Universalist, I would not wish for a fuller concession by which to overturn his principle. To give up, as he does in effect, the original use of the term antecedently to its being adopted by the apostles, and to rest his faith upon its being *always* applied by them to unlimited duration, is in my opinion, whatever be his design, to betray the truth. A Universalist might reply as follows—You are mistaken, Sir. It is obvious that *αιωνος*, though sometimes used in the endless sense, which we never deny, yet in other places is applied to the temporary existence of the present world, and to the *ages* and *times* of limited duration.—Matt. xiii. 39; xxviii. 20. John ix. 32. Acts iii. 21. 1 Cor. ii. 7. Ephes. iii. 9. Col. i. 26. Heb. i. 2. It is also obvious that *αιωνικος*, though it sometimes means eternal, yet in other places is applied, like *αιωνος*, to limited duration; namely, to the *ages* or *times*, since the beginning of the world.—Rom. xvi. 25. 2 Tim. i. 9. Titus i. 2. comp. with Ephes. i. 4. 1 Pet. i. 20. See Parkhurst. What

† Chambers, in his Cyclopedia, says, under the word *proper*, "In respect of words, it denotes their immediate and peculiar signification, or that which is directly or peculiarly attached to them; in which sense the word stands opposed to figurative and metaphorical." And Barclay, under the word *figure*, says, "In rhetoric, any mode of speaking by which words are used in a sense different from their primary and literal meaning." MS. Note by Mr. Fuller.

\* *Letters to Mr. Vidler*, Letter vi. *Scrutator's Review*, Letters vii. xi.



proof therefore is there of the endless duration of future punishment from the use of these terms, which are generic, including all degrees of duration, unlimited and limited?

To this reasoning I should reply by granting that the obvious design of these terms, in certain connections, is to express the idea of an *age* or *ages*; but that it is not their primary, literal, or proper meaning, and therefore ought not to be applied to the duration of future punishment, *unless* there were something in that subject, as there is in the others, which rendered the literal meaning inadmissible. But how my opponent could answer the objection, upon *his principles*, it remains for him to show. To me it appears that, by his method of reasoning, we should always be at sea, and without a compass; able to prove scarcely any divine truth from the words by which it is expressed, inasmuch as almost all words are used in more senses than one. I wish he would carefully and candidly read "Scrutator's" seventh and eleventh Letters on this subject.\*

Mr. Greatheed, as if to depreciate the primary sense of the term *αιωνος*, speaks of its being "invented by the heathens," and thinks that I cannot believe it to have been "created or revealed." I question whether any language, dead or living, can be proved to have had its origin in human invention. The account of the origin of all languages appears to be given in the eleventh chapter of Genesis; and all that men have done seems to have been to modify, compound, and change them into different forms. But, whatever was the origin of this and other terms, they were adopted by the Holy Spirit as the medium of conveying divine truth; and, if the sacred writers meant to be understood, they must, one would think, have used them in the ordinary acceptation in which they were used by those who spoke and wrote in the Greek language. That they applied them to new objects is true; but it does not follow that they changed their meaning. In the writings of Aristotle, *αιων* properly means *always being*, no less than in the epistles of Paul. †

"Upon the same ground," says Mr. Greatheed, "I have formed my judgment of the terms *βπτισμα* and *βπτισμος*. In whatever sense the heathens, who invented these terms, may have used them, it appears to me that the writers of the New Testament apply them so constantly to the signification of *a sacred cleansing* that I am not aware of an instance in which the connection requires a different sense to be ad-

mitted. I therefore consider this the obvious meaning of those words at the time, and in the circumstances in which the authors wrote." On this passage I would offer the following remarks:—

1. My worthy opponent is sufficiently aware that *βπτισμα* was used originally by the Greek writers to express immersion. But they were "heathens!" † And will he affirm that the word was so applied by heathens only? Did not the Septuagint translators of the Old Testament, and Josephus, so apply it? If proofs of this be called for, they will be produced.

2. The word *βπτω*, from whence *βπτισμα* is derived, it will not be denied, is used in the New Testament for immersion. Thus in John xiii. 26. "He it is to whom I shall give a sop when I have *dipped* it." Luke xvi. 24, "Send Lazarus, that he may *dip* the tip of his finger in water." Rev. xix. 13. "He was clothed with a vesture *dipped* in blood." In these sentences there is no idea of "cleansing" of any kind; and, in the last, the reverse of it.

3. Dr. Williams, to whose work Mr. Greatheed refers us, allows, and says, "*It is universally agreed among the learned that both βπτω and βπτισμα etymologically, and according to their radical, primary, and proper meaning, are justly rendered by the words tingo and mergo, to tinge or plunge.*" § But every one knows that to *tinge* is the opposite of to cleanse. One would think that this acknowledgment were sufficient to settle the meaning of the word. And, as Dr. Williams elsewhere says, it is "neither fair, nor agreeable to the just rules of criticism, to interpret the words of an author allusively, improperly, or metaphorically, except when plain necessity urges;" it must lie on him and his brethren, before they plead for any thing short of immersion being Christian baptism, to prove that the primitive sense of the term in this instance involves an absurdity, and therefore that a secondary one requires to be admitted.

4. The term *baptism*, as applied to the sufferings of Christ, conveys a full idea of immersion, but none of "cleansing."

5. That water baptism, which is the Christian ordinance, generally includes the idea of "cleansing," may be allowed; but it is only in a secondary or consequential sense, as he that is immersed in water is thereby cleansed. *Cleansing*, in water baptism, is that which its opposite, *staining*, is in a vesture being dipped in blood: it is not

† Mr. G., in alleging "that according to my statement the Scriptures are not sufficient to determine the meaning of words, without going among the heathens," might as well have said, "That the grace of God is sufficient to make a Christian, without being indebted to nature in first making him a man."

§ *Antipædobaptism Examined*, vol. ii. p. 30.

\* *Letters to a Universalist*: by Rev. Charles Jerram.

† *Fuller's Letters to Vidler*, pp. 53, 54, Note.

the thing itself, but its necessary effect. Such is the idea conveyed in Acts xxii. 16: "Be baptized, and wash away thy sins." To render the first of these terms *cleansed*, would make the sacred writer utter a mere tautology.

"If the apostles used the term βαπτισμος merely for immersion, then, it is said, every person who has been immersed, whether for health, diversion, or punishment, is a baptized person." True, he is so, though not with *Christian* baptism.

"But if something more than simple immersion is meant, when the apostles speak of the baptism of their converts, and yet the primary and proper meaning is nothing but immersion, then the apostles used that term in a secondary or figurative sense when they applied it to the initiatory ordinance of the Christian dispensation." If there be "no flaw" in this argument, Mr. Greatheed thinks his point is gained. I think there is a flaw in it, and that it lies in confounding the *act* with the *end* or the design to be answered by it. An act, say that of *eating*, may be one and the same, *whatever be the end of it*; whether refreshment, or a showing forth of the Lord's death. Nor is the term designed to express any thing more than the act: the *design* is to be learned from other terms connected with it, and not from that. To represent different ends as giving a secondary or figurative meaning to the term which expresses the action is what I apprehended no writer ever thought of on any other subject. At this rate, if I be said to *walk*, simply, or without an end, the term is literal; if for health, or to see a friend, it becomes figurative; and if to meditate and pray, like Isaac, it becomes still more figurative! The truth is, if I be not greatly mistaken, to baptize, to eat, or to walk, is each expressive of the action, *whatever be the end*; and the term is no less literally used in the one case than in the other.

The last argument of Mr. Greatheed's proceeds upon a principle which should not have been taken for granted; namely, that βαπτισμος signifies *any sacred cleansing*. The divers baptisms among the Jews (to which the word βαπτισμος, by the way, is applied, rather than to the Christian ordinance) may relate not to divers *modes* of baptizing, but to the divers *cases* in which persons and things were required to be immersed in water, and which cases were numerous and diverse. Thus, or to this effect, it is expressed by Grotius. Were I to speak of *divers* journeys, which my worthy friend has undertaken, to promote the interest of evangelical religion, it would indeed imply some kind of difference between them; but it were putting an unnatural force upon the words to understand

them as intimating that in every journey he adopted a different *mode* of travelling.

#### ON THE IMMACULATE LIFE OF CHRIST.

THE character and work of Christ form a very considerable part of the gospel embassy. The attention of Christians in all ages has been deservedly drawn towards this important subject. His God-head, his manhood, his miraculous conception, his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession at the right hand of God, are topics each of them full of the richest consolation to believers. There is nothing pertaining to Christ which is uninteresting. It has lately struck my mind that the immaculate life of Christ is a subject that has not been insisted on, in our sermons and bodies of divinity, in proportion to its importance in the evangelical scheme. The thoughts which I have to offer upon this subject will be contained in *two parts*. In the first, I shall take a view of the evidences with which it is supported; and, in the second, consider its connection with the truth of Christianity, and some of its leading principles.

THE EVIDENCES by which the immaculate life of our Lord Jesus Christ is supported are as follows:—

First: *His friends, who knew the most of him, and who wrote his life, describe him as without fault*. The characters of men are often best esteemed by those who know the least of them. Like works of art, they will not bear a close inspection; but those who were most conversant with Jesus beheld his glory, and loved him best. Peter tells us, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He describes him as "a lamb without spot." Paul speaks of him as being "made sin for us, who knew no sin." John teaches that "he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him was no sin:" and the whole company of the disciples, in their address to God, speak of him as his "holy child Jesus."—Acts iv. 27. It is true, some of the evangelists do not make express mention of his perfect innocence; but they all write his life as faultless. There is not a shade of imperfection that attaches to his character, from the beginning to the end of their accounts of him. This evidence derives peculiar weight from the evident impartiality of those writers in other cases; they do not hide each other's faults, nor even their own. The imperfections of the apostles, during Christ's life upon earth, were numerous, and, in some cases, affecting; yet they narrate them with the greatest sincerity. Even those faults which are most degrading to dignity of character, and the most mortifying to reflect upon, they never

affect to conceal. They tell of their little foolish contests for superiority, of their carnality in desiring an earthly kingdom, and of their cowardice in forsaking their Lord and Master in the hour of extremity; but never do they suggest any thing to his disadvantage.

Secondly: *His worst enemies have never been able to substantiate a single charge against him.* Though our friends have the greatest advantages of knowing us, yet it may be alleged they are partial, and that the scrutiny of an adversary is most likely to discover our imperfections. Be it so: it is to the glory of Christ's character that it will bear the test of both. A public challenge was given to the Jews, his most inveterate enemies, to accuse him of sin (John viii. 46); and not one of them dared to accept it. That which adds peculiar weight to this evidence is the circumstance that Christ had just before inveighed against them with the keenest severity: "Ye are of your father the devil," said he, "and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a liar from the beginning;" and, "because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." Under such charges from him, if there had been any shadow of a ground for accusation, they would most certainly have seized it. The apostles gave nearly a similar challenge on behalf of their Lord, as he had given for himself. They taxed their countrymen with having "denied the Holy One and the Just, and preferred a murderer before him." How are we to account for the silence of these adversaries? It was not for want of will; it must, therefore, be for want of power.

But there were some who, in the lifetime of Jesus, did accuse him. They said "He is a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." They insinuated that he was *ambitious*. Jesus having declared, saying, "I am the light of the world," they answered, "Thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true;" and the same objection is repeated by a modern Jewish writer.\* They also charged him with blasphemy in that he, being a man, made himself God; and for this supposed blasphemy they put him to death. To the former part of these charges it may be answered that they who preferred them do not appear to have believed them: if they had, they would have made use of them, especially when challenged to *accuse our Lord of sin*. As to the latter part of them, I acknowledge, were I to embrace any system of Christianity which leaves out the proper deity of Christ, I should be unable to vindicate him. Either his words did mean what the Jews understood him to mean, or they did not. If they did, upon every hypothesis which excludes his proper deity, he was a blasphemer; if

they did not, he ought explicitly, and with abhorrence, to have rejected the idea of making himself God;—but, if I admit that he really was *God manifest in the flesh*, all these objections fall to the ground.

It is worthy of notice that modern unbelievers are not very eager to attack the moral character of Christ. Through all their writings, full of railing accusations on every other subject, one cannot but remark a cautious reserve upon this. Mr. Paine, who in a talent of the highest importance to the cause of infidelity—I mean impudence—has had but few equals, even Mr. Paine declines this part of the business. Amidst all his rancor against revelation, he seems disposed to follow the advice of Pilate's wife, to "have nothing to do with that just man." "Nothing," he observes in his 'Age of Reason,' "which is here said, can apply even with the most distant disrespect to the *real* character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practised was of the most benevolent kind." Whether Mr. Paine can, consistently with these concessions, reject the evangelical history, we shall by and by inquire; suffice it at present to observe that though he disowns Jesus to be the Son of God, yet he ranks among the witnesses in favor of his moral character. But can it be true, we may be tempted to ask, that Mr. Paine, that determined adversary to Christianity, should have made such a concession in favor of Christ? "*Is Saul also among the prophets?*" It is even so; nor let it appear a matter of surprise: the father of lies himself was constrained to unite in this truth: "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

Thirdly: *Christ himself, who best knew his own heart, and who never was known to boast, bore witness of himself that he was free from sin.* Not only did he challenge his most inveterate enemies, saying, "Which of you accuseth me of sin?" but declared, what no other man did or could, that he always did those things which pleased God; that there was "no unrighteousness in him;" that when the prince of this world should come he should "find nothing in him;" and that he was "meek and lowly in heart," a perfect model for his followers to imitate, and into whose *image* they were predestinated to be conformed. If it be objected, in the words of the ancient Jews, "He beareth record of himself, his record is not true,"—it might be answered in the words of Jesus, "Though he bare record of himself, yet his record is true; for he knew whence and what he was;" and, as he was never known to deal in empty boasting, his testimony has great weight.

Fourthly: *The temptations that our Lord underwent, instead of drawing him aside, displayed his character to greater advantage.*

\* Mr. Levi.



Seasons of temptation in the lives of men, even of good men, are commonly dark seasons, and leave behind them sad evidences of their imperfection. It was not without reason that our Lord cautioned us to pray, saying, "Lead us not into temptation." There are but few, if any instances, in which we enter the field of contest and come off without a wound; but, to our Redeemer, temptation was the pathway to glory. There was nothing in him on which it could fasten: its arrows, therefore, rebounded upon the head of the tempter. "In all points he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He underwent the trials of poverty and want. He was often hungry and thirsty, and "had not where to lay his head;" yet he bore it without repining; he wrought miracles to satisfy the wants and alleviate the miseries of others; but for himself, strictly speaking, he wrought no miracle. It was upon this ground that Satan first accosted him: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread:" q. d.—Would I, having all creation at command, know the want of a piece of bread?—But this temptation was repelled in a manner that discovered his heart to be wholly devoted to the will of God. Our Lord had also temptations of another kind; he had worldly honors offered him. Not only did Satan present to him "all the kingdoms of the world," but the Jewish populace would have *made him a king*, even *by force*, if he had not withdrawn himself. If Jesus had possessed the least degree of worldly ambition, there were arguments enough to have induced him to comply with the popular desire. They had no king but Cæsar, and he was a tyrannic invader, who had just as much right in Judea as the empress of Russia and the king of Prussia in Poland. If the virtue of Jesus had resembled that of the great sages of Grecian and Roman antiquity, he would have embraced this opportunity, and his name might have been enrolled in the annals of fame. Their pride was to be patriots; but that which they called patriotism was abhorrent to the spirit of Christ. He possessed too much philanthropy to enter into national prejudices and antipathies: though the deliverance of his country from the Roman yoke might have been doing a great national justice, and, in this view, very lawful for some persons to have undertaken, yet he declined it; for it made no part of that all-important design for which he came into the world. He was *doing a great work, and therefore could not come down*.

As his last sufferings drew on, his devotedness to God, and his disinterested love to men, appeared more and more conspicuous. He incurred the displeasure of the Samaritans by *steadfastly setting his face to go up to Jerusalem*, even though he knew what would follow upon it. Under the prospect of his

sufferings he prayed, saying, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I to this hour. Father, glorify thy name." Never, surely, was such a flood of tenderness poured forth as that which follows in his last discourse to his disciples, and in his concluding prayer for them. Follow him to the Jewish and Roman tribunals, and witness his meekness and patience. "When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. There are two kinds of characters which are common among men,—oppressive tyrants, and cringing sycophants. The first are lords, the last are slaves; but the character given of Christ shows that he was neither the one nor the other. "He did no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth." Though the Lord and Master of his disciples, he was among them as their servant; and, when brought before Herod and Pilate, he betrayed no signs of fear; but amidst their blustering, imperious, and scornful treatment, maintained a dignified silence.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." Throughout his sufferings he manifested the tenderest concern for sinners, and even for his murderers. "The same night in which he was betrayed" he was employed in providing for us, by instituting the sacred supper; and as he hung upon the cross, and beheld his enemies, he prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!"

Let not fastidious infidelity object his want of *fortitude* in the garden; or, rather, let it object, and make the most it can of the objection. It is true "his soul was troubled;" it is true he prayed, saying, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! That is, he discovered what, among men of the most refined sense, are always accounted "the amiable weaknesses of human nature." Is it an honor under affliction to carry it off or affect to carry it off, with a high hand? Rather, is it not an honor to feel the hand of God in it, and to acknowledge that we feel it? And if, amidst these feelings, we be in "subjection to the Father of spirits"—if, while we mourn, we do not murmur—this is the highest degree of perfection of which human nature is capable. Such was the spirit of our Redeemer, and such the conclusion of his prayer in the garden: "Not my will, but thine be done."

That our blessed Lord was not deficient in *real fortitude* is manifest from his conduct during his trial and crucifixion. He feared God, and put up strong cries, and was heard in that he feared; but he feared not men. There his spirit shrunk under the weight:

but here he is firm as a rock. The principal engines with which he was attacked from men were *pain* and *disgrace*. By the former they deprived him of life, and by the latter they hoped to wound his reputation, and cover his name with eternal infamy: but neither the one nor the other could divert him from his course: "He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

By the misgivings of Christ's human nature in the garden, together with his firmness before men, we are furnished with very important instructions. From thence we learn that the most dreadful parts of his sufferings were not those which proceeded from men, but those which came immediately from the hand of God. This agrees with what is implied in that pathetic exclamation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He could have borne the rest, but this was worse than death! How can this agree with any other idea of the death of Christ than that of his being a substitute for sinners? Upon no other principle can his agony in the garden, or his exclamation upon the cross, be fairly accounted for. From hence also we learn the absolute necessity of Christ's death for our salvation. If it had been possible for the great designs of mercy to have been accomplished without his being made a propitiation for our sins, there is every reason to suppose that his request for an exemption would have been granted.

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In a former paper I considered the *evidences* of the immaculate life of Christ; in this I shall inquire into its *importance*, as it stands connected with the truth of Christianity itself, and of some of its most interesting branches.

First: *If the life of our Lord Jesus Christ was immaculate, it must go a great way towards proving the truth of the gospel which he taught, and of that religion which he inculcated.* If Jesus Christ was "a virtuous and an amiable man," as Mr. Paine himself acknowledges, he must have been what he professed to be—the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. To allege, as this writer does, that "Christ wrote no account of himself—that the history of him is altogether the work of other people," is mere trifling. If the history that is written of him is undeserving of credit, how came Mr. Paine to know any thing about either the amiableness of his character or the excellence of that morality which he preached and practised? He knows nothing of either the one or the other but through the medium of the evangelical history; and, if he admit this history in one case, with what consistency can he reject it in another?

Mr. Paine affects to rank Christianity with other religions—with heathenism and Maho-

medism, calling the New-testament writers "The Christian mythologists;" but what founder or teacher of any religion will he resort to whose character will bear any comparison with that of Christ? Among the sages of antiquity, or the teachers of what is called the *religion of nature*, there is not one to be found whose life will bear a thorough scrutiny. Natural religion itself must be ashamed of its advocates: and, as to Mahomet, there is scarcely any thing in his character but a combination of ambition, brutality, and lust, at the sight of which nature itself revolts. "Go," says an eloquent writer, "to your natural religion: lay before her Mahomet and his disciples, arrayed in armor of blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands and ten thousands, who fell by his victorious sword. Show her the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravished and destroyed, and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of the earth. When she has viewed him in this scene, carry her into his retirements. Show her the prophet's chambers, his concubines, and his wives; let her see his adultery, and hear him allege revelation and his divine commission to justify his lust and his oppression. When she is tired of this prospect, then show her the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men, patiently instructing both the ignorant and the perverse. Let her see him in his most retired privacies. Let her follow him to the Mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God. Carry her to his table, to view his poor fare, and hear his heavenly discourse. Let her see him injured, not provoked. Let her attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the scoff and the reproach of his enemies. Lead her to the cross, and let her view him in the agonies of death, and hear his last prayer for his persecutors, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!"

"When natural religion has viewed both, ask which is the prophet of God? But her answer we have already had, when she saw part of this scene through the eyes of the centurion who attended at his cross: by him she spoke, and said, "Truly this man was the Son of God."\*

To admit the amiableness of Christ's moral character, and yet reject the evangelical history of him, is choosing a very untenable ground. The history which the evangelists have given of Christ evinces its own authenticity. A character so drawn is a proof of its having really existed, and of those who drew it possessing a mind congenial with it. If Christ had not been that immaculate character which they represent, they could not have so described him. It

\* *Bishop Sherlock's Sermons*, Vol. I. pp. 270, 271.

is not in the power of man to invent any thing like it; the imagination of impostors, especially, would have been utterly unequal to the task; such a picture could not have been drawn without an original corresponding with it. Writers of fiction have often produced wonderful characters; they have emblazoned their heroes with extraordinary charms, but they are charms of a different kind from what Jesus possessed. The beauties of holiness are not to be collected, in the manner in which the sacred writers have collected them, by the power of imagination; and, as the existence of the picture implies the reality of the original, so also it proves the congeniality of mind possessed by those who drew it. Let the moral character of Christ have been ever so fair, a set of impostors could not possibly have drawn it in the manner in which it is drawn; for this, it was necessary that it should be not only observed, but felt, and loved, and imitated. If Judas had written a history of Christ, it would have been a very different one from those which are transmitted to us, even though it had been of a piece with his confession, "I have betrayed innocent blood."

I am not inclined to call Mr. Paine, what he calls the sacred writers, either *fool* or *liar*; but methinks it were no great labor to prove him to be both. It certainly was no mark of *wisdom* in him to acknowledge Christ to be "an amiable character, and that he taught and practised morality of the most benevolent kind," in an attempt to overturn Christianity; and the flagrant manner in which he has *belied* the sacred writers must be manifest to every one that is in the least acquainted with them, and will take the trouble to compare them with what he has asserted concerning them.

Secondly: From the purity of Christ's character arises an important part of his fitness for his undertaking; without this he could not have been a *priest*, a *sacrifice*, or a *mediator*. It was necessary that the priests of Aaron's order should be "without blemish," and their sacrifices "without spot."—Lev. xxi. 21. Numb. xxvii. 3, 9, 11. This purity, it is true, was of a ceremonial kind, but it was typical of that which was moral; for in reference to this it is said of Christ, that "such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.—We are redeemed, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.—He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The priests under the law were but ceremonially clean; they needed "daily to offer up sacrifices, first for their own sins, and then for the people's:" but Christ "offered himself once without spot to God," and thereby "perfected forever them that are sanctifi-

ed." A polluted being might endure the demerit of sin, as the ungodly actually will; but he cannot make atonement for it, so as to "make an end" of it. The world might have borne its own iniquity, but it is the "Lamb of God" only that can "bear it away." And as it was an important part of the priestly office to mediate, and make intercession for the people, so Christ is our mediator and intercessor before the throne: "With his blood he entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." This mediation is founded upon his sacrifice; and the acceptableness of the former depends upon his spotless purity equally with the latter. A mediator could in no case be admitted to plead in behalf of a criminal, unless he himself were innocent. Had Moses been guilty of idolatry at Horeb, he could not have mediated on behalf of Israel. Our "advocate with the Father is Jesus Christ the righteous." Though he mingled with sinners, yet he must be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from them; and though he pleaded for sinners, yet he must not extenuate their sin, but condemn it without reserve, and justify the righteous government of God, by which it was threatened with destruction. It was on this account that the mediation of Christ was so highly acceptable to God, and so gloriously successful, that he gave him the desire of his heart. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness, above thy fellows."

Thirdly: From the spotless purity of Christ's character arises his fitness to be the great *exemplar* after which we should be formed, and which it should be our daily practice to imitate. God hath "predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son." Jesus saith to the weary and heavy laden, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." One great object of the Holy Spirit is to "glorify Christ;" and this he doth, not only by "receiving of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us; but by working, as I may say, by his spotless life as a model, and forming our souls into a resemblance of it. And, as the Holy Spirit "glorifieth Christ" in his operations upon us, so also must we glorify him by voluntarily copying after his example.

The nature of man is such that he requires an example before his eyes. We all feel a strong propensity to imitation: Hence the danger of evil, and the benefit of good company: and hence the superior effect of example, in ministers and heads of families, to mere precept. But where shall a suitable example be found? God is too much above us: our weak souls cannot look



steadfastly at his glory. With angels we have but little or no acquaintance; and men, even the best of them, are stained with imperfections, which it would be dangerous to imitate. If we had been predestinated to be conformed to the image of the best merely human character, we should never "appear faultless before the presence of the divine glory." Whatever imperfections attend us in the present state, we require a perfect model, otherwise we shall never attain perfection in any state. The example of Christ is the only one that is adapted to our circumstances. In his face the glory of God is seen, without the eye of the mind being dazzled with its overwhelming lustre. In his character there is every thing to love, and in conforming to it nothing to fear. Happy are the men who are found "followers of the Lamb whithersoever he goeth!"

### ON THE DEITY OF CHRIST.

#### THE DEITY OF CHRIST ESSENTIAL TO ATONEMENT.

THE doctrine of atonement by the death of Christ is one of the great and distinguishing principles of the gospel, and its importance is acknowledged by most denominations of professing Christians: yet there are some who suppose that this doctrine is not necessarily connected with the divinity of Christ; and, indeed, that it is inconsistent with it. It has been objected that according to the Scriptures it was the *person* of Christ that suffered; but that this is inconsistent with his divinity, because divinity could not suffer. To which it may be answered that though the *person* of Christ suffered, yet that he suffered in *all that pertains to his person* is quite another thing. A great and virtuous character among men might suffer death by the axe or the guillotine, and this would be suffering death in his person; and yet he might not suffer in his honor or in his character, and so not in all that pertained to him. A Christian might suffer martyrdom in his body, and yet his soul be very happy. To object, therefore, that Christ did not suffer in his person, because all that pertained to him was not the immediate seat of suffering, is reasoning very inconclusively. It is sufficient if Christ suffered in that part of his person which was susceptible of suffering.

It has been objected that, as humanity only is capable of suffering, therefore humanity only is necessary to make atonement. But this objection proceeds upon the supposition that the value of atonement arises simply from suffering, and not from the character or dignity of him who suffers: whereas the Scripture places it in the latter, and not the former. "The blood of Jesus

Christ, *his Son*, cleanseth us from all sin."—He, "*by himself*, hath purged our sins."—Some, who have allowed sin to be an infinite evil, and deserving of endless punishment, have objected to the necessity of an infinite atonement, by alleging that the question is not what sin *deserves*, but what God *requires* in order to exalt the dignity of his government, while he displays the riches of his grace in the forgiveness of sin. But this objection implies that it would be consistent with the divine perfections to admit, not only what is equivalent to the actual punishment of the sinner, but of what is *not* equivalent: and, if so, what good reason can be given why God might not have entirely dispensed with a satisfaction, and pardoned sinners without any atonement? On this principle, the atonement of Christ would be resolved into mere sovereign appointment, and the *necessity* of it would be wholly given up. But, if so, there was nothing *required* in the nature of things to exalt the dignity of the divine government, whilst he displayed the riches of his grace; and it could not with propriety be said that "*it became Him*, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

If God required less than the real demerit of sin for an atonement, then there could be no *satisfaction* made to divine justice by such an atonement. And, though it would be improper to represent the great work of redemption as a kind of commercial transaction betwixt a creditor and his debtor, yet the satisfaction of justice in all cases of offence requires that *there be an expression of the displeasure of the offended against the conduct of the offender, equal to what the nature of the offence is in reality*. The end of punishment is not the misery of the offender, but the general good. Its design is to express displeasure against disobedience: and, where punishment is inflicted according to the desert of the offence, there justice is satisfied. In other words, such an expression of displeasure is uttered by the lawgiver, that, in it, every subject of his empire may read what are his views of the evil which he forbids, and what are his determinations in regard to its punishment. If sinners had received in their own persons the reward of their iniquity, justice would in that way have been satisfied: and if the infinitely blessed God, "whose ways are higher than our ways, and whose thoughts are higher than our thoughts," has devised an expedient for our salvation, though he may not confine himself to a *literal* conformity to those rules of justice which he has marked out for us, yet he will be certain not to depart from the *spirit* of them. Justice must be satisfied even in that way. An atonement made by a substitute, in any case, requires that the *same end* be answered by it as if the guilty party had

actually suffered. It is necessary that the displeasure of the offended should be expressed in as strong terms, or in a way adapted to make as strong an impression upon all concerned as if the law had taken its course: otherwise *atonement* is not made, and mercy triumphs at the expense of righteousness.

Let it be inquired then whether *this great end* of moral government could have been answered by the sufferings of a mere creature. Some who deny the divinity of Christ appear to be apprehensive that it could not, and have therefore supposed that God, in order, it should seem, to bring it within the compass of a creature's grasp, required less of his Son than our sins deserved. It is true indeed, if Christ be only a creature, it must be less, infinitely less, that was accepted, than what was strictly deserved. In the atonement of Christ God is said to have "*set him forth* to be a propitiation—to *declare his righteousness* for the remission of sins." Now this as well as the nature of things, implies that one who makes an atonement must be of so much account in the scale of being as to *attract the general attention*. But the sufferings of a mere man, whose obedience could be no more than duty, or whose humiliation contained in it no condescension below the place that became him, would be no more adapted to excite the general attention of the intelligent creation than the sufferings of an insect would be to attract the attention of a nation. It were as rational to talk of the king of Great Britain setting forth a worm tortured on the point of a needle, to *DECLARE* his regard to righteousness, while he pardoned the deluded votaries of the Pretender, as to talk of a mere creature being set forth as a propitiation for the *DECLARATION* of the righteousness of God in the remission of human guilt.

To suppose, because humanity only is capable of suffering, that therefore humanity only is necessary to make atonement, is to render *dignity of character* of no account. When Zaleucus, one of the Grecian kings, had made a law against adultery, that whosoever was guilty of this crime should lose both his eyes, his own son is said to have been the first transgressor. To preserve the honor of the law, and at the same time to save his own son from total blindness, the father had recourse to an expedient of losing one of his own eyes, and his son one of his. This expedient, though it did not conform to the letter of the law, yet was well adapted to preserve the spirit of it, as it served to evince to the nation the determination of the king to punish adultery, as much, perhaps more than if the sentence had literally been put into execution against the offender. But if instead of this he had appointed that one eye of an animal should be put out, in order to save that of his son, or if

a common subject had offered to lose an eye, would either have answered the purpose? The animal, and the subject, were each possessed of an eye, as well as the sovereign. It might be added, too, that it was mere bodily pain; and, seeing it was in the body only that this penalty could be endured, any being that possessed a body would be equally capable of enduring it. True, they might endure it, but would their suffering have answered the same end? Would it have satisfied justice? Would it have had the same effect upon the nation, or tended equally to restore the tone of injured authority?

Some have placed all the virtue of the atonement in the *appointment* of God. But, if so, why was it "*not possible* that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin?" It does not accord with the divine proceedings to be prodigal of blood, especially in a superior character, where one far inferior might answer the same end. When, in order to try Abraham, Isaac was bound, and ready to be sacrificed, a lamb was found for a burnt-offering: and if any gift from the divine Father, short of that of his only-begotten Son, would have answered the great purposes of moral government, there is no reason to think that he would have made him a sacrifice, but would have *spared him*, and not *freely* have "*delivered him up* for us all."

It has been objected, against the necessity of Christ's being a divine person in order to his making atonement, that, if he who makes atonement be infinite, it must needs be followed by the salvation of the whole human race. But this objection supposes that the number of the saved is to be proportioned to the ability of the Saviour: and then it would seem that Christ being a mere man, he saved all that his finite merit would extend to. With just as much propriety might it be alleged that the power by which we were created could not be infinite; for, if it had, there must then have been an infinite number of worlds in existence. And the wisdom and goodness by which we are saved cannot be infinite; for, if so, all the world, and the fallen angels too, would be interested in that salvation.

In short, the deity and atonement of Christ have always, among thinking people, stood or fallen together; and with them almost every other important doctrine of the gospel. The person of Christ is the foundation-stone on which the church is built. An error, therefore, on this subject affects the whole of our preaching, and the whole of our religion. In the esteem of the apostle Paul, that which nullified the *death of Christ* was accounted to be *another gospel*; and he expressed his wish that those who propagated it, and so troubled the churches, were *cut off*. The principle maintained by the Galatians, it is true, did not consist in a de-

nial of the deity of Christ; but the consequence is the same. They taught that justification was by the works of the law, from whence the apostle justly inferred that "Christ is dead in vain." And he who teaches that Christ is a mere creature holds a doctrine which renders his sufferings of none effect. If the deity of Christ be a divine truth, it cannot reasonably be denied that it is of equal importance with the doctrine of justification by his righteousness. If therefore a rejection of the latter was deemed a *perversion of the gospel*, nothing less can be ascribed to the rejection of the former.

DEITY OF CHRIST ESSENTIAL TO OUR CALLING ON HIS NAME AND TRUSTING IN HIM FOR SALVATION.

THERE are some doctrines of greater importance than others, and which may properly be termed fundamental truths. Whatever difficulty may attend the specification of those doctrines, it will not be found more difficult than a distinct enumeration of those christian graces which are essential to true religion. The precise degree of holiness necessary to salvation is not more easily to be defined than the degree of truth to be believed; yet no one can doubt that a certain degree of truth and holiness is essential to Christianity.

The importance of a principle must be determined by the relation it bears to other principles and duties of religion. Truth is a system, though it is not taught in the Scriptures in a systematic form. The gospel is not a mass of discordant sentiments, but possesses a lovely proportion, a beautiful analogy.—Rom. xii. 6. The oracles of God contain their "first principles" (Heb. v. 12,) which suppose a scheme or system of principles. To show the importance of the doctrine of the resurrection, the apostle proceeds to prove that it involves in it the resurrection of Christ, and that this involves in it the truth of Christianity.—I Cor. xv. 13—15. There is no part of the works of God but what bears a relation to the great system. The infinitely wise God does nothing in a loose, unconnected, or inharmonious form: connection and consistency run through all his works. And it would be strange if redemption, the greatest of all his works, were accomplished without a plan, or without a system. But, if the work itself form a complete system, just conceptions of it will be the same: otherwise our conceptions must be at variance with truth.

It is from this consideration that a denial of one divine truth generally leads on to the denial of many others. It is by the gospel as it is by the moral law: "to offend in one point is to be guilty of all." You cannot

break any command, without violating the authority of the law-giver; and, this being once violated, there are no bounds where to stop. "He that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. And if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art a transgressor of the law." The same principle which leads thee to despise the divine authority in one instance would lead thee to do the same in all, as occasion might offer. It is much the same in reference to evangelical truth: we cannot reject one part of it, especially if that part be amongst its fundamental principles, without either rejecting or becoming less attached to the rest.

At present there are two things which offer themselves to our consideration, in reference to the Deity of Christ; each of which, while it tends to confirm the truth of the doctrine, exhibits its importance. The one is, Calling on the name of the Lord Jesus: the other is, Trusting in him for salvation. These are of importance, or there is nothing in Christianity which is so: but a denial of the Deity of Christ would render them both improper, if not impracticable.

Calling on the name of the Lord Jesus is considered, in the New Testament, as of equal importance with believing in him, having the same promise of salvation annexed to it—"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." And seeing it is asked, "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" (Rom. x. 13, 14) it is strongly intimated that all who truly believe in Christ do call upon him. This is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the primitive Christians. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians was addressed to them, in connection with "all who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."—1 Cor. i. 2. Now as a rejection of the divinity of Christ renders it idolatry to worship him, or call upon his name; so it must involve a rejection of that by which primitive Christians were distinguished, and which has the promise of salvation. And, where these things are rejected, there is no longer any possibility of Christian union: for how can those who consider Christ to be a mere man join in the worship of such as are employed in calling upon his name, and ascribing "blessing and honor, and glory and power, unto the Lamb for ever!"—Rev. v. 13. If there were no objection on the part of Trinitarians, there ought to be on the part of Arians and Socinians, to render their conduct consistent.\* If we be guilty of idolatry, they ought to come out from amongst us, and be separate,

\* A certain Socinian is known to have declined taking any part in the family worship of a Trinitarian, and gave this reason for it: That he could not unite with those who call upon the name of Christ.



as the Scriptures command Christians to do with respect to idolaters.—2 Cor. vi. 16, 17. But, if they be so indifferent about the importance of religious principle as not to scruple such matters, there is no reason that we should be the same; and we have no warrant to acknowledge those as fellow-Christians who come not under the description given of such in the New Testament; that is, who call *not* upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Trusting in Christ for salvation is represented in the gospel as equivalent, and of equal importance, with believing in him.—“In his name shall the gentiles trust.”—“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day.”—Matt. xii. 21; 2 Tim. i. 12. But trusting in Christ must be intimately connected with a belief in his proper deity. Without this, all committing of ourselves to him, and trusting in his ability to keep that which we have committed to him, would be placing confidence in an arm of flesh; and would bring down the curse upon us, instead of the blessing. God has expressly appropriated trust to himself alone, and prohibited our placing it in a mere creature. “Thus saith the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.”—“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.”—Jer. xvii. 5, 7.

Every creature is entirely dependent on the Creator, and is totally incompetent to answer the character of a Saviour, especially with respect to that salvation which mankind need. That there may exist a proper foundation for trust, the character of a Saviour must unite omnipresent and omnipotent power, to control every intelligent creature, and every particle of matter in the universe, and render every thing subservient to the great purposes of salvation. Omniscient understanding, to know perfectly, and at all times, their hearts, their dangers, and their wants. Infinite wisdom, to select unerringly, from an infinite number, of supposable schemes, for the accomplishment of the great object, that which is best, both with respect to the end, and the infinitude of antecedent means. Absolute immutability, to prosecute invariably the same designs; and infinite love, to rise above millions of provocations, and embrace perpetually the same good.

That scheme, therefore, which denies Christ to be possessed of these divine prerogatives, and considers him as a mere dependent creature, leaves no ground for its abettors to trust unreservedly and ultimately in him for salvation; for, according to their principles, Christ cannot be an adequate object of trust.

Those who deny the divinity of Christ

may plead that they confide in the *truth* of his declarations; but they might also confide in the declarations of Peter or Paul, seeing that their testimony is equally true. But to commit our souls into their hands would be unwarrantable and presumptuous; and it would be equally so to commit them into the hands of Christ, if he were a mere creature like them. To deny his proper divinity, therefore, is to destroy the foundation of a sinner's hope, and to make void the distinctive evidence of primitive Christianity:—Calling upon the name of the Lord Jesus, and committing our souls into his hands for salvation.

#### DEFENCE OF THE DEITY OF CHRIST.

[In Reply to the Rev. Henry Davis.]

YOUR correspondent H. D. seems dissatisfied with the trinitarian doctrine of Christ's proper deity, and wishes to substitute the indwelling scheme in its place.—In writing the piece which occasioned his remarks, I did not once think of “Athanasius,” nor of any human writer; but simply of stating what appeared to be the mind of God in his word. Neither was it my object to prove, concerning any denomination of professing Christians, that they are not in a state of salvation; but merely that those *principles* which disown Christ's proper deity, be they held by whom they may, *if fully embraced so as to be acted upon*, do not consist with it.

Your correspondent asks, “How am I to conceive of this?” that is, of Christ's proper deity. “Am I to consider the deity of Christ as separate and distinct from the deity of the Father and the Holy Spirit? Is there one deity of the Son, another of the Father, and another of the Spirit?” If he intend to ask whether the proposition, *Christ is true God*, mean any thing different from the proposition, *the Father is true God*? I answer, it certainly does. But if whether the deity of Father, Son, and Spirit, be one or more deities, he must know that the former, and not the latter, is the avowed principle of trinitarians. I have always supposed that godhead is common to Father, Son, and Spirit; and that, whatever distinction there is between them, it consists not in their nature, but in their personality. Surely H. D., while he objects to the doctrine of the Athanasian creed, must have paid but little attention to it. “There is one person of the Father,” says the writer of that creed, “another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost: *but the godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one.*” As therefore he has mistaken the premises, the consequence of “a division in deity” falls of course.

But “something like this,” he thinks, “is

the case when the three persons are separately addressed in prayer." Did not the primitive Christians *call on the name of Christ*? Did not Stephen call upon the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit? And was not this praying to him as distinct, though not as "separate," from the Father? Yet I suppose Stephen will not be accused of making "a division in deity."

"It is evident that amongst common Christians there are many who, for want of time and inclination to read and examine for themselves, have no other idea of the doctrine of the trinity than that of three Gods." To *whom* is this evident? To me it appears that those Christians who read the least of human speculations upon this subject, and content themselves with the doctrine abundantly taught in the Scriptures, that "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God: yet that there are not three Gods, but one God," are the least likely to err.

But, "Is not tritheism an error that ought to be guarded against as well as that of Socinianism!" The Scriptures plentifully guard us against polytheism; and, if the danger of tritheism was what is here supposed, it is rather surprising that they never guard us against that. Yet so it is. The sacred writers expressly call the Father God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God (John i. 1; Acts v. 3, 4;) yet they seem never to have thought of Christians so understanding it as to make three Gods, and therefore never guard against it. Neither is there a single caution in all the word of God against making too much of Christ, though there are many against making too little of him. The union between him and the Father appears to me to be so described in Scripture as to leave no room for dishonoring the latter, while we truly honor the former.\* On the other hand, a jealousy for the honor of the Father, at the expense of that of the Son, was the error and overthrow of the Jewish nation.

The trinitarian doctrine of the eternal Son of God, the second person in the godhead, assuming human nature in the fulness of time, appears to me to be "the great mystery of godliness;" and that which ought to be received "without controversy," or curious speculations how these things are. It will not be expected that I should here enumerate the many passages by which this is supported in the New Testament: I will however mention one, which has lately struck me as possessing peculiar force. It is 1 John i. 2, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of

the Word of life. For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

On this passage I would remark—1. That there is a manifest resemblance between John's introduction to his epistle and that to his gospel, and that the same personage that is there called "The Word" is here called "The Life," and "The Word of Life."—2. That as 'The Word who was "with God," and who "was God," was "made flesh," and the apostles "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth;" so the "Life, even that eternal Life that was with the Father, was manifested, and they saw it." And the manifestation of the Life, in human nature, is given as the reason why he came to be "seen with the eyes, and looked upon, and handled;" plainly intimating that if he had not thus been manifested he would have been concealed from all mortal eyes.—3. It was not the deity itself, "personally distinguished as the FATHER" (for which Dr. Watts in his latter days contended), that was manifested; but "that eternal Life which was *with* the Father."

As to the *indwelling scheme*, I do not at present sufficiently comprehend it. If H. D. will give a brief and clear statement of it, and of the evidence on which it rests, whether in his own words or those of the ablest authors who have written upon it, I will endeavor seriously and candidly to consider what he may advance.

#### REMARKS ON THE INDWELLING SCHEME.

[In Reply to the Rev. Henry Davis.]

I PROPOSED in my last that you should state the indwelling scheme, with the scriptural grounds on which you supposed it to rest. I wish you had complied with this proposal: merely writing *about* a subject brings nothing to an issue. I will endeavor, however, to collect your sentiments as well as I can.

I agree with you that "attempts to investigate difficult parts of divine truth should be conducted with humility and candor." If any thing I have written, or may write, be inconsistent with either of these virtues, I am willing to bear the blame. But I hope an attempt to prove that the denial of Christ's proper deity is inconsistent with worshipping him, and trusting in him for salvation, is not necessarily subject to such a charge. I am far from thinking that every person is aware of the legitimate consequences of his own doctrine, or that in his

\* See Calvinistic and Socinian systems compared, Letter vii.

\* Palmer's Life of Watts, p. 62.



approaches to God he acts up to them; and still farther from "excluding from salvation all who may not have the same ideas of the subject with myself." I must add, however, that true candor does not consist in entertaining a good opinion of one another, *whatever be our religious principles*; but in speaking the truth in love. You may think well of me, and I of you; and we may go on complimenting each other, till we both fall into perdition. As to your personal religion, and that of the "very many" who, you say, think with you, I have never called it in question. It is of *things*, not *persons*, that I have written. If any of us find ourselves affected by what another advances, it becomes us to examine whether what he alleges be true, and not to content ourselves with exclaiming against his want of candor. If I think the worse of any man on account of his *differing from me*, that will only betray my vanity and folly; but if I do not think the worse of a man for what I account his *differing from the Scriptures*, and thereby dishonoring Christ, that is esteeming men irrespective of the truth that dwelleth in them, and rendering it of no importance; which, however pleasing to flesh and blood, may be no less repugnant to the spirit of Christianity than the most uncharitable bitterness.

You ask "whether, by the proper deity of Christ, I mean any thing more than his being called God in the Scriptures." Certainly I do; or I have all along been deceiving myself and the reader. I mean that *he is* what he is called. But, do I suppose "that he is God in the same sense as the three persons united are one God?" No: I do not. The Father is not God in this sense any more than the Son and Spirit. We nowhere read that the Father is *a* God, the Son *a* God, or the Spirit *a* God, when spoken of in distinction from each other; nor do I recollect any such idea conveyed in the Scriptures; yet each divine person has every perfection of godhead ascribed to him.

You have twice suggested that the Son and Spirit, having assumed visible appearances, must have a nature different from Deity. You cannot mean that the nature or appearance *assumed* was different from deity; for of this there is no dispute; but the nature *assuming*. But what proof is there of this? I do not know that the Holy Spirit ever assumed any other nature than his own, though he descended on Christ in the form or appearance of a dove: and, though the Son assumed human nature, yet this implies no inferiority to the Father, in respect of what he was antecedently to such assumption.

I have no objection to our inquiring, not only into the evidence that the doctrine of the Trinity is contained in Scripture, but, as

far as Scripture informs us, what that doctrine is. It does not become us however to take up the principle of the divine Unity, however true and important, and, having formed an idea of it as being personal, resolve to admit of no other than what shall agree with our preconceived notion; for this were to regulate certainty by uncertainty, the certain light of revelation by the uncertain conjectures supposed to be derived from the light of nature. We ought to regulate our ideas of the divine Unity by what is taught us in the Scriptures of the Trinity; and not those of the Trinity by what we know, or think we know, from the light of nature, of the Unity.

It appears to me, by the tenor of your pieces, especially from some passages, that you and your brethren have in this matter symbolized with the Socinians, who, having taken up the idea of God as being *one person*, reject every thing in the Scriptures that is inconsistent with it; and therefore renounce first the deity, and then the atonement of Christ; and, in short, almost every thing pertaining to revelation, except what might have been learned without it. I do not say that you go their lengths; but would seriously and affectionately entreat you to consider whether you have not adopted their principle. Do you not make your ideas of the unity of God the standard by which to try the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity; forming, as you say, "the best ideas you can" of the latter subject, and holding nothing fast except the former? If the admission of Christ's proper deity, though taught as plainly and much more frequently in the New Testament than the other, cannot be understood so as, in your ideas, to be "fully consistent," it must be given up, and a "godlike form" of a man, as one of your writers expresses it, substituted in its place. But if, as you acknowledge, "the three divine persons spoken of in Scripture be in some sense one God," why should you not suspect, or rather renounce, your own ideas of the unity, as if it must needs be confined to *one person*? And, instead of "forming the best ideas you can" *how* this is, why should you not be content with believing that it *is* so, without pretending to pry into that which is above your comprehension? Nor ought it to be objected that so abstruse a subject cannot be of any great importance. Can you communicate to me, or form to yourself, any idea of self-existence, eternity, or infinity? Yet, if you do not believe them, you do not believe in God. Your own scheme also appears to be equally incomprehensible as ours; for you do not pretend to "explain *how* the Son and Spirit derive their nature from the Father." Here then you can admit of mystery, though, as to the question, "*How* the three divine persons spoken of



in Scripture are one God," you are for going about to "form the best idea that you can;" and, if none present themselves, conclude that proper deity belongs only to one of them—a singular method this of answering the question!

If you think that you believe "the three divine persons spoken of in Scripture to be *divine*, and to be *one God*," do you not deceive yourself? You speak of "the Son and Spirit having a *derived* nature." If by derivation you mean what is *essential* and *eternal*, as expressed by the term begotten, there is no dispute on this head. But, if you mean that they were produced by the will and power of the Father, they are mere creatures; and, however exalted, cannot be "divine." No Socinian, I apprehend, would deny that God dwelt in the man Christ Jesus, enabling him to perform all his mighty works. But he would tell you, and justly too, that this does not prove him to be any thing more than human. Dr. Watts, I am aware, spoke of the indwelling of the Father in such a way as that the Father and the human nature became "*one person*;" and thus conceived that he maintained the proper deity of Christ. But, whether he did or not, his conceit of the Father's assuming human nature, which the New Testament invariably ascribes to the *Son*, or *Word*, or that eternal *Life* that was *with* the Father, leads on to the neglect, and by degrees to the disbelief, of this important truth. I scarcely remember ever to have heard a minister of your persuasion introduce the subject in the pulpit; and much less insist upon it with that earnestness and delight which is so frequently found in the writings of the New Testament.

Have you not symbolized with the Socinians till you have nearly, if not entirely, lost this great doctrine? Do you really consider Christ as any thing more than a *Man extraordinarily inspired of God*? If you do, how is it that you should feel yourself hurt when the contrary is maintained? I advanced nothing in the piece which first attracted your notice but the divinity of Jesus Christ. I had not the remotest idea of opposing the Indwelling scheme. I thought nothing about it; but merely stated a doctrine which your writers, Watts and Doddridge, professed to maintain. Yet this excites your suspicions. Can it be a matter of doubt whereabouts you are? Excuse me if I inquire farther, Will your scheme allow you to *worship* Christ, I do not say "separately" but distinctly from the Father, as the martyr Stephen worshipped him, and prayed to him in his dying moments; and as all the primitive Christians worshipped him, *calling upon his name*? Finally: Can you, in the full persuasion of this scheme, *trust* in him for salvation, as

one who is *able* to keep that which is committed to him? Does it not rather teach you to trust in *the Father only*, as dwelling in him?

These are serious things, and require to be answered in some other way than by exclaiming against the want of candor. Candor, sir, requires us to deal plainly and faithfully with each other. By the manner in which you, and writers on your side of the question, express yourselves, it would seem to be a matter of small account what we believe on these momentous subjects, provided we do but think well of one another. But surely that which affects the object of worship, and the foundation of hope, cannot be of trifling importance. Principles form the character in the sight of God: a handful of cockle may seem of but little consequence at seed-time, but it will appear different at harvest.

Your scheme requires you to symbolize with Socinians in denying our Lord Jesus Christ to be "equal with" the Father, and to explain away those Scriptures which speak of him as such. Thus that glorious passage in Phil. ii. 5—7 is degraded and martyred: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." This is made to mean that "his human soul, being in union with the Godhead," that is, with the Father, "was invested with a god-like form and glory in all ages. Thus he oftentimes appeared to the patriarchs as the Angel of the Lord, and as God. This seems to be 'the form of God' which the apostle speaks of; nor did he think it 'any robbery,' or presumption, so to do; that is, to appear and act as God. Yet he 'emptied himself,' or divested himself of this godlike form or appearance, this divine *Shekinah*; and, coming in the flesh, he consented to be 'made in the likeness of other men;' nay, he took upon him 'the form of a servant,' instead of 'the form of God.'"

"The form of God" means the godlike form assumed by a man! A man, or human soul, thought it no presumption to "appear and act as God!" A man consented to be made in the likeness of men. No, this was too gross; therefore the term "other" is added to help out. A man was so humble and condescending as to take upon him the form of a servant! And the existence of this man was necessary to the covenant of redemption; † that is, till God had formed a creature out of nothing, he had no counsel, plan, or design, what should be done! And is this Dr. WATTS?—the sweet singer of our Israel; the man who in his better days taught us thus to worship—

\* Palmer's Life of Watts, p. 86.

† Palmer's Life of Watts, p. 68.

“Ere the blue heavens were stretched abroad,  
From everlasting was the Word;  
With God he was, the Word was God,  
And must divinely be adored.”

How are the mighty fallen!

By the several passages of Scripture which you have introduced, in support of the Indwelling scheme, it seems to me that you interpret that as being essential which is only economical, just as in other instances you make that to be economical which is essential. Referring to John xiv. 10, you say, “Our Lord appeals to his works to prove that he was in the Father, and the Father in him—the Father in me doeth the works.” All that Christ said or did in the Father’s name was indeed a proof of such a mutual indwelling as that he who had seen the one had seen the other; but not of our Lord’s deity consisting in the Father’s dwelling in him. It might as well be alleged from this passage that the deity of the Father consisted in that of the Son, who is said to be “in him.” This and all other such passages, which ascribe the works of Christ to the power of the Father, are expressive of the *economy* of things, and not of the insufficiency of the Saviour.

I submit to your consideration the following brief statement of my views on this subject. The first measure in the execution of the great work of redemption was that he who was “in the form of God,” and as such “equal with God,” took upon him the form of a servant; and, having taken that form, it was fitting, in the account of Him who hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence, that he should act under it. Now it belongs to the character of a servant that he receive his instructions from him whose servant he is: and thus did Christ. Though, considered as divine, “he knew all things,” John xxi. 17; yet as a servant, and as being made in the likeness of men, he grew in knowledge, taught nothing, and knew nothing, as it were, but what he had heard and learned of the Father. “I speak to the world,” says he, “those things which I have heard of him.”—“Ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.”—“I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me.”—John viii. 26, 40; xvii. 8.

Farther: It belongs to the character of a servant that he act under the authority and be directed by the will of him whose servant he is: and thus did Christ. Though, as a Son, his throne was acknowledged by the Father himself to be forever and ever, Heb. i. 8, yet as a servant he learned obedience. He was sent by the Father, and did every thing in obedience to his will. “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.”—“I seek not mine

own will, but the will of the Father who sent me.”—“I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”—John v. 19, 30; vi. 38.

Finally: It belongs to the character of a servant that he be supported in his work by him who employs him: and thus was Christ. As a divine person he was acknowledged to be most Mighty—the mighty God (Psal. xlv. 3: Isa. ix. 6): yet as a servant, and during his humiliation, he is commonly represented as doing what he did by the power of the Father. He ordinarily ascribes his miracles to this, and not to his own power. It was “the Father who was in him that did the works.” Thus he was “God’s servant whom he upheld, his elect in whom his soul delighteth.”

Is it not a pity, sir, that this surprising instance of condescension, for the very purpose of redeeming us from the wrath to come, should be converted into an argument against his essential dignity? If it be asked, What is it then which is ascribed to the divinity of Christ, if his miracles and works are ordinarily ascribed to the Father, or to the Holy Spirit; and of what use was it? I answer: It gave value and virtue to all he did and suffered. Thus he is represented as “by himself” purging our sins—“The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”—We have a great high priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God.”—Heb. i. 3; v. 14. 1 John i. 7.

You mention some other passages: as, “God was manifest in the flesh;” by which, I suppose, you would understand the Father, or the deity, without distinction of persons. But who was it that was “seen of angels, believed on in the world, and received up into glory?” Was this the Father?—Frequent mention has also been made of Col. ii. 9, “In him dwelleth all the fulness of the godhead bodily;” as though it was not the second person in the godhead only that assumed human nature, but the godhead itself. To this I answer: If the passage refer to the constitution of the person of Christ, which to me is doubtful, it may without any force be understood of every perfection of the divine nature dwelling in him, in common with the Father. To interpret it of the godhead, without distinction of persons, is to contradict the whole tenor of the New Testament. “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman.”—“The Word that was with God, and who was God, even that Eternal Life that was with the Father, was made flesh, or manifested to us.”—Gal. iv. 4. John i. 1, 14. 1 John i. 2.

God being in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, has no relation, I apprehend, to the constitution of Christ’s person, but to the exercise of mercy through his

atonement. Thus it is that God in Christ, or for Christ's sake, is said to have forgiven us.—Eph. iv. 32.

## ON THE SONSHIP OF CHRIST.

THE meaning of the terms, "*Son of God*," and "*Only-begotten Son of God*," must needs be of importance, inasmuch as the belief of the idea signified by them was made a leading article in the primitive professions of faith.—John vi. 69, iii. 18, xx. 31; Acts xviii. 37; 1 John iv. 15. Whatever disputes have arisen of late among Christians, there seems to have been none on this subject in the times of the apostles. Both Jews and Christians appear to have agreed in this: the only question that divided them was, whether Christ was the Son of God or not? If there had been any ambiguity in the term, it would have been very unfit to express the first article of the Christian faith.

It has been frequently suggested that the ground of Christ's sonship is given us in Luke i. 35, and is no other than his miraculous conception: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

It is true that our Lord was miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit, and that such a conception was peculiar to him; but it does not follow that by this he became the "Son," or "only-begotten Son of God." Nor does the passage in question prove any such thing. It has been thought that the phrase "Son of God," in this place, is used in a peculiar sense, or that it respects the origin of Christ's human nature, as not being by ordinary generation of man, but by the extraordinary influence of God; and that he is here called the Son of God in the same sense as Adam is so called (Luke iii. 38), as being produced by his immediate power. If this be the meaning of the term, in the passage in question, I should think it will be allowed to be peculiar, and therefore that no general conclusion can be drawn from it as to the meaning of the term in other passages. But, granting that the sonship of Christ in this place is to be understood in the same sense as it is commonly to be taken in the New Testament, still it does not follow that the miraculous conception is the origin of it. It may be a reason given why Christ is called the Son of God; but not why he is so. Christ is called the Son of God as raised from the dead, and as exalted at the right-hand of God.—Acts xiii. 33; Heb. i. 4, 5. Did he then become the Son of God by these events? This is impossible; for sonship is not a progressive matter. If it arose from his miraculous conception, it could not, for that reason, arise from his resurrection or exaltation:

and so, on the other hand, if it arose from his resurrection or exaltation, it could not proceed from his miraculous conception. But if each be understood of his being hereby proved, acknowledged, or, as the Scriptures express it, "*declared to be the Son of God with power*," all is easy and consistent.

Whether the terms, "Son of God," and "only-begotten Son of God," be not expressive of his divine personality, antecedent to all consideration of his being conceived of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the virgin, let the following things determine:—

First: The glory of the "only-begotten of the Father," and the glory of the "Word," are used as convertible terms, as being the same: but the latter is allowed to denote the divine person of Christ, antecedent to his being made flesh; the same, therefore, must be true of the former. "The Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory"—that is, the glory of the Word, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." It is true, it was by the Word being "made flesh, and dwelling among us," that his glory became apparent; but the glory itself was that of the eternal Word, and this is the same as "the glory of the only-begotten of the Father."

Secondly: The Son of God is said to "dwell in the bosom of the Father;" that is, he is intimately acquainted with his character and designs, and therefore fit to be employed in making them known to men. "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." If this be applied to his divine person, or "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us," it is natural and proper; it assigns his omniscience as qualifying him for making known the mind of God: but if he became the only-begotten of the Father by his miraculous conception, or by any other means, the beauty of the passage vanishes.

Thirdly: God is frequently said to have sent his Son into the world: but this implies that he was his Son antecedently to his being sent. To suppose otherwise is no less absurd than supposing that when Christ sent forth his twelve disciples they were not disciples, but that they became such in consequence of his sending them, or of some preparation pertaining to their mission.

Fourthly: Christ is called the Son of God antecedently to his miraculous conception, and consequently he did not become such by it.—"In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law; that he might redeem them that were under the law."—"God sent his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh." The terms, "made of a woman, made under the law," are a parenthesis. The position affirmed is, that God sent forth his Son to redeem the transgressors of the law. His being



made of a woman, and made under the law, or covenant of works, which man had broken, expresses the necessary means for the accomplishment of this great end; which means, though preceding our redemption, yet follow the sonship of the Redeemer. There is equal proof that Christ was "the Son of God" before he was "made of a woman," as that he was "the Word" before he was "made flesh." The phraseology is the same in the one case as in the other. If it be alleged that Christ is here called the Son of God on account of his being made of a woman, I answer, if so, it is also on account of his being "made under the law," which is too absurd to admit of a question. Moreover, to say that "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" is equal to saying that the Son of God assumed human nature: he must therefore have been the Son of God before his incarnation.

Fifthly: Christ is called the Son of God antecedent to his being "manifested to destroy the works of the devil:" but he was manifested to destroy the works of the devil by taking upon him human nature; consequently he was the Son of God antecedent to the human nature being assumed. There is equal proof from the phraseology of I John iii. 8 that he was the "Son of God" antecedent to his being "manifested to destroy the works of the devil," as there is from that of I Tim. iii. 16 that he was "God" antecedent to his being "manifested in the flesh;" or from I John i. 2 that "that eternal life which was with the Father" was such antecedent to his being "manifested to us."

Sixthly: The ordinance of baptism is commanded to be administered "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." The terms "Father" and "Holy Spirit" will be allowed to denote divine persons; and what good reasons can be given for another idea being fixed to the term "Son?"

Seventhly: The proper deity of Christ precedes his office of Mediator, or High Priest of our profession, and renders it an exercise of *condescension*. But the same is true of his sonship: "He maketh the Son a High Priest."—"Though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience." His being the Son of God, therefore, amounts to the same thing as his being a divine person.

Eighthly: It is the proper deity of Christ which gives *dignity* to his office of Mediator: but this dignity is ascribed to his being the "Son of God." "We have a *great* High Priest, Jesus, the *Son of God*." His being the Son of God, therefore, amounts to the same thing as his being a divine person.

Lastly: It is the proper deity of Christ which gives *efficacy* to his sufferings: "by *himself* he purges our sins." But this efficacy is ascribed to his being the "Son of God:" "The blood of Jesus Christ, *his Son*, cleans-

eth us from all sin." His being the Son of God therefore amounts to the same thing as his being a divine person.

Those who attribute Christ's sonship to his miraculous conception (those at least to whom I refer) are nevertheless constrained to allow that the term *implies* proper divinity. Indeed, this is evident from John v. 18, where his saying that "God was his own Father" is supposed to be "making himself equal with God." But, if the miraculous conception be the proper foundation of his sonship, why should it contain such an implication? A holy creature might be produced by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, which yet should be merely a creature; that is, he might, on this hypothesis, profess to be the Son of God, and yet be so far from making himself equal with God as to pretend to be nothing more than a man.

It has been objected that Christ, when called the Son of God, is commonly spoken of as engaged in the work of mediation, and not simply as a divine person antecedent to it.—I answer, In a history of the rebellion, in the year 1745, the name of his Royal Highness, the commander-in-chief, would often be mentioned in connection with his equipage and exploits: but none would infer from hence that he thereby became the king's son.

It is further objected that sonship implies *inferiority*, and therefore cannot be attributed to the divine person of Christ.—But, whatever inferiority may be attached to the idea of sonship, it is not an inferiority of *nature*, which is the point in question: and, if any regard be paid to the Scriptures, the very contrary is true. Christ's claiming to be the Son of God was "making himself," not inferior, but *as God*, or "equal with God."

Once more: Sonship, it is said, implies *posteriority*, or that Christ as a Son could not have existed till after the Father: to attribute no other divinity to him, therefore, than what is denoted by sonship, is attributing none to him; as nothing can be divine which is not eternal.—But, if this reasoning be just, it will prove that the divine purposes are not eternal, or that there was once a point in duration in which God was without thought, purpose, or design. For it is as true, and may as well be said, that God must exist before he could purpose, as that the Father must exist before he had a Son: but, if God must exist before he could purpose, there must have been a point in duration in which he existed without purpose, thought, or design; that is, in which he was not God! The truth is, the whole of this apparent difficulty arises from the want of distinguishing between the order of nature and the order of time. In the order of nature, the sun must have existed before it could shine; but, in the order of time, the sun and its rays are coeval; it never existed a single instant

without them. In the order of nature, God must have existed before he could purpose: but in the order of time, or duration, he never existed without his purpose; for a God without thought or purpose were no God. And thus in the order of nature the Father must have existed before the Son; but, in that of duration, he never existed without the Son. The Father and the Son, therefore, are properly eternal.

THOUGHTS ON THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

No sober Trinitarian would take upon him to say precisely to what degree the distinctions in the Godhead extend. It is generally supposed, however, that the term *person* approaches the nearest to the scriptural idea of any term that could be applied to this subject; yet those who use and contend for this term, in opposition to that of three *names* or three *properties*, do not mean to suggest that the distinctions in the Deity are in all respects the same as between three persons among men. The latter have no necessary connection or union with each other, so as to denominate them one. It is highly probable that there is nothing in creation perfectly analogous to the mode of the divine subsistence; and therefore nothing by which it can be fully conceived. And what if this should be the case? Where is the wonder that there should be something in God peculiar to himself in the mode of his existence, which we cannot comprehend? If Socinians would but modestly consider the weakness of the human understanding, they would not decide so peremptorily on the other hand concerning the unity of God, as that it must needs be *personal*, or not at all. If it be too much for us to say, with exactness to what degree the distinction reaches, is it not also too much for them to decide upon the precise kind and degree of *union* which is necessary to denominate the great Creator of the world—the *ONE GOD*?

The doctrine of a Trinity in Unity is evidently a doctrine of pure revelation, and could never have been discovered by the mere light of nature. But, by comparing Scripture with itself, we may plainly perceive that the divine unity is not a unity of *person*. Though there are three in the godhead who are dignified with the same incommunicable titles of Jehovah, God, and Lord—possessing the same attributes and perfections, and entitled to the same worship and adoration—yet the Scriptures do not exhibit a plurality of deities, but teach us that Jehovah our God is one Jehovah. The obvious conclusion is, that these three are one God, and that the Scripture doctrine of unity is of more persons than one in the godhead.

The following passages, among many others, are very full to this purpose.—

“Go teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the *Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit*.—There are *three* that bear record in heaven; *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one*.—I am one that bear witness of *myself*.—*The Father* that sent me beareth witness of me.—It is *the Spirit* that beareth witness.—And the *Holy Spirit* descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him; and the voice came from heaven which said, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*.—When the Comforter is come, whom *I will send* unto you from the *Father*, even the *Spirit of truth*, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.—Now I beseech you, brethren, for the *Lord Jesus Christ's* sake, and for the love of the *Spirit*, that you strive together with me in your prayers to *God* for me.—*Through him* (that is, Christ) we both have access by *one Spirit* to the *Father*.—Praying in the *Holy Spirit*, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our *Lord Jesus Christ* unto eternal life.—*The Lord* direct your hearts into the love of *God*, and the patient waiting for *Christ*.—The grace of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, the love of *God*, and the communion of the *Holy Spirit* be with you all.”

On reading these and similar passages, together with a great number of others which teach the proper deity of Christ, we conclude that in a mysterious way, far above our comprehension, there are in the divine unity three subsistences: and as the New Testament constantly represents each of these three as bearing personal names, sustaining personal offices, and performing personal acts, we think ourselves warranted in accounting them three divine *persons*.

Socinians, however, object to the doctrine of the Trinity on account of its being *incomprehensible*: and Dr. Priestley denies that the first teachers of Christianity taught any “mysterious doctrines, or doctrines in their own nature incomprehensible;” \* and insists upon the necessity of “considering in *what manner* three persons are one God, upon the general principle that every proposition, before it can be believed, must be understood in some sense or other.” †

The first preachers of Christianity taught the self-existence of God.—Rev. i. 4. “Grace be unto you, and peace, from him who *is*, and who *was*, and who *is to come*.” But the self-existence of God is allowed by Dr. Priestley himself to be so much of a mystery that “he does not understand the manner of it.” He can here distinguish between things which are *above* reason and things

\* Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever. Part II. p. 209.

† Letters to Dr. Horne.

*contrary* to it. "Though it be above our reason," he says, "to comprehend *how* this original being, and the cause of all other beings, should be himself uncaused, it is a conclusion by no means properly *contrary* to reason." † Now, why might not an atheist demand of Dr. Priestley an account of the mode or manner *how* God himself can exist, upon the general principle, "that every proposition, before it can be believed, must be understood in some sense or other?" Why should not this general principle apply to the manner in which God always existed, as an uncaused being, as well as to the manner in which three persons are one God? And if it be proper to distinguish between things above reason and things contrary to it, in the one case, why not in the other?

The truth is, it is not necessary that every thing contained in a proposition should be clearly understood, in order to our being rationally convinced that such a proposition is true. We ought not to deny every thing we cannot comprehend; otherwise a man born blind would reason right when he forms this syllogism: We can only know the shape of different substances by feeling them: but it is impossible to handle them at a distance: therefore it is impossible to know the shape of different bodies which lie beyond our reach! A blind man, by the concurring testimony of all about him, may be convinced that the figure of different bodies may be clearly ascertained by sight, though we cannot handle them. But, when convinced of this on the ground of testimony, he never can be made to conceive *how* this is true. It is therefore a fundamental maxim, in all true philosophy, that many things may be incomprehensible and yet demonstrable, that though seeing clearly be a sufficient reason for affirming, yet not seeing at all can never be a reason for denying.

When it is affirmed that in the godhead there are three, and that these three are one God, it has been objected, not only that the doctrine is incomprehensible, but that the terms themselves involve a *contradiction*: to this it might be replied that, if the Divine Being were affirmed to be three in the same sense in which he is said to be one, the objection would be valid; but the contradiction here is only a seeming one, and is no other than what appears in other propositions concerning the Divine Being, which are also true. Suppose it were affirmed that it is *possible* for God to do evil, and yet that it is *impossible* he should do evil: this would involve an *apparent* contradiction; and, if the two branches of the proposition were to be understood in the *same sense* of possible and impossible, the contradiction would be

*real*. But to say that it is not *naturally* impossible for God to do evil, were he so inclined, is only affirming what is necessary to his being a free agent, and so of being virtuous or holy; and to say that it is *morally* impossible for God to do evil is only ascribing to him that perfection of holiness which constitutes the true glory of his character. So to affirm that the centre and surface of the globe are exceedingly remote, and yet so exceedingly near as to be equally the central point of infinite space, is an apparent contradiction, and yet demonstrably true. That the remotest periods of time are alike the centre of infinite duration is also a most evident truth, and yet a caviller might object that the terms of these propositions involve a contradiction: it is like saying that two points may be one, and that one may be two. Yet, opposite as the terms may appear, the truth of the propositions is not at all affected by them, but rests on the strongest demonstration.

#### JUSTIFICATION.

##### ON THE DOCTRINE OF IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"This is the name wherewith She shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." Jer. xxxiii. 16.

It may seem too much for the church of Christ to bear a name which is properly applicable only to Christ himself, and is expressly given to him in chap. xxiii. 6 of the same prophecy. Interpreters have attempted to account for this in different ways. Some have rendered the words, "And this is the name of Him that shall call her," as we should say, by his grace, "The Lord our righteousness." But the words clearly import an appellation given to the church. Others have supposed the church to be called after the name of Christ on account of her intimate union with him, as a woman is called after the name of her husband. But this is a modern practice, to which therefore there can be no allusion.

The name in the Hebrew is *Jehovah tsidkenu*; and, if I am not mistaken, the use of several other of these compound terms in the Old Testament will determine the meaning of the passage in question. When Abraham was about to offer up his son, in the very moment of extremity his hand was stayed, and a lamb was provided. Abraham, in commemoration of this signal interposition, called the name of the place *Jehovah-jireh*, the Lord will see or provide. When God gave Israel the victory over Amalek, Moses built an altar, and called it *Jehovah-nissi*, the Lord my banner. When Gideon, having seen an angel of God, was apprehensive that he should die, and the Lord comforted him, saying, "Peace be unto thee, fear not;" he built an altar, and

† Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever. Part 1. p. 46.



called it *Jehovah-shalom*, the Lord send peace. Finally, when the church in the latter day, under the form of a city, is described in prophecy, it is said that its name shall be called *Jehovah-shammah*, the Lord is there.—Gen. xxii. 14. Exod. xvii. 15. Judg. vi. 24. Ezek. xlvi. 35. Now the place where Abraham received the lamb was not *Jehovah*, nor either of the altars erected by Moses and Gideon. They were only memorials of what *Jehovah* had wrought. Neither will the city described by Ezekiel be *Jehovah*; but the presence of *Jehovah* shall be so sensibly and manifestly with it that this shall be its name or distinguishing character. Thus it is that the church, under the gospel dispensation, shall be called *Jehovah tsidkenu*, the Lord our righteousness; not because she is *Jehovah*, but because her justification, by the righteousness of *Jehovah*, forms a kind of prominent feature in her countenance. This leading truth is inscribed upon her in deep and legible characters, like those upon the altars of Moses and Gideon. She is even a standing memorial of it to all generations.

Such, I take it, is the meaning of this prophecy. Let us next inquire whether it accords with fact. If there be a leading principle which distinguishes the gospel church more than any other, it may be expected to occupy a conspicuous place in the New Testament. It is true, the Old-testament church was accepted of God through the same medium that we are; but, the righteousness of *Jesus* not being actually wrought, it does not form so prominent a feature in that dispensation. As soon as our Lord entered on his ministry, he declared his errand to be, “to seek and to save that which was lost.” The self-righteous pharisees, who were whole in their own eyes, were most of them left to perish in their own deceivings, while publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of God before them. Every encouragement was given to *faith* in the Redeemer. In answer to this the diseased were cured, and the guilty forgiven, whatever had been their former character. Those who embraced the Saviour from among the sect of the pharisees, and who were righteous in their own eyes, were brought to an open renunciation of every thing of this kind, and to sue for mercy among the chief of sinners. This was particularly the case of Saul of Tarsus, who “counted all things but loss that he might win Christ, and be found in him; not having his own righteousness, which was of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”—Phil. iii. 8, 9.

When the apostles, commissioned by their Lord, went forth preaching the gospel to every creature, this was their errand.

To the Jews they thus addressed themselves: “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”—Acts xiii. 38, 39. As to the gentiles, their address to them was in substance as follows: “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—2 Cor. v. 20, 21.

In almost all the epistles, we find this great truth written in legible characters. It is almost the sole object of that to the Romans. To quote all the evidence from it were to quote the epistle itself. I shall only observe that there are some errors noted in that epistle, among believers, and which were to be objects of forbearance: but justification by faith in the righteousness of Christ, to the renouncing of all dependence on the works of the law, is not represented as a question that divided believers, but as a principle of such importance as to distinguish believers from unbelievers. “The gentiles which followed not after righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling stone. Being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.”—Rom. ix. 30—32; x. 3.

The disorders of the Corinthians were greater than those of any other of the primitive churches. This, with some who profess to believe this important truth in the present day, would have been thought a sufficient reason for withholding it in this instance, lest it should be abused: but Paul did not withhold it. “Of him,” says he, “are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”—1 Cor. i. 30, 31. He had found them sunk in vice and profligacy. Speaking of fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners; “and such,” says he, “were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”—1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

The epistle to the Galatians, like that to

the Romans, is principally composed of this doctrine. It is here considered of such importance as that the rejection of it "perverted the Gospel of Christ." Those teachers who set themselves against it, and thereby troubled the churches, the apostle wished to have them "cut off" from among them. And those professors of Christianity who gave into another system he considered as "fallen from grace," or as having deserted the truth of the Gospel; and told them plainly that Christ was "become of no effect to them."—Gal. i. 7; v. 4, 12.

The epistle to the Ephesians, the object of which seems to be to endear Christ, and the knowledge of him, enumerates the spiritual blessings with which God hath blessed us in him, and among these is his having made us "accepted in the Beloved." And again, "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Similar observations might be made on almost all the remaining epistles. I shall content myself with only referring the reader to the following passages, (Phil. iii. 7—9. 1 Tim. i. 9. Tit. iii. 4—7. 2 Pet. i. 1. 1 John ii. 1. Rev. xix. 8.) and offering a few remarks on the apparent inconsistency of Paul and James on this subject. If the justification on which these sacred writers insist were the same, their doctrine would certainly wear every appearance of contradiction, inasmuch as that the one affirms we are justified "by faith without the works of the law," while the other insists that a man is justified "by works, and not by faith only." Yea, and what is more, each of them appeals to the case of Abraham, as an example of his doctrine.—Rom. iv. 1—6. James ii. 21—26. But, if the justification on which they severally insist be different, different things may be affirmed concerning each, without any contradiction. And this is manifestly the case. *Paul* discourses on the justification of the *ungodly*, or of sinners being accepted of God, which is by faith in the righteousness of Christ, without works; *James* on the justification of the *godly*, or of a saint being approved of God, and which is by works. Abraham is said to have been justified by faith, when he first believed the promise, prior to his circumcision; but by works, many years after it, his faith was made manifest, when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar. The one therefore relates to his acceptance with God as a sinner, the other to his being approved of God as a saint. Both together completed his character. "He believed, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness:" he obeyed, and was "called the friend of God."

Upon the whole, if these observations be just, we are, by this appellation given to the Christian church, furnished with a criterion

by which to judge of it. It is composed of such characters as, renouncing all dependence upon their own righteousness, rely only upon the righteousness of Christ for acceptance with God; while at the same time their faith is not a dead, inoperative opinion, but a vital principle, productive of good works.

We also see the justice with which divines have insisted on the importance of this great article of faith. It was with good reason that Luther, in particular, considered it as a kind of corner-stone in the Reformation. Those reformed communities, whether national or congregational, which have relinquished this principle in their confessions of faith, or which, retaining it in their confessions, yet renounce or neglect it in their ordinary ministrations, have with it lost the spirit and power of true religion.

#### DEFENCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS.

[In reply to a Correspondent, in 1799.]

I AGREE with your correspondent, Christopher, that "a manly and Christian avowal of our sentiments tends to the discovery and establishment of truth;" to which also "I devoutly wish that all our differences may verge." But if I thought, that "difference of opinion," or, as I should call it, the imbibing of opposite religious principles, was any otherwise "unavoidable in the present state" than as every other species of sinful imperfection is so, I should consider the attainment of truth as an object of no importance; and all our labors to rectify our own and each other's errors as so many attempts to subvert the order of nature. It were absurd to attempt to reduce to uniformity the natural differences of men's tastes and features: and if differences in religion be of the same kind, as your correspondent seems to think, it were equally absurd to attempt to lessen them, or "devoutly to wish them to verge towards truth."

But really, Sir, I feel at a loss how to enter upon a defence: and this because I cannot perceive that any thing I have advanced is the object of your correspondent's attack. It is true, he begins by expressing his disapprobation of imputed righteousness: but I am not the inventor of that doctrine, or of the terms by which it is expressed. If there be any thing objectionable in either, it is the apostle Paul that must be accountable for it, who in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Romans has repeatedly used the very language at which your correspondent has taken offence. If the objection had been made to any explanation of the doctrine which I had given, I should have considered myself as called upon to reply: but, as what is alleged is against imputation itself, I have no concern in the business. It

is on Paul that Christopher has made his attack, and he and Paul must settle the matter. It is true, he has explicitly stated the notion of imputation to which he objects, which he says is this—"To ascribe *that* to a man which he has not, whereby he is considered righteous, or a good man." But this is as foreign from any thing I have advanced as darkness is from light. To have answered *me*, he should have collected *my* ideas of the subject: if there were none to collect, there could be nothing to answer. I have no notion of "ascribing" the righteousness of Christ to the believing sinner personally, any more than he has. I should as soon "ascribe" the unrighteousness of the sinner to Christ as the righteousness of Christ to the sinner. The *imputation* of sin to Christ, and of righteousness to the sinner, appears to me to consist, not in God's thinking or judging of characters differently from what they are, or declaring them to be what they are not; but in his treating or *dealing with them*,\* not according to their personal merit or demerit, but according to those of another. God neither thought his Son to be wicked nor declared him to be so; but he treated or dealt with him *as if he had been so*. God neither thinks the character of the believing sinner such as his righteous law approves, nor declares it to be so: but he treats or deals with him *as if it were so*, out of respect to the righteousness of him in whom he believeth.

Of course, by the term *righteous*, as it is used with reference to justification, I do not mean the same thing as being "a good man." I should as soon consider Christ's being "made sin for us" as the same thing with his being made a bad man, as I should our being made "the righteousness of God in him" to be the same thing with our being made good men. This is utterly confounding justification with sanctification, which indeed appears to me to be the drift of the whole piece.

The statement which Christopher gives of men's recovery by Jesus Christ seems to represent sinners not as accepted of God out of regard to what Christ has done, but on the ground of "the divine life and likeness within us;" and that the righteousness which he disclaims as the ground of his hope is not what he performs under the character of a Christian, but merely what he has performed prior to his sustaining that character, or while he was unrighteous.

The connection in which he has introduced Col. i. 27, "Christ in you the hope of glory," renders it pretty evident that by "Christ," in this passage, he understands the image or likeness of Christ in us. But

surely this was not Paul's meaning; of Christ, who was in or among the Colossians, he adds, "whom we preach." But it was not the image of Christ in our hearts that was the subject of Paul's ministry.

If even our evangelical obedience be the ground of acceptance with God, I should be glad to be informed—(1) How is it that *works* are constantly excluded in the justification of sinners?—Rom. iii. 21—27; iv. 2—8. (2) How is it that God is said to *justify the ungodly*?—Ch. iv. 5. I do not suppose that, when a sinner is justified, he is actually an enemy to God; for in the same passages he is supposed to be a believer, which character is inconsistent with such a state of mind. But, as Dr. Owen has observed, "To say that he who worketh not is justified through believing, is to say that his works, whatever they be, have no influence in his justification; nor hath God in justifying him any respect unto them."—(3) How is it that the righteousness by which we are justified is represented as *revealed* to faith, and as being *to* and *upon* all them that believe?—Ch. i. 17; iii. 22. Are the dispositions of our own minds "revealed" to us?—(4) How is it that such *objections* are made to the Christian doctrine of justification, if holy dispositions were the ground of it? If Paul had taught justification by evangelical works, and not only meant to reject those which were done prior to embracing the gospel, with what plausibility could it have been objected that this doctrine gave liberty to sin? If the "righteousness through which grace reigns to eternal life (ch. v. 21) meant, as Christopher explains it, "our own righteous dispositions," with what propriety does the apostle ask, in the following words, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!"

Your correspondent remarks that "his friend Gains seems partial to the phrase *imputed righteousness*." Is it unbecoming a Christian, then, to be partial to the phraseology of Scripture? What if I should ask friend Christopher whether he be not prejudiced against this phrase; and not the phrase only, but the doctrine conveyed by it? He might answer, No: I shall allow it in the same sense in which sin is imputed to us, that is, really and truly, by participation of a fallen nature. Then really and truly, friend Christopher, either you or I are entirely out as to the meaning of words. Does the word *impute* really and truly mean to participate? When Abimelech pleaded before Saul, saying "Let not the king *impute* any thing unto his servant" (1 Sam. xxii. 15), did he mean, Do not cause me to participate in a conspiracy? When Shimci entreated David, saying, "Let not my lord *impute* iniquity unto me" (2 Sam. xix. 19), did he mean, Do not make me wicked?

\* In a subsequent record of his views, the author defines imputation as consisting not of *treatment*, but *charging* or *reckoning*, which is the ground of treatment. See p. 827.—ED.



Does he not rather mean, Do not deal with me according to my desert?

And does the imputation of the sin of our first parent to his posterity consist in participation? That it is connected with it I allow. Could an individual be found who had never made the sin of his first father his own, by participating in it, he would, I suppose, have nothing to fear from its being imputed to him. And much the same may be said concerning righteousness; for until a sinner believes in Christ, which includes an acquiescence in the gospel way of salvation, he has nothing to hope from imputation. These things have an inseparable connection; but the plain meaning of words must be altered before we can consider them as the same.

We have the same authority for believing that our sins were imputed to Christ as that Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity. The word "impute" is used in neither case, but both are compared to the imputation of righteousness. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."—"He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—Rom. v. 19. 2 Cor. v. 21. Now will Christopher affirm that Christ was really and truly made sin by participation?

It does not follow from hence that "the old man, any more than the new man, is a mere creature of imputation," or that the necessity of "repentance and the love of God" is superseded. It is strange that Christopher should have so little regard for the credit of his own understanding as to insinuate the contrary. He who cannot distinguish between the blessings of justification and sanctification, without setting aside the importance of either, has in my opinion yet to learn one of the first principles of the oracles of God.

#### REMARKS ON GOD'S JUSTIFYING THE UN- GODLY.

[In Reply to Dr. Joseph Jenkins, of Walworth.]

The passage in my last paper on which J. J. has animadverted is as follows—"God is said to *justify the ungodly*."—Rom. iv. 5. I do not suppose that when a sinner is justified he is actually an enemy to God; for in the same text he is supposed to be a *believer*, which character is inconsistent with such a state of mind."

Now he who controverts these principles may be supposed to maintain the contrary; namely, that when a sinner is justified he is actually at enmity with God; and that though he is a believer, as the text intimates, yet his being so includes nothing inconsistent with such a state of mind. And

such in fact is the statement of this correspondent.—(1) He endeavors to maintain that when a sinner is justified he is God's enemy. It is true, he says, "I do not suppose, any more than Gaius, that a man can be justified and at the same time be an enemy to God;" but he means only to allow that he does not continue an enemy to God *after* he is justified, concerning which there is no dispute. The question is,—In what state of mind is the sinner, with regard to enmity and friendship, *antecedent* to his justification? And, by all that J. J. has written, it appears that he considers him as God's enemy "until" he is justified.—(2) He labors to prove that his being a *believer* includes in it nothing inconsistent with such a state of mind. The faith which is "counted for righteousness," he supposes, must either mean Christ, the object of faith, or a spiritual illumination of the understanding, in which the mind is passive: at all events, it must include no holy disposition of heart, that is, nothing inconsistent with enmity to God.

Before we examine these positions, it seems necessary to have a clear understanding of what is meant by justification. J. J. distinguishes between justification in the eye of justice, or a sinner's being accepted in the Beloved: and justification as it respects the sensation or perception of the blessing in a person's own mind; adding, that "his more immediate business is with the latter." I am certainly obliged to him for this explanation, for without it I should have supposed the question to relate wholly to acceptance with God itself, and not to the sensation or perception of this blessing in the mind; and still less to the pleas which the sinner is to "bring forward," in his application for mercy. I must say, however, if J. J.'s "business" lies here, assuredly mine does not; having never, that I recollect, advanced a single idea on this subject.

But, if it did, it would not affect the argument; for, if we be not in a justified state till we cease to be the enemies of God, it is impossible we should enjoy any previous sensation or perception of it, as no one can truly perceive that which does not exist.

To me it appears that the distinguishing of justification into acceptance with God, and the sensation or perception of this blessing which a sinner enjoys, has nothing in the Scriptures to support it. I think it will be found on inquiry that the former is that which the sacred writings term justification, and that the latter is denominated "peace with God," which follows on it as a consequence.—Rom. v. 1. A sensation of peace is as distinct from justification as a sensation of wrath is distinct from condemnation. As some are justified, that is, exempt from the curse of the law, and entitled to everlasting life, according to the uniform declarations of the statute-book of heaven, while, owing

to a cloud upon their minds, they are far from clearly perceiving it; so others stand condemned, that is, exposed to the curse of the law, according to the uniform declarations of the same statute-book of heaven, while, through ignorance and unbelief, they have no proper sense of it.

The question is not concerning any secret persuasions in the mind of man, or any secret purpose in the mind of God; but simply this, Do the holy Scriptures, which form the statute-book of heaven, and fully express the mind of God, pronounce any man pardoned or justified in his sight, while his heart is in a state of enmity against him?

"It is plainly implied," says J. J., "in the Lord's justifying the *ungodly*, that they are *ungodly until* justified. But, before any conclusion can be drawn from these words, it is necessary to ascertain the meaning of them, particularly of the term "*ungodly*." This term, I apprehend, is not designed, in the passage under consideration, to express the actual *state of mind* which the party at the time possesses, but the *character* under which God considers him in bestowing the blessing of justification upon him. Whatever be the present state of a sinner's mind—whether he be a haughty pharisee or a humble publican—if he possess nothing which can in any degree balance the curse which stands against him, or at all operate as a ground of acceptance with God, he must be justified, if at all, as unworthy, *ungodly*, and wholly out of regard to the righteousness of the Mediator. He that is justified must be justified as "*ungodly*," in like manner as he that is saved must be saved among the "*chief of sinners*."—1 Tim. i. 15. But as Paul's using the latter expression of himself does not prove that at the time he uttered it he was one of the worst of characters, so neither does his using the former concerning others prove that they are at the time of their justification the enemies of God. If it be objected that the term "*ungodly*" is nowhere else used but to express a state of enmity to God, it may be answered that God is nowhere else said to "*justify the ungodly*." The interpretation put upon this term, therefore, is no more singular than the phraseology of the text itself. Both the one and the other ought no doubt to be interpreted by the general tenor of Scripture, and the particular scope of the writer. If the sense here given clash with either of them, let it be rejected. To me it appears in harmony with both. When the reader has considered the following observations, let him judge whether it be so or not.

1. It is the uniform language of the Scriptures that "*without repentance there is no forgiveness*."—Psal. xxxii. 5. Prov. xxviii. 13. Mark i. 4; iv. 12. Luke iii. 5; xxiv. 47. Acts iii. 19; v. 31; viii. 22. 1 John i. 9. The very passage to which the apostle in

the context refers (Psal. xxxii.) as affording an example of the imputation on which he was treating, clearly holds up the idea of forgiveness as preceded by repentance. It is of no account to allege the difference between pardon and justification; for whatever difference there is between these blessings, there is none which affects the argument. They are not so distinct as that the one can in any instance exist without the other. He that is justified is pardoned. If, therefore, repentance precede the one, it must precede the other. But, if justification be preceded by repentance, it cannot be said that a person is an enemy to God "*until* he is justified," for enmity and repentance are inconsistent.

2. It is the uniform language of the New Testament that *those whom God justifieth are believers*.—John iii. 18, 36; v. 24. Acts xiii. 39. Rom. iii. 26, 28; iv. 24; v. 1; x. 4. Gal. ii. 16; iii. 24. Phil. iii. 9. The very persons referred to in the text under consideration are supposed to "*believe in him who justifieth the ungodly*." But faith "*worketh by love*," and is therefore inconsistent with a state of enmity to God. If the uniform language of Scripture had been, we believe by or through being justified, we should certainly have concluded that justification in the order of things preceded believing, and consequently that those who are justified were at the same time enemies to God. And as it is the reverse, or that we are justified by or through believing, why should we not equally conclude that faith in the order of things precedes justification, and consequently that they who are justified were at the time not the enemies but the friends of God?

3. The apostle, in the same epistle as that which contains the passage in question, speaks of justification as *preceded by vocation or calling*. "*Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate: whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified*."—Rom. viii. 29, 30. It cannot be pleaded that the order of things is not here preserved. It is allowed on all hands that predestination is preceded in the order of nature by foreknowledge, calling by predestination, and glorification by justification. What good reason then can be given why justification should not from hence be concluded to be preceded by vocation? But the vocation here spoken of is a holy one, the same with that mentioned in 2 Tim. i. 9, "*He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling*;" which must therefore be inconsistent with enmity to God.

4. The design of the apostle in the context was to establish the doctrine of *free justification by faith in Jesus Christ*, without the works of the law—a justification that

should exclude boasting, or glorying. Now this design is equally accomplished by the interpretation here defended as by the contrary. I am aware that this ground will be disputed, and let it be disputed. The principle on which I rest my defence, on this part of the subject, is the following:—**WHAT-EVER BE THE STATE OF A PERSON'S MIND AT THE TIME, IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE AS TO THE GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION.**—J. J. will not deny this: he has acknowledged as much himself. "In this case," he says, "all works, good and bad, are out of the question;" and, if so, doubtless *all dispositions* are the same. None of them, be they what they may, can avail any thing towards justifying one who has not continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them. But, if so, of what account is it to the doctrine of justification by grace, to maintain their non-existence at the time? The existence or non-existence of things that are "out of the question" can signify nothing to the argument, and afford no ground of glorying.—Moreover: if the existence of a holy disposition at the time of our being first made partakers of the blessing of justification detract from the grace of it, why should it not operate in the same way afterwards? Justification is not of so transient a nature as to be begun and ended in an instant. Though not progressive, like sanctification, yet it is a permanent privilege, or *state* of blessedness bestowed on believers. As condemnation is a state of exposedness to the curse, under which every unbeliever, remaining such, *continues*; so justification is a state of exemption from it, in which every believer in Jesus *abides*. It is true we are *introduced* to this blessed state at the moment of believing: from that instant we are no more under the law, but under grace: the curses of the former stand no longer against us, and the blessings of the latter become our portion. But, though our introduction to the blessing be transient, yet the blessing itself continues as long as we continue believers in Christ, and united to him, which is to the end. Hence justification and condemnation are each described in language expressive of their continuity. "It is God that *justifieth*: who is he that *condemneth*? He that believeth on the Son hath *everlasting life*: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God *abideth* on him." Hence also believers, in every stage of life, deal with Christ for justification, desiring nothing more than that they may be found in him, not having their own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. And this accounts for Abraham's believing for righteousness, as we shall see presently, not merely when he first believed in God, but after he had loved and served him a number of years; and for Da-

vid's having righteousness imputed to him without works on his recovery from a state of backsliding. Now do the holy dispositions of Christians detract from the freeness of their continued acceptance with God? If not, why should the existence of any such dispositions detract from the freeness of their first acceptance? If it be necessary that the mind be at enmity with God, "until" we are first introduced to this blessing in order to its being merely of grace, why should it not be equally necessary that it should remain so through life, in order to its continuing to be merely of grace?

5. Neither Abraham nor David, whose cases the apostle selects for the illustration of his argument, was, at the time referred to, the enemy of God. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness;" and it is concerning his justification that the following reflection is made. "Now to him that worketh is the reward reckoned, not of grace, but of debt." It is here plainly supposed of Abraham that if he had "worked," and so obtained the reward, it had been a matter of debt, and he had had whereof to glory. And did not Abraham work prior to the period to which this refers? He certainly should not have performed a single good work, but have been an enemy to God, according to J. J.'s hypothesis. But the truth is, he had been a believer in God and a true worshipper of him for many years, at the time when he is said to have believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.—Gen. xv. 6; xii. 1—3. Heb. ix. 8. Here then is an account of one who had walked with God for a series of years "working not, but believing on him that justifieth the ungodly;" a clear proof that by "working not" the apostle did not mean a wicked inaction, but a renunciation of works as the ground of acceptance with God.

"David also," continues the apostle, describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Of whom speaketh the psalmist, in this thirty-second psalm; of himself, or of some other man? Of himself, as is manifest from the whole psalm. It is one of those penitential songs which he penned after his fall and recovery. The third and fourth verses describe the state of his mind after he had sinned, and before he had repented. The "blessedness" of which he speaks is a blessedness arising from *free* forgiveness. Hence the apostle, in the text under consideration, very properly puts this gloss upon his words: "David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." David did not say it was "without



works:" he said nothing about works; but he described the blessedness of him who possessed a *free* forgiveness, which was the same thing. Paul supposed that David "worked not:" but had he never performed a "good work" at the period referred to? Was he at that time an enemy to God? J. J.'s hypothesis requires that it should have been so: but it was not so. Let the reader judge whether the cases of Abraham and David be not decisive, and whether they ought not to decide the controversy, as to the meaning of the passage in question.

I had supposed that when a sinner is justified he is not an enemy to God, seeing he is a *believer*. J. J. attempts, it should seem, to invalidate this argument by so explaining faith as that it shall include in it nothing inconsistent with enmity to God. I cannot but remark the unpleasant situation of the writer in this part of his work. With him it seems a very difficult thing to determine what the apostle means by that faith which is counted for righteousness. "If it were to be considered as a *work*, he supposes it would overturn the whole reasoning of the verse." If it were considered as a work performed to furnish a ground of justification it would; but not else. That faith is a work we are expressly taught by one who perfectly understood its nature.—John vi. 28, 29. But that we are justified by it as a work, or as a part of moral obedience, J. J. knows I utterly deny. But, if it be not counted for righteousness as a work, "it *must* mean either Christ the object of faith, or a spiritual illumination of the understanding, in which the mind is totally passive." That it does not mean the former, one should think, is evident, in that it is called believing. "He that believeth, his faith, or believing, is counted for righteousness." And if it mean the latter it will go to confound what the Scriptures elsewhere distinguish. Spiritual blindness is represented as an obstacle to believing, and spiritual illumination as that which precedes it.—2 Cor. iv. 4; John vi. 40. But faith in this passage "*must*" mean this or that. Perhaps it *must*, in order to comport with J. J.'s hypothesis: and this spiritual light or discernment *must* also be supposed to have nothing spiritual in it, or it will be equally inconsistent with a state of enmity to God as believing. But let him seriously consider whether that hypothesis which requires such forced and far-fetched interpretations of Scripture to support it can be any part of "evangelical truth."

To me it appears a plain and easy matter to ascertain the meaning of faith in the passage referred to. It is believing; and this believing is counted for righteousness; not as a work, but as the prescribed means of interesting us in the righteousness of Christ. Thus it was common for Christ to

say to diseased people, whom he had healed, "Thy faith hath saved thee." Did he mean by this to make a Saviour of faith? No: faith did not cause, nor so much as co-operate, in these cures, which were accomplished only by his own power: but it was the prescribed means by which they became interested in the exercise of that power. I use the term interest as I do that of justification, not for what we may have in the secret purpose of God, but for that part or portion which we have in spiritual blessings according to the revealed will or promise of God in the Scriptures. The healing efficacy proceeded from Christ, and not from faith, yet without faith they would not have been healed; and the same may be said of justification.

#### NATURE OF IMPUTATION.

[In Reply to Ignotus.]

I CORDIALLY agree with your correspondent, on the necessary connection between the doctrine of Christ's divinity and justification by the imputation of his righteousness. But the former of the two grounds on which he rests it I would seriously entreat him to re-consider. He represents the imputation of righteousness as consisting in a "transfer of surplus virtue;" and as every creature, however exalted, owes its all to God, it can have none to spare for the use of others. But, if this be the nature of imputation, how are we to understand it in the case of the *first* Adam? If, instead of transgressing the divine precept, he had faithfully obeyed it, there is every reason to conclude that his posterity, instead of being exposed to sin and death, as they now are, would have been confirmed in a state of holiness and happiness; that is, his obedience would have been imputed to them, as is now his disobedience. Yet in this case there would have been no "surplus" of obedience, or any thing done by our first parent beyond what was his duty to do. From hence, I conceive, it is clear that the imputation of righteousness consists not in the transfer of overplus of virtue; and that divinity is not necessarily, and in all cases, connected with it.

I shall not here take upon me to decide whether Christ's obedience to the Father was necessary on his own account. Whether it was or not makes nothing as to his being qualified to accomplish our salvation. The imputation of righteousness, as the Scriptures represent it, appears to me to be this:—*God for wise and holy ends blessed one, or many, in reward of the obedience of another, to whom they are related, in a manner as though it were performed by themselves.* Thus, if the first Adam had continued obe-

dient, God would have *expressed his approbation* of his conduct, not only by confirming him, but his posterity after him, in a state of holiness and happiness. And thus *the obedience unto death* yielded by the second Adam is represented as that with which God is so well pleased that, *in reward of it*, he not only exalted Him far above all principality and power, but bestowed full, free, and eternal salvation on all those who believe in him, how great soever had been their transgressions.

But, it may be said, if this be the idea which the Scriptures give us of the imputation of righteousness, and it be applicable to the first as well as the second Adam, whence arises the necessity of the divinity of Christ, in order that his righteousness should be imputed to us? I do not suppose that it was necessary to imputation itself, but rather to its being *available* to the justification of the ungodly. Imputed righteousness may take place, whether it be that of a mere man or of one who is both God and man; but the righteousness of a mere creature would not avail for the pardon and justification of rebellious men.

There is an important difference between the supposed imputation of the righteousness of the first Adam, and that of the second. God's promising to bless the sinless posterity of the former, by confirming them in a state of holiness and happiness, had nothing in it which could clash with any of his perfections. He might thus have blessed them without any previous obedience being performed on their behalf, as it appears that he actually did the elect angels. His promising to bless the children, in reward of the obedience of the parent, was that, while he expressed his love to both, he might also express his love of righteousness. But, in receiving rebellious sinners to favor, there required a proviso for the security of his honor, that he might appear to be what he was—*Just*, as well as *the Justifier*. "It became him, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The glory of the divine character must not be tarnished. That for the sake of which we are pardoned and justified therefore, be it what it may, must at least be *equivalent*, as to its influence on moral government, to justice having taken its natural course. Hence arises the necessity of the deity of Christ, in order to our justification. Though the obedience of a mere creature might be the medium of conveying blessedness to his sinless posterity, yet none but that of a divine person could accomplish the salvation of sinners: because the obedience of a mere creature could not have done such honor to the divine law as should have been equal to the dishonor which it had received from us: nor could the sufferings of any one that was not

God have expressed the divine displeasure against sin in so striking and impressive a manner as if every transgressor had received his just recompense of reward. But, admitting the Redeemer to be divine, all is plain and easy. Hence that which is peculiarly ascribed to the deity of Christ in regard of his sufferings is their *value* or *virtue*. "By *himself* he purged our sins."—"The blood of Jesus Christ, *his son*, cleanseth us from all sin."—Heb. i. 3. 1 John i. 7.

#### ON IMPUTATION.

[From a MS. of the author, without date.]

It has been common to suppose that we are so implicated in Adam's transgression, or that such a union subsisted between him and his posterity, as that what was done by the one was done by the other; or that we are really accountable for his disobedience, it being our disobedience as much as the act of one part of the body belongs to the whole man. Thus, or to this effect, I myself have written in certain publications; particularly in my answer to Mr. Dan. Taylor.\* But since that time I have had different thoughts on the subject, which, however, I at present only put down as thoughts, and not as settled articles of faith.

Unless we had full evidence from Scripture of different intelligent beings being so united as that the voluntary actions of one shall properly belong to the other, I ought not to believe that so it is. It is certainly contrary to all our ideas of accountableness, and to every dictate of conscience. If Adam's transgression in Eden were really ours, why do we not *repent* of it as we do for our other sins? Mr. Hall, late of Arnsby, whose ideas on Imputation were entirely such as are here opposed, yet describes repentance as "arising from a conviction of *personal blame*." † We may be sorry for the sin of Adam, and of other sinners; but we never *repent* of that which we in our own persons have not committed.

I. Is there not an important difference between *punishment* and *suffering*? All punishment is suffering; but all suffering is not punishment. If a soldier have his hand cut off for lifting it up against his commander, it is punishment; but, if it be shot off in battle, it is mere suffering.

II. Though an innocent creature cannot justly be exposed to punishment, yet may it not be to suffering? If a commander-in-chief order a troop of his best soldiers to scale a wall in the mouth of danger, they are exposed to suffering; nor would they

See page, vol. I—483

† Circular Letter of the Northamptonshire Association, 1780.

think of replying, as in the case of his ordering them to receive each a hundred lashes, "What have we done to deserve this treatment?" But if a human commander for the accomplishment of a wise, just, and good object, may thus expose his innocent men to suffering, why may not the same be said of the great master of the universe? Have we not been too much in the habit of concluding that suffering necessarily supposes the party to have sinned; and so because we saw the human race suffer, even in their earliest infancy, we have concluded that they must have sinned in the person of their grand progenitor. But do not the brute creation also suffer? yet they have not sinned. Did not the family of Achan suffer death, as well as his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep? yet they were not transgressors in "the accursed thing," any more than the cattle. Are we not so linked together in society that in millions of examples one suffers the consequence of another's crime, though he partook not with him in the guilt? It may be true that *all suffering supposes sin somewhere*. The suffering of the brutes may be a part of the punishment of the sin of man, who has a propriety in them; and the suffering of Achan's family was undoubtedly a part of the punishment of his sin. But yet it does not necessarily suppose sin in the suffering party.

III. May not the same event be a punishment to the guilty party, and to the innocent mere suffering? The death of Achan's sons and daughters, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, as well as his own death, was to him a punishment, but to them mere suffering. And supposing his children to be grown up, and to be entirely under the influence of the love of God and righteousness, they must have hated their father's crime, and have acquiesced in the doom; not on the principle of being participants of his guilt, but of such a measure being a just punishment to him, and on their part adapted to the general good. "Let our lives," they would say, "be made a sacrifice that may stand as a lasting monument to Israel never more to touch the accursed thing!" In such a case, their death though a part of their father's punishment, yet to them would be merely an affliction, an affliction that should, through the grace of God, introduce them to everlasting life.

Some righteous persons might perish in the overthrow of Judea by the Romans, who had all along sighed and cried for the abominations of the land. To the nation that event was punishment, but to them it might be mere affliction, and of the nature of a blessing. Now what consequence would follow were I to suppose the sentence of death, and of its antecedent miseries, passed upon all mankind in consequence of Adam's

sin, to be to him a punishment, but to them merely an affliction?

There are "*other instances*" of Imputation as well as that of Adam's sin to his posterity, from which it is possible some light may be derived to this important subject: e. g. our sin was imputed to Christ, and his righteousness is imputed to us. "He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21. And, as both these instances of imputation are mentioned together, it should seem that they both proceeded on the same principle.

In what sense then was our sin imputed to Christ, or how was he "made sin?" Surely not by a *participation* of it, for he is expressly said in the same passage to have *known no sin*. God did not judge him to be the sinner, for his judgments are according to truth. The whole seems to have been that for wise and gracious ends *he was treated as though he had been* the sinner, and the greatest sinner in the world.

Farther, In what sense is Christ's righteousness imputed to us, or how are we made the righteousness of God in him? Not by a *participation* of it. It is not true, nor will it ever be true, that the holy excellence of Christ is so ours as that we cease to be unworthy, and are deserving of eternal life. The whole appears to be the same as in the former instance, God for the sake of the obedience of his Son *treats us as though we were righteous, worthy, or meritorious*.

Since writing the above, however, I have some doubts whether imputation consist in *treatment*. Rather, is it not that which is the *ground* of treatment? I have said in "Dialogues, Letters, and Essays," vol. ii. p. 50, "Imputation of sin or righteousness consists in *charging* or *reckoning* to the account of the party in such a way as to impart to him its evil or beneficial effects."

#### TO THE AFFLICTED.

THOSE whose Christian compassion induces them frequently to visit the sick see and hear things of which others can scarcely form any conception. They see affliction, not merely in easy circumstances, wherein it is alleviated as far as possible by the comforts of life, but as it exists in the poor man's dwelling, aggravated by privations and hardships, many of which would seem intolerable to some, even in a time of health. They sympathize with you, and as far as they are able, it is presumed, administer to your relief.

But there is one thing which has particularly struck the writer of this address; namely, *the different manner in which affliction is borne by religious and irreligious people*. He wishes to be understood as speaking



*generally*, rather than *universally*. Some who are thought to be religious are not so; and some that are truly religious are the subjects of morbid nervous sensibility; while others, who are not so, have much constitutional patience and equanimity. But, other things being equal, he has perceived a wide difference in favor of religion. In visiting the dwellings of Christian people in times of affliction, his heart has been cheered by their cheerfulness. Their troubles have seemed to be more than balanced by their enjoyments. Hope has glistened in their very tears, and submission to the will of God has brightened their emaciated countenances. But, on entering the abodes of the irreligious, such discontent, despondency, and misery, have appeared, that he has come away quite dejected. The smile of hope and the tear of joy were there alike unknown: all was darkness, and the prospect of thicker darkness.

Let us try to find out the causes and the cure of this state of mind, which adds so much to the miseries of life. If every one could tell his tale, and would tell the truth, we might hear some such accounts as these:—

My heart was set upon certain things, and I seemed almost to have gained them, when unexpectedly I was seized with this heavy affliction. And now all my plans are broken; I seem likely to die disappointed; and, what is worse, I have thought nothing, or next to nothing, of a hereafter.

I have lived, says another, a thoughtless and careless life, putting the evil day far from me. I began by entertaining a dislike to the worship of God, and so forsook it, and turned the sabbath into a day of sports. I kept bad company, and soon began to doubt the truth of the Bible. I drank, swore, and when in company laughed at religion; though a secret persuasion that it would prove true sometimes made me very unhappy when alone. I laid my account with living as long as my neighbors; but I am afraid now I shall not recover, and that my soul is lost. Oh, how little did I think, a few weeks ago, that I should be so soon arrested in my course! What have I done? What can I do?

I have lived a sober life, says a third, and have not been used to doubt but that through the merits of Christ this would answer every purpose: but, since I have been laid aside, I have been thinking, in case I should die, whether this ground will bear me; and, the more I think of it, the more it seems to sink under me. I am a sinner, and know not how my sins are to be forgiven.

I have been brought up in a Christian family, says a fourth, and have heard the gospel from my childhood; yet my conscience tells me that I am not a Christian. I heard the truth, but never received it in

the love of it, that I might be saved. I conformed to family worship, but my heart was never in it. So much was it against the grain of my inclination that I longed to get from under the yoke. At length my father died, and I had what I wished for—my liberty. Since then I have been very wicked. And now I am brought down to death's door. I know not what will be the end. The Lord have mercy upon me!

If any of these cases be yours, or nearly so, allow me to remind you that a time of affliction is a time when God calls you to a serious inquiry into the state of your soul. "In the day of adversity consider." It is the only time, it may be, in which the voice of religion and conscience can be heard. You may have been "as the wild ass used to the wilderness," neither to be turned nor restrained; all those who have sought to reclaim you have but wearied themselves: but, as in her month she was to be found, so are you in yours. Consider then that God has laid his hand upon you that he may cause you to feel what he could do, and induce you to hearken while he reasons with you. He has awakened you also to some sense of your danger, that you may feel your need of the salvation of Christ ere it is forever hid from your eyes. I dare not comfort you on the consideration of your distress of mind as though it were a hopeful sign of salvation. If it lead you to the Saviour, you will be saved; but, if not, it may be to you but the beginning of sorrows. Your sins are much more numerous and heinous than you are aware of; it is an evil and bitter thing to have departed from the living God, and to have spent so large a part of the life he gave you without his fear being in you. God might justly cut you off, and cast you into perdition.

But consider the faithful saying, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of sinners." You have doubtless heard of this, but perhaps have never considered its import. If Jesus came into the world on such an errand, he must be the Messiah foretold by the prophets, the Son of God, and the Saviour of men. If he came into the world to save sinners, the world must have been in a lost and hopeless condition. If any thing could have been done by man towards saving himself, it would doubtless have been left to him: God would not unnecessarily have interfered, especially to send his Son to be made a sacrifice for us. It does not comport with the wisdom of God to send his Son to suffer and die, to accomplish that which might have been accomplished without him. Moreover, if Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, he must have come *with a design*, which is what no mere creature ever did. Whatever design there may be *concerning* our coming into the world, we are not the subjects of

it: but Christ was the subject of design. "He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;" and this from a state of mind that we are called upon to imitate.—Phil. ii. 7. His coming into the world was nothing less than *the Word being made flesh, and dwelling among men; or that eternal life that was with the Father being manifested to us.* But, if all this be true, sin must be indeed an evil and bitter thing, and salvation from it a matter of the greatest importance. And shall we so pursue our farms and merchandize as to make light of it? "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." It is sufficient to warrant our coming to him that such are we. Finally, if he came to save the chief of sinners, whatever our sins have been, they can furnish no reason for despair. Even the sin against the Holy Ghost is not unpardonable as being too great for the mercy of God, or for the atonement of Christ; but as precluding that which is necessary to an interest in both—*repentance.*—Heb. vi. 6. If therefore our sins be lamented, and we have faith in Christ, however numerous or heinous they have been, we shall find mercy. If a ship founders at sea, and while her company are some floating on pieces of wreck, and others swimming for their lives, a friendly vessel bears down and throws out a rope to every one of them, would it be for any one to hesitate as to his taking hold of it?

Many in the day of adversity have, like the prodigal, been brought to a right mind; but many are not so. Some are unaffected, and even hardened, under their afflictions. Nothing is heard but murmurings and complainings; and nothing seen but sullen discontent, depression, and despondency. Others, being deeply entrenched in the persuasion that they have lived a good life, all that is said to them respecting the gospel makes no impression on their minds. Others are secure in consequence of having imbibed some false scheme of religion; and others, who are tender at the time, and appear to believe the gospel, are no sooner restored to health than they lose their impressions, and return to their former courses.

Let us review these cases. If affliction has been the means of humbling you, and bringing you to a right mind, you have reason, not only to be reconciled to it, but to consider it among your greatest mercies. It has been good for you to bear the yoke of adversity; and this should teach you to be resigned to the will of God as to your future lot. "It was by affliction," said a good man, "that I was first brought into the way, and by affliction that I have been kept in it. 'Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have learned thy word.'"

But if the visitations of God have tended

only to *harden* you, and to provoke you to *sullenness and discontent*, you have reason to fear lest you should be given up to such a state of mind. "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more."—"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone!"

If you be full of *self-righteous confidence*, flattering yourself that your life has been good, and that you have nothing to fear, consider whether you be not in the very condition of those whom our Saviour describes as *whole*, and so *needing no physician*. You appear to have no wants; and therefore none of the blessings of the gospel are interesting to you. A very interesting narrative was published a few years since of such a case as this. A worthy minister, on visiting a dying man, was told by him with great self-complacency, that "he had never been guilty of any particular sins, and was not therefore uneasy on that score."—"To every thing I said," says the minister, "he gave that unlimited assent which, when coming from an unenlightened person, has always appeared to me peculiarly embarrassing. To every truth I stated, his monotonous reply was, 'Yes, sir,'—'To be sure, sir,'—'Certainly, sir,' and the like. I now felt (as I have often done under similar circumstances) discouraged, perplexed, and grieved; and could not but deeply lament the mental darkness under which the poor man appeared to be enveloped. After a short pause, I frankly confessed that I knew not what to say to him; observing that he appeared to have *no wants*—that the blessings of the gospel were for the poor, the wretched, and the lost—that if he were lamenting his sins, crying for mercy, and inquiring the way of salvation, I thought I should know how to address him; but that, with his present views, the gospel must necessarily appear to him of very little value." This faithful remonstrance, together with a charge of having neglected his own salvation for the sake of worldly advantage, which charge the minister was enabled to bring home to his conscience, appears to have been the means of awakening him to a sense of his danger. "What!" said he, "and is it too late? Is all lost? Is my poor soul abandoned? Have I lived in the neglect of all these things? And is it come to this? O what, what shall I do? O my sins! O my poor soul! O my God, my God! Shall I be cast off forever? What must I do to be saved? Is there no way open for me? O what, what must I do to be saved?"—"The way of salvation being pointed out to him, he appeared with great sincerity to embrace it, and died very happily. But many have died in the very spirit of the Jews, seeking after acceptance with God, without attaining it. And wherefore? "Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the

law: for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone."

But your security may be in consequence of your having imbibed *some false species of religion*, which influences your mind like an opiate, divesting you of all painful reflection, and filling you with dreams of future happiness. A confidence of this sort is more difficult to be shaken than self-righteous hope itself. Those who have not made much pretence to religion have not so great sacrifices to make in embracing the gospel as those who have. You account your darkness light: but, "if the light which is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!" There is an intoxicating quality in false religion, and in the false joys excited by it: like strong drink, it produces a kind of happiness at the time, and a vehement desire of repeating the delicious draught: but its end is bitter.—Prov. xxiii. 29—35. We have no mind to dispute with you, but wish to declare unto you the gospel of God, and leave it. If the "faithful saying" above referred to be received, it will issue in your salvation; if not, we can only deliver our own souls!

Finally: Though your mind may have undergone a change during your affliction, yet recollect that sick-bed repentances are often, though not always, like what is said of the goodness of Ephraim: "As a morning cloud, and as the early dew, it goeth away." If you abound in vows and promises as to your future life, it is rather a sign that you know but little of yourself than of a real change for the better. An immediate apprehension of death is capable of producing great effects, which are often mistaken for a change of heart. Be confident of the truth of Christ's doctrine and promises; but be diffident of yourself. To doubt his word is unbelief; but to be jealous of yourself is one of the fruits of faith. If God should restore you to health, and you prove by your Christian conversation that his word has taken deep root in your mind, your fellow-christians will rejoice over you, and join in blessing God that the day of visitation has been to you a day of salvation.

### THE HEAVENLY GLORY.

#### THOUGHTS ON THE NATURE AND PROGRESSIVENESS OF THE HEAVENLY GLORY.

ONE of the leading characteristics by which the religion of the Bible is distinguished from those systems of philosophy and morality which many would impose upon us in its place, is, that every thing pertaining to it bears a relation to eternity. The object of all other systems is at best to form the manners; but this rectifies the heart. They aspire only to fit men for this world; but this,

while it imparts those dispositions which tend more than any thing to promote peace, order, and happiness in society, fixes the affections supremely on God and things above.

That such should be the exclusive property of revealed religion is not surprising, since it is this only that assures us of the existence of an eternal hereafter. If we relinquish this, all beyond the grave is uncertainty, and our attention will of course be confined to the transitory concerns of a few revolving suns. The conclusion of those who doubt the resurrection ever has been and will be, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." But, believing in the Scriptures of truth, immortality opens to our view. This is the seed-time and eternity the harvest. All that is known of God and done for him in this life is preparatory to the joy that is set before us.

To this affecting theme, fellow-christians, let us bend our attention. Would we be heavenly-minded, we must think of what heaven is. "Would we set our affections on things above, we must know them, converse with them, and perceive their superior value to things on the earth. It is true, when all is done, it is but little we can comprehend. It is a weight of glory which if let down upon our minds in our present feeble state would overset them. It did not appear even to an inspired apostle, while upon earth, what believers "would be;" but if we can only obtain a few ideas of it, a glimpse of glory through the breakings of interposing clouds, it will more than repay us for the utmost attention. What pains do men take by artificial mediums to desecrate the heavenly bodies. Every discovery, whether real or imaginary, is to them a source of rapture and delight. Yet they expect no possession in these supposed worlds of wonder. It is not the object which they discover, but the act of discovery, which by giving birth to a momentary faue is their reward. And shall we be indifferent towards those blessed realities in which every thing that we discover is our own, and our own forever?

Let us first inquire into the NATURE of that blessedness which God has prepared for them that love him, and then consider its PROGRESSIVE character.

I have no desire to indulge in speculations concerning the place; nor to enter on any curious inquiries how spirits while separate from their bodies can receive or communicate ideas; nor to throw out conjectures upon any thing which God hath not been pleased to reveal. My object is, as far as may be, to collect the *scriptural* account of things, or to ascertain wherein consists that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand, and which will continue to flow as in rivers of pleasure for evermore.

The easiest and most satisfactory medium of conception which we have of these things



appears to me to be furnished by our own *present experience*. The Scriptures abundantly teach us that the blessedness of heaven is the same for substance as that which we now partake of by faith. This is clearly intimated in those passages in which *grace* is represented as the *earnest* and *foretaste* of glory. Our Saviour is said to have received power "to give *eternal life* to as many as were given him." "And *this*," he adds, "*is life eternal*, to know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." To whomsoever therefore Christ gives this knowledge, he gives the earnest of the promised possession, and which, as to the nature of it, is the same as the possession itself. The promises to them that overcome, in the second and third chapters of the Revelation of John, agree with what is actually experienced in measure in the present world, though expressed in highly figurative language, as the "eating of the tree of life," "partaking of the hidden manna," a being "clothed in white raiment," and "made pillars in the temple of God." Were we to read that sublime passage in the epistle to the Hebrews, without observing its introduction, we should undoubtedly consider it as a description of the heavenly state, and of that only:—"Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born who are written in heaven, God the judge of all, the spirits of just men made perfect, Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel!" What can this mean but the very heaven of heavens? Yet the apostle tells the Hebrews that they were already "*come ro*" this celestial city, and to all its honors and privileges. On what principle can this be understood but this, that the church below and the church above are one—"the whole family of heaven and earth," and he that cometh to one branch or part of it cometh in effect to the whole?

If then we can review the sources of our best and purest joys in this world, or observe those of the saints whose history is recorded in Scripture, and only add perfection to them, we have in substance the scriptural idea of heavenly glory. The nature of Canaan's goodly fruits was clearly ascertained by the clusters that were carried into the wilderness.

We have seen already that the grand source of spiritual enjoyment in the present life is the "knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." And what is this but an epitome of the gospel, and the faith of it? To have a just sense of the glory of the Lawgiver and the Saviour, and of the harmony between them in the salvation of lost sinners; to see every divine perfection as it is manifested in the person

and work of Christ; in a word, believingly to contemplate God in a Mediator . . . . is eternal life! This was the *water* which Christ imparted, and which to them who nibbed it became in them "a well of living water springing up into everlasting life."

Look at the enjoyment of the scripture saints, and see if they did not arise from the same spring that shall supply the city of the living God, even in the heaven of heavens. Every thing that manifested the glory of the divine character was to them a source of enjoyment; and, as all God's other works were wrought in subserviency to the redemption of the church by his Son, this was the theme which above all others engrossed their attention. What was it that filled Abraham's heart with joy? What that eclipsed the world in the esteem of Moses? What that made the tongue of David as the pen of a ready writer? It was Christ. That in the "everlasting covenant" which was all his salvation, and all his desire, was its containing the promise of Christ. If we find any of the prophets filled with more than usual ardor, it is when Christ is the theme: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.—Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.—Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." It is easy to see in these and similar passages a beam of heavenly glory shining upon the writers. In short, it was eternal life for them to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he *would* send.

What of heaven there was upon earth during the time of our Saviour's ministry consisted of the knowledge of him, and the knowledge of him involved that of the Father who sent him. Who can read the interview between Mary and Elizabeth, or the words of Simcon in the temple, without perceiving that a beam of celestial glory had descended upon them, and raised them above themselves? "My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour!"—"Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!"

And when Jesus commenced his public ministry what a charming interest was ex-

cited among the people. John, observing him as he walked, said to two of his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God!" They immediately follow Jesus. Jesus, turning to them, asks, "What seek ye?" They cannot express all they wish at that time and place; but, desirous of a more intimate acquaintance with him, ask, "Where dwellest thou?" The answer was, "Come and see." And when they had spent the evening with him, one of them (Andrew) goes and finds his brother Simon, and said, "We have found the Messiah!" And he brought him to Jesus. The day following Jesus findeth Philip, and said unto him, "Follow me!" Philip findeth Nathanael, and said, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."—"Can there any good thing," said Nathanael, "come out of Nazareth?" The answer is, as before, "Come and see."

The enjoyments of these people were a heaven upon earth: yet at the same time Christ was nothing to unbelievers. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."—"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."—"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among them (and they beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." Thus it was that of his fulness they all received, and grace for grace. In him the invisible God was in a manner rendered visible; for he who dwelt in his bosom came down and declared him. In beholding his glory, therefore, they beheld the glory of God, and were partakers in measure of eternal life.—John i. 10—18.

It is a remarkable saying of our Lord to Nathanael, when his mind was transported with joy and surprise, "Thou shalt see greater things than these—hereafter you shall see *heaven open*, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." The allusion is, I doubt not, to the vision of Jacob at Bethel; and what the ladder was to him—namely, a medium on which the angels of God ascended and descended, that Christ would be to his church after his resurrection. I say to *his church*; for though the intimation is given to Nathanael, yet it was not of any thing which *he* should see in distinction from others, but in common with them. The pronoun is plural: "Verily I say unto *you*, hereafter *you* shall see heaven open," &c. But what a saying is this! When the wrath of God was poured upon a guilty world, it is expressed by this kind of language: "The windows of heaven were opened." What then can it here denote but that God would in honor of HIM in whom

his soul delighted, pour forth a deluge of blessings in his name? Then, when Jesus had said unto his disciples, "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem;" when thousands of Jews found mercy under a single sermon, and tens of thousands from among the Gentiles partook of the benefits of his death; and when, as the great High Priest of our profession, he had entered into the holy of holies, and consecrated a new and living way for the most intimate communion between God and his people,—then was heaven opened.

The words of our Lord to Nicodemus are also here in point: "No man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven." The connection of the passage will convince us that a *personal* ascent or descent is out of the question. The meaning appears to be this: No man hath known the mind of God, save He that was always with him, and is still with him, dwelling as in his bosom.—Thus the phrase *ascending to heaven* is used in Deut. xxx. 12, and Rom. x. 6. The Greek might seek after wisdom, and the Jew make his boast of God; but no man should be able to find out the wisdom from above, nor discover the way of life, but by coming to Christ and taking him for his guide. Nicodemus, though a master in Israel, yet, while a stranger to Christ, stumbled at the very threshold of the heavenly doctrine. Christ told him of earthly things, namely, the new birth, which was only one of the first principles of true religion, a subject confined to the earth, and which every babe in grace was acquainted with, and he could not understand it: how then should he climb up as it were into heaven, and discover the mind of God? Christ taught what *he knew*, and they that received not his testimony were strangers to the kingdom of God; but they that received it, looking to him as the Israelites looked to the brazen serpent in the wilderness, found eternal life.

The prayer of our Saviour in behalf of his followers shows also that heaven consists in that which has its commencement in this world: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; *that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." What is heaven but to be of one heart with the Father and with Christ, even as they are one? Yet this blessed union is not confined to the heavenly state: it was to take place on earth, and be *visible* to men; how else should the world be convinced by it that Jesus was sent of God? So far then

as we enter into the views and pursuits of God and of his Christ, so much we enjoy of heaven; and, so far as we come up to this standard in our social and visible character so much does our conduct tend to convince the world of the reality of religion.

The kingdom of grace, especially the gospel dispensation, is described by Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, in language equally applicable to the kingdom of glory, and which, indeed, at first, brings the latter to our thoughts: "As it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

Once more: The prayer of Paul in behalf of the Ephesians, and of all saints, is very expressive on this subject: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. If there be a sentence in the Bible expressive of ultimate bliss, one would think it were this of being "filled with all the fulness of God:" yet this is held up as an object not altogether unattainable in the present life.

But let us look with close attention at the different parts of this wonderful prayer.

Observe, First: The *character* under which God is addressed: "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." We sometimes hear prayers among us beginning with a great flow of pompous words, and high-sounding names ascribed to the divine Majesty, without any *relation* to what is prayed for: but, the more we examine the prayers recorded in Scripture, the more we shall find that all their prefatory ascriptions are appropriate; that is, they bear an intimate relation to the petitions that follow. Thus Jacob prayed when in fear of Esau: "O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac," &c. Thus also David, "O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." And thus the souls under the altar, "How long, O Lord, *holy and true*, dost thou not judge and *avenge our blood?*" The same is observable in this prayer of Paul. "*The father* of our Lord Jesus Christ" is supposed to be through him the *Father* of all that believe in him, even of the whole "family in heaven and earth;" and to be more ready to impart good things to them

than the tenderest father can be to his children. The combining also of the church in heaven and the church on earth, and the representing of them as but *one family*, though in different situations, seem designed to furnish a plea that all the blessedness might not be confined to the former, but that a portion of it might be sent, as it were, from the Father's table to those children who had not yet passed the confines of sin and sorrow.

Secondly: The *rule* by which the Lord is entreated to confer his favors: "According to the riches of his glory." By the term "riches," we have the idea of fulness, or all-sufficiency; and, by the "riches of his glory," that perhaps of an established character for goodness. Taken together they suggest that, in drawing near to God, whether for ourselves or others, we must utterly renounce all human worthiness, and plead with him only for his name's sake. This is a plea which has never failed of success.

Thirdly: The *petitions* of which the prayer is composed: "That he would grant you—to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man," &c. By reviewing these petitions, as quoted above, we shall perceive that the first three are *preparatory* to those which follow. The import of them is that believers might be girded, as it were, for an extraordinary effort of mind. He prays for their being possessed of certain things "that they may be able" to comprehend other things. Such is the weakness of our souls for contemplating heavenly subjects, especially "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" of redeeming love, that, without grace to prepare us for it, it would be utterly beyond our reach.

The first thing prayed for is that we may be "strengthened with might by his Spirit in our inner man." We may possess strong mental powers, and by cultivating them may be able to reason high, and imagine things that shall fill our own minds and those of others with agreeable amazement: yet without that might which is produced by the Holy Spirit we may be mere babes in true religion, or, what is worse, "without God in the world." It is being strong in faith, in hope, and in love, that enables the mind to "lay hold of eternal life."

To this is added, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." For one to dwell in the heart of another is the same thing as to be the object of his intense affection; and as all that we at present know of Christ, and consequently all the love that we bear to him, has respect to his character as revealed in the gospel, it is "by faith" that he is said to dwell in us. Did not Christ dwell in the hearts of the Ephesians then already? He did: but the object of the apostle's prayer in this instance was, not that they



might be saints, but eminent saints; not that they might merely love Christ in sincerity, but in the highest or most intense degree. And, as this prayer is preparatory to what follows, it shows that the more intensely we love him the more capable we are of comprehending his love to us. We may talk of everlasting love, and fancy ourselves to have a deep insight into the doctrines of the gospel; but, if his name be not dearer to us than life, it will be little or nothing more than talk. The deeds of David would appear abundantly more glorious to Jonathan than to those cold-hearted Israelites who had no regard for him. Of all the disciples none were so loving as John, and none have written so largely on the love of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

Once more: He adds, "That ye being rooted and grounded in love." If Christ's dwelling in our hearts be expressive of love to him, it may seem as though this part of the prayer was a mere repetition: but the emphasis appears to lie upon the terms *rooted* and *grounded*. They are both metaphorical; one referring to a tree or plant, and the other to a building. Now, seeing it was the desire of the apostle that believers should soar upward in one respect, he is concerned that they should be prepared for it by descending downward in another. If the tree be not well rooted, or the building well grounded, the higher it rises the greater will be its danger of falling. And what is that in love to Christ, it may be asked, which is analogous to this? It may be its being accompanied in all its operations by a *knowledge* of his true character. One is greatly enamored of a stranger who has saved his life, and thinks at the time he should be happy to spend his days with him; but, as he comes to *know* him, he finds they cannot live together. He regards him as a deliverer, but dislikes him as a man. Another in similar circumstances not only feels grateful for his deliverance, but is attached to his deliverer. The more he knows of him the better he loves him, and wishes for nothing more than to dwell with him forever. The regard of the former we should say, is not "rooted," or "grounded;" but that of the latter is. It is easy to apply this to the love of Christ, and thus to account for the fall of many fair and towering professors, as well as for the growth of true believers.

But what is the *object* of all these petitions? They are only preparatory, as before observed, to what follows. And what is this? "That ye may be able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." The love ascribed to Christ is that, no doubt, which induced him to lay down his life for us, and which still operates in the carrying

into effect every branch of our salvation. But who can ascertain its dimensions? Whether we consider the extent of his designs, the duration of its effects, the guilt and misery from which it recovers us, or the glory and happiness to which it raises us, we are lost in the boundless theme. How should it be otherwise, when it "passeth knowledge," even that of the most exalted creatures?

The perception which we have of this great subject, however, is termed "comprehending," or *taking hold of it*. It is not peculiar to sublime and elevated genius to soar above the skies. The Christian, borne on the wings of faith, may adopt the language of Milton, and in a much more real and interesting sense:—

"Up-led by thee  
Into the heaven of heavens I have presumed,  
An earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air."

One more step remains ere we reach the top of this divine climax. In proportion as we comprehend the love of Christ, we are supposed to be "filled with all the fulness of God." If there be a sentence in the Bible expressive of ultimate bliss, I say again, surely it is this. To be filled with God, with the fulness of God, with all the fulness of God—what things are these? Yet, by being strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit in our inner man, by Christ's dwelling in our hearts by faith, and by being rooted and grounded in love, we are supposed to be *able*, in measure, to grasp the mighty theme of redeeming love, and so to partake of the divine fulness.

There is a perceivable and glorious fitness in God's imparting his fulness through the knowledge of the love of Christ. First: It is through his dying love that the fulness of the divine character is *displayed*. Much of God is seen in his other works; but it is here only that we behold his *whole* character. Great as were the manifestations of his glory under former dispensations, they contained only a partial display of him. "No man hath seen God at any time," said John: "but the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath *declared* him."—Secondly: It is through the dying love of Christ that a way is opened for the consistent *communication* of divine blessedness to guilty creatures. God's fulness is a mighty stream; but sin was a mountain which tended to impede its progress, and so to prevent our being filled with it. This mountain, by the dying love of Christ, was removed, and cast into the depths of the sea. Hence the way is clear: all spiritual blessings in heavenly places flow freely to us through Christ Jesus. God can pour forth the fulness of his heart towards sinners without the least dishonor attaching to his character as having connived at sin.—Third-

ly: It is as knowing the love of Christ that we imbibe the divine fulness. To be filled with the fulness of God, it is not only necessary that the object be exhibited, and a way opened for its being consistently communicated, but that the soul be emptied of those impediments which obstruct its entrance. There is no room for the fulness of God in the unrenewed mind: it is pre-occupied with other things. All its thoughts, desires, and affections, are filled with the trash of this world. If it assume the appearance of religion, still it is so bloated with self-sufficiency that there is no place for a free salvation. But knowing the love of Christ, as revealed in the gospel, all these things are accounted loss, and the fulness of God finds free access.

And as it is in the beginning, so it is in the whole of our progress. If we prefer the study of other things to the doctrine of the cross, even of those things which in subserviency to this are lawful, we shall pursue a barren track. We may feed our natural powers, but our graces will pine away. It is by the study of Christ crucified that our souls will be enriched; for this is the medium through which God delights to communicate of his fulness.

Having considered something of the nature of the heavenly blessedness, our next object of meditation is ITS PROGRESSIVE CHARACTER. By the manner in which some have spoken and written of the heavenly state, it would seem not only as if all would possess an equal measure of blessedness, but that this measure would be completed at once; if not on the soul's having left the body, yet immediately on its re-union with it at the resurrection. But such ideas appear to me to have no foundation in the Holy Scriptures. There is no doubt that salvation is altogether of grace, and that every crown will be cast at the feet of Christ: but it does not follow that they shall be in all respects alike. Paul's crown of rejoicing, for instance, will greatly consist in the salvation of those among whom he labored: but this cannot be the case with every other inhabitant of heaven. And, with respect to the completion of the bliss, there certainly will be no such imperfection attending it as to be a source of sorrow, but rather of joy, as affording matter for an endless progression of knowledge, and consequently of love, and joy, and praise. There is no sorrow in the minds of angels in their present state: yet they are described as looking with intenseness and delight into the doctrine of the cross; which clearly indicates a progressiveness in knowledge and happiness. God is perfect, and immutably the same; but it is as he is *revealed* or *manifested* to us that we enjoy him as our portion. If, therefore, he be gradually manifesting himself through time, and thereby causing the tide

of celestial bliss to rise higher and higher, it may be the same to eternity. Nay more, if heavenly bliss consist in knowing the love of Christ, and that love, when all is said and done, "passeth knowledge," it must be so: there must either come a period when the finite mind shall have perfectly comprehended the infinite, and therefore can have nothing more to learn, or knowledge and happiness must be eternally progressive.

I might here consider the doctrine as proved; but other evidences will appear by examining the *causes* of it, as taught us in the Scriptures. That the happiness of saints and angels is now increasing is abundantly evident from the progressive state of various things from whence it rises. Our Lord assures us that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth: but, if so, the gradual progress of his kingdom among men, from its first beginning, must have caused a gradual influx of joy to the heavenly world. The same might be said, no doubt, of other things which are working together for the accomplishment of the divine designs. But I shall select *two* great events as having an influence in this way beyond any thing else with which we are acquainted. These are, THE FIRST AND SECOND APPEARING OF CHRIST. The one will give us some idea of the increase of heavenly blessedness during the separate state, and the other after it.

The person and work of Christ, as we have seen, is the grand medium by which the divine character is manifested. Every stage of his undertaking, therefore, may be expected to exhibit it with increasing lustre, and so to augment the blessedness not only of saints on earth, but of saints and angels in heaven. The *appearing* of Christ, whether to save or to judge the world, is an event which the Scriptures seem to have marked with emphasis, and God to have honored by a peculiar manifestation of his glory. Such is the idea suggested by the following passages: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began; but is now made manifest by the *appearing* of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."—"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious *appearing* of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." From the former of these passages we see that the first appearing of our Saviour was the time marked out of God for pouring forth the fulness of his heart, or for manifesting what had been hid in his secret purposes from before the foundation of the world: from the latter we see that his second appearing is not only a time to which Christians may look forward with hope, but that it is itself their

hope, "that blessed hope;" as though all other hopes were comprised in it: and, in that it is denominated "glorious," it is intimated that the glory of Christ shall in that day be manifested beyond what it has ever been before.

The influence which the first of these events had on the happiness of the church on earth surpassed every thing which had gone before it. Not only was the daughter of Zion called to "rejoice greatly" at the coming of her King, but is directed to "get upon the high mountain," as if to proclaim the glad tidings to the ends of the earth. Yea, fields, and woods, and seas, and heaven, and earth, are called upon to unite in the general joy.—Zech. ix. 9; Isa. xl. 8; Ps. xcvi. 11, 12. And is it possible that the blessed above should be uninterested on this occasion? If the repentance of a sinner gives them joy, what must they feel on the appearance of him who came to save a world?

The ministry of angels, and the appearance of other celestial inhabitants during the Lord's residence on earth, afford some idea of the lively interest which they felt in his undertaking.

When the heavenly messengers announced his birth to the shepherds, they did not preach an unfelt gospel: by turning the "good tidings which should be to all people" into a song of praise, they manifested how much their own hearts were in the subject.—In their *ministering* to him after his temptations in the wilderness we see a cordiality resembling that of Melchizedek to Abraham, when he brought forth bread and wine, and blessed him. It was not for them to appear at the scene of conflict, lest the glory of the victory should seem to be diminished: but they may congratulate him on his return, and furnish him with those things which he refused to obtain by miracle at the instance of the tempter.—The appearance of Moses and Elias on the mount of transfiguration, and their speaking of his *decease* which he should accomplish at Jerusalem, strongly evinces the deep interest which they took in it, and affords a specimen of that which occupied the attention of the heavenly inhabitants.

During our Saviour's sufferings, as under his temptations, it seems to have been ordered that the hosts of heaven, as well as his friends on earth, should in a manner forsake him: not as being uninterested in the event (for legions of them were ready, if God had given commandment, to have rescued him, or avenged his wrongs,) but that he might grapple as it were single-handed with the powers of darkness, and that to him might be given the whole glory of the victory. Except a single angel, who appeared to strengthen him prior to the conflict, all seem to have stood aloof, and with

awful silence witnessed its result. But when, rising from the dead, he began his return from the field of battle, they again met him, as Melchizedek met Abraham, with their blessings and congratulations. The resurrection of our Lord was at too early an hour for the most zealous of his disciples to be present; but the heavenly watchers were there; and, on his leaving the tomb, were stationed to give information to them that would be seeking him. The question which they put to Mary, "Woman, why weepst thou?" would seem to intimate that, if she had known all, she would not have wept, unless it were for joy! As from that day Satan had begun to fall before him, a mighty influx of joy must needs have been diffused through all the heavenly regions.

If we follow our Redeemer in his ascension and session at the right hand of God, where he is constituted Lord of all, angels, principalities, and powers being made subject to him, and where he sits till his enemies are made his footstool, we shall observe the tide of celestial blessedness rise higher still. The return of a great and beloved prince, who should, by only hazarding his life, have saved his country, would fill a nation with ecstacy. Their conversation in every company would turn upon him, and all their thoughts and joys concentrate in him. See then the King of kings, after having by death abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light; after spoiling the power of darkness, and ruining all their schemes; see him return in triumph! There was something like triumph when he entered into Jerusalem. All the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" And the multitude answered, It is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth; and the very children sung Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest! How much greater then must be the triumph of his entry into the heavenly Jerusalem? Would not all the city be "moved" in this case, saying, *Who is this?* See thousands of angels attending him, and ten thousand times ten thousand come forth to meet him! The entrance of the ark into the city of David was but a shadow of this, and the responsive strains which were sung on that occasion would on this be much more applicable.

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates,  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;  
And the King of glory shall come in.  
*Who is this King of glory?*  
The Lord strong and mighty,  
The Lord mighty in battle.  
Lift up your heads, O ye gates;  
Even lift them up ye everlasting doors;  
And the King of glory shall come in.  
*Who is this King of glory?*  
The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory!"



To form an adequate idea of the mighty influx of joy which this event would produce in heaven is impossible: a few particulars of it however are intimated in the Scriptures. The angels of God, previously to the appearing of Christ, would learn the divine character principally from the works of creation and providence. When he laid the foundations of the earth, they sang together; and when, in the government of the world which he had made, he manifested his wisdom, power, justice, and goodness, they cried one to another, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." But when the doctrine of salvation through the death of Christ was revealed, they are represented as fixing upon this as their chosen theme—"Which things the angels desire to look into."

What an idea does this last quoted passage convey of the intense desire and delight of those holy intelligences while exploring the mysteries of redeeming grace! Stooping down, like the cherubim towards the ark and the mercy-seat, their minds are fixed upon the delightful theme. Yet such was its depth that they did not pretend to fathom it, but merely to *look*, or rather *desire to look into it*. The gospel was to them a new mine of celestial riches, a well-spring of life and blessedness.

Much to the same purpose are the words of Paul to the Ephesians. Speaking of the gospel which was given him to communicate to the Gentiles, he calls it "the mystery which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that *now* unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom, of God." By whatever mediums God had heretofore made known his manifold wisdom, it is through the redemption of the church that it must "*now*" be viewed, even by the highest orders of intelligences. And thus it was designed to be from the beginning: all things were ordered in the secret purpose of God, and the fit time of every event determined, "to the intent" that the tide of mercy might rise and overflow with the rising glory of his Son, and that the spoils of his warfare on behalf of men should not only furnish them with an everlasting feast, but a surplus as it were to be distributed among the friendly angels. The foundation of this well-ordered frame was laid in creation itself: for God "created all things *by Jesus Christ*;" that is, not merely as a co-worker with him, but as the end to which every thing was made to fit, or become subservient: "All things were created *by him*, and *for him*."

We seem to ourselves to be the only parties under God who are concerned for the spread of Christ's kingdom in the world: but it is not so. The answer of the angel

to John, who by mistake was going to worship him, is worthy of our notice: "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. This language conveys an idea not only of the lively interest which those holy beings take in the promotion of Christ's kingdom on earth, but of their union and co-operation with us in every thing pertaining to it. We know not in what manner this is effected; but so it is; and as their perception both of the worth and the loss of God's favor is exceedingly more vivid and enlarged than ours, such in their view must be the importance of saving a soul from death. By how much also their love to God and disinterested benevolence to men exceeds the languid affections of sinful creatures, by so much more lively must be the interest which they feel in the progress of this work. The joy ascribed to them on the repentance of a sinner is that which might be expected: how much higher must it rise then when the strong holds of Satan give way in a town, a city, or a country, where sinners have heretofore from time immemorial been led captive by him at his will? While the poor servants of Christ are laboring under a thousand discouragements, and sighing under their own unfruitfulness, they, if they were permitted to speak, would say to each of them, as to Mary, "Why weepst thou?"

It cannot be supposed surely that what has been observed of angels is confined to them, and that the ascension of Christ added nothing to the blessedness of the redeemed themselves. It might be presumed that they who are his bone and his flesh would not be the last either in bringing back the king or in enjoying his triumphs. But we need not rest this conclusion on mere presumptive evidence. Though the visions of John, in respect of *design*, were mostly prophetic of events to be accomplished on earth, yet much of the *scenery* is taken from the work of heaven, and affords some very interesting ideas of that blessed state. Surely the "new song" of the living creatures and the elders who were "round about the throne" may be considered in this light: and they are represented as not only joining with angels in ascribing worthiness to the Lamb, but as dwelling upon one subject peculiar to themselves: "Thou art worthy—for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

It is also observable that these living creatures and elders who were redeemed from among men are described as rejoicing over the fall of Babylon, and in the prospect of the marriage of the Lamb; which seems to be only a prophetic mode of describing the overthrow of popery, and the general

prevalence of true religion.—Rev. xix. But, if so, the church above must be interested in all that is going on in the church below; and must derive a large portion of its enjoyments from the progress of that cause in defence of which millions of its members have shed their blood. The exaltation of Christ, as King of Zion, adds, therefore, to the happiness of both heaven and earth.

In what sense could Christ be said to “prepare a place” for his followers, if his presence did not greatly tend to augment the blessedness of that world whither he went, and render it a sweet resort to them when they should have passed their days of tribulation? If heavenly bliss consist much in social enjoyment, the arrival of *any* interesting character must be somewhat of an acquisition. If our present conceptions, however, be any rule of judging, the being introduced to certain dear friends who have gone before us will be a source of pleasure inexpressible. In this point of view every one who goes before contributes in some degree to prepare a place for those that follow after; and, as things continually move on in the same direction, the sum total of heavenly enjoyment must be continually accumulating. But, if such be the influence arising from the accession of creatures, what must that have been which followed his entrance who is life itself! His presence would render those blest abodes ten thousand times more blessed! Hence the grand motive to heavenly-mindedness in the New Testament is drawn from the consideration of Christ’s being in heaven. “If,” said Paul, “ye be risen *with Christ*, seek those things which are above, *where Christ sitteth* on the right hand of God. And what the apostle recommended to others was exemplified in himself; for he had “a desire to depart, and to *be with Christ*, which is far better.” But to “be with Christ” is not to be shut up with him in such a manner as to be unacquainted with what is going on in behalf of his kingdom in this world. On the contrary, we shall there occupy a situation suited to a more enlarged view of it. Solomon represents every event as having its proper season, and all the works of God as forming a beautiful whole; but intimates that man in the present life is *too near the object* to be able to perceive it in all its parts. He is too much in the world, and the world in him, to judge of things pertaining to it on a large scale. “I have seen the travail,” saith he, “which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made every thing beautiful in its time: also he hath *set the world in their heart*, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end.” But to be with Christ is to be at the source of influence and the centre of intelligence. It is to be in company with him that sitteth

at the helm, knowing and directing all things, and to feel a common interest with him in all that is carrying on.

Such are a few of the ideas given us of the effects of Christ’s *first* appearing: but the New Testament ascribes full as much if not more to his appearing a *second* time without sin unto salvation. God seems to have determined to honor the *appearing* of his Son by rendering it the signal for pouring forth a flood of blessedness on the created system. The glory which accompanied his first appearing eclipsed every thing which had gone before it. The dispensation which it introduced is the jubilee of the church, in which millions who sat in heathen darkness have been liberated and brought forth to the light of life. But the glory which shall be revealed on his second appearing will be greater still; and the increase of celestial happiness will transcend every thing which eye hath seen or ear heard, or which it hath entered into the heart of man to conceive. Believers have received abundance of grace already, and shall receive abundance more on their arrival at their Father’s house: but both are unequal to “the grace that shall be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

It is worthy of notice that the glory of that day is set forth in such language as in a manner to eclipse every thing that may be enjoyed in a separate state before it; and on some occasions it is actually passed over as though it had no existence. Thus, when Paul would comfort the Thessalonians for the loss of their Christian friends, he says nothing of their being immediately present with the Lord; but of their being raised from the dead, and caught up to meet the Lord on his second appearing.

Among the many passages of Scripture which hold up this important truth are the following: “I shall behold his face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.—Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.—Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.—And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivered us from the wrath to come.—Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.—Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.—Surely I come quickly. Amen; even so come Lord Jesus.”

The most plausible arguments that are alleged against the doctrine of a separate state have been drawn from these and such

like passages; and, though there be no ground for such a conclusion, yet we are hereby taught to expect that the glory which shall at that time be revealed will greatly transcend every thing that has gone before it. The streams of grace have flowed, and overflowed in all their meandering directions: but here they meet and fall into the ocean of glory.

The following particulars may in some measure serve to account for the strong language of the New Testament upon this subject.

First: *Salvation will be then completed.*—It hath pleased God to accomplish this great work by degrees. We are saved from the curse of sin, by our Redeemer's having been made a curse for us; from the dominion of it, by the renewing of his Spirit; from the being of it at death; but the effects of it remain till the resurrection. This last act of deliverance is of such importance as to be the assigned object of our Saviour's second appearance. "He shall come a second time without sin unto salvation." Christ's engagements in behalf of those whom the Father hath given him extend not only to the saving of their souls from wrath, but of their bodies from the pit of corruption, and in this have their issue. "This is the Father's will who hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." This deliverance is called "The adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body;" and is represented as that for which believers, even those who had the first fruits of the Spirit, groaned within themselves. Every part of the work of salvation is great, and accompanied with joy; but this, being the last, will, on this account, in some respects, be the greatest. The husbandman rejoices when his seed is sown, and at every stage of its growth; but the joy of harvest, when he reaps the fruit of his labor, crowns the whole. What the jubilee was to them that were in bondage, that the resurrection will be to the righteous dead. The one was accompanied with general joy, with a public proclamation, with the blowing of the trumpet, and with the liberty of the captives; and so will the other. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first."

That this should augment the happiness of heaven is easily conceived. The re-union of soul and body will both furnish new matter for joy and enlarge our capacity for receiving it. If Christ watches over our dust as a part of his charge, we ourselves cannot be supposed to be indifferent towards it. We know that in contemplating the grave as our long and lonesome habitation, or as that of our friends, we have felt much. The plaintive language of Job has here often

been adopted: "Man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep!" But by how much we have sown in tears, by so much we shall reap in joy. To hail the happy day after so long an imprisonment—to find our vile bodies changed, and fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body—to feel ourselves no more subject to corruption, dishonor, and weakness, but possessed of incorruption, honor, and immortal vigor, fully adapted to the state to which we shall be introduced—must needs be a source of joy unspeakable. Hence the language of the prophet, which, though it foretels a glorious revival of the church, yet alludes to the joy of the resurrection: "Thy dead shall live; my deceased, they shall arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."\*

Secondly: *The opposition which from the entrance of sin into the creation has been carrying on against God shall now come to an end, and all its mischievous effects be brought to a glorious issue.*—For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil; and which purpose will now be fully accomplished. Death is represented as the last enemy, which being destroyed in the resurrection, it is supposed that every other enemy shall have fallen before it. Here then will be the triumphant conclusion of the war between Michael and the Dragon, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The appearing of Christ, to raise the dead and judge the world, marks the season or "time of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Hence the rebellion raised in the dominions of God shall be crushed; pardon conferred on some, punishment inflicted on others, and law, peace, and order restored to their ancient channels. Now, as sin, whether in ourselves or others, has been the source of all our unhappiness, to see it in this manner finished, and the cause of Satan utterly ruined, cannot but produce an influx of joy inexpressible.

Thirdly: *The creatures of God will then be delivered from the bondage of corruption or the yoke of being subservient to his enemies.*—Rom. viii. 18—23. To magnify "the glory that shall be revealed in us" at the resurrection, the apostles represent it as an object interesting to creation in general, and for which it groaneth and travaileth as it were in pain, longing for our deliverance as the signal of its own. As, when a province rises up against legitimate authority, the greater part, if not the whole, of its resources are drawn in, and made to subserve the interest of the rebels against the rightful sove-

\* Isaiah xxvi. 19. Lowth's Translation



reign; so when man apostatized from God, all the creatures, whether animate or inanimate, which by the laws of nature were subservient to his happiness, were drawn, as it were, into the confederacy. Sun, moon, stars, clouds, air, earth, sea, birds, beasts, fishes, and all other creatures which contributed to man's happiness, are, through his revolt, in some way or other made to subserve the cause of rebellion. To this "vanity" they are subjected: "not willingly" indeed (for every creature in its proper station naturally inclines to serve and honor its Creator, and whenever it does otherwise it is against nature); "but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." In other words, The great Supreme, having first established the laws of Nature, did not judge it proper to overturn them on account of their abuse; but to permit the creatures to go on serving the cause of rebellion, till in his own due time he should deliver them from their servitude by other means. Yet to show their original bent, and how much their present subjection is against the grain, they frequently rise up, as if to revenge their Creator's cause against their abusers. The sun smites them by day, and the moon by night; the waters drown them; the air, full of pestilential vapors, infects their vitals; the earth trembles under them, and disgorges floods of liquid fire to consume them; and the animals revolt against them and even seize them for their portion. In a word, nature, by a bold figure of speech, is personified and described as laboring under the pangs of child-birth, longing to be delivered of its cumbrous load.

And, as the "redemption or resurrection of our body will mark the period when this disorder shall come to an end, it is considered as the birth-day of a new creation. Hence the interests of the sons of God are described as including those of creation in general. The latter are, as it were, bound up in the former: the glorious liberty of the one being a glorious liberty to the other, each longs for the same event: "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

Now, as the new heavens and the new earth will henceforth be the abode of righteousness, and no more subject to the vanity of subserving the cause of sin, this must needs contribute to augment the blessedness of the blessed; for, as it would grieve a loyal heart to see the resources of his country turned against their rightful sovereign; so it must rejoice him to see the rebellion crushed and every thing appropriated to his honor, and the peace, order, and happiness of society. Such are the sentiments expressed in the 148th Psalm, in which every creature in heaven above, and in the earth beneath, according to its capacity, is called upon to join in praising God.

Fourthly: *The glory of Christ as a Saviour will be manifested beyond any thing which has appeared before.*—Christ is glorified whenever a sinner is brought to believe in him, and more so when multitudes flock to his standard; but all this is little when compared to the general assembly of the saved, every one of which furnishes an example of the efficacy of his death. The great physician appears with his recovered millions, and, in the presence of an assembled universe, presents them to the Father. In that day Christ will no doubt be honored by his people: but that which is principally held up to us is his being honored by others for what is seen in them. He shall come "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe."

Now, as every manifestation of Christ's glory has been productive of an influx of blessedness to his people, and is that indeed in which it consists, this being the greatest of all his manifestations, it may well be supposed to be accompanied with the greatest augmentation of blessedness which has ever been experienced.

Fifthly: *The mystery of God will be finished, or his great designs concerning the world and the church will be accomplished.*—It has been already noticed that one reason why man labors in vain to find out the work of God from the beginning to the end is his nearness to the object; or his being in the world, and the world, as it were, in him. Another is, that these parts, though designed to form a whole, resemble at present the detached wheels of a machine, before they are put together. God, who sees the end from the beginning, views them as complete: but this is too much for creatures, even the most exalted. The heavenly inhabitants themselves can know things only as they are manifested. Whatever therefore turns up in providence which casts a light on God's designs is to them an object of delightful attention, and serves of course to augment their blessedness. But, if the successively putting together of every part of this divine system has gradually heightened their enjoyments, what must be the effect of the whole being completed? Innumerable events, of which we in this world were ready to think hardly, and they in the other were unable to perceive the use, will now appear wise, merciful, and glorious.

We have been used to speak of creation, providence, and redemption, as if they were distinct systems: but it may then appear that they were in reality one great system; and that the two former have all along subserved the latter. "All things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

But it may be said, One great end of Christ's second coming will be "to judge the world," and that it is difficult to conceive how this can increase the happiness of the

righteous, unless they be so swallowed up in selfish feelings as to care only for themselves. I answer, The righteous will not be swallowed up in selfish feelings, and yet their happiness will be abundantly increased. The design of the last judgment is not merely to *decide* the future state of men, but to *manifest* the holiness, justice, and goodness of the divine proceedings. In this world God requires us to confide in his equity, and does not give account of any of his operations; but in that day every intelligent creature shall perceive not only *what* he does, but *why* he does it. Such a display of things to the wicked must, I acknowledge, be a source of unspeakable misery, as it will deprive them of the small consolation of even thinking well of themselves at the expense of their Creator's character: but that which *silences* them will *satisfy* the righteous, and fill them with sentiments of the highest admiration and esteem. Their present feelings will not be so extinguished as to render them hard-hearted towards any creature. They will rather be overcome by the consideration of the righteousness and fitness of the divine proceedings. If they be swallowed up, it will not be in selfishness, but in the love of God, to whose will all inferior affections ought to be and will be subordinate. There is a satisfaction felt by every friend of justice in the conviction and execution of a murderer. Humanity in this case is not extinguished, but enlarged: it is individual compassion overcome by regard to the general good. Thus, in whatever light we consider the coming of our Lord, it is a "blessed hope," and a "glorious appearing," to all that love it.

The happiness of Jacob in reviewing the issue of that mysterious train of events which brought him and his family down to Egypt must have overbalanced, not only the sorrows which he felt during the suspense, but the joy of his whole life: much more will the happiness of saints, on reviewing the issue of all the dispensations of God, overbalance, not only their former afflictions, but all their preceding joys.

Great, however, as their happiness will be at the appearing of Jesus Christ, the language used in reference to that period shows it to be but an *introduction* to greater joys: "Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world—*enter ye into the joy of your Lord!*"

The *likeness of Christ*, which is attributed to our "seeing him as he is," seems to be expressive of something more than a freedom from sin. It denotes, not a negative, but a positive blessing; not an *instantaneous*, but a *gradual* assimilation, like that which is insensibly contracted by being in the company of one with whom our hearts unite.

We shall, doubtless, from our first introduction into his presence, on leaving this mortal body, be so far like him as to have no remains of contrariety to him: but a positive like-mindedness with him may, nevertheless, be capable of perpetual increase, as his mind shall be more and more discovered by us. The spirits of the just made perfect are happy, as being free from every degree of misery; but not so filled with positive enjoyment as to be incapable of receiving more: and thus it may be with respect to positive holiness. What is holiness but that in which the whole law is summed up,—*LOVE*? But love is capable of becoming more rooted and grounded, as well as more intense, as the worth of its object becomes more known and appreciated. And as every degree of attainment capacitates the mind for greater attainments, and the objects to be known *pass knowledge*, there is reason to believe that the things which God hath prepared for them that love him include nothing less than an eternal accumulation of blessedness.

DEGREES IN GLORY PROPORTIONED TO WORKS OF PIETY, CONSISTENT WITH SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE.

A CONSTANT reader of the Evangelical Magazine approves of several observations which were made on the parable of the Unjust Steward (Vol. III. p. 556;) but wishes me to show more particularly the consistency of spiritual and eternal blessings being bestowed as a reward of works of piety and charity, and consequently of different degrees of glory being hereafter conferred on different persons, according to their conduct in the present life, with the doctrine of salvation by grace alone. I consider the above as an interesting inquiry, and submit the following as an answer.

In the first place, it seems proper a little more fully to establish the sentiments themselves. Whether we can perceive their consistency, or not, they manifestly appear to be taught in the holy Scriptures. The same divine writers who teach the doctrine of salvation by grace alone teach also that eternal life will be conferred as a *reward* on those who have served the Lord with fidelity, and suffered for his sake in the present world. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness's sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." In the addresses to the seven Asiatic churches, eternal life, under various forms of expression, is promised as the *reward* of those who shall overcome the temptations and persecutions of the present state. Nor is it a mere promise of eternal life in *general* to those who shall overcome; but of a reward according to the deeds done in the body. This subject will appear with the fullest evidence, if we consider the na-

ture of that enjoyment of which the heavenly state will consist.

First: Heavenly bliss will greatly consist in our being *approved of God*. There is a day approaching when "God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man have praise of God." That which Enoch had on earth all God's faithful servants shall have in heaven, a *testimony that they have pleased God*; and a heaven it will be of itself! But it is impossible that all good men should partake of this satisfaction in an equal degree, unless they had all acted in this world exactly alike.

Secondly: Heavenly bliss will consist in *the exercise of love, supreme love to God*. And, if so, the more we have done for him, the more our hearts will be filled with joy on the remembrance of it. The same principle that makes us rejoice in his service here will hereafter make us rejoice, that we have served him; and, as love here makes us glory even in tribulation, if God may but be honored, so there it will make us rejoice that we were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name's sake. It is thus that our present "light afflictions work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and thus that, by laboring and suffering in his cause, we "lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven." All this supposes that, unless we have equally labored and suffered for God in this world, we cannot equally enjoy him in the next.

Thirdly: Heavenly bliss will consist in *ascribing glory to God and the Lamb*: But this can be performed only in proportion as we have glory to ascribe. He that has done much for God has obtained more crowns, if I may so speak, than others; and, the more he has obtained, the more will he have to cast at the Redeemer's feet. When we hear a Thornton, a Howard, or a Paul, acknowledge, "By the grace of God I am what I am," there is a thousand times more meaning in the expression, and a thousand times more glory redounds to God, than in the uttering of the same words by some men, even though they be men of real piety. The apostle of the gentiles speaks of those to whom he had been made useful, as if such would be his *joy and crown* another day. But, if there were not different degrees of glory in a future state, every one that enters the kingdom of heaven, yea, every infant caught thither from the womb or the breast, must possess the same joyful recollection of its labors, and the same crown, as the apostle Paul. The stating of such a supposition is sufficient to refute it.

Fourthly: Heavenly bliss will consist in *exploring the wonders of the love of God*. Spiritual knowledge expands the soul, so as to render it capable of containing more than it would otherwise do. Every vessel will be

filled, as some have expressed it; but every vessel will not be of equal dimensions. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are represented as conspicuous characters in the kingdom of heaven, with whom it will be a blessedness to sit down in communion. Peter and Paul, and other such eminent characters, are prepared for a greater degree of enjoyment than Christians in common.

Some have objected against this doctrine, "that we are all loved with the same love, purchased by the same blood, called by the same calling, and heirs of the same inheritance; and therefore it may be supposed that we shall all possess it in the same degree." But, if this reasoning would prove any thing, it would prove too much; namely, that we should all be upon an equality in the present world, as well as in that which is to come: for we are *now* as much the objects of the same love, purchased by the same blood, called by the same calling, and heirs of the same inheritance, as we shall be hereafter; and, if these things be consistent with the greatest diversity in this life, there is no conclusion to be drawn from thence but that it may be equally so in that which is to come.

What remains is that we prove *the consistency of this doctrine with that of salvation by grace alone*. If the doctrine of rewards implied the notion of *merit*, or *desert*, the inconsistency of the one with the other would be manifest. Man, even in his purest state, could merit nothing at the hand of his Creator; since the utmost of what he did, or could do, was his duty: much less is it possible for fallen, guilty creatures, to merit any thing at the hand of an offended God, except it be shame and confusion of face. But no such idea is included in the doctrine of rewards, which is only designed to encourage us in every good word and work, and to express Jehovah's regard to righteousness, as well as his love to the righteous.

In the first place: Rewards contain nothing inconsistent with the doctrine of grace, because those very works which it pleased God to honor are *the effects of his own operation*. He rewards the works of which he is the author and proper cause. He who "ordains peace for us"—"hath wrought all our works in us."

Secondly: All rewards to a guilty creature have respect to *the mediation of Christ*. Through the intimate union that subsists between Christ and believers, they are not only accepted in him, but what they do is accepted and rewarded *for his sake*. "The Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering;" and we are said to "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." As there is no sin so heinous but God, for Christ's sake, will forgive it; no blessing so rich, but he will bestow it; so there is no service so small, but he will reward it. A cup of cold water given to a



disciple for Christ's sake will insure a disciple's reward.

Thirdly: God's graciously connecting blessings with the obedience of his people serves to show, not only his love to Christ, and to them, but his regard to righteousness. His love to us induces him to bless us; and his love to righteousness induces him to bless us in this particular mode. An affectionate parent designs to confer a number of favors on his child, and in the end to bequeath him a rich inheritance. He designs also to have his mind suitably prepared for the proper enjoyment of these benefits; and therefore, in the course of his education, he studiously confers his favors by way of encouragement, as rewards to acts of filial duty. He gives him a new garment for this, and a watch for that: for his attention to the flocks and herds, he shall have a sheep, or a cow, which he shall call his own; and, for his assiduity in tilling the soil, he shall have the product of a particular field. It is easy to perceive in this case that the father does not consider these things as properly the child's due upon a footing of equity; but to manifest his approbation of filial obedience. Thus our heavenly Father gives grace and glory. Thus it is that *finding* is connected with *seeking*, and *crowns of glory* with *overcoming*. It is thus, as well as by the atonement of Christ, that "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life." Those who at the last day shall be saved will be sufficiently convinced that it is all of grace, and that they have no room for glorifying but in the Lord; while, on the other hand, the moral government of God will be honored, the equity of his proceedings manifested, and the mouths of ungodly sinners stopped; even when the Judge declares in the face of the universe, concerning the righteous, "These shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy."

#### THE FINAL CONSUMMATION OF ALL THINGS.

[Replies to some objections of the Rev. John Newton, St. Mary Woolnoth.]

I HAVE received a letter from Father Newton, very highly approving of "The Gospel its own Witness;" and, understanding that a second edition of the work was now at press, he proposes a few emendations. The worst of it is that advice offered by such venerable men as him and Dr. John

Erskine, and with such a degree of friendship, can hardly be refused; and yet, if I were to follow every body's counsel, I might alter all that I have written. His objections, however, are confined to a few expressions.—See vol. I. p. 131, line 5—14.

On this statement, accompanied with some other remarks, Mr. Newton asks:—1. "Why may not 'a new heaven and a new earth' be expounded figuratively, as in other places; and be referred to the kingdom of God upon earth—the gospel state?" I answer, No: the new heaven and new earth are represented as *following* the general conflagration.—2 Pet. iii. 12, 13. In the Revelation, this state is also represented as *following* the last judgment.—Chap. xxi. 1, 2.—2. "May we not pray that 'the will of God may be done upon earth as in heaven,' without looking so far forward as the final consummation of all things?"—We may in some degree, but not fully, or without having a reference to the final state of things. When we pray to be made like Christ ourselves, we always look forward to the time when we shall be perfected, as the period in which our request shall be *fully* answered. So it is in this case, and, as this does not hinder our praying for progressive sanctity in the use of all the means of grace, so neither does the other hinder our praying for the success of Christ's kingdom. In both cases we cannot pray for the ultimate end, without praying for all the means by which it is effected.—3. "Does not the desire of revisiting the spots and scenes of past transactions belong to our present situation and conformation. Will it not, like many of our human and social feelings, have no farther influence upon the soul when freed from the body and from the earth?"—It may be so: and I think I shall alter this a little, as well as add something on the second question.—4. "Suppose we had a desire to visit these places after the conflagration, how shall we find them? We cannot now ascertain where Eden was, and many other things, owing perhaps to the alteration made in the earth by the flood. But the alteration produced by the final conflagration will probably be much greater."—Perhaps we may then be better geographers than we are now. Many places are at present wisely concealed from us to prevent abuse from superstition, of which we shall then be in no danger.—Such would be my answers to Mr. Newton, if he were a *brother*; but he is a *father*, and so full of love and kindness that I know not what to do with him.

## REVIEWS.

### THE ABUSE OF REVIEWS.

[Written under a concealed signature several years before the "Strictures on Sandemanianism."]

THE practice of reviewing the publications of the age as they appear is a species of writing much adapted to a periodical work. It is acceptable to the generality of readers to see in a small compass what is going on in the literary and religious world; and, even in works which are not wholly devoted to this object, it is agreeable to trace the leading principles of now and then a particular piece which attracts the public attention. But in these, as in all other Reviews, there is need of a much greater portion of judgment and candor than many writers possess. If the editor, or principal managers of a work of this kind, indulge either a partial fondness for some men, or a censorious dislike of others, their review will become a mere vehicle of flattery or abuse.

These reflections have been occasioned by a friend putting into my hands the fourth volume of the *New Theological Repository*. On looking it over it appeared to me not a little tintured with these faults: the latter more especially. A writer in the *Biblical Magazine* has already noticed one instance of their petulance, and brought home the charge to the confusion of the writer; and, if you judge the following remarks upon the conduct of these gentlemen towards your friend Mr. Fuller admissible, they are much at your service.

On looking over the Index of the *Theological Repository*, I observed under the name of this writer a long list of supposed errors laid to his charge. Now, thought I, surely Mr. Fuller has published some good things since this Magazine has made its appearance! But if the other volumes of the work resemble this, and this contain a fair account of him, he must be a very erroneous and dangerous writer: all he publishes is naught, and deserving of reprobation. It is true, they praise his former productions, written twelve or thirteen years ago; but even this seems rather from a design to give an edge to their present censures than from any thing like a regard to what is good in

them. Surely, said I, this is not the simple fruit of a regard to truth? Is it owing to some personal antipathy, which they may have conceived against him; or is it a disposition to censure the element in which they live?

I observe there is a great deal of apparent coolness and self-possession in all their animadversions, but this is not always at the greatest remove from unchristian bitterness. Mr. Sandeman was very calm; yet he has been accused, and perhaps not without reason, of "gross misrepresentation, illiberal censure, and sarcastical contempt:"\* and whether in this case the disciple be not as his master, they who are acquainted with the productions of both will easily determine.

As to the controversy with Mr. McLean, I cannot approve of the conduct of these bystanders, who, as if they doubted whether what their leader has advanced were sufficient, must need obtrude themselves as his coadjutors, and attempt to worry his opponent.

The lengthened list of errors imputed to Mr. Fuller by these gentlemen is little else than an index to Mr. McLean's pamphlet; a review, or rather an echo, of which is given in three succeeding numbers of the volume alluded to. It is marvellous what a bone of contention these writers make of that which the Scriptures exhibit as the food of the faithful. They affect to consider faith as a very simple thing, needing no explanation; yet scarcely any writers have said so much to explain it, or made so much of their explanation. A mere review of a pamphlet on this subject shall contain more matter than the original piece which gave occasion for it.

The writers in this work, I observe, have accused Mr. Fuller of error on three leading subjects; namely, Regeneration, Justification, and Particular Redemption. Permit me therefore to make a few remarks upon each of them.

1. Mr. F. is criminated for having pleaded for *regeneration being necessary to believing*. He contends, it seems, for "holy dispositions of heart previous to faith." Does he hold with any self-wrought goodness in

\* Booth's "Glad Tidings." Preface, p. vii.

the heart of a sinner? This will not be pretended. Does he plead that a man may sustain a holy character while an unbeliever? No. Does he plead for any other holiness of disposition than what is essential to the very act of believing? He does not. Now his opponent, notwithstanding the triumphs of the party, has, if I am not greatly mistaken, conceded almost every thing that Mr. Fuller pleads for on this subject.

1. He admits faith to be not only *an act of the mind but a holy act*. But if so, unless a mind void of holy dispositions can perform a holy action, one would think it must be, after all, as Mr. F. has stated it.—2. He acknowledges faith to be not only “good” or holy, but “an effect of the regenerating influence of the Spirit and word of God.” But, if this be allowed, where is the difference between them? Mr. F. would not object to the influence of the *word* in regeneration, provided it were granted him that it was not by the word savingly believed; for it is regeneration *by faith* that he opposes. His words are, “All that I contend for is, that it is not by means of a spiritual perception, or belief of the gospel, that the heart is, for the first time, effectually influenced towards God.” And if the above concession may be depended upon, as expressing the fixed sentiments of Mr. M<sup>r</sup>Lean, he does not contend that it is: for that which is the “effect” of regeneration cannot, for this reason, be the *cause* or means of it.

2. Mr. F. stands accused of undermining the doctrine of *free justification*; for the fitness of faith to receive it is made, it seems, “to depend on its *moral excellency*.” Suppose it were said, it depends on its being *true, living faith*? This undoubtedly is all that Mr. F. intends; and one would think this could not be denied him. In turning to the pages referred to, I find Mr. M<sup>r</sup>Lean laboring with all his might to prove that his opponent pleads for such a *fitness* in faith as that we are put into a state of justification as a suitable testimony of divine regard towards it. But surely this is up-hill work. How pitiable is the fate of a controversial writer! After disowning a sentiment in almost every form of language, unless it be that of forswearing it, he is still accused of holding it. His words must be tortured and twisted into a thousand forms, to make them mean what he asserts they do not mean.

After all, Mr. M<sup>r</sup>Lean has some diffidence about him, though his reviewer has none. He “thinks” this must be Mr. Fuller’s meaning. “If he is not greatly mistaken,” it is so. Yet Mr. F. declares the contrary. He professes to be of one mind with Mr. M<sup>r</sup>Lean on this subject: but Mr. M. will not allow it. How is this? It has been observed that the followers of Messrs. Glass and Sandeman have a singular talent for discerning a *self-righteous* spirit in all but

themselves. A person in that connection once called upon a friend of mine, who was nearly of his sentiments as to Christian doctrine; but happening, unfortunately, to discover a partiality for believer’s baptism, he was instantly condemned as a pharisee, and assured that he made a righteousness of it. Thus it is that Mr. M. has discovered the self-righteousness of Mr. F. He first insinuated something of this kind in some marginal notes of the second edition of his treatise on the Commission, and has ever since been laboring to make good his insinuations. If he fail in this, the whole of what he has written against Mr. F. upon justification must appear to the reader, as he himself justly observes, “a piece of insipid altercation.”

But why does Mr. F. plead for the *moral excellency* of faith, as necessary to justification, if he do not make justification a reward conferred upon it as such? Why do Mr. M. and his party plead for *true* faith, in order to justification? An answer to this question will be an answer to the other. Why does Mr. M. admit the *holiness* of faith? By what he has last written, it should seem, he would not allow such a faith as is *not* holy, “a mere empty speculation,” to be justifying. He must admit therefore that we are justified by *that which is* a holy exercise of the mind, and *that which is* a duty, though it is *not* for the sake of any holiness in it, or duty performed by us.\* And what does Mr. F. plead for more? Whether faith contains any holy affection or not makes nothing as to the freeness of justification; because, whatever holiness a creature may possess short of “continuing in all things written in the book of the law, to do them,” it is of *no account* in that important article. But if it were otherwise, while Mr. M. and his friends admit faith to be a *holy act* of the mind, though they will have it to be purely intellectual, the same consequence attaches to their notion as to that which they oppose. Let the reader judge, therefore, whether all they have alleged on this subject be any other than “a piece of insipid altercation.”

3. The heaviest charge is yet behind. Mr. F. is not only erroneous, but self-condemned. He has abandoned his principles, it seems, on *particular redemption*. He has formerly written well on this subject, but of late has contradicted himself. “A new edition of his former excellent pamphlet,” say these editors, “is a desideratum.” Mr. F.’s late error, it seems, consists in his placing the peculiarity of redemption, not in the degree of Christ’s sufferings, or in any want of sufficiency as to the nature of the atonement, but merely *in the sovereignty of*

\*The reader may see this subject clearly and satisfactorily stated in President Edwards’s Sermons on Justification, pp. 13—27.



*its application.* And this is an error of such magnitude as ought to sink him in the esteem of religious people! "What," say they, "will the Calvinists of the present day say to this view of the subject?" Many of those called Calvinists in the present day are not so. If the words of Calvin upon the very subject in question were printed by Mr. F. as his own, they would be sufficient in the account of great numbers of modern Calvinists to prove him an Arminian. And will the editors of the Theological Repository stoop to appeal to popular religious opinion, which on other occasions they hold in such sovereign contempt? Ardent zeal, on certain occasions, is very condescending. It is said of Mr. M'Lean, that he lately advanced sentiments concerning original sin, and the obedience of Christ, which are not commonly received among religious people, nor universally in his own connections. How is it that these gentlemen, who profess to "respect no man's person," do not hold *him* up to reproach; and ask, What will Calvinists of the present day say to this?

"That this is not the Scripture doctrine," they add, "we think has frequently been shown; but by no one more satisfactorily than by Mr. Fuller himself." Does Mr. F. then, in his former pamphlet, place the peculiarity of redemption upon different ground? With what face can these writers insinuate that he does? Had they quoted his own statement of the doctrine, the reader would have seen that, whether Mr. F. be right or wrong in his views, he set out on the same principle in that piece which he maintains in his latter publications. Let him speak for himself. "I suppose Philanthropos is not ignorant that Calvinists in general have considered the particularity of redemption as consisting, not in the *degree* of Christ's sufferings, as though he must have suffered more if more had finally been saved, or in any *insufficiency* that attended them, but in the sovereign *purpose and design* of the Father and the Son, whereby they were constituted or appointed the price of their redemption, the objects of that redemption ascertained, and the ends to be answered by the whole transaction determined. They suppose the sufferings of Christ, in themselves considered, as of infinite value, sufficient to have saved all the world, and a thousand worlds, if it had pleased God to have constituted them the price of their redemption, and made them effectual to that end. These views of the subject accord with my own."

But, it will be asked, does he not here represent Christ as dying in the character of a shepherd for his flock, a husband for his church, and a surety for his people? He does: but each of these particulars is adduced merely in proof of a *speciality of design* in the death of Christ, and not of the

want of any sufficiency in the nature of the atonement itself. If they prove more than this, they prove more than the writer manifestly appears to have intended. Every charge therefore of his having relinquished his sentiments, founded on those arguments, must be nugatory. All of them go to establish that the number of the saved was wholly dependent on the *purpose* of the Father, and the *design* of the Son; and, wherein this differs from "the peculiarity of redemption consisting in the sovereign application of the atonement," I am not able to perceive. Christ's dying as a shepherd for his sheep, a husband for his church, and a surety for his people, is the same thing in Mr. F.'s account as his dying with a *purpose or design* that his death should be applied to their salvation, rather than others. It is manifest he then thought, as well as now, that the obedience and death of Christ, *in themselves considered*, were, like the sun in the heavens, necessary for an individual, but sufficient for a world; sufficient for all, but effectual only to the elect.

These gentlemen would persuade their readers that upon Mr. F.'s present principles Christ was equally wounded for the transgressions of Judas Iscariot as for those of the apostle John. And, if by this were meant no more than that his death was in itself equally *sufficient* for both, it certainly is the sentiment for which Mr. F. pleads, and that in his earlier as well as his later publications. But, if it means that there was the same *design* towards both, this is not his sentiment; nor is it to be found in his latter publications, any more than in his earlier ones.

A very unjust and unfriendly insinuation has been made by one of your correspondents, as though Mr. F.'s not having answered his opponent Mr. M'Lean arose from a consciousness of the badness of his cause. That men whose prejudices lie on that side of the question should exult, and labor to provoke him to write, is no more than is common in such cases. But it is well known that Mr. F. has in several controversies suffered his antagonist to have the last word; and, when he has thought proper to write, he has always been so slow in printing that he has seldom answered any considerable work in the same year. For the time of Mr. M'Lean's pamphlet making its appearance, his hands have been so full of more important business as scarcely to afford him the opportunity to read, much less to answer that performance.

Whether Mr. F. intends to make any reply is best known to himself. I know, however, that several of his friends have endeavored to dissuade him from it.—1. From an apprehension that such disquisitions, united with his other labors, may be injurious to his health.—2. Because of the illib-

erality of his opponent, in having interspersed his performance with a number of insinuations that Mr. F. had *knowingly* and *wilfully* misrepresented him. Such intimations become neither the Christian nor the man: they tend also to divert the reader's attention from truth and to interest it in what is merely personal. Were I disposed, I am sure that I could make out the charge of *wilful* misrepresentation against Mr. M. in as many instances, and on as good grounds, as those which he has preferred against Mr. F.: but I would scorn the attempt. Whatever mis-statements either of them may have given of each other's sentiments, and however difficult it may be to account for them on fair grounds, I am persuaded that neither the one nor the other is capable of doing it *knowingly* and *wilfully*; and a writer that will maintain the contrary, whatever be his talents, is unworthy of an answer.—3. Because of the vast quantity of misconstrued and distorted meaning put upon his words, which will require to be set right; and which is a task not a little irksome both to the writer and the reader, and which few men who can better employ their time would wish to undertake.

THE REV. THOMAS SCOTT'S "WARRANT AND NATURE OF FAITH," &c.

THE design of this treatise, "if we rightly comprehend it, is to discuss various important points advanced in Mr. Booth's "Glad Tidings to Perishing Sinners." We are happy in perceiving that both these respectable writers agree as to the complete *warrant* which every sinner who hears the gospel has to believe in Christ for the salvation of his soul, antecedent to all holy qualifications or dispositions whatever,—a truth which leaves all unbelievers without excuse, which points out the way of peace to awakened sinners, and affords a plain direction to gospel ministers to invite their auditors, without distinction, to a participation of eternal life.

This important truth, though plentifully taught in the Holy Scriptures, and generally, if not universally, embraced by the reformers, puritans, and nonconformists, has been much opposed in the present century. Those writers who have labored to set aside the gospel offer, as inconsistent with the doctrines of grace, have with it explained away the free invitations of the gospel as they respect the unregenerate; considering them as addressed only to sinners made sensible of their sin, and thirsting after spiritual blessings; and contending that no other descriptions of men have any warrant to embrace them. This notion Mr. Booth has successfully combated, proving, beyond all just contradiction, that the invitations of the gospel are addressed to sinners *as sinners*.

There are several important particulars, however, in which Mr. Booth and Mr. Scott disagree, and which are well worthy the attention of those who wish for clear and accurate views of evangelical truth. Mr. Booth is partial to the term *warrant*, and seems to have studiously kept the idea of obligation out of sight. Mr. Scott, on the other hand, undertakes to prove that faith in Christ is the *duty* of all who hear the gospel, and observes that no warrant seems to be required for obedience to a plain commandment. Considering faith however as implying an all-important benefit, he admits the propriety of the inquiry, What warrant has a sinner for expecting it from his offended God? In this view, he observes, "the term warrant signifies a ground of encouragement, authorizing an application, and giving sufficient reason to expect success; inasmuch that he who applies in the prescribed manner cannot be rejected consistently with the truth of the Holy Scriptures." Such a ground of encouragement Mr. Scott allows to exist in the word of God, irrespective of all holy dispositions whatsoever.

But Mr. Booth not only denies the necessity of a change of heart to *warrant* our believing, but explodes the idea of its being necessary to the act of believing itself; or, as he defines it, of relying on Christ for salvation; contending also that, prior to his justification, the sinner performs no good act, but is an enemy to God. Mr. Scott takes the opposite ground, maintaining that no man ever believed in Christ while under the dominion of sin; that saving faith is the effect of regeneration, or the renewal of an unholy creature to a right spirit; and that those who "work not, but believe in him who justifieth the ungodly," are not persons who are inactive, but who "cease to work in respect of justification; not enemies of God, but, having transgressed his law, are rendered forever incapable of being justified by any thing done by themselves; or in any other character than that of ungodly, to whom mercy is shown merely out of regard to the righteousness of him in whom they believe.

To establish these positions, Mr. Scott confines his attention to one leading point, which makes up the body of his performance; namely, *that faith is not a mere act of the understanding, but a holy exercise of the heart*. Our author seems to have apprehended that, if this idea could be established, his work would be done, and to have reasoned on some such principles as the following:—If faith itself be a spiritual exercise, it must be the effect of regeneration; as no sinner, while an enemy to God, can be induced by any influence, human or divine, to perform that which is spiritually good. Farther: if faith be a holy exercise, and precede justification, the sinner when he

is justified, though, being a transgressor of the law, he be in the account of the judge of all "ungodly," yet is not actually at enmity with God; inasmuch as every degree of holy exercise must be inconsistent with such a state of mind.

In the discussion of this leading point—which after all we incline to think Mr. Booth does not deny, though he may have advanced things inconsistent with it—Mr. Scott goes over a great variety of topics, and examines various passages of Scripture, which had been produced on the other side. The most forcible of his arguments appear to be the following:—Our Lord assures us that no man can come to him except he is taught of God, drawn of the Father, and has heard and learned of him. And has this teaching, drawing, hearing, and learning, he inquires, nothing holy in its nature? Faith in Christ is not only the source of all the obedience which follows after it, but is itself an act of obedience. But all obedience is the expression of love, and is never performed by an unrenewed heart, not even by divine influence. Unbelief arises from an evil heart, which "loveth darkness rather than light;" faith therefore, which is its opposite, arises from the love of light rather than darkness. As unbelief is attributed to voluntary blindness, so faith is ascribed to a holy illumination, to "light shining into the heart," which gives it a holy bias. Regeneration is assigned as the *reason* why some believed in Christ while others received him not. Of their believing on his name, this is given as the cause; "they *were* born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Faith in Christ is the *effect* and evidence of regeneration. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." That this is the sense of the passage is evident from similar phraseology being used of other effects and evidences of regeneration by the same writer, and in the same epistle. "Every one that loveth is born of God—Every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Repentance is constantly represented as previous to forgiveness, and consequently to justification, of which forgiveness is a branch; it is also generally mentioned as preceding faith in Christ, and in some instances as influential on it. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Repent and believe the gospel. If peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. Ye repented not that ye might believe."

Mr. Booth pleads that the word of God is the means of regeneration, and the seed or principle of spiritual life. Mr. Scott replies, not by denying either of these positions, but by suggesting that we cannot explain the *manner* in which God uses the word in regeneration any more than that in which an-

imals and vegetables are produced according to the course of nature. And, though the word of God be the seed from whence the fruits of grace arise, yet must the ground be made good ere it will be received so as to become productive.

Mr. Booth alleges the case of the Prodigal, as favoring his idea of there being nothing good in a man prior and in order to believing. Mr. Scott replies, "And did our Lord in this parable represent the returning sinner as driven merely by distress to seek deliverance from God? What did he then mean by the expression 'when he came to himself?' Is it not evident that from that time he possessed a right mind? and are not all his expressions those of sorrow and humiliation for sin, and of deep self-abasement?"

Mr. Booth suggests that the Publican, in the parable, far from considering himself as possessing any holy disposition, appears as a criminal deserving of destruction; and who dare not lift up his eyes to heaven even when he cried for mercy. Mr. Scott replies, "The question is not in what light the publican viewed himself, but whether there was nothing in his spirit intrinsically better than in that of the boasting Pharisee; and whether his self-abasing cry for mercy was not an exercise of true holiness. That it sprang from humility and contrition, and was not extorted by mere terror, the Lord himself testifies. "I tell you that this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This testimony ought to be decisive.

Finally: Mr. Booth suggests that, if there be any holiness previous to justification, those characters in whom it is found may be justified, if not wholly, yet in part by their own righteousness. Mr. Scott replies, by alleging a principle in which we supposed all Calvinistic divines were agreed; namely, that no degree of good whatever, in creatures who have once broken the divine law, can in the least avail towards their justification; and that a renunciation of our own righteousness, imaginary or real, is of the essence of faith in Christ.

We have felt much interested in this serious discussion. The parties appear in some few instances to have mistaken each other's meaning, as is commonly the case more or less in controversial writings. On the one hand, the question is not whether a carnal heart will, of *its own accord*, believe in Christ, but whether it does so, *under divine influence*, without any predisposition of the will? On the other hand, the question in dispute is not concerning a *warrant*, but a *willingness* to believe; nor in what light it is necessary for a sinner to view himself in his application for mercy, but of what manner of spirit it is necessary for him to be ere he will rightly apply? Neither do we



perceive how regeneration by or without the word can effect the question at issue between these writers, which is, whether regeneration precede faith? If faith were understood as a belief of the word, and the mind were allowed to be passive in it, it possibly might: but if the belief of the word be not faith, but, as Mr. Booth considers it, something "presupposed," the influence of the word upon the soul, whatever it is, and in whatever way, one should think must be the same. The mind is certainly active in its "reliance" on Christ for salvation, and such activity we think Mr. Booth will not assert to be the effect of an unregenerate heart.

We earnestly wish those who may have read one of these treatises to read the other, and any thinking serious mind will find himself amply repaid for the perusal.

THE REV. A. BOOTH'S "GLAD TIDINGS," &c.

We have already expressed our sentiments of this work in reviewing Mr. Scott's "Warrant and Nature of Faith," which was occasioned by it. In the present edition Mr. Booth has made some alterations, and some additions. We observe with pleasure, as he has expressed himself with more caution, and to the nature of faith in Christ, than before. In the first edition, "a firm persuasion of his being the promised Messiah, and that the Christian religion is from God," was excluded from the definition, and only considered as something "presupposed" in believing. But in this it is "a general persuasion" of these truths only that is thus represented. This we consider as unexceptionable.

We wish Mr. Booth had been equally attentive in his revision of chap. iii., wherein the objections are answered. As to those persons who plead for any disposition of heart being necessary to *warrant* an application to Christ, whoever they are, we have nothing to say in their behalf. But those who, with Mr. Scott, consider regeneration as necessary, in the nature of things, to believing, whether they be right or wrong, appear to be rather unfairly treated. Far be it from us to accuse this truly respectable writer of wilful misrepresentation: we are persuaded he is incapable of it. But it is no uncommon thing for an author, in the heat of controversy, to be insensibly warped from the line of a fair and impartial statement of the sentiments of his opponent.

"It is objected," says Mr. Booth, "though it be not necessary for a sinner to *know* that he is born again before he believe in Jesus Christ, yet regeneration itself must precede faith; for, the heart of a sinner being naturally in a state of enmity to the di-

vine character, he will never turn to God, while in that situation, for pardon and acceptance." To this he answers, "Before this objection can justly be considered as valid, it must be evinced not only that regeneration precedes faith, but also that it is necessary to *authorize* a sinner's reliance on Jesus Christ." But why must this be first evinced? The objection, from whomsoever Mr. Booth took it, appears manifestly not expressive of the sentiments defended by Mr. Scott; who, we are persuaded, detests the idea of any holy disposition *authorizing* a sinner to come to Jesus. He contends however that without it he never *will* come. A state of mind may be necessary, in the nature of things, to our coming to Christ, which is no part of the "warrant" for so doing. Mr. Booth himself admits a speculative change of mind, with a conviction of sin, to be so; yet, as he elsewhere justly observes, "It is not under the notion of being deeply awakened in conscience that sinners must first believe in Jesus, but as transgressors." Why then may not Mr. Scott, or those of his sentiments, be allowed to argue in the same manner with respect to the necessity of a change of heart? Why does Mr. Booth insist that, if it be necessary at all, it must be necessary for the purpose of *authorizing* him to come? Finally: Why does Mr. Booth allege that a persuasion of regeneration being necessary to believing must lead the awakened sinner to "investigate the state of his own soul in search of it, with much the same solicitude as if he considered it as a warrant." All these allegations appear to be equally directed against what he allows as what he opposes. If conviction of sin may be necessary to believing, without affording any warrant for it, so may regeneration; and, if a persuasion of the necessity of regeneration to believing must needs turn the attention of a sinner into a wrong direction, such a persuasion respecting conviction of sin must have the same effect.

Again: "It has with confidence been demanded," says Mr. Booth, "whether, if sinners must not come to Christ as penitent, and as possessing a holy disposition, they are to believe in him as impenitent, and as under the reigning power of their depravity. But this, adds he, like some other objections, is not pertinent; for the question is, what is the proper warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus?" Now, so far as we are able to judge, the contrary of this is true. The question here was not what is the proper warrant for a sinner to believe in Jesus? for that is not a matter of dispute; but *what is the state of his heart in the moment when he first believes.*—Mr. Booth's answer appears to be evasive. "A sinner must come," he says, "neither as penitent nor as impenitent, but merely under the character

of one that is guilty and perishing." The term *as*, in the objection, means the character which the sinner actually sustains; but, in the answer, the character under which he is to view himself. It is thus, as we apprehend, that the objection is evaded. Mr. Booth would not say that, in coming to Christ, a sinner is neither penitent nor impenitent; yet, to meet the objection, it is necessary he should say so; for the question is not, under what character a sinner must view himself in coming to Christ, but what character, with regard to penitence or impenitence, does he actually sustain?

It is not our object to enter into Mr. Booth's reasonings, many of which we cordially approve; but barely to state, in a leading instance or two, wherein we conceive he has not done justice to his opponents.

We shall only add a few remarks on the note which Mr. Booth has introduced in answer to a passage in our review of Mr. Scott's "Warrant and Nature of Faith." It was our design in that review to give, according to the best of our capacity, an impartial statement of the controversy. Mr. Booth however complains of a misapprehension of his meaning. He had said, "If sinners be reconciled to God and his law, previous to believing in Jesus, and to a view of revealed mercy, it should seem as if they had not much occasion either for faith, or grace, or Christ. Because it must be admitted that persons of such piety are already accepted of God, bear his image, and are in the way to heaven." On this passage we remarked, Mr. Booth suggests that, if there be any holiness previous to justification, those characters in whom it is found may be justified, if not wholly, yet in part, by their own righteousness. We have no objection to acknowledge, on a revision of the subject, that Mr. Booth's words did not warrant this construction; and that it had been better to have quoted them as they were than to have put any construction upon them. We also acquit Mr. Booth of the obnoxious principle alluded to. But, having said thus much, it requires to be added that the above sentence, which stands the same in both editions, appears to be far from defensible.

First: It represents that which is pleaded for only as *an essential part* of a sinner's return to God, as though it were a *whole*, sufficient to denominate his character as a saint, and to prove his being accepted of God. It was necessary that the prodigal should come to himself, justify his father's conduct, and condemn his own, before and in order to his return: but the necessity of his return was not thereby superseded, nor was he accepted of his father until he did return. It is true, the father held him "while a great way off;" and

met the first movement of his heart towards him: but, whatever were his kind designs, he was not accepted, according to the established laws of the house, till he had actually returned. It was not necessary that while he thus justified his father's character he should be ignorant of his readiness to forgive. Without a persuasion of this, however he might have reproached himself, he could have had no encouragement to return as a supplicant. Nor is it supposed that a sinner, in being brought to justify God as a law-giver, must needs be ignorant of his being revealed as the God of grace: but the question is whether, in the order of things, it be possible for him to see or believe any grace in the gospel, beyond what he feels of the equity of the law? He may be persuaded of God's exercising what is called pardon; and knowing himself to be a sinner, exposed to wrath, he may be affected with it: but it cannot possibly appear to him to be a *gracious* pardon, any farther than as he feels reconciled to the justice of his claims as a lawgiver. To suppose it possible that we should believe the doctrine of grace, without being first made to feel the equity of the law, so as to justify God and condemn ourselves, is to suppose a contradiction. There is no grace but upon this supposition, and we cannot see that which is not to be seen. Whatever promises there may be to the least degree of holiness, if they respect the first movement of the heart towards Christ, it is under the consideration of its *issuing in faith in him*, without which no works of a sinful creature can be accepted; such promises therefore ought not to be brought for the purpose of superseding it. "He that cometh to God must first believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Many promises also are made to believing: but if from hence we were to infer that a man is sufficiently blessed in *believing*, so as to render *coming* to God unnecessary, we should put a force upon the Scriptures. Believing is supposed to have its immediate issue in coming, and therefore is treated in the Scriptures as in effect the same thing—John vi. 35.

Secondly: It is supposed that, when once a sinner is accepted of God, he has but little occasion for either faith or grace, or Christ, in comparison of what he had before. "If after a person is reconciled to the divine character," says Mr. Booth, "he applies to Christ for justification, he cannot, consistently with his new state, believe in him as justifying the *ungodly*, nor consider himself as entirely worthless, and on a level with sinners in general." But 1. This supposes him not only to be renewed in the spirit of his mind, but to be *conscious* of it, which Mr. Booth's opponents do not contend for. 2. Supposing he were conscious of it, did

not "Abraham believe on him that justifieth the ungodly," and that many years after his being a good man and a believer; and did he not consider himself at that time as "entirely worthless, and, as to acceptance with God, on a level with sinners in general?"—See Rom. iv. 3—5, compared with Gen. xv. 6; xii. 1—3. Heb. xi. 8. We might add, does not every good man stand in the same need of faith, and grace, and Christ, with respect to justification, as at the first moment when he believed? And, in all his approaches to God for this blessing, does he not consider himself as "entirely worthless, and upon a level with sinners in general?"

MR. BOOTH'S SERMON,—“THE AMEN OF SOCIAL PRAYER.”

[This sermon was one of a series of discourses on the Lord's Prayer, delivered at the monthly meeting in London, and published by desire of the ministers who heard it.]

THE summary of prayer given by our Saviour to his disciples stands unequalled for conciseness and comprehensiveness. Every petition, and almost every word in such a prayer, may be expected to contain an important meaning. That such a meaning is comprehended in the concluding term, and which forms in itself a perfect sentence, the judicious author of this sermon has fully evinced. Previous to his attempting this, however, he expresses his utter dislike of the practice of preaching from a single word, as a trial of skill, and offers what must appear to every candid reader a sufficient reason for his complying with the request of his brethren in this instance.

Having stated the scriptural meaning of the term "Amen," he proceeds to consider various important truths, directions, encouragements, cautions, and reproofs, which are suggested by it. Particularly, That to close our prayers with a suitable Amen they are required to be offered with *understanding*; for without knowing the revealed will of God, and our own unworthiness as sinners before him, believing in the all-sufficient atonement and prevailing intercession of Christ, and depending on the aid of the Holy Spirit, we cannot hope for success in our petitions—With *fervor*; for, if we be not in earnest in our prayers, our Amen loses its emphasis, and becomes a superficial formality, a mere word in course—Also with *expectation*; for the animating principle of our "so be it" arises from the grounds we have to believe that *so it shall be*. Our obligation to pray is not from hence; but our *encouragement* is. We are not warranted to expect an answer to our prayers at the time and in the manner we may prefer;

but in God's time and manner we are. We have no ground to hope for success in prayer against the prevalence of our corruptions, unless we also watch against them; but, so praying, we have.

Farther: That the Amen of prayer suggests various reproofs and solemn cautions, both to those who lead and those who unite in the worship. Particularly *in him who leads*, or is the mouth of the assembly, it reproofs all words which persons of the weakest capacity do not understand; all quaint expressions, or terms or phrases that are adapted to raise a smile, or which in any way savor of wit or contrivance; all ambiguous language, or words of doubtful meaning; all contending or arguing for or against a doctrine; and every thing like anger, envy, or malignity, or which has a natural tendency to interfere with devout attention, deep solemnity, and the lively exercise of holy affections towards God; for to all or any of these things how shall a serious assembly say, Amen?—*In those who silently unite* in this solemn duty it cautions against, and severely reproofs, every degree of negligence respecting their attendance at the place of prayer, before the devotional exercise begins; all wandering thoughts and inattention during the exercise; all unkind, unsocial, and immoral feelings towards one another; and all aversion of heart from the genuine meaning of the ascriptions, confessions, or petitions, which are presented; for, with such frames and feelings, how can they with a good conscience say Amen?

The sermon concludes with a very solemn and interesting address to those who take the lead in prayer, those who unite in it, and those who pay little or no regard to it. On the whole, the writer of this review feels thankful to God, and the worthy author, for having seen this highly interesting publication.

MEMOIRS OF REV. JAMES GARIE.

IT is good to read the lives of holy men; and the more holy they have been the better. Some readers, it is true, are not satisfied unless they discover in others the same low, grovelling, half-hearted kind of life, which they find in themselves. But satisfaction of this sort is better missed than found. It is good to be reprov'd, and stirr'd up to labor after greater degrees of spirituality than any which we have hitherto attained.

It is good also to observe the difference between the accounts of the same person as communicated by a friend, and by himself. As given by the former, the character appears nearly faultless; as depicted by the latter, it abounds with imperfection. Whence this difference? We *know* more



of ourselves than any other person can know of us. What then will our lives be, when declared by Him who knoweth all things? Well might one of the greatest and best of men desire that he might be *found in him!*

It is pleasant that in the same years, months, and days, that we have been walking in the ways of God ourselves, others, whom we know not, were travelling in the same direction, and with kindred sensations. What a society shall we find assembled, when we get home! We read the lives of eminently holy men in former times, and, when we come to their decease, are ready to ask with a sigh, Are there any such men to be found in these days? God hath a reserved people, however, in this as well as in every other age.

The characters of men are chiefly known by *trial*. It is not how we may feel and conduct ourselves in times when we have nothing in particular to affect us; but how we bear the temptations and afflictions, the smiles and the frowns, the evil reports and the good reports of the world, that determines what we are. Mr. Garie had his share of these trials. Doubtless there are men who have passed through greater: but his were sufficient to furnish proof of his being not only a true Christian, but an eminent servant of Jesus Christ. In his removals from place to place, he appears to have kept his eye on one object, and in patience to have possessed his soul.\*

While, however, we admire his piety, meekness, and patience, it becomes us to learn instruction from the things which befel him. In his first removal we see the danger of congregational churches submitting to the influence and direction of a few opulent individuals (whose desire it frequently is to obtain a minister who shall deal gently with their vices,) till, lightly esteeming their greatest mercies, they are justly deprived of them.

In determining on the question of joining the established church, we find him frankly avowing the influence of early spiritual advantages which he had there received, of the amiable and dear friends he had in it, and of what he accounted the leadings of providence. But no mention is made of his inquiring into *the revealed will of Christ* upon the subject: nor any intimation given that, after having examined the Scriptures, he was convinced that a national establishment was the most consistent with them.

In the repulses he met with, we cannot but perceive the lamentable evils which arise from the church being so connected with

the world as that the best interests of a Christian congregation shall be decided by the prejudices and intrigues of men, who care not for its spiritual welfare, and the greater part of whom may be strangers to true religion.

We are glad to find that Mr. Garie's family, like that of Mr. Pearce, has been thought worthy of the patronage of the religious public. It speaks well for our times that the families of men who have been eminent in disinterested labors for God are provided for by his people. The spirit discovered in Mr. Garie's diary will both reprove and provoke to emulation those who are in any degree likeminded; and may convince others that religion is not a cunningly devised fable, but a solemn reality.

#### MR. EVAN'S DEFENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS.

CONCERNING the atonement or satisfaction of Christ, Penn and Claridge profess to reject what they term "the vulgar doctrine of Satisfaction;" and our author allows them to have disowned "vicarious atonement," and "the appeasing of vindictive wrath."\* We should be sorry to affix ideas to terms which were not in the mind of the writer; but, if we understand them, atonement is reparation made to the injured authority of the divine law. "Vicarious atonement" is for that reparation to be made by a substitute, who endures the curse of the law in the sinner's stead; and "the appeasing of vindictive wrath" is not the changing of God's mind from hatred to love; but having expressed his displeasure against sin, in the death of his Son, justice is satisfied, and he can now consistently display his compassion to sinners for Christ's sake.

We do not think it was the intention of these writers to favor the Socinian doctrine; but in opposing the crude notion of Christ's having so paid the debt as to lay the Governor of the world under a natural obligation to discharge the debtor, and that immediately, or without the intervention of repentance and faith, we cannot but observe that they have made very near advances to it. We earnestly entreat our author and his connections to reconsider this subject,

\* The introductory part of the following review is omitted, as relating merely to the circumstances under which the "Defence" was written; it was occasioned by the representations of Hannah Barnard, an American preacher of the society of Friends, and of Mr. Evans in his "Sketch of the different Denominations," that the original tenets of that society were Socinian.

In Mr. Fuller's re-publication of Mrs. Hannah Adams's "View of Religions," to which he prefixed his "Essay on Truth;" the article "Friends" was supplied by Mr. Bevan, with whom Mr. F. had become intimately acquainted. ED.

\* Mr. Garie encountered great hazards in preaching the Gospel in Ireland in 1790, particularly in Sligo, where his chapel was burned soon after its opening, and his life threatened. ED.

and carefully to examine whether they may not renounce this notion, without giving up our Saviour's vicarious atonement," or his having endured the curse of God's righteous law in the sinner's stead. Were we to abandon this idea, we could affix no meaning to a great part of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah; nor should we feel any solid ground on which to rest our everlasting hopes.

In chap. v. and vi. our author proceeds to examine the sentiments of the early Friends concerning the Scriptures. Penn, Barclay, and others, certainly were not Socinians on this subject, any more than on the foregoing ones; but they wrote much to prove that the Scriptures were not the only, nor the primary, rule of faith and manners; for this honor they ascribe to the Spirit as dwelling in man. This position, though wide of Socinianism, yet led them to write in a manner very capable of being turned by an ingenious Socinian to the advantage of his cause.

It is with pleasure we find the early Friends acknowledging the Scriptures to have been written by divine inspiration, and to be the words of God; and also that "whatever doctrine or practice, though under pretensions to the immediate dictates and teachings of the Spirit, is contrary to them, ought to be rejected as false and erroneous." But we do not perceive the consistency between this and their denying them to be the principal rule of faith and manners; that is, the principal rule by which the other is to be judged of. Ought we to try the truth of the Scriptures, then, by their agreement with what we suppose to be the dictates and teachings of the Spirit within us, or the truth of these supposed dictates and teachings by their agreement with the Scriptures? The above concession appears to be in favor of the latter, and so to decide the question.

We readily admit that the Spirit of God is greater than the Scriptures, as God is greater than the greatest of his works; and that by his renewing influence the mind is taught to know what it would never form just conceptions of without it. This we consider as that anointing of which the apostle speaks, by which believers are said to "know all things." But we do not perceive the propriety of calling this "a rule of faith and manners." The extraordinary revelations of the Spirit, such as those of David, concerning his pursuit of the Amalekites; and to Paul, respecting his going into Bithynia,—were indeed a rule to them, as much as a written revelation is to us. But it is very unsafe to reason from them to the ordinary teachings of the Holy Spirit, since the "sealing up of the vision and prophecy." The one was a revelation of new truths to the mind: the other enables us to discern

the glory of that which is already revealed. The former supplied the want of a perfect rule, while the sacred writings were incomplete: the latter teaches us how to walk by it, now that it is completed. The teaching of the Holy Spirit, we conceive, is that which forms us by the rule, rather than the rule itself.

It has been said by antinomians that it is not the moral law, but the Holy Spirit in their hearts, which is a rule to them. Our answer has been, You confound the rule of a holy life with the cause of it. Whatever is a rule to us must be known or knowable by us; but the Holy Spirit in the heart is a secret spring, of which we can know nothing, but by its effects. It is the source of all spiritual judgment and action; but the rule by which we are to judge and act is God's revealed will. Whether this answer be just,—and, if it be, whether it does not apply alike to both cases,—we hope will be seriously and candidly considered.

With respect to the question between our author and his opponent, we have no hesitation in saying that the early Friends would neither have approved nor endured the opinions of Hannah Barnard. It is true they each set up a rule superior to the Scriptures; but that of the one is the reason of the individual; the other, the teachings of the Spirit. By the rule of Hannah Barnard, many parts of the present canon of Scripture are rejected as untrue; by theirs, the whole is admitted to be authentic. She rejects the account of the miraculous conception, of the miracles, and of the resurrection of Christ. But Barclay considers it as "damnable unbelief not to believe all those things to have been certainly transacted which are recorded in the holy Scriptures concerning them."

The seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth chapters contain a review of the charges exhibited against Hannah Barnard, with her answers, &c. The former appear to be worded with great caution, and proved beyond all just contradiction. By her answers, in several instances, she departs from Christian ground, and ought to rank as a Deist. The partiality discovered for her cause by Mr. Evans, in his "Sketch of the Denominations," adds another to the numerous proofs which have gone before, that Socinianism feels a sympathy (as of one that is near akin) with infidelity.

The sentiments of the Friends on the unlawfulness of war, under the Christian dispensation, are well known. Hannah Barnard has advanced a step farther, maintaining that war is in itself wrong; and consequently that the wars of the Jews with the seven nations of Canaan could not have been made with the divine approbation. Were we to judge of the sentiments of the Friends by those of Anthony Benezet, who

considers war as having been suffered rather than approved under the Old Testament, in like manner as men were "suffered to put away their wives," we must acknowledge that we could not perceive their consistency with the commandments of God to Israel to make war on the Canaanites, and his displeasure against those who refused. But as he is not one of the early Friends, and what he has written is considered as only his private opinion, the sentiments of the Society on this subject are to be sought elsewhere.

Their disapprobation of all war appears to be confined to the Christian dispensation, and to be founded on such passages as Matt. v. 38, 39—"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." They suppose that the law warranted a retaliation of injuries; but that the gospel requires forbearance and forgiveness. We do not think it was the design of our Lord, in this passage, to oppose the genius of the gospel dispensation to that of the law, but to rectify the abuses which had been made of the latter by the false glosses of the Jews, who perverted the lawful punishments of the magistrate, as allowed in Exod. xxi. 24, to the purposes of revenge and private retaliation. But whatever we may think of this, and of the lawfulness of resisting unjust aggression, or threatened invasion, we see nothing in the principle, as maintained by the Friends, that reflects on the justice of the wars of Israel, which they consider as founded on divine authority.

Upon the whole, though we differ from the Friends in many important particulars, and have, we hope with Christian candor, stated our objections to some of them, yet there are many things in this work which afford us pleasure. It is gratifying to see so unanimous and decided a stand made against the spirit of infidelity, under the form of Unitarianism; and to find it conducted with so much calmness and justice. Such cases as those of Hannah Barnard are permitted to try, not only individuals, but societies. It is pleasant also to observe in our author a familiar acquaintance with the writings of others besides those of his own denomination. We cannot but from hence entertain a hope that he, and the Friends in general who may give the foregoing remarks a perusal, will take them in good part, and candidly consider the force of them. It is from such a mutual interchange of sentiments between different denominations, who have been in different habits of thinking, that each is likely to derive advantage. In this way we may be candid, charitable, and liberal, without becoming indifferent to religious principles.

The work itself is elaborate, and fraught with information on the subjects it embraces. It contains much close thinking and conclu-

sive reasoning. We will only add that, though it is natural and proper for a society to vindicate the principles of its first founders when they are misrepresented, yet, in pursuing this object, there is danger of considering their opinions as oracular. "The first of considerations," as this writer allows, "is not who has believed,—but what is the truth?"

THE REV. CHARLES JERRAM'S LETTERS ON  
THE ATONEMENT.

THE many able productions which have appeared in defence of this important doctrine might seem to render all future vindications of it unnecessary. But, while its adversaries write and labor to exhibit it in a false and exceptionable point of light, its friends must write also, though it be only to re-state its evidence, and to correct their misrepresentations.

By the advertisements at the end of these Letters we learn who was the author of the excellent "Letters to a Universalist," hitherto known by the name of SCRUTATOR. The occasion of both these pieces appears to be nearly the same. The Universalists in the neighborhood of Mr. Jerram having been very assiduous, it seems, in propagating their principles, he has felt it his duty to vindicate the doctrines which they have attempted to discredit.

But how is this? Do Universalists disown the atonement? It is well known that the adversaries of the atonement have long been friendly to universalism; and Mr. Vidler was warned, at the outset of his career, "to beware of the whirlpool of Socinianism:" but is it so that they have actually formed a junction? The writer opposed in these Letters does not *profess* to reject the doctrine of atonement, but to give a new *explanation* of it. Such, we recollect, was the object of a pamphlet published not long since by a Mr. John Simpson of Hackney, entitled "Plain thoughts on the new-testament doctrine of Atonement;" and the explanation given by him amounted to this, namely, The reconciliation of the mind to God, or conversion!

But wherein is the difference between the scheme of these writers and that of Socinians in general? According to Mr. Simpson, it lies in this: many of the latter, with Dr. Taylor, make atonement to consist in the reconciliation of our heathen ancestors to Christianity, to the superseding of personal conversion in their descendants; and this, he thinks, renders it almost, if not altogether, a nullity. To this we take the liberty of adding, Socinians in general renounce not only the doctrine, but the word *atonement*, which they are very well aware conveys the idea of *satisfaction*. But Mr. Simpson, and the Universalists, though they



agree with their brethren in rejecting the doctrine, yet seem to think it best to retain the word, and to put their own sense upon it.

Mr. Jerram considers this merely a piece of artifice. "Under pretence of being advocates for the atonement," he says, "they have attempted to undermine it, renouncing the doctrine while they retain the name. They have chosen to call this doctrine, as it has for ages been understood by all denominations of Christians, any thing but the atonement; and have appropriated the name to a set of notions which bear no more resemblance to the ideas which it has hitherto been accustomed to designate than the writings of Socinus to the epistles of St. Paul. This artifice has so far succeeded as sometimes to prevent the alarm which a naked statement of their real sentiments would have occasioned. Persons who have always been taught to consider the atonement of Christ as the only foundation of a sinner's hope might have been startled at an avowed opposition to it: but, by retaining the name, though the thing be given up, the change they are persuaded to make appears less formidable. And when such sentiments have been addressed to minds of a speculative turn, and who have never been well grounded in the principles they profess to believe, they have seldom been without effect. At first they were *not disposed to contend for trifles*, so long as they conceived the principal doctrine remained unimpeached; and, feeling desirous of being ranked among "the candid and liberal inquirers after truth," they next *lent a favorable ear* to every thing that presented itself under the mask of improvement. To this succeeded a number of flattering compliments addressed to their vanity—and now the work is done. They presently discovered the absurdity of their former opinions, and look down with pity or contempt on those who still hug the chains of prejudice, and creep on in the obsolete path of their forefathers. They commence the zealous disciples of Socinus—the "rational" worshippers of the *all-benevolent Deity*—and all this without relinquishing an iota of the doctrine of the atonement!"

The work before us contains four Letters, which Mr. Jerram has addressed to his opponent. In the first he states the question at issue. Declining all contention about the term *satisfaction*, he endeavors to ascertain the thing which he means to defend. "I collect," says he, "from your letter, that you mean to set aside every other consideration in the pardoning of sin but the mercy and love of God; you oppose every thing *vicarious* in the nature of Christ's death, every idea of making an atonement to divine justice, or of Christ's suffering any thing in the place of sinners." This doctrine Mr. Jerram maintains; and proceeds to answer no

less than sixteen objections which his opponent had raised against it. In the second letter, he endeavors to establish the doctrine from the general current of Scripture; in the third, from the nature of the Jewish sacrifices and priesthood; and, in the fourth from the fitness of things.

At the close are several valuable notes, taken principally from the elaborate and masterly work of Dr. Magee, on the same subject. In the last of these notes Mr. Jerram has taken occasion to vindicate his friend Mr. Fuller, from a very unfair statement given by Mr. John Evans, in his "Sketch of the different Denominations;" in which Mr. Fuller's views on this important doctrine are ranked with those of Arians and Sabellians. It would seem as if these writers, like the hero across the channel, were very much in want of help, or they would not wish to press those into an alliance with them who are known to be averse to their system.

If the reader has seen the "Letters to a Universalist," before referred to, he will observe that the present are less diffuse; and, what may appear not a little surprising, are written in a very gentle and argumentative strain, and without any reference to the learned languages. The sarcastic "Scrutator" is here the calm, dispassionate, but decided advocate for what appears to him a fundamental doctrine of Christianity. To account for the difference, we must have recourse to the preface to his former pamphlet. "He was not ignorant," as he then observed, "that when a man sits down to debate a point with another he should avoid every appearance of personality, and, as far as possible, whatever might even indirectly hurt the feelings of his opponent. The investigation of truth is the only object at which he should aim. But the office of a reviewer is widely different. It is his province to hold up the disputants to the view of the world; to praise what is commendable, and to correct what deserves censure. It belongs to him to point out the perspicuity, strength, and conclusiveness of an argument, as well as the candor and ingenuousness with which it is conducted: nor is it less his duty, however painful, to expose the petulance of little minds, the arrogance of the sciolist, the unsupported claims to candor of the illiberal, and to wrest the palm of victory from the hand of the vanquished."

#### THE VOICE OF YEARS.

THE late Mr. Huntington was, beyond all doubt, an extraordinary man; and his labors have produced extraordinary effects. Whatever opinion we entertain of their good or evil tendency, all know that he has gathered together a great body of people, and impregnated their minds with principles which will

not soon become extinct. And as he not only preached, but wrote, his labors may be expected to produce effects for many years to come : on this account, it becomes a duty to ascertain their nature and their tendency.

The author of the piece before us appears to have been well qualified for his undertaking, both as to his means of knowing Mr. Huntington, and the unprejudiced state of his mind towards him. He is also evidently a man of close observation, and serious reflection.

There are two questions, however, which, on reading his performance, have risen in our minds. First, Whether the account which he has given of Mr. Huntington's "good qualities," supposing it to be just, includes any indications of personal religion? Secondly, Whether the account of his good and bad qualities can be made to consist with each other?

If our object were to ascertain whether, in the judgment of charity, Mr. Huntington was, or was not, a true Christian, justice would require us first to ascertain, as far as possible, the correctness or defectiveness of these accounts of him ; but, this not being our object, we may suppose them to be correct, and, as far as human observation can extend, perfect. Our inquiry, then, is simply this : Whether those "good qualities" which are here ascribed to him, and weighed against his evil ones, have any thing truly good in them? If they have not, and yet are allowed, notwithstanding all his faults, to prove him a good man, the consequence may be fatal to thousands, who shall venture to follow his example.

To us it appears that the good qualities ascribed to Mr. Huntington, taken in connection with the comments by which they are explained, are of an *equivocal* character : they may accompany true religion or they may not. There is not a Christian grace, nor the exercise of a Christian grace, necessarily contained in any one of them. No one will say that a "plain and natural" manner of speaking has any religion in it. If there be any thing of this, it must be looked for in his being "scriptural, experimental and evangelical:" yet when, by the first of these terms is meant little more than that his discourses abounded in Scripture quotations, supposed to be gathered out of a concordance ; by the next, that, in preaching, he was wont to tell of his own feelings, which corresponded with those of others like-minded with him ; and by the last, that he dwelt on *some* of the great truths of the Gospel: what is there in all this indicative of true religion? The same may be said of his being "independent, contemplative, and laborious:" they may be connected with true religion, or they may not. They are not the things which prove "the root of the matter to have been in him."

It may be said that the author does not profess to give Mr. Huntington's character as a Christian, but as a minister. It is an unhappy circumstance, however, in a case wherein the good and the bad are to be weighed one against the other, that his good qualities, as a minister, should prove nothing for him as a Christian, while his bad qualities as a minister prove every thing against him as a Christian. His good qualities contain nothing decisive of his goodness : but his bad qualities are indications of the pre-dominancy of a spirit which is not of God.

We proceed, secondly, to inquire whether the account of Mr. Huntington's good and bad qualities can be made to consist with each other.

It has long been common for some, who have disapproved of Mr. Huntington's spirit and conduct, to speak of him, notwithstanding, as preaching *the pure Gospel*. And our author, though he will never allow him, he says, to have preached it *fully*, yet seems willing to grant that he preached it as far as he went, and that, upon the whole, he was "evangelical." Nay, more : he represents him as often expatiating upon the truths of the Gospel "with a cheerfulness and fluency which sufficiently testified his own interest in them, and his ardent desire that his hearers should be partakers with him in the blessings of a new and everlasting covenant." Yet he is described, at the same time, as being conceited, overbearing, vindictive, proud, inaccessible, covetous, and, we may add, blasphemous, continually swearing to the truth of his dogmas, by the life of God!!! We do not understand how these things can be made to agree.

It is true, as Mr. CECIL observes, that the preaching of Christ is "God's ordinance ; and that although Christ may be ignorantly, blunderingly, and even absurdly preached by some ; yet God will *bless his own ordinance*." But we think there is a material difference between these failings and those *moral* qualities which are ascribed to Mr. Huntington. We can reconcile the former with true religion, but not the latter.

Allowing, however, that God may bless his own truth, let it be delivered by whom it may, yet is there no reason to suspect whether doctrine imbued by such a mind is free from impure mixture? whether, if the vessel be tainted, the liquor will not taste of it?

One thing is clear ; they who "lack virtue, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity," or are "lovers of their own-selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, unthankful, unholy," are not allowed by the Scriptures to understand or believe the truth. The former are described as "blind, and such as cannot see afar off;" and the latter as "ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth ;"

may, as "resisting the truth; men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." 2 Pet. i. 9. 2 Tim. iii. 1-8. How far men may preach the truth without understanding or believing it, in the scriptural sense of the terms, we shall not decide: but certainly we should suspect whether truth from such a source, or through such a medium, is likely to be very pure.

The Scriptures do not acknowledge men of unholy lives as ministers of the Gospel, but declare, in the most peremptory terms, that "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."—1 John ii. 4. Our Lord himself, when warning his followers against false prophets, assured them that "a good tree could not bring forth evil fruit," any more than an evil tree could bring forth good fruit; "wherefore," saith he, "by their fruits ye shall know them."—Matt. vii. 18—20.

We do not say that such was Mr. Huntington's character, but barely that, *if the account given of him in this performance be just*, we do not perceive what else it could be. We suppose, therefore, that either Mr. Huntington's character must have appeared to this observer of him much worse, or his preaching much better, than it really was.

We should apprehend, merely from this performance, and without any reference to his publications, that whatever portion of truth his preaching might contain, there was a vein of false doctrine running through it, which tainted it, to the bone and marrow, buoyed up himself and his admirers in false hope, and rendered his ministry unworthy of the character of "evangelical." And if this were to be suspected, without any reference to his publications, how much more likely does it appear when they are taken into the account! In all that we have seen of them, the object of the writer appears to have been to exhibit *himself*. How this can comport with the character of a Christian minister we do not understand. "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and our-

selves your servants, for Jesus' sake." And, if the obedience and death of Christ were in honor of the divine law, we do not understand how Christ could be either believed in or preached, while the law was degraded. We may degrade *the works of the law as a ground of justification*; this the apostle did: but he that thinks meanly of the law itself must think meanly of the Gospel, as doing honor to it. If there be no glory in the law, there is none in the gospel.

To allege that there are things in the precepts of the New Testament which are not *specifically* required by the decalogue is mere evasion. This was not the question between Mr. Huntington and "other ministers:" but whether the divine law, as summed up by our Lord in love to God and our neighbor, does not comprehend all duty, and be not binding on all men, believers and unbelievers. It was not the *defectiveness* of the decalogue, in comparison with the precepts of Christ, that led Mr. Huntington to degrade it. Had this been the case, the subject of "Christian duty," as inculcated in the New Testament, would have occupied a place in his ministry: but Mr. Huntington, it seems, "*never said any thing of that kind!*"

We doubt whether the apostle Paul would have acknowledged such a doctrine to be the Gospel, or such a character as that which is ascribed to him to consist with Christianity; and whether, instead of selecting things out of it for imitation, he would not have sought them in other characters. "Brethren," said he to the Philippians, "be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." We have no doubt, however, of the truth and importance of our author's remarks on preaching Christ. Whatever be our "qualifications," or talents, if the person and work of Christ be not the favorite theme of our preaching, we had better be day-laborers than preachers.



## ANSWERS TO QUERIES.

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### ON THE FALL OF ADAM.

“Was the fall of Adam *fore-determined* or only *foreseen* by God?”

THE concern which the decrees of God have with the fall of man has often been the subject of inquiry. I do not see the reason, however, why this particular fact should be singled out from others. There is nothing revealed, that I know of, concerning the fall of man being the object either of the divine foreknowledge or decree. The Scriptures declare, in general, that God knoweth the end from the beginning, from which we may conclude with certainty that he knew all the events of time, all the causes and effects of things, through all their multiplied and diversified channels. The Scriptures also ask, “Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?” which intimates that the providence and purpose of God are concerned in whatever cometh to pass. The volitions of free agents, the evil as well as the good, are constantly represented as falling under the counsels and conduct of heaven. Never did men act more freely nor more wickedly than the Jews, in the crucifixion of Christ; yet in that whole business they did no other than what “God’s hand and counsel determined before to be done.” The delivery of Christ into their hands to be crucified, as performed by Judas, was a wicked act; yet was he “delivered according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” The proof that the fall of man was an object of divine foreknowledge is merely *inferential*; and from the same kind of proof we may conclude that it was, all things considered, an object of predetermination.

That this subject is deep and difficult, in the present state, is admitted, and wicked men may abuse it to their own destruction: but the thing itself is no less true and useful, if considered in the fear of God. There is a link, as some have expressed it, that unites the purposes of God and the free

actions of men, which is above our comprehension; but to deny the fact is to disown an all-pervading providence; which is little less than to disown a God. It is observable, in one of the foregoing passages, that Peter unites “the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” together, and seems to have had no idea of admitting the one without the other. It is also worthy of notice that, in his manner of introducing the subject, it appears to have no tendency whatever to excuse them from guilt, by throwing the blame on the Almighty: on the contrary, it is brought in for the purpose of conviction, and actually answered the end; those to whom it was addressed being “pricked in their hearts,” and crying out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

The decrees of God seem to be distinguishable into *efficient* and *permissive*. With respect to moral good, God is the proper and efficient cause of it. This James teaches, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights;” particularly the blessing of regeneration, which contains all moral goodness in embryo: as it follows, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth.”

With respect to moral evil, God permits it, and it was his eternal purpose so to do. If it be right for God to permit sin, it could not be wrong for him to determine to do so; unless it be wrong to determine to do what is right. The decree of God to permit sin does not in the least excuse the sinner, or warrant him to ascribe it to God, instead of himself.

The same inspired writer who teaches, with respect to good, that “it cometh from above,” teaches also in the same passage, with respect to evil, that it proceedeth from ourselves; “Let no one say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil: neither tempteth he any one. But every one is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” And, as if he considered the danger of mistaking on this profound subject, he adds by way of caution, “Do not err, my beloved brethren.”

## ACCOUNTABILITY OF MAN.

"1. Since, on the present constitution of things, men never had a disposition to love and serve God, nor can it be produced by any circumstances in which they can be placed, how can they be accountable for what they never had, and without divine influence never can have ?

"2. If it be said that man is accountable from his powers and constitution, and therefore that God requires of him perfect obedience and love as the result of his possessing a moral nature ; still how is it consistent with the goodness of God to produce accountable beings in circumstances where-in their rebellion is certain, and then punish them for it ?

"3. If the reply to these difficulties be founded on the principle that, from what we see, we cannot conceive of a constitution which hath not either equal or greater difficulties in it, is it not a confession that we cannot meet the objections and answer them in the direct way, but are obliged to acknowledge that the government of God is too imperfectly understood by us to know the principles on which it proceeds ?

"The above queries are not the effect of any unbelief of the great leading doctrines of the gospel ; but, as every thinking man has his own way of settling such moral difficulties, you will confer a favor on me if you will state how you meet and answer them in your own mind."

If the querist imagines that we profess to have embraced a system which answers all difficulties, he should be reminded that we profess no such thing. If it answer all *sober* and *modest* objections, that is as much as ought to be expected. The querist would do well to consider whether he be not off Christian ground, and whether he might not as well inquire as follows: How could it consist with the goodness of God, knowing as he did the part that men and angels would act, to create them? Or, if he had brought them into being, yet, when they had transgressed, why did he not blot them out of existence? Or, if they who had sinned must needs exist and be punished, yet why was it not confined to them? Why must the human race be brought into being under such circumstances?

I remember, when a boy of about ten years old, I was bathing with a number of other boys near a mill-dam, and, the hat of one of my companions falling into the stream, I had the hardihood, without being able to swim, to attempt to recover it. I went so deep that the waters began to run into my mouth, and to heave my feet from the ground. At that instant the millers, seeing my danger, set up a loud cry, "Get back! get back! get back!" I did so, and that was all.—What the millers said to me, modesty, sobriety, and right reason, say to all such objectors as the above, "Get back! get back! get back!" You are beyond your depth! It is enough for you to know that God HATH created men and angels, and this notwithstanding he knew what would

be the result; that he HATH NOT blotted them out of existence; and that he HATH NOT prevented the propagation of the human race in their fallen state. These being FACTS which cannot be disputed, you ought to take it for granted, whether you can understand it or not, that they are consistent with righteousness: for the contrary is no other than *replying against God*.

Whatever objections may be alleged against an hypothesis, or the meaning of a text of Scripture, on the ground of its inconsistency with the divine perfection; yet, in matters of acknowledged *fact*, they are inadmissible. If God HATH DONE thus and and thus, it is not for us to object that it is inconsistent with his character; but to suspect our own understanding, and to conclude that, if we knew the whole, we should see it to be right. Paul invariably takes it for granted that *whatever God doth is right*; nor will he dispute with any man on a contrary principle, but cuts him short in this manner: "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!" It was enough for him that God had said to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." This, as if he should say, is the FACT: "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he *hardeneth*." He knew what would be the heart-risings of the infidel—"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" But does he attempt to answer this objection? No; he repels it as Job did: "He that reproveth God, let him answer it—Nay, but, O man, who art thou that *repliest against God*? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, *Why hast thou made me thus*?"

Let the querist consider whether his objections be not of the same family as those which were made to the apostle, and whether they do not admit of the same answer. Is it not *fact* that though sinners "never had a disposition to love and serve God, and no circumstance in which they can be placed will produce it," yet *they are accountable creatures, and are invariably treated as such in the Scriptures*? God requires them to love and serve him just as much as if they were of opposite dispositions, and "finds fault" with the contrary. Instead of allowing for the want of disposition, he constantly charges it as the very thing that provokes his displeasure. Hundreds of proofs might be produced; but I will only refer you to two or three.—Jer. vi. 15—19. Matt. xii. 34—37. John viii. 43—47. It is upon these FACTS that we rest our persuasion; and not upon a supposed perfect comprehension of the divine government, nor yet upon the ground of its "having the fewest difficulties." We say, God *actually* treats the want of disposition not as an excuse, but as a sin: and we take it for grant-

ed that "what God does is right," whether we can comprehend it or not. Howbeit, in this case, it happens that with the testimonies of God accord those of conscience and common sense. Every man's conscience "finds fault" with him for the evils which he commits willingly, or of choice; and, instead of making any allowance for previous aversion, nothing more is necessary to rivet the charge. And, with respect to the common sense of mankind in their treatment one of another, what judge or what jury ever took into consideration the previous aversion of a traitor or a murderer, with a view to the diminishing of his guilt? On the contrary, the tracing of any thing to that origin rivets the charge, and terminates the inquiry. With the united testimony therefore of God, conscience, and common sense on our side, we make light of objections which, as to their principle, were repelled by an apostle, and which are retained only in the school of metaphysical infidelity.

#### ON MORAL INABILITY.

FIRST: you inquire "whether any person by nature possesses that honest heart which constitutes the ability to comply with the invitations of the gospel?" I believe the heart of man to be by nature the direct opposite of honest. I am not aware, however, that I have any where represented an honest heart as constituting our ability to comply with gospel invitations, unless as the term is sometimes used in a figurative sense, for moral ability. I have said, "There is no ability wanting for this purpose in any man who possesses an honest heart." If a person owed you one hundred pounds, and could find plenty of money for his own purposes, though none for you; and should he at the same time plead inability, you would answer, *there was no ability wanting, but an honest heart*: yet it would be an unjust construction of your words, if an advocate for this dishonest man were to allege that you had represented an honest heart as that which *constituted the ability to pay the debt*. No, you would reply, his ability, strictly speaking, consists in its being *in the power of his hand*, and this he has. That which is wanting is an honest principle; and it is the former, not the latter, which renders him accountable. It is similar with regard to God. Men have the same natural powers to love Christ as to hate him, to believe as to disbelieve; and this it is which constitutes their accountableness. Take away reason and conscience, and man would cease to be accountable; but, if he were as wicked as Satan himself, in that case no such effect would follow.

Secondly: If no man by nature possess an honest heart, you inquire, "Whether, if

I be not what you call an *elect sinner*, there are any means provided of God, and which I can use, that shall issue in that 'honesty of heart' which will enable me to believe unto salvation?" Your being an elect, or a non-elect sinner, makes no difference as to this question. The idea of a person destitute of honesty using means to obtain it is in all cases a contradiction. The use of means *supposes the existence* of an honest desire after the end. The Scriptures direct to the sincere use of means for obtaining eternal life; and these means are "repent and believe the gospel;" but they nowhere direct to such a use of means as may be complied with without any honesty of heart, and in order to obtain it. Nothing appears to me with greater evidence than that God *directly requires uprightness of heart*, not only in the moral law, but in all the exhortations of the Bible, and not the dishonest use of means in order to obtain it. Probably you yourself would not plead for *such* a use of means, but would allow that even in using means to obtain an honest heart we ought to be *sincere*; but, if so, you must maintain what I affirm, that nothing short of honesty of heart *itself* is required in any of the exhortations of Scripture; for a sincere use of means *is* honesty of heart. If you say, "No; man is depraved: it is not his duty to possess an honest heart, but merely to use means that he may possess it;" I answer, as personating the sinner, I have no desire after an honest heart. If you reply, "You should pray for such a desire," you must mean, if you mean any thing, that I should express my *desire* to God that I may have a *desire*; and I tell you that I have none to express. You would then, sir, be driven to tell me I was so wicked that I neither was of an upright heart, nor would be persuaded to use any means for becoming so; and that I must take the consequences. That is, I must be exposed to punishment, because, though I had "a price in my hand to get wisdom, *I had no heart to it*." Thus, all you do is to remove the obstruction farther out of sight: the thing is the same.

I apprehend it is owing to your considering human depravity as the *misfortune*, rather than the *fault* of human nature, that you and others speak of it as you do. You would not write in this manner in an affair that affected *yourself*. If the debtor above supposed, whom you knew to have plenty of wealth about him, were to allege his want of an honest heart, you might possibly think of *using means with him*; but you would not think of directing him to use means to become what at present he has no desire to be—an honest man!

Thirdly: You inquire if there be no means provided of God which I can use that shall issue in that honesty of heart



which will enable me to believe unto salvation, "how can the gospel be a *blessing bestowed upon me*; seeing it is inadequate to make me happy, and contains no good thing which I can possibly obtain or enjoy?" If I be under no other inability than that which arises from a dishonesty of heart, it is an abuse of language to introduce the terms "possible, impossible," &c., for the purpose of diminishing the goodness of God, or destroying the accountableness of man. I am not wanting in power provided I were willing; and, if I be not willing, there lies my fault. Nor is any thing in itself less a blessing on account of our unreasonable and wicked aversion to it. Indeed, the same would follow from your own principles. If I be so wicked as not only to be destitute of an honest heart, but cannot be *persuaded to use means in order to obtain it*, I must perish; and then, according to your way of writing, the gospel was "inadequate to make me happy, and was no blessing to me!" You will say, I might have used the means: that is, I might *if I would*, or if I had possessed a sincere desire after the end: but I *did not* possess it; and therefore the same consequences follow your hypothesis as that which you oppose.

If these things be true, say you, we may *despair*. True, sir; and that is the point, in a sense, to which I should be glad to see you and many others brought. Till we despair of all help from ourselves, we shall never pray acceptably; nor, in my judgment, is there any hope of our salvation.

Let a man feel that there is no bar between him and heaven except what consists in his own wickedness, and yet that such is its influence over him that he certainly never will by any efforts of his own extricate himself from it, and he will then begin to pray for an interest in salvation by *mere grace*, in the name of Jesus—a salvation that will save him *from himself*; and, so praying, he will find it; and, when he has found it, he will feel and acknowledge that it was grace alone that made him differ; and this grace he is taught in the Scriptures to ascribe to the purpose of God, given him in Christ Jesus before the world began.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD, AND WHETHER IT  
EXTENDS TO THE NON-ELECT.

[An original letter to a friend in reply to the inquiry]

"Since God never intended those that are not his elect to know the power of his grace in Christ Jesus, how can we extol the love of God in seeking the salvation of men, except in relation to those whom he designed to save? And how can we speak of the love of God to men at large, except on the general ground that it is among the mass of mankind that his chosen can be found,

and therefore that they will hear and obey the gospel when preached unto them? In fewer words, What is the love which God hath for those whom he hath not chosen to eternal life?"

I CANNOT undertake to free this subject or any other from difficulty; nor do I pretend to answer it on the principles of reason. If I can ascertain certain principles to be taught in the word of God, I feel it safe to reason from them; but, if I proceed beyond this, I am at sea.

Respecting the first member of this question, I am not aware of having represented God as "seeking the salvation of those who are not saved." If by the term *seeking* were meant no more than his furnishing them with the means of salvation, and, as the moral governor of his creatures, sincerely directing and inviting them to use them, I should not object to it. In this sense he said of Israel, "O that they had hearkened to my voice!" In this sense the Lord of the vineyard is described as *seeking* fruit where he finds none.—Luke xiii. 7. But, if it be understood to include such a desire for the salvation of men as to do all that can be done to accomplish it, I do not approve of it. I see no inconsistency between God using all proper means for the good of mankind as their creator and governor, and his withholding effectual grace, which is something superadded to moral government, and to which no creature has any claim.

As to the second member, God may be said, for aught I know, to exercise love to *mankind*, as being the mass containing his chosen people; but I cannot think this idea will answer. It appears to me an incontrovertible fact that God is represented in his word as exercising goodness, mercy, kindness, long-suffering, and even love towards men as men. The bounties of providence are described as flowing from *kindness* and *mercy*; and this his kindness and mercy is held up as an example for us to *love* our enemies.—Matt. v. 44, 45. Luke vi. 35, 36. And this the apostle extols; calling it "The riches of his goodness," &c., keenly censuring the wicked for despising it, instead of being led to repentance by it.—Rom. ii. 4. And what if God never intended to render this his goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering, effectual to the leading of them to repentance? Does it follow that it is not goodness? And while I read such language as this, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"—and that the ministry of reconciliation was in this strain—"We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech [men] by us, we pray [them] in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God,"—I can draw no conclusion short of this, that eternal life through Jesus Christ is freely offered to sinners as

sinner, or as Calvin, on John iii. 16, expresseth it, "He useth the universal note, both that he may invite all men in general unto the participation of life, and that he may cut off all excuse from unbelievers. To the same end tendeth the term *world*; for, although there shall nothing be found in the world that is worthy of God's favor, yet he showeth that *he is favorable unto the whole world*, when he calleth all men without exception to the faith of Christ. But remember that life is promised to all who shall believe in Christ, so commonly, that yet faith is not common to all men; yet God doth only open the eyes of his elect, that they may seek him by faith."

If God had sent his Son to die for the whole world, and had offered pardon and eternal life to all who should believe in him, *without making effectual provision for the reception of him in a single instance*, what would have been the consequence? Not one of the human race, you may say, would have been saved, and so Christ would have died in vain. Be it so. Though this would not have comported with the *wise and gracious designs of God*, yet it does not appear to me inconsistent with his justice, goodness, or sincerity. If he had called sinners to repent, believe, and be saved, while he withheld the *means* of salvation, it would have been so; but not in his merely withholding the *grace* necessary to turn the sinner's heart.

If I mistake not, this second member of the question proceeds on the principle that there can be no good will exercised towards a sinner in inviting him to repent, believe, and be saved, unless effectual grace be given him for the purpose. But this principle appears to me unscriptural and unfounded. Supernatural and effectual grace is indeed necessary to the *actual production* of good in men; but is never represented as necessary to justify the goodness of God in *expecting or requiring it*. All that is necessary to this end is, that he furnish them with rational powers, objective light, and outward means. In proof of this, let all those Scriptures be considered in which God *complains* of men for not repenting, believing, obeying, &c.; e. g. in the complaint against Chorazin and Bethsaida, no mention is made of supernatural grace given to them; but merely of the "mighty works" wrought before them.—Matt. xi. 20—24. The complaint of the want of "reverence for his Son" (which proves what he had a right to expect) was not founded on his having furnished them with supernatural grace, but with objective light, means, and advantages.—Matt. xxi. 33—38. God gave no effectual grace to those who are accused of bringing forth wild grapes instead of grapes; yet he *looked for grapes*, and asked what he could have done

more for his vineyard that he had not done? —Isa. v. 4. The strivings of the Spirit which sinners are described as *resisting* (Gen. vi. 3. Acts vii. 51.), could not for this reason mean the effectual grace of the Holy Spirit, nor indeed any thing wrought in *them*, but the impressive motives *presented to them* by the inspired messages of the prophets.—See Neh. ix. 30. And thus I conceive we are to understand the complaint in Deut. xxix. 4, "The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." It is inconceivable that Moses should complain of them for the Lord's not have given them supernatural grace. The complaint appears to be founded on the nonsuccess of the most impressive *outward means*, which ought to have produced in them a heart to perceive, eyes to see, and ears to hear. Such is the scope of the passage—"Moses called to all Israel and said, ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land. The great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles: *yet the Lord*, by all these impressive means, *hath not given you an heart to perceive*," &c.

From the whole, I conclude that there are two kinds of influence by which God works on the minds of men: First, That which is common, and which is effected by the ordinary use of motives presented to the mind for consideration. Secondly, That which is special and supernatural. The one is exercised by him as the moral governor of the world: the other as the God of grace, through Jesus Christ. The one contains nothing mysterious, any more than the influence of our words and actions on each other; the other is such a mystery that we know nothing of it but by its effects.—The former *ought* to be effectual; the latter is so.\*

You sum up the question in fewer words by asking, What is the love which God hath for those whom he hath not chosen to eternal life? I should answer, *The good will of the Creator*, whose tender mercies are over all his works. It is that tender regard for the work of his hands which nothing but sin could extinguish, and which in the infliction of the most tremendous punishments is alleged in proof of its malignity, and to show how much they were against the grain of his native goodness, and that he would not have punished the offenders, after all, had not the inalienable interests of his character and government required it. Such are the ideas conveyed, I think, in Gen. vi. : "I will destroy man *whom I have created* from the face of the earth;" and in Isa.

\* See Bellamy's *True Religion Delineated*, second edition, p. 111—117.

xxvii. 11: "He that *made* them will not have mercy upon them, and he that *formed* them will show them no favor."

#### THE PRAYER OF THE WICKED.

"Ought a wicked man to pray?"

THE declaimer who denied this position seems to have had an eye to those passages of Scripture which declare "the sacrifice and way of the wicked to be an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. xv. 8, 9); and to have concluded from them that God does not require any sacrifice or prayer at their hands. But, if so, why did Peter exhort the sorcerer to pray?—Acts viii. 22. And wherefore is the fury of God denounced against the families that call not upon his name?—Jer. x. 25. An hypothesis which flies in the face of the express language of Scripture is inadmissible, and the framer of it, to be consistent, should avow himself an infidel.

If he meant only to deny that God requires such prayers as wicked men actually offer, the prayer of a hard, impenitent, and unbelieving heart, I have no controversy with him. God cannot possibly approve any thing of this kind. But then the same is true of every other duty. Wicked men do nothing that is well-pleasing to God: nothing which is aimed at his glory, or done in obedience to his authority; every thing that is done is done for selfish ends. If they read the Scriptures, it is not to know the will of God and do it; or, if they hear the word, it is not with any true desire to profit by it. Even their pursuit of the common good things of this life is that they may consume them upon their lusts; hence the very "ploughing of the wicked is sin."—Prov. xxi. 4. Yet the declaimer himself would scarcely infer from hence that it is not their duty to read the word of God, nor attend to the preaching of the gospel, nor pursue the necessary avocations of life: neither would he reckon it absurd to exhort them to such exercises as these.

The truth is, wicked men are required to do all these things, not carnally, but with a right end and a right spirit. In this way Simon Magus, though "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," was exhorted to pray; not with a hard and impenitent heart, but with a spirit of true contrition. "Repent, therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." To repent and pray is the same thing in effect as to pray penitently, or with a contrite spirit. Wicked men are required to read and hear the word, but not with a wicked spirit; and to plough the soil, but not that they may consume its produce upon their lusts.

There are not two sorts of requirements, or two standards of obedience, one for good

men and the other for wicked men; the revealed will of God is one and the same, however differently creatures may stand affected towards it. The same things which are required of the righteous, as repentance, faith, love, prayer, and praise, are required of the wicked.—John xii. 36. Acts iii. 19. Rev. xv. 4. If it were not so, and the aversion of the heart tended to set aside God's authority over it, it must of necessity follow that a sinner can never be brought to repentance, except it be for the commission of those sins which might have been avoided consistently with the most perfect enmity against God! And this is to undermine all true repentance; for the essence of true repentance is "godly sorrow," or sorrow for having displeased and dishonored God. But if, in a state of unregeneracy, a man were under no obligation to please God, he must of course have been incapable of displeasing him; for where no law is, there is no transgression. The consequence is, he can never be sorry at heart for having displeased him; and, as there would be but little if any ground for repentance towards God, so there would be but little if any need of faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. If in a state of unregeneracy he were under no obligation to do any thing pleasing to God, and were so far rendered incapable of doing any thing to displease him, so far he must be sinless, and therefore stand in no need of a Saviour. Where there is no obligation, there can be no offence; and, where there is no offence, there needs no forgiveness. Thus the notions of this declaimer, who, I suppose, would be thought very evangelical, will be found subversive of the first principles of the gospel.

#### ASPECT OF GOSPEL PROMISES TO THE WICKED.

[Suggested by certain queries addressed to the writer on his exposition of the Beatitudes. See p. 87.]

THE queries put to me, with so much candor and kindness, by a Constant Reader, are such as I feel no difficulty in answering. And I do it with the greater pleasure, because it is not the first time of my being misunderstood on this subject; and I might add, in one instance, largely misrepresented. Your correspondent then will give me credit, when I assure him that I should never think of addressing an awakened sinner in the way in which he supposes I should not; but in the way in which he supposes I should. If he be still at a loss how to reconcile this acknowledgment with the passage he calls in question, I must request him to consider whether there be not a manifest difference between comfort being held out



in a way of *invitation*, to induce a sinner to return to God by Jesus Christ, and its being given in a way of *promise*, on the supposition of his having returned. The wicked is *invited* to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and to return unto the Lord; and all this while he is wicked. Mercy also, and abundant pardon, are *promised* him, not, however, *as wicked*, but *as forsaking his way and his thoughts, and as returning to the Lord*. The weary and heavy-laden, by which I understand sinners considered as miserable, are *invited* to come to Jesus with their burdens: but it is *as coming to him, and as taking his yoke*, that rest for their souls is *promised* to them. All the comfort contained in the gospel is to be presented to the sinner in the way of invitation; but no comfort is afforded him in a way of promise, but as repenting and believing the gospel. "Say ye to the wicked, it shall be ill with him."—"There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked."

Now, it requires to be noticed that the beatitudes, which I was expounding, are not *invitations to believe*, but *promises to believers*. In saying, "The gospel has no comfort for impenitent, though distressed sinners, in their present state," I meant, it promises no mercy *but* on supposition of their coming off from that state to Jesus Christ. My design was not to direct the attention of the awakened sinner to anything in himself for comfort; but to beat him off from false comforts, by assuring him that mere distress was no proof of his being, as yet, in a state of salvation. If such a one should ask me, *What must I do?* I should think of nothing but of pointing him to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. But if he tell me his tale of woe, under an idea that *something may be found in it* to which the promises of mercy are made (and such cases are not uncommon), I should answer, Think nothing of this, my friend; unless your distress lead you to relinquish every false way, and to cast yourself as a perishing sinner on Jesus Christ for salvation, it is of no account. The gospel promises nothing to mere distress. Your concern is not to look into yourself for evidences of grace (the existence of which, at present, is extremely doubtful, and the discernment of it may be impossible,) but to the atonement of Christ, the hope set before you.

#### POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE GOSPEL.

"What is the true meaning of those parts of the New Testament which declare the gospel to have a powerful operation in the souls of men, especially in unbelievers? See Rom. i. 16; 1 Cor. i. 18, 24; 1 Thes. ii. 13. And is the power of the gospel in any sense to be distinguished from the pow-

er and influence of the Holy Spirit; or are they always connected; or do both include one and the same divine operation?"

THAT the gospel of Christ has an influence on the souls of men cannot be denied: as a means it is naturally adapted to this end. Even where it is not cordially believed, it is often known to operate powerfully upon the mind and conscience. It is natural to suppose that it should do so: the human mind is so formed as that words, whether spoken or written, should influence it. We cannot read or hear a discourse of any kind, if it be interesting, without being more or less affected by it; and it would be very surprising if the gospel, which implies our being utterly undone, and relates to our everlasting well being, should be the only subject in nature which should have no effect upon us. The gospel also being indited by the Holy Spirit, the influence which it has upon the minds of men is ascribed to him. It was in this way, that is, by the preaching of Noah, that the Spirit of Jehovah "strove" with the antediluvians. It was in this way that he was "resisted" by the Israelites; that is, they resisted the *messages* which the Holy Spirit sent to them by Moses and the prophets. Hence, the expressive language in the confession recorded in Nehemiah ix. 30, "Many years didst thou testify against them *by thy Spirit* in thy prophets." Also the pointed address of Stephen, to those who rejected the gospel of Christ, in Acts vii. 51. "Ye do always resist *the Holy Ghost*: as your fathers did, so do ye." This, for aught I can conceive, may with propriety be called the *common* operation of the grace of God.

As the gospel has an effect upon the minds and consciences even of many who do not cordially believe it, much more does it influence those who do. In them it works *effectually*, transforming them into its own likeness.—1 Thess. ii. 13. Their hearts are cast into it as into a mould, and all its sacred principles become to them principles of action. The grace, the wisdom, the purity, the justice, and the glory of it, powerfully subdues, melts, and attracts their hearts to love and obedience. The *power* of God had often been exerted by various means, and to various ends. Thunder and smoke, blackness and darkness and tempest, as displayed on mount Sinai, were the power of God unto conviction. Overwhelming floods, and devouring flames, in the case of the old world, of Sodom and Gomorrah, were the power of God unto destruction. Nor were these means better adapted to their ends than is the gospel to be the power of God unto salvation. It has ever pleased God by this means, weak and despised as it is in the account of men, "to save them that believe."—"This is the vic-

tory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

The above is offered as an answer to the former part of the question. But it is inquired, "Is the power of the gospel upon believers in any sense to be distinguished from the power and influence of the Holy Spirit?"

That the power of the gospel in the hearts of believers is the power of the Holy Spirit is admitted. All that the gospel effects is to be attributed to the Holy Spirit, who works by it as a means. It is called "the sword of the Spirit," Ephes. vi. 17; its influence, therefore, is as much the influence of the Spirit as that of a sword is of the hand that wields it. That obedience to the truth by which our souls are purified is "through the Spirit."—1 Pet. i. 22. Indeed all the means, whether ordinances or providences, or whatever is rendered subservient to the sanctification and salvation of the souls of men, are under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The influence, therefore, which they have to these ends is reckoned *his* influence. But it does not follow from hence that "the power of the gospel is in no sense to be distinguished from the power of the Holy Spirit, or that the one is always connected with the other, or that they both necessarily, and in all cases, include one and the same divine operation." The contrary of each of these positions appears to be the truth. The passages already adduced speak of the influence of the word upon those, and those only, who believe: and then the question is, How is it that a sinner is brought to believe?

The word of God cannot, in the nature of things, operate effectually *till it is believed*; and how is this brought about? Here is the difficulty. Belief, it may be said, in other cases is induced by evidence. This is true; and, if the hearts of men were not utterly averse from the gospel, its own evidence, without any supernatural interposition, would be sufficient to render every one who heard it a believer. But they are averse; and we all know that evidence, be it ever so clear, will make but little impression upon a mind infected with prejudice. The Scriptures speak of "sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth," as distinct things; and as if the one was antecedent to the other.—2 Thess. ii. 13. They also tell us that "the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, and she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul." We are said to "believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead."—Ephes. i. 19, 20. It would not require more power to believe the gospel than any other system of truth, if the heart were but in harmony with it; but, as it is not, it becomes necessary that a new bias of heart should be given as a preparative to knowing or em-

bracing it. The Scriptures not only speak of knowledge as the means of promoting a holy temper of heart, but of a holy temper as the foundation of true knowledge. "I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord."—Jer. xxiv. 7.

If it be objected that "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," I answer that faith must have an object, or it cannot exist. The word of God is the objective cause of faith; but it does not follow from hence that it is its sole or compulsive cause. Eating cometh by food, and food by the blessing of God upon the earth. Food may be said to be the objective cause of a man's eating, seeing he could not have eaten without food; but it does not therefore follow that food was the impulsive or sole cause of his eating; for, had he not been blessed with an appetite, he would not have eaten, though surrounded by food in the greatest plenty.

If it be farther objected that we can form no rational idea of the influence of the Holy Spirit, any otherwise than as through the medium of the word: I answer, we can form no idea of the influence of the Holy Spirit at all, either with or without the word, but merely of its effects. We may indeed form an idea of the influence of truth upon our minds, but we cannot conceive how a divine influence accompanies it. Nor is it necessary that we should, any more than that we should comprehend "the way of the Spirit," in the quickening and formation of our animal nature, in order to be satisfied that we are the creatures of God. It is sufficient for us that we are conscious of certain effects, and are taught in the Scriptures to ascribe them to a divine cause.

#### THE NATURE OF REGENERATION.

"Does the Spirit of God, in regeneration, produce a new principle in the heart, or only impart a new light in the understanding?"

THE question, as stated by your correspondent, I consider as important, and as admitting of a satisfactory answer. Whether I shall be able to afford him satisfaction, I cannot tell; but will do the best I can towards it. If we were called to determine *how*, or in *what manner* the Holy Spirit operates upon the human mind, great difficulties might attend our inquiries; but the purport of this question seems to relate, not to the *modus* of his operations, but to the *nature* of what is produced. To this, I should answer: The Spirit of God in regeneration *does* produce a new principle in the heart, and not merely impart a new light in the understanding. The reasons for this position are as follow:—

First: That which the Holy Spirit imparts

in regeneration corresponds with his own NATURE: it is *holiness*, or *spirituality*. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit." But mere light in the understanding, as distinguished from the bias or temper of the heart, has nothing in it spiritual or holy; it is a mere exercise of intellect, in which there is neither good nor evil.—The Scriptures, it is true, make frequent mention of spiritual light, and of such light being imparted by the Spirit of God; but the terms *light* and *knowledge*, as frequently used in Scripture, are not to be understood in a literal, but in a figurative sense. As spiritual darkness, or blindness, is not a mere defect of the understanding, so spiritual light is not the mere supplying of such a defect. Each of these terms conveys a *compound* idea; the one of ignorance and aversion, the other of knowledge and love. Hence the former is described as *blindness of the heart*, and the latter as *understanding with the heart*. If I understand any thing of the theory of the human mind, there is a kind of action and reaction of the understanding and the affections upon each other. We are not only affected with things by our judgment concerning them, but we judge of many things as we are affected towards them. Every one feels how easy it is to believe that to be true which corresponds with our inclinations. Now, *so far* as the decisions of the judgment are the consequence of the temper of the heart, so far they are either virtuous or vicious. Of this kind is *spiritual blindness*. Men do not *like* to retain God in their knowledge. They *desire* not the knowledge of his ways. Hence ignorance, in this figurative or compound sense of the term, is threatened with the most awful judgments: Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that *know* thee not."—Christ will come "in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that *know* not God." Of this kind also is *spiritual light*. Hence the following language; "I will give them a *heart to know* me."—"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in *our hearts*, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This is that holy or spiritual knowledge which it is *life eternal* to possess; of which the *natural* man is destitute; which would lead us to *ask for living water*; and which, had the Jewish rulers possessed, "they would not have crucified the Lord of life and glory."—"Ye neither know me nor my Father," said our Lord to the Jews: "if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." The want of this knowledge was the sin of the Jews; and, as we have seen already, stands threatened with divine judgments: but the mere want of knowledge, according to the strict and literal meaning of the term, and where it arises not from any evil bias of heart, which has induced us to slight or

neglect the means, is not criminal: on the contrary, it excuses that which would otherwise be criminal. Ahimelech pleaded his ignorance of David's supposed rebellion, before Saul; and it ought, no doubt, to have acquitted him. If the Jews had not enjoyed such means of knowledge as they did, comparatively speaking, they *had not had sin*.—Further: Spiritual knowledge, or knowledge according to the figurative or compound sense of the term, has the promise of *eternal life*: but knowledge, literally taken, as distinguished from the temper of the heart, may exist in the most wicked characters, such as Balaam and Judas; and, though in itself it be neither good nor evil, yet it may be, and generally is, an occasion of greater aversion to God and religion. Thus our Lord told the Jews: "Ye have both seen and hated both me and my Father." Thus also many among us who have long sat under the preaching of the gospel, and long been the subjects of keen conviction, feel their enmity keep pace with their knowledge; and thus, at the last judgment, sinners will see and know the equity of their punishment; so that "every mouth will be stopped, and all become guilty before God;" yet the enmity of their hearts, there is reason to think, will be thereby heightened, rather than diminished. In short, mere knowledge is in itself neither good nor evil, though it is essential to both good and evil; that is, it is essential to moral agency. If knowledge were obliterated from the mind, man would cease to be an accountable being. In every condition of existence, therefore, whether pure or depraved, he retains this, in different degrees; and will retain it forever, whatever be his final state.

From hence I conclude that what is produced by the Holy Spirit in regeneration is something very different from mere knowledge.

Secondly: That which the Holy Spirit produces in regeneration corresponds with the nature of DIVINE TRUTH: but the nature of divine truth is such that mere light in the understanding is not sufficient to receive it. In proof of the former of these positions, I refer to the words of the apostle, in Rom. vi. 17, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you," or rather, according to the marginal reading, "into which ye were delivered." \* The gospel, or the "form of doctrine" which it contains, is a *mould*, into which the heart, softened like melted wax, is, as it were, "delivered," or cast, and whence it receives its impression. Every mark or line of the gospel mould leaves a correspondent line in the renewed heart. Hence Christians are represented as having the "truth dwelling in them;" their hearts being a kind of coun-

\* Εἰς οὐ παραδεδωκεν.



terpart to the gospel.—That mere light in the understanding is not sufficient to receive the gospel will appear by considering the nature of those truths which it contains. If they were merely objects of speculation, mere light in the understanding would be sufficient to receive them; but they are of a holy nature, and therefore require a correspondent temper of heart to enter into them. The sweetness of honey might as well be known by the sight of the eye as the real glory of the gospel by the mere exercise of the intellectual faculty. Why is it that the “natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them;” but “because they are spiritually discerned?” A spiritual or holy temper of heart is that in the reception of gospel truth which a relish for poetry is in entering into the spirit of a Milton or a Young. Mere intellect is not sufficient to understand those writers; and why should it be thought unreasonable, or even mysterious, that we must possess a portion of the same spirit which governed the sacred writers in order properly to enter into their sentiments?

Thirdly: That which the Holy Spirit communicates in regeneration corresponds with the nature of DIVINE REQUIREMENTS. In other words, the same thing which is required by God as the governor of the world is bestowed by the Holy Spirit in the application of redemption; both the one and the other is not mere light in the understanding, but a heart to love him. The language of divine requirements is as follows:—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.”—“Circumcise the foreskin of your hearts, and be no more stiffnecked.”—“Make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”—“Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth, and with all your hearts.” The language of the promises is perfectly correspondent with all this, with respect to the nature of what is bestowed:—“And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.”—“A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.”—“And I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me.”

Fourthly: That which the Holy Spirit communicates in regeneration, being the great remedy of human nature, must correspond with the nature of the MALADY: but the malady of human nature does not consist in simple ignorance, but in the bias of the heart; therefore such must be the remedy. That regeneration is the remedy of human nature, and not the implantation of principles which were never possessed by man in his purest state, will appear from its being expressed

by the terms “washing” and “renewing;” the washing of regeneration, the renewing of the Holy Spirit; which convey the ideas of restoring us to purity, and recovering us to a right mind. Regeneration implies degeneracy. The nature of that which is produced therefore by the one must correspond with that which we had lost, and be the opposite of that which we possessed in the other. Now that which we had lost was the love of God and our neighbor. “Love is the fulfilling of the law:” love, therefore, comprehends the whole of duty; consequently the want, or the opposite of love, comprehends the whole of depravity. If it be said, No, the “understanding is darkened.”—True, but this is owing to the evil temper of the heart.—Eph. iv. 18.\* There is no sin in being ignorant, as observed before, any farther than that ignorance is voluntary, or owing to some evil bias. This we are sure is the case with wicked men, with respect to their not understanding the gospel. “Why do ye not understand my speech?” said our Lord to the Jews. The answer is, “Because ye cannot hear my word.” His word did not suit the temper of their hearts; therefore they could not understand it. Prejudices blinded their eyes. Here then lies the malady; and, if the remedy correspond with it, it must consist in being “renewed in the spirit,” or temper, “of our minds;” and not merely in having the intellectual faculty enlightened.

It may be said, we cannot love that of which we have no idea; and therefore light in the understanding is necessary to the exercise of love in the heart. Be it so; it is no otherwise necessary than as it is necessary that I should be a man in order to be a good man. There is no virtue or holiness in knowledge, farther than as it arises from some virtuous propensity of the heart, any more than there is in our being possessed of human nature. This, therefore, cannot be the grand object communicated by the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

Should it be farther objected, That those who plead for a new light in the understanding mean by it more than mere speculative knowledge—that they mean spiritual or holy light, such as transforms the heart and life; to this I should answer: If so, the light or knowledge of which they speak is something more than knowledge, literally and properly understood: it must include the temper of the heart, and therefore is very improperly distinguished from it.

To represent men as only wanting light is indeed acknowledging their weakness, but not their depravity. To say of a man who hates his fellow-man, “He does not know him—if he knew him, he would love him;”

\* Διὰ τὴν πᾶρωσιν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν. Through the callousness of their heart.

is to acknowledge that the enmity towards the injured person is owing to mere mistake, and not to any contrariety of temper or conduct. The best of characters might thus be at variance, though it is a great pity they should, especially for any long continuance. If this be the case between God and man, the latter is not so depraved a creature as we have hitherto conceived him to be. The carnal mind is not *enmity* against God, but merely against an evil being, which in his ignorance he takes God to be. To this may be added, if sin originate in simple ignorance (which is supposed, in that the removal of this ignorance is sufficient to render us holy), then it is no more sin; nor is there any such thing as moral evil in the universe. So far as we can trace our actions to simple ignorance, or ignorance in which we are altogether involuntary; so far, as we have already seen, we may reckon ourselves innocent, even in those cases wherein, had we not been ignorant, we should have been guilty. These are serious consequences; but such as at present appear to me to be just.

The above is submitted to the consideration of *Tardus*, and the reader, as the result of the maturest reflections of the writer.

#### FAITH NOT MERELY INTELLECTUAL.

THE candor and ingenuity of your correspondent induce me, though the subject seemed to be concluded, to offer a brief reply. And, if I understand his FIRST QUESTION, it amounts to this: "Whether faith includes any thing *more* than an exercise of pure intellect or not, yet it will be allowed to include *something intellectual*; and is not that a duty? Surely faith *in all its parts* is the duty of every one."

I answer: The exercise of the intellectual faculty may be necessary to a holy exercise, and yet make no part of the holiness of it. We cannot perform any spiritual act without the powers of humanity: but it is not *as human* that they are spiritual or contain obedience to God. If, as the Scriptures teach, "*love* be the fulfilling of the law, and all the law be fulfilled in one word, love;" all the various acts, whether corporeal or mental, which are the subject of commandment, can be no other than the diversified expressions of love. So much of love as there is in them, so much of obedience, and no more. Take away love from *fear*, whether of God or our parents, and you reduce it to a mere dread of displeasure as a natural evil, which has nothing holy in it, but may exist in all its force even in devils. Take away love from the exercise of *charity*, and it ceases to be obedience to God or benevolence to man.

Even those exercises which have their more immediate seat in the intellectual faculty, as knowing and judging, have just so much of holiness or unholiness, and are just so much of the nature of obedience or disobedience, as they contain in them of love or aversion. Knowledge is no farther an exercise of duty, nor ignorance of sin, than as the means of divine instruction are voluntarily used or neglected. The same may be said of judgment. If I decide, though it be in favor of truth, yet if it arise not from a candor of mind that is willing to receive it as the will of God, whatever be its bearings, there is no more *obedience* in it than in the just notions of the discreet scribe—Mark xii. 28. If, on the contrary, I judge erroneously, it is no farther an exercise of *disobedience* than as I am warped by an evil bias of heart, which inclines me to reject or neglect the truth. Error which proceeds not from these causes is mere *mistake*, for which none is criminated either by God or man. If David had been a conspirator against Saul, lying in wait for his life, as the latter suggested, and Ahimelech had erred in treating him as he did, yet knowing nothing of all this, less or more, he ought to have been acquitted.

The same remarks apply to *faith* and *unbelief*. As to the latter, I suppose it will be allowed to be just so far a sin and no farther than as it arises from aversion to the truth, which leads men to reject or neglect it. Yet it may be said of this, as well as of faith, "Does Mr. F. hold the dissent of the understanding to be *any part* of unbelief? If so, surely unbelief *in all its parts* is a sin." But unbelief is not a sin, considered simply as an exercise of the intellectual faculty; or rather that which is such is not the unbelief of the Scriptures, which is attributed to a corrupt state of the will, and from whence *alone* arises its sinfulness.—1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. And why should not the same be allowed of faith? If a mere dissent of the understanding be not the unbelief of the Scriptures, a mere assent of the understanding cannot be the faith of the Scriptures. So far as any thing is an exercise of pure intellect, uninfluenced by the disposition of the soul, it is merely natural; and duty is no more predicable of it than of the sight of the eye, or any other natural exercise. Nothing is duty any farther than as it is voluntary, or arises from the moral state of the mind. No duty therefore can be performed by a depraved creature, but in consequence of regenerating grace.

This is a truth so clearly taught in the Scriptures that I wonder your correspondent should call it in question. Does he not know that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;" and that therefore "they that are in the flesh cannot please God?" If this passage, as well as many

others, do not teach us that no *obedience* is or can be yielded while the sinner is "in the flesh,"—that is, in a state of unregeneracy,—what does it teach? But if this be allowed, and faith admitted, as it is, to be an act of obedience to God, it must of necessity be preceded by regeneration: otherwise they that are in the flesh may please God.

If I have not strangely mistaken your correspondent, he admits of as much as this in his last paper. He admits the necessity of candor of heart, or of the mind being purged from prejudices by divine influence, *in order to believing*; and very properly places the *duty* of men in such an unprejudiced attention to divine truth. "The gospel," says he, "proves its author as the sun its creator; and we need only to attend, and to have the mind purged from prejudices, that we may possess complete conviction concerning both. This is the indispensable duty of all, though no man will perform it but through divine influence." Again: "Though the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, but accounts them folly; yet a person under the influence of the Spirit of God, delivered from the blinding prejudices common to men, and attentive to the divine testimony, judges it to be true."

If these be really the fixed principles of your correspondent, and not merely a slip of the pen, we are agreed; and there needs no farther discussion on the subject.

As to the SECOND QUESTION, I do not know of any thing worth disputing between us. Whether *believing Christ*, and *believing in or on Christ*, convey precisely the same idea or not, we are agreed that both are characteristic of real Christianity, and have the promise of salvation.

Whether I be able to maintain what I suggested, that the former of these phrases ordinarily respects Christ as *a witness of the truth*, and the latter as being himself *the sum and substance of truth*, or not, I am not aware of any doctrine of the gospel, or any sentiment which either of us embraces, being affected by it. From a brief review of the passages referred to, I have but very little doubt of the phrase, *believing in or on Christ*, being ordinarily expressive of believing him to be the Messiah, and *the only way of salvation*, that is, the sum and substance of truth, rather than *a witness of the truth*. It is true, he sustained both these characters; and accepting or rejecting him in either involved a reception or rejection of him in both. But I wish to examine this matter more closely than I have hitherto been able to do, for want of leisure; not because I apprehend any consequences to hang upon it, but merely to come at the true meaning of Scripture language.

## FAITH REQUIRED BY THE MORAL LAW.

"In what sense is faith reckoned (Matt. xxiii. 23) by our Saviour amongst the weightier matters of the law?"

I HAVE no doubt but that a belief of the gospel of Christ, even such a one as is connected with salvation, is required by the moral law, and is one of its most weighty matters; for the moral law requires love to God with all the heart: and love to God would certainly lead us to embrace any revelation which he should make of himself; such a revelation especially in which the glory of God is provided for in the highest degree. But the term *faith*, in Matt. xxiii. 23, I consider as synonymous with *fidelity* or *veracity*, being ranked with *judgment* and *mercy*, which are duties of the second table.

## ON CHRISTIAN LOVE.

"As all mankind are *alike* sinners in the eyes of God, exposed to his anger, under his control, and within the power of his grace, are they not *alike* entitled to our compassion and regard? And as all the saints are alike chosen of God, redeemed by Christ, sanctified by the Spirit, &c., are they not *alike* entitled to our affection and esteem? Seeing also that much has been said and done to diffuse the gospel, and promote a spirit of brotherly love among real Christians of all denominations, is it not inconsistent with this general design that the various friends of Missionary Societies among Episcopalians, Independents, Baptists, &c., should appear to be so intent on promoting the particular interests of their respective societies as not to feel an *equal* concern for the rest? One is fervently praying for the missionaries in the east, and makes their labors the topic of his conversation, while those in the south are nearly overlooked, or lightly regarded; and *vice versa*. But why not bestow a like degree of love and zeal upon the common cause?"

THE above statement overlooks an important truth; namely, that though all sinners are alike under God's eye, control, and anger, and within the power of his grace, yet they are not alike *within our knowledge, care, and charge*. And though all saints are alike entitled to our esteem, as chosen of God, as redeemed by Christ, as sanctified by the Spirit, &c., yet they are not all *known alike to us, nor alike under our immediate watch and care*. The wall of Jerusalem, considered as a whole, was an object that interested every godly Jew who had a mind to work, yet every man *repaired next unto his own house*, and consequently was more assiduous to raise that part of it than any other. If any one, indeed, had been so intent upon his piece of the wall as to be regardless of the rest, and careless about



the work as a whole, it had been criminal: but, while these were properly regarded, he might be allowed to be particularly attentive to his own special work, to which he was appointed. It is wisely ordered that it should be so; for, if the mind were taken up entirely in generals, by aiming at every thing, we should accomplish nothing. The Turks and Chinese are alike sinners, and stand in need of mercy as well as the people to whom a minister preaches: but he is not equally obliged to pray for, and seek to promote, their salvation as he is that of the people "over whom the Holy Spirit hath made him an overseer." The children of heathen families are alike objects of God's knowledge, anger, &c., as those of our own; but they are not alike known to us, nor equally objects of our paternal care.

It is very possible that Episcopalians, Independents, Baptists, &c., may be each too much concerned about their own party, and too inattentive to the prosperity of others, even in those respects wherein they consider them as conforming to the mind of Christ: but perhaps the whole of this ought not to be attributed to a sinful partiality. Let one society speak of the mission to Africa and the east; another inform us of what God is doing by a Vanderkemp and a Kitchener; and another of what he is accomplishing by Carey and his companions, &c. In all this they only "build against their own houses," and report progress to their brethren for the stimulating of the whole. Only let them bear good will one to another, and rejoice in all the goodness vouchsafed to either of them; and the wall will rise, and in due time the work of one will meet that of another, so as to form a whole.

#### ON CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

[From the Biblical Magazine.]

THE question proposed in the first number of your magazine, p. 13, is, I confess, attended with some "difficulty;" and, without pretending to "pronounce a decisive sentence" upon it, I beg leave to offer a few remarks tending to prosecute the inquiry.

Your correspondent, Minimus, "understands by *Christian charity* the second great command, as confirmed and illustrated by our Lord Jesus Christ." That he did by his doctrine and conduct illustrate "the second great command," and display all the virtues of "Christian charity," is undoubtedly true; but it may admit of a doubt whether these be exactly of the same import: because—(1) There seems to be a difference between the *nature* of Christian charity and that love

which is required in the second commandment. The latter is love to our *neighbor*; the former is love to a *Christian*: the latter is love for *his own sake*; the former is love for *Christ's sake*: the latter is pure *benevolence*; the former includes *complacency*. The Scriptures denominate Christian charity to be a *brotherly love*, or a love to Christians as brethren: "Be ye kindly affectioned one to another, with *brotherly love*, in honor preferring one another."—"Let *brotherly love* continue."—Rom. xii. 10. Heb. xiii. 1. According to this, the object of Christian love must be one who is esteemed a Christian brother; but the object of the second great command extends to all mankind, irrespective of their moral qualities. (2) Christian love is by our Lord called "A new commandment." Speaking to his disciples, he says, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."—John xiii. 34. Some, indeed, have supposed that it is so called on account of its being revived by our Lord, after having been neglected by the Jews, and discontinued by their teachers: others have thought that it is so called by way of excellence; but the peculiar phraseology of the passage is not satisfactorily accounted for by either of these suppositions. It rather seems that Christian charity, or love, is called "a new commandment" because of its being a love to Christians *as such*, which, though virtually contained in the second great command, yet was not specifically required by it. The church of God was now no longer to be national, but should be formed of Christians individually, amongst whom there should be no other bond of union than that of pure Christianity. Hence it is that this "new commandment" is suited to a new dispensation.

If the distinction here attempted be at all just, then "the *duties* of Christian charity" do not so properly relate to our dispositions and conduct toward our "fellow men" as toward our *fellow Christians*; and, with respect to the latter, it appears to me that these duties are equally concerned in "the judgment we form of their actions and characters" as in "our disposition and conduct toward them."

With respect to the question, "Whether charity ought to have any influence on our judgment, or be equally free from a favorable as from an unfavorable bias," I would answer, No farther than to induce us to put a good construction upon every thing that will admit of it. If an action will bear a favorable or an unfavorable construction, uncharitableness will induce the judgment to suspect the worst—charity to hope the best. It "hopeth all things, believeth all things."

## CHARACTER NOT DETERMINED BY INDIVIDUAL ACTS.

“Was not David a regenerate man when he slew Uriah by the sword of the children of Ammon; and, if so, how can we reconcile his conduct with the apostle's assertion—that ‘no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him?’”—1 John iii. 25.

THE difficulty here suggested would vanish, if it were considered that, while the *quality of actions* is determined by their relation to the divine law, the estimate we form of *character* must be regulated by the *habitual course* of the life and conduct. If we were to form our opinion of men from particular events in their lives, we should pronounce Noah a drunkard, Aaron an idolator, Jacob a liar, David a murderer, and Peter an apostate; and each of these characters is excluded from the kingdom of God. But such a judgment would evidently be harsh and erroneous, because these things were not of a piece with their general character, but most entirely opposed thereto. The apostle, in the words referred to, is describing those who “*go in the way of Cain,*” and whose character and spirit resemble his. Such a man, he affirms, “hath not eternal life abiding in him.”

But in this sense David was not a murderer. His sin, in the matter of Uriah, was not the result of those principles on which his character was formed, but a melancholy proof of the force of temptation, even in the case of an eminently good man.

## ON SATAN'S TEMPTATIONS.

“1. Ought we to ascribe any part of our conduct which is not absolutely sinful to the agency of Satan? There appears to have been nothing ‘absolutely sinful’ in the conduct of the Corinthians towards the incestuous.

“2. How are we to know, in all cases, whether our actions be produced by the force of Satan's temptations, operating on the depravity of our will and affections, or whether those actions be the effects of our depravity merely, without Satanic influence?”

I FREELY confess that I am unable to speak to the second question in *any case*. Neither do I know what to ascribe to the Holy Spirit, or to holy angels, as being *conscious* of the influence of either. It is only the effect produced of which I am conscious. I am taught in the Scriptures to ascribe whatever is good to the Holy Spirit. I am also taught in the Scriptures, especially in the prophecies of Daniel, that holy angels have great influence on the minds even of princes, and consequently on the great events of the world. But no one, I suppose, is *conscious* of any thing of the kind. We

all know that the minds of men are influenced by thousands of causes without themselves. Man is a leaf shaken by every wind; the least accident may so affect him as to give a turn to the most important concerns of his life. We also know that no influence from without us destroys our agency or accountableness. If we were to take away a man's life, in order to obtain his property, we should not think of excusing ourselves by alleging that we were *influenced to do so* by some person having told us that he was very rich.

I apprehend we are not so much to consider Satan as working immediately as mediately. He is “the god of this world;” the riches, pleasures, and honors of it, together with the examples of the wicked, are the means by which he ordinarily works upon the souls of men. The bird need not fear the fowler, if it avoid the snare; nor the fish the fisherman, if it do but shun the bait.

Respecting the *occasion* of the question, I beg leave to say that the extraordinary exertions of the late excellent minister referred to have, in my judgment, been noticed by some persons with undue severity. Had they properly attended to the account which Mr. PEARCE himself has given of this matter, every unfavorable idea would have vanished; and pity, blended with love and admiration, would have superseded every complaint. In the *Memoirs* of this dear man, p. 197, when writing to an intimate friend, he thus expresses himself:—“Should my life be spared, I and my family, and all my connections, will stand indebted, under God, to you. Unsuspecting of danger myself, I believe I should have gone on with my exertions till the grave had received me. Your attention sent the apothecary to me, and then first I learned, what I have since been increasingly convinced of—that I was rapidly destroying the vital principle. And the kind interest you have taken in my welfare ever since has often drawn the grateful tear from my eye. May the God of heaven and earth reward your kindness to his unworthy servant, and save you from all the evils from which your distinguished friendship would have saved me.”—To another of his friends he also declared, very seriously, that “if ever he incurred guilt of this kind, it was through error of judgment respecting the strength of his constitution, and that he adopted a system of precaution as soon as he apprehended danger.”

It has also been insinuated by some that his persuasion that he ought to be a missionary must have been a delusion, as appeared from the result; for he did not go. But, if this be just reasoning, it was delusion also in Mr. Grant; for he was taken away almost immediately after his arrival at the scene of action. The desire like-

wise of David to build a house for God must have been altogether delusion; though we are assured it was taken well of Him by whom actions are weighed. The truth is, there are but few men who are proper judges of such a character. We are most of us at so great a distance from his spirit as to be in danger of thinking such extraordinary zeal to be a species of extravagance.

#### ON THE OBEDIENCE AND SUFFERING OF CHRIST.

"1. Did not the law of God require of Christ, considered as a man, a perfect obedience on his own account? If it did, how can that obedience be imputed to sinners for their justification?"

"2. How does it appear to be necessary that Christ should both obey the law in his people's stead, and yet suffer punishment on the account of their transgressions; seeing obedience is all the law requires?"

To the former I should answer, The objection proceeds upon the supposition that a public head, or representative, whose obedience should be imputable to others, must possess it in a degree over and above what is required of him. But was it thus with the first public head of mankind? Had Adam kept the covenant of his God, his righteousness, it is supposed, would have been imputed to his posterity, in the same sense as the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers; that is, God, to express his approbation of his conduct, would have rewarded it, by confirming him and his posterity in the enjoyment of everlasting life: yet he would have wrought no work of supererogation, nor have done any more than he was required to do on his own account.

But though, for argument's sake, I have allowed that the human nature of Christ was under obligation to keep the law on his account; yet I question the propriety of that mode of stating things. In the person of Christ, the divinity and humanity were so intimately united that perhaps we ought not to conceive of the latter as having any such distinct subsistence as to be an agent by itself, or as being obliged to obey or do any thing of itself, or on its own account: Christ, as a man, possessed no being *on his own account*. He was always in union with the Son of God; a public person, whose very existence was for the sake of others. Hence his coming under the law is represented, not only as a part of his humiliation, to which he was naturally unobliged, but as a thing *distinct from his assuming human nature*; which one should think it could not be, if it were necessarily included in it. He was "made of a woman, made under the law;"—"made in the likeness of men, he took upon him the form of a servant;"\*

"being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient unto death."

As to the *second* question, Obedience is not all that the law requires of a *guilty* creature (and in the place of such creatures our Saviour stood:) a guilty creature is not only obliged to be obedient for the future, but to make satisfaction for the past. The covenant made with Adam had two branches: "Obey, and live; sin, and die." Now the obedience of Christ did honor to the preceptive part of the covenant, but not to the penal part of it. Mere obedience to the law would have made no atonement, would have afforded no expression of the divine displeasure against sin; therefore, after a life spent in doing the will of God, he must lay down his life: nor was it "possible that this cup should pass from him."

As obedience would have been insufficient without suffering, so it appears that suffering would have been insufficient without obedience: the latter was *preparatory* to the former.\* "Such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." And such a meetness could not have *appeared*, but by a life of obedience to God. As a Mediator between God and man, it was necessary that he should be, and appear to be, an enemy to sin, ere he could be admitted to plead for sinners. Such was our Redeemer to the last, and this it was that endeared him to the Father. "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Finally: the sufferings of Christ could go only to the removal of the curse; they could afford no title to eternal life, which being promised on condition of obedience, that condition must be fulfilled in order to insure the blessing. Hence it is by "the righteousness of one" that we partake of "justification of life."

The great ends originally designed by the promise and the threatening were to express God's love of righteousness and his abhorrence of unrighteousness; and these ends are answered by the obedience and sufferings of Christ, and that in a higher degree, owing to the dignity of his character, than if man had either kept the law or suffered the penalty for the breach of it. But if Christ had only obeyed the law, and had not suffered; or had only suffered, and not obeyed; one or other of these ends must, for aught we can perceive, have failed of being accomplished. But his *obedience unto death*, which includes both, gloriously an-

\* I use the terms *obedience* and *suffering*, the one to express Christ's conformity to the precept of the law, the other his sustaining the penalty of it; though, in strict propriety of speech, the obedience of Christ included suffering, and his suffering included obedience. He laid down his life in obedience to the Father.

\* See Doddridge's Translation of Phil. ii. 7.



swered every end of moral government, and opened a way by which God could honorably, not only pardon the sinner who should believe in Jesus, but bestow upon him eternal life. Pardon being granted with a view to Christ's atonement would evince the resolution of Jehovah to punish sin; and eternal life being bestowed as a reward to his obedience would equally evince him the friend of righteousness.

ON JESUS GROWING IN WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE.

"How could Jesus grow in wisdom and knowledge, if he were the true God, and consequently infinite in both!"

If there be any difficulty in reconciling these ideas, it must be on the supposition that a union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ implies a *communication of properties*; i. e. that whatever property belongs to him as a divine person it must, on his assuming human nature, belong to him as human. But I know of no such sentiment being held by any trinitarian. It is always maintained, so far as I know, that as Christ was very God he retained all the peculiar properties of Godhead; and, as he was made very man, he assumed all the peculiar properties of manhood. The above supposition, so far from belonging to the doctrine of what is called the hypostatical union, is utterly inconsistent with it; for, if the union of the human nature to the divinity imply that it must become infinite in wisdom and knowledge, it also implies that it must become omnipresent and almighty. And it might be with equal propriety asked, How could Jesus grow in stature and strength, if he were infinite in power? as How could he grow in wisdom and knowledge, if he were infinite in both? But this is equivalent to asking, How could he be "a child born," and yet be called "the mighty God?" that is, How could he be both God and man?

Further: If a union between the divine and human natures of Christ imply a communication of properties why should not that communication be mutual? There is just as much reason for concluding that all the imperfections of humanity should be imparted to the divinity as that all the perfections of divinity should be imparted to the humanity. But this would form a contradiction; as it would be supposing him to retain neither perfection nor imperfection, and so to be neither God nor man.

But, if we admit the Scripture account of things, no such consequences will follow. *If that eternal life that was with the Father was so manifested to us as to be capable of being heard, and seen with our eyes, and looked*

*upon, and handled*; in other words, if he were a divine person, always existing with the Father, and was manifested to us by the assumption of human nature, and if each nature, though mysteriously united, yet retain its peculiar properties, all is consistent. Things may then be attributed to Christ which belong to either his divine or his human nature; he may be a child born, may grow up from infancy to age, increase in knowledge, in wisdom, and in stature; be subject to hunger, and thirst, and weariness, and pain; in a word, in all things "be made like unto his brethren;" and at the same time be, in another respect, "the mighty God;"—"upholding all things by the word of his power."

"If thou be the Son of God," said Satan, "command that these stones be made bread." This was insinuating that it was inconsistent for so divine a personage, who had the command of the whole creation, to be subject to want; but the answer of Jesus intimates that he was also the Son of Man; and that, as such, it was fitting that he should feel his dependence upon God.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, after asserting the dignity of the great Author of Christianity, as not only superior to angels, but acknowledged by the Father as God, "whose throne was forever and forever," obviates an objection that would arise from his deep humiliation; showing the necessity there was for his being made like unto his brethren.—Chap. i. ii.

Socinians may amuse themselves and their admirers by talking of the absurdity of God being exposed to suffering, and of a man of Judea being the Creator of the world. They know well enough, if they had candor sufficient to own it, that it is not as God that we ascribe the former to him, nor as man the latter: yet, owing to the intimate union of divinity and humanity in his person, there is an important sense in which it may be said that "the Prince," or author, "of life" was killed; that "God purchased his church with his own blood;" that "hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us;" that "our great High-priest, Jesus, the Son of God, was touched with the feelings of our infirmities;" and that he who was born in Bethlehem "was before all things, and by him all things consist."

ON READING THE SCRIPTURES.

I do not wish the following remarks to supersede any other answer which may enter more fully into the subject. All I have to offer will be a few hints from my own experience.

In the first place, I have found it good to appoint *set times* for reading the Scriptures; and none have been so profitable as part of

the season appropriated to private devotion on rising in the morning. The mind at this time is re-invigorated and unincumbered. To read a part of the Scriptures, previous to prayer, I have found to be very useful. It tends to collect the thoughts, to spiritualize the affections, and to furnish us with sentiments wherewith to plead at a throne of grace. And, as reading assists prayer, so prayer assists reading. At these seasons we shall be less in danger of falling into idle speculations, and of perverting Scripture in support of hypotheses. A spiritual frame of mind, as Mr. Pearce somewhere observes, is as a good light in viewing a painting; it will not a little facilitate the understanding of the Scriptures. I do not mean to depreciate the labors of those who have commented on the sacred writings: but we may read expositors, and consult critics, while the "spirit and life" of the word utterly escape us. A tender, humble, holy frame, is perhaps of more importance to our entering into the mind of the Holy Spirit than all other means united. It is thus that, by "an unction from the Holy One, we know all things."

In reading by myself, I have also felt the advantage of being able to pause, and think, as well as pray; and to inquire how far the subject is in any way applicable to my case, and conduct in life.

In the course of a morning's exercise it may be supposed that some things will appear hard to be understood; and I may feel myself, after all my application, unable to resolve them. Here, then, let me avail myself of commentators and expositors. If I read them *instead* of reading the Scriptures, I may indeed derive some knowledge; but my mind will not be stored with the best riches; nor will the word "dwell richly in me in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." If, on the other hand, I read the Scriptures, and exercise my own mind on their meaning, only using the helps with which I am furnished when I particularly need them, such knowledge will avail me more than any other; for, having felt and labored at the difficulty myself, what I obtain from others towards the solution of it becomes more interesting and abiding than if I had read it without any such previous efforts. And as to my own thoughts, though they may not be superior nor equal to those of others, in themselves considered, yet, if they be just, their having been the result of pleasing toil renders them of superior value to me. A small portion obtained by our own labor is sweeter than a large inheritance bequeathed by our predecessors. Knowledge thus obtained will not only be always accumulating, but of special use in times of trial; not like the cumbrous armor which does not fit us, but like the sling and

the stone, which, though less brilliant, will be more efficacious.

I may add, it were well for those who can find leisure to *commit to writing* the most interesting thoughts which occur at these seasons. It is thus that they will be fixed in the memory; and the revision of them may serve to rekindle some of the best sensations in our life.

#### DIFFERENCE IN THE FRAME OF MIND WHEN ENGAGED IN SOCIAL AND SECRET PRAYER.

I TAKE it for granted that Stephanus means to say that *at the same time* when it was common for him to find great liberty and zeal in public prayer it was usual for him to be lifeless, barren, and uncomfortable in private; otherwise there would be no difficulty in the case. That such a state of mind should excite a jealousy of himself is not surprising. Stephanus inquires after its *cause and cure*.

As to the former, permit me to ask, Are you not more influenced by the presence of creatures than by His presence who fills heaven and earth? Is there not a spice of vanity that prompts you to wish to appear to advantage when in company with your fellow-men; an emulation that stimulates invention, and which by a kind of intellectual friction, like that of the wheels of a machine, warms your faculties, and works up your powers to an earnestness that is in danger of being mistaken for religious zeal? Such has not unfrequently been the case among professors of religion.

Let me further ask, Have you not indulged in some besetting sin, to which God and your conscience only have been witness? Private prayer is the season for such things to come to remembrance, rather than in the exercise of more public duties. Hence it may be that your face shall be covered with shame, and your soul be struck as by the darts of death, when in private; while in your more public exercises, not considering yourself as called upon to confess private sins, you may think but little about them. Let me suppose Stephanus to be a young man, and to have offended his father. Should he be admitted into public company with his father, he will not feel so great a difficulty in addressing him there, as if he was introduced into a private apartment, and was obliged to converse with him alone. In the former case, his private feelings, as being unknown to the company, will not be noticed; in the latter, the conversation can turn upon nothing else. I do not presume to determine that this is the case with Stephanus; but this I say, such causes are adequate to such effects, and it becomes Stephanus to inquire if they have no influence in his case.

As to the *cure*, that is certainly a very improper step which he proposes—declining to engage in public prayer. Let him rather betake himself to private prayer, attended with close examination and humiliation before God: this will render public prayer more easy. If Stephanus had offended his father, as supposed above, and if, after a little free conversation with him in public company, he should feel dejected and sullen, and should be ready to resolve that he would never enter a company again with his father, because, though he could speak freely to him there, yet he was always reserved when alone, would this be lovely? Let him rather reflect, and ask, Is there not a cause? Let him resolve on this wise, I will arise and go to my Father in secret, and will say, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” Let him give no rest to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, till all is reconciled: otherwise, whether he pray in public or desist, his soul will be exposed to the most imminent danger.

## NATURE OF INDWELLING SIN.

“Is the love of sin eradicated from the regenerate? Though it lives in them, is it not their sorrow and detestation?”

If the question had been whether the love of sin be the governing, prevailing, and habitual principle in the regenerate, there could be no doubt of its being answerable in the negative. Holiness is represented as the law of the believer's mind. It is the governing and habitual principle of his soul, and that which gives it its leading bias. It is that which rules in the ruling power of the soul—“the mind;” which is equal to saying that it reigns. If a rightful prince, after being driven from his throne by a rebellion, should so far recover it as to rule in the proper place of rule, and compel his enemies to quit the reins of government, and seek refuge in their private haunts, he is truly said to reign. Thus the grace of God becoming “the law of the mind,” and the power of carnality being driven, as it were, to take its main residence in “the members,” working not by open daylight, but by deeds of darkness, the former, and not the latter, is truly said to have the dominion over us. And, as every being is denominated by his governing disposition, so holiness is that from which believers are denominated in the Scriptures: it is that which gives them their *character*.

There is a sense in which good men, as well as others, are *sinner*s, as every good man will acknowledge; but, when the Scriptures describe them, it is not as *sinner*s, but as *saint*s. The character of *sinner*s distin-

guishes the unregenerate. Though, strictly speaking, “there is no man that doeth good, and sinneth not,” yet believers are described as not doing evil, but good. “He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil is of the wicked one.”—“He that is born of God sinneth not.”—“He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” All these modes of speaking are descriptive not of what is universal, but of what is general and habitual. Sin is the constant course of the wicked, but righteousness of the righteous.

But to say that the love of sin is *eradicated* from the regenerate is saying that sin has no place in their affections, and that their affections are never entangled by its influences; and wherein this differs from saying that they are sinless I do not understand. If sin has no place in the affections, it has no place in the soul; for the affections are the proper seat of good and evil. As the whole of duty is summed up in love, so the whole of sin may be summed up in the contrary.

Moreover, if sin has no place in our affections, it has none in our *choice*; for choice is an affection of the mind, by which it prefers one thing to another, or likes this rather than that. When the acts of the will are distinguished from those of the affections it is rather a distinction of degree than of nature. But, if all evil choice were eradicated, all sin would be eradicated. Whatever there was, it must absolutely be involuntary; and that which is such is not sin. It is impossible for the mind to feel any conscientious guilt on account of it, any more than for the contortions of a convulsed state of the body.

Dr. Owen, in his admirable treatise on “The Nature of Indwelling-sin,” has proved, I think, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the essence of all sin lies in aversion of heart, and that this aversion is “universal, to all of God, and in all of the soul.” Nor need we have recourse to the judgment of Dr. Owen: experience will teach every reflecting mind that he sins not, but as his will and affections are drawn away from God after things which are forbidden.

I have observed this opinion to be maintained on very different grounds. Some worthy characters, observing the loose conduct of certain professors and their attempts to excuse themselves by pleading that believers are not free from the love of sin, and therefore they ought not to be criminated or suspected on that account, may have been tempted to maintain the contrary, as necessary to the honor of God and religion. But God does not require us to defend his cause by stretching any doctrine beyond what it will bear. Such characters ought rather to be told that every plea for self-indulgence taken from the sins of God's people indicates



a prevailing love of sin, which is inconsistent with true religion.

In other instances, the same thing is maintained by loose characters themselves, who, while they are living in sin, contrive to transfer the *love* of it from themselves to the "old man" that is within them. Paul, speaking of himself as a renewed man, represents the working of evil in him as contrary to the *habitual* bias of his soul; as repugnant to the *governing* principle of his mind; and, therefore, as being not *himself*, but sin that *dwelt in him*. Paul, however, was not a loose character; not did he speak in this manner from a desire to excuse himself in sin. That which he said of himself in an improper or figurative sense, such people understand literally, and infer that sin in them is absolutely involuntary. The opposite principles of good and evil, denominated "the old and new man," they consider as distinct *agents*, or as voluntary beings, who carry on a contest, of which the man himself is only an involuntary spectator. But as in all the exercises of grace it is *we* that repent, believe, love, &c.; so in all the exercises of evil it is *we* that sin, and that must be accountable.

The querist asks, "Whether sin, though it dwells in the regenerate, be not to their sorrow and detestation." Undoubtedly it is; and herein the experience of Paul is opposed to theirs who make use of his language to excuse themselves in sin. The body of sin was to him "a body of death," which rendered him "wretched," and from which he longed more than any thing to be "delivered." But a detestation of sin, unless it were perfect in degree, does not imply the *eradication* of love to it. The same soul, as influenced by opposite principles, may be the subject of both hatred and love. In proportion however as one operates, the other must necessarily subside.

#### PRESERVATION AGAINST BACKSLIDING.

"What are the best means of preservation against backsliding?"

It is usual with us to confine the idea of a backslider to a good man. I apprehend the Scriptures do not use the term always in this sense. Backsliding always supposes a religious profession; but does not necessarily imply that this profession is sincere. The ungodly Israelites, who had not the *fear of God in them*, are termed backsliders in Jer. ii. 19. Saul and Judas would be accounted backsliders, in the scriptural sense of the term, as well as David and Peter. The backslidings of the latter were partial, and of the former total.

But I shall suppose the querist to be a good man, and that he feels a proneness to depart from the living God: perhaps some

particular temptation may entangle him, or easy-besetting sin perplex him: he may have had several narrow escapes from open scandal, and may be apprehensive that in some unguarded moment he may be drawn into that which may ruin his future peace and usefulness.

Were I a stranger to such exercises, I should be but ill qualified to write upon the subject. The case of backsliders has lately been much impressed upon my mind. Great numbers I am persuaded among professing Christians come under this denomination. At present I shall only offer three or four directions to the consideration of the querist, or any other whose case they may suit.

Every means should be used that may stop the avenues of temptation, or prevent its coming in contact with the evil propensities of the heart.—If there be nitre in our habitations, it becomes us to beware of fire. Such was the counsel of our Lord to his disciples in a season of peculiar danger: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." He had himself entered that field, and came out a conqueror; but he knew what was in man, and counselled them rather to avoid than court the contest. In cases where the heart begins to be seduced by temptation, it will soon become restless, solicitous, and importunate; it will moan after it, and be exceedingly fruitful in devices to get into the way of it; it will persuade conscience, for once, at least, to be silent; it will blind the mind to the evil, and paint the desirableness of the good; and, if all this will not do, it will promise to be only a looker-on, or that thus far it will go, and no farther.—But if thou hast any regard to God or his cause, or to the welfare of thine own soul, *consent thou not!* Temptation leads to sin, and sin to death. Whatever company, amusement, occupation, or connection, has frequently *caused thee to offend*; that is the *eye* that requires to be plucked out, lest thy soul bleed in the end beneath the stroke of God's displeasure.

2. Beware of the *first stages* of departure from God. All backslidings begin with the heart.—Jer. ii. 19. From hence are the *issues of life*. Private prayer, it may be, at first becomes wearisome; no communion with God in it: it is then occasionally neglected: hence public ordinances cease to afford their wonted pleasure; christian society is dropped; the world takes up your attention, and you have little or no time to spare for religion; some carnal acquaintance, perceiving you to be coming, draws you on: recommends you to read some one of the liberal productions of the times, by which you are to learn that there is no need to be so rigid in religion, and no harm in frequenting the theatre, or in devoting a part at least of the Lord's-day to visiting or

amusement. These are a few of the seeds of death, from whence have sprung many a bitter harvest.

“Beware of sin, then, crush it at the door;  
If once 't is in, it may go out no more!”

BUNYAN.

3. If thou hast in any degree been drawn aside, give no rest to thy soul till thy sin is crucified, and thy conscience reconciled by the blood of the cross. It is too common for sin to be worn away from the memory by time and new occurrences, instead of being washed away at the gospel fountain; but, where this is the case, the stain is not removed, and its effects will sooner or later appear, perhaps in a form that may cause the ear of every one that heareth it to tingle. “He that honoreth me,” saith the Lord, “will I honor; and he that despiseth me, shall be lightly esteemed.” If we care so little for the honor of God’s name as to be unconcerned for secret faults, we may expect he will care as little for the honor of ours, and will give us up to some open vice that shall cover us with infamy.

4. If some extraordinary temptation or easy-besetting sin perplex thee, bend not thy attention so much to the subduing of that particular evil as to the mortification of sin in general; and this not so much by directly opposing it as by cherishing opposite principles.—We may heal an eruption in a particular part of the body, and yet the root of the disease may remain, and even be gathering strength. We may also be employed in thinking of our sins without gaining any ascendancy over them: on the contrary, they may by those very means obtain an ascendancy over us. If we go about to quench a fire by directly contending with it, we shall presently be consumed by its flames; but, by applying the opposite element, it is subdued before us. It is thus that the Scriptures direct us: “Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.” The heart cannot be reduced to a vacuum: if spiritual things do not occupy it, carnal things will. It is by walking with God and conversing with the doctrine of the cross that we shall become dead to other things; and this will go to the root of the evil, while other remedies only lop off the branches.

#### MINISTERIAL CALL AND QUALIFICATIONS.

“How may a man ascertain his election of God to the ministry of the gospel? And what are sufficient qualifications for that important office?”

I CONCEIVE an answer to the latter part of the question will enable a person to decide upon the former; it being a principle which may be taken for granted that whoever possesses the essential qualifications for the Christian ministry is called of God

to exercise them. “Every man that hath received the gift” is commanded of God “to minister the same as a good steward of the manifold grace of God.” Only let him take heed that “if he speak, it be according to the oracles of God.”

Now the Scriptures are not silent on the qualifications of a bishop.—See 1 Tim. iii. 1—7. By a bishop I must be allowed to understand not a lord in lawn, but a Christian pastor. And, besides those requisites which belong to his moral and religious character, there are two things which appear to be absolutely necessary to the discharge of this sacred office; one is, that he have a true *desire after it*, and the other, an *ability for it*. The former of these qualifications is included in the terms, “if a man *desire* the office of a bishop.” It is supposed that this desire shall spring from a pure motive, and not from the love of ease, affluence, or applause; but from a concern to glorify God and promote the salvation of men. It is necessary, in my judgment, that there should be a *special desire* of this sort; a kind of fire kindled in the bosom, that it would be painful to extinguish. The latter qualification is contained in those expressive terms, “*apt to teach*.” He must possess not only an inventive mind, but a kind of natural readiness in communicating his ideas.

Neither of these qualifications is sufficient in itself. A man may have a desire after the Christian ministry, and that desire may arise from the purest motives; and yet, having no competent ability for the work, he is certainly not called of God to be employed in it. I doubt not but the Lord will take it well that it was in the heart of such persons to build him a house, though their desire may never be accomplished. On the other hand, a person may not only be a good man and judicious, but possess a readiness in communicating his ideas; and yet, having no special *thirst* after the work of the ministry, or of thus promoting the salvation of souls, he is unfit to engage in it.

Of the former qualification every man must be his own judge; for who else can be acquainted with his desires and motives? Of the latter, those with whom we stand connected. Whether we be “*apt to teach*” is a question on which we ought not to decide ourselves: those are the best judges who have heard us, and been taught by us. When a congregation of Christians invite a person to serve them in the gospel, it is sufficient proof that they consider him as equal to the undertaking. If a person so invited be but clear as to the former qualification, I conceive he may leave the latter to the judgment of others; and conclude that, so long as a door is opened for him to preach the gospel, he is called of God to do so.

## FUGITIVE PIECES.

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### THE NECESSITY OF SEEKING THOSE THINGS FIRST WHICH ARE OF THE FIRST IMPORTANCE.

A GREAT part of the evil which prevails in the world consists in an entire neglect of what God commands, or in doing what he has expressly forbidden; but not the whole of it. There may be an attachment to many things which in themselves are right, and yet the whole may be rendered worse than void by the want of *order*, or a regard to things according to their importance. Our Lord did not censure the pharisees for attending to the lesser matters of the law, but for attending to them "to the neglect of the greater." If we pursue things as primary which ought to occupy only a secondary or subordinate place in the system, we subvert the whole, and employ ourselves in doing what is worse than nothing.

I think I see the operation of this principle among us, and that to a wide extent. I see it among the unconverted, among the converted, and among different parties or denominations of Christians.

First: It is by this that great numbers who lay their accounts with obtaining the kingdom of heaven will be found to have deceived themselves. It may be too much to say of them that they do not seek the kingdom of God; but they seek it not as a *first* or primary object. The world is their chief good, and the kingdom of God only occupies a secondary place in their affections. They wish to attend to their everlasting concerns: but they cannot spare time. Now we can commonly spare time for that which we love best. The sensualist can find time for his pleasures, and the man of the world for getting money. They can think of these things when sitting in the house, or walking in the way; and every thing else is made to bend, or give way to them. The result is, this preposterous conduct mars the whole; for God and religion must be supreme, or nothing. There are certain relations, even among us, in which it is impossible to be

contented with a secondary place. If a wife give her heart to another than her husband, and aim only to oblige him so far as to keep him in tolerable good humor, it is what cannot be endured: he must be first, or nothing; and such is the claim of heaven.

Secondly: It is owing to this, among other causes, that many Christians go from year to year in doubt, with respect to their interest in Christ and spiritual blessings.—It is very desirable to have clear and satisfactory views on this subject. To live in suspense on a matter of such importance must, if we be not sunk in insensibility, be miserable. How is it that so much of this prevails among us; when, if we look into the New Testament, we shall scarcely see an instance of it among the primitive Christians? Shall we cast off all such characters as unbelievers? Some have done so, alleging that it is impossible for a person to be a believer without being conscious of it. Surely this is too much; for if the grace of God within us, whatever be its degree, must needs be self-evident to us, why are we directed to keep his commandments as the means of "knowing that we know him!" The primitive Christians, however, had but little of this fear; and the reason of it was, they had more of that *perfect love* to Christ, to the gospel, and to the success of it, than we have, which tended to "cast out fear." If we make our personal comfort the *first* object of our pursuit (and many attend the means of grace as if they did), God will make it the *last* of his: for it is a general principle in the divine administration, "Him that honoreth me I will honor; but he that despiseth me shall be lightly esteemed." If we seek the honor of God, we shall find our own peace and comfort in it; but, if we make light of him, he will make light of us, and leave us to pass our days in darkness and suspense.

Thirdly: It is owing, if I mistake not, to the same cause that various denominations of Christians, who at some periods have been greatly blessed of God, have declined as to their spiritual prosperity. Several of our religious denominations have arisen from a



conscientious desire to restore Christianity to its primitive purity. From this motive acted, I believe, the greater part of the reformers, the puritans, the non-conformists, and the baptists. I do not know that any one of these denominations were censurable for the separations which they made from other professing Christians. It may be alleged that they have torn the church of Christ into parties, and so occasioned much evil: yet some of them did not separate from the church of Christ, but from a worldly community calling itself by that name; and those who did, pretended not to be the only people of God in the world, but considered themselves merely as "withdrawing from brethren who walked disorderly." It is a melancholy fact, however, that no sooner have a people formed themselves into a new denomination than they are in the utmost danger of concentrating almost all their strength, influence, zeal, prayers, and endeavors for its support; not as part of Christ's visible kingdom, wishing all good to other parts in so far as they follow Christ, but as though it were the whole of it, and as though all true religion were circumscribed within its hallowed pale. This is the essence of a sectarian spirit, and the bane of Christianity.

I am a dissenter, and a baptist. If I confine my remarks to the faults of these denominations, it is not because I consider them as greater sinners in this way than all others, but because I wish more especially to correct the evils of my own connections.

If we wish to promote the *dissenting* interest, it must not be by expending our principal zeal in endeavoring to make men dissenters, but in making dissenters and others Christians. The principles of dissent, however just and important, are not to be compared with the glorious gospel of the blessed God: and, if inculcated at the expense of it, it is no better than tithing mint and cummin, to the omitting of the weightier matters of the law. Such endeavors will be blasted, and made to defeat their own end. Those dissenters among whom the doctrines of the puritans and nonconformists have fallen into disrepute are generally distinguished by this species of zeal; and it is principally from such quarters that complaints are heard of "the decline of the dissenting interest." Where they are believed and taught, and their progress, whether among dissenters or others, viewed with satisfaction, we hear of no such complaints. It is a curious fact that, while a certain description of dissenters are inquiring into the causes of the decline of the dissenting interest, a certain description of the established clergy are inquiring into the causes of its increase!

If we wish to see the *baptist* denomination prosper, we must not expend our zeal so much in endeavoring to make men baptists, as in laboring to make baptists and others

Christians. If we lay out ourselves in the common cause of Christianity, the Lord will bless and increase us. By rejoicing in the prosperity of every other denomination, in so far as they accord with the mind of Christ, we shall promote the best interests of our own. But, if we be more concerned to make proselytes to a party than converts to Christ, we shall defeat our own end; and, however just our sentiments may be with respect to the subjects and mode of baptism, we shall be found symbolizing with the pharisees, who were employed in tithing mint and cummin, to the neglect of judgment, mercy, and the love of God.

## ON PARTY SPIRIT.

THERE appears to be a mistaken idea, too commonly prevailing in the religious world at present, respecting what is called a *party spirit*.

Many professors, while they endeavor to promote the interests of religion in *general*, too often neglect to pay that attention which is due to the interest and welfare of that class or denomination of Christians in *particular* with which they are or have been connected. It is not uncommon to see one of these "*candid*" Christian professors keep at a distance from his own denomination, or party, where that denomination stands most in need of his countenance and support; while he associates with another party, which is sanctioned by numbers and worldly influence. And, when the inconsistency of his conduct is hinted at, he will excuse himself by saying, in the cant phrase of the day, That it is his wish to promote the interests of religion in *general*, and *not to serve a party*, I wish some of your correspondents would expose the conduct of such fawning professors in its true colors; and endeavor to convince them that in vain are all pretensions to Christian *candor* where *consistency* and *integrity* are wanting.

## ON EVIL THINGS WHICH PASS UNDER SPECIOUS NAMES.

THERE is something in the nature of evil, which, if it appear in its own proper colors, will not admit of being defended or recommended to others: he, therefore, who is friendly to it is under the necessity of disguising it, by giving it some specious name, in order to render it current in society. On the other hand, there is something in the nature of good, which, if it appear in its own proper colors, cannot well be opposed: he therefore who wishes to run it down is obliged first to give it an ill name, or he could not accomplish his purpose. This species of imposition, it is true, is calculated only for superficial minds, who regard words rather than things; but the number of them is so

great in the world, and even in the church, that it has in all ages been found to answer the end. In the times of the prophet Isaiah, there were those who "called evil good, and good evil, who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter:" but, as the woe of heaven was then denounced against the practice, it becomes us to beware of going into it, or being imposed on by it.

It is not the design of the writer to trace this abuse of language through any part of history or politics, or any other worldly department; but merely to notice a few terms which are very current in our religious circles:—such as *moderation*, *liberality*, *charity*, &c., on the one hand; and *bigotry*, *narrowness of mind*, and *ill-nature*, on the other.

There is a spirit gone forth in the present age which is calculated to do more harm in the church of God than the most erroneous doctrine that has been advanced since the days of the apostles. It bears a favorable aspect towards those systems of divinity which depreciate the evil of sin, the freeness of grace, the dignity of Christ, and the glory of his righteousness as the only ground of acceptance with God; so much so that it is seldom known to oppose them. Or if, for the sake of preserving its reputation, it strikes an occasional blow at them, yet it is with so light a hand as never to hurt them. It takes no decided stand on this side or that, and thereby obtains admission among all parties. If the friends of Christ meet together, it wishes to meet with them, though it be only to oppose every measure which may bear hard upon its favorite designs, and would take it very unkind to be treated as an intruder. If his enemies be assembled, it will also be there; and, if no untrusty brother be in company, will commonly manifest itself to be then most in its element.

Now, let a spirit of this kind make its appearance in any other department than religion, and observe how it will be treated. In the year 1745, for instance, when the great question in the country was, Shall we support the reigning family, and the constitution; or shall we admit the pretender, with popery and arbitrary power in his train? what would have been thought of a man who should have pretended to be on neither this side nor that, but talking against war, and in favor of moderation, liberality, and charity towards the unhappy youth, (who by landing on our shores had greatly endangered his life) made use of all his influence to oppose every decided measure tending to drive him from the country? "Sir," they would have said, "you are on the side of the pretender, and deserve to be taken up as a traitor." And had he complained of their bigotry, narrow-mindedness, and ill-nature, his remonstrance would have deserved no regard. But is the cause

of *God* and *truth* of less importance than the temporal prosperity of a nation? Surely not!

If, indeed, our differences consist merely in words; or, though they should be things, yet if they do not affect the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, considering the imperfections which attach to the best of men, a spirit of moderation or forbearance is here in character. When we have frankly spoken our minds, we may with a good conscience leave it, and join with our brethren, notwithstanding, in the work of the Lord. But, in differences which respect the principles above mentioned, compromise would be treason against the Majesty of heaven. There were cases in which an apostle allowed that "every one should be fully persuaded in his own mind:" but there were cases also in which "the doctrine of Christ" was given up; and, if any man came as a minister without this, Christians were directed "not to receive him into their houses, nor to bid him God speed." Such conduct in the present times would raise a great outcry of bigotry and illiberality; a plain proof this that what passes among us under the names of moderation and liberality is in a great degree anti-christian.

What is *moderation*? The Scriptures recommend a yielding and gentle disposition in things wherein our own name or interest only are concerned.—Such is the moderation enforced by Paul: but, when *the continuance of the truth of the gospel* was at issue, he refused "to give place, even for an hour." The Scriptures also recommend forbearance in Christians one towards another: but this is far from that spirit of indifference which would confound truth and error, religion and irreligion, the friends of Christ and the men of the world.

What is *liberality*? The term denotes freedom, or enlargedness of mind. It is applied in the Scriptures merely to that simple, sincere, and bountiful spirit, which communicates freely to the needy, and stands opposed to a sinister, close, contracted, and covetous disposition. The application of it to sentiments may be proper, when used to describe that enlargedness of mind which arises from an intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures, and an extensive knowledge of men and things. A rigid attachment to modes and opinions merely of human authority is often seen in persons who have read but little, and thought less. Had they seen more of the religious world, and heard more of what is to be said against the notions in which they happen to have been educated, their tenacity, we may commonly say, might be abated: in other words, they might be more liberally minded, and moderate in their censures against those who differ from them. But to attribute all attachment, to principles, and even modes

of worship, to illiberality of mind, is itself illiberal. If an attachment, whether it be to one or the other, be the effect of impartial research, and a firm persuasion that they are the mind of God as revealed in his word, it is so far from indicating a bigoted, contracted, or illiberal mind, that it may arise from the contrary. The more we understand of divine truth, the more our minds will be enlarged, and the more decided will be our opposition to error. To call that liberality which holds all doctrines with a loose hand, and considers it as of no importance to salvation whether we believe this or that, is a gross perversion of language. Such a spirit arises not from enlargedness of mind, or from having read much, or thought much; but from the *vanity of wishing to have it thought that they have*. This vanity, when flattered by weak or interested men, induces the most ignorant characters to assume imperious airs, and to exercise a kind of contemptuous pity towards those who cannot treat the gospel with the same indifference as themselves. A minister who has wished for the liberty of playing fast and loose with Christian doctrines, without being disrespected by his congregation, has been known to compliment them as an enlightened people, and to praise them for thinking for themselves; while in fact they have neither thought, nor read, nor understood, unless it were a few political pamphlets, and the doctrine of getting money.

It seems to be a criterion of this species of liberality that we think well of characters, whatever be their principles, and entertain the most favorable opinion of their final state. The writer was some time since in a company where mention was made of one who believed in the final salvation of all men, and perhaps of all devils likewise. "He is a gentleman," said one, "of liberal principles." Such principles may, doubtless, be denominated liberal, that is, free and enlarged in one sense;—they are free from the restraints of Scripture, and enlarged as a net which contains a great multitude of fishes, good and bad; but whether this ought to recommend them is another question. What would be thought of one who should visit the felons of Newgate, and persuade them that such was the goodness of the government that not one of them, even though condemned, would be finally executed? If they could be induced to believe him, they would doubtless think him a very liberal-minded man: but it is likely the government, and every friend to the public good, would think him an enemy to his country, and to the very parties whom by his glozing doctrine he had deceived.

It is usual to call that man liberal who thinks or professes to think for himself, and is willing that every other person should do the same. This, if applied to civil society,

is just. Christianity will persecute no man for his religious principles, but meekly instruct him, in hope that God peradventure may give him repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. But apply the principle to religious society, and it is inadmissible. If one member of a Christian church be not accountable to another for what he believes, an infidel, in demanding the Lord's supper from a Christian minister as a qualification for office, demands no more than the other may conscientiously and scripturally comply with. In refusing to unite with an unbeliever, or a profligate, or one who in my judgment rejects what is essential to the gospel, I do not impose my faith upon him; but merely decline having fellowship with what I consider as a work of darkness.

The writer is acquainted with several dissenting churches at this time, which for some years past have acted upon what they call a *liberal ground*: that is, they have admitted men of all sorts of principles into their communion: and if some who once professed to be friendly to the doctrines of salvation by grace, the deity and atonement of Christ, acceptance with God through his righteousness, the necessity of the new birth, &c., become their avowed enemies, they take no notice of them; but leave them, as they say, to judge for themselves. The consequence, however, is that many of these churches have in a few years become extinct; and those which remain have become mere worldly communities, going into many of the dissipations and follies which are practised by none but people who make no pretence to serious religion. I have generally observed that those who are thus liberal in regard to principles are seldom far behind as to their practices. Cards, balls, plays, &c., are with them innocent amusements. Such assuredly was not the liberality of Paul. He was, however, of an enlarged mind, and wished much for Christians to be *also enlarged*. But how? By opening their doors to worldly men, and holding fellowship with all sorts of characters? Not so; but by the direct contrary. —Read 2 Cor. vii. 11, to the end. "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you; our heart is enlarged.—Ye are not straitened in us, but in your own bowels.—Be ye also enlarged.—Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." From hence it would seem that true enlargedness of mind is inconsistent with an indiscriminate communion with unbelievers or worldly characters. And this accords with universal experience. Those Christian societies who are careful to preclude or exclude the enemies of the gospel are in a good degree of one heart, and will feel themselves at liberty to engage in every good work in their social capacity. But those communities which are open to all will never be agreed



in any thing which requires self-denial, diligence, or devotedness to Christ. One will make this objection to the measure, and another that; so that nothing will be effected. This is being yoked together with unbelievers: it is like yoking the sprightly horse with the tardy ass, which, instead of helping, only hinders him and may in time so break his spirit as to render him nearly as tardy as the other. In vain do we separate from national establishments of religion to corrupt ourselves. Nonconformity to the ceremonies of the church is of no account, if it be attended with conformity to the world. If the seven Asiatic churches had been originally formed on these liberal principles, how came it to pass that they were censured for having those "among them" who held doctrines inconsistent with Christianity? On such principles, they might have excused themselves from blame, inasmuch as those individuals were only permitted to think and act for themselves.

#### SCRIPTURAL TREATMENT OF RICH AND POOR CHRISTIANS.

It is a glory pertaining to the Christian religion that it embraces in one community all ranks and degrees of men. It admits of civil distinctions, and honors every one to whom honor is due; but at the house of God all this is required to be laid aside. All are brethren, and no account is made of worldly superiority.

I have been led to these reflections by comparing the words of the apostle James (ch. i. 9, 10) with a passage which I have lately met with in an otherwise admired publication. "Let the brother of low degree," says the apostle, "rejoice in that he is exalted; but the rich in that he is made low: because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away." We see here that joy is the common portion of all believers, whether rich or poor: and that the highest character which either can attain is that of a "brother." There is, however, some difference in the considerations which are presented for the purpose of inducing joy, according to their different situations in life. The poor brother is supposed to be most in danger of inordinate dejection: and therefore, as a proper antidote, he must rejoice in being "exalted." The rich, on the other hand, is most in danger of being lifted up with his situation; he must, therefore, rejoice in his being "made low." The adaptedness of the means to the end, in the former instance, is easily conceived; but there seems to be something a little paradoxical in the latter. Let us examine them.

The poor brother's part, by which he is taught to rejoice in adversity, is one in which every Christian heart will rejoice

with him. A state of poverty, viewed by itself, is both chilling and cheerless. Nature revolts at it. A lowly habitation, a dry and scanty morsel, mean attire, hard labor, and the want of respect among men, are things which cannot be agreeable. If all were alike, it would be somewhat different: but the poor man is affected by the disparity between his condition and that of others. Plenty daily passes by his door; but he scarcely tastes it. If the fig-tree blossom, it is not for *him*; there is no fruit on *his* vine, nor flock in *his* fold, nor herd in *his* stall. But, "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted." Come hither, poor man, says the gospel; art thou but withal a Christian? here is a feast for thee. ALTHOUGH thy fig-tree blossom not, and there be no fruit on thy vine, nor flock in thy fold, nor herd in thy stall; yet mayest thou rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of thy salvation! Say not, I am a dry tree; God hath given thee an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Art thou a servant? care not for it; thou art the Lord's free man. To be an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ, a son or daughter of the Lord God Almighty, a fellow-citizen with the saints, is an honor which princes might envy! Nor is it altogether in hope. As there is a meanness in sin which renders the character of the sinner, in spite of all his efforts and pretences, contemptible even in his own eyes; so there is a dignity in uprightness which ennobles the mind, whatever be its outward circumstances. This it was emboldened the prisoner, while the want of it caused his judge to tremble.—Acts xxiv. 25.

That, on the other hand, which is addressed to the rich brother, is no less appropriate. He is directed to rejoice, and we should think with good reason, inasmuch as his enjoyment lies in both worlds: but this is not the ground of it. And though he is, in common with his poor brother, interested in gospel privileges, yet they are not here introduced: but something more suited to counteract that spirit of high-mindedness of which the rich are especially in danger. He is directed to "rejoice in that he is made low." He must not value himself on any thing of a worldly nature, because "as the flower of the grass he shall," in that respect, "pass away." Rather let him rejoice that he has been humbled, and taught, like Moses, to prefer affliction with the people of God to the pleasures of sin for a season. It is true this is rejoicing in what the world accounts a disgrace; but such was the joy of all who gloried in the cross of Christ. Whatever the world may think, there is a solid reason for the opulent Christian to rejoice in his being made low: for it is a being led to think justly and soberly of himself as he ought to think, and enabled

to withdraw his dependence from those deceitful enjoyments which will quickly "fade like the grass before the scorching sun." It will tend also to heighten his joy, if he compare his case with that of the generality of rich men, who are put off with the present world as their only portion. "Not many" of this description "are called." It is therefore matter of thankfulness to any who are singled out by divine grace from their companions.

Christianity is far from promoting a *levelling spirit* in one sense of the term; but it is its professed object in another. "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low." In all that Christ and his apostles have done to propagate it, they have made no account of those things which men are apt to set a value upon. Had human wisdom been consulted, the first object would have been to convert those who, on account of office, rank, fortune, or talents, had the greatest influence upon others; and who, by throwing their weight into the Christian scale, would have easily caused it to preponderate. But, though some of this description are to be found among the primitive Christians, yet they appear to have taken no leading part among them; nor is the success of the gospel ever ascribed to their influence. But, descending from their former heights, they took their place among the *brethren*, rejoicing that they were made low.

You are ready to ask, What of this? And what is the passage you have been comparing with it? It is as follows:—"Greatly as I wish the reform of principles, and the suppression of vice, I am not sanguine in my expectations of either event, while rank, and station, and wealth, throw their mighty influence into the opposite scale. Then, *and not till then*, will Christianity obtain the dominion she deserves, when the makers of our manners shall submit to her authority, and THE PEOPLE OF FASHION become THE PEOPLE OF GOD."

Christianity, to be sure, will never obtain the dominion she *deserves* while any class of society continues to set her at nought: but, if its scale should be made at least to preponderate by the mighty influence of rank, and station, and wealth, being thrown into it, things must proceed on very different principles from what they have done. If I had no hope of Christianity obtaining the dominion "*till then*," I should have little or no hope at all; for though God is able to turn them, as well as others, to himself, yet it is not his usual way of working in order to promote his own cause. Is it not much too great a compliment to pay to men of rank and fashion, to suppose that Christianity will never prevail till it receives "*their* mighty influence?" Ought they not rather to be told that, if they decline to engage on her side, the consequence will only affect them-

selves? "Deliverance will arise" from another quarter, and God will cause his name to triumph without them? According to all that has hitherto appeared, and all that we are taught in the Scriptures to expect, the people of fashion will be the *last* that shall enter into Christ's kingdom; and, when they do enter, it will not be to take the lead, but as rejoicing that they are made low.

#### ON THE DANGEROUS TENDENCY OF THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

As the Scriptures abound in representations of divine truth, and of its influence in sanctifying and saving the souls of men, so they are no less explicit in declaring the unholy and destructive influence of error. It is said to "increase unto more ungodliness," and to "eat as doth a gangrene." The same divine writer speaks of "strong delusion;" or the energy, mighty working, or effectual operation of error. It is often alleged, in behalf of the advocates of certain doctrines, that, allowing them to be in an error, yet there is no reason to question their sincerity; and, if so, it may be only an innocent mistake. If by sincerity be meant no more than that they really believe what they teach, there is no reason to doubt their being possessed of it; but the same was true of the persons described by Paul. Their doctrine was a *lie*, yet they *believed* it. Paul, however, was far from reckoning their error on this account an innocent mistake. On the contrary, he represents it as leading to *damnation*; and its abettors as righteously given up of God on account of their not having received "the love of the truth," even while professing to embrace it.

Without taking upon us to decide how far, and for how long, a real Christian may be drawn aside from the simplicity of the gospel, or what degree of error may be found after all to consist with being "of the truth,"—it is sufficient that the natural tendency of these things is destructive. Every man who sets a proper value on his soul will beware of coming within the sweep of that by which multitudes, in all ages of the church, have been carried into perdition.

Under the fullest conviction that what has been said of error in general is applicable to the doctrine of universal salvation, or the restoration of men and devils from the abodes of misery to final happiness, we wish, in the most serious and affectionate manner, to caution our readers against it. To this end, we shall point out a few of its dangerous consequences, which, if clearly ascertained, will be so many presumptive proofs of the falsehood of the principle.

First: The violence which requires to be done to the plain language of Scripture, ere this doctrine can be embraced, goes to introduce a habit of treating the sacred oracles



with levity, and of perverting them in support of a preconceived system. If he who offendeth in one point of the law is guilty of all, in that he admits a principle which sets aside the authority of the lawgiver; he who perverts a part of the Scriptures to maintain a favorite doctrine, in the same way perverts the whole, and thus renders the word of God of none effect. Hence it is that Universalism leads to Socinianism, as that does to Deism. One of the leading advocates of this system was warned of this at his outset; and by his late publications, and those of his party, they appear to have given full proof of the propriety of the warning.

Secondly: To explain away the Scripture threatenings of eternal damnation is intimately connected with light thoughts of sin; and these will lead on to a rejection of the gospel. The whole doctrine of redemption by the Son of God rests upon "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," and the lost condition of sinners; for "the whole need not a physician." If these, therefore, be given up, the other will follow; and this is another reason why universalism will be almost certain to end in Socinianism. The benevolence which is ascribed to God by the advocates of both is in reality connivance; it is that which must induce him to pardon the penitent without a vicarious sacrifice, and to punish the impenitent only for a time, and that for their ultimate advantage. The Socinians openly renounce the atonement; and, though some of the universalists may at present retain the name, yet they have abandoned the thing.\* The corruption of Christian doctrine among the Galatians went to introduce "another gospel," and to make "Christ to have died in vain." But what would Paul have said of this? Let those who have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil judge.

Thirdly: If the Scripture threatenings of eternal damnation be set aside, and light thoughts of sin admitted, sinners will be more and more hardened in their impenitence. The greatest object of desire to a wicked man is, doubtless, a heaven suited to his inclinations: but, if this cannot be, his next object is to be exempted from punishment; on which principle he would gladly be annihilated: but, if this cannot be, he would next prefer a punishment of short duration; and if God be supposed, notwithstanding what has been said of *eternal damnation*, and of sinners being *never forgiven*, to intend nothing more than this, he will naturally conclude that the degree of it will be abated, as well as the duration shortened. The same kind of reasoning from the Divine benev-

olence which brings him to believe the one will bring him to believe the other. It cannot be a very *fearful thing*, he will suppose, to fall into the hands of a Being who will inflict nothing upon him but for his good; and therefore he will indulge for the present, and abide the consequence. This is not an imaginary process: it is a fact that these are the principles by which profligate characters, in great numbers, comfort themselves in their sins. When Rousseau was impressed with the doctrine of eternal punishment, he could scarcely endure his existence; but a lady, with whom he says he was very familiar, used to tranquilize his soul by persuading him that "the Supreme Being would not be strictly just, if he were just to us." If all such characters were as free in their confessions as this debauchee has been in his, there is no doubt but the same tale, in substance, would be told by millions. It is the hope that they shall not *surely* die—or, if they die, that the second death will consist of annihilation, or at most of only a temporary and tolerable punishment, that makes them comparatively easy. So universalists and Socinians preach, and so profligates believe, or at least are very willing to believe if their consciences would suffer them.

Fourthly: It is a principle that will universally hold good that there is no ultimate risk in adhering to truth, but that the utmost danger attends a departure from it. It is thus that we reason with unbelievers: It is possible at least that Christianity may be true; and, if it be, we have infinitely the advantage. But, allowing that it may be false, yet what risk do we run by embracing it? While we are taught by it to "deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," neither your principles nor your consciences will allow you to deny that we are safe. But if that Saviour whom you have despised be indeed the Son of God, if that name which you have blasphemed be the only one under heaven given among men by which a sinner can be saved, what a situation is yours! Apply this reasoning to the subject in hand. If universalism should prove true, there are few if any dangers that can follow from disbelieving it: but, if it should prove false, the mistake of its abettors will be inexcusable and fatal. If *we* be wrong, we can plead that we were misled by interpreting the terms by which the Scriptures ordinarily express the duration of future punishment in their literal or proper sense; that we found the same word which describes the duration of future life applied in the same passage to the duration of future punishment: and thence concluded it must mean the same: moreover that, if any doubt had remained on this head, it must have been removed by *eternal damnation* being explained in the Scriptures by *never having forgive-*

\* See *Letters on the Atonement*, by the Rev. C. Jerram; a peace in which the real opinions of the universalists, concerning this all-important doctrine, are clearly developed and answered.



ness—Mark iii. 29. But, if *they* be wrong, they can only allege that observing the terms to be often applied to limited duration they concluded they *might* be so in this; and, this sense best comporting with their ideas of divine benevolence, they adopted it. In the one case, our fears will be disappointed: in the other, their hopes will be confounded. If the mistake be on our side, we alarm the ungodly more than need be; but, if on theirs, they will be found to have flattered and deceived them to their eternal ruin, and so to have incurred the blood of souls! If we err, our error is much the same as that of Jeremiah, on supposition of the Babylonians having been repulsed, and Jerusalem delivered from the siege: but, if they err, their error is that of the false prophets, who *belied the Lord*, and said, "It is not he, neither shall evil come upon us." Which of these paths, therefore, is wisdom's way, we leave our readers to judge.

ON THE MYSTERY OF PROVIDENCE, ESPECIALLY IN RESPECT OF GOD'S DEALINGS WITH DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD IN DIFFERENT AGES.

It has frequently been objected that if the religion first taught among the posterity of Abraham, and afterwards among the Gentiles by the preaching of Jesus Christ, be of God, how is it that it has been so partial in its operations? The promulgation of a religion adapted to man, it is said, should be as extensive as the globe. The force of this objection has been felt; and Christian writers, in general, have acknowledged that there is a depth in this part of divine providence which it is difficult, if not impossible, to fathom. There are hints to be found in the Scriptures, however, which may throw some glimmering of light upon the subject; and, when the mystery of God is finished, we shall perceive that he has done all things well.

In general, we are given to understand that God is an absolute sovereign in the dispensation of his favors. He was under no obligation to any; and he will bestow his blessings, in such a manner as shall cause this truth to be manifest to all. Man would fain put in a claim, and accuse the ways of Jehovah with being unequal; but this only proves the perverseness of his own way. The blessings of civilization are undoubtedly adapted to man; yet a large proportion of the human race are mere barbarians: even those countries which have, in past ages, ranked high in this respect, are now sunk far below mediocrity; while others, whom they were in the habit of treating with the greatest contempt, have been raised above them. It is thus that the valley is exalted, the mountain made low, and the glory of

Jehovah revealed: but, if God may act as a sovereign in dispensing the bounties of providence, who shall call him to account for doing the same in the distribution of the blessings of grace? He has, in all ages, manifested his determination, however, to act in this manner, let sinful creatures think of it as they may. With respect to individuals, the things of God have been hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes; and the same principle has been carried into effect with nations and continents. When the adversaries of sovereign grace meet with this doctrine, in the Scriptures, they endeavor to get rid of it by applying it in the latter sense only; but God's dealings with nations and continents are of a piece with his dealings with individuals; they are only different parts of the same whole.

It is observable that, in the dispensations of mercy, God has in a wonderful manner balanced the affairs of men, so as, upon the whole, to answer the most important ends in the great system of moral government. In the early ages, for instance, mercy was shown to the posterity of Abraham, and hereby the world was provoked to jealousy. On the coming of Christ, mercy was shown to the world; and the posterity of Abraham, in their turn, were provoked to jealousy: and there is reason to believe that before the end of time, and perhaps before many years have passed over us, God will show mercy to both; and each will prove a blessing to the other. The conversion of the Gentiles shall in the end effectually provoke them to jealousy; and thus, "through our mercy, they shall obtain mercy." On the other hand, their return to God will be a kind of moral resurrection to the world. Probably, the conversion of the great body of Pagans and Mahometans may be accomplished by means of this extraordinary event. Their fall has already proved our riches; how much more their fulness! "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but *life from the dead*?" God's mercy towards them is at present, righteously suspended, "till the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in." The Gentiles were as one behind in a race; let them first come up, and then "all Israel shall be saved," and become as life from the dead to the world.

The fifty-second chapter of Isaiah appears to contain a prophecy of the restoration and conversion of the Jews; but in the last three verses it is intimated that God's servant, the Messiah, by whom it should be effected, should deal prudently. Now much of prudence consists in the proper timing of things. This glorious work was not to take place immediately; there must ere this be a long and awful pause. "He must first come and suffer many things, and be rejected." The wrath of God must be poured on

the Jews on this account to the uttermost; and the gentile nations must be sprinkled with the showers of gospel grace. Such is the import of these last three verses, and the whole fifty-third chapter. Then in the fifty-fourth she that had been "a wife of youth," but of late "refused and forsaken," is called upon to *sing* for joy; and yet the mercy should not be confined to her; for the Redeemer should not only be called "the Holy One of Israel," but "the God of the whole earth."—"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

If God had called the Gentiles without having first "concluded," or *shut them up as it were*, "under sin," their salvation would not have appeared to be the effect of free promise (Gal. iii. 22); and, if he had not in like manner *shut up the Jews in their unbelief*, his mercy towards them had been far less conspicuous.—Rom. xi. 32. As it is, we behold the goodness and severity of God, each blazing by turns in the most lovely and tremendous colors.

Something analogous to this is observable in the conduct of God towards the eastern and western parts of the earth. For more than two thousand years after the flood, learning, government, and the true religion were in a maner confined to the east; and our forefathers in the west were a horde of barbarians. For the last two thousand years learning, government, and the true religion have travelled westward; they have been within the last few centuries extended even beyond the Atlantic Ocean. But before the end of time, and perhaps before many years have passed over us, both the east and the west shall unite and become one in Christ Jesus. Such an idea, I apprehend, is conveyed in Isa. lx. 6—9. The geographical descriptions of nations, as given in prophetic language, is commonly by way of *synecdoche*, putting those parts which are nearest the Holy Land for the whole, or all beyond them. Thus Europe is commonly called "the Isles of the Gentiles" (Gen. x. 5, Isa. xlix. 1), because those parts of it which lay nearest to Judea were the Archipelago, or the Grecian Islands. And those nations which lay next to Judea, eastward, include, in the prophetic language, all beyond them, or the whole of Asia. Thus "the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, all they from Sheba, the flocks of Kedar, and the rams of Nebaioth," denote the accession of the eastern world to the church of God. On the other hand, "the isles waiting for him, and the ships of Tarshish bringing the sons of Sion from far," denote the accession of the western world. Thus all shall be gathered together in Christ, and become one holy family. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How

unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

One great cause of the mercy bestowed on the western part of the earth was the Roman conquests, which, whatever were the motives of the conquerors, were overruled for the introduction of the gospel among European nations. And who knows but the British conquests in the east, whatever be the motives of the conquerors, may be designed for a similar purpose? Even that iniquitous traffic which we and other nations have long been carrying on in the persons of men, I have no doubt, will eventually prove a blessing to those miserable people, though it may be a curse to their oppressors. At this day there are many thousands of negroes in the West India islands who have embraced the gospel, while their owners, basking in wealth, and rolling in debauchery, will neither enter into the kingdom of God themselves, nor suffer others who would enter in. God is gathering a people in spite of them. Behold the goodness and justice of God! Men, torn from their native shores and tenderest connections, are in a manner driven into the gospel net: the most abject and cruel state of slavery is that by means of which they become the Lord's freemen. Their oppressors, on the other hand, who lead them captive, are themselves led captive by the devil at his will, and, under the name of Christians, are heaping up wrath against the day of wrath. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

From the whole we are led to consider the sovereignty of God not as a capricious, but as a wise sovereignty. While those who are saved have nothing to boast of, those who perish perish as the just reward of their own iniquity. Jacob will have to ascribe to distinguishing grace all he is more than Esau; while Esau, having lost the blessing, has to recollect that he first despised it.

#### THE CONNECTIONS IN WHICH THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION IS INTRODUCED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

It is generally allowed that to understand the Scriptures it is necessary to enter into the connection of what we read; and let it be considered whether it be equally necessary to the understanding of any particular doctrine that we enter into the connections in which it is introduced in the Scriptures. We have seen, in a former essay, that divine truths are not taught us in a systematical form, and also the wisdom of God in scattering them throughout his word in a variety of practical relations. What these relations are it becomes us to ascer-



tain; otherwise we may admit the leading truths of revelation as articles of belief, and yet, for want of a close attention to these, may possess but very little Scripture-knowledge; and the doctrine which we think we hold may be of very little use to us. "When I was a youth," said a minister lately in conversation, "I admitted many doctrines, but did not feel their importance and practical efficacy."

It would be a good work for a serious, thinking mind carefully to inquire into the various connections in which acknowledged truths are introduced in the Scriptures, and the practical purposes to which they are there actually applied. I shall take the liberty of offering a brief specimen with respect to the doctrine of *election*. The truth of the doctrine I may in this place take for granted as a matter clearly revealed in the word of God, observing only a few of its principal connections.

First: it is introduced *to declare the source of salvation to be mere grace, or undeserved favor, and to cut off all hopes of acceptance with God by works of any kind*.—In this connection we find it in Rom. xi. 5, 6. "Even so then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace: and, if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: but, if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." All compromise is here forever excluded, and the cause of salvation decidedly and fully ascribed to electing grace. With this end the doctrine requires to be preached to saints and sinners. To the former, that they may be at no loss to what they shall ascribe their conversion and salvation, but may know and own with the apostle that it is by the grace of God they are what they are; to the latter, that they may be warned against relying upon their own righteousness, and taught that the only hope of life which remains for them is in repairing as lost and perishing sinners to the Saviour, casting themselves at the feet of sovereign mercy.

Secondly: It is introduced *in order to account for the unbelief of the greater part of the Jewish nation, without excusing them in it*.—This appears to be its connection in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. To show that the wide-spreading unbelief of that people was not a matter of surprise, and did not affect the veracity of God in his promises, the apostle distinguishes between those who were Israel and those who were merely of Israel (ver. 6); evincing that from the beginning God had drawn a line between Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau; the former being merely "children of the flesh," and the latter "children of the promise," to whom God had an eye in all he had said, and who were "counted for the seed." The same argument is pursued and confirm-

ed from the declaration of God to Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and compassion on whom I will have compassion; intimating not only that a sinner had no natural claim of mercy on God, but that even among the Israelites, who were a people in covenant with him, he ever preserved the right of sovereignty in the forgiveness of sin, and every dispensation of saving grace. The result is that in God's leaving great numbers of Abraham's posterity to perish in unbelief, and calling a people for himself, partly of Jews and partly of Gentiles (ver. 24, 27), he proceeded on the same principle as that on which he had proceeded from the beginning.

Paul saw, indeed, that the corrupt mind of man would allege that, if things were so, the agency and accountableness of man were destroyed; and therefore introduces the objection, ver. 19—"Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will?" This objection affords irrefragable proof that the doctrine maintained by the apostle was that of the absolute sovereignty of God, in having mercy on whom he would, and giving up whom he would to hardness of heart: for against no other doctrine could such an objection have been made with any appearance of plausibility. This objection is the same for substance as has been made ever since, and that by two sorts of people; namely, those who disown the doctrine, as being destructive of human agency; and those who contend for the doctrine for that very purpose. The language of those who disown the doctrine is this: If it be so, that the state of every one is determined by the will of God, why are men blamed for not believing in Christ? God has his will, and what would he have more? The language of those who contend for the doctrine, with the intent of destroying human agency, is, It is true that the state of every man is determined by the will of God; but then it is not right that he should find fault with sinners for their unbelief: for his will is not resisted. It is easy to see that both these positions are at variance with the gospel. With respect to the former, if we follow the example of the apostle, we shall think it enough to prove that God *actually exercises* an absolute sovereignty in saving whom he will, and yet *finds fault* with unbelievers as much as if no such sovereignty were exercised; leaving him to justify his own conduct, and them who reply against him to answer it at his tribunal. With respect to the latter, if we keep to the principle laid down by the apostle, we shall not deny the truth because they abuse it; but avow it, and at the same time *find fault* with unbelievers, ascribing their failure, as he did in the same chapter, to their "seeking righteousness as it were by the works of the law, stumbling at the stumbling-stone."



If on this account we be accused of "self-contradiction," "saying and unsaying," "preaching half grace and half works," "beginning with truth and ending with falsehood," &c. &c., we have this comfort, that the same things might have been objected with equal justice to the writings of the apostle, as appears from the above remarks, and were in substance actually objected to them.

Thirdly: It is introduced to show the certain success of Christ's undertaking, as it were in defiance of unbelievers, who set at nought his gracious invitations. When Esther seemed to hesitate on going in unto the king in behalf of her people, she was answered by Mordecai's order, thus: "If thou hold thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed!" Such, in effect, is the language of the doctrine of election to sinners of mankind, and that on various occasions. It is not designed to supersede universal invitations; but to provide against those invitations being universally unsuccessful. Thus, our Lord having upbraided Chorazin and Bethsaida for their impenitence under his ministry, it is immediately added by the evangelist, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." This was like saying, Though Chorazin and Bethsaida have not repented, yet shall I not be wanting of subjects; deliverance shall arise from another place!—Again: When, addressing the unbelieving pharisees, he applied those words in the cxviii Psalm to them, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner," his words convey the same idea:—Ye builders may set me at nought; but God will exalt me in defiance of you. God will show a temple, and I shall be the foundation of it, though you should persist in your unbelief and perish!—Matt. xxi. 42. Again: Those very remarkable words in John vi. 37—"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," &c., are introduced in the same manner. Addressing himself to those Jews who followed him because they had eaten of the loaves and were filled, he saith, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said unto you that ye also have seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." As if he should say, You have no regard to me in my true character, but merely for yourselves, and for the meat that perisheth: but I shall not lose my reward, however you may stand affected towards me.

REMARKS ON THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

ALLOWING all due honor to the English translation of the Bible, it must be granted to be a human performance, and, as such, subject to imperfection. Where any passage appears to be mistranslated, it is doubtless proper for those who are well acquainted with the original languages to point it out, and to offer, according to the best of their judgment, the true meaning of the Holy Spirit. Criticisms of this kind, made with modesty and judgment, and not in consequence of a preconceived system, are worthy of encouragement.

But, besides these, there is a species of criticism which offers itself from a more familiar source, and of the propriety of which the mere English reader is competent to judge; namely, the division of chapters, the use of supplementary terms, &c.

If the following example of the former kind be thought worthy of a place in the Biblical Magazine, it is probable I may on a future occasion send you more of the same nature.

The seventh chapter of John ends with these words: "And every man went unto his own house." The eighth begins with these: "Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives." Here, I conceive, the former chapter ought to have ended; for here ends the labor of the day, and each party is described as withdrawing to his place of retirement.

The whole passage contains a beautiful representation of the breaking up of a fierce dispute between the chief priests, the pharisees, the officers whom they sent to arrest our Saviour, and Nicodemus. In the picture which is here drawn of it, we see at one view the very hearts of the different parties; and, if the subject were made to end with the retirement of Jesus to the Mount of Olives, it would appear to still greater advantage.

The pharisees and chief priests having sent officers to take Jesus, they return without him.

*Pharisees.* Why have ye not brought him?

*Officers.* Never man spake like this man!

*Pharisees.* Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers, or of the pharisees, believed on him? But this people, who know not the law, are cursed.

*Nicodemus.* Doth our law judge any man before it hear him?

*Pharisees.* Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

*Historian.* And every man went unto his own house: Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives.

What an exhibition is here given, in a few simple words, of the workings of mind in the

different parties! Follow them respectively to their places of retirement, and judge of their feelings. The officers, stung with conviction and stung with the reproaches of their employers, retire in disgust. The pharisees, transported with rage and disappointment, go murmuring to their houses.—Nicodemus having ventured, though mildly, to repel their outrage, feels himself suspected of a secret adherence to the Galilean, and is full of thought about the issue of things. Jesus, with the most perfect calmness and satisfaction, retires to the place whither he was wont to resort for prayer and communion with God!\*

## ON COMMENDATION.

It has been observed that sinful propensities are commonly, if not always, the original propensities of human nature, perverted or abused. Emulation, scorn, anger, the desire of property, and all the animal appetites, are not in themselves evil. If directed to right objects, and governed by the will of God, they are important and useful principles; but, perverted, they degenerate into pride, haughtiness, bitterness, avarice, and sensuality.

By this remark we may be enabled to judge of the propriety and impropriety of bestowing commendation. There are some who for fear of making others proud, as they say, forbear the practice altogether. But this is contrary to the Scriptures. We have only to hear what the Spirit saith unto the seven churches in Asia to perceive the usefulness of commending the good for encouragement, as well as of censuring the evil for correction. Paul, in his epistles, seldom deals in reproof without applauding at the same time what was praiseworthy. This, doubtless, ought to be a model for us. Those who withhold such commendation, for fear of making others proud, little think of the latent vanity in their own minds which this conduct betrays. If they did not attach a considerable degree of consequence to their own opinion, they would not be so ready to suspect the danger of another's being elated by it. A minister, fifty or sixty years ago, after delivering a sermon and descending from the pulpit, was accosted in rather a singular manner by another minister who had been his hearer. Shaking him by the hand, and looking him in the face, with a smile, "I could," said he, "say something . . . . I could say something, . . . . but, perhaps, it is not safe; it might make you proud of yourself."—"No danger, my friend," replied the other, "I do not take you to be a man of judgment."

\* The author supplied another example from Hos. xi. 8, the substance of which is in p. 111.—ED.

Yet there is real danger of our becoming tempters to one another, by untimely and improper commendation. Man has too much nre about him to render it safe to play with fire. Whatever may be said by worldly men, who have adopted Lord Chesterfield's maxims, and whose only study is to *please*, it is not only injurious, but by men of sense considered as inconsistent with good manners to load a person with praises to his face. Such characters are *flatterers* by profession, and their conduct is as mean as it is offensive to a modest mind; but what is flattery, but insult in disguise? Its language, if truly interpreted is this: "I know you to be so weak and so vain a creature that nothing but praise will please you; and, as I have an end to answer by obtaining your favor, I will take this measure to accomplish it."

The love of praise has been called "the universal passion," and true it is that no man is free from it. There are some, however, who are much more vain than others. It is the study of a flatterer to find out this weak side of a man, and to avail himself of it: but good men are incapable of such conduct. If they see another covetous of praise, they will commonly withhold it, and that for the good of the party. It is true, I have seen the vanity of a man reproved by a compliance with his wishes, giving him what he was desirous of, and that in full measure, as it were, pressed down. He did not seem to be aware that he had thirsted for the delicious draught till the cup was handed to him; the appearance of which covered him with confusion. But this kind of ironical praise is a delicate weapon, and requires a quick sensibility in the person who receives the address as well as in him who gives it. It is, however, hardly consistent with the modesty, gentleness, and benevolence of Christianity.

When two or more persons of a vain mind become acquainted, it may be expected they will deal largely in compliments; playing into each other's hands: where this is the case, there is great danger of the blind leading the blind till both fall into the ditch.

To a wise and humble man, just commendation is encouraging; but praise beyond desert is an affliction. His mind, sanctified by the grace of God, serves as a refiner to separate the one from the other; justly appreciating what is said to him, he receives what is proper, and repels what is improper. Thus, it may be, we are to understand the words of Solomon: "As the fining-pot for silver, and the furnace for gold, so is a man to his praise."

The Scriptures never address themselves to the corrupt propensities of the mind, but to its original powers; or, to use the language of the ingenious Bunyan, they have

"nothing to say to the Diabolians, but to the *ancient inhabitants of the town of Mansoul*." Men address themselves to our vanity; God to our emulation. If we follow this example we are safe.

The occasion of all these reflections was my finding the other day, among a number of old loose papers, the following tale, which carries in it the marks of being a true one; and with which I shall conclude this paper:—"A young minister (whom I shall call Eutyclus) was possessed of talents somewhat above mediocrity; his delivery also was reckoned agreeable. He was told by one of his admirers, in an evening's conversation, how much his sermons excelled those of the generality of preachers. Alas, the same thought had occurred to himself! Hence he easily assented to it, and entered freely into conversation on the subject. On retiring to rest, he endeavored first to commit himself to the divine protection. It was *there*, while on his knees, that he first felt his folly. Overwhelmed with shame and confusion before God, he was silent; seeming to himself a beast before him. At the same time, a passage in the Acts of the Apostles flashed like lightning in his mind: And they shouted and said, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. . . . . And he was eaten of worms, because he gave not God the glory." There seemed to him a considerable analogy between his case and that of Herod. Herod was flattered and idolized—his heart was in unison with the flattery—he consented to be an idol, and gave not God the glory—for this he was smitten by an angel of God, his glory blasted, and his life terminated by a humiliating disease. "I also have been flattered," said Eutyclus, "and have inhaled the incense. I have consented to be an idol, and have not given God the glory. God, I am afraid, will blast my future life and ministry, as he justly may, and cause me to end my days in degradation and disgrace!" About the same time, those words also occurred to him. "Woe to the idol shepherd: his arm shall be dried up, and his right eye shall be darkened!" He could not pray!—Groaning over the words of David, "Oh Lord, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sin is not hid from thee," he retired to rest. The next morning the same subject awoke with him. He confessed, and again bemoaned his sin: entreated forgiveness for Christ's sake, and that his future spirituality might not be blasted. "Cast me not away from thy presence," said he, "take not thy Holy Spirit from me!" But he could not recover anything like freedom with God. The thought occurred to him of requesting one of his most intimate friends to pray for him: but this only occasioned a comparison of himself with Simon the sorcerer, who importuned Peter, saying,

"Pray to the Lord for me, that none of these things come upon me."

In short, the temptation into which he had fallen not only polluted his mind, and marred his peace, but rendered him for some time wretched in the exercise of his ministry.

Let hearers take heed, while they give due honor and encouragement to ministers, not to idolize them; and let ministers take heed that they do not receive and still more that they do not court applause.

ORATION DELIVERED AT THE GRAVE OF  
THE REV. ROBERT HALL, OF ARNSBY.

[March, 1791.]

Dear Friends,

You have often assembled with pleasure in company with your beloved friend and faithful pastor; but that pleasure is over, and you are now met together with very different feelings, to take your last farewell of his remains!

What can I say to you, or wherewith shall I comfort you? The dissolving of the union between near relations, and the breaking up of long and intimate connections, are matters that must needs affect us. That providence which at one stroke separates a husband from his wife, a father from his children, a pastor from his people, and a great and greatly beloved man of God from all his connections, cannot do other than make us feel. Indeed we are allowed to feel on such occasions in moderation; at the grave of his friend, Lazarus, "Jesus wept."

But should we exceed the bounds of moderation, should our mourning under the hand of God border upon murmuring against it or thinking hard of it, there are many considerations that might be urged to alleviate our grief; so many, indeed, that under the heaviest afflictions of the present state we may well weep as though we wept not.

In this instance, we may not only comfort ourselves with the consideration that it is the common lot of men, the greatest and the best as well as others, and therefore no more than might be expected; but with what affords infinitely greater satisfaction—that this lot is a real and substantial advantage to our deceased brother. There is a pleasure even in the very pain that we feel for those who die in the Lord. Our Redeemer has walked the road before us; and, by so doing, has abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light. Where the sting of death is extracted, there is little else but the name, the shadow of death, to encounter; and the prospect of a glorious resurrection to eternal life



more than annihilates even that. Your husband, your father, your pastor is not dead, but sleepeth; and his Redeemer will come ere long that he may awake him.

Nor is this all; he lives already among the spirits of the just made perfect. Though the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, yet the inhabitant is not turned out, as it were, naked and destitute; but has a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It was that which reduced the apostle to "a strait betwixt two," having a desire on the one hand to be profitable to the church of God, and on the other to depart and be with Christ, which, so far as concerned himself, was far better. Could we but be governed by faith instead of sense, we should rejoice even while we mourned. What our Lord said to his apostles might be said by his faithful followers to their surviving friends, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said I go to the Father;" and the reason which he alleged, "for my Father is greater than I"—that is, the glory and happiness which my Father possesses, and which I go to possess with him, is greater than any thing I can here enjoy—would also apply to them. To be with our Father above is much greater and better than to be here.

Such considerations as these may moderate our grief, and reconcile us to the will of God: but this is not all; there are other things that require our attention. As the aged and the honorable are called off the stage, there is the more to be done by us who are left behind. God has said to this his servant, as he said to the prophet Daniel, "Go thou thy way;" let another, as if he had said, come and take thy place, and acquit himself as well as thou hast done! Our venerable deceased father had embarked for life, and so have we: he has finished his course, but we have yet to finish ours. We are apt to feel discouraged at the loss of eminent men, and to think the interests of religion, in their particular connections, must needs suffer, and it may be so; but it may be of use to consider that when Moses died the Israelites were not to stand still, but were commanded to go forward; and it is no small consolation that God's cause is still in his own hands, "The government is upon his shoulder."

One thing more deserves our serious attention.—Though the relations before mentioned are now extinct, yet what has taken place in those relations is not. A great part of the actions of the present life are either those of parents to their children or children to their parents, of husbands to their wives or wives to their husbands, of pastors to their people or people to their

pastors; and these are matters that must all come over again. In this point of view, relationship, though of but a few years' duration, is of the utmost importance; it sows, as I may say, the seeds of eternity, and stamps an impression that will never be effaced!

Consider, dear friends, the events of that relationship which is now dissolved. The various labors of your worthy pastors will not be lost, not even his more private instructions, prayers, and counsels in your families, or his own; they will not return void, but accomplish the end whereunto they were sent. The great question with you is, Does that end include your salvation? Can you look back and bless God for the life which is now finished, as having been a blessing to you? Can you remember the sermon, the visit, the reproof, the warning, the counsel, the free conversation, from whence you began to cry, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" Or has this valuable life, which thousands have acknowledged as a public blessing, been nothing to you? You have heard him, and have talked with him, and have witnessed the general tenor of his life, how holily, how justly, and how unblameably he behaved himself among you; and is all of no account? Is the harvest past, and the summer ended, and are you not saved? Alas! if this should be the case with any of you in this congregation (and it is well if it is not), you may never have such opportunities again; and, if you should perish at last, the loss of your souls will be greater, and attended with more aggravating circumstances, than that of many others. Those of Bethsaida and Chorazin, who rejected or neglected the gospel, were in a worse situation than even the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. When the *books* come to be opened, at the great day, they will contain a long and dark list of slighted opportunities, abused mercies, despised counsels, and forgotten warnings!

Dear friends, call to remembrance the labors of your minister, and pray to the Lord that none of these things may come upon you. If any of you have been deaf to the various calls of God during his life, yet hear this one which is addressed to you by his death! If the seed which this dear servant of God has been sowing for nearly forty years among you should yet spring up—if to a future and happy pastor of this church it should be said, in the language of Christ to his apostles, "Another has labored and you have entered into his labors"—it would afford us no small pleasure that would serve to counterbalance the painful providence with which at this time we are afflicted.

TO THE MEMORY OF MY DEAR AND VENERABLE FRIEND, THE REV. ROBERT HALL.

*Who died in the sixty-third year of his age, on March 13th, 1791.*

AND is my much-respected friend no more ?  
How painful are the tidings to my heart !  
And is that light extinguished which so long  
Has burned with brightest lustre, and diffused,  
Through all his loved connections round about,  
Pure rays of evangelic light and joy ?

Is all that stock of true substantial worth  
Become as water spilt upon the ground ?—  
That *universal knowledge*, which embraced  
A compass wide and large, of men and things !—  
That well known solid *wisdom*, which, improved  
By long experience, made his face to shine ?—  
That *uprightness of character*, by which  
He lived down slander, and of foes made friends ?—  
That ardent and *affectionate concern*  
For truth, for righteousness, for Zion's good,  
Which, with a *social kindness*, long endeared  
His name, and renders him a public loss ?—  
That *grace* that ruled and seasoned all his soul,  
And as with sacred unction filled his lips,  
In which as life declined he ripened fast,  
And shone still more and more to perfect day ?—  
That tender *sympathy* that often soothed  
The sorrowing heart, and wiped the mourner's tear ?  
That sweet *humility*, and *self-abasement*,  
With which we heard him oft invoke his God ;  
Which ne'er assumed, though first in counsel skilled,  
The lordly look, or proud dictator's chair ?—  
That guiltless *pleasantry* that brightened up  
Each countenance, and cheered the social hour ?—  
(If he were there, it seemed that all were there ;  
If he were missing, none could fill his place).  
That *store of excellence*, in short, to which  
(As to a ship well fraught) one might repair,  
And be enriched with treasures new and old ?—

IS ALL, as by a kind of fatal wreck,  
Destroyed, and sunk at once to rise no more ?  
Dear friend (for still I fain would talk to thee !)   
Shall I discern thy cheering face no more ?  
And must thy gladdening voice no more be heard ?  
And, when I visit thy much-loved abode,  
Shall I not find thee there as heretofore ?  
Nor sit, nor walk, as erst with pleasure wont,  
Nor mingle souls beneath the friendly bow ?  
No . . . this is past . . . nor aught seems left for me,  
Except to walk, and sigh upon thy stone !

Dear friend ! I saw thee burdened years ago  
With heavy loads of complicated grief ;  
And grief more complicate, though less intense,  
I'm told thou didst in earlier days endure ;  
But tribulation patience in thee wrought,  
And such a stock of rich experience *this*,  
That few like thee could reach the mourner's case,  
Or ease the burdens of the laboring heart.

We saw thee ripen in thy later years,  
As when rich-laden autumn droops her head :  
That theme on which thy thoughts of late were  
penned,\*  
None knew like thee, nor could have touched so  
well ;

It seemed thy element, the native air  
Thy holy soul had long been used to breathe.  
Such things we saw with sacred pleasure ; yet  
'Twas pleasure tinged with painful fear, lest these  
(As fruit when ripe is quickly gathered in)  
Should only prove portentous of thy end.

\* *Communion with God*, the subject of the Circular Letter for 1789, which was Mr. Hall's last printed performance.

O thou great Arbitrer of life and death !  
Thy ways are just, and true, and wise, and good ;  
Though clouds and darkness compass thee around,  
Justice and judgment still support thy throne.  
Had it been left to us, he still had lived,  
And lived for years to come, and bless'd us still :  
But thus 'tis not : thy thoughts are not as ours.  
Had poor short-sighted mortals had their will,  
The great Redeemer had not bled, or died.  
Teach us to say, " Thy will, not ours, be done,"  
To drink the cup thou givest us to drink.

Dear relatives and friends, his special charge !  
Bereaved at once of him whose life was spent  
In unremitting labors for your good,  
We must not call on you to mourn, but try  
To stem the tide, or wipe the o'verflowing tear.  
'Tis true his course is finished, and your ears  
Shall hear no more the long accustomed sound ;  
But 'tis as he desired, when late we heard  
Drop from his lips, what seemed his last farewell. †  
The prize for which he counted life not dear  
Is fully gained ; his course *with joy* he closed.

What did I say ? the ship was wrecked and lost ?  
No, it is not ; 'tis safe arrived in port,  
And all the precious cargo too is safe ;  
His knowledge, wisdom, love, and every grace,  
Are not extinct, but gloriously matured,  
Beyond whate'er he grasped in this frail state.  
A fit companion *now* for purer minds,—  
For patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, and for those  
Whom once he knew, and loved, who went before ;  
For HIM whose name was dear to him on earth,  
And whose sweet presence now creates his heaven.

Nor is all lost to those who yet survive :  
Though he is gone, his mantle's left behind.—  
Kind *memory* may recal his words, and deeds,  
And prayers, and counsels ; and conviction aid  
Or cheer the heart, or guide the doubtful feet,  
Or prompt to imitate his holy life.  
Nor memory alone, the *faithful page*  
Is charged with some remains, in which the man  
And his communications yet are seen ;  
In these, though he be dead, he speaketh still. ‡

Yes, here's Elijah's mantle : may there too  
A double portion of his spirit rest  
Upon us all ; and, might I be indulged  
In one more special wish, that wish should be,  
That he who fills his father's sacred trust  
Might share the blessings of his father's God,  
And tread his steps ; that all may see and say,  
" Elijah's spirit on Elisha rests."

#### THE NATURE OF TRUE VIRTUE.

MR. HALL, in his justly admired Sermon on modern Infidelity, has brought forward some very plausible objections to President Edwards's definition of virtue, but which appear to be founded in misapprehension. The definition itself is fairly stated—that

† It has been observed that Mr. Hall's last public sermon, in his own connection, was preached at Olney Association, June 2, 1790, from Acts xx. 24:—" Neither count I my life dear, that I may finish my course with joy," &c.

‡ Mr. Hall wrote many of the *Circular Letters* to the churches of the Northamptonshire and Leicestershire Association, most of which have been noticed already, as well as his *Help to Zion's Travellers*. He also printed *A Charge to Mr. Moreton*, delivered at his ordination at Kettering, 1771. And a *Funeral Sermon for Mrs. Evans, of Foxton, 1775*.

"virtue consists in a passion for the general good, or love to being in general." Mr. Hall observes that "the order of nature is, evermore, from particulars to generals: we advance from private to public affections: from the love of parents, brothers, and sisters, to those more expanded regards which embrace the immense society of human kind."—p. 51. And afterwards, in a note, pp. 57, 58, he maintains that, on the president's principles, "virtue is an utter impossibility; because that the human mind is not capable of such *different degrees* of attachment as are due to the infinitely various objects of the intelligent system; also because that *our view* of the system being capable of perpetual enlargement, our attachments are liable to undue proportion, so that those regards which appeared virtuous may afterwards become vicious. And, lastly, that if virtue consists in the love of being in general, or attachment to the general good, the particular affections are to every purpose of virtue useless, and even pernicious; for their necessary tendency is to attract to their objects a proportion of attention which far exceeds their comparative value in the general scale."

"The question is," as Mr. Hall observes, "what is *virtue*?" Answer, *love*. But love to whom, or what? To being, says Edwards; and, as the Supreme Being is the first and best of beings, it is to love Him supremely, and our fellow-creatures in subordination to him. It is objected that we cannot comprehend the Supreme Being, and therefore cannot love him in proportion to what he is in the scale of being. True; and we cannot fully comprehend ourselves; yet we may love ourselves supremely.

"The order of nature," says Mr. Hall, "is evermore from particulars to generals; we advance from private to public affections; from the love of parents, brothers, and sisters, to those more expanded regards which embrace the immense society of human kind." But to this it may be replied—

1. Virtuous affection does not consist in natural attachment: if it did, birds and beasts would be virtuous, as well as men. Nor does genuine benevolence arise from those instinctive feelings as their root: if it did, all men who are not "without natural affection" would be virtuous, benevolent characters. It may imply a high degree of depravity to have obliterated natural affection, though the thing itself has no moral good in it. Natural affection, however, if exercised in subserviency to the divine glory, becomes virtuous; as are eating and drinking, and all other natural actions that are capable of being performed to a higher end.

2. The question does not relate to the order in which the human mind comes to the knowledge of objects, and so to the actual exercise of affection towards them; but to the order in which love operates when the

objects are known. If we were free from every taint of original sin, yet we should not love God before we loved our parents; and that because we should not know him first. We cannot love an object before we know it; but it does not follow from hence that, when we know both God and our parents, we must continue to love them first, and God for their sake. That which this writer calls "the order of nature" may indeed be so called, as it is the order established for our being brought to the actual exercise of our powers; but, with regard to the argument, it is rather the order of *time* than of nature.

"The welfare of the whole system of being must be allowed," says Mr. Hall, "to be *in itself* the object of all others the most worthy to be pursued; so that, could the mind distinctly embrace it, and discern at every step what *action* would infallibly promote it, we should be furnished with a sure criterion of right and wrong; an unerring guide, which would supersede the use and necessity of all inferior rules, laws, and principles."—p. 55.

But it is not necessary to true virtue that it should comprehend all being, or "distinctly embrace the welfare of the whole system." It is sufficient that it be of an expansive *tendency*; and this appears to be Edwards's view of the subject. A child may love God by loving godliness, or godly people, though it has as yet scarcely any ideas of God himself. It may also possess a disposition the *tendency* of which is to embrace in the arms of good will "the immense society of human kind;" though at the time it may be acquainted with but few people in the world. Such a disposition will come into actual exercise, "from particulars to generals," as fast as knowledge extends. This, however, is not "private affection," or self-love, ripening into an "extended benevolence, as its last and most perfect fruit;" but benevolence itself expanding, in proportion as the natural powers expand, and afford it opportunity.

#### MORALITY NOT FOUNDED IN UTILITY.

IN a late excellent Sermon\* the author combats, with great success, the notion of morality being founded in utility. On looking over some loose papers the other day, I found a short conversation on this subject which took place a few years since between two friends, and which was taken down immediately after they had parted. It will occupy but a small space; and, if you think it worthy of insertion, it is at your service.

C. I have been thinking of the reason why

\* "*Sentiments proper to the Present Crisis*," by the Rev. R. Hall, delivered on occasion of the General Fast in 1803.



we are required to love God and one another ; and why the contrary is forbidden.

*F.* And what do you conceive it to be ?

*C.* Would there be any such thing as sin in the universe, if it were unproductive of evil consequences ?

*F.* You mean, would there be moral evil, if there were no natural evil arising out of it ?

*C.* I do.

*F.* I allow that all moral evil tends to natural evil, as disorder in the animal frame tends to pain and misery : but we do not usually consider the effect of a thing as the reason of its existence. Instead of saying it is wrong because it tends to misery ; I should say, it tends to misery because it is wrong.

*C.* What idea do you affix to right and wrong distinct from that of its good or evil tendency ?

*F.* That which is in itself *fit* or *unfit*, or which agrees or disagrees with the relations we sustain to other beings, whether Creator or creatures. Thus it is commanded : "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is *right*."

*C.* Yes, it is "right : " but its being so, I conceive, arises from its tendency to render the universe happy.

*F.* Then it has no excellency *in itself*, but merely a *relative* one. Will you say that, because moral good tends to general happiness, therefore it must needs be what it is on that account ?

*C.* What if I were to affirm this ?

*F.* By the same mode of reasoning I might affirm that truth would not be true if it were not an object of utility : and, as the first of all truths is the existence of God, that God would not exist, if it were not for the advantage of the creation that he should exist.

*C.* This consequence is certainly inadmissible ; but I can hardly see how you make it out.

*F.* Try it again. If moral good be moral good because it tends to general happiness, why is not, truth, truth, because it is of utility ?

But farther : An action may tend to natural good, though it be performed from the worst of motives, as the relieving of the needy, from ambition ; yet with such a motive there is no moral good in it. If therefore you will maintain your position, you must give up all purity of motive as essential to morality ; and maintain, with Volney, that *intention* is nothing. You will also find your opinion largely defended by Hume, who has written a treatise to prove that all virtue arises from its *utility* ; and that, as "broad shoulders and taper legs are useful, they are to be reckoned among the virtues !" I hope you will not be elated with your company.

#### SIN ITS OWN PUNISHMENT.

[*Sketch of a Sermon delivered at Maze Pond, May 11, 1794.*]

"Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee."—Jer. ii. 19.

WHEN we read such pointed addresses as these to the conscience, it becomes us not to be contented with considering whom they were immediately addressed to. What will it avail you and me barely to read that there were a great number of wicked people in the times of the prophet Jeremiah ? What immediate use will it be to us to be told that the judgments of God were threatened against them, and that those judgments were executed upon them, unless we consider this threatening as applicable to ourselves ? We ought to conceive that all such language is expressive of the indignation of God against all unrighteousness, and, consequently, against our unrighteousness. I do not take upon me to say that those whom I now address are in all points like unto the people who are here addressed ; probably there is great diversity of character not only between individuals of the same age, but between those of different ages and circumstances, yet I am persuaded there is likeness enough to afford a ground for inquiry. I am persuaded that I need not go so far back as the days of Jeremiah to find such a thing as wickedness ; that I need not go three thousand years back in order to find characters who are guilty of backsliding from God : no, the word is nigh to us, and the objects which it describes are nigh us. We ourselves are parties herein deeply interested.

The terms wickedness and backsliding, perhaps, are not exactly of the same meaning : wickedness seems to comprehend rather more than backsliding ; it seems to be a stronger term : all backsliding is wickedness, but all wickedness is not backsliding : backsliding supposes, at least, the profession of religion ; wickedness does not necessarily suppose this : backsliding is never attributed but to those who were in the ways of God either in reality or else by profession ; that was the case with the Israelites as a nation. But that sentiment which has principally struck my mind is the manner or method that God takes in order to punish wickedness, and in order to punish backsliding. It is here said, "thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee." It is not said, thine own wickedness shall be corrected, thine own backslidings shall be reproved, or that they shall be removed on those accounts ; but it is intimated that their very

wickedness should prove its own punishment, that their backsliding should become the means of its own correction. This I think is the sentiment taught us in the passage, and it is upon this and this only that I mean to dwell, that God in the punishment of sin frequently so orders it that we should see our sin in its punishment. I think if we take a review of the dealings of God with men, both good and bad men, we shall find this idea abundantly substantiated.

#### I. LET US REVIEW THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH GOOD MEN.

1. I may observe, in the first place, that if our backslidings consist in a neglect of secret devotion, God will usually punish them by withholding his blessing from all other means of grace. It is often the case, I believe, that backslidings originate in a neglect of private duties. It is rarely known, I believe, that persons fall into foul misconduct at once; there is generally a gradual progress in this business: first, the heart begins a little to be alienated, the thoughts turn and fix upon worldly objects, delight in conversing with God ceases, the closet ceases to be a privilege and resort in the hour of distress, it becomes rather a dreaded place—a place that we begin to shun, or, if we frequent it, we are driven there rather by the reproaches of conscience than by the desires of the heart. When closet duty is, thus neglected, and we cultivate scarcely any other religion than that which is before the eyes of men, God will then cause this sin to become its own punishment; that is we shall lose by it, we shall be destitute of the pleasures of religion. A great and good man used to say, “a little religion is just enough to make a man miserable, a good deal will make him happy.” A little religion is just enough to keep conscience uneasy, just enough to disturb and embitter all those pleasures which others indulge in without remorse, just enough to make you hang your head like a bulrush: now this is the punishment that attends a neglect of a closet walk with God. It is in this way that God causes our wickedness to correct us, and our backsliding to reprove us. We go lean from day to day, and that not only in the want of closet enjoyment, but, if we neglect dealing with God in secret, we shall not enjoy much from our public engagements: if a man only frequent public worship, but not his closet, God will withdraw his blessing from that public worship; you may sit and hear the Saviour presented, but you shall not be profited. You may go, but your heart may not be there, and you may find no profit; you may impute it to this or that; you may say it is owing to the preacher, or this, or the other, but say what you will you shall not profit, you shall not enjoy God, you shall not enjoy the pleasures of religion while you live in the neglect of close

converse with God in secret; for it is thus that thy wickedness shall correct—that thy backslidings shall reprove.

2. If our backslidings have consisted in the indulgence of secret sin of a positive kind, then we may expect that God will punish it by causing that that sin shall not long be kept secret. God in his providence frequently so orders it that he who can allow himself to sin in secret will not be able long to keep it secret; it shall be exposed in the eyes of the world: him that honoreth God he will honor, but he that despiseth him shall be lightly esteemed. If you care nothing about God's honor, or so little about it as to violate his will in secret, God will care but little about your honor. If you care only about your own reputation, and watch no part of your conduct but that which falls under the eye of man, God will presently so order it that you shall not preserve your reputation. David had sinned in this manner, and God punished him by making his sins public: “Thou hast done this thing in secret, but I will expose thee before the sun.” It is a very dangerous thing to play with secret sin, to indulge in abominations when we are behind the scene and away from the eyes of mortals: be sure of this, that God will find you out; his providence will bring secret sins to light; and that which was done in secret he will manifest upon the house-tops; and it is thus that thy backslidings will particularly look thee in the face and reprove thee. Iniquity of every species is a something that it is next to impossible always to hide. A man that falls into guilt feels greatly degraded; his conscience tells him I am guilty, I am degraded, and every one that meets me will slay me, every one that meets me knows it. Oh, it is a difficult thing to hide what is within! God thus will surely bring it out, and thus cause our iniquities to reprove us. The slander of the tongue is a method the Divine Being sometimes uses, and we may remark in some of his dispensations that he will permit reproach to be poured upon us, and that beyond the degree of our desert. We find that David was reproached with being a bloody man: this was not true in the sense that Shimei meant, viz. that he had been a bloody man to the house of Saul; it was the language of reproach: but then it was true in a sense in which Shimei did not feel it—he had been a bloody man in the affair of Uriah; this was it that cut David to the very soul. “Go on thou bloody man,” says Shimei.—Abishai said unto the king, “let me take off his head; why should this dead dog reproach my lord the king?” no, says David, let him alone. God said curse David: it is the message of God—what he says is a lie in the sense to which he meant it, but it is true in another sense—I am a bloody man; God has thus permitted the very en-

emy to reproach me. It is thus that God caused David's wickedness to correct him, and his backslidings to reprove him.

If our backslidings consist in idolizing created good, in making that of it which it ought not to be, or putting it in the place of God, then it is God's usual method to punish us either by taking away the idol from us, or by continuing it as a curse and a plague to us. When the heart is set inordinately upon any created good, so as that God is excluded from the supreme place in our affections, he frequently takes away the object, and thus perhaps we may sometimes account for the loss of some of our dearest friends—of our darling children: it may be they have occupied too high a place in our esteem and affection: it may be owing to them that God had but a small share in our affections. Well, the Lord has taken them away as being his rivals, and it is thus that we read our sin in our punishment: while the heart bleeds on account of the wound which is produced by rending the bone from bone and flesh from flesh, let us remember that this was our sin—to idolize this creature, and therefore God has caused a worm at the root of the gourd in order that it may fade and die. Sometimes he is pleased to continue the object to us, but to continue it as a curse and a plague, as a grievance to us, and this is much more awful and much more to be dreaded than the former. We have a remarkable example of this in the case of Lot. When he parted with his uncle Abraham he lifted up his eyes and beheld the plain of Sodom, and lo, it was a rich and a well-watered plain: indeed! and is there no other tract of the country, Lot, that can satisfy thy desires without pitching thy tent in that infamous country? Lot, are you not alarmed for your honor? are you not alarmed for your family, lest they learn the ways of the wicked Sodomites? What! a rich and well-watered plain, is all that Lot consults; he goes, he places his family in Sodom, and what is the consequence? God lets him have his rich and his well-watered plain. I suppose he accumulates wealth to a great amount there, and by and by the wrath of God is poured down from heaven upon the city. While he is there his righteous soul, it is true, is grieved for the filthy conversation of the wicked, but what has become of his family? what has become of his children? why, here are two or three of them married and settled in Sodom, and they have become so attached to the manners and customs of the Sodomites that when Lot went to warn them of the approaching destruction his words seemed an idle tale. I imagine they smiled and said, the old man is superannuated; they would not regard any thing he said. Well, this is one of the fruits of his attachment to this rich and well-watered plain; he has two or three of his children settled there

and they must fall in Sodom's overthrow. Well, there are two of his daughters remain single; he does somehow or other manage matters by the good hand of God so as to accomplish their escape. They are brought out of the city, and his wife along with him; but what are the consequences as to his wife? she has lived so long in Sodom that her heart is wedded to it, and she seems to have left it with such reluctance that she is ready to call her husband, I imagine, a thousand fools as they are going along, to think he should leave it, and she looks behind her, and her heart goes along with her eyes, and God smites her—turns her into a monument of divine vengeance; here is another fruit of his choice. Well, he has only his two daughters left; he takes them and flees to a little city: a little one will now serve Lot and his family: "is it not a little one?" Again, they are much reduced, and what follows? alas! the two daughters have learnt so much of the abominations of Gomorrah, that they cover their father's name with infamy, and cause him to go down to the grave with shame. Here are the fruits of a sinful choice, of a man's choosing to settle in the world merely for the sake of wealth, without considering any thing about God and religion. What a striking example does it afford us of the method of the divine procedure—to give us our choice, but to render that choice its own punishment! thus our wickedness shall correct us, our backslidings shall reprove us.

4. If our backslidings have consisted in unfaithfulness towards one another, God will oftentimes punish this sin by so ordering it that others shall be unfaithful to us in return. If men deal treacherously with others, by and by others shall deal treacherously with them. You recollect it was thus in the case of Jacob. Jacob dealt unfaithfully with his brother Esau, and with his father Isaac, and how was he punished? many years after he was imposed upon by his uncle Laban, in a manner that proved a trial to him all his future life. Could Jacob help reading his sin in his punishment?

5. If our backslidings have consisted in undutifulness to parents, God will oftentimes punish this sin by causing our children to be undutiful and cruel to us. See that young person who will treat his aged parent with cruelty and neglect—only suppose that he lives to be an aged man, and you may see how he shall be treated in return by his own posterity. I have heard of a cruel, unfeeling son, whom providence had smiled upon and blessed with worldly affluence; he had a poor aged father who was reduced to necessities in his old age—he took him into his house, but he treated him as a brute. One day the poor old man, it seems, had offended this cruel son: he called one of his own children, a little boy of about eight or



nine years old, to him, and gave him a blanket and bid him go and give it to the old man, his grandfather, and turn him out of doors, and tell him he should never enter his doors again;—the little boy took the garment and cut it in two;—the father, astonished at this, required the reason:—"Father," says he, "I have cut it in pieces in order to give one to my grandfather and to keep the other to turn you out of doors with when you are old:"—the keenness of the remark, it is said, had its effect.

6. Our backslidings may have consisted in a neglect of family government. Religious professors are often very loose in the exercise of family government. Well, if our backslidings have consisted in this, God will usually punish us by causing us to reap the fruits of it in the looseness of our children and those about us. Many a parent, by neglecting the proper government of his family, has seen such sins in his children as have brought them to infamy before his own eyes, and when a parent in old age comes to see his posterity covered with shame, with misery, and with infamy, what must be his reflections! What must have been the sensations of Eli when he saw the wickedness of his children, and heard of their awful end!

7. Once more, if our backslidings have consisted in setting ill examples before our domestics, we may expect that God will punish us by suffering our children to follow these examples. Many a parent (some cases have fallen under my own observation) has set shocking examples before his children; he has walked vainly and loosely, nevertheless he has not intended that they should follow his example; he has endeavored by his authority to prevent their doing so; but it shall not be so long;—set you but an ill example in your house, and God will probably suffer your children to follow that example as a punishment in part to you. What very awful events of this sort there were in the family of David! he set an example of murder and uncleanness, and what followed?—the first news that you hear in his family is, Tamar is ravished; and then as a revenge for it Amnon is slain by his brother Absalom. How soon do we hear of one iniquity upon the back of another!—bloody business goes on in David's family—the sword shall not depart from his house.—That was the way in which God would punish him.

II. OBSERVE THE SENTIMENT EXEMPLIFIED IN THE DEALINGS OF GOD WITH THE WICKED.—There is one description of ungodly persons whose hearts are set upon the gratification of their appetites and passions. Young man, you have had a religious education—your father has taught you to read the word of God—he has a thousand times prayed for you, and a thousand tears have

been shed over you, and a thousand remonstrances delivered before you, but all without effect—your heart is hardened—you are weary of reproof—you wish in your heart either that the old man was dead, or that you were out of the family, so as that you might have your full swing and go on without remorse. You are tired of this round and round of religion in the family—you hate to hear so much of praying morning and evening—you hate to hear the Bible read—you hate to hear those reproaches rung in your ears—you wish they would but let you alone. Not only this, but these remonstrances have kept your conscience rather awake—you cannot sin so cheaply as many other wicked people do—you plunge yourself into wicked company, but when you get alone there is something will rise within you in spite of yourself, and you cannot go on with that ease and repose which others do. Well, thus your heart fretteth against the Lord—thus you want to be freed from conviction. Now, how may you expect that the Almighty will punish you? probably by giving you your wish—by letting you have your way. Well, young man, you shall be troubled not much longer with these remonstrances. God will take that pious parent out of your way. Hitherto God has been hedging up your way, and building walls as it were to keep you from plunging into hell; these have been a grievous eye-sore to you, and you want to have them removed. Very well, God will probably remove them out of your way—he will take away your godly parents; and since you want to get rid of this remorse, these convictions, and uneasiness God will give you up to hardness of heart—as you have loved strangers, you shall go after them—as you have chosen delusion, God will choose also your delusion, and let you have your course. And as you have been hitherto, perhaps, used to sit under a faithful ministry, a ministry that has come home to your conscience, and you cannot sit at quiet, God perhaps will permit you to have one after your own heart—one that will please your ears and never disturb your conscience, and then you may take your course. If there be an awful way of punishing sin, it is surely this—this, indeed, is for our own wickedness to correct us—this is for our backslidings to reprove us.

Again, I might mention another case, the case of those who have an inward dislike to the gospel. There are many persons who have a secret hatred to the humiliating doctrines of the gospel, and to those searching plain truths that come home to the conscience, and therefore they find some false system of religion—some system or other that is more adapted to the flesh. Now, if this be the case with any one, let him expect that God will cause his sin to become its own punishment. You may expect that,

seeing you delight not in the truth, God will give you up to a reprobate mind, that you "may believe a lie and be damned:" so the Scriptures speak, because "they believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness," therefore God will give a man up; seeing he chooses some flesh-pleasing system—something that will lie easier upon his mind, he shall follow his inclinations, and the consequences are generally fatal.

We may further observe that the same principle will be found exemplified at death and judgment as well as in the present world. If we be found wicked in the sight of God at the last day, we shall find that there will be something in the nature of the punishment, or of the doom denounced, that will of necessity call to our remembrance the nature of our sin: witness this, when the sinner, with frantic despair, stands calling at heaven's gates, "Lord, Lord, open unto us!" God will say, "I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hand, and no one regarded it; therefore will I laugh at your calamity," I will mock now your fear is come: and, when that awful sound "depart" shall ring in the ears, must it not, think you, call to remembrance the language of a sinner in the world? Have you not been saying all your life, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways—depart from me thou faithful minister—depart from me thou irksome and disagreeable reprovor—depart from me thou faithful friend, and let me have a friend that will merely soothe my passions and flatter my vices—depart from me godly and serious parents—depart from me all thoughts of God and heaven?" Has not this been the language of thy heart? and now when the Lord comes at last to address thee, "depart from me;" oh what a sound will this have! what ideas will this revive? Thus it is that thine own wickedness shall correct thee. Nay, I might add, in that dreadful world of woe the essence of misery will consist in recollection. Could memory but be obliterated from the soul, the flames of hell would become extinct; but then busy memory, clear memory, cruel memory will harrow up the feelings—will recal past events and place them before the mind; nor shall we be able to efface the thought, nor give attention to any other object; but the remembrance of the past will thus prey upon the soul forever;—this will be the worm that dieth not—this will constitute the fire that will not be quenched. It is thus that our wickedness must in the end reprove us, and our backslidings correct us.

But I close: if things be thus, how dreadful a thing is sin in all its operations! Every one of us that indulges in it is only kindling a fire with which to burn himself; he that indulges in it is but whetting a sword to plunge into his own soul; and, I may add,

what reason have we to bless God that our iniquity has not more reprov'd us than it has; that our backslidings have been no more! If we review our life we must remember many periods in it in which we were upon the point of some awful fall; we cannot but remember how we have walked near the precipice, and how divine Providence has preserved us from falling: how God has either by giving us timely repentance for our sins brought us back to himself, or by his providence has prevented iniquities we designed. Who is there but must cover his face with shame, and reckon it a wonder that he is not this day marked among the fools in the gospel? But beware, beware, of sinful indulgence of any sort, or in any degree; for be sure of this, that the Almighty will find you out; and let it be your concern and mine to cleanse our hands and to repair to the blood of Calvary, that we may be cleansed from all our backslidings and all our wickedness—there is no other radical cure, but to return to the Lord with contrition, and to repair to the blood of the cross that we may obtain remission. It is this and this only that will effect a cure.

#### THE VISION OF DRY BONES.

(Ezek. xxxvii. 1—14.)

LET us suppose ourselves walking over an extensive plain, where many years ago a great battle was fought, in which vast numbers were slain, and, being buried in heaps but a little below the surface, their bodies are now disunited, dried up, and many of them scattered over the surface of the country; such I imagine to be the imagery of this prophecy. As to its meaning, we are at no loss, since it is expressly applied to "the house of Israel," and doubtless describes their low and scattered condition, together with their restoration, which should be to them as a resurrection from the dead.

But to what restoration does the prophecy refer? It must be either to that of Judea from Babylon or to that of all the tribes in the latter days. Some very good expositors, I allow, have applied it to the former; but the following reasons induce me to understand it of the latter. 1. What is here predicted respects "the whole house of Israel," ver. 16—23; but the restoration from Babylon chiefly respected those who were carried captive into Babylon, namely Judah and Benjamin, and the Levites. 2. It was to be an "exceedingly great army," ver. 10: but they that returned from Babylon were about forty and two thousand (Ezra ii. 64); a number that could not answer to this description. 3. The general scope of the prophecy, as it draws towards the close, refers to the times of the Messiah. The "temple," the "holy



waters," and the "city," whose name should be called "Jehovah Shammah," *the Lord is there*, cannot be literally understood, and must therefore refer to the glory of the church in the latter days. 4. There are some passages in this chapter which appear to be inapplicable to any times but those of the Messiah: such are those in ver. 24, 25, where David was to be their king, and their shepherd; compare this language with that in Hosea iii. 7. 2. The restoration here predicted was to remain forever, ver. 25—28. This language, if applied to the few centuries between the restoration from Babylon and the dispersion by the Romans, must be hyperbolical in the extreme. I conclude, therefore, that the restoration here predicted is yet to come, and that it refers to what is foretold in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where the receiving of Israel into the church is said to be "life from the dead."

Considering this point, then, as settled, I shall only offer a few remarks on the leading ideas suggested by the prophecy concerning "the house of Israel," viz. on its former glory—its present low and scattered condition—its future prospects—and the gradual methods by which the change will be effected.

First: The prophecy implies that the house of Israel, though now in a scattered and forlorn condition, was once otherwise. A contemplative mind would see a number of dry bones scattered over a plain, a once living army; and such must be our reflection concerning the house of Israel. The history of this nation is deeply engraven on our minds. The names of their ancestors are dear to us. In the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, and the prophets, we see not only models of holy beauty, but patterns of faith. In them we recognize the principles which animated our apostles and martyrs. Those all died in faith of the Messiah to come; these of the Messiah as already come: the Messiah in whom each believed must have been the same, or their spirit and conduct would not have been so. How lovely do this people appear as the worshippers of the true God at a time when all the nations of the world were gone after their idols! Even an enemy was constrained to exclaim, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel! From the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations!" We admire Athens for its science, and Rome for its power and splendor; but what are they to Zion? "In Judah God was known!" The remembrance of ancient Zion still excites tears of affection and grief.

Secondly: Let us notice the *present* condition of this once highly-favored nation.

They who were once as an army going forth to battle are now a number of dry bones; so dry that, to an eye of sense, there is no hope of their being ever revived. Long have they ceased to be a political body: they are indeed preserved as a distinct people, while all the other nations of antiquity are lost in one undistinguished mass; and this indicates a special providence over them for future purposes; but as to their condition at present, it is that of scattered individuals over the face of the earth. A political existence they have not, nor any thing scarcely deserving the name of religion. They are, in fact, what was foretold by the prophet Hosea, "Without a king, without a prince, without a sacrifice, without an image, without an ephod, and without teraphim." Not only are they without their own appropriate worship, but without the resemblance of it. Where are we to look for such holy men of God among them as were found amongst their forefathers? Where are the symptoms of Jehovah being amongst them? There is scarcely the mantle, much less the Lord God of Elijah! Where are the symptoms of brotherly love? There appears to be no bond amongst them, but that of hatred of Jesus. If to an eye of sense there be no hope of their being restored to political life, the case is more hopeless as to the *spiritual* life. No people upon earth have lived among Christians to so little purpose. The negroes from Africa, though injured and enslaved by men calling themselves Christians, have no such inveterate antipathy to Christ as the Jews. If serious Christians, who carry it kindly to them, recommend their Saviour to them, it is not unfrequently with success; but it is rarely known so with the other, who appear to be given up to blindness of mind, and hardness of heart. Other sinners make light of serious religion; but they are full of bitterness against it. Others are wicked; yet we can come at their consciences; but their very mind and conscience is defiled. Other sinners are dry bones; but, lo, these are *very dry!*

Thirdly: Let us consider the *future prospects* of this people. These bones, scattered and dry as they are, and without any hope from ordinary causes, yet, by the power and grace of God, can, and shall live. "O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. And ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then shall ye know that I Jehovah have spoken it, and performed it, saith Jehovah.—And I will make them one nation in the land: upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be



king to them all, and David, my servant, shall be king over them, and they all shall have one shepherd." On this part of the subject, as being yet unfulfilled, it certainly becomes us to speak with diffidence: but surely it cannot denote *less* than that the house of Israel shall be restored to their own land, united as a nation, and turned to the Lord. With this accords the prophecy in the twelfth chapter of Zechariah, where, *after the restoration from Babylon*, it is declared that "Jerusalem should yet again be inhabited in her own place, even in Jerusalem. And, what is more, that the Lord would "pour upon its inhabitants the spirit of grace and of supplications, and that they should look upon him whom they had pierced and should mourn as one mourneth for an only son, and be in bitterness as one that is in bitterness for his first-born!"

As to the order in which these great changes will be accomplished, it would seem by these prophecies as if the gathering of the people together would precede the pouring out of the Spirit upon them. There are other passages of Scripture, however, in which restoration is promised on their repentance.—Deut. xxx. 1, 16. 1 Kings viii. 47.

But both these accounts may be fulfilled: some, though perhaps not the greater part, may return to their own land as they did from Babylon, "Going and weeping and seeking the Lord their God," Jer. i. 4; and God may graciously reckon them as the first fruits of the whole nation, and restore them in answer to their prayers; and, when they shall have arrived from the four quarters of the earth, a still greater measure of the spirit of grace and supplication may be poured upon them. If this, or something like it, should be the case, it certainly furnishes a strong inducement both to the Jews themselves to repent and turn to the Lord, that they may not only escape that wrath which came upon their fathers to the utmost, and still lies upon them, but be among the first-fruits of their nation, for whose sake God will restore it, and to those who are seeking to turn them, that they may contribute to the work.

Lastly, let us observe the gradual methods by which the great change will be effected: "And he said unto me, Prophecy upon these dry bones, and say unto them, O, ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord: thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, I will lay sinews upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded, and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them

above, but there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy son of man, and say unto the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." It appears from hence that many things will be done for this people preparatory to their general conversion to Christ; which, in themselves, may be no more than the sinews, the flesh, and the skin of the human body, but which are no less necessary than the breath of life. If all that should be done, or is doing at present, should be only in this preparatory way, still, if it be a part of the divine process, it is not to be despised. And though the breath of life may not as yet be breathed, so as to produce a general conversion, yet there may be instances of it sufficient for present encouragement. Paul certainly did not expect a general conversion in his day, but merely a few who should be as the first-fruits to the lump; yet he labored if by any means he might save some. Only let us do what we do with simplicity of heart, seeking not our own glory, but their salvation, and, whether we succeed little or much, we shall obtain the approbation of God.

#### ON THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST.

THEOLOGICALS have said much about grace and justice; yet but few have defined these terms with sufficient accuracy to render them intelligible and consistent. Hence it has been asked, If Christ paid the debt for sinners—if he gave himself a ransom, and purchased them with his blood—how can they be said to be pardoned or delivered by grace? If an equivalent price be paid for their redemption, may they not on the ground of justice demand salvation? How can those be subjects of forgiveness who owe nothing? If Christ has paid the debt, will it not be injustice to exact it again of the sinner? By all this it should seem that Christ rendered such a satisfaction to justice as inferred an obligation on justice itself for the deliverance of sinners; and their deliverance by virtue of the atonement is not now to be considered as an act of pure grace. But the Scriptures insist on a full atonement, and yet every where hold up the deliverance of sinners as an act of mere grace. How then are these terms to be understood consistently with each other?

By *grace* we are to understand the exercise of free favor, and consequently the bestowment of good where evil is deserved and may in justice be inflicted. Where there is no exposure to evil there is no room for the exercise of grace. He who is not guilty is not a subject of pardon: he who

does not deserve punishment cannot be said to be freed from it by an act of favor. Grace, therefore, always implies that the subject of it is unworthy; and that he would have no reason to complain if all the evil to which he is exposed were inflicted on him. Grace and justice are opposite, and their provinces entirely distinct: grace gives, but justice demands. Though they are united, yet they are not confounded in man's salvation.—Rom. xi. 6.

Justice assumes three denominations—commutative, distributive, and public. *Commutative* justice respects property only. It consists in an equal exchange of benefits, or in restoring to every man his own. *Distributive* justice respects the moral character of men; it regards them as accountable beings, whether obedient or disobedient: it consists in ascertaining their virtue or sin, and in bestowing rewards or inflicting punishments. *Public* justice respects what is right as to the character of God and the good of the universe.

In this sense justice comprises all moral goodness, and properly means the righteousness or rectitude of God, by which all his actions are guided with a supreme regard to the greatest good. Justice, considered in this view, forbids that any thing should take place, in the great plan of God, which would tarnish his glory or subvert the authority of his law.

In what sense then did Christ, by his substitutionary sufferings, render satisfaction to divine justice?

1. Did he satisfy *commutative* justice?—Commutative justice had no concern in his sufferings; men had taken no property from God, and consequently were under no obligation to restore any. But, it will be said, do not the Scriptures represent Christ as giving himself a ransom, and as having bought us with a price. They do: they also represent men, while under the influence of sin, as prisoners, slaves, captives. These expressions are all figurative, borrowed from things sensible, to represent those which are spiritual, and therefore cannot be explained as if literally true. If we have any consistent meaning in the use of such terms, it must be this—that in consequence of what Christ has done we are delivered from sin, in as great a consistency with justice as a debtor is delivered from his obligation, or the demands of law, when the debt is paid; that is, God extends pardon in such a way, through Christ, that he does not injure the authority of his law, but supports it as effectually as if he inflicted punishment.

2. Did Christ satisfy *distributive* justice? Certainly not: distributive justice respects personal character only. It condemns men because they are sinners, and rewards them

because they are righteous; their good or ill desert is the only ground on which moral justice respects them. But good and ill desert are personal: they imply consciousness of praise or blame, and cannot be transferred or altered so as to render the subjects of them more or less worthy. What Christ did, therefore, did not take ill desert from men; nor did it place them in such a situation that God would act unjustly to punish them according to their deeds. If a man have sinned, it will always remain a truth that he has sinned; and that, according to distributive justice, he deserves punishment.

3. Did Christ satisfy *public* justice? Undoubtedly he did. His sufferings rendered it fit and right, with respect to God's character and the good of the universe, to forgive sin. The atonement made by Christ represented the law, the nature of sin, and the displeasure of God against it in such a light that no injury could accrue to the moral system; no imputation would lie against the righteousness of the Legislator, though he should forgive the sinner, and instate him in eternal felicity. Perfect justice is therefore done to the universe, though all transgressors be not punished according to their personal demerit. The death of Christ, therefore, is to be considered as a great, important, and public transaction respecting God and the whole system of rational beings. Public justice requires that neither any of these be injured, nor the character and government of the great Legislator disrespected, by the pardon of any. In these respects public justice is perfectly satisfied by the death of Christ. Rom. iii. 21, 25, 26; x. 4. 1 John i. 9. Isai. xlv. 21.

Hence it follows—1. That atonement, and consequently the pardon of sin, have no respect to commutative justice. 2. That the sufferings of Christ did not satisfy distributive justice, since that respects character only; and therefore, with respect to distributive justice, salvation is an act of *perfect grace*. 3. That Christ's sufferings satisfied public justice; and therefore, with respect to public justice, salvation is an act of *perfect justice*. It will appear from hence that any scheme of salvation which represents Christ as suffering on the ground of distributive justice is quite erroneous; for, if justice could demand his sufferings, he was treated according to his own personal character; and of consequence his sufferings had no more merit than those of a transgressor. If these were just, *in the same sense* as the sufferings of the sinner would be just, then he endured no more than he ought to endure. His death, therefore, on this plan, made no atonement for sin. Besides, to represent Christ's sufferings to be the same as those of his people, is to destroy all grace in salvation; for, if in him they

have endured all to which they were exposed, from what are they delivered? and in what respect are they forgiven?

Further: If the sufferings of Christ had respect to public justice only, as the above statement supposes, then nothing can with certainty be inferred from thence as to the number that shall be finally saved. The salvation of the elect is secured and their condemnation rendered impossible by other considerations: but if the Scriptures had given us no further light on this subject than what we derive from the sufferings of Christ, whether we consider them for a part, or for all mankind, we should have been wholly in the dark as to the final issue of those sufferings. As their nature and design were to render the pardon of sin consistent, it appears that the atonement is as *sufficient* for the salvation of millions of worlds as of an individual sinner: for whatever would render one act of pardon of sin consistent, simply as the exercise of mercy, would render another consistent, and so on *ad infinitum*. The number of instances in which atonement will be applied, and pardon granted through that medium, will depend wholly on the *sovereign purpose and determination of God*.

#### CREDULITY AND DISINGENUITY OF UNBELIEF.

AN old man who travelled the country as a philosophical lecturer was one evening entertaining his audience, which consisted chiefly of young people, by attempting to account for that famous pile of stones near Salisbury, commonly called Stonehenge. He supposed it might have been a temple: whether Saxon, Roman, or British, he did not say. Indeed his ideas seem to have gone far beyond every period of history with which we are acquainted. The principal thing on which he insisted was its being used for viewing the heavenly bodies; and from this part of his hypothesis he drew some very singular conclusions. The structure, he supposed, originally faced the south; but that the points themselves, in a great number of years, change their positions; and, as Stonehenge did not now face the south, he concluded it was owing to this cause, and that from hence we might calculate how long it had been erected. By the mode of calculation which he adopted, it was easy to perceive that in his account it must have existed 270,000 years! It is true, he did not proceed so far as to draw the conclusion, as that might have excited prejudices against what he had farther to advance; but the thing itself was plainly understood by the company.

In his course of lectures he also made mention of some very ancient writings, found in the Shanscrit language, and brought to light by Sir William Jones, in which mention was made of *this country*, as a kind of sacred place, to which pilgrimages were made in those very early ages; and, if I am accurate in my recollection, he supposed Stonehenge might be a place of such resort.

Lately, looking into Vol. III. of the Asiatic Dissertations, I found something which reminded me of the old lecturer's assertion. It was in a dissertation of Lieut. Wilford's, "On Egypt and the Nile, from the ancient books of the Hindoos." I here found that the Puranas, or historic poems of the Hindoos, made mention of "the sacred western islands," as a place to which pilgrims in those early ages had been used to resort. "Many brahmans indeed assert," adds Lieut. Wilford, "that a great intercourse anciently subsisted between India and countries in the west; and, as far as I have examined their sacred books, to which they appeal as their evidence, I strongly incline to believe their assertion."

Thus far the supposition of our philosopher seems to be confirmed. The reader may suppose that I now felt a desire to ascertain, if possible, the *antiquity* of the Puranas. Surely, thought I, they are not 270,000 years old! On inquiry, I soon perceived that they must have been written *since* the time of the flood, by the manifest reference which they make to Noah and his three sons. The following translation by Sir William Jones, and which he declares to be minutely exact, though in the hands of the readers of the Asiatic Dissertations, may be new to many others, and will serve to show that Indian literature, instead of weakening the authority of Scripture, tends rather to confirm it.

#### *From the Padma Puran.*

"To *Satyavarma*, that sovereign of the whole earth, were born three sons: the eldest *Sherma*, then *C'harma*, and thirdly *Jyapeti* by name. They were all men of good morals, excellent in virtue and virtuous deeds; skilled in the use of weapons to strike with, or to be thrown; brave men, eager for victory in battle. But *Satyavarma* being continually delighted with devout meditation, and seeing his sons fit for dominion, laid upon them the burden of government. Whilst he remained honoring and satisfying the gods, and priests, and kine, one day, by the act of destiny, the king having drunk mead became senseless, and lay asleep naked. Then was he seen by *C'harma*, and by him were his two brothers called—To whom he said: What has now befallen? In what state is this our



sire? By those two was he hidden with clothes, and called to his senses again and again.

"Having recovered his intellect, and perfectly knowing what had passed, he cursed *Charma*, saying, Thou shalt be the servant of servants. And, since thou wast a laugh-er in their presence, from laughter shalt thou acquire a name.\* Then he gave to *Sherma* the wide domain on the south of the snowy mountains. And to *Jyapeti* he gave all the north of the snowy mountains; but he by the power of religious contemplation attained supreme bliss."†

I will only add a part of the eulogium on the life and writings of Sir William Jones, by the Right Hon. Lord Toignmouth, in his address to the Asiatic Society.

"He professed his conviction of the truth of the Christian religion, and justly deemed it no inconsiderable advantage that his researches had corroborated the multiplied evidences of revelation, by confirming the Mosaic account of the primitive world. We all recollect, and can refer to the following sentiments in his eighth anniversary discourse:—'Theological inquiries are no part of my present subjects; but I cannot refrain from adding that the collection of tracts which we call, from their excellence, the Scriptures, contain, independently of a divine origin, more true sublimity, more important history, and finer strains both of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected within the same compass from all other books that were ever composed in any age, or in any language. The two parts of which the Scriptures consist are connected by a chain of compositions which bear no resemblance in form or style to any that can be produced from the stores of Grecian, Italian, Persian, or even Arabic learning. The antiquity of those compositions no man doubts, and the unrestrained application of them to events long subsequent to their publication is a solid ground of belief that they were genuine predictions, and consequently inspired.'"

The old lecturer's desire of introducing the Asiatic Researches, in a way unfriendly to the Scriptures, reminds us of the wish of a certain jealous king, and of his dealings with "the wise men of the east" in order to obtain it. The wise men of the east, it seems, are not to be drawn into such measures. Their business is to do homage to the *Mes-siah*, and not to join with his murderers.

\* They say he was nicknamed *Hasyasila*, or the Laughter; and his descendants were called, from him, *Hacyasilas*. By the descendants of *Charma*, they understood, says Lieut. Wilford, the *African Negroes*.—Asiatic Diss. Vol. III. pp. 90, 91.

† Asiatic Dissertations, Vol. III. p. 262.

ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GLASGOW MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

[A letter to Mr. H. Muir, Glasgow.]

Dear Sir,

I greatly rejoice in the establishment of your society. If many were formed there would be no need of any apology to those which are formed already. There is work enough for us all. The harvest truly is great, and I heartily wish you success.

If the exertions of our society have contributed to excite the public spirit which now prevails through the kingdom, it is no small reward. We have found the undertaking particularly useful in uniting and quickening us in religion; and I trust it will produce similar effects among Christians in general. Where no object of magnitude attracts our regard, we are apt to pore on our own miseries; and, where nothing exists as an object in which we may all unite, we are apt to turn our attention chiefly to those things in which we differ. It is well for ourselves, therefore, to be engaged in some arduous undertaking which shall interest our hearts, bring us into contact with one another, and cause us to feel that we are brethren.

As to your questions, our experience you know is but small. It is little more than three years since we began, and only two missions have yet been undertaken; what I have observed, however, I shall with the utmost freedom communicate. You ask—

First, "What are the requisite talents and character of a missionary?" As to *talents*, there is a considerable difference to be made betwixt a principal and an assistant in any mission. In every mission I conceive there should be one person at least of a clear head, calm, cool, enterprising, prudent, and persevering; and, as it will be an object of the first importance in due time to translate the Scriptures, it would be well for him to have some knowledge of languages. But, as to others who may accompany him, no great talents are necessary: a warm heart for Christ, an ardent love to the souls of poor heathens, an upright character, and a decent share of common sense, are sufficient. No man is fit to be sent, in my judgment, either as a principal or an assistant, who does not possess a peculiar desire after the work; such a desire as would render him unhappy in any other employment. I do not mean to plead for enthusiastical impressions; yet an impression there must be, and an abiding one too, that all the fatigues, disappointments, non-success, and discouragements of such an undertaking shall not be able to efface. When God has had any extraordinary work to perform, it has been his prac-

tice to raise up suitable instruments, and to impress their minds with suitable views and desires. The wall of Jerusalem needed rebuilding, and God put it into the heart of Nehemiah to go and build it. It was this particular desire which God put into his heart which enabled him to encounter difficulties and surmount obstructions at which ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have fainted. When the second temple was to be built, God stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel and of Joshua. It is not every person however who may possess a desire to be a missionary who ought to be accepted. You will probably find many during this great stir who will offer themselves to go, but whose desire upon examination will be found to have originated in a dissatisfaction with something at home. They dislike the politics of their country, and therefore wish to leave it; or they have been chagrined by disappointment in civil and worldly affairs; or they are vain, and conceive it to be a fine thing to attract the attention and bear a commission from thousands; or they are idle, and wish to ramble up and down the world; or inconsiderate, and have not properly counted the cost. Even ministers will be found who are unacceptable at home, and therefore desire to change their situation. But none of these motives will bear. It is true, every one who was discontented, distressed, or in debt, gathered themselves to David; and they might answer his purpose, but not ours. A pure, disinterested, ardent desire to serve the Lord in this work is the one thing needful. When we perceive such desire in a candidate, and he voluntarily offers, or in some way discovers his inclination, we then make inquiry what is his general Christian character. Is he upright, modest, benevolent, prudent, patient? if so, we are satisfied.—You ask—

Secondly: "What is the best mode of introducing him and the subject of his mission to the heathen?"

We at present think it best not to send them in large *companies*, but *two and two*, unless they have wives and children, who, of course, would go with them; partly because we wish to make no *parade*, but to go on in a course of silent activity, that in case of disappointments and disasters, which we ought to lay our account with, the work may not sink in the general estimation; and partly because we wish them to be convinced at the outset that we have no hostile intentions between them; and this cannot be done so effectually as by going and throwing ourselves upon their generosity. A large company might excite alarm; but two or three people going into the midst of them, putting their lives into their hand, would ordinarily have a contrary effect. The extent of the British trade is such that we cannot fail of a passage, by merchant ships, to almost any

part of the world. Carey and Thomas, and their families, kept up worship in the ship, though surrounded with infidels and profane people; and an infidel who went with them, and is since returned, has said, "If ever there was a good man in the world, *Carey* was one." As to the mode of introducing the subject of their mission, that must be according to circumstances. In Hindostan they have an advantage in Mr. Thomas having been first. His method was to go into a town or village. The sight of a European, walking up and down, would excite as much attention among them as a Turk would among us. He would single out some intelligent looking person, and begin to ask him questions. This would draw others round them; he would then, having the whole village of 400 or 500 people, talk to them, ask them questions, show the evil of idolatry, convict them of sin, and introduce the Saviour. In Africa, all round the Sierra Leone colony, the natives want English people to teach their children to read, write, &c. We therefore direct our missionaries to that country to go to the colony, and get recommended to the natives, first as school-master; and while they taught the children to read, write, &c., to teach the parents, as well as the children, Christianity.

Were I to go into a country where no Europeans were to be found, I would go immediately among the natives, and, by signs, convince them that I wished to cast in my lot with them. I would watch the names they gave to things, and write them down as they occurred. Thus a vocabulary would rapidly advance: while thus learning their language, I would live as they lived, and conform to their manners in all lawful things: when they revelled, or sacrificed to their idols, I would stand aloof, and, by my non-conformity, silently reprove them. When I sufficiently understood their language, I would tell them there was a God in heaven—that I was a worshipper and servant of him—that idolatry, and all iniquity, was hateful in his sight—that there was an hereafter, when these things, would be brought into account—that, from the love I bore to him and them, I had come amongst them to tell them of these things—that God, in love to sinners, had sent his Son to die, &c., and now commanded all men, every where, to repent; that he was able and willing to save all that returned to God by him; and that all others would everlastingly perish, &c.

And now, dear sir, I must conclude. As I am going out to-morrow, for some days, I thought I would answer your letter now, and that of your friend when it arrives. Whether my answer be in point, so as to meet your difficulties, I cannot tell; but I have suggested what appeared best to me.

Remember me affectionately to your Society. I shall be happy at any time to hear from you, and to communicate any thing in



my power. I lately received a letter and a handsome donation from a Mr. David Dale of your city. Remember me affectionately to him. I am, dear sir, with cordial esteem, yours in our common Lord. A. P.

## IMPORTANCE OF A LIVELY FAITH,

Especially in Missionary undertakings.

[Written in 1799.]

I HAVE been a good deal impressed with a persuasion that in our missionary undertakings, both at home and abroad, we shall not be remarkably successful, unless we enter deeply into the spirit of the primitive Christians; particularly with respect to faith in the divine promises. I am apprehensive that we are all deficient in this grace, and therefore presume that a few hints on the subject may not be unseasonable.

When Israel went out of Egypt, they greatly rejoiced on the shores of the Red Sea; but the greater part of them entered not into the promised land, and that on account of their unbelief. The resemblance between their case and ours has struck my mind with considerable force. The grand *object* of their undertaking was to root out idolatry, and to establish the knowledge and worship of the one living and true God; and such also is ours. The *authority* on which they acted was the sovereign command of heaven: and ours is the same. "Go preach the gospel to every creature." The *ground* on which they were to rest their hope of success was the divine promise. It was by relying on this alone that they were enabled to surmount difficulties, and to encounter their gigantic enemies. Those among them who believed, like Joshua and Caleb, felt themselves well able to go up: but they that distrusted the promise turned their backs in the hour of danger. Such also is the ground of our hope. He who hath commissioned us to "teach all nations" hath added, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." The heathen nations are given to our Redeemer for an inheritance, as much as Canaan was given to the seed of Abraham; and it is our business, as it was theirs, to go up and possess the land. We should lay our account with difficulties as well as they; but, according to our faith in the divine promises, we may expect these mountains to become a plain. If the Lord delight in us, he will bring us into the land: but if, like the unbelieving Israelites, we make light of the promised good, or magnify the difficulties in the way of obtaining it, and so relax our efforts, we may expect to die as it were in the wilderness.

It is true, there are some differences between their case and ours; but they are

wholly in our favor. We are not, like them, going to possess countries for ourselves but for Christ. They went armed with the temporal sword, we with the sword of the Spirit; they were commissioned in justice to destroy men's lives, we in mercy to save their souls; they sought not them but theirs, we seek not theirs but them. Now, by how much our cause exceeds theirs in the magnitude and beneficence of its object, by so much the more shall we incur the frowns of Heaven, if we fail of accomplishing it through unbelief.

On a certain occasion "the disciples said unto the Lord, Increase our faith;" and it is worth while to consider what that occasion was.—Luke xvii. 3—6. There was a hard duty enjoined, to forgive lamented injuries, even though committed seven times in a day. The apostles very properly turn the injunction into a petition, praying for great grace to enable them to discharge so difficult a duty. They said unto the Lord, "Increase our faith." But why ask for an increase of faith? Possibly *we* might have said, Lord, increase our love, our self-denial, or our patience. Asking for an increase of faith was asking for an increase of every other grace; this being a kind of first wheel that sets the rest in motion. Our Lord's answer intimates that they had chosen a right petition; for faith, even in a small degree, will enable us to surmount great difficulties—difficulties the surmounting of which is as the removal of mountains. The passage, taken in its connection, teaches us *the efficacy of faith in discharging duties, and surmounting difficulties.*

Where there is no faith in the truths and promises of the gospel, there is no heart for duty: and, where it is very low and defective in its exercises, there is but little spiritual activity. If a good man be entangled in sceptical doubts respecting the truth of the gospel, or any of its leading doctrines, he will, during that time, be not only unhappy in his own mind, but of little use to others. He admits that God used in former ages to hear the prayers and succeed the labors of his servants, and that there will be times in which great things will again be wrought for the church. But of late, and especially in the present age, he imagines we are not to expect any thing remarkable. This is no other than a spice of that atheistical spirit which said, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth, he regardeth not man;" the effect of which is an indifference to every exercise and enterprise of a religious nature. Faith operates as a stimulus, unbelief as a palsy.

If faith in divine truths and promises be low, though we should be drawn in with others to engage in religious enterprises, yet we shall not follow them up with ardent prayer, or look for the blessing of God with that earnest expectation which generally



precedes the bestowment of it. Instead of forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we shall be in danger of resting satisfied in present attainments, and so of losing the things which we have wrought, for want of following up the work to which we have set our hands.

All the great things that have been wrought in the church of God have been accomplished by this principle. It was by *faith* that the worthies "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and put to flight the armies of the aliens." It was by *faith* that the apostles and primitive Christians went forth as sheep among wolves, and, at the expense of all that was dear to them on earth, carried the gospel into all nations. Wherever they went they were previously persuaded that they should go in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ: and it was so. God always caused them to triumph in Christ, and made manifest the savor of his knowledge by them in every place. Could we but imbibe this spirit, surely we should be able, in some good degree, to say so too. "Believe in the Lord our God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper."

But why is it that God should thus honor the exercise of faith? Is it not because faith is a grace that peculiarly honors him? We cannot do greater dishonor to a person of kind and generous intentions than by thinking very ill of him, and acting towards him on the ground of such evil thoughts. It was thus that the slothful servant thought and acted towards his lord. On the other hand, we cannot do greater honor to a character of the above description than by thinking well of him and placing the most unreserved confidence in all he says. Any man who had a just regard to honor would in such a case feel a strong inducement to answer the expectations which were entertained of him. And God himself hath condescended to intimate something like the same thing. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." In believing his word we think well of him, and he takes pleasure in answering such expectations; proving thereby that we have thought justly concerning him. It was on this principle that our Lord usually conferred the blessings of miraculous healing, in answer to the faith of the patient, or of those that accompanied him. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. According to your faith be it unto you."

## INFINITE EVIL OF SIN.

1. Is not the whole that is meant by the infinite evil of sin, that, on account of the Object against whom it is committed, it is so great an evil as to involve consequences without end?—2. Is not the whole that is meant by the infinite value of Christ's sufferings, that, on account of the dignity of the sufferer, they also involve in them consequences without end?—3. Is not the former of these questions consistent with different degrees of guilt, and consequently of punishment in the sinner; and the latter with a finite degree of suffering in the Saviour?—4. Does not the merit of obedience sink, and the demerit of disobedience rise, according to the excellency of the Object?

## THE LEPER.

[A Memorandum, June 30, 1798.]

WE sinners in this world are as lepers in a "several house." The great High Priest from above has deigned, and still deigns, to visit us. Happy will it be for us if, during his visitations, we are purified from our uncleanness. If so, we shall be re-united to the society of the blessed: but, if otherwise, if we die in impenitence and unbelief, what is said of the confirmed leper will be true of us,—without the camp must our habitation be!

## ON THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

[An original letter.]

Kettering, Aug. 25, 1805.

My dear friend,

I RECEIVED yours yesterday, and, though my hands are full, I must write you a few thoughts on the Lord's day. Your views on that subject, I am persuaded, are injurious to your soul, and to the souls of many more in ——. It is one of those consequences which arise from an extreme attention to *instituted* worship, to the neglect of what is *moral*. If the keeping of a *sabbath* to God were not in all ages binding, why is it introduced in the moral law, and founded upon God's resting from his works? If it were merely a Jewish ceremonial, why do we read of time being divided by *weeks* before the law? There was a day, in the time of John the apostle, which the Lord called *his own*; and, as you do not suppose this to be the seventh (for, if it were, we ought still to keep it), you must allow it to be the first. The first day then ought to be kept as the *Lord's own* day, and we ought not to think our own

thoughts, converse on our own affairs, nor follow our own business on it. To say, as you do, that we must not eat our own supper on that day, is requiring what was never required on the Jewish sabbath. *Necessary* things were always allowed. Nor did my argument from I Cor. xi. suppose this. The argument was—the ordinance of breaking bread being called the *Lord's* supper proved that they ought not to eat their own supper *while eating that* supper; therefore, the first day being called the *Lord's* day proves we ought not to follow our own unnecessary concerns *while that day continues*, but to devote it to the Lord, and this is a moral duty—that, whatever day we keep, we keep it to the Lord.

Your notions of instituted worship, to the overlooking of what is moral, I am persuaded have injured you as to family worship and family government. It is not said of Abraham that God gave him a special precept about commanding “his household after him,” but knew him that he would do it. It was one of those things, and so is the other, of which it might be said, “Ye need not that I write this unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to do these.”

But allowing your argument, that there is no sin in attending to worldly things on the Lord's day, yet, according to Paul's reasoning in I Cor. viii., you ought to refrain. You cause others to offend God by breaking what they consider a divine commandment. And the reasoning of Paul, in chap. viii. 8, applies to you; if you do these things you are not the better; and if you abstained you would not be the worse. Do you not hereby sin against Christ, and wound those whom you account your weaker brethren? You must also have done harm to your son, and to the writers at the inn. Reckon me if you please a weak brother. But so fully convinced am I of the invariable obligation of keeping a day to the Lord that, if I had seen what I did on the Lord's day morning, it would have marred all my comfort at the Lord's supper, and I know not that I could have there united with you. I write not because I love you not, but the reverse. . . . but alas! the taint of your old principles I fear will remain . . . O that they did not!

My dear friend, I see in you so much to love that I cannot but long to see more; and particularly to see that *old leaven* purged out. “The knowledge of the *holy* is understanding.” It is this sort of leaven that makes those few baptists at —— afraid to unite with many of your baptists; and I cannot but approve of their conduct. They would unite with any individual who comes to them and gives satisfactory evidence of his Christianity, and of his Christian walk; but, if they unite with baptists by whole companies, they are ruined. I was told at

—— that the way in which the baptists in Mr. ——'s connection take in members was by merely requiring an account of their faith, that is, a creed, and not of the influence of truth upon their own mind. The consequence is, as might be expected, great numbers of them are men of no personal godliness, but mere speculatists. Churches formed on such principles must (like what I have heard of many —— societies) sink into nothing, or worse than nothing, mere worldly communities, a sort of freemasons' lodges. My dear friend, flee from the remains of such religion! I mean no reflection upon individuals. I trust Mr. —— is a good man; and I have been told his church is in the main one of the best: but, on such a principle, it cannot stand. Affectionately yours,  
A. F.

## PICTURE OF AN ANTINOMIAN.

UNDERSTANDING that a certain preacher, who was reported to be more than ordinarily evangelical, was to deliver a sermon in the town where I reside, and hearing some of my neighbors talk of going to hear “the gospel,” I resolved to go too. I thought that I loved the gospel, and felt a concern for my neighbors' welfare: I wished therefore to observe, and form the best judgment I could of what it was to which they applied with such an emphasis that revered name.

I arrived, I believe unobserved, just after the naming of the text: and staid, though with some difficulty, till the discourse was ended. I pass over what relates to manner, and also much whimsical interpretation of Scripture; and shall now confine my remarks to the substance and drift of the discourse.

There were a few good things delivered, which, as they are stated in the Bible, are the support and joy of pious minds. I thought I could see how these things might please the *real* Christian, though, on account of the confused manner of their being introduced, not the *judicious* Christian. Pious people enjoy the good things they hear, and, being thus employed, they attend not to what is erroneous; or, if they hear the words, let them go as points which they do not understand, but which they think the wiser preacher and hearers do.

I cannot give you the plan of the sermon, for the preacher appeared not to have had one. I recollect however, in the course of his harangue, the following things.—“Some men will tell you,” said he, “that it is the duty of men to believe in Christ. These men say that you must get Christ, get grace, and that of yourselves; convert yourselves, make yourselves new creatures, get the Holy Spirit yourselves;” &c. Here he went

on with an abundance of misrepresentation and slander, too foul to be repeated.

He asserted with the highest tone of confidence I ever heard in any place, much less in a pulpit, his own *sainthood*; loudly and repeatedly declaiming to this effect—"I must go to glory—I cannot be lost—I am as safe as Christ—all devils, all sins cannot hurt me!" In short, he preached himself, not Christ Jesus the Lord. He was his own theme, I believe, throughout one half at least of his sermon. He went over what he called his *experience*, but seemed to shun the dark part of it; and the whole tended to proclaim what a wonderful man he was. Little of Christ could be seen: he himself stood before him: and, when his name did occur, I was shocked at the dishonor which appeared to be cast upon him.

All accurate distinction of character, such as is constantly maintained in the Scriptures, vanished before his vociferation. The audience was harangued in a way which left each one to suppose himself included among the blessed. This confusion of character was the ground on which he stood exclaiming, "I am saved—I am in Christ—I cannot be lost—sins and devils may surround me, but, though I fall and sin, I am safe—Christ cannot let me go—lusts and corruptions may overwhelm me in filth and pollution, as a sea rolling over my head; but all this does not, cannot affect the new man—the new nature is not touched or sullied by this: it cannot sin, because it is born of God—I stand amidst this overwhelming sea unhurt." All this the hearers were told in substance, and persuaded to adopt; and it was sin and unbelief not to do so!

The whole was interspersed with levity, low wit, and great irreverence. On the most solemn subjects of "hell, devils, and damnation," he raved like a billingsgate or

blasphemer. On the adorable and amazing names of the ever-blessed God, he rallied and sported with such lightness and rant as was truly shocking. This was especially the case in his repeating the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light; let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." The manner in which the sacred name was here used was highly profane and impious.

On returning from the place, I was affected with the delusion by which some of my neighbors were borne away, crying up the preacher as an oracle, "a bold defender of the gospel." To me his words appear to answer with great exactness to what is called, by the apostle to Timothy, "profane and vain babbling;" and which, from an accurate observation, Paul declared "would increase unto more ungodliness; and would eat as doth a canker," or gangrene.

Need I ask, Can this be true religion? The effects which it produces, both on individuals and on societies, sufficiently ascertain its nature. It was and is affecting to me to think what a state the world is in; so few making any profession of serious religion, and so few of those that do who have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. To think of Christian congregations who have heard the word of truth for a number of years being carried away with such preaching as this, is humiliating and distressing to a reflecting mind. Alas, how easily men are imposed upon in their eternal concerns! It is not so with them in other things: but here the grossest imposture will go down with applause. Yet why do I thus speak? "There must needs be heresies, that they who are approved may be made manifest."



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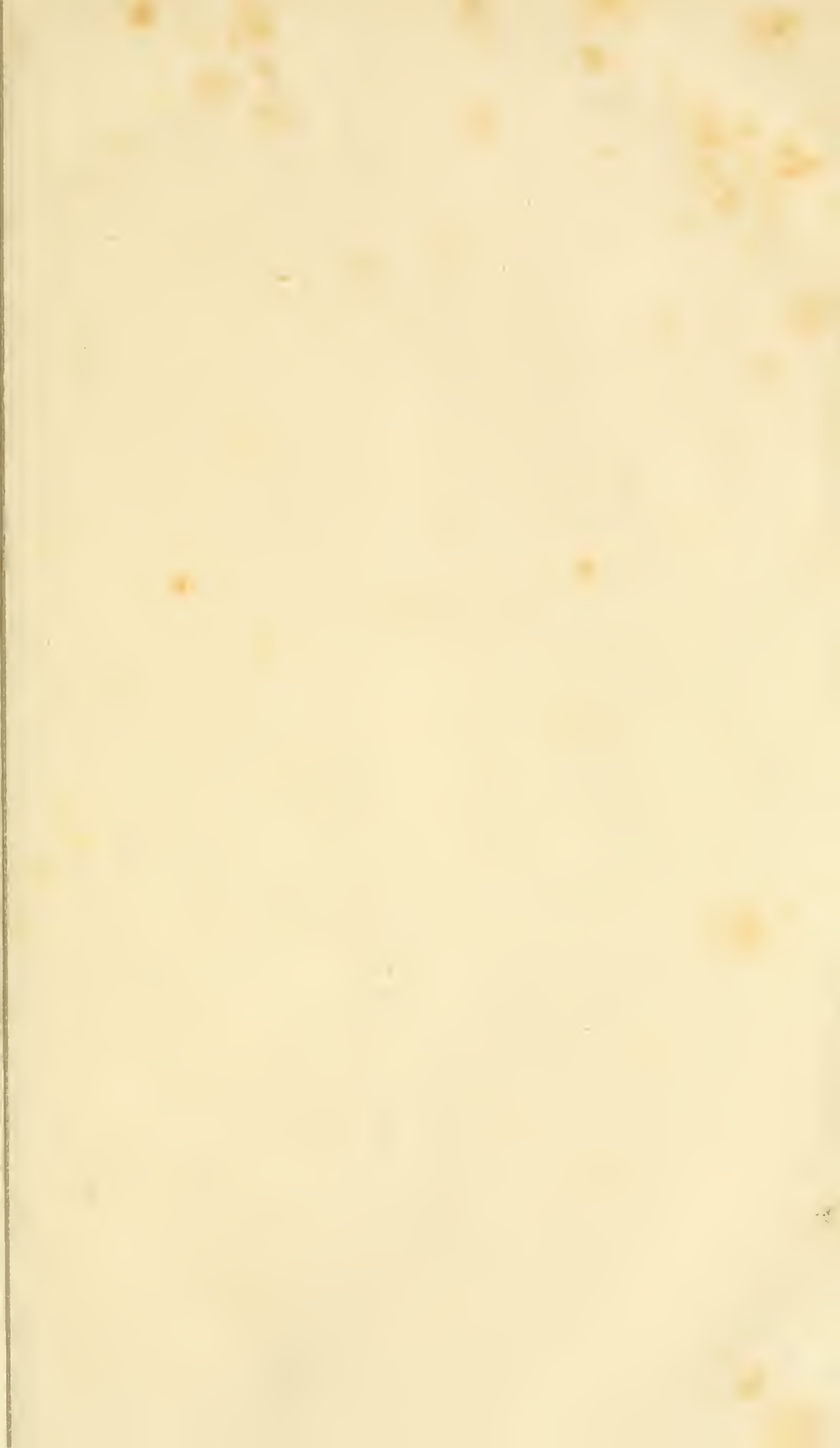


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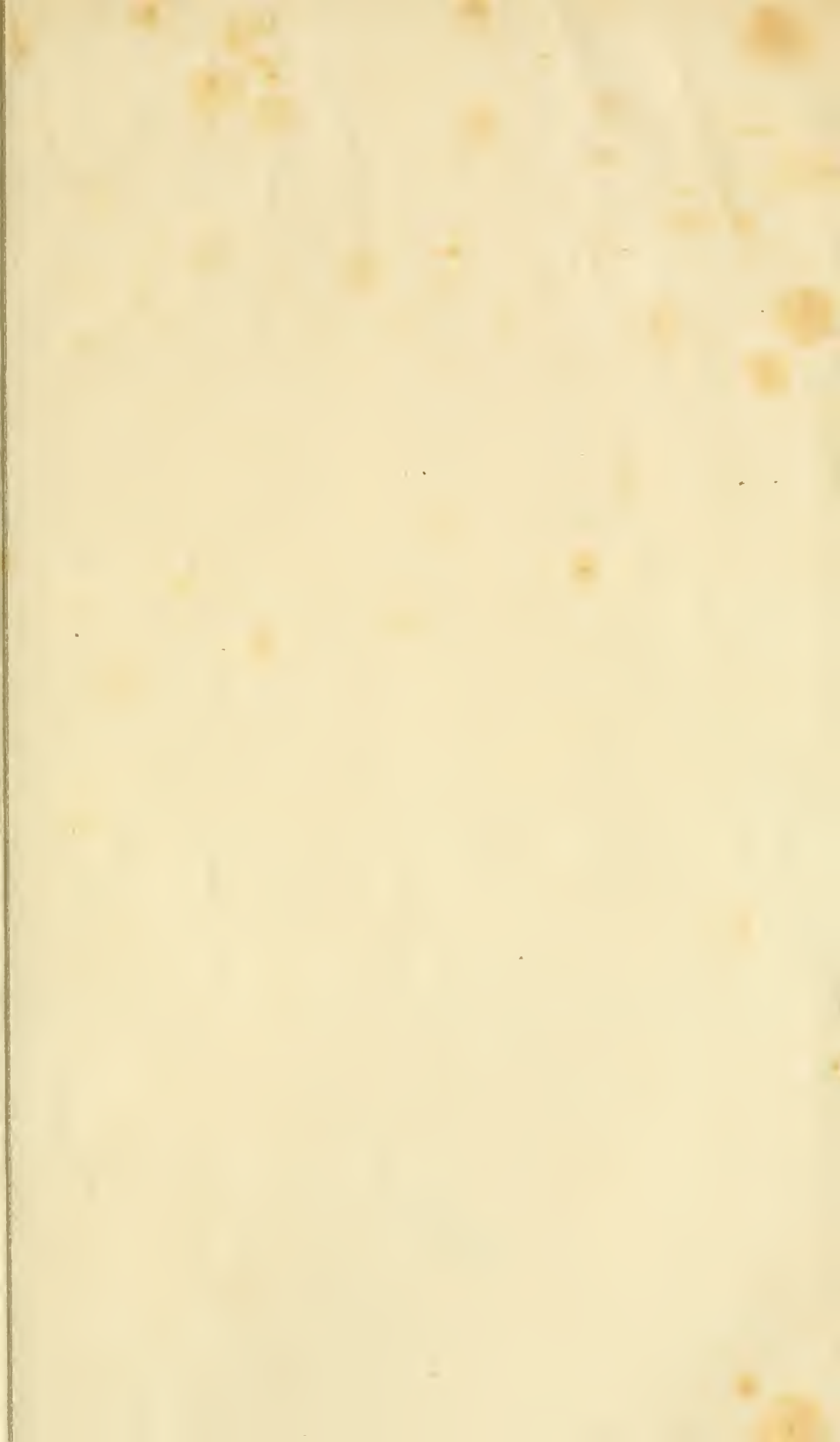














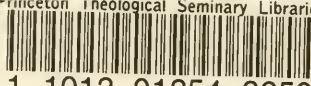
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