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Wylie  
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# SECTARIANISM IS HERESY

IN THREE PARTS,

IN WHICH ARE SHOWN,

ITS NATURE, EVILS, AND REMEDY:

By A. WYLLIE.

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“Behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

DAVID.

“There is no virtue greater than that which reunites scattered and separated parts.”

CRYSOSTOM.

“Invenissent forsitan necessaria, nisi et superflua quæsissent.”

SENECA.

“Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti  
Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpos.”

JUVENAL.



BLOOMINGTON IA.

1840.

REPT. AND ALPHABETICAL INDEX

IN THREE VOLUMES

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## PREFACE.

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### TO THE READER:

THE thoughts contained in the following pages were gradually suggested to the mind of the writer, during the last twenty five years. Certain events that have fallen under his notice in the last ten years, have impressed them with such force, as to make it seem to him a duty not to withhold them from the public. He has, indeed, been placed in a condition, in which he feels in a manner compelled to let his thoughts be known through the press. The following extract of a letter recently received, will shew that it is due to his friends that they at least should be informed what has induced him to assume, for a time, the position he now occupies, and which his correspondent calls "leaving the Presbyterian church:"

"Enquiries, which I am persuaded, are prompted by a disinterested regard for yourself, are often addressed to me, which I am unable satisfactorily to answer. For instance, it is often inquired, 'Is it true that Dr. Wylie has left the Presbyterian church? The church in which he was born and educated, and in which he was appointed to the sacred ministry? The church in which he has so long continued, and it is presumed from principle? Surely there must be some good reason why one of such intellectual and moral eminence as Dr. W.—why one so capable of forming a correct judgment in the case, and who is disposed to act with such stern integrity of purpose—surely there must be some *very good* reason, why he has taken such a step in a matter of so much importance, not only to himself, but to others. If he has left the Presbyterian church, with what other Christian denomination has he formed a connexion? Has he found another church, whose doctrines and order are more in accordance with his own views? Another church to which he is, on the whole, disposed to give his deliberate preference? Another religious connexion more conducive to the spiritual interests of himself and family?

"Along with the inquiry in regard to church connexion, is associated another which in itself is of more importance still: Has Dr. W. become a Unitarian—or, as others term it, has he become a Universalist? Has he at last discovered that the faith of the whole Christian church on the subject of the Trinity is at war with the bible? That the doctrines of the Saviour's divinity—of the atonement, &c.—are mere human figments, inconsistent with reason and unworthy of belief? Has he at last discovered, although he has so many years, and with such force of demonstration, taught the doctrine of the eternal punishment of the finally impenitent, that thieves, and adulterers, and murderers, &c., continuing such until death, are, notwithstanding, sure of entering a holy heaven? Or, if

he does not as yet boldly avow these doctrines, is his coming out against 'Creeds and Confessions' to be regarded as a preliminary step to this avowal? Or, if none of these things are true, is he among the number of those on whose Presbyterianism the decision of the court of *nisi prius*, in the State of Pennsylvania has wrought such a wonderful transformation? Who, when their party had gone out from the Presbyterian church in a tumultuous and schismatical manner, and were themselves for a time in doubt as to their own true character, yet by the sage announcement of the (learned?) judge were convinced that they are, and of right ought to be, the only *constitutional!!!* Presbyterians."

He honestly thinks, that, although he may not have been quite stationary, the movement made by that church has been, at least, as great in one direction, as he has made, in the same time, in the opposite. On his way home from Philadelphia, in the spring of 1837, he was asked, "What will you do now, you, and the other fence men, since the fence is burnt down?" "Sit in the ashes," was the reply. And though the question was put, in rather a jocular way, by the querist—who, by the by, was the man who had applied the torch to the fence—and who seemed to enjoy the sight and warmth of the conflagration very well—and though the reply was made in the same light and playful manner, it was connected in *my* mind with feelings that were far, very far, from those of gayety. [The reader will pardon me, for leaving the formal and periphrastic manner of using the third person, instead of the first.]—One of the severest trials I have experienced in life has arisen out of those convulsions, which reached their crisis in the spring of 1837, when the General Assembly passed the famous Excinding Act, and proceeded to measures for the new modeling of the whole body of the Presbyterian church on the basis of that act. Not that I entertain any other than the kindest feelings towards the men who did these things. Better men on earth I do not expect to find than some of them are. But still, in matters of truth and duty, conviction must prevail over personal attachment and worldly interest. Had the excinding act been predicated on the termination of the "Plan of Union," made for the churches in "the *new* settlements," a plan which was manifestly designed to be temporary in its duration and to cease with the exigency which called it forth, I should have felt little concern in the matter. But whatever that act may be in form, and however it may be called, it was in fact, and in the impression it was calculated to make and perhaps designed to make, a *judicial act*. The majority in the General Assembly of 1837 that passed it, did virtually say to the Synods excinded, "we condemn you, first, as being corrupt and heretical; and, secondly, because you gave your vote to acquit the Rev. A. Barnes, whom we had convicted of heresy in 1835, and would have punished, had not you, by your votes, turned the scale in his favor, and so laid the foundation for imputing his heresy to yourselves." That this was the real meaning of the act I have not the smallest doubt. It contained, wrapped up in its many folds, a sentence of condemnation. In the "Act and Testimony," which prepared

the way for it, and which was adopted by the Synod of Indiana, there were certain heresies specified, which the Act affirmed did exist in the Presbyterian church. To the adoption of this act by the Synod of Indiana, being a member at that time, (1835, I think,) I made the most earnest (some no doubt thought vehement) opposition, on the ground that, for the affirmed fact that these heresies existed, we had no other evidence than *rumor*. And, to this hour, there exists no other evidence. Here, then, is an example set in favor of a course of proceeding at which my moral sense revolts; and against which, while I have a voice, that voice shall be raised, and with the more earnestness, as it falls in with the practice of a vice which has become exceedingly prevalent in our country. Slander is the foul demon which attacks every thing that is not safe in its insignificance, or obscurity. This demon needed not the example of church courts, to give wider range, and more certain effect to its fury.

When I reflected, moreover, on the case of the Rev. Albert Barnes, which had furnished the occasion for all this disturbance, and compared the errors (so called) contained in his sermon with my own views, I was sensible that if he were chargeable with heresy, so was I; for, on some points, my opinions were no more in accordance with the "Confession of Faith" than his. I was startled, too, at the cry of "moral perjury," which was raised against all such as, when they entered the sacred office, did not, "*ex animo*," assent to every tittle of doctrine contained in the "Confession." This was a crime of so horrible a character, as to alarm the conscience of any one who had any reason to suspect himself of having, however thoughtlessly, committed it. I looked back with "searchings of heart" to the solemn day, when, kneeling down before God, the hands of the Presbytery on my head, I devoted myself to "the work of the ministry" in the Presbyterian church; and I asked myself how, and in what sense, I had received the "Confession." I recollected that, on one point, I had undergone a pretty close examination: "The Sonship of Christ," or, as it is sometimes styled, "The eternal generation of the Son of God," and that my answers expressed, what, at the time, was my real opinion; an opinion that I had received from reading Dr. Watts, and which I *knew* was not the opinion of the member of the Presbytery who principally conducted the examination, and *supposed* was not that of the majority of the Presbytery. In this supposition, however, I was mistaken. And, I recollected, distinctly, to have heard Dr. McMillan say, afterwards, in relation to the point, and in the words of another, that "eternal generation was eternal nonsense." Yet I believed then that this "nonsense" was really in the "Confession." From this circumstance and some others attending my trial for licensure and ordination, I formed this opinion as to the sense in which the act of receiving the "Confession" was understood; viz. not that it was to be regarded as an "infallible rule" of belief, since the book itself asserted this of the Bible *alone*, but that a distinction was to be

made between points essential to christianity, and points incidental to it. At that time, (1812,) indeed, there was little fear about heresy, and little said on the subject. I preached several years, entertaining what I suppose some would call a belief in the great doctrines of Calvinism, particularly the doctrines of The Trinity, Election, Preterition and Reprobation, and Efficacious Grace; but without making much use of them, save the last, in my discourses. Reflecting on my conduct in this particular, I felt somewhat like a person might be supposed to feel, who was suddenly awakened to the sense of a crime he had unconsciously committed. I found, however, on further reflection, that I had been led by my feelings, as well as my judgment to discourse to the people of my charge on subjects which were more practical, and which I myself better understood. I still purposed, however, to take up and discuss these *difficult* subjects (then lying dormant in my mind,) at some future time: but, to this day, I have not done it; for the more I thought, and read, and talked with others on them, the more I felt in the condition of Simonides, who, when requested to discourse on the nature of God, asked a day to prepare; and at the end of that, two days; and at the end of these, four; intimating that the more he strove to grasp it, the further it seemed to recede beyond his reach. I cannot, therefore, after the most serious self-examination, condemn myself of "moral perjury," or even of insincerity, in remaining so long in connexion with the Presbyterian church, although I did not believe every thing to be true which is found in her standards: for it was not till lately that such belief was required in her members. Her members I loved and still love, and for her prosperity shall ever pray. But, with the views which I now entertain, and which it is the object of the following pages to unfold, I cannot, without an open avowal of them, remain in her exclusive communion. It is with feelings of the deepest sorrow, that I make this sacrifice to what I conceive to be my duty. The claims of Truth are sacred and awful. A mind fettered by authority is unfaithful to the God of Truth, who made it to be free.

I despair now, after much reflection, of ever being able to work the infinite *into a system*. But for my thoughts on this matter I refer the reader to the following pages.

To show the progress—or retrocession, as some may think—that my mind was making, I will here relate a fact of no importance in itself: Some four or five years before I came to this country, perhaps more, I was sounded by a distinguished member of the Synod of Pittsburgh whether, if chosen, I would be willing to take the chair of didactic theology in the Theological Seminary at Pittsburgh. I promptly answered I would not. My reason, which I explained to him, was, that I could not be bound to teach by any creed but the Bible; and as the regulations of the Seminary required of the professor a restricting promise in this matter, I could not accept the office. Yet, the views on theology, which then pre-

vailed among the Orthodox clergy of that region, were more liberal and more practical than those which I met with, among a certain class of Presbyterians, after I removed to the West. In proof I allege this fact: I preached in Pennsylvania, more than once, a discourse that I had fully written out, showing the superiority of moral over religious duties, from the text, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." There it occasioned no surprise; it was what the people were accustomed to hear. I preached the same discourse in Indiana, in two or three different places, and in some of these it *did* excite both surprise and suspicion. This fact may further shew, that what may pass for orthodoxy in one place will not in another; and the glaring impropriety, therefore, that there is in disturbing people's minds with rumors of dreadful heresies said to prevail in some parts of *our* church two or three thousand miles off.

On the subject of creeds I must candidly confess, that my mind has undergone a considerable change within the last ten years. Formerly I supposed creeds were harmless things"; the creeds, I mean, of the different sects. Now I have, as the result of a serious examination of the subject, in the light of God's truth, come to the conclusion which the reader will find in the following pages. In coming to this conclusion I have, perhaps, been aided by certain exhibitions of unchristian conduct (I might employ stronger terms) which I have witnessed, and which charity binds me not to expose, unless compelled,—unchristian conduct, which may be distinctly traced to a bigotted veneration for a set of opinions embodied in a creed. If any one thinks that conduct of this sort is owing to the abuse and not the use of creeds, I reply, let creeds be reduced to the dimensions pointed out in the word of God, and then I shall not object to them. What these are, it is one object of this work to shew.

As to the inuendo contained in the letter of my friend quoted above, and which might occur to others' thoughts as well as his—viz, that my leaving the Presbyterian church is a matter of policy founded on the decision of Judge Rogers; I reply, that my application to the Presbytery of Vincennes for a dismissal was made at their spring meeting before the decision of the "learned judge" took place. My friend's accusation is therefore like that of the wolf against the lamb, for muddying the water, when the lamb was drinking *lower down the stream than he!*

I have thought of my children in taking this step: and in taking it, I have, so far as they are concerned, consulted, not indeed their temporal interest or peace. The various branches of the Presbyterian church, taking them all together, are powerful and respectable, and it would rejoice my heart, could I now die in the assurance that all my children and friends were indeed true christians and members of the Presbyterian church. And if any, or all of them, should think their soul's eternal welfare will be promoted by entering that church, they have my hearty amen to such a choice. But I would say to them, as I would say to all

who may read these pages: "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and the righteousness thereof,"—"Strive to enter in at the straight gate,"—"Except ye be born again ye cannot enter into—ye cannot see the kingdom of heaven." At the same time, for their consolation, I would have them know that their acceptance with God does not depend on their ability to digest the systems of either Calvin, or Arminius, or Priestly, or any other philosophical teacher, but on "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ"—a heart purged from the love of the world and devoted to God and duty.

In the composition of this work I had no time to think of style. I adopted the form of dialogue as better suited to the subject than that of the essay. The names given to the persons in the dialogue, or rather the trialogue, are significant. They are all easily understood, except the third, for which the curious reader, if he thinks it worth while, may go to the *Phædrus* of Plato. But I use not the name as conveying any thing reproachful. The names are each intended to signify rather the spirit than the opinions of the different speakers; and, consequently, to represent not so much any particular sect, as that class of people, who are to be found in greater or smaller numbers, in all sects, and to whom the name "sectarian" is properly applied.

In preparing for the press the following sheets, it may be proper to remind the reader that I have also had in my view, that numerous, and, in some respects highly respectable class of my fellow citizens, who have not attached themselves to any denomination of professing christians, though favorably disposed towards Christianity itself. It is hoped they will find hints suggested in the following pages, that, if properly improved, may help them to break through their present difficulties, and lead their feet in the way of peace. To the candid and serious attention of all who may honor with a perusal this humble production its author would, in concluding these prefatory remarks, humbly commend it; praying that in their minds it may exert some influence in favor of Christian piety and virtue, and so tend, by the blessing of Him from whom all good comes, to aid, in co-operation with all other efforts that are made for the same purpose, in bringing about a greater harmony of affection among all, of every name, who believe in Christianity as a religion from God. When this "consummation devoutly to be wished" is effected, society will put on another and brighter aspect; and the scene portrayed by the poet be soon realized:

"One song employs all nations, and all cry  
Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!  
The dwellers in the vales and in the rocks  
Shout to each other; and the mountain tops  
From distant mountains catch the flying joy;  
Till nation after nation taught the strain,  
Earth rolls the rapturous Hosannah round."

## SECTARIANISM, &c.

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PERSONS IN DISCOURSE:—TIMOTHY, GARDEZFOI, DEMOCOP.

*Gardezfoi.*—What is this, friend Timothy, that seems to afford you so much entertainment. I find you reading and smiling at the same time?

*Timothy.*—I am at this moment diverted partly with my own thoughts and partly with my author; and yet the subject is a sad one.

*G.*—Who? What book is it?

*T.*—Bourdaloue.

*G.*—And who was he?

*T.*—A distinguished French preacher, a Catholic.

*G.*—A Catholic! I wonder at you to read Catholic books! French, too!—You might be better employed.

*T.*—Perhaps so. But I do not like to be confined. Variety is good. Are we not commanded to “prove all things?” Would you make up your mind on a case from hearing one side of it? You and I were brought up to hate the Catholics. Would it not be well for us to hear—to read—what they have to say for themselves?

*G.*—No, indeed; not for me. I feel best when I am farthest off from them and their works—the bloody, cruel, bigotted—

*T.*—There is no use in calling names and flying in a passion.

*G.*—How can I help it when I think—

*T.*—On the precept of the Saviour, which requires you to love your neighbor as yourself?

*G.*—Well; I should hate myself, were I guilty of doing the deeds or even of cherishing the detestable principles which I know, and you cannot deny, that they have done and cherish.

*T.*—Will you stick to that?

*G.*—Yes, will I; but you must convince me first that I am guilty.

T.—A hard task; but if you will candidly attend to truth and reason, I will try.

G.—Certainly I will.

T.—Hear then what the French Catholic says. His subject is “The humility of Faith:” (Reads.)

“For what is faith, and wherein does it consist? It consists in believing without seeing, (John 20.) *‘Happy are they who have not seen and yet have believed.’* It consists in believing what is revealed to us, and not immediately even, by God himself; but by the ministry of men and by the organ of the church.”

Mark well the expression, Mr. Gardezfoi, “by the ministry of men and the organ of the church,” and hear his proof:

“‘Whosoever shall refuse to hear the church regard him as a heathen and a publican,’ (Matth. 18.) This is the idea which the apostles, after Jesus Christ, and which all the theologians give us of this virtue. This is its nature and essence. Now, are not these the most excellent and the most perfect exercises of humility of which a reasonable creature is capable, aided by the grace of God? To believe what one does not see, what one does not comprehend; what contradicts all our senses, all our prejudices, all our natural laws of belief? Further still: to believe in a truth because God has revealed it, but without any other evidence of the fact that he has revealed it, than this only that men like ourselves, declare it so to be, I say men like ourselves, not but that there is a difference, and that they are distinguished from us by a divine authority with which they are clothed, and which in them we are bound to acknowledge and respect; but, after all, and judging only by appearances, by the outside, by the eyes, we perceive nothing in them which gives us the impression that they are any thing more than men like ourselves. It is they who, with other believers, make up the Church of Jesus Christ; it is they who govern it in the name of Jesus Christ; and it is to their decisions that we should submit ourselves purely and simply, that is to say, without any other proof than that the decisions in question proceed from their tribunal. Such a submission, I say, such a sacrifice of our entire understanding and of all our views—is it not the greatest exercise of humility that the human mind can perform?

“It is in this sense that the Son of God has told us in the gospel: ‘If ye do not become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,’ (Matt. 18.) For as the phrase is to be interpreted, the kingdom of heaven means the Church militant on earth and triumphant in heaven. That, then, we may belong to this church we must become little children; and by what means, asks St. Augustine? By faith. In fact, continues the holy doctor, a little child is different from a man only in this, that as yet he has no exercise or use of reason. He believes, but does not reason; and it is just so that faith operates in us. When once God has spoken, either by himself directly, or, as more commonly, by his church, faith prevents us from doubting, examining, or making any inquiries; but it commands us to believe. Thus it reduces us to a sort of infancy; and how can we bring ourselves to that by a Christian obedience, unless we are truly humble?

“It is, moreover, in the same sense and according to the same idea of faith, that the holy Apostle Paul represents it to us as a holy servitude,

in which we hold our understanding bound, so to speak, and enchained. What would he have us to understand by this figure? St. Chrysostom explains it in a very ingenious and very literal manner. Observe, says this father, the condition and state of a prisoner: He cannot go where he may think proper, or where he pleases; he finds himself locked up in an obscure and dark place, without being permitted to take a single step to get out; and should he make the least effort to deliver himself from this captivity he would be treated as a rebel. Such is the subjection of faith: our mind has the faculty naturally of spreading itself over all sorts of objects, of elevating itself to what is above it, of going in search of things the most hidden, of passing from one acquisition to another, and of making continually new discoveries. This indeed is one of its highest prerogatives; in which it places its principal glory, and of which it is the most jealous. To be willing to give up this privilege, to forego the right so dear to us and so flattering to our vanity, is strangely to degrade and debase ourselves. This, however, is what faith undertakes. It interdicts all curiosity; it forbids all liberty of discussion, or inquiry into the ground of the truths God has revealed to us, and so holds us captives under its yoke. Let humility be wanting, and will we remain in this bondage, and not find the means of freeing ourselves from a dominion so mortifying to our pride?

“It is certain, and experience makes it evident enough, that it is in this very point that submission is the most difficult and least supportable. In other things we submit, we suffer ourselves to be brought into captivity. In our affairs, in our employments, even in our diversions, and in our strongest inclinations, we are continually doing violence to ourselves; but if the question concerns our sentiments, the particular opinions we have adopted, if we are required, by our respect for superior authority, to renounce these, then it is that the mind revolts and opposes, and such is the strength, often, of this increased opposition, that neither reason, nor duty, nor fear, nor hope, nor necessity, nor force, are able to overcome it. Whence this difference? How comes it that we are so docile in all other things, and so obstinate in resisting whatever opposes our ideas or our preconceived opinions? It is because docility and condescension in all other things bear not along with them ordinarily the character of humility; on the contrary they pass for honesty, for civility, for goodness: whereas, to renounce and give up one’s thoughts, and to attach one’s self to others, to which one is obliged to conform himself, this is to confess that one has been deceived, gone astray, has not sense nor intelligence enough to act for himself, and this is what our presumption cannot endure nor agree to.

“Mark well, I beseech you: I say ‘to attach one’s self to other’s thoughts, to other’s sentiments which he is obliged to adopt.’ For if it is from yourself the change of opinion is to come, if it is with a full liberty of choosing what you please, and that you retain your former independence, then, indeed, there is nothing to offend your pride, and, of course, your mind will cease its opposition. One may even boast that he has been divested of error, that he has more thoroughly examined such a point, which before he did not fully understand, that he has more just views and has at length discovered the truth. But still, all this must be of ourselves, that is to say, it must be ourselves that judge, ourselves that decide, ourselves that undeceive ourselves. If it is another that wishes, in the matter, to direct us, and to bring us into his way of thinking, above all, if it is a legitimate power to which we are in subjection, that requires of us

this testimony of our dependence and obedience, that will be enough to rouse our opposition to the utmost, and without the help of a sincere and religious humility it can never be expected of us that we will give up the right, so well established in our imagination, of depending on ourselves and being the masters of our own judgments.

“False and miserable right! which has made in ages past, and which, in our own day, is still making so many libertines in matters of faith. To believe nothing but what one sees, or knows by natural evidence; to consult one’s self alone, to defer to one’s self alone is the grand principle of pride in man. We want to comprehend the things of God before we have faith: and God tells us by his prophet that his will is that we should believe them before we comprehend them. Why so? Because, says St. Augustine, to understand the things of God is a gift of grace, which should be merited by the humility of faith, and which is the recompense of faith. Worldly men, of boasted strength of mind, wish God to govern them by reason: and God replies to them, ‘I wish faith to govern you; or, rather, I wish myself to govern you by faith.’ Every consideration engages him to take this course with us, particularly this, that feeble and insignificant creatures, as we are, it is not just that we should be the judges and arbiters of what concerns his adorable mysteries and his impenetrable counsels, and that if we were to be guided by reason, it would not then be to his mere divine word that we should submit, but that in the use of that reason which served us as a guide, we should judge of his word itself, and erect ourselves into a tribunal above him, a thing, doubtless, which does not belong to us, and never can belong to us.

“What, then, says the wise man of this world, have I not the right to ask for the reason of the things that God declares to me, or that are declared to me as coming from him and that I am required to believe? Hah! who would give you that right, and how dare you claim to exercise it in regard to God and the church of God, since every day of your life you are in the habit of believing mere men on a thousand subjects—men without character and without authority—on their word alone? How many things in the universe are there unknown to you, and of which, nevertheless, you entertain no doubt, because you rely on the testimony of the learned respecting them? Strange, says St. Hilary, that we should be so humble as to admit our ignorance in regard to the secrets of nature, and so proud and presumptuous in regard to the mysteries of God and points of religion!

“We know into what abysses this dangerous presumption and this pride have precipitated so many heresiarchs and their followers; we know to what extremities and excesses they have been carried. They would rather abandon the religion of their fathers, tear the bosom of their mother, the church, be cut off from the communion of their brethren, believers, be accursed in the world, see the trouble and confusion they have caused, than let go a new and erroneous sentiment. If they could but once say, ‘I am deceived; I have been too much filled with my own thoughts; I ought not to have attached myself to them with so much conceit,’—if, I say, they would allow themselves to speak in this manner, and act accordingly, what a multitude of evils they might have prevented! God would thereby have been glorified, the church edified, faith would have triumphed, and they themselves would have gained, in the view of all christian people, a crown of merit and of honor. But to this end humility and submission were wanting; and that spirit of pride which ruled in them could not yield, could not submit to the least abasement. No

other alternative therefore remained for them, says Vincent de Lerins, but to become apostates and infidels.

“This is the alternative which Luther and Calvin have taken. They would not acknowledge that law, too humiliating for them, to receive the revelations of God by the intervention of men, and, in order to cast off this yoke. they substituted in the church (*un esprit particulier*) the right of private judgment, by which they pretended to know every thing, and without which they would believe nothing. Not like the Israelites in the wilderness, who requested that God might not speak to them, but that Moses his minister and interpreter would speak to them himself and himself alone; they, by an infidelity just the reverse, desired that God should speak to them, and protested that they would hear none but him. Far from making the church the judge of their faith, they made themselves the judges of the faith of the church; disputed her power, blamed her conduct, rejected her decrees and definitions, endeavored to destroy her, and employed all their artifices and all their efforts to exterminate her.

“At first, indeed, they manifested a certain deference and respect for her oracles. So long as they thought it would be for their interest not to set themselves in open opposition to her and to remain in her communion, they made protestations of inviolable attachment and full submission; so long as they hoped to dispose her in their favor, and make her approve, or at least tolerate their errors, they contrived to keep on terms with her, they did not refuse to be cited before her to give an account of their doctrine. But so soon as, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and inimical to falsehood, she undertook to censure and condemn their corrupt dogmas, then it was that all that anger which they had concealed in their hearts burst forth: she judged them, and they declaimed against the judgments which she passed; she threatened them with her anathemas, and they despised her threats; she fulminated, and they received her thunders without fear and without concern. Thus acted Luther: the prelates of the church condemned him, and he treated them as ignoramuses: the head of the church gave sentence against him, and he answered that the judge was ill-informed: a council was assembled, to which he had appealed, and which united in itself the whole body of the church, but, because this council did not adopt his sentiments, it seemed to him an object of pity, and he esteemed himself more competent, than all the pastors and all the doctors. To convince him, then, must an angel descend from heaven? An angel descended from heaven would not have convinced a mind so opinionated and inflated with pride.

“What is ridiculous in the conduct of these heretics is that at the very time that they were renouncing the true church, and treating her with the utmost contempt, they were making for themselves a phantom of a church, for which they entertained remarkable veneration. I say, a phantom of a church: for what but such was that church which did not speak to them, nor check them, nor control them, and left them at liberty to believe and say what they pleased? What a phantom is an invisible church, which cannot be known, and to which, by consequence, no recourse can be had, which remains locked up in the hearts of pretended believers without showing itself abroad! Chimerical ideas, to which by an intolerable pride, they preferred to attach themselves, rather than admit in the christian world a visible church which might hold them under its dominion and be the regulator of their faith.

“Such is the punishment that God inflicts. He permits vain and proud minds when they forsake the centre of truth and of unity to wander into

as many errors as the steps they take. \* \* \* \* At last they come to think they have reason on their side, that their adversaries have nothing solid or convincing to oppose them with, that they know well how to answer, that they have gained a complete victory. You may overthrow them a thousand times, you may overwhelm them with proofs, you may set before their eyes witnesses the most irreproachable—still their pride will never yield. God, on his part, gives them up to blindness of mind and hardness of heart; in these they live, in these they die.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Let us not lose the advantage which we have always had over heretics: they are our equals at every thing else, and in some things they are our superiors: they have erudition and science, they have readiness and penetration, they have grace and polish of language, they are charitable to the poor, severe in their morals, and some among them have passed for saints; but what they have not and never had, is the humility of faith.”

T.—Now, tell me candidly, Mr. Gardezfoi, whether you do not agree with Bourdaloue in the great principle which he maintains in the passage I have just read.

G.—The humility of faith?

T.—Aye, so he calls it: but let us go beyond names and look at the thing. For what does he blame the whole body of those whom he is pleased to call heretics, Luther and Calvin in particular? Is it not because they refused to let the church govern their faith, that is, decide for them what they were to believe and what they were not to believe? Is it not because they would not receive revelations from God through the intervention of men like themselves? Is it not because they insisted on the right of interpreting the word of God for themselves, without regarding what the “head of the church,” and “the prelates,” or even the council decided?

G.—So it seems. But then the “head of the church” means the pope, and the prelates were popish priests, and the council was a popish council. Surely you would not think it right that *they* should decide points of faith for such men as Luther and Calvin.

T.—And would it not have been just as bad for Luther and Calvin to decide points of faith for their opponents, the pope and his prelates, as for these to decide them for Luther and Calvin?

G.—I suppose not; for Luther and Calvin would have taught them a better creed.

T.—And then you would have the whole church to yield to these two individuals the right of making a creed for her? a creed, too, in direct opposition to the received and orthodox creed which was then in vogue, and which, as was universally believed, had the sanction not only of the authority of the church but the voice of tradition for its support.

G.—That, I confess, would have been unreasonable. I see, therefore, no other way for them but to do as they did—both parties.

T.—Then you do not believe that the church—any church—Catholic or Protestant—any organization of men, civil or ecclesiastical—has the right to make a creed to be enforced authoritatively upon christians. For, if they have, the Reformation was wrong, and Luther and Calvin were what the church pronounced them to be—heretics.

G.—I see what you are driving at: but I never will allow that these men were heretics. People say that you are a heretic, and I begin to believe it, else you would not speak so disrespectfully of those great and good men.

T.—It is of no use to talk thus loosely. If we would understand the subject we must go to first principles. Suppose we settle the point what a heretic is, before we go to applying that epithet to one another. For, though to have the name affixed to one now-a-days does not expose his person to the punishment of the stake, or the wheel; yet it still carries with it enough of terror, to preserve many people in that same “humility of faith” so much extolled by Bourdaloue.

G.—Well: I should be glad to settle that point as you propose; especially as here comes my friend Democop, who—Sit down, Mr. Democop, if you please, and share our chat. Timothy will settle the point for us, what a heretic is.

T.—I’ll do no such thing, for that would be to do with you as the Catholic church did with Luther. I tell no man what he is to believe. I settle no points. I refer to higher authority—“to the Law and to the Testimony.” Here is my creed: and as my good friend Gardezfoi understands Greek, we can refer at once to the New Testament in the original, for the meaning of the term.

G.—Agreed; go on.

T.—The word *hairesis* (heresy) occurs in the following places: Acts 5th, 17; 15th, 5; 24th, 5. In these three passages it is translated *sect*. In Acts 24th, 14 it is rendered *heresy*, though it had, perhaps, there also better been rendered *sect*: for the Apôstle in using the word evidently replies to the charge alledged against him by Tertullus in the 5th verse, where he calls Paul a “ring leader of the *sect* of the Nazarenes.” In chap. 26, verse 5, Paul again uses the word to designate the *sect* of the Pharisees. In the 22d verse of the 28th chap. the Jews at Rome, whom Paul had called together to engage their sympathies in his behalf, call Christianity by the name *heresy*, or *sect*; though the word is here rendered, I know not for what reason, “*way*.” It occurs also, in 1 Cor. 11, 19; Gal. 5, 20; 2 Peter 2, 1, in all which it is rendered *heresy*. These are all the passages in which the word is to be found in the new Testament. In Titus 3, 10, “*heretic*,” an adjective derived from it, occurs: and in Matth. 12, 18, a verb derived from it is used in conformity to its primary meaning, in which it simply signifies *choice*, and is accordingly rendered, “*I have*

*chosen.*" An attentive consideration of the foregoing instances, the only ones in which the word occurs in the New Testament, is sufficient to shew, beyond a doubt, that heresy means the *choice*, or adoption of any opinion or tenet, which is inconsistent with the unity of the church, or the acting upon, or carrying out, into its practical consequences, of any such tenet or opinion—that is, taking such measures as will lead to the establishment of a society or party, based on such a tenet or opinion. The principle of such a society is heresy, and the society based upon it is a sect: and whoever adopts such a principle and adheres to such a party in religion, is a heretic or sectarian.

G.—Do you say, then, that *heretic* and *sectarian* are words of the same import?

T.—I do. The church of Rome, in the exercise of her usurped authority, made certain tenets, or dogmas, or doctrines of her own arbitrary enactment, to be the terms of union with her; and by so doing, became a great sect, and body of heretics; and the Protestants, by protesting against this usurpation and exposing these tenets, dogmas, and doctrines, as being contrary to reason and scripture, took the true ground, and the only ground on which the proper unity of the church can be maintained, and heresy or sectarianism prevented. Christ is the Head of his church. There is no true church but his, and it is one. Its members are his disciples. The great question is, what qualifications are necessary to constitute a disciple of his. What does he, our Lord and Master, say on this point? In addressing his disciples, shortly before he suffered, he says, "Ye believe in God; ye believe also in me," (John 14, 1. The verb "*pistucte*" is manifestly in the indicative in both places.) Here then, we have, in a brief space, the character of a true disciple of Christ. The same is expressed, in the same summary manner, and evidently with the intention of shewing what it is that constitutes a christian, in the fifth verse of the second chapter of Paul's first epistle to Timothy: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." This, with much greater propriety than the formula usually so called, might be denominated The Apostle's Creed. For, whoever exercises a true faith in this one God, as God, and this one Mediator as Mediator, must be a christian, a disciple of Christ, and a member of his church. This truth, I am confident, no well informed member of any sect will now deny. If, then, this is the Faith of Christ, and Christianity, it follows that whatever body of people, calling themselves christians, whether under the jurisdiction of the pope, or of the prelacy, or of the presbytery, insist on any other terms, as conditions of union and communion with them, they, in so doing, plant themselves on another foundation than that *unity of faith*, on which the one universal church of Christ is built, and erect for themselves a standard of heresy, or sect—for they are the same—and encamp apart from

“The sacramental host of God’s elect.” And whether these additional tenets, which they annex to the conditions of discipleship, be few or many, plausible or absurd, it matters not: the principle is the same. Their right to annex them is the point. It is not the quantity nor quality of the additions, but the authority to make any additions whatever, which is the thing to be considered. The Church of Rome made many and very absurd additions to the foundation laid by Christ, additions which it required, indeed, a great “humility of faith,” on the part of her members, to receive: other churches—sects, I should say—have made fewer, and more plausible additions, and which, to receive, does not require such a total prostration of the powers of the human understanding; but still, they are additions, and the authority to make them is usurpation: and this usurpation it is, which has produced sect—heresy. Our fathers, the heroes of the revolution, resisted unto blood the authority claimed by the Parliament of the mother country, to tax them without their consent; though the tax actually imposed was a mere trifle, and that, laid upon tea, a luxury, which the country had been better without; for they well knew, the right of taxation once allowed, it would be in the power of the mother country to increase the quantity at pleasure. So, if “mother church,” Catholic or Protestant, claims the right of taxing the faith of men, to the amount of the smallest tittle of doctrine, beyond what is expressly contained in the Constitution of the Church, as laid down by Christ, its Master and Founder, it is usurpation—and generates sect—heresy;—is, in fact, heresy, provided it be acted out. For, see how it operates: You, I will suppose, have, by reading the Bible, been led to exercise faith in God, and God’s Messiah; and this your faith proves itself to be genuine, by works of righteousness; that is, your visible character is that of a Christian; and you come to a church, the members of which are about to commemorate the death of Christ; and you express your desire to unite with them in this duty—a duty which the Lord your Saviour has plainly commanded;—and they, that church, forbid you to do it! They, at the same time, admit your character to be that of a Christian, a disciple of Christ:—but they will not allow you to sit down with them at his table! Why? Because you do not believe—in God? No. In Christ? No. In the Bible? No. What then is the matter? Because you do not believe in certain articles of a creed, which their leaders have imposed;—for, as to the rest, they know but little about such things. In “the humility of faith” they have taken them on the authority of their teachers! And so, because you have not the same “humility of faith;”—or, to speak the thing in plain English,—because you have not implicit faith in what, by their usurped authority, the leaders of the sect have given as their interpretation of the Bible, you are rejected! Now, tell me, who is on the ground assumed by the church of Rome? Is it you, who, by the suppo-

sition, are, in the true and scriptural sense of the term, a believer; or is it not the sect, who reject you, or perhaps stigmatize you as a heretic?

G.—But, unless you allow leaders, as you call them, to settle the terms of communion for their respective churches, you never can have unity or harmony among the members.

T.—Unity in what?

G.—In the faith.

T.—I see we must go to first principles again, in order to determine what we are talking about. Faith is now generally used by sectarian controversialists in a sense quite different from its scriptural meaning. With them it signifies, a mere assent to whatever may be proposed to us on the authority of the church: in the Scriptures it means, *trust in a person, on account of the known trust-worthiness of his character*. The faith which saves the soul is *trust* in the Eternal God. Accordingly, in the translation of the Old Testament, the original term is almost uniformly rendered *trust*; and the word *faith* hardly ever occurs in it. You are continually meeting there with such expressions as these: “Trust in the Lord and be doing good;” “Trust in the Lord, for in the Lord is everlasting strength;” “Blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is;” “They that trust in the Lord shall be like mount Zion that can never be moved.” And, in the New Testament, the word *trust* would, in almost every instance in which the thing in question is spoken of, better express the force of the original term than either *faith* or *believing*. The instances would be too numerous to mention in detail. Let one serve as a specimen. In 1 Pet. 2, 6, the common version has it thus: “Wherefore, also, it is contained in the Scriptures, Behold I lay in Zion a corner-stone, elect, precious, and whosoever *believeth on him* shall not be confounded.” This sounds very strangely,—“a stone”—and he that “*believeth*”—and not only so, but “*on him*”—on “*him*,” viz. the stone! Instead of “*him*” read “*it*,” and for “*believeth*” put “*trusteth*,” and the passage will be consistent, and the sense plain. Nor is this a piece of idle criticism. It goes to the very marrow of the subject of practical religion. A mind conscious of guilt cannot trust in God, without a just sense of his goodness and mercy. Hence, when we closely examine the matter, we find that the element of faith is a moral element—not any notion in the intellect. For as faith is trust in God, who is only and supremely good, it is the same with trust in goodness. But it is goodness that trusts in goodness: and I know, on the contrary, of no surer criterion of a character radically and essentially vicious, than suspicion and distrust. Once or twice, through life, I have seen persons take up and prosecute enmity against another on mere suspicion, for which there was not only no ground at all, but which was cherished in opposition to demonstrations, on the part of the person suspected, of the utmost kindness, forbearance and

good will towards the suspicious person. The enmity entertained against Joseph, whose character was remarkable for simple honesty and affectionate confidence, proceeded manifestly on the part of his brothers from their want of these qualities; in other words, they were destitute of faith in moral goodness. But the greatest and most striking demonstration that the world ever saw of both parts of this truth, I mean the direct and the converse of it, we have in the character and the conduct of the Son of God, and his treatment by the leaders of religion among the Jews, and the great body of the nation. On the part of the Savior, what unshaken faith in the Father, whose will he came on earth to execute, and, as the fruit of this faith, or confidence, what steady and active perseverance in that course of unexampled and perfect goodness which he accomplished! And, on the part of the Jews, what obstinate distrust in the god-like character, presented in all its commanding dignity and attractive loveliness before their eyes! And why this distrust? this infidelity? Because they themselves were *destitute* of goodness. They were supremely selfish, themselves; and they could form no conception of that disinterested love of Christ which induced him to bear the contradiction of these sinners against himself, and even to lay down his life for their sakes. All his wonderful and beneficent works, wrought continually on the thousands who were healed by him, they ascribed to infernal agency: his pure and heavenly doctrine and precepts they imputed to the arts of imposture. Why so? Their own hearts were evil. Their consciousness reported to them nothing else. They knew nothing else, and hence it was that they perceived not goodness in Goodness, infinite Goodness, itself, impersonated in their Messiah, whom, therefore, they crucified as an imposter. Their want of faith was, therefore, nothing else than a want of goodness. For goodness knows itself, confides in itself, seeks itself, and *finds itself*, not only in the bosom where it resides, but in *other* bosoms, and, most of all, in the bosom of God.

G.—I have always understood, as, indeed, I have always been taught, that faith is the credit we give to testimony, belief in the truth of a statement. Was not the faith of Abraham, who is called the father of the faithful, and whose faith seems to be proposed to us as a model, a simple credence of the truth of the declaration of God made to him?

T.—It was this and much more. The first instance of Abraham's faith that we find was that which led him to *obey* the command of God, (Gen. xii.) to leave his native country and kindred, and to go forth, under the divine guidance, "not knowing whither he went." Had he simply believed that God had given him such a command, but, through his remaining attachment to his country and friends whom he was required to leave, refused or hesitated to obey it, he would never have deserved the high commendations that the spirit of inspiration has conferred upon him—he had

remained, in fact, a faithless man. But, like Paul, long afterwards, "he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision;" for he had confidence, trust in God, whose command, for *that reason*, he obeyed with unhesitating alacrity; though at the sacrifice of the strongest feelings and affections of human nature. Nothing but the fullest confidence in the goodness and all sufficiency of the Almighty could have induced him to make this sacrifice. So, in the still more trying instance in which he was commanded to offer up his son, his only son Isaac, the child of promise, his unbounded confidence in God was that which silenced every objection, and quelled every opposing emotion. But I have said enough on this point. Every scholar knows that the phraseology employed both in the Old Testament and in the New, where that decisive movement of the mind is spoken of, which indicates the person to be, as Abraham was, "righteous" in the sight of God, corresponds precisely with a mode of speaking which we have among us here in the western country, and which, no doubt, the people derived from the manner in which they have understood, and correctly understood, the sacred Scriptures to speak on this subject. "I believe in that man," expresses, accordingly, in the most emphatic manner, our *confidence* in any one. And, when we have this confidence, we, of course, give credit to his testimony, when he makes to us a statement: but this credit is not commensurate with, does not amount to, the full import;—it falls far short of the full import, of that confidence in the entire excellence of the man's character which we express by the phrase, *believing in him*. It is but a part of it. It results from our confidence in his veracity merely; which is but an ordinary and common virtue in the general excellence of a good man's character. There are, accordingly, many men whose veracity I should be sorry to impeach, in whom, nevertheless, I would repose very little faith, where any great cause is at stake. They are light, fickle, timid, liable to be moved from their purpose by passion, interest, partial views, and, above all, by a want of faith in God; which is, in fact, the only immovable thing in the heart of man, and that which gives stability to all his moral principles; firmness and integrity to his whole character. And, by the way, he who has no faith in his God, has little claim to the confidence of his fellow-men. Yet no being in the universe is entitled to *unbounded* confidence but God alone. He is essentially and supremely good—omnipotent—all wise, eternal, and unchangeable—the Rock of Ages, on whom his people securely trust. Were a man to be found, in whose integrity we could place every confidence, yet, still, he is a frail mortal "whose breath is in his nostrils," and "in whom," therefore, in the beautifully significant language of holy writ, "there is no help."

G.—Granting all this that you have stated on the subject of faith to be true, I do not see what connexion it has with the point in hand.

T.—You will see presently. Suppose you are an elder in the church;

a man of irreproachable character applies for membership in the church of which you have the "watch and care," and makes a profession of such a faith in God and his Christ as I have described,—would you receive him?

G.—Yes: if he would take and adopt the Confession of Faith of our church as the confession of his faith, and promise—

T.—What, the book called the Confession of Faith?

G.—Yes.

T.—And does that book contain any thing but a set of abstract propositions and rules, which, whether true or false, a man might believe, and yet have no more trust in God and his Messiah than the demons have—who "believe and tremble!"

G.—It contains a summary of the doctrines contained in the Bible—and—

T.—And does not that very book tell you that the Bible itself is the *only* infallible rule of faith and practice?

G.—I believe it does.

T.—Why, then, do you contradict it in practice, and substitute another rule, viz. the book itself; as if you were resolved to make the book answer a purpose against which the book itself reclaims? A man tells you he believes the Bible, that infallible rule and that *only* infallible rule, and you tell him, "Sir, this is not sufficient; you must take this fallible rule, by which to interpret the infallible one!"

G.—Yes; but neighbor Timothy, there are so many disorganizers now at their unhallowed work, and permit me to say—and I say it with regret—that I am afraid your influence goes that way.—

*Democop.*—Yes, yes, I'm certain of it: and he and such as he are for turning things into confusion, disturbing and unsettling the minds of the people. I really wish there was some way to put a stop to such heretics.

T.—Calmly, Mr. Democop: there was a way once, and it was tried a long time and with great perseverance. The Jews tried it with the Apostles, those arch-heretics and disorganizers who were turning the world upside down: and the Pagans tried it; for the Apostles mightily disturbed the quiet of pagan establishments and pagan faith wherever they came—and, at the Reformation, the church of Rome tried it. You know what I mean. I hope you would not resort to fire and faggot, scourging, imprisonment and the scaffold, as means of restraining heresy.

D.—Well, I don't say that I would.

T.—But if you *should*,—who would really be the heretics, according to the sense of the word heresy, as we find it in the New Testament? Would it not be they who make divisions in the church?

D.—Certainly.

T.—How many faiths has the church?

D.—One: “There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

T.—Did I not describe that one faith just now?

D.—I suppose you did: I could not find any fault with your description of it.

T.—If there is one faith, is not he the heretic—are not they the heretics who propose another?

D.—Certainly. And, therefore, you and all like you, who have a faith different from the orthodox are heretics.

T.—Very good: the orthodox faith, I suppose, is saving faith; and if that very faith that I described awhile ago is the faith that saves the soul, the faith that Abraham had, and Noah, and the prophets, and the apostles, and the very faith, the profession of which the Apostles required of those whom they admitted into the church, it follows, does it not, that this “Confession of faith” proposed by Mr. Gardezfoi, is not the same with it; and, consequently, that to make use of it, or any other *as the terms and conditions of communion* in, and with his church, is heresy. So, Mr. Democop, if you had the power and the disposition to extirpate heretics by fire and sword, it is from him and not from me you must make your commencement.

D.—I won’t be jeered this way. Come, brother Gardezfoi, let us go.

T.—I have not jeered: I have, in good humor and kindness, but plainly spoken my sentiments: and I hope you will not take offence at what I have said. Tea is ready; let us cool off with that, and adjourn our meeting, to resume, if you please, our discourse at another time.

G. and D.—Agreed.

## CONVERSATION II.

*C and D.*—Good morning, neighbor Timothy: we have come, thus early, expecting to find you at leisure for further conversation.

*T.*—I am glad, gentlemen, to see you, and ready to hear what you have to say. Pray be seated and proceed.

*G.*—In the 9th chapter of John, 18th verse, it is said the Jews did not *believe* the fact respecting the man born blind, and who had been cured of his blindness, till they had called his parents. Now, surely, their not believing, in the case, must simply mean that they did not credit the statement of the fact as it had been given them: and does not this show conclusively,—for one instance is as good as a thousand,—that faith, the opposite of unbelief, is simply giving credit to a statement or testimony: and if so, all your discourse about faith's being trust in a person falls to the ground.

*T.*—You have misunderstood me, Mr. Gardezfoi. I never said that the act of believing was faith or trust, though even believing proceeds from trust or confidence in the veracity of the narrator: but that the phrase believing *in a person* is equivalent to trust in him; for instance, that when the scriptures speak of believing in Christ, or in God, or on the name of Christ, or of God, they mean faith or trust. This is no vain distinction. Let me explain it by an instance: I am a poor black—a slave; and you offer to my master a ransom for me, and propose to me, that if I will follow you, you will take me to Liberia, where I can enjoy the dignity and privileges of a free man, in the land of my forefathers. Now, will it answer the purpose for me to say, I believe what you say is true? Such a faith cometh by hearing. I hear you make the declaration, and I think or believe you sincere in it: but still, I may choose to remain in bondage, rather than to run the risk of losing my life on the passage, or undergo the hazard of acclimation when I shall have arrived on the coast of Africa. But, if my whole soul were in sympathy with the proposal,—if my very heart longed and panted for liberty in the land of my ancestors; though I might not understand any thing of geography, or navigation;—though I had never seen a ship, nor so much as heard any description given, by which I could rationally understand how it were possible for a man to pass in it from one continent to another: in short, though I were as ignorant as an infant on the whole matter of *the how* this enterprize could be accomplished; yet there is one thing which, with all my ignorance, I

might have, and it would answer my purpose, and yours, in making me the kind proposal, better, much better, than all the knowledge that could be obtained on the subject.

G.—What is that ?

T.—Faith: faith in you, as a kind, good man, who, out of pure concern for my welfare, had made me the proposition. And if I had confidence, faith, in your power of accomplishing what you propose; if I knew you to be endowed with more than mortal power and not only a person skilled in navigation, but one whom the winds and the sea obeyed, would not this faith be the very thing that I would need to put my mind at rest, and fix my resolution? And, suppose some of my fellow servants should attempt to jeer me on my ignorance, and ask me what I knew about Africa, or navigation, or the theory of the winds, would it not be a sufficient answer to all their cavils for me to say, I know Mr. Gardezfoi; he is a good man; he is more; the power of God is with him; he would not deceive me; he has manifested his sympathy for me, by proofs that I cannot doubt. Besides; I can read countenances, though I know not how to read in a book, and I see, in his countenance, that, which tells me I shall be safe under his guidance. I have faith in him, and that is enough.

And here allow me to go a little further with the parable, and suppose, that after all this my anxious desire for freedom, and all this my confidence in you, who have put me upon the way of obtaining it, I should, all at once, refuse to sail in the vessel prepared to convey me to Africa, because, forsooth, it was your will and direction that I should go on board in company with other liberated slaves, with whom I could not agree in opinion on such points as these:—How we come to be born in servitude, whether it was by way of punishment for the sin we committed in our great progenitor Ham, or only in consequence of it; whether our deliverance from slavery is to be ascribed to the price paid for our ransom made over to us and reckoned as ours, or whether such payment is to be viewed merely in the light of an expedient necessary in the appointed chain of means for accomplishing our deliverance; whether you made us willing in the day of your power to go to Liberia, by the irresistible force of some secret charm attending your eloquence, or whether it was owing to the moral force of your arguments along with our good sense in appreciating them; whether you were an Englishman or an American; whether it were possible, after we once got on board your vessel, to jump out and perish, or whether we should, as a matter of necessity, reach the coast of Africa at any rate:—I ask, what opinion would men of sense entertain of my conduct, if, upon arriving at the port where lay the vessel ready to receive me *and other liberated slaves*, I should refuse to embark *along with them*, because upon enquiry, I found that their opinions differed from mine on the points I have mentioned, or possibly some other points still more

insignificant! Would it not be this, that I was either deranged, or had been all the while playing the hypocrite?

Now, my friends, allow me to apply this similitude; for I feel deeply concerned on this point: it is of vital importance. Faith on our part is required in the gospel. But faith supposes an object that interests. For, to speak of reposing confidence, or, which is the same thing, exercising faith where we have no interests at stake, is to talk nonsense. And if faith supposes an object, or end to be obtained, it supposes a way of obtaining it; and if in the way of obtaining it there is any thing that devolves on us as a duty for us to do, faith will prompt to the doing of it. It would be idle for a patient to profess faith in a physician, and yet refuse to follow his prescriptions. Now, Jesus is the great physician of souls. Our salvation is the object to be effected. And, let it be ever kept in mind, that this object is not effected *without* us, but *in* us: we are hence required to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that worketh in us to will, and to do his own good pleasure.” Hence the faith which saves the soul not only *trusts*, but works—works by love: and it works to purpose, for it purifies the heart and overcomes the world. And if it were this excellent grace that Bourdaloue had in view in his discourse on the “humility of faith”, I could not object to any thing he has said: for there may be raised, as indeed there have been raised, I know not how many curious and difficult questions on points in theology which faith is ignorant of, and so humble as to confess her ignorance; though that ignorance abates not in the least the firmness of her trust, nor the energy of her power. But the faith of which he speaks is quite another matter, an implicit credence of whatever the church asserts,—or, rather, what a body of heretics, calling themselves the church, presumes to assert are the truths of revelation: and this presumption submitted to and encouraged by such implicit credence, on the part of the people, is the first grand element of heresy or sectarianism. It is the foundation on which are built all the religious exclusive parties of the present day; as it is the ground on which rested all the heresies of former times.

*G.*—Still, I must adhere to our “Confession of Faith.” That, and the Assembly’s Catechism are our standards. Whatever differs from them, I must consider as heresy.

*D.*—And, though I agree with you, Mr. Gardezfoi, in the necessity of a creed, I must differ with you on many points contained in yours. It is Calvinism, which is a system of abominations. I adhere to John Wesley, and—

*T.*—There it is, now: “I am of Paul, and I of Apollos.” One of you says “I am of Calvin and the Westminster Assembly: the other rejects both and says, I am of John Wesley: and I must therefore take the liberty of

saying to you both, as Paul, for the same reason, said to the Corinthians "Are ye not carnal, and walk as men."

*D.*—Do you say I am carnal? I humbly trust, I was converted twenty years ago. Blessed be God, I know the very spot, I saw the heavens opened and the recording angel write my name in the Lamb's book of life,—and—

*T.*—By carnal, I meant what I understood the Apostle to mean, not *unconverted*, but influenced by selfish and worldly considerations. There are, doubtless, belonging to the different sects, christians, not in name only, but in truth; and yet, in the degree in which they are sectarian, in the same degree, they are "carnal and walk as men." For, so says the spirit of inspiration.

*D.*—And, how, pray, do you make it out that I am influenced by selfish and worldly considerations?

*T.*—I addressed you both. And as you are at liberty to shew wherein I have misquoted, or misapplied Paul, I hope you will not be backward, in turn, to do me the same compliment when I deserve it. Passing by the impropriety that there is in the very name of the book which my friend Gardezfoi here calls one of his standards, "The Confession of Faith,"

*G.*—What then would you have it called?

*T.*—Any thing rather than a *Confession of Faith*, inasmuch as simple people may be, and some, doubtless, are, led by it to suppose that if they, in the language of Bourdaloue describing his humble faith, "believe in its truth, without any other evidence that God has revealed it than this only, that men like themselves," viz: the Westminster divines "declare it so to be," and declare this to be the confession of their faith; they, of course, have faith, in the scriptural sense of that term, and so are safe. Let it be called a summary of doctrines, if you please, or rather, the doctrines or tenets of the Westminster divines,—

*D.*—Or rather, *the errors* of the Westminster divines; or, the errors of Calvinism.

*T.*—Whether errors or truths does not affect the question now before us; I shall not, therefore, say any thing about that, but leave it for you and Gardezfoi to settle between you, as best you may. Passing, I say, over the name, I should like to know why you, Mr. G. have adopted this book; not as the confession of your faith, for that, I suppose, you see to be absurd; but as the expression of your opinions on theology: is it because you have thoroughly and painfully investigated all these knotty questions which it contains, and weighed the evidence for and against them?

*G.*—Few of our most profound divines, I imagine, have done that.

*T.*—Why then do you adopt the book?

G.—O, as matter of convenience, and to prevent the endless discord that would else ensue.

T.—A matter of convenience! And there you are convicted of being carnal. It is a very convenient thing, no doubt, to have a book which a body of people may wear as a badge of distinction, which whoever wears will be cherished, *in the spirit of the brotherhood*, and that in proportion to his zeal in defending it! A very convenient thing, too, no doubt it is, whenever a man makes his appearance, who, from his situation, talents, learning, or reputation, becomes an object of envy to his brethren, to have this same book at hand as an instrument to crush him!

G.—Do you accuse me of such things?

T.—I accuse nobody. I have never yet, however, found the man—clergyman or layman—and I have conversed with not a few on the subject,—who would acknowledge, *in private*, that he believed *every* thing in that book, taking the words of it in their plain, literal, obvious meaning. By very few, indeed, in the Presbyterian church are opinions in theology entertained which coincide, in all points, with the language of the “Confession.” Their opinions, in fact, are not derived from this book, but from the Bible and from the discourses of divines, whether read in books or heard from Sabbath to Sabbath, from the lips of the living teacher; who himself seldom thinks of the creed which was composed for him by the Westminster divines, but in his preparations for the pulpit goes directly to his Bible, which he interprets for himself, under the guidance of that sense of his own spiritual wants which every good man constantly feels. He takes it for granted, all the while, that his preaching is in accordance with “The Confession of Faith,” and so do his hearers. In fact, neither he nor they ever think of comparing the one with the other. He refers them to another standard, and tells them to “search the Scriptures” for the truth of what he utters. His discourses being practical, he finds no occasion for introducing even the mention of the abstruse and knotty questions of theology. In truth, his secret persuasion is, that to do so would not be for their edification: so that these parts of “the system” are, virtually, laid aside, as useless lumber. In the mean time, it may be said that he preaches according to the system of Calvinism; but it is so modified, and explained, and, in various ways softened down and smoothed off, by reducing its sharp corners, that it remains no longer that rugged and craggy thing which it seems to be, as presented in “The Standards of our church.” It is, indeed, utterly impossible to express, in short compass, the different parts of so vast a theory as that of Calvin, so as not to present, some where, the appearance of absurdity or contradiction. The very first sentence of the “Confession” exhibits a case of this kind: “Although the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do, so far, manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God, as to leave men

inexcusable; yet they are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of his will which is necessary unto salvation." Take this sentence by itself, and aside from all modification and explanation, and it contains a shocking absurdity - since it implies that God has placed the greater part of the human race in circumstances which *necessarily* ensure their eternal condemnation, and which, nevertheless, render them *inexcusable*; two things that are in palpable and glaring contradiction, one to the other: since necessity and blame cannot meet in the same case, the one always excluding the other. I am perfectly aware, that Calvinists have explained away the difficulty in a manner satisfactory to themselves, and in a manner too, that, perhaps, ought to satisfy every candid and considerate mind that is capable of taking into view the whole system, if not respecting the truth of the system itself, at least respecting the magnitude of the difficulty that stands in its way. But, in the explanation of the difficulty, nice distinctions must be made, and a chain of arguments must be followed out, from point to point, through a vast and thorny region, which none but the boldest spirits have attempted to explore, and none but the vainest have ever supposed they had explored sufficiently. Since then, the opinion contained in the very first sentence of your "Confession" is, at best, but a doubtful opinion which, without a great deal of explanation and modification, cannot be made to appear even plausible, how preposterous is it to set it down as an *article of faith*, and in the very front of the whole; as if for the purpose of erecting, at the very threshold of your communion, a barrier, to repel such as the Apostle has commanded you to receive, such, namely, as are "weak in the faith;" or, to speak more correctly, *all* who, in the language of Bourdaloue, have not that happy "*humility of faith*" which boggles at nothing which has the authority of "mother church" to recommend it, however repugnant it may be to the moral sense and reason of mankind! The same may be said respecting the dogma of reprobation, which, as the confession states it, strongly savors of supralapsarianism, a part of "the system" which nobody, so far as I know, now believes, whether in your church or out of it. There are, doubtless, not a few who, as you say, acquiesce in the use—or, I should say, abuse—of the standards as a matter of convenience; and because they were handed down by tradition from the fathers; and because they serve as terms of union and communion among the members of a particular church. But, while they answer these purposes of convenience, they answer another purpose; that of heresy;—rending the church of Jesus Christ; making divisions between those who reciprocally acknowledge each other as his disciples—and affording opportunities for those to act with greater effect whose delight it is to sow discord among brethren. For, as to their preventing discord, they have—perhaps I should say rather, the abuse of them, has multiplied discord and strife a thousand fold. I say, the abuse,

of them; for I should not be opposed so much to these summaries of doctrine, were they not employed to divide those who are one in the faith.

G.—How can that be? Were you and I one in the faith, we would both adopt the same creed, the same standards; would we not?

T.—Alas, the pernicious force of evil habit! When men will persist in using forms of speech without meaning, or having a meaning that they reject! Have not you and Mr. Democop the same faith in God and Jesus Christ, the sent of God?

G.—Yes, I hope so, or we would not account each other christians.

T.—You are one in the faith, then, are you not?

T.—I must admit it.

T.—Yet *you* are *for* this book, this creed, about which we have been talking; and he *against* it. That is, your *faith* is the same, your *opinions* *different*.

G.—I see it now. Creeds are designed to make people agree in opinion.

T.—And hence their name of standards. A yard stick is the standard by which you measure cloth:—What do you think christians did when they had no better standard than “The Law and the Testimony?”

G.—They disputed, I believe, as we do now.

T.—Yes; and the apostles reprov'd them for it, and exhorted them to “study the things that make for peace and the things whereby one may edify another:” but, in matters of opinion, the apostles allowed no standard. Every man was left to think for himself; and the only principles laid down for the regulation of these matters were these two; first “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind,” i. e. be sincere in the opinions he holds; and, second, “Not to condemn one another,” in matters of opinion; but to allow to every other the right that each claims for himself, that of thinking for himself in such matters. These are the Apostle’s principles. And whoever acts in opposition to them is—a heretic. By the way, the explanation of this matter that I have just given, is the only one that enables me to understand the description of “the heretic” which Paul has given in the third chapter of his Epistle to Titus, 11th verse, “Him that is a heretic, after the first or second admonition, reject, knowing that such an one is perverted, (turned aside,) and sins, *being self-condemned*.” The heretic is turned aside, that is, from the faith, because he substitutes opinion for faith, and lays that stress on the former which is due only to the latter; and in doing so he sins, errs, commits a radical mistake, and is “self-condemned,” because in erecting his own private opinions into a rule of judgment, by which to exclude others from his communion, he “condemns himself,” to the same fate when *they*, in their turn, undertake to judge him by *their* standard: in the very point

in which he is a heretic, he condemns himself, in as much as, in making his rule, which, as the lawyers say, to be a good one must work both ways, he makes a rule which condemns himself. So, when the Pope excommunicated Luther, Luther, in return, excommunicated the Pope. Which was the heretic, the pope who made the rule, or Luther, who applied to the pope the pope's own rule, you shall judge. Now, since my explanation of heresy enables me to understand what Paul has said about "the heretic," does not this afford a pretty good proof that my explanation of heresy is the right one, especially when it is considered, that no other explanation that has been given of it, or, as I think, can be given, can make the passage I have quoted intelligible.

G.—But where do you find your authority for the two principles which you say the apostles laid down in relation to difference of opinion among Christians?

T.—Here is a Greek Testament: read with me the 14th chapter of the epistle to the Romans: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations, (*diakrisis dialogismos*,) not to discriminations of reasonings. The sequel shows to what the apostle refers by these discriminations—discriminations founded on the different reasoning of different persons about the same things. They are the distinction of meats and days, which as is well known, many of the early Jewish converts contended, owing to their cherished prejudices in favor of Judaism, was still binding on the conscience. Such as held this opinion the apostle directs, though they might be called, and justly called, weak in the faith, to be "received" into communion and christian confidence by their brethren, and permitted quietly to retain their opinion, and not to be troubled or to trouble others with disputations about it. And it is worthy of remark that the apostle denominates those who entertained scruples of conscience on the subject of meats and days "weak in the faith;" because such as were strong in the faith, feeling a deep concern about the vital points of Christianity, were, of course less apt to have their attention drawn off to matters of minor importance, or foreign from the subject which chiefly interested them. "One believeth that he may eat all things: he that is weak"—in the faith, namely—"eateth herbs." Now, how are these persons to treat one the other? "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not: and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth, for God hath received him." Mark the reason, God hath received him: and mark who they are with whom this reason will not serve. That God receives a man, is, with them, a small matter, they will reject him notwithstanding, as if their authority were paramount to his, or, rather, transcended it! Let such daring heretics attend to what the apostle further urges, verse 4, "Who art thou that judgest another's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth—and stand he shall, for God is

able to make him stand." Let the puny legislators for conscience think whom they oppose, when they resolve to put down one who, for daring to think for himself, has fallen under their censure.—5. "One makes a distinction between one day and another; another not:" Let each be satisfied in his own opinion.—6. "He that regardeth the day regardeth it for the Lord," that is, he is governed by the respect he has for the Lord's authority in the observance of the day—"he that regardeth not the day, for the Lord he doth not regard it"—that is, his respect for the same authority restrains him from observing the day—"he that eateth" meat, such as the other deems unclean, "for the Lord he eateth, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, for the Lord he eateth not, and he giveth God thanks," for other provisions which he is allowed to eat. "For none of us liveth for himself, and none dies for himself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, for the Lord we die: whether, therefore, we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For, to this end, Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and the living. But who art thou that judgest thy brother, or who art thou that settest at naught thy brother, for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." This is an awful challenge, it appears to me, to such as undertake, as all heretics do, to condemn and set at naught, others, on account of differences of opinion in matters such as those of which the apostle is treating.

G.—Yes, truly, it is an appalling challenge; and it ought to be so felt by such as are guilty—but are there any such? Any, I mean, among Protestants, who condemn and set at naught their brethren on account of such differences?

T.—It is not my intention to cast reflections on individuals. I shall, however, give you, at another time, some facts that have fallen under my own personal observation, merely by way of specimen. In the mean time, let us settle, if we can, the difference between matters of faith and matters of opinion. It is of the utmost importance to a clear understanding of the subject before us.

G.—Proceed: I am all attention.

T.—Faith, then, is trust in a person; divine or saving faith is trust in God, as revealed to us through the Mediator. So faith in Christ is, in the answer to the 86th Question of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism briefly and, I think, with admirable propriety and force, described by the words "receiving and *resting* upon him," &c.

G.—I am satisfied with what you have said on that point. Go on.

T.—Well, then, let me ask what is, in the nature of things, necessary in order to trust in a person. Is it not, first that we should know him to be trustworthy, and, especially, in the enterprise in which he would engage us: second, that we should have our hearts in the enterprise: third,

that we should be aware, that his aid is indispensable to its accomplishment ?

G.—This I think is all plain from the nature of the case, and might be very well illustrated by the parable of the slave, made use of by you in your former conversation.

T.—Since we are agreed in this point, then, tell me whether a full persuasion, on my part, that God is willing, in and through Christ, to become the God of my salvation, will not lead me to exercise faith in Him, that is, provided the other two requisites are present and realized in my experience, namely, that my heart is in the enterprise of my salvation, and that I know that in God alone it can be accomplished ?

G.—Certainly.

T.—May I not, then, have this persuasion without being able to decide on the truth or falsity of an hundred opinions—"doubtful disputations"—contained in the Confession of Faith—the book so called ?

G.—I could answer you better, if I knew to what you refer.

T.—I mean such opinions as those contained in chap. 3, sec. 7, on the subject of reprobation, where it is stated "the rest," that is, all mankind but the "elect," "God was pleased—for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by and ordain to dishonor and wrath for their sin," &c.—and those relating to original sin, chap. 6, sec. 3, where it is stated, that "the guilt of this sin"—that of our first parents "is imputed to their posterity"—"whereby" sec. 4, "we are wholly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to *all* good and *wholly* inclined to all evil,"—and those relating to the perseverance of the saints, as stated, chap. 17, where it is said to "depend on the decree of election," &c.—and those respecting the condition of such as having never heard the gospel—cannot be saved;" see Larger Cat. question 60. I might mention more, but these instances may suffice to show what I mean by matters of opinion.

G.—Do you reject them as false !

T.—That is nothing to the point. They may be true, or they may be false. I care not, so far as relates to the question in hand, which is this; are they matters of *faith* ? If they are, then it is impossible for me to have faith, and, of course, to be saved,—in plain terms, I must be left to perish eternally, if I cannot believe them ; and, as the great mass of professing Christians do not believe them, if they are articles of faith, and not mere matters of opinion, there is no hope for them—they must eternally perish.

G.—I would not go so far as that. Nor does our church, as you very well know. We only say, that such as hold these opinions cannot be of *our communion*. Still, they may be christians. So I acknowledge Mr. Democop here to be a christian brother, though I know he does not hold these opinions. He belongs to *his* church, I to *mine*. We are on good

terms; we agree to differ. We do not expect to change our views on these points: and so we never discuss them.

*T.*—Very well: that is doing as the apostle directs in the 14th chap. to the Romans, as we have before seen. But if Mr. Democop were of your church, and held these same opinions which he now does, what would you do with him?

*G.*—Censure him for heresy—of course.

*T.*—It is you that would be acting the heretic then, in rejecting from your communion one whom the apostle has commanded you to receive. But see your inconsistency: you give that allowance to one of another church, which you refuse to one of your own. This reminds me of what I once heard a famous Doctor of the Presbyterian church say. “He fought with none but Presbyterians,” because he was one himself. Your communion is based on the principle not of unity of faith, but unity of opinion, and you, as christians will commune with none but those who agree with you in opinion.

*G.*—Exactly so.

*T.*—Exactly, in the teeth of what the apostle teaches in the aforesaid chap, Rom. 14,—and exactly in the teeth of what he teaches also in the 15th chap. particularly in the 7th verse, where he sums up his remarks on the subject in the following remarkable exhortation: “Wherefore receive ye one another as Christ also hath received you to the glory of God.” If, then, Christ receives us on the sole ground of our faith, on the same ground should we receive one another.

*D.*—It is time to be going, Mr. Gardezfoi. Suppose we all meet to-morrow evening at my house. I want to hear more on this subject; but I shall reserve what I have to say till Timothy has exhausted his quiver.

*T.*—I hold no offensive weapons. Arrows and quivers—creeds and barbed dogmas—I leave to heretics. I take only shield and buckler. But please remember the point I must consider as established, viz. that heresy is that which violates the unity of faith by cutting the church into sects, by the use, or, if you please, the abuse of creeds—summaries of opinions—disputed points.

## CONVERSATION III.

*T.*—I have come, Mr. Democop, according to invitation, and am happy to find our friend, Mr. Gardezfoi, with you.

*D.*—We are glad of the opportunity of further discourse, and hope you will proceed: for it belongs to you, being the oldest, and most learned to lead the way.

*T.*—As to learning, I make no pretensions to superiority: but this I admit, that I have, all my life made religion the subject of serious thought, and that, for several years past, I have studied the scriptures, not as a controversialist or sectarian, but, as I trust, for the purpose of knowing what is the mind and will of God, as therein revealed to me; in other words, to learn my duty.

*G.*—That is certainly the right way; and I have, since our last conversation, been thinking that, perhaps, it is the fault of most Christians, I suspect it has been mine, that we have depended too much on those who have gone before us for our knowledge, and too little on the scriptures themselves.

*T.*—I rejoice greatly to hear you say so. What we receive upon authority, in the exercise of that “humility of faith” so much extolled by Bourdaloue and the church of Rome, does us little good. It has, in fact, done us a great deal of harm. It is a sad affair to surrender understanding and conscience to the control of another. Deference to a fellow mortal is all that is due—not blind submission.

But to our subject: in our last discourse was shown the difference between matters of faith and matters of opinion. (*See note A. in the Appendix.*) We agreed that faith is one; that this unity of faith is the foundation of union—or ought to be—among Christians; and that it is sect, or heresy, that breaks up this union, or prevents it, by substituting matters of opinion in the place of matters of faith. There is another unity which I wish to present to your notice, that of which the apostle speaks in Ephesians 4, 3, where he exhorts them to “keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace.”

*G.*—Will you tell us what you understand by the spirit here—for it is said you have become Unitarian, and I received a letter the other day, detailing a number of alarming facts—if true—that have recently been reported against you in the east. In short it is said—and I think you ought

to know it—that you are “on the way to infidelity.” Here is the letter—it gives names and places—and is not confidential.

*T.*—(Reads.) This letter is not at all strange. People who make opinion their faith, think, of course, a man is an infidel who rejects or doubts their opinion. It has been said that it is better to believe too much than too little in religion. This saying, like many other sayings aphoristic, may be true in some things and not in others. If a man suspected his friend, I think the danger would lie on the side of believing too much. For four years of my life, I was rendered the most unhappy of mortals by believing certain opinions of the character and government of Almighty God, which I have since been compelled to either lay aside or greatly modify; and, if I am not much mistaken, my faith has been strengthened by it. A body bloated and swollen by dropsy or intemperance is not a sign of strength: and the apostle calls him “weak in the faith” who believed in the obligation upon christians of the law of Moses, in regard to the distinction of meats and days. See Rom. 14th chap. on which we before commented: and this was believing too much. He is an unwise engineer who, if called to defend a fortress, would extend too widely his line of defence, and none are, in fact, in greater danger from the assaults of infidelity than the opinionated bigot, who lays the whole stress of his religion upon a system of opinions, and feels as if his title to heaven were taken away if one of them should be shaken or controverted. In fact, if his faith has no better foundation than such a system of opinions, though they were every one true, he is an infidel—and not merely, as your correspondent says of me, “on the way to infidelity.”

*G.*—But I want you to come to the point and tell me truly what you understand by the word Spirit, in the text you quoted; “keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.” Is it not the Spirit of God, the third person in the Adorable Trinity, who dwells in believers?

*T.*—In Rom. 11, 8, you read of the spirit of slumber; in 1 Cor. 2, 12, of the spirit of the world; in chap. 4, 21, of the spirit of meekness. Curran, the Irish orator, says, “I speak in the spirit of the British law.” By spirit in these phrases—and hundreds of the like import are at hand—do you understand a person? And when Paul, speaking of the incestuous person, whom he directs the church at Corinth to expel, 1 Cor. v. 3 and 4, says, though he was absent from them in body, he was present in spirit, and enjoins it upon them, when assembled together, and *his spirit* in the assembly with them, “to deliver such an one unto Satan,” &c. do you understand that Paul consisted of two persons, and that one of them was at Rome writing the letter, and that the other, which he calls his spirit, was, or would be, at Corinth, at the meeting of the church there?

G.—No. I cannot say exactly how I understand him. What say you does he mean ?

T.—Does he mean, or can he mean, any thing else than that the moral judgment which he had expressed in the case, in his letter to the church, would be there when the letter should be received and publicly read ? So, when we read, Mark xiv. 38, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak ;” and when, Luke i. 17, it is said of John, “he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias ;” and when Mary says, verse 47, “my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour ;” and when it is said of the child Jesus, verse 80, that “he grew and waxed strong in spirit ;” and when he said to his disciples, Luke ix. 55, “ye know not of what kind of spirit ye are ;” and when, in Luke xi. 13, Jesus says, “how much more shall your Heavenly Father give a holy spirit to them that ask him”—not *the* holy spirit—the article is wanting in the original : and when, John iv. 23, it is said, “the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth ;” and when Jesus says, chap. vi. verse 63, referring to what he had *before* said about “eating his flesh and drinking his blood,” “it is the spirit that giveth life, the flesh profiteth nothing : the things which I say unto you they are spirit and they are life ;” and when, Acts vi. 3, the church at Jerusalem were ordered to elect seven of their number, “full of a holy spirit and wisdom ;” and when, Acts xvii. 16, “the spirit of Paul was excited”—exasperated—at seeing the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry ; and when, Rom. i. 9, Paul says he “serves God in the spirit ;” and, chap. ii. 29, that he is a Jew who is one in spirit ; and when he speaks of “serving in newness of spirit,” chap. vii. 6 ; and in chap. 8, where he speaks of “walking in the spirit ;” and of “the law of the spirit of life, in, or by, Christ Jesus, making him free from the law of sin and death ;” and in chap. xv. 30, when he entreats his brethren by their “love in the spirit ;” and when,—to pass over an hundred other instances,—he says, 2 Cor. iii. 17, “The Lord is the Spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty”—liberty from the law of Moses, namely, for of that he had been treating ; and then adds, verse 18, “We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord ;” and when in 1 Cor. xi. 10, we read, “For the spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. For who knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him ; even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God ;”—I ask, if an attentive consideration of these and such like passages where the word spirit occurs, is not sufficient to show to any one versed in the style and manner of the writers of antiquity, sacred and profane, what the word means ?

G.—My mind is bewildered by the multitude of instances. What do you say is its meaning; for to me it is not clear?

T.—I shall direct your view of the object, through an avenue on the other side of it; through which you will perhaps discern it more clearly.

G.—Do: for I confess I do seem to discover things that I did not see before, yet dimly, as if through a fog.

T.—It will clear up as we proceed.

G.—Proceed, then, I am impatient.

T.—Consult with me, then, if you please, your Greek Testament, 1 Cor. ii. 14; and compare this verse with the 1st verse of the next chapter. Here, you perceive the apostle distinguishes three characters: the one he calls "carnal," (*sarkikos*;) the second "spiritual," (*pneumatikos*;) the third he calls "intellectual" (chap. ii. 14, *psuchikos*.) Our translation renders this last "natural," the word for which would have been *phusikos*. Let us dwell, a little, on these distinctions. To the living principle in man we ascribe three distinct modes of acting, with their correspondent feelings. First, we have the power of moving our limbs, perceiving by the senses, receiving pleasure by the senses and appetites. In all these, there is felt, what some have called "an organic impression," and that indicates itself to our consciousness, as if it belonged to, and were felt by, the body, the flesh. The pleasures of sense and appetite are the sum total of the happiness of the fleshly man, either as now felt, or as recalled to remembrance, or anticipated in the future. A short and striking picture of the happiness of such a man is given, Luke xii. 16, in the parable of the rich fool, who, in contemplating the enjoyment to be derived from his accumulated stores, expresses himself in these terms, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink and be merry." This is the carnal man. Again: there are exercises of our immortal nature, attended with their appropriate enjoyments, which make no sensible impression on the body, or any of its organs; such are the various operations of the understanding employed about the truths of science and literature, which open a vast field of delightful contemplation to men of cultivated minds. One who is capable of exercises and enjoyments of this kind rises in the scale of dignity, as much above the fleshly man as *he* does above the "ox that eateth grass." Him the apostle denominates "the *psuchical*," or intellectual man. That this is his meaning must be evident from the passage itself; for to say that the things of the spirit of God are not discernible by the intellect, is to announce a truth that is both undeniable and important; whereas, to say that the natural man cannot know them is the same as to say, that man has not naturally faculties to know them; and if so, he would be no more susceptible of any benefit from revelation than the beasts themselves. The intellect of man is simply conversant about truth. But there are things discernible, which, though intimately connected with

truth, as intimately as heat is with light in the rays of the sun, are nevertheless not seen by the same mental eye that fixes on truth as its object, but by another power, which is developed in man when he becomes *pneumatikos*, spiritual.

G.—Has man naturally this power?

T.—Yes: though it may never be developed. In the sensualists it is merged in the flesh. Intellectual pursuits do not call it into exercise; though they do not, like the lusts of the flesh, directly war against it. This, in the passages before quoted, is called spirit. It is this to which Jesus refers in his discourse with Nicodemus under the image of being born—"born of the spirit," John iii. 5.

G.—You do not deny the doctrine of regeneration, then?

T.—Far from it. It is the one thing needful. Religion without it is vain.

G.—Did you not tell us, just now, that man had this power naturally?

T.—I said that man possessed naturally the power of discerning moral beauty; or, in the words of Paul, "the things of the Spirit;" but I added, that in some the power is never developed;—they are not born again. So, the unborn infant has eyes, though, till born, it sees not. But the analogy must not be pressed too far; for even the unregenerate can perceive moral beauty; they know how to admire a generous action; they approve what is just and fair, and are disgusted with villainy and injustice. But it is usual to speak of men according to their predominating qualities. We call him selfish, in whose character a regard to self is the ruling principle, though he may, to some extent, be just and even generous; and him, dissolute who is given to pleasure, in the prevailing bent of his inclinations, though he may sometimes restrain them; and him, a miser, whose heart is supremely devoted to riches, though other and better principles than avarice may exist within him. So the scriptures speak of him, in whom the spirit, that is the renovated moral powers of his nature have the ascendancy, as a spiritual man, and of him, as carnal, in whom fleshly lusts and passions predominate.

G.—And, do you say, that by the word spirit, in the sacred scripture we are to understand the renovated moral powers of man's nature? I had always thought, that by the spirit we were to understand the spirit of God—the Holy Ghost. And this, it appears to me, is its meaning in the phrase, "the unity of the spirit," in that very text which you are endeavoring to explain.

T.—And do you think the apostle, in exhorting christians to keep the unity of the Spirit, really feared they would, or could, rend in pieces the Holy Ghost! Let me, however, ask you another question. Is not the moral nature of God the same with the moral nature of man, allowing for the infinite disparity between man as a creature and the Creator! In

other words, is not benevolence, truth, justice, mercy, the same in God as in us? Are not, in other words still, the principles of the divine law—which has been, with beautiful propriety, called a transcript of the Divine perfections,—are not these principles eternally and every where the same? And when we are required to be holy as God is holy,—and when “beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord” we are said to be transformed into the same image,—and again when we are said (2 Pet. i. 4,) to be partakers of “the (a) divine nature” and when, (and this quotation is clearly and fully to the point) it is said (1 Cor. vi. 17,) “he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit,” can any other meaning be attached to these expressions than this, that they are so many ways of expressing the truth of the identity of moral excellence wherever it may be, whether in God, angels, or men? If so, we are prepared to understand what is meant by “the unity of the Spirit.”

*G.*—But, lest I should forget it, I wish to know whether you think, as you seemed to intimate just now, that regeneration means nothing more than giving the ascendancy in man’s nature to that spirit, or those moral powers, which existed in the person before regeneration.

*T.*—Nothing more:—and do you suppose this to be a small matter?

*G.*—Not so great but that a man might regenerate himself,—or, at least, might have this change effected upon him by the force of circumstances—education—moral suasion.

*T.*—Not so: “Leviathan is not so tamed.” Man is dependent; and in himself, without strength to effect in himself so great a revolution. His heart, alas! cleaves to earth,—is infected by the spirit of the world, which engenders in it a thousand evil passions and delusive hopes. It must be quickened, electrified, magnetized, by God’s spirit, brought in contact with it by the gospel, where, in the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ—in the mighty power of that love of God which beams forth from the cross, it may receive an attraction which will enable it to rise into the region of spirit, and approximate the Eternal Source of all goodness.

There is a sympathy of the spirit. The presence of a good man makes us better; it is felt in our spirits, overawing whatever there may be in us that is wrong, inspiring us with good thoughts and resolutions, awakening and strengthening our love of virtue, prompting us to noble deeds, and fortifying us against temptation. There is something so majestic, so full of dignity and grandeur in a spirit of holiness and purity, that it strikes even the wicked with awe. So Satan is represented as cowering with fear and shame in the presence of the good angel,

“ Abashed the devil stood,  
And felt how awful goodness is,  
And virtue in herself how lovely, felt  
And pined his loss.”

What the soul of man needs to give its moral powers, the spirit, the ascendancy over passion, and sense, and appetite, and the feelings that belong to a low and grovelling policy, which regards nothing but what is gross and earthly, is, that it be brought into the presence of that Spirit, which is the native home and source of moral perfection. This Jesus does. By him we all have access, by one spirit, unto the Father. He is the way the truth and the life. Into the holiest of all a new and living way is opened by his blood. Through him beams out upon us the glory of God—his ineffable goodness and grace; his love, mercy, and condescension. Did ever teacher present such sweet and touching images of the paternal character of Deity as Jesus has done! God taking care of the young sparrows; numbering the hairs of our heads; loving us in our sins; sending his Son to instruct us in the way to Him; suffering, bleeding, dying on the cross for us—the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God! That he might bring us to God! What an achievement of love and mercy! Now, the whole method by which this is effected is called, 2 Cor. iii. 8, the ministration of the Spirit, because there is in it a moral efficacy that acts upon the spirit of man—an influence—allow a bold expression—from the Spirit, the heart of God, reaching to, penetrating, purifying, exalting the heart of man—degraded, sunk, lost—once lost, now found, recovered, redeemed, regenerated, adopted, saved!

This holy influence, this divine spirit, received on earth—acted out by man in the several relations in which he is placed towards others around him, above him, below him—making every creature within its sphere of operation feel its benign effects—would it not harmonize every thing in the church, and even in human society at length, to the very ends of the earth?

*G.*—Certainly it would.

*T.*—Here, then, we have the apostle's idea; “the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace.”

*G.*—I must confess, that there seems to be great plausibility in what you say; I feel my interest in the subject greatly increased; but I would like to know what is the precise bearing of your remarks on the subject before us.

*T.*—In our former conversations, was it not agreed, that the fact of substituting a matter of opinion for a matter of faith is heresy, sect?

*G.*—Yes: as thereby the unity of the faith was violated.

*T.*—Exactly so: and now I am prepared to develop another element of heresy, sect; that, namely, which violates or sets aside The Unity of the spirit, for a Unity of science.

*G.*—Cannot the spirit and science co-exist?

*T.*—Yes: but not on the same subject, any more than you can erect two buildings on the same foundation. A man may have the spirit of Christ,

the spirit of religion, the spirit of God, and he may have the science of Astronomy, but if he says the science of Astronomy is the spirit of Christ, he commits a radical mistake.

The propensity to philosophize is greatly strengthened by education and literary and scientific pursuits. The facts of nature's shewing, phenomena, reduced to classes, and these classes considered as to their points of correspondence, and dependence constitute in any branch of science, the system according to which that science is taught. Thus, we have systems of botany, systems of anatomy, systems of mineralogy, systems of astronomy, of grammar, of logic, of rhetoric, of metaphysics, of political economy, and a long list of others, which, taken together, make the Encyclopedia of knowledge. This love of system men have brought into christianity. The acute and disputatious Greeks led the way, long ago. And, since that time, the history of christianity has been little else than an account of systems, their assailants and propugnators; and the weapons and skill of the scientific combatants. The subtle and endless distinctions of Aristotle's logic, the spirit of which obtained an early admission into the church, gradually impressed themselves on the matter of theology, which was admired or reprobated, according as the system by which the stamp was made, was or was not of the orthodox type; an affair determined by councils sometimes nearly equally divided, and by popes succeeding popes, whose decrees were sometimes according to one system, and sometimes according to an opposite system, just as the changing tide of public opinion might happen—in connection with political interest—to determine. At length, it was seen that people were scandalized by these discrepancies, and the disputes that grew out of them, to prevent which it was proved from S. S. that the church possessed the attribute of infallibility, and, consequently, that what she pronounced through her head, the vicar of Christ, and God on earth, to be true, was, by an implicit faith, to be believed—credenda—the creed. Thus what began in philosophy ended in dogmatism: and thus it will ever be, when men make of religion a science.

Thus the matter stood at the commencement of the Reformation. The Protestants, so called because they solemnly protested against the usurped authority of the so called Universal Church; exercised by the clergy with the pope at their head, in determining the creed, that is to say deciding by a simple decree what was truth and what error, rejected the established system or creed:—but they did not perceive the folly of creed-making. They too must have a system. They too viewed religion as a science, and the bible as containing the scattered truths of that science; which, therefore, it was their duty like honest philosophers, to pick out, gather together, and arrange into a system. And to the work they went, with all the talents and learning and industry they possessed. And that

was not a little. But, considering the work they were at, it was certainly not enough. For what was it they were about? Making a system. Of what? Of the conceptions of the Eternal mind. Respecting what? The Infinite, the boundless, the unknown! Their projected system was to be a tower, whose top should pierce the skies, and overlook the universe and eternity. They failed, of course, as did their prototypes on the plains of Shinar; for the enterprise was too great for mortals; their language was confounded; they divided into companies: and each company built a system: so that the whole face of christendom has become dotted over with the structures of these puny builders—ant-hills, rather than towers; the abodes of angry insects, ever ready to bite and sting each other, except when they make a truce, for the purpose of annoying a common enemy. A set of opinions are extracted from the bible, and put into the form of a system, and this system is held more sacred than the bible itself; inso-much that many make a religion of their orthodoxy, which consists in a steady, not to say obstinate, adherence to these opinions. They are viewed as a sacred and precious deposit to be kept, explained, guarded and defended with the most vigilant jealousy and the most ardent zeal. They are called God's truth. His honor is supposed to be concerned in their preservation. And men feel as if to surrender one of them would be to put their salvation itself in jeopardy.

Lest I may be thought to magnify the danger of abusing creeds by substituting them in the place of the word of God, and even in the place of vital godliness itself, I will quote a passage from "Clap's Defence of the Doctrines of the New England Churches," as it appears in the the July number of the "Princeton Review," for the present year. "This Confession of faith," they say, ("The Synod of Saybrook,") "they offer as their firm persuasion, well and truly grounded on the word of God, and commend the same to the people of this colony, to be examined, accepted, and constantly maintained. That having applied the rule of holy scripture to the articles of this confession, and found the same to be the eternal truths of God, you remember and hold them fast: contend earnestly for them, as the faith once delivered to the saints; value them as your great charter; *the instrument of your salvation, and the evidence of your not failing of the grace of God, and of your receiving a crown that fadeth not away.*" What is this but saying, "Receive this confession and fight for it, and you are sure of heaven—your orthodoxy will save you?" This passage, let it be noticed, is quoted in the Review without subjoining any caution to the reader. This would not have been done a few years ago. The spirit of sect is making progress. I must confess I am alarmed at it.

Now, is not the man who has suffered himself to slide into this way of thinking, occupying a position altogether different from that which properly belongs to him, and is not the very power of these truths which he

thus holds and maintains—lost to him by his name of holding them! He holds them, in the first place, as a system of doctrines constituting a science, the science of Theology. But such they are not. The truths of divine revelation, supposing those of *his* system to be identical with the truths of divine revelation, were never proposed by their author as matters of science, truths to serve as subjects on which to exercise the powers of contemplation and ratiocination, but as great moral principles to move and purify the heart, and to govern the life: as presenting motives to the will, sentiments and views to the spirit, light to the conscience, models of moral beauty to exalt and exercise the spiritual desires and affections. Their use is, as intimated before, to produce not orthodoxy, or a set of sound opinions, but orthopraxy, or a course of right conduct. To press them into a creed, therefore, is to destroy the life and spirit which they contain. Their spirit evaporates in the process. To illustrate what I mean by an instance or two: the bible teaches that “God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life.” Here the great point is manifestly the love of God displayed in the mission of Jesus—the strength of our Heavenly Father’s affection towards us, his erring offspring, set forth in the person of him who loved us and gave himself for us, suffering even the cruel and ignominious death of the cross for our redemption. Here is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and gave his son to die for us. This is the manner in which the S. S. present this great fact to our view. But, how does it appear when wrought up into a creed or system of theology? First, there must be an enquiry into the constitution of the divine nature, which ends, let us suppose, in the doctrine of a Trinity of persons, as in one creed, and the conflicting doctrine of the Unity of God, as in another creed, to say nothing of the homoousian and the homoi-ousian disputes of former times, the Patripassians, the Gnostics, and I know not what. Next, we must determine what was the state of man, that he needed such an effect of divine benevolence in his favor. It is not enough to leave the conscience of every man to testify against him, that he is a sinner and alienated in heart from God. No: we must go deeper into the matter, and ascertain *how* he came to *be* a sinner. And here we are not to be satisfied with the general and indefinite way in which this matter is proposed in the bible, which tells us, “That by one man sin entered into the world,” but we must ascertain *exactly how* it happened; and after a great deal of philosophizing, we can explain it all—by the covenant entered into between God and Adam, as the representative of his posterity—or by some other scheme—and this our explanation must go into the system as being plainly what God, by Moses, meant to tell us of the matter. And having now fixed and settled this point, we must be cer-

tain, as to what is the precise nature of the evil entailed upon us by Adam; whether it consists in something positive, or in mere privation; what is its principle, whether selfishness, or what; whether the understanding is affected by it, or all the powers of man, soul and body; whether the corruption is total, so that the man is, without qualification, dead in trespasses and sins, before he has committed any actual transgression; what is the case of infants, whether they are not guilty of the sin of Adam, and in what this guilt consists. And having fixed all these points, and a great many more, to our minds, and placed them in our system, we next proceed to enquire into the nature of the Son of God, the constitution of his person, and on what principles of law and justice—taken from the policy and jurisprudence of the Romans, as laid down in the Pandects of Justinian, and copied into the codes of the states of modern times—judging, I say, of the jurisprudence of heaven, and the laws of his Eternal throne, by what knowledge we have got from these respectable sources, we can determine to our own satisfaction *how* it is, that the Son of God can save from sin. And our explanation of this point, too, goes into the creed as an essential part of our system—which we call—the gospel system—the orthodox system. Gainsayers will cavil and object; but if they do they shall be denounced as heretics, infidels, disorganizers!

And, yet again, there is another point, more difficult still, to be settled; and that respects the application of the Atonement by Christ and the nature and extent of it. Themes full of difficulty and obscurity, which Jesus, in his parables of the prodigal son and the insolvent debtors, and the other parts of his doctrine, did not properly solve. But we must do the best we can: and after we have laid down a clear and satisfactory account of the metaphysics of regeneration, attended though it be with knotty points of ability and inability, passivity and activity, and free will, and effectual grace, and efficacious grace, and common grace, and irresistible grace—after, I say, we have determined all these matters, and many more equally essential to salvation, and set them in their proper places in the system; and after we have thoroughly studied the system, and gazed at it again and again with fond admiration, as being the very truth as taught in the bible; and after we have felt our hearts glow with a holy zeal for the truth of it, because it is God's truth, and committed to us for safe keeping, then—why then—what then? Why then, while we have thus busied our heads with this puzzling science of theological system making, we have been removing our hearts farther and farther from the influence of the truth as it is in Jesus! Jesus! thou divine teacher, let me come away from all these perplexing systems, and all this babbling of vain philosophy, and like Mary, the weeping penitent, let me kiss thy feet! Let me gaze at thy cross, and hear thy words of prayer for those who have smit-

ten the thorns of their mock-diadem into thy bleeding temples, and scourged the torn flesh from thy body with their whips, and driven home the rough spikes through thy palms and thy feet when they fastened thee—thou suffering Son of God—to the infamous wood. And let me catch the spirit of thy faith and thy love, which enabled thee to triumph over earth and hell, death and the grave. And in thy resurrection, let me see thee, thou conquering Son of God, giving a pledge that faith in thy God and my God will not deceive those who have it, and that the love which gives it energy to accomplish good at the expense of sufferings and reproaches, toils and sacrifices, will conduct those that follow thee in thy renovating work to that state of glory where thou art. Let me thus imbibe the spirit of thy doctrine and of thy example, and I care not how the men of orthodox opinions settle among themselves the points of doubtful disputation, about which they incessantly contend.

This practice of extracting from the bible materials for a system is attended with this further danger, that the constructors of the system place those parts of it, which, it may be, are clearly contained in the bible, or fairly deducible from it, on the same level with those other parts of their system, which, indeed, have no other foundation than their own authority, supported with whatever show of reasoning they may have been able to make. This may be quite satisfactory to themselves. But still, it is no more than their own reasoning, and ought not to be placed on the same footing with the word of God. Nay: it is not at all improbable, that the spirit of sect induces some to proceed even farther than this, and to lay down the principles of their reasoning, their system, their creed, as the standard to which the bible itself must be made to bend. Such teachers, did they candidly speak out, would say to their disciples: "Search the scriptures, make them the man of your council, a light to your feet and a lamp to your path. Read them, and study them diligently; *but understand them according to the creed.*" Is not the Catholic church more consistent, when she says to her private members, "Read not the bible at all; for you cannot understand it. Learn from the priest what is contained in that holy book."

It is seldom that men engaged as a party in any cause are themselves fully aware of the motives by which they are actuated, and of the secret strength of habit and education in determining the amount and direction of that zeal which inflames them. I add, therefore, in the third place, that the tendency of this practice of making systems in theology and elevating them into standards of orthodoxy, is to generate and maintain a spirit of partial fondness towards the brethren of the same creed, and of indifference, unkindness, and even hostility towards those who are not. The peculiarities of the creed become the badges of the party; by which all of

the party distinguish a friend from a foe. And these peculiarities are the more insisted on because they *are* peculiarities, the very reason why they should be regarded as of small importance. For, it will not be denied, I suppose, by any but the most blinded and obstinate bigots, that those things in Christianity, which all sects hold in common, are precisely the things that are of essential importance; while the points on which they differ are, for the most part, comparatively insignificant. Yet, each sect, when it comes to be the question as to their own peculiarities, recede from what, in the general, they were so ready to grant, and magnify to themselves the merest trifles, just because they are the distinctive marks of the sect. They constitute their badge, and their badge must not be parted with. Does not this look like a determination to perpetuate the divisions which heresy has made?

To show, in a still clearer light, the nature of this element of sectarianism on which we are now remarking, let it be asked, who are the persons to insist the most on the distinguishing points of their sect, and to push them into the greatest extreme? If I mistake not they will generally be found to be persons in whom there is but very little of the spirit, persons the least distinguished for piety and moral worth. In all cases where party violence prevails, the most worthless of the party are sure to carry their violence to the greatest length—to insist most on keeping up the party distinctions, and to denounce, in the strongest terms, those who are not of the party. In this way they think to make conspicuous their zeal for their party, a virtue which seldom has to wait long for its reward. If, as before stated, party distinctions may be considered as so many badges, used to distinguish brethren of the fraternity from strangers and aliens, or, perhaps, I should rather say, as so many standards, around which the separate hostile bands are arrayed for battle, then he who wears his badge the most conspicuously, and advances his standard in the face of the enemy with the most portly bearing, and the most show of zeal and gallantry, is likely to gain credit for most devotion to the honor and interests of his party. Hence we find that the most zealous partizans of the different sects have rarely failed to carry much farther the offensive peculiarities of the sect, than did the original founders of the sect, themselves. It is no uncommon thing to find Calvinists far more Calvinistic than Calvin—(See note B.)—and Wesleyans more Wesleyan than Wesley.

*D.*—Your remarks, it appears to me, apply rather to Antinomians than to Wesleyans or even to Calvinists.

*T.*—The antinomians are not a sect by themselves. They do not constitute a church of their own. If they did, it would not be hard to guess whom they would prefer for pastor, provided they elected on the principle of choosing the most efficient. But, as the personage referred to is said

to have a large diocese, it is not likely he would choose to confine himself to one congregation, or even to a single sect. An Antinomian is a man whom grace has set free from moral obligation. Now, into this hideous heresy the spirit of sect unquestionably runs. A man's mind is limited. He can care for only a certain given circle of affairs. He can have but one supreme concern. Now, if orthodoxy is this with him—if to study the creed of his sect, and to maintain himself sound in the faith—for belief in the articles of his creed is what he calls faith—be his chief concern—his religion in a word, it cannot be otherwise but that his heart should be corrupt and his character depraved; and it will be well if even his course of life should not become openly wicked. As an instance to illustrate my meaning, let me refer you to the 7th page of "The Catholic Metropolitan Almanac" for the present year, where under the head of "Fasting Days," you will find the following directions laid down to guide the conscience: "Every Friday in Advent; every day in Lent, Sundays excepted; the Ember-days, which occur four times in the year, viz. the Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, 1, immediately after the first Sunday in Lent; 2, in Whitsun-week; 3, immediately after the 14th of September; 4, immediately after the third Sunday of Advent; the Vigils of Whitsunday; of Saints Peter and Paul; of the Assumption of All-Saints, and of Christmas. When a fasting day falls on Sunday, it is observed on the Saturday preceding. To fast consists in abstaining from meat, in eating but one full meal in the day, and that not before 12 o'clock. Besides this repast, a collation is allowed in the evening, which, however, should not exceed the one fourth of an ordinary meal. Milk, except to color tea or coffee, eggs and warm fish, are prohibited at the collation. All those who have completed their twenty-first year, are obliged to observe the fasts commanded by the church. The sick, women with child, or who give suck, they who are under infirmities, who are advanced in years, or whom painful or laborious occupation will not permit to fast without great prejudice to their health, are dispensed from fasting. But every little headache, want of sleep or other transient and inconsiderable indisposition, are not sufficient reasons to justify an exemption from the law. To act prudently, and with a *safe conscience* in this matter, we should always consult the clergyman who is charged with our spiritual welfare, and follow his advice with respect to the time of Lent. It should be remembered that, if the bishop of the diocese grants a general dispensation to eat flesh meat at our meal on certain days in the week, those days do not, on that account, cease to be fasting days; and it should be further observed, that fish and meat are not allowed to be taken at the same meal. They who, for good reasons, have been dispensed from this law of the church, should endeavor to comply with it as far as their circumstances will permit, and supply what is wanting by other works of penance."

Conscience having but a given force to expend, can it be supposed that they who are scrupulous about tithing this mint, anise and cummin, will not, of course, neglect the weightier matters of the law ?

It is the nature and tendency of all kinds of superstition to put a cheat upon conscience, by inducing the opinion that a man's duty to God consists in something aside from, and, it may be, contrary to, his moral obligations. So the Thugs in India follow murder as a business, believing that their deity has called them to it. The Rev. Dr. Dick, referring to the declaration, used by certain antinomian writers, "That God sees no sin in believers," says that by it, "nothing more is intended than that he sees in them no obligation to punishment, no ground on which he may proceed against them as a judge:" and then adds the following judicious remarks: "We may say of this, and some other paradoxes relative to the same subject, which caused much discussion more than a hundred years ago,—such as, that believers contract no new guilt by new crimes; that God is not offended by their sins; that confession and repentance and prayer are not necessary to pardon; we may say of them that, if not altogether false, they are a pitiful play upon words, and that, while the sentiments which they were meant to convey, so far as agreeable to scripture, might be defended, the language ought to have been universally condemned. It is a poor employment to turn the doctrines of religion into riddles." And under the head of "Good works," he says, "Antinomianism is indignantly exploded by all the enlightened friends of the gospel, and their due place is assigned to good works in the system of religion, but it seems to have tainted the minds of not a few, who in words disavow it, as we may infer from the suspicion or dislike with which they view expositions of moral duties, and the desire which they discover to be always entertained with discourses on the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. The time was, when the minister who explained and enforced relative duties in detail, was heard with a jealous ear, and was in danger of being assailed with the accusation of legalism. This unfounded prejudice, I believe, is passing away; but it still retains its influence upon the weak and ignorant. Good works should always be inculcated on Christian principles; and when they are placed upon a proper foundation, and enjoined for the ends which the Scriptures point out, they are an important and necessary part of public instruction. Ministers should "affirm, constantly, that they which have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works." This is the command of Paul; and he does not act in his spirit, who, intimidated by popular clamor, always insists on doctrinal topics. In this case he pleases not God but man. The ignorance which finds fault with him is entitled to no respect; and, if the censure is dictated, as in some cases we have reason to suspect, by a worse principle—the disinclination of the human heart to holiness,—and the presumptuous hope of salvation without it—it

should be treated with the contempt it deserves. When men would separate what Christ has joined together, and set one part of his religion in opposition to another, the audacious attempt should arouse the holy zeal of all the friends and defenders of the truth. By the same authority which explodes or throws into the shade one part of the system, the other may be subjected to the same dishonorable usage. If one class of men demand faith to the exclusion of works, another may as reasonably demand works to the exclusion of faith. He is a wise steward, who arranges every thing in its proper place, and brings it forth in its order and season. He is a faithful minister, who enquires not what are the fancies and tastes of his audience, but what is the truth; and, regardless of human censure or applause, fearlessly teaches men "to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded them."

*D.*—Was this Dr. Dick, whom you have just quoted, a Calvinist?

*T.*—To be sure he was, and an able and enlightened defender too, of the Calvinistic system: not only so, but what, perhaps, will still more surprise you, he was a Professor of Theology of the Associate Reformed Church in Scotland, of the same body which in this country is called "The Union people," a branch of the Secession.

*D.*—I did not think, I confess, that so much good could come out of Nazareth. The sentiments you have quoted resemble those of Wesley and Fletcher, more than those that I would expect from a Calvinistic Doctor of Divinity. I am truly surprised.

*T.*—You ought not to be, however: since, you know that all *real* Christians, being led and taught by the same spirit of Jesus, "whom having not seen they love," do, of course, feel and think alike on all essential points. And they would soon come still closer together in sentiment, attracted by mutual love, were it not that their sectarian prejudices, fostered by a blind devotion to creeds, still keep them apart.

But the sectarian has somehow got the notion into his head that to study religion as a science, and to preserve his creed pure from all error is, if not his whole duty, at least the highest and best part of it: and though he may not be called to propagate it abroad beyond the hallowed enclosure of his own church;—yet, within those limits, and especially in his own mind and in the minds of his children, he is under the highest obligations to preserve it. To bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, means, as he understands it, to teach them his system of opinions—his creed. And, as for himself, he hopes to die in the triumphs of faith, saying with the apostle, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," provided he can only, to the end of life, maintain unshaken his belief in the articles of his creed. And thus, is his science of religion a shield to keep out of his heart the spirit

of religion. His heart!—the nether mill stone is not harder than the heart of a man who has the science without the spirit of religion—it is after his covetousness or ambition ; and there is nothing so maliciously false that it cannot devise, and give to his tongue or pen, to propagate to the injury of any one who may chance to disturb his tranquil repose on the downy couch of his scientific speculations.

*D.*—I have sat mute all this time, listening. Now I am tired, though not of the subject nor the company. Suppose we here drop the matter of discourse, and resume it at my house, to-morrow afternoon.

*T. and G.*—Agreed.

CONVERSATION IV.

G.—Good afternoon, friends! I am happy to find, from your punctuality, that your interest in the subject under discussion, has increased, as well as my own. But, Timothy's discourse of yesterday, has somehow, left on my mind an impression that has troubled me. If religion is not a science, its truths are of little importance; investigation useless; and the way is opened for all sorts of extravagance and folly, to come in under the name of piety. The religion of mere emotion is of no account. Truth must go before feeling, and be the basis of it. Now, truth known and apprehended is science. Your discourse, Timothy, seemed to me, to reduce religion to mere feeling, or, what you call spirit, and to disparage truth as of little importance.

T.—Far be it from me, to say any thing in disparagement of truth. What I wish to expose and condemn, is the method of teaching what are supposed to be the truths of the Bible,—teaching them as if they were matters of science,—teaching them in an abstract form,—endeavoring to reduce them to system, as is done in creeds and formulas: and what, especially, I desire to condemn, is the substitution of a unity in theoretical opinions for that unity of spirit, on which the Bible insists. It is not the object of the Bible, to be contemplated theoretically. To make it a textbook of science, is to misapprehend it, misapply it, pervert it. It is a grand Directory. It shews the path of life, the way to God and happiness; and to employ oneself in extracting from it, a syllabus of abstract points of doctrine, with the view of requiring a theoretical belief in it, as the basis of christian fellowship, is to substitute the coldness, and lifelessness of scientific speculation for the spirit: the one may produce orthodoxy; the other is that, and that alone, which will produce orthopraxy. What would you think of the conduct of a traveller, who should hope to arrive at his journey's end, by merely contemplating a chart or draft of the way, while he stirred not a foot, or made a single effort to change his position? Or, that I may present the same thought in a somewhat different light, what would you think of *his* conduct, who, in order to get an impression of the beauty of "the human face divine," should try to learn it from systems of anatomy, or who, in order to gain an insight into the beauties of nature, should have recourse to treatises on botany, mineralogy and meteorology?

G.—Such conduct were preposterous, certainly.

T.—And why, but because the impression that beauty makes is not to

be learned from science? It comes direct from the object to the soul, leaves its image there, and there it abides, a growing element of refined delight. In like manner, the glory of the "ministration of the Spirit"—a phrase beautifully descriptive of the christian religion,—shines direct into the spirit of him who receives it, deposits there the living essence of Heavens own morality—"love, joy, peace."

G.—Still, I demand, is there no such thing as the science of theology?

T.—Of that afterwards. In the mean time, I want to show how dangerous it is to teach, or learn the *Christian religion* as a science, or rather, to pretend to do it. Abstracting, arranging, classifying, deducing conclusions from premises:—the spirit of man never was, never can be reached by these arts. It acts like instinct, and its movements are spontaneous towards its object, when properly presented. This is the excellency of Jesus, as a teacher of the spirit, he presents, by parables, and by his own bright example, goodness, love, compassion—the very heart of kindness—the very spirit of—God. The Bible contains prescriptions for the sick, and the convalescent. It is not a theory of medicine.—Suppose, now, you are sick. The physician calls, leaves his prescription, directs how the medicine is to be administered. You and your family, as soon as he retires, enter into discourse. You draw from the words of the prescription, certain abstract truths, relative to the ingredients, which compose the medicine, how it was made up, who discovered it, and where, when, and how; the proportion of the ingredients; their respective properties, and what effect each would have, were they administered separately. And then the system of the patient, must be discussed; and how it come to be diseased; and the nature of disease in general; and so forth. Meantime, the prescription itself is laid by carefully, and the medicine with it: but a summary of the truths that have been deduced, after long, and frequent discussion, from the prescription, is given to you the patient, and you are to read it, study it, believe it, defend and maintain it against all gainsayers, and doubters—and instead of the medicine, you must swallow the paper—the summary of abstract truths, and thrust it down the throats of as many others as you can.—Do you laugh? This would be acting precisely as sectarians, heretics, have done with the Bible, except, that in the case as I have supposed it, the summary of abstract truths has been deduced from the prescription, by the patient himself, with the assistance of his friends, whereas, the summaries of doctrine, creeds, which sects substitute for the Bible have, in almost every instance, been made not *by* the persons that use them, but *for* them by others.

G.—But, if I find a truth in the Bible, what harm can there be in transferring it to my summary, or creed?

T.—None: if you *do* transfer it: but what if you transfer it without

its roots, and connecting fibres—or what, if you do not transfer it at all, but some split stick, of human manufacture?

G.—Explain yourself. Give an instance.

T.—Take, then, if you please, this, the doctrine of the saints perseverance.

D.—That “damnable doctrine,”—“Once in grace, always in grace.”

T.—It is a doctrine, which I think to be fairly deducible from the abstract systems of theoretical opinions, or creeds, of nearly all the sects called evangelical.

G.—Surely, you do not intend to call in question, the truth of this precious doctrine, so full of comfort to the believer! So—

D.—So replete with encouragements to the false security of the self-deceiver, you should have said.

T.—It is a doctrine, which I feel myself bound neither to affirm, nor deny; because, I think, it is neither affirmed, nor denied in the Bible; and can neither be affirmed nor denied in any method of preaching, that takes the Bible for a model. In practise, it is perfectly useless.

G.—You amaze me. Would you take from the christian, “the full assurance of hope”?

T.—But, how is a man to know he *is* a christian? He compares his character with that described in the standard; in the Beatitudes, for instance, in the beginning of our Lord's sermon on the mount: he sees there a resemblance, or he finds, if you please, an exact similitude between them. This is his judgment of himself: He may be mistaken, as many have been. His evidence is imperfect, and his judgment fallible. His evidence may grow brighter and brighter, but it will never be complete, till he has persevered unto the end: nor, so long as he remains in this world, will his judgment ever become infallible. He cannot, therefore, know to an absolute certainty, that he shall, when he dies, enter into Heaven, unless, with the same certainty, he knew he should persevere in the way of righteousness till he dies. The abstract doctrine of perseverances cannot, therefore, add any thing to his present comfort; since the fact of *his perseverance*, which is necessary to complete his evidence at present, cannot be itself anticipated. When, like Paul, he shall “have fought the good fight,” it will be time enough, to raise his voice to the pitch of triumphant exultation: till then, it will be safer for him to adopt the caution of the same apostle, when he says, Heb. IV. I. “Let us therefore, fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into that rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”

G.—What, then, becomes of the faith of assurance?

T.—I have met with a few, who professed to have attained what they called the faith of assurance; but I confess, it seemed to me to possess in its composition, much more assurance than faith. Faith, in this much

abused phrase, cannot mean certainty; for then, it would be not faith, but sight, a kind of evidence not allowed us here. That fearless confidence in their present state, and final salvation, which some christian teachers profess respecting themselves, and hold out in their exhortations to others, as a most desirable, and not very difficult attainment, is always to be suspected. An aged disciple, like Simeon, embracing the Saviour in his arms, may sing his "*Vnne disnittis*:" but, in the course of the christian warfare, the less shouting the better. A conflict, begun in bravado, is apt to end in the groans of a shameful discomfiture. "There are first, that shall be last;" let us remember, who has told us this, and we will "pass the time of our sojourning here in fear."

G.—Do you, then, not believe the doctrine?

T.—As I said before, I neither believe nor disbelieve it. In the abstract form in which it is put, I believe it is an idle question, one which never ought to have been raised, and which never can be profitably discussed. The matter of final salvation, the Sacred Scriptures always present to us in the way of exhortation, and in connection with the vigilant, zealous and persevering discharge of all our duties. Our salvation we are required to "*work out with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that worketh in us, to will and to do of his own good pleasure.*" Is not this enough? Why should we lay down a position *in thesi*, which the Bible always puts *in hypotesi*? Do we want something to dispute about? Why multiply knotty questions which serve to perplex the minds of the simple, and afford matter of doubtful disputation to the vain and empty polemic? (See note A. in the Appendix.)

G.—Well: enough of this. Can you give another instance?

T.—Yes, scores of instances; but it would be irksome, and unprofitable. I shall, however, refer you to those disputes which have so much agitated the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, and at length divided it into two hostile sects, now at law with each other; the disputes I mean, respecting the Atonement. That the mercy of God, through Christ, will be extended to all true penitents is a doctrine of the Bible, which christians of all sects believe: but they differ on certain abstract points or theoretical questions belonging to the philosophy of the subject: questions which touch not the doctrine itself, but *the How* of the doctrine. Such, for instance, as this, whether the Atonement is special, that is, made for a certain number only, the elect, namely; or, whether it is general and indefinite as to its object; and this, whether the atonement is vicarious, and to be viewed in the light of a payment exacted from the surety, instead of the real and original debtor, who has become insolvent. All such questions, are theoretical; they belong to philosophical systems which have been as their authors think, extracted out of the Bible, and they will be answered differently according to the different systems, which

men have embraced. Still the different answers contain *opinions*, nothing more.

G.—Not so: this is a vital point. He that denies the vicarious nature of the sufferings and death of Christ takes from the condemned sinner the only plan of salvation which is consistent with the justice, truth, and purity of God and the demands of his government.

T.—“Takes from the sinner the plan of salvation!” The sinner, never laid the plan. It is not his, but God’s, and God never revealed it to him: and, in my humble opinion, it is too deep and vast for the sinner to comprehend. The plan! It is not a plan, if it is not consistent with itself, and so seen to be, by the mind, which theoretically contemplates it. It may be consistent, but if neither I, nor you, nor Calvin, nor any other man, can shew it to be consistent, it is no plan to us; it must resolve itself into mystery.

G.—But is it not, and has it not been shewn to be consistent?

T.—Hear what a late distinguished Divine, (Dick,) a staunch advocate of the “plan,” says on the subject. After explaining the doctrines of election, and reprobation; essential parts of the “plan,” both of them,—this theologian, who though a sectarian in theory seems to have been a man of good sense, and a sincere christian, subjoins the following candid confession. I read from the “Calvinistic Family Library,” vol. 2. p. 195. “It is objected, that the doctrine of predestination is inconsistent with the invitations of the gospel; for how could God offer salvation to men, if he had excluded them from it, by an immutable decree? and how could he earnestly entreat them to believe, although he had determined to withhold his effectual grace? There is a greater difficulty here than orthodox Divines sometimes seem willing to acknowledge, and the mode in which they meet it, is not always satisfactory. A distinction between the secret and revealed will of God, must be admitted, and in many instances is perfectly intelligible; but it is not easy to reconcile them, when, in revelation, he declares, that he is not willing that any should perish, but, by his secret counsel, has left many to perish. He who sees no difficulty here, has not, as he probably imagines, more understanding than other men, but less.” (Democop here claps Gardezfoi on the shoulder, and exclaims, mark that!)—(Timothy continues reading.) “It may be remarked, however, that this objection does not press upon the system of absolute decrees alone, but meets every man, who simply admits the Divine prescience of future events;” (Here Gardezfoi, claps Democop on the shoulder; and exclaims, mark that!) “for how, it may be asked, can God in sincerity invite, beseech, and exhort with men, evidently with a design to effect a change of their sentiments, although he knows infallibly beforehand, that they never will change? I know what may be said in answer to the objection; but I confess my inability to give complete satisfac-

tion to myself, or you. *Let us suspect our own views of the subject, rather than suspect the sincerity of God.* Of the latter, we are certain; it is essential to his moral character, and is the foundation of our faith in his testimony, and our dependence upon his promises. We can never be certain that we understand the subject of predestination so well as we understand, that God is sincere. The latter truth, therefore, let us hold fast; whatsoever may become of our speculations, respecting the former. Here we may err, because the subject is mysterious; but on the other point we cannot be deceived. The gospel is preached to every creature. All are commanded to believe, and encouraged by the promise of salvation. God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. If doubts, respecting these comfortable declarations of scripture, should be suggested to us from any quarter, let us repel them as hostile to our own peace, and subversive of religion, and say with the Apostle, "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar."

G.—Your author gives up the Calvinistic system, then, does he not?

T.—Not at all. He only finds it impossible to reconcile it with the sincerity of God; candidly owns this, and resolves the difficulty into the inscrutable mystery of the subject.

D.—Dr. A lam Clark found the same difficulty, but extricated himself by denying the Divine foreknowledge.

G.—Aye, and so got into a worse one. Nobody now, not even of his own sect, defends the position of the Dr. But, I wonder why theologians are not, at length, aware of the true reasons why every one of their systems labors, in some point or other, under the same difficulty.

D.—Pray, tell us the reason.

T.—It is simply because they attempt to reduce theology to a science, a thing which to a finite mind is impossible, because it has in it, the infinite. When beginning to construct their systems, they should have been deterred by the challenge, "who can, by searching, find out God, who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" It is high as heaven, what canst thou know? It is deep as hell, what canst thou do? The extent thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea." As Dick himself suggests, it is the intellectual *imbecile*, who sees no difficulty in such subjects. Men boldly systematize the infinite. With the infinite, as a medium of proof, it has been demonstrated that every sin, the smallest delinquency, that a poor weak erring mortal can be guilty of, is of infinite malignity, because God, against whom every sin is committed, is infinite; and so it has been laid down as an undeniable truth, that "every sin deserveth Gods wrath and curse, both in this world, and that which is to come." The Stoics have been justly ridiculed, for maintaining that all sins are equal. But here the point is made out to a demonstration; for if sin is an infinite evil, all sins are equal, since the infinite admits not of

degrees. The infinite is a rock, which cannot be wrapped up and borne in the cobweb theories of our weaving: it will break through them, and become a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence in our way. This, every candid system maker is constrained to confess; so soon as his theory comes in contact with any of the plain practical truths of the Bible, and of human experience. Then he exclaims, like Dick in the passage I have read, there is a mystery here! Pity, the reflection did not occur sooner, even at the moment when the theorist discovered that the infinite was before him. But those who would by their systems turn religion into a science, have not been so sharply sighted, or so honest as Dick: they have advanced their proud speculations into the rank of articles of faith, and put them into the creed; withheld their charity and fellowship from such as would not go with them in their opinions; and thus have they been guilty of not keeping the unity of the spirit, in the bonds of peace.

G.—Is there then, no plan of salvation?

T.—Yes, truly. But it is Gods, not ours. His understanding is infinite. He comprehends it. We cannot.

G.—But, if he has revealed it.—

T.—So far, and no farther can we know any thing about it. And why should we expect to understand more? We, who are of yesterday, and know nothing;—we, who know little or nothing of ourselves—what our essence is, what our life is, how a trinity of faculties, soul, mind, and spirit, are united in one principle of consciousness—with a duality of natures, the material, and the immaterial;—we, who know neither what mind is, nor what body is, nor how they are united—or whether indeed they *are* united, or only conjoined; nor how they reciprocally act, and are acted upon, the mind moving the body, and the organs of the body conveying intelligence to the mind;—we, who know nothing of the great powers of nature, that are at work in us, and around us, caloric, galvanism, electricity, light—what causes gravitation, gives polarity to the needle,—or growth to a blade of grass,—and then turns that grass into blood and bone and nerve, and mucilage in the animal that feeds upon it;—we, to whom all nature is nothing but a vast complication of mysteries, of which nothing, absolutely nothing, is known to us perfectly, directly, adequately; but what little we know, we know imperfectly, indirectly, obscurely, partially;—we, who cannot understand a fly, an atom of sand;—we, who are confounded by the little, as well as by the great, by the animalcule which sports, with the myriads of its happy companions, in the hundredth part of a drop of water, no less than by the vastness of the Ocean—or the solar system:—shall such insects as we presume to bring the Eternal and his counsels and policy of government, within the outlines of a plan, such as we can sketch! Or shall we exclude from our charity and fellowship, one of those for whom Christ died, who possesses the spirit of Christ, be-

cause his understanding cannot adjust itself to all the turns and angles of a plan—which, after all, is not a plan, since its lines will not close! Above all, shall the curse of eternal blindness issue from the Most Holy Place, where God resides—"dark with excessive bright" to blast the vision of him—not who dares to fix on it a steady, and presumptuous gaze, but who, conscious of his weakness, follows the example of that prophet, who at the sound of the still small voice," wrapped his face in his mantle, and of those worshipers in the temple above, the Seraphim, who veil their faces with their wings in the presence of God!

*G.*—The trinity, and the atonement are essential doctrines: without understanding them, we cannot be saved.

*T.*—We are lost then. Our case is hopeless. For these things are beyond our reach. They are mysteries.—But, to return to an illustration before used, cannot the patient be profited by his physician, till he knows the nature of the medicine, and the pedigree of him that prescribes it? When I hear the proclamation, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for I am God," can I not obey the invitation, till I have penetrated the mysterious depths of the divine nature, and essence, and subsistence. And as to the Atonement, is it not enough to know that God is satisfied with the expedient, unless I, also, can be made to see how it comports with the Jurisprudence of Heaven. A beggar at the door of Mercy, need I hesitate to receive the bread of life, till I first have learned how it was composed and prepared, and how it can consist with the purity and honor of the donor, to grant it to me!

*G.*—You grow warm, without reason, I think. For if men make a system, the lines of which, as you say, will not close, what harm is there! It is only so much labor lost.

*T.*—I confess I do feel deeply on this subject, and with goodreason. What harm! The body of Christians has been split into fragments; the unity of the spirit destroyed; opinions substituted for faith. Do you see no harm in all this? The harm, however, we may consider afterwards. The thing in itself is now the subject. You say it is only labor lost. It is much worse: for while this labor of making and defending systems is going forward, the real interests of religion are not only standing still, but greatly retarded, and a spirit of idle and unprofitable speculation is propagated from the clergy to the whole mass of the community of christians. The exercise that is given to the powers of the intellect on subjects which these powers can manage is salutary; but on subjects too vast for them it is hurtful. In religion, when made a subject of mere speculation, an interest is created not unlike that which we see take place in games of skill. To understand the game, see through all its intricacies, know how, in a series of movements, each one leads on still further towards the desired result, is an affair of the understanding, capable of

yielding a pleasant excitement. But if the game be played with well practised hands on either side, and some rich prize at stake, the interest felt is sometimes so great as to overstrain the faculties and produce derangement. Now, to a spectator, who understands nothing of the game, the scene that is acted around a gambling table must appear sometimes unutterably ridiculous, sometimes horribly shocking. In much the same light do eager disputants about the abstract and abstruse points of theology appear to persons of plain good sense; and great is the wonder with such that people should suffer themselves to be transported with zeal about matters which are of no consequence, seeing they are placed beyond the reach of the human faculties. A system of abstract doctrines, composed and adjusted one part to another, so as to make it harmonize in all its parts, becomes an object of interest, like the chess-board to the player; it awakens concern, from the exercise it affords to the intellect. Add to this the excitement of emulation, and the hope of victory over a skilful antagonist, and, to say nothing at present of the stakes which are to fall to the victor, a point which will merit a distinct consideration, you have that which is capable of moving the mind even to transports of phrenzy. Change the scene, and, instead of a round table and a company of black-legs, with their cards or dice, figure to yourself a church, a company of blackcoats, with texts of scripture and syllogisms—the machinery is altered, but the spirit of the game is the same in the one case as in the other. Now, if this spirit be introduced among professing christians, instead of the spirit of that religion which they profess—will it be asked what harm?

*G.*—But how does this practice of system-making introduce such a spirit?

The *how* is, in this case, plain enough. A system once adopted and sanctioned is esteemed sacred, and will have zealous defenders. But the Intellect of man, made to be free, will not submit to the trammels of authority. Hence, some will, in the exercise of their freedom, be less mindful of the respect due to the system than they ought, and so the contest begins. And to shew that this spirit of system, thus running into and producing the spirit of the game, as it always does, tends to banish from the minds of man the spirit of christianity, I shall adduce an instance from across the great water, though not for want of instances nigher home.

About the year 1820 the celebrated Dr. Chalmers published a work on the Evidences of Christianity, in which he rejected the internal evidences entirely. His reason for so doing is remarkable. I shall state it in his own words:—"We have," says he, "experience of man; but we have no experience of God. We can reason upon the prudence of man in given circumstances, because this is an accessible subject, and comes under the cognizance of observation. But we cannot reason on the prudence

of the Almighty in given circumstances. This is an inaccessible subject, and comes not within the limits of direct and personal observation." Again, he says, "there can be nothing so completely above us and beyond us, as the plans of the Infinite Mind, which extend to all time and embrace all worlds. There is no subject to which the cautious and humble spirit of Lord Bacon's philosophy is more applicable, nor can we conceive a more glaring rebellion against the authority of its maxims, than for beings of a day to sit in judgment upon the Eternal, and apply their paltry experience to the councils of his high and unfathomable wisdom."

There is, doubtless, some truth in these remarks; but taken together as advanced by their author for the purpose of invalidating the argument drawn from the "internal evidences," by shewing that it is not a legitimate argument, because pertaining to a subject inaccessible and beyond our reach, they have filled me with no little surprise, and especially as coming from a christian divine of such distinguished abilities. How could it have escaped the penetration of such a mind as his, that the objection he raises against the legitimacy of the argument from the internal evidence must recoil, with all its force, upon the argument from the external evidences of miracle and prophecy, on which he is anxious to rest the whole weight of the question? Were the Deity to me an inaccessible subject,—had I no knowledge of him previous to the revelation proposed to me in the sacred scriptures, of what use, I ask, would a miracle be to me? Suppose I saw, for instance, Lazarus raised from the dead, how would this convince me that the effect produced was produced by the power of God, if I knew nothing previously about the power of God? Were I entirely ignorant of the power of God, I could not, without presumption, think or say any thing whatever respecting it, what it could, or could not effect. The raising a dead man to life might be beyond his power, for any thing I could tell. And, if interrogated on the subject, I ought to reply, "God is an inaccessible subject; I have no experience of him; I dare not sit in judgment in a case where I know nothing. It would be an act of rebellion against the humble and cautious spirit of Bacon's philosophy." Besides, suppose I were somehow convinced that the resurrection of Lazarus was indeed effected by the power of God, still that would afford me no good reason why I should rely on any statement made me by his commissioned messenger, were I not previously acquainted with other attributes of his nature, or were his character as to other traits of it, an inaccessible subject. God, I might say, has, by his power, restored this dead man to life before my eyes. For what? To gain my confidence in the truth of certain statements, that are made, or to be made, in his name. But, power and truth have no necessary connexion. God may be a deceiver. I have no experience of his character; nor can I have. It is an inaccessible subject. He may be a selfish and malignant

being; and this very miracle may have been wrought to win and mislead my confidence. The truth is, the very appeal made by miracles themselves, on which Dr. Chalmers is willing to rest the whole weight of the argument in favor of Christianity, is a useless and idle appeal, if made to a man in any age of the world and in any circumstances, were man such a being as the Dr.'s argument supposes. But he is not. There is in his nature, wrapped up in the depths of his spirit, a revelation of God, prior, of course, to all external revelations, and but for this, an external revelation were as useless as it would be impossible, and, at the same time, as impossible as it would be to the beasts that perish. Where did we get our moral perceptions and their corresponding sentiments—our sense of the True, the Right, the Just, the Beautiful, the Fair—the *To Kalon*, as the Greeks called it! Not from the Bible, surely, any more than we got our eyes from the Bible. We use the latter in perusing its sacred pages, but we are not indebted to these pages for our eyes, neither are we for the seeing spirit—the living faith in Moral Goodness—which the Spirit of the Eternal breathed into us, in lighting up within us the principle of an immortal life, in virtue of which we can see God and commune with Him—trace the impressions left by his plastic hand on the face of external nature—and hear the sweet tones of his voice, as they sound through all her lovely palaces—and echo in the recesses of the temple in our own bosoms. No! God is not an inaccessible subject. He is nearer us than any other subject. Our spirit touches His! What am I saying? His spirit pervades ours! In him we live and move, and have our being. We are his offspring. And how could it be thought, by a christian divine and philosopher, that HE had made himself inaccessible to his children—hidden himself from the view of all of them, except a favored few to whom a special revelation was to be made! The Apostle Paul thought differently, for he says that “His eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen” in the visible creation. St. John thought differently, for he writes, “In him was light, and the light was the life of men—the light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.” The Royal Psalmist thought differently, for he says; “The heavens declare the glory of the Lord; the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night teacheth knowledge. There is no speech, no language—their voice is not heard. Their sound is gone out into all the earth; their instruction to the end of the world.”

No; God is not an inaccessible subject. If he were, no miracle, no prophesy, no words nor art of man, could bring him within the reach of our thoughts. We should want an interpreter within, to teach us the import of whatever impression from without might be made upon our senses. Were man made destitute of spirit, how could he scale, by the help of any outward revelation, the lofty heights by which the moral is raised

above the physical! Pleasure he might understand through the soul as affected by impressions made on the bodily senses and appetites; but without spirit, a moral nature, how could he form a conception of moral goodness and beauty? And without a conception of this, how could he, by miracle or any other means, be made to apprehend God? Power he might discover, but power is not God. The skill of contrivance he might discover in the structure of nature; but an Almighty architect of boundless skill is not God. God is a spirit; God is love; God is Wisdom, and Goodness accomplishing their ends. These things he could not understand, from any thing without. He must draw them up from the depths of his own spirit, where God reveals himself first to man, and where every man finds in himself those moral ideas which he puts together, and out of these frames the Grand Idea of which God is the Archetype. There is a faith which cometh by hearing: but before this, in order and importance, there is a faith which the word of revelation pre-supposes, and which, therefore, this word does not produce. According to the representation of the matter, in the parable of the sower, there is required a goodness in the soil, which the seed that is sown upon it has no agency in producing. This is the faith in question. It is what may be called faith in moral goodness. To this the Apostle refers when he says that the word of the gospel was revealed from faith to faith, meaning from the faith, that is, faithfulness of God, its author, to the faith, or trust in Him, existing in those who were to receive it.

When the government of ancient Greece sent abroad a public servant, with whom a correspondence was to be carried on, the matter of which, required secrecy, they adopted the following expedient. Two staves were formed exactly of the same dimensions, one of which the officer took with him, the other remained at home with the government. And should occasion require a communication to be sent, they took a narrow slip of parchment, and rolled it round the staff, beginning at one end and proceeding to the other, till the whole was completely covered. On this, they wrote their communication. It was, then taken off, and sent to the officer. Should it, by any mischance, fall into the hands of an enemy, he could make nothing of it. If it arrived safe, the officer receiving it, unwrapped *his* staff with it, and thus it became legible. Such a letter they called skytale.

The Father of our spirits, when he sent them from heaven into these bodies, gave to each one of them such a skytale, conscience, a moral nature, corresponding to the moral nature of God himself. This is a divine light in the spirit, the oracle which Penn, and Socrates, and indeed all good men of every age and country, venerated, and consulted with so much care. In the proper use of this, we are able to hold correspondence with our Father in heaven, read his mind and will in the skytale, he has sent

us. Those among the Jews, who possessed this in the days when God, by his Own Son, and his forerunner, sent his message among them, received it at their hands, read it, obeyed; and were saved; and thus, in the language of Christ' Wisdom was justified of all her children. Those who possessed it not,—for it may through carelessness, be lost,—“rejected the counsel of God against themselves”—or, as the passage should be rendered, “frustrated the counsel of God, as it respected themselves,” by rejecting the message, and maltreating those that bore it—and so perished.

Now, that, in order to set aside the internal evidences of Christianity, that is, the evidences arising from its spirit—the moral nature in it which addresses itself to our moral nature—Dr. Chalmers should have overlooked the fact, that we *have* a moral nature, owing to which God is to us an *accessible* subject, is truly surprizing, and to be accounted for, no otherwise than, from the spirit-quenching influence which the practise of system-making had on his mind. And if it had such an influence on *his* mind, what may we suppose to have been, and still to be the state of the general mind? We view Christianity as a science; we work it up into a system; the system, we erect into a creed; the creed becomes the standard of faith—the orthodox faith—the watchman cry, “Alls well!”—but the glory has departed, the spirit is gone; a form of dead orthodoxy is all that remains! But, here I must drop the subject; will you meet, and resume it with me at my house, this day week, at the usual hour!

G. & D. Yes.

## CONVERSATION V.

*D.*—Why, Timothy, I verily believe you read nearly all the time. We found you reading on our first interview, and now you are at it again.

*T.*—Reading is of little use without thinking: and were I to read nearly all the time, as you say, without taking time to think, reflect, and investigate, I should derive as little benefit from the exercise as they do, who, in religion, lay aside the Bible, which would set them upon thinking, and take up creeds and systems of theology, where all the the thinking is done for them. But, if you please, I will read you a passage or two out of this book. It is called “Specimens of Foreign Literature.” The passages I wish to read are, one of them, from the pen of Jouffreys, the other from that of Bancroft. They present portraits of two men whose names are dear to humanity, Locke and Wm. Penn.

*D. and G.*—Read, read.

*T.*—Of Locke the author says;—“His love of truth was too sincere and earnest to permit his confinement within the limits of a party. His eye turned freely to the light, without reference to the point from which it came. He rejected the scholastic forms in which thought had been wretchedly trammelled, and gave free indulgence to the tendencies of his mind, which was inclined by nature to examination and doubt, even on those subjects which had hitherto been considered too sacred to be looked into. In an age of affectation and false taste, he had purified his mind from every taint of cant, and expressed himself with a manly simplicity, which gives the charm of freshness to his writings, even when there is no originality in his ideas. The transparency of his style is an emblem of the ingenuousness of his disposition, and of the clearness of his thought. His discussion of difficult and complicated subjects is conducted with such a business-like directness and skill, that we are often tempted to take his conclusions on trust without a careful investigation into the strength of their foundation. The liberal and elevated views, moreover, which he uniformly cherished, on the most interesting questions relating to politics and society; his hostility to every form of oppression; his generous vindication of the rights of the human mind, his singular freedom from prejudice; and the almost childlike artlessness, with which he expresses his opinions, have contributed to win for him the favorable regards of his readers, and, in many cases, to secure to him the renown which we love to yield to the select lights of the human race.”

“Locke, like William Penn, was tolerant; both loved freedom; both cherished truth in sincerity. But Locke kindled the torch of liberty at the fires of tradition; Penn at the living light in the soul. Locke sought truth through the senses and the outward world; Penn looked inward to the divine revelation in every mind. Locke compared the soul to a sheet of white paper, just as Hobbes had compared it to a slate, on which time and chance might scrawl their experience; to Penn, the soul was an organ which of itself instinctively breathes divine harmonies, which are so curiously and perfectly formed, that, when once set in motion, they of themselves give forth all the melodies designed by the artist that made them. To Locke ‘Conscience is nothing else than our own opinion of our own actions’ to Penn, it is the image of God, and his oracle in the soul. In studying the understanding, Locke begins with the sources of knowledge; Penn with an inventory of our intellectual treasures. Locke deduces government from Noah and Adam, rests it upon contract, and announces its end to be the security of property; Penn, far from going back to Adam, or even to Noah, declares that there must be a people before a government, and, deducing the right to institute government from man’s moral nature, seeks its fundamental rules in the immutable dictates of universal reason, its end in freedom and happiness. The system of Locke, lends itself to contending factions of the most opposite interests and purposes; the doctrine of Fox and Penn, being but the common creed of humanity, forbids division, and ensures the highest moral unity. To Locke, happiness is pleasure; things are good and evil, only in reference to pleasure and pain; and to enquire after the highest good, is as absurd as to dispute, whether the best relish be in apples, plums, or nuts; Penn esteemed happiness to lie in the subjection of the baser instincts to the instinct of Deity, in the breast; good and evil, to be eternally and always as unlike, as truth and falsehood, and the enquiry after the highest good, to involve the purpose of existence. Locke, says plainly, that, but for rewards and punishments beyond the grave, ‘it is *certainly right* to eat and drink, and enjoy what we delight in.’ Penn, like Plato, and Fenelon, maintained the doctrine so terrible to despots, that God is to be loved for his own sake, and virtue to be practised for its intrinsic loveliness. Locke, derives the idea of infinity from the senses, describes it as purely negative, and attributes it to nothing but space, duration and number; Penn derived the idea from the soul, and ascribed it to truth, and virtue, and God. Locke declares immortality a matter with which reason has nothing to do, and that revealed truth must be sustained by outward signs, and visible acts of power; Penn saw truth by its own light, and summoned the soul to bear witness to its own glory. Locke believed ‘not so many men in wrong opinions, as is commonly supposed, because the greatest part have no opinions at all, and do not know what

they contend for.' Penn likewise vindicated the many, but it was because truth is the common inheritance of the race. Locke, in his love of tolerance, inveighed against the methods of persecution, as 'Popish practices;' Penn censured no sect, but condemned bigotry of all sorts as inhuman.'

G.—These characters are finely drawn.

T.—And, in general, correctly. Penn, however, did not believe that the soul of man, "was an organ which of *itself*, instinctively breathes divine harmonies," if, by this representation, the author means to leave out of view the agency of the divine Spirit, with which, the soul of every good man is in unison, the presence of which with mans spirit, is that which enables it to "breathe divine harmonies."

There are two kinds of Philosophy; the one looks at human nature, as acted on by the objects that compose the world without us; the other contemplates it, in itself, and its own native energies, which, though often indeed elicited by external things, are nevertheless, independent of them, and capable of moving the mind in opposition to them. There was something of both these kinds of philosophy, in those illustrious men, whose names and characters have been just given. But, Locke had far more of the first than Penn, while he possessed far less of the second. To the production of the highest character, both would be necessary; but whether in equal proportions, will depend on the character of the times. If the times be distinguished by a spirit of action, and busy enterprize; if men's thoughts are all "outward-bound;" if what is present, and in contact with the senses chiefly engages the attention; if the conversation that is heard by the table, and the fireside, as well as in large companies, and on more solemn occasions, and the matter for light reading that issues from the press, in the periodicals of the day, all go towards the external world; and if whatever attention is given to human nature,—for that only, is philosophy, which is employed about human nature—all else is either literature or science;—if, I say, whatever attention is given to human nature as a subject of contemplation, is given to it as its image is cast back upon us, from the concave of the concerns and interests of the bustling world around us, rather than as it is to be seen, or perhaps, I should say, felt in the retired depths of its own native powers, where dwell those living sentiments of the spirit, which have no object in the world of matter, and which, neither by pencil nor chisel, nor even by words, can be properly expressed:—in such times, a man has need of more than an equal portion of that inward-looking principle, which predominated in the philosophy of Penn, to keep him from sinking into the sensual and earthly.

That such is the character of the present times, is, (I think,) but too evident.

Not, that we have too much of the one, but too little of the other. As a

people, there is among us, a great deal of thought employed about that vast assemblage of things, that genius and art employ, in an endless variety of ways, for their various uses, to increase the comforts, the convenience, the elegancies of life. "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed," comprehend not all which we seek. Far from it. We want to have large possessions, "goods laid up for many years." We want to be what is called respectable, independent, and to make an estate for our children. We want place, office, influence, power. To improve the surface of the country, by roads and canals, so as to facilitate commerce, is an important matter with us. To improve the breed of cattle, and all other kinds of domestic animals, is an affair of great interest. The saving of time, by increasing the speed with which we can be conveyed from one place to another, in our chase of profit or pleasure, we accomplish at the hazard of our lives. The chief use, we think, of the physical sciences, is that they shew the artist how he may effect these purposes. Law and a certain regard, beyond what mere law can enforce, to those rules of life, on which the peace and good order of the social state depend, are the basis and sum total of our morality. And the business of education is nothing more than to train our children to habits conformable to these views, and to furnish their minds with such a portion of *useful* knowledge, as may fit them for carrying them into effect, in the business and concern of gaining a livelihood—competence—a fortune.

Now this were all well enough, if this were indeed not all.

D.—You have been describing a worldly spirit, and showing, if I understand you, how Locke's philosophy, more readily chimes in with this spirit, than the philosophy of Penn.

T.—Or the religion of Penn. It was Penn's religion, that gave the turn to his philosophy, and his whole character, and every thing about him.

D.—But, have you not forgot our subject?

T.—No. What I have been reading to you, and what remarks I have made upon it, naturally prepare the way for the consideration of the second grand element of heresy, or sectarianism, to which I designed, in the present conversation, to invite your attention.

D.—But, with your leave Timothy, though your quiver does not seem to be exhausted, I have a bolt ready on the string which I should like to discharge.

T.—With all my heart. Proceed Mr. Democop, I shall be happy to breathe a little—or, to use your favorite figure, I shall even be content to stand as the target while you shoot.

D.—And I think I shall hit the mark. The truth is—and I will be plain with you—you are suspected of a leaning towards infidelity: and I have myself, heard some of your remarks, on Sectarianism, made last

winter at Indianapolis, exultingly quoted by those who include all religion under that name. Our protestant confessions of faith resulted from the conflict with papal Rome. We cannot do without them. It is true of all action, whether of mind or matter, that it must have rules. States have constitutions and laws: Mechanics have their squares and angles; and navigation, the compass, and the modes of sailing. Religionists must have some belief, and Christians, as one branch of the worshipers of a Supreme First Cause, must have a belief, as to "what saith the scriptures." Creeds and confessions, therefore, are the natural product of religious belief; and therefore they are not in themselves wrong, but only liable to abuse, and therefore the abuse, and not the use of them should be the subject of correction. The same thing is to be said of systems of government. What then, is the business of philosophy, of philanthropy, of truth? It is not to war with these things. Would it be wise, in China, to open up to the three hundred millions of her people, the corruptions, the evils, the unfounded pretension of the power, that affects to administer the government of God, in the Celestial empire—(I believe they give it that name) without giving them a knowledge of those counter principles, which would shew them what good government is? The shortest mode of making skeptics in religion, is to convince people that all their opinions are wrong, without showing them what is right: for then they would simply believe nothing. Now, I have attached myself to the church, to which I belong, because I believe its doctrines, and love its communion. It is, I rejoice to say, the largest in the Union. I have been for years a preacher in it, as you know, and I preach according to the views of its pious, and illustrious founders, because I have found them to be the power of God, and the wisdom of God, in my conversion, and because the faithful exhibition of them by the preachers in our connection, is made the means of conversion, from year to year, to the thousands that are annually added to our communion. In short, these truths, and our mode of presenting them, are the means, that have been, and continue to be owned and blessed of God, for producing revivals, by which, He is enlarging, and strengthening our Zion. The great object, we have constantly in view, is the conversion of souls. My labors and preaching, cannot be wrong, if they promote this object, and so strengthen, by the accession of numbers, the interests of our church. You may exclaim against me, as a sectarian, as much as you please. I am for making converts, and in the language of Christ himself, compelling them to come in. This I try to effect, not by physical force, but by moral compulsion; by alarming their fears, exposed as they are, to the curse of God, and eternal perdition. To effect this, I study to portray in the blackest colors, the guilt and danger of an unconverted state, Knowing the terrors of the Lord. I persuade men; uncover hell before their eyes; represent the con-

dition of the lost there, tossed eternally on billows of liquid fire, the worm that never dies preying on their vitals; black despair hovering over them with her raven wings; God himself discharging upon them the thunderbolts of his wrath; upholding them, at the same time, in existence, that they may be immortal in their sufferings. These appeals to the conscience, I follow up by the soothing accents of the gospel of peace; shew the extacies and transports, which follow conversion here, and the glories of the heavenly state hereafter. All this, in the name of this Divine Master, whose ambassador I am, I offer to the mourning penitent. This, in short, is my creed: this is my mode of preaching the gospel; and it is vain and idle, for any man to attempt a refutation of what experience teaches me, to be true; and what, I may say further, the Spirit of God has sanctioned by the seal of his approbation, having made it effectual in the conversion of multitudes.—You seem to believe in the Spirit. I was happy to find it so; for I had understood, you were a Unitarian. Now, here is the testimony of the Spirit, in favor of our Church, and our views.

Compare this religion, Timothy, with your cold, dry, moral disquisitions; and I think, if you are candid, you will acknowledge you *are hit*. What say you?

T.—Neither hit nor hurt. On the contrary, I am greatly your debtor, for furnishing me a statement, which goes directly to illustrate the second element of sectarianism, which I was proceeding to notice.

D.—How so? There is no religion without feeling. I like a religion that I can feel.

T.—And so do I. But feelings may deceive. The stony-ground-hearers received the word with joy, but they had no *root*. Mere emotion is not religion; though there can be no religion without emotion. Emotion, extreme emotion, may be produced by working on the imagination: and the imagination may be powerfully excited, by the machinery of the stage, and by picturesque description, where the conscience is not called into exercise, nor any salutary impression made upon the heart. I have met with people, who seemed to entertain not the slightest doubt of their conversion, and who could locate, with great distinctness, the scene in which it took place, who, nevertheless, gave no good evidence, that their character had been radically changed. They seemed full of pride, and self confidence, garrulous in the subject of their attainments, and experience in religion, and arrogant, in their claims of respect and difference from others, on the ground of a peculiar intimacy and favoritism between them and their Maker. Such were the Pharisees of old, on whom, He who, knew what was in man, pronounced his severest denunciations. The direction given to human nature, by a religion of the sort, when it is joined with a zealous proselyting spirit, is in direct opposition to that of genuine christianity. By a proselyting spirit, I mean not an earnest endeavor

to gain over people to the interests of goodness and virtue, benevolence and piety, but a disposition to strengthen the cause of a sect or party, by the accession of numbers to its side. For it is well understood, to be the case with parties in religion, as well as in every thing else, that the ambition, and other selfish passions of the zealous partizan, are likely to be rewarded in proportion to the numbers he can add to its ranks. A whole people may not think of rewarding those who serve them; and when they do, it may fairly be attributed to gratitude, or rather to a sense of justice. For they are already strong, and have no rivals. But a sect or party, animated with its true spirit, is always wishing to extend its influence, and strengthen its cause. It never feels entirely safe, so long as every thing is not in subjection to its control. And it knows that to secure the zealous efforts of its friends in future, it must liberally reward the services already rendered by its partizans. Interest, and the hope of reward, are the principles to which it appeals, the powers on which it rests for support. Nor is it those rewards only, after which men of the world generally aspire in the walks of vulgar ambition, that have power to allure and inflame cupidity. Money and political distinction are not the only things, that men of ambition thirst after. To guide the consciences of men, to govern their opinions, and to awe their fears by means of an influence derived from the invisible world, is a distinction as dear to the heart, that loves power, as are the sceptre and diadem of Kings. Peter, the hermit, probably, enjoyed the proud consciousness of his power, no less than Napoleon: the phrenzy of excitement produced, in the one by fanatical zeal, was as agreeable to his temperament, and as pleasant in the feeling, as was that thirst for daring exploits, and for military glory, which inflamed the genius of the other. The hero of Austerlitz, for any thing, that appears in his life, was as much a saint as the hero of Clermont. The spirit of genuine religion, which inspires new energy into the heart, and raises a man above himself, may be counterfected by the wild transports of the spiritual impostor. But their opposite origin and character will be seen by their fruits, which are just as different as the fruits of the spirit, from the lusts of the flesh. The few, and indistinct intimations which are given to us in the Sacred Writings, of the things of the invisible world; and given for the most part, with the vagueness of eastern imagery have furnished the elements of a machinery, which may be employed in scene of religious excitement, much in the same fashion, as the poetical fictions of the drama. Whether the stage-effect, produced by such means, may not be mistaken for conversion, by those who operate, and by those who are operated on, is a question of grave and serious moment: but it need not now be discussed. What I mean to propose to your consideration, is this, whether such means may not be resorted to, for the purpose of establishing a kind of spiritual authority over the minds of the people, who

may be brought under its influence, an authority, which is to be wielded for worldly ends?

*D.*—You don't mean, I hope, to charge me with such designs.

*T.*—I charge no body—no individual or sect. They, to whom my remarks apply, will, of course, save me that trouble, by making the application to themselves.

*D.*—But, you are uncharitable. You ought to have some grounds for your remarks.

*T.*—Did you not, yourself, just now, speak of yourself, as an ambassador for God?

*D.*—And did not Paul the same.

*T.*—But, Paul was an inspired Apostle, which you, I suppose, do not pretend to be.

*D.*—You are disposed to carp and cavil. You make a man an offender for a word.

*T.*—I would beg pardon, had I intended a personality, you may have dropped the word casually, and without weighing its import. But I put it to you seriously, to say, whether, with a certain class of men, the manner in which they habitually speak of themselves, both directly, and by oblique references, and allusions is not undeniably such, as to induce the belief, that they look upon themselves, and claim to be regarded by others, as standing in a nearer relation to the Deity, than those whom they address, occupying a position, as it were, between a man, and his God,—a sort of mediators, and as such, capable of exerting some powerful, but mysterious influence, upon the determinations of the Most High, in relation to the destinies of their trembling devotees.

*D.*—I know not whom you mean, by trembling devotees; but I firmly believe, that every true, and honest preacher of the gospel, who is called of God, to the work of the ministry, has, by virtue of his vocation, and the influence of the spirit, which seals it to him, this very power, which you mention, and which you seem disposed to charge upon us, as arrogance to claim.

*T.*—Well: I shall not enter into any dispute with you, about the power. I will only say, that, did I suppose myself possessed of it in the sense, and to the degree in which some preachers, I have known, seemed to think they did, I could not act, as I have seen them acting.

*D.*—What? How?

*T.*—The moment after going through scenes of the most deep and solemn religious interest, in which they addressed their hearers in terms of the most awful, and terrible import, in reference to the concerns of eternity, and their immortal souls, they would indulge in all the lightness, and frivolity of a gay and airy spirit—the trifling tale, the jest, the laugh, the egotism! But, passing this by—for allowances must be made for the con-

stitutional diversities of temperament—and as I said, allowing you to possess the power of which I was speaking, the enquiry is, for what purposes is it used? To be plain, and to come at once to the point, I ask, is it not used for the purpose of making proselytes to a sect?

*D.*—It is expected, of course, that when people are converted under our ministry, being our spiritual children, they will attach themselves to our church: and I go farther, and say, that, unless I should act the hypocrite, I must use what influence with them, I can, to induce them to do so, and that, for the same reason, that I, myself, am attached to it. I gave it the preference, and became a member of it, for that reason. And to be consistent, I must persuade others to follow my example; I must say to them, as Moses to Hobab, come with us, and we will do you good; for the Lord has spoken good, concerning Israel.

*T.*—And, when you promise to do them good, do you not mean, by promoting their worldly interests?

*D.*—Their entire interests—of soul and body, for time and eternity. And why exclude their worldly interests? Other things being equal, we feel bound to give the preference, in trade, custom, business, in short, every way, and in every thing, to a brother. And it is right we should. It is expected that we be mutually subservient to each others interests. All Denominations of christians do the same; and why not we? By sympathy, by mutual commendation, by the enterchange of a thousand kind offices, we have it in our power, without doing injustice to any, to further the designs, and advance the interests of a brother: and may we not exercise this power? May we not confer our favors, as we please? Is it not even required of us to make a distinction in favor of such, as belong to “the household of faith?” Individual man is weak, and helpless, and needs the aid and comfort of society, to support him. The infant, the infirm through age, or accident, the unfortunate of every description, have especial claims upon our charity; and it is convenient and proper, that we should first regard the claims of such as belong to our society. These are the principles on which we act, and if to act upon them makes a man a sectarian, I confess myself one.

*T.*—The amount of the matter is, by your own statement, simply this, that, like the Jews of old, you regard those of your own sect as neighbors and brethren; others as aliens, if not enemies. In the parable of the good Samaritan Jesus teaches a different doctrine. The view of christian duty which you have taken, may be well enough so far as it goes. No one would blame you for extending your regards to those of your own sect. The fault lies in the exclusiveness of your charity. It is confined within limits, that are too narrow. But the truth must be told fully, and that is, that in fact and in practice, there is no such thing as confining our love to those who are within our own church, without doing injustice to

those that are beyond it. To say, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," with the interpretation of exclusiveness put upon it, as the Jews understood it, is in fact to say also "Thou shalt hate thine enemy."

*D.*—I see not how that follows.

*T.*—The quantity of services rendered by society to the individual in return for his, though they may be a full equivalent, rarely if ever satisfy his desires, or even what he considers his just claims. Hence competition arises, and life becomes a contest between different claimants, each putting in his demand for his just share of the advantages and pleasures resulting from public favor and public patronage, and public sympathy. Now, the spirit of sect brings religion into the game, as the arbiter by whose dictum every claim is to be decided. Take a familiar illustration: A. and B. are candidate for office. A. is, in the current phrase of the sect, a brother. But the qualifications of B. are confessedly superior; yet you give your vote for A. because he is of your sect. Is this right? Is it just to defraud the public of the advantage to be derived from the services of a competent officer, and to set aside the claim of merit to advance a favorite?

When the public reward merit with their confidence, merit, to speak in the language of Political Economy, will be produced. The young, especially, will be diligent in improving their talents and cultivating the moral virtues, when they see that the public are disposed to encourage talent and moral virtue. Otherwise, they become discouraged and disgusted; and the great and honorable, and influential places in the community come at length to be filled by men whose zeal for sect is their only recommendation. Nor does the mischief stop even here. For the partiality of sect, thus acted out, tends rapidly to complete the corruption of the sect which cherishes it, and that, in a great variety of ways. For ambitious men will be apt to attach themselves to such a sect, especially if they can boast of numbers, in order to gain popularity; and the minds of the people themselves will become debased and polluted, by the habit of mixing considerations of earthly interests with the offices and concerns of religion. So that their religion itself will become nothing better than a tissue of carnal policy: the temple of God among them will be converted into a den of thieves.

It is not my purpose to go into detail on this part of my subject. It would be too disgusting. A Christian has as good a right as any other man to work for the public, in whatever sphere he is prepared to fill. His talents, skill, industry, and, if you please his integrity, the public have a right to, on the same principle that they have a right to any thing else that they need; and that, on the principle of paying for them according to the market price. And the christian has as good a right as any other man, or should I not rather say, he is as much bound as any other man, to

bring his labor to the market:—but he has no right to bring his *piety* to market, or to make it the ground of any claim to any reward or consideration whatever, which the hands or tongue of mortals can bestow. It must not even be praised. The incense of applause would sully its purity. But, where the spirit of sect prevails, you will see cant and hypocrisy, and especially zeal for the sect, acted out in their most offensive forms; that the countenance of the sect, the custom of the sect, the good words of the sect, and, in a word, the strength of the sect may be gained over to the interests of the individual.

Knavery is never so complete in its character, and so grasping in its desires, and so thorough-going in its measures as when it is tinged with that kind of religious importance which is compounded of superstition, enthusiasm and fanaticism. The school of Loyola may defy the world for adepts in villainy. Yet the Jesuit was not always a knave, in the common acceptation of that term. He as often deceived himself as others. He belonged to an order or sect, whose interest he thought he ought promote by all the means in his power. The end justifies the means, was one of his maxims. Hence he could mix poison, *prompt* the assassin's dagger, and plight his faith in the most solemn promises, in order to betray the confidence thus gained, and all without the slightest remorse.

G.—You put extreme cases. I would allow the reasonable claims of a brother, and no more;

T.—Others, however, would go further. And you yourself might on some great occasion permit the spirit of sect to carry you further than you are aware. Is not every sect, so far as it is a sect, possessed of the same foul spirit? Will they not do things to advance their interest, and to run down and prostrate whatever cannot be made subservient to their views, which a man of honor, though utterly destitute of all sense of religion, would blush to be thought capable of doing, and would really scorn to do.

Every member of the community consumes a certain amount of the product of other men's labor, which, of course, he can procure honestly in no other way than by the products of his own. These, however, he can never dispose of to advantage, unless they possess such a quality and fashion as to give them value in the eyes of the purchaser. The articles that fall under the denomination of the necessaries of life, whether good or bad, are known at sight. Of their quality every one is a judge. In dealing in such articles there is no room for imposition. Nor will people buy an inferior article of this kind at a high price, merely because the producer is of his own sect: though there are some who would even do this. But there are articles of another kind, of which people generally are not possessed of sufficient skill to enable them to judge correctly. Such are what, in the language of political economy, are called immateri-

al products; as, for instance, the services of professional men. Here the element of sectarianism has room to work, and an opportunity to be worked upon. Few are capable of judging of the skill of a physician, or of a teacher in a public institution of learning, but every body can tell what is his religious denomination; and, in the absence of other criteria, that is sufficient, at least for a sectarian. To belong to my sect is a merit: zeal for my sect is a still greater merit; and where these merits are, others may be presumed. As the case, however, generally turns out, such a judgment implies rather too much *presumption*. But a large quantity of this may be reasonably looked for among sects, and the adventurer, though destitute of all other merit, and just in proportion as he is conscious to himself of being destitute, will be sure to make up for the deficiency by a shew of redundant and pragmatistical zeal for the sect on whose good will he depends for support.

But there is a case in which this spirit of worldly interest goes still further. Taste is an affair of great moment in the great mart of the world's exchange. Now taste is the most artificial of things. It can be moulded and fashioned and changed into a choice for almost any thing. We see how this is in the matter of dress. A costume made, one would think, for the purpose of burlesquing the human form, becomes pleasing so soon as it is the fashion. And the religion of sect is as foreign from human nature as the dress of the body: and, indeed, it would not be difficult to show instances in which the form of the dress makes a part of the religion of the wearer. But the spirit of the sect forms the taste of the sect. And the taste of the sect creates a demand for the article that suits it. Is it a sermon? No matter how little scripture, sense, reason, or humanity there may be in the warp and woof of its texture, or how little logic, or grammar, or eloquence, or even decency there may be in its form and coloring—if it be in the manner and taste of the sect, it will *take*: and when the audience are so well trained as to count it a sin to look at any other article—to hear a sermon of any other sect (and there are instances of whole congregations, if not entire sects who have been thus trained) there will always be a market for such productions. Is it a book? If it bear the imprimatur of the sect—breathe the spirit of the sect;—if the bookseller knows the number of members belonging to the sect, he knows how large an edition to publish.

To the prevalence of the secular element in the spirit of sect is to be ascribed chiefly that peculiar zeal for making proselytes of the wealthy, which occasionally shews itself, in movements and indications not to be mistaken. In such cases, it puts on its most courtly forms of address, and its most winning and attractive airs. Its harsh tones and rough features are all laid aside. Defects of character must not be scrutinized too close-

ly, but covered over with the mantle of charity. Allowances must be liberally made. Infirmities winked at. Self denial--taking up the cross--must be inculcated with all imaginable gentleness--and the Lion that was wont to shake the forest, on other occasions, with his terrible voice, must crouch and fawn and roar--"like any sucking dove,"--And when the man of wealth and influence has been proselyted, it must be known abroad; and in making known the important fact, certain terms and phrases must be employed, too offensive to the delicacy of genuine piety, to be here repeated, or more plainly characterized.

The hostility of different sects toward one another, has in former times displayed itself in acts of violence and barbarity, which have brought no little reproach upon the christian name. The progress of the human mind in knowledge, aided by those instructive, but sad lessons which the spirit of sect has given in the history of former persecutions, has saved the world from a repetition of the like bloody scenes. The fires of the stake, it may be hoped, have gone out, never to be rekindled. The sleeping mother will not again be startled at midnight by the terrific signal that calls the sons of Belial to their work of massacre. No bench of inquisitors; sitting in conclave shall, under the mock forms of trial, consign the innocent to the wheel of torture, or the iron boot, or the caldron of boiling pitch. These things are long since past and gone. But is the spirit in which they originated past and gone. Are there no other methods of persecution, than those formerly resorted to? To disturb the tranquillity of a man, to wound his feelings, diminish his influences by calumnies heaped upon his reputation, is as little, in accordance with the spirit of christianity, and may be a source, on the whole, of as great personal suffering as it would be to tear his flesh from his bones with red hot pincers. Yet, for difference of opinion, we not unfrequently see men suffer the most bitter persecution of the former kind, from persons who would be shocked exceedingly at the bare idea of the latter. The cause of this, is in the superior humanity of the times, not in *them*, nor in the superior excellence of their principles. In other words, the man who can gratify his malice by inventing, or circulating falsehood against his neighbor, and especially, who can join in a systematic course of persecution of this kind, would, were circumstances changed, be equally ready to shew his zeal for the interests of his party, by the now exploded methods of confiscation of goods, imprisonment, the faggot and the scaffold. It is a gross mistake to ascribe those wars of extermination, those bloody massacres, and those cruel murders, perpetrated formerly under the name of religion, to religion as the cause. These atrocities sprung from the lust of power, the desire for plunder, and the other evil passions that spring up and flourish in the human heart, in which the feelings of humanity, and the sense of right have been extinguished. Though committed under her venerable name.

Religion had nothing to do with them. Neither has she with these less revolting, though, perhaps not less criminal, methods which the spirit of sect now employs to accomplish its purposes. It is essentially a persecuting spirit, and finds its highest gratification, when it can, secured by the strength of numbers, crush whatever it cannot control.

There is a phenomenon, which often presents itself in the workings of the sectarian principle, which it will be proper here to consider. It will throw additional light on this part of the subject. I refer to the fact that though, sectarians of different names do in heart hate one another, and can, cheerfully enough, give vent to their dislike in word and action when an occasion offers; yet, there is one thing which never fails to kill their enmity, and, as with the efficacy of some fatal charm, to unite them in bands of fraternal concord—It is the presentation of one who is not a sectarian. There could scarcely, be a greater difference between two sects than there was between the Pharisees, and Sadducees; yet, they seemed to have buried all disputes and misunderstandings, as did Herod and Pontius Pilate, their personal enmity, when the crucifixion of Jesus was to be accomplished. Herod hated Pilate; and Pilate, Herod. The Pharisee hated the Sadducee, and the Sadducee, the Pharisee. But the hatred they all bore to Jesus, was so much stronger that it neutralized their enmity among themselves, and for a while at least turned it into friendship. And so it is still. If you see two sectarians in hard conflict, and would bring them to terms of concord, and a better understanding, you have only to set Jesus before them, and your object is accomplished. Hold out to their view, his principles, his doctrine and holy life, his commands and his denunciations, and they will unite in making opposition. There is, indeed, this cause of concord among all sectarians, that they all agree in the necessity of living separate. So far, then, they can walk together, for so far they are agreed. They will allow you to be a very good christian, if you attach yourself to any one of the parties that exist; and provided you are zealous, for that, you may be almost anything else you please; but the moment you decline a special connection with any, they all denounce you as an enemy. If you join the cry of “I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, they may treat you as belonging to Christ: but if not, they disown you. Give them the liberty of being, and remaining in different sects, that is, hostile parties, and it is well. Preach to them love, union, mutual forbearance, and you arouse their jealousy and resentment, and immediately you hear yourself denounced as an infidel or a heretic.

*D.*—You do not mean to charge these things upon the whole body of christians surely: and yet they may all be called sectarian, for they all belong to some sect or other.

*T.*—The belonging to a sect does not make a man a sectarian. He is

such, and he only who is actuated by the spirit of sect, which is in fact the spirit of heresy.

*D.*—But it is time to separate. Timothy has had the most of this discourse, but I am still not convinced.

*T.*—I have finished all I had to say on the elements that go to make up sectarianism: the first is bigotry which substitutes opinion for faith, the second is carnality, which substitutes a combination of secular interest, for the unity of the spirit. In our next conversation I want to say something about the evils flowing from the union, of these impure elements.

## CONVERSATION VI.

G.—I think, Timothy, you were next to notice some of the evils of sectarianism.

T.—Yes.

1. And, to begin with those that are more outward in their character, and for that reason more open to observation. It prevents the spread of christianity by the divisions and dissensions which it creates.—Consider the condition of the most of our towns and villages, and especially of our sparse population, in those immense regions of our country that have been, in periods comparatively recent, reclaimed by the hand of industry from their primitive wilderness condition. The means of supporting the public administration of the word and ordinances of christianity would be barely sufficient for that purpose, were all professing an interest in them united in their efforts. But as it is, years must roll away, perhaps generation after generation must leave the world, before adequate provision can be made for maintaining a regular course of instruction for the people in the things which belong to their peace. Instead of each village presenting its one church of respectable architecture, and with decent accommodations for those who come to worship in it, and to enjoy the benefits of public instruction, what do we see? Either none at all, or a number of miserable buildings, with each its congregation, so few, that a little child may count them, and supplied with the visits of some itinerant, which like angels' visits, are "few and far between," though the resemblance sadly fails in every other particular. Nor, is this the worst. For these separate congregations, each being weak and poor, become rivals for popular favor; and a system of measures for the purpose of increasing their numbers and resources commences with their very existence, which is precisely calculated to frustrate the benevolent designs of the gospel and to produce, instead of peace on earth and good will among men, strife, hatred, and every evil work. The mischief is increased in another way, by lowering the character of those public services which ministers of the gospel are expected to render. It might be thought, that four or five different discourses, delivered by as many preachers to their respective audiences, would answer the purposes of religious instruction, as well at least, if not better than one of them delivered to the whole number. Perhaps so, if the discourses were the same. But they would not be the same. The days of miracles are past, and "the weak things of the world," to whom the present system in too many cases gives the pulpit, were sectarian divisions, and sectarian prejudices, and sectarian taste to cease, would be superseded by men of a higher order of talents and superior

qualifications. And the people would receive the benefit, by being fed with the sound and wholesome and substantial food, which a feeble and ill furnished mind, however piously affected, can never dispense.

(See note A. in the Appendix:)

It is not at all surprising that people, whose minds have become somewhat enlarged by the knowledge they have acquired, should become disgusted at what is called preaching in many of our churches. The preacher's circle of thought is exceedingly contracted on religion especially. His theme is perpetually the same, made up for the most part as I have said of dry, disputed points of polemic theology, which are the only things known in the sect, and the only things discussed in its pulpits. The human spirit will not be put off with such treatment. Sacred names, and solemn associations may for a while bring hearers before such pulpits: but a starvling intellect will degrade them at length into objects of contempt.

(See note A. in the Appendix.)

2. I shall pass over with a very brief notice, the obstacles which sectarianism throws in the way of the propagation of religious knowledge in foreign lands. Indeed, so much was the necessity of a greater degree of union among the different sects felt in regard to their foreign efforts, than what had characterized their measures at home, that sectarianism was happily, to a great degree, banished, from the first, from those great and generous movements which the christian world has, for the last fifty years, been making for extending the influence of christianity over the earth. The Bible Society has kept itself on the broad ground of the Bible. Tract Societies have, to some extent, followed the example, and it is pleasing to observe, that different sects have, in so many instances, united their efforts in the cause of foreign missions; and that their agents, when in the wide field of their labors, seem to have forgotten in a manner their distinctive peculiarities, and acted only as christian men, and christian missionaries. This is commendable; and it is encouraging to observe, that, as this spirit of liberality and Catholicism has manifested itself in the operations of the foreign department, it has reacted with a most visible and happy effect on the affairs of the home department of christian duty; and that christians have been sensibly drawn nearer each other in affection, in proportion as they have ceased to dispute, and girded themselves to "do" their Masters will. But still it must be manifest, that much greater efforts, and with more signal success would have been made by christian churches in this cause, had they acted with greater concert, and a more perfect spirit of pure christian principle in their foreign operations.

3. The spirit of sect corrupts the first principles of religion in the heart, and stands in direct opposition to that condition of discipleship which Jesus, in such strong terms, and with so much emphasis, inculcated in his teaching. He assures us, that unless a man forsake all things;—and, in language still stronger;—unless he hate father and mother, wife and chil-

dren, houses and lands, yea, and his own life also: and take up his cross and follow him, he cannot be his disciple. A declaration which must be understood to mean, that in the matter of religion a man must not be influenced by any considerations of interest or affection, nor by a regard even to personal safety; but by the pure sense of duty alone. A supreme regard to this is no doubt what he means by the single eye, so indispensable to clear and correct views in all spiritual matters. A nobler sight on earth there is not, than that of a human spirit beset with the infirmities of our nature, and assailed by the storms of temptation, yet rising superior to both, on the strength of its own convictions of right, sustained by faith in that Being whose province it is to reward the just in the future dispensations of his eternal reign. To illustrate by his teaching and example these two moral principles was one great end of what Jesus taught, did, and suffered. It was a sublime end, and sublimely accomplished. In him there was no flinching, no failure. He conquered; and, by his example shewed his followers how to conquer the forces of their spiritual enemies. These chiefly lie in the power which this world has over our senses, appetites, affections, hopes and fears. For though Satan tempts, it is only through the world as his instrument; and though the heart itself may be said to tempt a man, as the Apostle James suggests, yet it is the heart as bent upon the pursuit and enjoyments of the things of the world, that leads us astray. Hence the great importance of self denial—taking up the Cross. Hence, too, the reason of the place in which Jesus has put it, as first and preliminary in the whole affair of our connection with Him and dependence on Him. He would have every man that thinks of becoming a disciple of his to sit down first and count the cost, considering seriously with himself, whether he is willing at the call of Jesus, that is, duty, to forego all worldly considerations whatever. This is the first step in genuine christianity and in no case is the French proverb, which in the first step, places the whole difficulty, more true than in this. But does the sectarian even take this first step?

Is not his eye evil, in other words, is not his attention from the very first distracted among a variety of considerations that are quite aside from that of an upright heart and a holy life? What to do with either has any of the knotty points in scholastic Theology, which make so great a part in the creeds of the different sects? What to do with either has the question of the number, or wealth, or respectability of the Society he is about to join, or their reputation for orthodoxy or sanctity, or the good offices they may have it in their power to do him, or the amount of custom in business, or support and influence which he may be able to derive from his connection with them. What, in this high and awful matter, have friends and their solicitations, or companions and their sympathies, or the world and its smiles—or sneers—what have these to do—what has any thing to do, with the spirit of a man and its determinations, but God and conscience.

And yet, is it not evident that in becoming a sectarian christian—if there is not a contradiction in the terms—a man must be governed, more or less, by considerations such as these? Now, in whatever degree this is the case with him, his religion is corrupt, rotten at the very core. It is, in fact, an expedient adopted for mercenary purposes and will, like all other expedients, suit itself to circumstances, and be used or laid aside, spread out, or contracted as may best suit the convenience of the person adopting it.

Cases have been, and may again arise, when christians will be required, in the discharge of their duty, to act in opposition to every earthly interest, and every personal and social attachment. In these cases the spirit fails, if it cannot find, what Archimedes wished for,—a *pou sto*—a place to stand on, without, and beyond, the world. This faith finds. It is the throne of God. Here firmly fixed the true christian can remain steady to his principles, though the world and every thing belonging to it, be tossed like the Sea in a tempest. But the sectarian fixes his lever on the whirling elements, which make up the present unsettled and ever shifting state of things; and, of course, he does not move it, but is moved by it.

When did ever a man of this kind do any thing great, or noble, to advance the cause of truth and the interests of humanity? Never. All the achievements of this kind that have been accomplished, have originated, not in organized bodies, not in politic associations—and a sectarian without his sect is a cipher—but in the strong impulses of individual spirits, who had communion with the spirit of all good, and were lifted, by the commerce with Heaven, above all selfish considerations. Such men have often, by the mere force of the irremovable spirit, and by the untiring energy of their virtues, amidst reproach and opposition from every quarter, and through the extremest sufferings of poverty and persecution, engaged in a cause, and brought forth judgment unto victory—carried every thing before them, and made that to be popular, which at first was “every where spoken against.” Then, indeed, the time-serving sectarian could come in to share the triumph:—and, what is still more remarkable, then, it is that the sectarian, by his blind zeal—blind to every thing but interest, embracing a cause, now become popular, and pushing it far beyond the intention of its original advocate, sinks it again into contempt, by the extravagance and intolerance of his measures. With respect to such, how true is the remark; “If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.” To be genuine, religion must be free from the admixture of every earthly element. The Soul must look upward to God, not downward to the earth, or around on persons and circumstances, if it would enjoy the light of Heaven, and drink in its invigorating influences.

Sectarianism produces a distorted character. How often do we find these things in combination: a tight creed, and loose morals: much zeal

and small knowledge; great confidence, and little humility; sanctimoniousness, and profanity; a conscience tender, to the extremest sensitiveness, in trifles, and torpid in affairs of moment—a beam in one's own eye, and tender concern for the unhappy condition of a neighbor who has a mote in his. The Pharisees, of old, at the very time when they were about accomplishing the most atrocious murder that ever was committed, would not go with the crowd into the judgment-hall, lest they might unconsciously contract some ceremonial defilement, which would unfit them for keeping the passover. The Mussulman feels no remorse from plundering and slaughtering a caravan; though his conscience would not rest, had he omitted his prayers and prostrations. When men place undue stress on those opinions and forms which distinguish them from other sects,—and all sectarians do this,—it cannot fail to produce that distortion of character which has been noticed, or some other not less deformed. Darwin's theory of "*a nismus*" in the yet unformed productions of animated nature, though ridiculous enough in itself, may furnish an analogy to illustrate this point, with this difference, that Darwin's *nismus* always acted according to the nature of the animal; but that of the sectarian is in opposition to nature, like the faith of a distinguished modern writer in divinity, which, as he thought, was so much the better because it was contrary to "Scripture, sense and reason." The bigot makes a *nismus* towards pleasing God: but he never reflects that moral virtue is the most pleasing to God, and therefore his *nismus* is made in another direction—that of profound research and accurate discrimination in the deep and curious dogmas of scholastic theology;—or it may be made towards punctilious exactness in the observance of the outward forms of christianity;—or it may go forth in a burning zeal for making proselytes. But, while this is the case, and while the man's soul is putting forth its powers in these directions and growing, so to speak, into strange and monstrous excrescences, its vital energy passes away from the more important functions, which of course shrivel up and decay, and finally disappear entirely.

Any one who will attentively read the New Testament, and those facts of the Old, that are most intimately connected with the New, cannot fail to observe how emphatically these sacred oracles make religion to be a personal thing, a concern in which each man has to think, feel, judge and act for himself. And the more we act upon this idea, the purer will be our religion. I speak not of its fruits. These of course are outward. They grow on our social relations. But the thing itself, the principle is within. The Kingdom of Heaven is within you. The religion of sect is ever the reverse of this. It exists not in solitude. It is found in the mass—out—abroad—bustling—agitating—and acted on by sympathy, interest—affection—imitation. So that, in the end, there is nothing personal or individual about it. It is the creature of public policy, or public excite-

ment, and in public it lives. Ah! how different is the sectarian, from the man: the man in the public eye, with his cloak of sanctity, or his formal dress of orthodoxy thoughtfully adjusted, and the man in the private walks of life, at his business, among his family and his neighbors!—Jesus said to his disciples, “ye are the salt of the earth.” It is the personality of religion, if I may so express it—its life and power in the soul of the individual, that makes him a particle of the conservative kind. This it is, that gives to religion its antiseptic property. If the world is the mass to be salted, the salt must not be of the same nature as the mass. Whoever would exert a good influence upon the world must be above it. He must not be subject to its powerful attraction. He must be spirit, not flesh. Out of this, more in another place.

It is certainly remarkable that all great organizations, however pure they may have been in their commencement, have, in process of time, become corrupt. There are several reasons for this; the main one of which is undoubtedly this, that whenever men form themselves into large organizations, opportunities are presented to turn aside the action of the body from the object of its institution to some secular end. Carnal reason will then take the lead, and a more worldly policy will be the result. For men are ever apt to resort to something out of religion to sustain it. They think it insecure if not guarded by earthly palisades: and weak, if not propped by worldly securities. They will not trust God with his own cause, nor rest their hopes of the orthodoxy of the generations to come on the mind and spirit of the individual men of those generations; but they will manufacture a religion for them, and send it down to them on authority, as they would their civil rights embodied in written laws, and surrounded by constitutional guarantees. And while they are laboring with all their might to effect these objects, they flatter themselves, they are doing great things for religion, when in fact they are corrupting it. The very keeping up of that machinery, and the prosecution of that system of management to which they have resorted for the purpose of supporting religion, has itself become their religion. Instead of having their thoughts turned inward to the care and culture of piety in their hearts, and the regulation of their lives; so that they may avoid all impropriety of conduct, and be zealous of good works, imitating Him, whose followers they profess to be in all the virtues of a holy life, abounding in fruits of righteousness, and illuminating the sphere in which Providence has placed them with the light of an amiable example; their whole care is directed to what may be called church politics—the interests of the body, the maintaining and augmenting of those securities in which the members of the body are taught to repose their confidence, as the means of perpetuating the orthodoxy, and extending the influence of the body. And thus the means by which sects seek to extend and perpetuate their power, prove a snare to

their souls: and the politics of the church take the place in it which is due to religion.

Sectarianism wrests the S. S. Where the creed of a sect is once formed, the Bible is ransacked for what are called proof texts; and it often happens that texts, which, as they stand in the sacred page with the light reflected on them from the entire passage of which they are a part, speak a very plain and intelligible language, are, when taken out of their proper connection, easily made to express sentiments not only different from, but directly opposite to their real meaning. How often have I not heard, for instance the saying, "for whatsoever is not of faith is sin," advanced in proof of the doctrine that the unregenerate can do nothing but sin? And yet the passage quoted, relates to a different subject altogether, the subject of things indifferent, which become sinful, or not, according to the faith, that is the opinion or judgment of the person who uses them. For whatever a man believes in his conscience is wrong, to him it is wrong. In things indifferent, the moral property of an action is according to the belief of the agent; and whatever is done by him, without faith, that is, a confidence that it is right, is a sin. So have I heard that passage in the first chapter of Isaiah, in which the Jewish Commonwealth is spoken of, in its then afflicted condition, under the image of a body covered over from head to foot with wounds and bruises, quoted as a proof of the doctrine of the total depravity of our nature!—In those fierce controversies between the distinguished champions of contending sects, one may see ample specimens of this way of wresting the Scriptures. Yet, from such writings and creeds, the result of such writings, it is that the common reader of the Bible, if he is a sectarian, is left, or rather directed and required, to form his opinions of the contents of the sacred Volume. And to such a length does this attachment to the authorized opinions and forms of expression used to express them, in some cases, proceed, that it has affixed such a character of inviolable sacredness to the present version of the Bible, that the scholar must not presume to call in question its correctness, or amend in the least; though every scholar knows that it is, in many places, especially taking the English words in their present use, calculated to convey a meaning very different from the true import of the original. To such a fearful length does this disposition to follow the authority of a sect, sometimes lead people, that, like the Jews of old, they use it to set aside the law of God itself. For that, I suppose, must be admitted to be the law and the testimony which holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the holy Ghost, and not that which a number of divines in the reign of King James have given us as their interpretation of the sacred text. Not that I would allow ever pedantic babblers, who wish to show off his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, to suggest his emendations to the common version. But on this I insist, that the Bible in the original tongues ought

not to be considered an exhausted mine; and that neither the student of theology, nor the people are to be sent to the cabinets of the learned of a former day, to see what it contains. It is never safe to check enquiry by the force of authority. The world is advancing in science. The past shews how, as the sun of science rose higher and brighter, the shadows of a false interpretation which ignorance and superstition had affixed to large portions of the Sacred Volume, have been dispersed, and a more rational sense of these passages brought to view. And he is no friend to the cause of truth who insists that this process must proceed no further.

Sectarianism relaxes discipline in churches. This it does in various ways. The divisions between sect and sect, serve as walls for defence, and as hedges for ambuscade. The offender who takes refuge *behind* them is perfectly safe from censure for any thing he may have committed *beyond* them, and will be apt to take encouragement from this impunity, to aim his poisoned arrows against the persons of better men than himself who because they are not of the sect, he is taught to consider, are lawful game. No instance, I believe, has ever occurred of a member of any sect being subjected to discipline by his church, for slandering a member of a church not of his sect. This is not certainly because instances of the most flagrant violation of the laws of christian morality in this particular, are not scandalously frequent. A new impetus has, within the present century, been given to some of the worst propensities of human nature, by means of the press. The violence and utter disregard to truth, which have long characterised newspapers devoted to the interests of political parties, have been equalled in some instances by the, so called, religious papers of the day. To what an extent that bitter and malignant spirit which is engendered by the union of religious bigotry, and worldly ambition has vented its impure effusions through this channel, is known to all, and lamented by every one whose regard for the interests of pure and undefiled religion has kept his mind free from the wide-spreading infection. I shall not attempt to describe the ill consequences and effects that flow from the evil surmises, the foul slanders, the uncandid statements, and the personal abuse, that have been first circulated about in a more private manner, and then, like so many poisoned missiles, hurled back and forth in open warfare, by contending parties; but I have a right to demand whether these are not the undeniable and legitimate fruits of the sectarian principle. Men begin by separating themselves from their christian brethren,—refusing to join with them in celebrating *his* love, who died on the Cross for their redemption;—and, in most cases, it can hardly be told, for what cause this alienation has taken place: is it any wonder, then, that they should seek to justify themselves in what they have done, by representing the characters of those from whom they have separated, or are preparing to separate as being every way worthy of abhorrence and execration.

Or, if the separation be made on account of doctrine, then an effort must be made to represent the obnoxious doctrine in such an aggravated light, as to suggest the opinion that it could be entertained by none but persons of corrupt and vicious principles. And thus it has happened, that the spirit of sect has filled the christian world with all uncharitableness. Sectarianism tends to relax the discipline, and consequently to corrupt the morals of the church that cherishes it in another way. By dwelling constantly, as sectarians, especially sectarian teachers do, on their peculiarities, which, as has been already shewn, are mostly matters of no importance, whatever, these peculiarities are magnified; they take possession of peoples minds, engross their public discourses and private conversation, till, at last, nothing else can be thought worthy of regard. Christian morals, which, if we are to believe what Jesus has taught us, are the essential matters, are rejected. People become hardened and stupid. Their very consciences are perverted; and they fall into that most absurd and foolish, and, at that same time, that most perverse and pernicious way of thinking and judging, which was, by Jesus, so severely reprov'd in the Scribes and Pharisees, who were scrupulous in trifles, and preposterously loose and negligent in concerns of the greatest weight and importance.

Finally, I would remark on this part of the subject, that sectarianism tends to lead men astray from the path of duty, as in many other respects, so particularly in this, that it gives what seems to be a sacred employment to principles and men that are far from possessing a sacred character; and so brings the abomination of desolation into the most holy place. Those measures of harshness and severity; those uncharitable denunciations and illnature'd criticisms; those plans of worldly policy, which are so much in use where sectarianism prevails, have many attractions for men of corrupt minds. They are services in the cause of party, which of course the party will reward, they offer the prospect of becoming conspicuous to those who can have no reasonable expectations of becoming so, by talents, learning, or virtue. They present a scene of action and excitement to the torpid and dull; they stir up a military spirit, which men cherish without scruple, when the war to be waged is a holy war; and, by an infatuation still more deplorable, they enkindle that false zeal, which, in the mind of the zealot, sanctifies the worst of crimes, making him imagine that he is doing God's service, while, in fact, he is seeking to gratify the basest and most malignant passions. When the spirit of sect, which, in effect, is nothing else than the concentrated action of these vile elements, shews itself in the person of some one whose natural gifts, and acquired qualifications mark him as the most diminutive of his species, it would be amusing, were it not disgusting, to witness the exhibition. As if the power and honor and consequence of the whole body to

which the pigmy belongs, were concentrated in his single self, he swells and vaunts, and struts, and dogmatizes, and hurls his anathemas, and then sitting down, smoothes his face into the look of self-satisfaction, and pious gratitude, that he has been permitted to bear his humble part in the work of reform, and lift up the standard of a faithful testimony for the truth.

G.—Now this is too bad. You talk of the evils of sectarianism, and your descriptions are taken from extreme cases only, and such as are scarcely to be found. Individuals, such as you have described, are few and insignificant. And if it were not so, and the evils of sectarianism were such, and as great, as you say they are; still, they would be trifling and few compared with those of infidelity, to which your liberal views have a manifest tendency.

T.—The evils of sectarianism are greater and more numerous than I have represented them. In truth, I have given only a specimen. And, as to extreme cases, had I been searching for such, I would have gone for them to the times before the Reformation, or to countries where Religion, in form, that is sectarianism, is established by law, and where implicit faith with all the enormities that arise out of it, is enforced by the civil magistrate. And so far are my liberal notions, as you call them, from being friendly to infidelity, that the very reverse is the truth. The corruption of liberty is the way to despotism: the corruption of religion results in infidelity. The history of the French Revolution affords a striking illustration of both these truths. The only way by which the growth of infidelity, in our own country, can be checked, is by purging religion from the evils of sect. When the followers of Christ shall become one, then, and not before, may we expect infidelity to cease from among us, and the world to be converted.

D.—Your views, it seems to me, tend to infidelity in another way.

T.—What is that?

G.—By destroying the influence of the Clergy, who are all in favor of creeds as being necessary to hold their people together.

T.—The influence of the Clergy, in this country is not too great. It might be made greater by pruning, as you do with fruit trees. Their influence, so far as creeds support it, is a *sucker*—a superstitious excrescence on the stock of their religion. Take it away, and the tree will bear better and more abundant fruit. The day of superstition is nearly past, and so is the influence which it gives.

G.—You speak riddles. Explain yourself.

T.—You must have patience then.

G.—I'll hear you out.

T.—To illustrate what I mean, it is safest to go back to the times of the Romish hierarchy. One method by which the way was prepared for

the assumption of that unlimited power which it exercised over the consciences of men, was by applying the maxims of policy found in human Governments to the Government of God—an error that still remains in the church. I give an instance. Men—citizens of any Commonwealth, may extend their meritorious services beyond the requirements of law. In the Theocracy the same holds. (The church you observe, was still thought to be a Theocracy, of which the Clergy were the ministers;—hence their name, the priesthood!) Confessors and Martyrs, who sacrificed their lives in the cause of God, did more than was required;—did works of supererogation;—acquired a redundancy of merit. What was to come of it? God could not receive the benefit of it: it must not be lost: He, therefore; passed it over to the account of the church. Thus was constituted a fund of merit—the Church's Bank. To increase its stock was a motive to noble, generous, deeds. But, then, there were persons poor in merit,—delinquents who fell as far short of their duty as the greatest saints had transcended. These paupers were to be accommodated—by drafts on the Bank—which drafts went by the name of indulgences, to be purchased by these poor people, poor in merit, though opulent, it might be, in the riches of this world. Thus, the most wicked wretch on earth might have his guilt cancelled,—even the guilt of sins that he intended to commit,—and stand fair, as the phrase was, not only in “*foro soli*,” but also, in “*foro poli*.” That is, in the Judgment of God, as well as of man. This doctrine, added to that of the real presence in the sacrifice of the mass, gave to the officiating priests prodigious influence. The doctrines were to be received, and were received, as creeds are now, in the exercise of implicit faith. Luther and Huss and Jerome, who attacked these doctrines, the two latter of whom were burnt to death for doing so, were condemned as heretics. And, the true reason was, they diminished the influence of the Clergy. The Pope, by the way, was a Clergyman of very considerable influence.

But let us be just: these doctrines, on the basis of which was erected such a mighty influence, were not expressly provided for that purpose. They were gradually introduced for the purpose of urging the minds of men, by the most effective and stimulating motives, to the performance of good works; and, afterwards, they were employed as convenient engines of a carnal—a diabolical, policy.

Superstition may begin in ignorant and well meaning simplicity; but it never ends there. The phosphorus—light, that shines brightest when the darkness is the most deep, and which, though it seems so pure, is the product and sign of putrefaction, will at length be employed by the mischievous and the knavish in playing off the gainful acts of imposture. Whenever man goes off from the solid ground of that rational faith which has the moral sentiments—the spirit—for its basis, and the relations of the

actual world for its sphere of operation, into the region of extra-human and extra-mundane speculation, he generally finds—though he may not have gone expressly in search of it—what, as it respects the material world Archimedes wished for—a *pou sto*, and resting place for his lever. This found, if he does not move the world in subserviency to his interests, he rarely fails to manage the more simple and credulous—a class always numerous enough to give them power when embodied and trained according to the method of party tactics.

That zeal for those doctrines of a sect, which give to one man the greatest power of operating, in the use of them, upon the mind of another, or agitating the multitude, is generally heretical, or sectarian in its views. Indeed, no man can have any considerable influence in the way of argument and persuasion, much less in that of declamation, over the spirit of another, in the simple matter of pure religion considered as a principle. It is of the spirit: and the spirit is free. It bows to no authority but the authority of the infinite spirit from whom it emanated. In his light it seeks to dwell. There it sees light, and drinks in love. To produce those living sentiments in the spirit, which are the pulsations of the spiritual life, nothing is requisite, about which man can exert any agency, but that the proper object be presented. It is the love of God that moves our spirit to love Him in return. And, as this shines forth, with transcendent lustre and power, in the mission and character of the Son of God, “who loved us and gave himself for us,” it is the grand means of the sinner’s conversion;—it is that which maintains and invigorates the spiritual life. How exactly in accordance with this view of the subject are those strong metaphors which he Himself has employed; such as, “eating Him;—eating his flesh and drinking his blood;—deriving life from him as the branch from the stock &c.” Now I would intreat you to read over and over again the story of Jesus;—his discourses; his parables; his prayers—to study well the character of the Man of sorrows;—to come near him in spirit, and catch that virtue that flows from Him; and imbibe from his example and teaching the Sublime Conception of “God manifested in the flesh,” to shew us that high moral rectitude and that pure love, which is the very nature of God, and which the Son of God came to impart to man; and then transfer yourself to the region of the creed-making, and creed-imposing, and creed-defending polemic, and tell me, which of the two is” in his views most nearly allied to infidelity, and most likely to be lead to it; he, who, discarding the questions of a vain philosophy, goes directly to Jesus, to learn of God; and to feel, upon his own spirit the Spirit of God acting, through the simple facts of the gospel—or he, who, neglecting the spirit, and the direct contemplation of the glory reflected from the gospel, as from a burnished mirror, (see 2 Cor. III. 18) turns aside to discuss the puzzling intricacies of some philosophically constructed system of scholas-

tic theology! The latter may, perhaps, battle it more stoutly with the infidel, in the use of his well-hammered and case-hardened creed, hacked and battered, though it be in a hundred conflicts: the former, I suspect, will sooner overcome—by the spirit—the virtues of a pure, simple, Christ-like life. And, as to influence, it is questionable whether all the authority to be derived from a zealous adherence to the most orthodox creed will confer as much, as that which may be derived from the earnest and prayerful study of the Bible, and a life governed by its precepts.

*G.*—The whole body of professing christians throughout the world, is divided into sects. Do you mean to implicate them all in the guilt of producing the evils you have mentioned?

*T.*—By no means. Many individual christians there are, in every sect, who, nevertheless, do not themselves possess any thing of the spirit of sectarianism, and lament the appearance of it in others, and the evils it has heretofore produced, and is every day producing: but they see no remedy for these evils, and are quietly waiting till God, in some way not known at present, shall remove them. They continually and earnestly supplicate the throne of grace, that God would be pleased to heal the divisions of his people.—

*G.*—But is prayer the whole of our duty? Have we not something to do in the matter? Has not every professing christian of every name a solemn responsibility resting upon him, which cannot be discharged by mere praying?

*D.*—I agree with you there. It is, you know, a doctrine much insisted upon in our church, that we are not to expect God to do our duties for us.

*T.*—And your church is, certainly, so far, in the right. Our church! Your church! See how sect has corrupted our language, and reconciled us to the use of phrases which ought to shock us. The church is one and it belongs to Christ.

*D.*—True. But you spoke of a remedy.

*T.*—That we will, if you please discuss at our next meeting.

*G. & D.*—Agreed.

## CONVERSATION VII.

D.—I have come as you see, Timothy, with a book in my hand from which I beg leave to read a passage or two, for the purpose of shewing you how difficult, or rather, how hopeless is the attempt in which you are engaged. Here now is my friend Guardesfoi a staunch Calvinist; were he and I in the communion of the same church we would be perpetually wrangling; whereas, now we can agree to differ and remain as we are in connection with our respective churches. To convince you of this, allow me to read my views and those of our church on the subject of reprobation, a doctrine, you know, of the Genevan school of orthodoxy.

T.—Read.

D.—The passage is in the 3d vol. of Fletchers Checks, P. 387 where the author says that "Calvins partial reprobation, which flows from free wrath and has nothing to do with any degree of saving grace, may be compared to the king's placing a whole regiment of marines in such dreadful circumstances by sea and land, that all the soldiers and officers shall be sooner or later *necessitated* to desert and to have their brains blown out for desertion; a distinguishing severity this, which will set off the distinguishing favor, which his majesty bears to a company of favorite grenadiers, on whom he has absolutely set his everlasting love, and who cannot be shot for desertion, because they are tied to their colors by *necessity*—an adamantine chain, which either keeps them from running away, or irresistably pulls them back to their colors as often as they desert. Thus all the marines wear the badge of *absolute free wrath*: not one of them can possibly escape being shot, and the grenadiers wear the badge of *absolute free grace*: not one of them can possibly be shot, let him behave in ever so treacherous a manner for ever so long a time. But alas! my illustration fails in the main point. When a soldier, who has been *necessitated* to desert, is shot, his punishment is over in a moment; but when a reprobate, who has been *necessitated* to continue in sin, is damned, he must go into a fire unquenchable, where "*the smoke of the torment shall ascend forever and ever.*"

Again he says (P. 401) that "rigid downright Calvinism, equally spoils the doctrines of *grace* and the doctrines of *justice*: for it turns the holy doctrines of *special grace*, into solidian doctrines of lawless grace: and with respect to the doctrines of *impartial justice*, it totally demolishes them, by allowing but of one eternal absolute, partial, and personal election, which necessarily binds Christ's righteousness and finished salvation upon some men;—and of one eternal absolute, partial, and personal reprobation, which necessarily fastens Adami's unrighteousness with finished

damnation upon all the rest of mankind—Now, according to these doctrines of partial grace and free wrath, it is evident, that *justice* can no more be concerned in justifying or condemning, rewarding or punishing men, under such circumstances, than you could be equitably concerned in *crowning* some men for swimming, and in *burning* others for sinking; supposing you had first bound the elected *swimmers* fast to an immense piece of cork, and tied a huge millstone about the neck of the *sinking* *reprobates*." And to shew how utterly irreconcilable with our doctrines, on another point, are those of the Calvinist School, hear what my author "says in the next paragraph." "By preaching a Rule of life" to believers, they now and then, meet with professors ingenious enough to follow that rule. For, as there are, even in Billingsgate, persons cleanly enough to wash their hands, although their neighbors should certainly assure them that they can never get one speck of dirt off;—that the King must do it all away in the day of his power;—that in the mean time his Majesty sees no dirt upon their hands, because he looks at them only through the hands of the prince of Wales, which are as white as snow, the cleanness of which his Majesty is pleased to impute to their dirty hands: And besides, that dirt will work for their good,—will display the strength of their constitution,—will set off, by and by, the cleansing virtue of soap and water,—and will make dirty people sing louder at court, when the Kings irresistible power and their own deadly sweats shall have cleansed their hands;—As there are cleanly persons, I say, who would wash their hands, notwithstanding such dirty hints as these: so there are some sincere souls among every denomination of Christians, who hate sin, and depart from it, notwithstanding all that some mistaken theologists may say to make them continue in sin, in order that the graces of humility and of faith in the atoning blood may be abundantly exercised." Besides the points of difference referred to in these passages, there are other tenets of Calvinism which I would not endure, such as that which ascribes to God two opposite wills, a secret and a revealed, by the one of which he leaves men to perish, and by the other commands them to believe and be saved, and that which relates to irresistible grace, by which the freedom of the will is destroyed, and man converted into a block.

*C.*—Truly, friend Democop, you have judged rightly in saying that, in order to live in peace, you and I must remain, as we are, in different churches. For how can two walk together except they be agreed. I could not patiently sit in one of your pews and hear the doctrines of grace so misrepresented.

*D.*—Shew me, if you please, wherein Fletcher has misrepresented any thing in what I have read.

*G.*—He represents the perdition of unbelievers as resulting from the decree of reprobation, by virtue of the same necessity as that by which a

man in the water, with a huge millstone tied around his neck, must sink to the bottom; and the salvation of believers, in like manner, he represents as flowing from a similar connection of necessity with the decree of election, under the image of a person made to float, without any effort of his own, on the surface of the water, by having an immense piece of cork attached to his person: whereas the decrees of God, being secret and unknown to man, have no influence and can have no influence in determining his character, much less a necessary influence. Your author is unfair in another respect, in charging that as a consequence upon the Calvinistic doctrine which follows equally from his own; unless, indeed, like Doctor Clark, he denies the foreknowledge of God: for that makes the event certain, no less than a decree. Fletcher surely knew what Calvinists have so often explained, that a thing may be certainly future; and yet not so, by *necessity*. But you shall hear what the great mind of Edwards thought on these points. I hold in my hand the 7th vol. of his Works, and shall read a few extracts, beginning at the 405th page." Whether God has decreed all things that ever come to pass or not, all that own the being of a God, own that he *knows* all things *beforehand*. Now, it is self-evident, that if he knows all things beforehand, he either doth approve of them or he doth not approve of them; that is, he either is willing they should be, or he is not willing they should be. But to *will* that they should be is to *decree* them. The Arminians ridicule the distinction between the secret and revealed will of God, or, more properly expressed, the distinction between the decree and law of God, because we say he may decree one thing, and command another. And so they argue, we hold a contrariety in God, as if one will of his contradicted another. However, if they will call this a contradiction of wills, we know that there is such a thing: so that there is the greatest absurdity to dispute about it. We and they know it was God's secret will, that Abraham should not sacrifice his son Isaac; but yet his command was to do it.—Contingency, as is holden by some, is at the same time contradicted by themselves, if they hold foreknowledge. This is all that follows from an absolute, unconditional, irrevocable decree, that it is impossible but that the things decreed should be. The same exactly follows from foreknowledge, that it is absolutely impossible but that the thing certainly foreknown should precisely come to pass.—What a contradiction is it to say, that God certainly foreknew that Judas would betray his master, or Peter deny him, and yet certainly knew that it might be otherwise, or certainly knew that he might be deceived?—I suppose none will deny, that as to God's own actions God decrees them, or purposes them beforehand. For none will be so absurd as to say that God acts without intentions, or without designs to act. And whatsoever God intends or purposes, he intends and purposes from all Eternity, otherwise he would not be omniscient, and

he would be mutable.—God foresaw who would comply with the terms of salvation: and he could have forborn to give being to such as he foresaw would not comply.”—On Page 425 He reasons thus: “I: God absolutely determined that Christ’s death should have success in gathering a church to him, it will follow, that there was a number absolutely elected; or that God had absolutely determined that some should be saved. His promises to Christ show this (see Isa. XLIX. 6 and LIII. 10. Psalm LXXII. an Tit. 11. 14. If God has absolutely determined to save some certain persons, then, doubtless, he has determined, in like manner, concerning all that are to be saved. God’s promises supposes not only that the thing is future, but that God will do it. If it be left to chance, or man’s contingent will, and the event happen right, God is never the truer. He performs not his promise: he takes no effectual care about it; it is not he who promised, that performs. That thing, or rather no-thing, called fortune orders all.

Now, the doctrine of efficacious grace—which you call irresistible—but that is not the term Calvists use in speaking of the thing, and it is improper, as it carries with it the idea of a force exerted that makes all resistance vain; whereas we hold that efficacious grace secures the compliance of its subject without force or compulsion;—this doctrine of efficacious grace follows irresistibly from the positions taken by Edwards, —positions which it is not in the power of sophistry to overturn. For if God the promiser fulfils his promises to Christ, it must be by his efficacious grace that he does it.

“It is manifest,” says Edwards, (P. 440) that the scripture supposes, that if ever men are turned from sin, God must undertake it, and he must be the doer of it; that it is his doing that must determine the matter; that all that others can do will avail nothing without his agency. This is manifest from such texts as these: Jer. XXXI. 18. 19 Turn thou me and I shall be turned; Thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned I repented; and after I was instructed I smote upon my thigh &c. Sam. V. 21 Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord and we shall be turned, Psalm LXXX. 3 Turn us again O God and cause thy face to shine and we shall be saved,” &c. (Page 444.) He goes on to show, that the words and phrases, employed in various parts of the sacred scriptures, are such as to denote the exertion upon the soul of some power transcending that which we call natural. Thus, in Eph. I. 19. 20, It is called the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward, according to the working of his mighty power, or the effectual working, as the word signifies. These words “according to the effectual working of his power” are applied to conversion, Eph. III. 7—to growth in grace Eph. IV. 10—and to the resurrection of the body, Philip III. 21.—That which is effected by it you are well aware is called a new creature—or new creation. Proofs like

these, one would think, ought to save the doctrine of efficacious grace from ridicule.

T.—Have you, Mr. Guardzfoi, ever read “Fletchers Checks,” out of which Mr. D. has read us those extracts? “

G.—No: I never read Methodist books.

T.—And have you, Mr. Democop, ever read Edward’s Works out of which Mr. G. has been just reading to us?

D.—No: I never read Calvinistic books.

T.—There, now, is just what makes sectarianism, and bigotry. And I may say to all sectarians in the words of Cicero, “*Vestra solum legitis; vestra amatis, caeteros, incognita causa, condemnatis,*” You read nothing but your own books, you love only what favors your own opinions; those who differ from you, you condemn without a hearing. Now the only step towards reconciling the different religious sects would be to reverse this absurd and uncandid practice, and every one to read on all disputed points what has been advanced on the opposite side from that which he has embrac’d Political partizans may be pardoned, perhaps, for patronizing those papers which advocate the principles of the party, and the blind devotees of the party may be pitied, if they read nothing from presses on the other side; because men’s worldly interests are all that is concerned in the case: but what apology can be offered for those who follow the same miserable course in matters of religion,—a thing into which worldly interests and party-feelings ought never to enter! When men allow themselves to look at the opinions and persons of their fellow christians, of other denominations, through the distorted and discolored medium of the writings of their own heated and prejudiced controversialists, and refuse to read or hear any thing in their defence, they act as absurdly as would a jury who, after hearing the lawyers on behalf of the prosecution, should stop their ears, so as not to hear a syllable that might be said in vindication of the accused. What, in such a case, must be their verdict we all know. No wonder, then, that the sectarian bigot, who has, all his life, been listening to the representations respecting his christian brethren and their opinions, as given by those who are either prejudiced, or have an interest in misleading and deceiving him, or both together—for this is the honest truth as it respects all party-leaders—no wonder, I say, if the bigot should in these circumstances, continue to be a bigot still. Therefore, I would advise you, Democop, to borrow and attentively peruse the Works of Edwards; and you, Guardzfoi, to do the same with Fletchers Checks. You will, no doubt, each of you, be, in this case, at least as willing to lend as to borrow; and if Edwards should not convert Democop to Calvinism, nor Fletcher turn Guardzfoi to Arminianism, I am certain you will both be benefitted, if in no other respect than this, that you will have your prejudices soften’d, and your charity for those who differ from you in opinion promot’d.

But you must make use of candor while you read, otherwise it might have the contrary effect; for prejudice turns every thing into acid. It is by "proving all things," that we learn to distinguish what is "good," and are strengthened, besides, to "hold it fast," by a firmer gripe.

G.—Were I to read every thing on controverted subjects in religion I should dread the consequence; I might be "carried away by every wind of doctrine."—I believe I shall not touch Fletcher. "Touch not, taste not handle not" is my rule in such cases.

T.—Pardon me sir if I say, that your sectarian bigotry feeds on scripture perverted and misapplied. This is one of its most horrid propensities. Consult your Bible, and you will see, from the context, that the precept you have quoted has no relation whatever to such a case as reading Fletchers Checks.

G.—Fletcher was an Arminian and so was Wesley. Arminius was a heretic. It is dangerous to read the works of heretics.

T.—How do you know whether Fletcher was a heretic? You never read him. Is not this prejudice! Be a man. Rise above such narrow views. They are contemptible. Will you allow others to lead you where they please, blindfold? Wont you use your own eyes? Your own thinking faculties? If you love the truth as it is in Jesus, there is no danger of your being carried about by every wind of doctrine. The conflicting blasts of opposite opinions will only cause your faith to strike its roots the deeper, provided, indeed, you have faith. But if you love the truth, not as it is in Jesus, but as it is in the creed—no matter what creed—your faith is only opinion, and as for that matter, it makes not a straws difference what you are, whether Arminian, Calvinist, or what.

G.—But, were I to read Fletcher, the next thing would be to read Priestly and Channing and Socinus himself, and then Hume and Voltaire. No: no: they say you are verging fast towards infidelity, and I partly believe it; or you would not urge *me* to such a course for sake of company.

T.—Would you think it safe to read the works of Dr. Isaac Watts, or those of Luther and Calvin?

G.—Why do you ask such a foolish question, when you know that Watt's Psalms and Hymns are used by the authority of the General Assembly in all our churches, as well as in our family devotions. And as for Luther & Calvin, you cannot suppose I would hesitate to read their writings.

T.—I asked you the question expecting just such an answer as you have given; that I might, out of your own mouth, shew your inconsistency. For, if to reject your particular forms of speech, on what is called the Trinity, is to be guilty of heresy, then was Dr. Watts a heretic, for he says, in an apostrophe to the Deity, "Dear and blessed God, hadst thou been pleased, in any one plain scripture, to inform me which of the different opinions about the Holy Trinity, among the contending parties

of christians, had been true, thou knowest with how much zeal, satisfaction and joy, my unbiased heart would have opened itself to receive and embrace the divine discovery. Hadst thou told me plainly in any simple text, that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three real, distinct, persons in thy divine nature, I had never suffered myself to be bewildered in so many doubts, nor embarrassed by so many strong fears of assenting to the mere invention of men, instead of divine doctrine; but I should humbly and immediately have accepted thy words, so far as it was possible for me to understand them, as the only rule of my faith. Or hadst thou been pleased so to express or include this proposition in the several scattered parts of thy Book, from whence my reason and conscience might with ease find out and with certainty infer the doctrine, I should have joyfully employed all my reasoning powers, with their utmost skill and activity, to have found out this inference and engrafted it into my soul. Thou hast taught me, holy Father, by thy prophets that the way of holines in the times of the gospel, or under the kingdom of the Messiah, shall be a highway, a plain and easy path, so that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. And thou hast called the poor and the ignorant, the mean and the foolish things of this world to the knowledge of Thyself and Thy Son, and taught them to receive and partake of the salvation Thou hast provided. But how can such weak creatures ever take in so strange; so difficult, so abstruse a doctrine as this, in the explanation and defence whereof, multitudes of men, even men of learning and piety, have lost themselves in infinite subtleties of dispute; and endless mazes of darkness? And can this strange and perplexing notion of three persons going to make up one true God, be so necessary and so important a part of that Christian doctrine, which in the Old Testament and the New, is represented as so plain and so easy, even to the meanest understandings?

G.—I, in common with all the orthodox, cannot but regard the doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead as essential and fundamental, whatever Dr. Watts and others may have thought about it: consequently, I look upon Unitarians as little better than infidels.

T.—When you say there are three Persons in the Godhead, do you mean they are separate, distinct, and, in their subsistence, independent of each other; just as you and Democop and myself are separate and distinct individuals?

G.—No, for then there would be three Gods. I use the word in a peculiar and theological sense, which I cannot exactly define.

T.—That is, you use it to signify some mysterious distinction in the mode of the divine subsistence which you suppose the scriptures obscurely intimate to us, without telling us what it is.

G.—Exactly so.

T.—Then you need not hold the Unitarians in so much abhorrence

for you are in fact one yourself. What shocks the mass of Unitarians, when they hear us speak of "Three Persons in the Godhead," is "because they have used themselves to fancy that notion only of the word Person, according to which three men are accounted to be three persons, and these three persons to be three men. But they ought to consider that there is another notion of the word Person, and in common use too, wherein the same man may be said to sustain divers persons, and those persons to be the same: that is, the same man as sustaining divers capacities. So Tully said of himself "I sustain, at the same time, three persons, my own, that of my opponent, and that of the judge: "*Tres personas unus sustinet; meam, adversarii, judicis.*" And then it will seem no more harsh to say, The three Persons, Father, son and Holy Ghost, are one God, than to say, God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sanctifier are one God—it is much the same thing whether of the two forms we use.

The word person (persona) is originally a Latin word, and doth not properly signify a man (so that another person must needs imply another man) for then the word Homo would have served, and they needed not have in the word Persona; but rather one so *circumstantiated*. And the same man, if considered in other circumstances, (considerably different) is represented *another person*. And that this is the true notion of the word Person, appears by those noted phrases, personam induere, personam deponere, personam agere, and many the like in approved Latin authors. Thus the same man may at once sustain the Person of a King and a Father, if he be invested both with regal and paternal authority. Now, because the King and the Father are, for the most part, not only persons but different men also, (and the like in other cases,) hence it comes to pass that *another person* is sometimes supposed to imply *another man*; but not always, nor is that the proper sense of the word. It is Englished in our dictionaries by the *status, quality, or condition, whereby one man differs from another*; and so, as the condition alters, the Person alters though the man be the same.

The hinge of the controversy is that notion concerning the *three somewhats*, which the Fathers (who first used it) did intend to design by the name *Person*: so that we are not from the word person to determine what was that *Notion*; but from that notion which they would express, to determine in what sense the word person is here used."

G.—This is Sabellianism I think.—

T.—Whatever it is, it is not mine, for I have used the very words of an orthodox prelate Dr. Wallis, as cited, with approbation by Archbishop Whately.

G.—The orthodox use the word to signify not so much as, *a separate and distinct individual*, and yet *something more than a character or capacity*.

T.—Can you tell precisely what that intermediate something is?

A.—No: it is a mystery.

T.—Then, after all, this mighty matter of difference, on account of which you were, a little while ago, ready to class the Unitarians with infidels, dwindles down into a word—a word, too, to which no definite meaning can be attached! A worthy cause, truly, why christians should not only divide themselves into parties, but refuse to acknowledge each other as brethren in Christ!

G.—The Unitarians, I believe, are willing enough to acknowledge us; if we would acknowledge them.

T.—They acknowledge you, without the *if*.

G.—Well: I think, there is, so far, strength in your argument, that I shall consent to read hereafter both sides of controverted subjects. Give me Fletcher's Checks Demococp, and take in exchange, Edwards.

T.—There is one step towards union. Spirit of Sect! Thy days are numbered.

D.—Tell us what is to be the next step.

T.—It is simply this, to cease the vain attempt, so often repeated by theologians, to reduce the infinite into your systems. This has been a fruitful source of controversy and of division in the church. "When we talk of God, who is infinite and incomprehensible, it is natural to run into notions and to use terms, which it is impossible for us to reconcile. And in lower matters, that are more within our knowledge and comprehension, we shall not be able to keep ourselves clear of them. To say that a curve line, setting out from a point within a hairs breadth of a straight line, shall run towards that line as swift as thought, and yet never be able to touch it, seems contrary to common sense; and yet were it not clearly demonstrated in the conchoides of Archimedes, it could never be believed. Matter is infinitely divisible; and therefore a cubical inch of gold may be divided into an infinity of parts; and there can be no number greater than that which contains an infinity. Yet another cubical inch of gold may be infinitely divided also; and therefore, the parts of both cubes must be more numerous than the parts of one only. Here is a palpable contrariety of ideas, and a flat contradiction of terms. We are confounded and lost in the consideration of infinities; and surely, most of all, in the consideration of the *infinite of infinities*. We justly admire that saying of the philosopher, that *God is a being whose centre is every where, and circumference no where*, as one of the noblest and most exalted flights of human understanding; and yet not only the terms are absurd and contradictory, but the very ideas that constitute it, when considered attentively, are repugnant to one another. Space and duration are mysterious abysses, in which our thoughts are confounded with demonstrable propositions to all sense and reason flatly contradictory to one another. Any two points of time, though ever so distant, are exactly in the middle of eternity.

The remotest points of space that can be imagined or supposed, are each of them purely in the centre of infinite space."—(Edwards.)

Here might have been added the mysteries of God's eternal duration, it being without succession, present, before and after, all at once: "*Vita interminabilis tota simul et perfecta possessio.*"

G.—We cannot comprehend the infinite I acknowledge: but where have theologians attempted to do this?

T.—Edwards himself whose very words I have just used does it in various instances. I will give you this one: "If, says he, "there be any evil or faultiness in sin against God, there is certainly *infinite* evil; for if it be any fault at all, it has an infinite aggravation, viz: that it is against an infinite object."

He uses the same mode of reasoning frequently in different parts of his works, as you will see in their perusal. And what are all the systems that have been formed on the subject of the mode of the Divine subsistence, and the decrees of God, about both of which there have been so much of angry discussion, what are they but so many vain attempts to master subjects, which, because they run into the infinite, are beyond the reach of the human faculties.

Besides; the opinions which men form on these incomprehensible subjects were they capable, which they are not, of being perfectly reconciled with other opinions, held by the same individuals, but situated in another part of their system, are still no more than opinions, and ought, therefore, never to be placed on a level with an article of Faith. They are, and let them be considered, as mere matters of speculation. Let men who have an unconquerable penchant for such an intellectual exercise, and since nothing will serve them but they must indulge their fancy for theorizing on subjects with regard to which neither Scripture nor reason furnish any solid ground to go upon, why, let them indulge it: but let them not attempt to drag others with them in their head-long excursions into the regions of "Chaos and old Night." To enter into a strife of words about such things, as we sometimes find the zeal and bigotry of sect have elevated into the dignity and importance of articles of faith, is folly: to divide the church of Christ's followers, on account of them, is worse. It is atrocious wickedness. The wrangling and strife about words to no profit, which began even in the time of the apostles, and which have been increasing ever since, ought, surely, by this time, to have taught the church the necessity of forsaking the thorny road of philosophical speculation, and going peaceably along in the common-sense path of practical godliness, taking the plain declarations of the word of God as statements concerning so many ultimate facts—; contented to use, as they are, in all the vigour and generality of a common-life practical style.—without even attempting to become wise above what is written. What have I—with my

scant allowance of perspicacity—a creature of a day, a mite an insect—what have I to do with the ontology of the Godhead—with the audacious mystification of that other source of strife—the eternal generation of the only Son of God! Must I be required, from the knowledge I have derived of the principles and rules and policy of human government—derived from the Pandects of Justinian and the “Spirit of laws”—must I be required to be able so accurately to scan the jurisprudence of the Eternal, as to know the *precise way* in which the sufferings and death of the Mediator become the channel through which pardon and grace flow down to me, before I can receive that pardon and that grace; and that, too, when I know that his own immediate disciples, who sat at his feet and heard his words, understood nothing of it! So far from it, that they revolted at the bare idea of his future sufferings, and would not admit its possibility, till forced upon them by the melancholy catastrophe itself? Melancholy, I say, for to their feelings it was so, to a degree which we can scarcely conceive. Among the various and conflicting opinions which have prevailed on these high and mysterious subjects, I am at liberty to adopt whatever one may seem to me most in accordance with reason and Scripture; but let me not presume to exalt my opinion into an article of faith, and repel from me, as “an heathen man and a publican,” whoever will not subscribe to it. Speculative opinions, on the philosophy of Christianity, have no more claim to be made the ground of divisions among christians, than speculative opinions on other branches of philosophy; On the subject of electricity there is the theory of Franklin and the theory of Dufay. Why have we not Franklinian and Dufayan Christians, each denouncing the other as heretics!

That “there is one God and one Mediator between God and man,” and that this Mediator is God’s Plenipotentiary, in the grand affair of Redemption, is what all christians believe—all Protestants at least:—and is it not enough for them to know this, that they may follow him in the narrow way of obedience to his precepts—and this, not to be forgotten among the rest, that they love one another.

Orthodoxy of opinions is ever changing: so that what, in one age was orthodox, becomes heterodox in another, or is considered frivolous and consigned to contempt. Who now, for instance, can read, without blushing, the orthodox theory about the Maternity and Virginity of Mary—*Dei ara*, (the mother of God!) as she was called, or the orthodox theory relative to the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, which preserved it from the impure fate of other food, and which fixed upon the heretics that denied or doubted it the odious name of *Stercorarians*! All true disciples of Christ have, through him, access, by one spirit, unto the Father. He that hath hath not this spirit of Christ is none of his. Now, those deep theologico—metaphysical questions, that have torn, and des-

tracted and divided, into so many fragments, the body of Christians, are not of the spirit. They are foreign from it, They partake not of it. Logical accuracy, metaphysical acumen, skill in scholastic theology are not graces of the spirit. The life of God in the soul of man is neither begun, carried on, nor perfected, by their means. That life-giving principle which regenerates the moral powers of our nature, and brings strength and joy from God into the soul by communion with Him, is distinct from, and independent of those artificial forms which ideas take in the theoretical understanding. These forms may be different in different understandings; and they may appear still more different when expressed in words; and yet the practical views and impressions which really govern the men of these different understandings may be exactly the same. Again, there may be "a form of sound words," a shell of orthodoxy, with nothing in it, a shibboleth that men pronounce for purposes which the term itself may recall, and yet there may be absolutely no intelligible idea connected with it. And, what is, perhaps, still more remarkable, a man's theoretical or speculative belief may be in direct contradiction to his practical: so, some have, in speculation, held that the material world is a phantom; and yet both Pyrrho and Hume were, in their conduct, governed by a belief in the testimony of their senses, and avoided knocking their heads against posts and stepping into pits, no less than other people. Many years ago, I attempted to ascend the cupola of a church in Little York; which is said to be the highest in the United States. Encouraged by a friend, a citizen of the place, who attended me; I mounted the winding stairs from story to story, till, at length looking down through the open windows, as I slowly passed them, on the face of the country stretching far and wide on all sides, I seemed to be raised to such a fearful elevation in the air, that I could not cast my eye on the objects so far, very far beneath, without a feeling of insecurity coming over me, which increased at every step; so that, at last, in spite of my resolution to the contrary, and in spite of the exhortations of Cassat, and in spite of my speculative belief that the timbers of the lofty spire were perfectly sound and well jointed and secured, I could proceed no further. According to my speculative opinions, I was safe: according to my practical belief, I was not.

The notions of the intellect—which make so large a portion of sectarian creeds—must be impregnated from the spirit—mingled with the moral feelings, before they can produce the living virtues of a holy life. But there are notions that wander, so far off "in the mighty void" of speculation, that they must remain forever barren of good. Yet, to carry out the figure, it not unfrequently happens, that these extramundane wanderers are caught and fecundated by another spirit than the spirit of purity and goodness—that same spirit which, according to Milton, once traversed

this region of horrors, where, without an effort of the imagination, he may still be conceived to hover—and hence has come into existence that evil progeny, which in every age have vexed and troubled the church of God—the offspring of a malignant spirit of persecution engendering with the forms of a cold and speculative orthodoxy.

G.—The train of your remarks, it seems to me, would lead one to the conclusion, that it matters not what a man believes. Do you then really adopt the sentiment expressed in the so often quoted couplet of Pope,

“For modes of faith let senseless bigots fight,  
His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.”

F.—There is some truth in the sentiment, as much, I think, if not more, than in the following from the same author.

“For forms of government let fools contest,  
That which is best administered, is best.”

A republican form of government is, I think, better than a monarchy; yet I would prefer living under the latter, if well administered, to living under the former if badly administered. So, a creed of sound opinions is preferable to one that contains errors: yet there is many a man with a bad creed, whose christian character is decidedly and greatly better than many another man, whose creed is much nearer the truth. The wrong opinions of the one are neutralized by his good principles; and the right opinions of the other, by his bad ones. A creed of sound opinions ought never to be made a passport into the church; as we certainly know it can never gain for any one admission into Heaven. Nor, on the other hand, would there be any propriety in admitting to christian fellowship a man of fair moral character, however erroneous his opinions might be; but the man and his creed ought to be considered together; since it is impossible to say, in the abstract, how much error of opinion is compatible with a truly christian heart; or how much orthodoxy with a mind alienated from the life of God. An error may be inert and innocent in one, which could not be so in another. And the truth itself may be held in unrighteousness. Hence, one among the many injuries that have been done to the cause of genuine vital christianity by the use, or, if you please, the abuse, of creeds, lies in this, that they make of orthodox opinions a test of christian character, a test, which is certainly not the same as that which the Lord has furnished, and which, lest his disciples should overlook it, he has expressed in every variety of phrase, and set in every different point of light: “By their fruits ye shall know them.”----“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”----“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.”----“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”----But to quote all that our Divine Master has said to this effect would be to quote, in fact, the whole of his sayings that have been left on

record: whereas, I do not remember a single word of his that can be tortured into an intimation of the importance of speculative opinions.

The being, providence and moral government of God; a future state of retribution, in which all shall receive according to their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil; the necessity of regeneration, and purity of heart and of his own Mediation, as he is "the way the truth and the life;" these are the grand topics on which he insisted: and these are still regarded, by all who are worthy the name of his followers, as the vital points of his religion; I am compelled, therefore, to conclude that they comprize in them all or nearly all that is necessary to compose a creed, such as would unite, in one body, all on earth, who really and in the spirit, have fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ: however they might differ as to the mode and form in which the minuter parts of this creed when carried out into detail might shape and arrange themselves in their different intellectual conceptions.

Either some such creed as this, or the Bible itself, must take the place of the sectarian creeds now in vogue, or sectarianism must continue to divide, and further and still more minutely, to divide the protestant world.

What I have now said as to the remedy for sectarianism has relation to one only of its elements, the bigotry of opinion. The other element, worldly interest, we will talk about, if you please, in our next conversation.

G. & D. Agreed.

## CONVERSATION VIII.

D.—Well, what is your remedy for the other part of the evil—or, as I believe you called it—the second element of Sectarism ?

T.—Caloric. More caloric.

D.—Caloric ! Have you forgot what we were talking about ?

T.—No. We were talking about those stupendous icebergs--those huge floating mountains of ice, which the adventurous navigator encounters in the polar seas, and between which, his frail bark is in danger, every moment, of being crushed—was not this our subject ?

D.—The man's head is sorely turned. We were talking of sects.

T.—And what is a sect but an iceberg ? Impart sufficient caloric to the frozen mass, and its particles, dissolved by the genial influence, would mingle and flow together, in kindly fellowship, with the kindred particles that make up the Ocean. Impart sufficient love, the caloric of the moral world, to those cold hearts, which the spirit of the world has congealed into selfishness, and combined together for worldly purposes, and they would not—they could not, remain compacted together by the frigid principle of elective affinity, by which one icy particle cleaves to another, but would melt and flow together, with all their brethren in the great family of God, assimilated to one another because assimilated to Him:—"for God is love."

G.—Your imagination has created a phantom, which, in the shape of an imposing image, has beguiled your understanding. Were I now to separate myself from the Presbyterian church, I want to know how that would generate caloric—love towards christians in general. A man, by hating his own family, is not likely to gain new fervor to his love for the race of man in general.

T.—I do not mean, that you should separate yourself from the Presbyterian church, nor that you should love its members nor its communion any less than you do, I only desire that your attachment to its interests be pure, free from all influences of a worldly tendency.

G.—I hope it is so.

T.—I do not presume to judge you—but let me ask, Have not efforts been most zealously and incessantly made to endow Theological seminaries, with their scholarships and professorships, and also to render the education gratuitous of such young men in your church as have the Ministry in view ?

G.—Yes, and a good and glorious work it is.

T.—Is it not expected that the orthodox will be made exclusively to

share in the advantages resulting from the management of these funds ?

G.—Certainly. We would be fools to bestow them on heretics.

T.—And, how pure, tell me, is that orthodoxy and that piety likely to be, which are to be attracted by the lure of such advantages ? By these means are you not bribing people to be religious, and to be so in a *certain way*.

G.—No: We are providing for the wants of the church and of the world;—we are thrusting out laborers into God's harvest.

T.—Indeed ! I thought you a Calvinist. I thought, too, that this was God's business, and that your duty was to pray Him, the Lord of the harvest, that *he* would send forth laborers into his harvest.

G.—We should pray, and use other means too.

T.—So, indeed, the eloquence of those who conduct this matter is wont to represent it. But there may be a sad mistake in the matter. Constantine only provided for the wants of the church, when he established the christian religion by law, and many well meaning people think that our Government fell into a mistake in not imitating his example, and that of the Mother country in this particular.—But, let me ask you another question, whence do you obtain funds for the purposes just mentioned ?

G.—From the free will offerings of the people, as Moses got the materials wherewith to make the tabernacle.

D.—And Aaron those wherewith to make the golden calf.

T.—And will not other sects follow the example, and solicit free will offerings to promote their orthodox purposes;—and will not thus iceberg come in collision with iceberg ?

G.—I wish in my heart you would come out from among these everlasting icebergs. You know I can't bear declamation and hate figures.

D.—And questions ?

T.—Allow me, however, to ask one more—Have you not repeatedly declared to me, that you believed the object of the New school party in the Presbyterian church, for many years, to have been, to get the ascendancy in the Presbyterian church, that they might wield its funds and the influence connected with them ?

G.—Yes, and I still think this was their object; but the exciding act defeated them. Was it not so ?

T.—Whether it was so, or not, I am not concerned to know; this I, and all the world, know, that there has been a struggle for *something*; and, in the struggle, a great deal of ill-feeling generated and a mighty disturbance made, and a vast injury done to the interests of true religion. And charity itself can hardly repel the suspicion, that a worldly ambition has had much to do in these agitations. The great lawsuit is a strong proof of this. The history of the church, in past ages, both before and since the Reformation, leads to such a suspicion. "Where the carcass is

there the Eagles will be gathered together." Ambitious and worldly spirits love a dowered orthodoxy. Monied establishments have never failed to corrupt religion, by giving intensity to sectarianism. The establishment is looked to, as the means of affording a living to the pious—orthodox—and the zealous partizan. Monachism was, at first, a pure institution. Men retired from the world, and submitted to poverty, in solitary seclusion from the pleasures of social life, with the honest but mistaken view of cultivating, to better advantage, habits of piety, and raising higher the flame of devotional feeling. It was soon found convenient to mitigate the rigors of such a life, by somewhat of the comforts of that world which they had renounced, sent to them by the kindness of friends whose society they had left. The next step was to reward such distinguished piety, by more ample donations. It only remained, to secure by law what was so freely and piously granted; and thus, there at length grew up, over all christendom, a multitude of monastic establishments, which the Holy Briarian Monster used, as so many hands, in making war upon Truth and Heaven.

And when the protestant establishment of the Church of England became, what Wilberforce in his "View" has described it, rich and powerful and corrupt, we know in what style it acted out its fierce spirit of sectarianism and intolerance, not only against the dissenters, but against its own children the Wesleys, when they attempted to infuse new life into the dead forms of its orthodoxy.

*G.*—The established church was bound, in self-defence, to resist the arrogance of these disorganizers, who, instead of preaching the gospel, railed in their public discourses at the regular clergy, calling them "dumb dogs"—"priest of Baal"—"Wolves in sheeps clothing," &c. &c.

*D.*—The railing, with your leave, was on the other side. The established clergy, not content with refusing the use of their pulpits to these persecuted men, reproached them as "field-precahers." And I question, whether in the whole compass of the English literature, a specimen of bitter and contemptuous invective can be found equal to that which Warburton, a bishop of the established church, poured out upon John Wesley. Nor is M'Gee, though he wrote after the excitement of the first commotions attending the rise of Methodism had subsided, altogether free from a similar imputation.

*G.*—You do Warburton great injustice. He wielded the club of Hercules, because he thought he had a monster to deal with. And the pretensions of Wesley to something like miraculous powers gave him some reason to think so.

These pretensions Warburton brought to the test of scripture, and instead of finding, in Wesley's proceedings, the "wisdom which is from above, which is pure, peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of

mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy," he proved, by copious extracts, from Wesley's own Journal, that his policy was marked, in every particular, by traits the very opposite. Warburton deserves the thanks of the christian world for exposing the tricks of imposture.—But what did M'Gee? I have read his work on the Atonement, but that was directed against the Unitarians,

*D.*—O, he has the audacity to class together the Methodists and the Unitarians—puts Wesley alongside of Priestley.—Here, is the book. Shall I read? (reads) “How easily is this question”—he refers to the question of native depravity—“how easily is this question answered by the follower of Priestly:—or, I may add, of Wesley. The former produces his philosopher, the latter his saint, in refutation of such unworthy and disparaging notions of human nature. They differ, indeed, in one material point: The one contends that, by his *own* virtuous resolutions, he can extricate himself from vicious propensities and habits; whilst the other is *proud* to admit, that the divine favor has been *peculiarly* exerted in *his* behalf to rescue him from his sins. The one denies that he was ever subject to an innate depravity: the other confesses that he was, boasts even of its inveteracy, but glories that he has been *perfectly purified* from its stains, But both are found to agree *most exactly* in that vain self-complacency which exults in the reflection that “they are not as other men are,” and in the arrogant presumption that they are lifted above that corruption of nature from which the more humble and more deserving christian feels himself not to be exempt. In the philosophizing Christian all this is natural and consistent. But in the Methodist [I speak of the Arminian Methodist or follower of Wesley] it is altogether at variance with the doctrines which he professes to maintain. Accuracy of reasoning, however, is not among the distinctive marks of this latter description of religionists. A warm fancy, with a weak intellect; strong passions, and vehement conceit, almost always go to the composition of the character. That such qualities should find many minds of congenial aptitude, is a thing not to be wondered at. And, therefore, that this mixture of fanaticism, hypocrisy and vanity, and ignorance, should be widely spreading in both countries is perfectly natural”.—Yes: here is the secret cause of all this abuse. “Widely spreading.” The growth and power of the Methodist society provoked his spleen.

*T.*—I am, indeed, gentlemen, much obliged to you both, for furnishing me an illustration so much to my purpose. Here is an established church, zealous for its worldly honors and emoluments, embittered against another church, not established in law, but making a vehement effort to establish itself in the affections of the people. Do you think there had been all this earnestness, not to say virulence and ill-temper, manifested in the case, had there been no other interests at stake than those of the

kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the holy Spirit \*

G.---But you cannot separate religion from the interests of the world, unless you were to take it out of the world. So long as it needs the services of men, they must be supported and provision must be made for that purpose. The Bible clearly sanctions this principle, when it says "They who minister at the altar are partakes of the altar."

T.---True enough, But, to support such as are actually employed in rendering important and laborious services in the cause of religion, is one thing; and to lay up funds, in any form of permanent investment, is a very different thing. Even civil governments have, long since, abandoned this policy, having seen, from long experience, the bad effects of it. An accumulated hoard is, always, either an instrument of oppression in the hands of a domestic tyrant, or a lure to some foreign spoiler. It is wonderful, how much slower to learn wisdom, in this matter, Ecclesiastics have been, than statesmen; and that the administration of the affairs of that kingdom, which is not of this world, should embrace in it less of faith and more of carnal confidence, than that of governments entirely secular! No republican thinks of securing our liberties by means of pecuniary investment. It is only in matters of religion that we think so absurdly. To guard the orthodoxy and increase the power of our church, we, with infinite pains and trouble, make permanent investments---foundations they are sometimes called---and should "the foundations be destroyed"---we anxiously exclaim, "what will the *righteous* do?"

Metinks the evil one, in the mean time, lies crouching in his den, with a sharp eye towards the accumulated store, and laughs in his sleeve, well assured, that it will be his before long. If employed in giving strength and confidence to the sect, *as a sect*, it *is* already his; and if some other party, who to get the control of it will not hesitate to subscribe articles, or do any thing you please to require of them, as a test of orthodoxy, lay their hands upon it, it is, still more emphatically, his. Besides, this accomplished financier knows that, in scraping the funds together, and in contriving and exerting plans to keep them together, and to distribute their proceeds, the attention of many will be called off from their appropriate duties; and that the men of the world, seeing so much of the paraphernalia of the "unrighteous mammon" hung round the form of religion, will mistake it for mammon himself; and further, that, in the direction and management of the whole concern, many things will be done which will be entirely to his taste; and that, in all these ways, the interests of his kingdom will be promoted; and that, too, by those who are enlisted to make war upon it, and who vainly dream that they are on the very point of taking it by a "coup de main."

G.---Lost in figures again!

D.---They are plain enough however, and please me the better that they

accord so well, in their purport, with the doctrine which, you know, we always preach—and

*G.*—And never practice. There is not a more money gathering sect on Earth than yours.

*T.*—These accusations are as unpleasant to me as it seems my figures are to you. I shall avoid figures in future if I can, while I shall call your attention to one thing more, which if put in practice would prove an effectual remedy to the evils of sectarianism: and it is this, that the zeal of christians be turned upon the great matters of practical godliness. The morals of Christianity are its glory. No one can read the discourses and parables of its Divine Author, without perceiving that this was, in his estimation, the main point. And it grieves me to be compelled to add that, among the sects, the very opposite sentiment is but too generally prevalent; and, with still greater grief, I must add too generally inculcated. In proof of what I say, you may go into any sectarian pulpit [that is if they will let you] and you may preach to the people on any practical point,—that, for instance, which the parable of the good Samaritan was intended to illustrate—and you may enforce your doctrine from the very same topics that Jesus Christ employed, and the people will come away dissatisfied and murmuring, because “it was not a gospel-sermon”.—Practical antinomianism is the grand heresy. We try, with all our might, to “beware of those great guns the ten commandments,” though in a sense very different from that in which Bunyan meant the caution. There is a remarkable zeal occasionally manifested for “the conversion of sinners” as the phrase is, but on the varied and important duties of christian morals nothing is said; just as if, when a sinner is converted, there were nothing more to be done, or as if that conversion were worth any thing which is not followed up, or, evinced to be genuine, by the virtues of a humble, holy, diligent and careful life.

As to the way and means of converting sinners, there is, I apprehend, a great and prevalent mistake among the ranks of sectarianism. This great change is expected to be brought about precisely as it was at the first, when converts were to be made from among Jews and Pagans, and when, of course, the superstitious absurdities of the latter and the obstinate prejudices of the former, as well as the sinful habits that were common to both with the rest of mankind, were to be renounced. Now, the case is different. The last vestage of Paganism is effaced from our manners and modes of thinking. Jews among us there are none. We have no prejudices in favor of any other religion than christianity. We want no miracles, nor preaching, in the primitive sense of that term, to convince us of the truth of christianity. But we want, still, the truths of christianity to come home to our hearts in demonstration of the spirit and with power. And, though the reading and the hearing of the word may be

blessed for this purpose; yet the most powerful means of effecting it is the "light" of example that shines in the lives of real, simple, honest hearted christians: for so says the divine teacher himself. "Let your light so shine before men, that *others seeing your good works may glorify your Father who is in Heaven.*" And, again, he says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another." And, in that most moving and solemn prayer for his disciples which he offered shortly before his crucifixion, and which breathes the very spirit of his religion, he plainly intimates that the conversion of the world was to be effected through the moral power of *union*—the union of love—among his disciples, for which union he prays, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." To feel the truth of this sentiment we need only ask, whether to exhort sinners with all the powers of reason and eloquence would any where be expected to convert them, if the exhortation proceeded from one who was notoriously a greater sinner than any of them. They would laugh in his face and be only the more confirmed in their iniquities than before. Now, to say nothing of those palpable violations of the laws of christian morality—alas! not "few nor far between,"—which spring out of the division of christians into sects, which are for the most part—the fact cannot be concealed—little else than so many rival, and, may I not say, hostile parties—to say nothing of all this, and the sad effect which it must have on the public mind, is not the naked and simple fact that such a division among Protestant christians has taken place, standing forth, as it does, glaringly conspicuous, before the eyes of all men, an obstacle in the way of the conversion of multitudes?—and a stumbling block—shall I not say it?—over which they fall into perdition? Christians! this is a solemn, a tremendous consideration! Will you not lay it to heart? Regard not the palliations and the apologies and the excusses that men—the very men, it may be, who are verily the most guilty in this thing, may make to quiet their own consciences, and still the anxieties that others begin to feel on this awful subject. But go to the Great Teacher himself: read his discourses and meditate on them;—go to the cross, and weigh well the meaning of what, standing beneath it, you may yet see and hear; and beware that you be not guilty of setting at naught one of those for whom Christ died, and that, by magnifying matters of doubtful dispute, you spread not the flames of discord among his followers and thus inflict a wound and dishonor upon that cause which ought to be dear to you for its own sake, as well as on this account, that to promote it, he shed his precious blood. It was not the cause of your sect or mine, (if I also am a sectarian) that he came into our world to promote by his example, doctrine and sufferings. No: it was a holier cause than this; the cause of pure virtue itself. This demands, and let it have, our chief regard also. He commands us to be perfect. Are we making sincere and

honest efforts, in imitation of his example, and by the aid of his spirit, to obey this precept, and accomplish the great work of our entire sanctification? Make them, we must or the work will never be done. What ever any of us may think of the doctrine which makes a man passive in regeneration, no one ever taught us to expect *sanctification* in a passive state. Let us be, then, always alert diligent, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Is there any ill habit we have contracted? let us not rest till it be broken off—any besetting sin that steals upon us on our weak side? Let us fortify ourselves against it by watchfulness, faith and prayer. Have we wronged any one? Let us make instant reparation. Let no one have reason to reproach us with any thing that is unjust, uncandid, dishonest, insincere, selfish, hard, mean or ungenerous. Let us improve each one his talent and sphere of usefulness. If it is a humble sphere, let us labor to dignify it with contentment; if it is exalted, let us not make it a sin-ecure, but discharge its duties with fidelity to God and the public, regardless of the obloquy with which envy may seek to harrass us. If there are any that have special claims upon us, whether from ties of nature, gratitude, friendship or sympathy, let us scorn to be wanting in regard to these claims. Let us, especially, do all the good we can, while the day of our activity lasts, ever bearing it in mind that “the night cometh.” The measure of a common morality, such as the law of public sentiment demands of all who would be respectable in life, is not the standard for Christians. They should aim at something higher, “What do ye more than others? should therefore always sound in our ears. Our righteousness must go beyond that of the Scribes and Pharisees; not indeed in their own way, but in the way that Christ has so clearly pointed out. And, as party strife characterizes our population; and as inveterate obstinacy and malignity characterizes that state of mind to which the spirit of party leads, whether in politics or religion, but especially the latter, let us beware how we indulge it, lest we be found condemning and denouncing, without first examining and ascertaining—condemning and denouncing what and whom the Lord approves. Never—never let a follower of the Lord Jesus be swayed by the voice of the multitude, who to day shout Hosanna, and may cry crucify to-morrow; nor by the interests and honors of a world the fashion of which so rapidly passeth away? Let principle, high, pure, christian principle,—not passion, prejudice, policy, or interest, be, then, our guide: and let us live as under the inspection of that eye, from whose heart—penetrating search there can be no concealment, and as amenable to that judgment-bar before which all must be tried “ACCORDING to their WORKS.”—My heart bleeds when I think of the distractions that sect has produced: let me, therefore, beseech and intreat you,—and would! that my voice could reach my christian brethren throughout the world,—I would beseech and intreat them all to transfer

some of that regard which hitherto they have given to those of their own sectarian name to those who belong to the great household of faith, though under a different denomination, and especially to place a little less stress on what they and their party call orthodoxy—though venerable for antiquity and recommended by the strength of numbers—or at all events, a little *more* stress on Orthopraxy, a thing which, if the Sacred Scriptures contain a syllable of truth, will better than the other—much better(—however it may be treated now)—pass the ordeal of the LAST DREAD DAY, and, in the mean time, would, if properly honored and regarded, banish, from among the churches of the reformation, the Fiend of Sectarianism, with all that mighty train of evils which he draws after him

Amen: so let it be!

F I N I S .

## NOTE A TO PAGE 3.

The reason, it is to be feared, why many confound opinion with faith, is that, in reality, they are destitute of true faith. Faith and opinion rest, with them, on the same bottom. Opinion is an assent of the understanding to something which, on some grounds or other, is taken for truth: and *their* faith is no more than this. It is a dead faith. A living man knows the difference between his eye and his toe-nail; his head, and the hair that is on it. To a dead man they are all the same: The plucking out of an eye would be no more regarded than the paring of a nail; the amputation of the the head, than the cutting off of the hair.

The real christian *lives* by faith. He uses it constantly, and cannot do without it. It is to him eyes in seeing; ears in hearing; legs in walking; mouth in eating; or rather it is the life which gives perception and active power to all his faculties. Were a doubt to come over his mind with regard to any of those grand truths which concentrate in the Object of his faith, he would instantly be struck with a spiritual paralysis. He would feel the effect as sensibly as he would the ebbing of his life's blood, if an artery were cut. Opinion regards truth in the abstract: faith views it in its object. Opinion contemplates it at a distance: faith brings it home. Opinion speculates about it: faith acts on it and with it. The reflected light of authority, like that of the cold moon, is enough to create opinion. Faith sees it in its Fountain "The Sun of righteousness," and derives warmth and healing from his beams. For the management of church-affairs and similar interests, and to keep up the external forms of religion, faith is not necessary. Orthodox opinion will answer these purposes just as well: perhaps better, as it need not be embarrassed with scruples. But to "fight the good fight"—to overcome the native depravity of the heart and the temptations of the world, quite a different principle is needed—one that will lead the soul to the Great Physician, "who died the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God"—one that, through the Mediator as "the way, the truth and the life," conducts to God as a Merciful Creator, a kind Father, a righteous Rewarder;—one that, by beholding in the gospel, "as in a glass, the glory of the Lord," animates the moral sentiments; and collecting in itself the strength of them all, and firmly relying on the promises of God's word supports itself in a patient continuance in well-doing, looking not at the things which are seen and temporal but at those which are unseen and eternal, and seeking for glory honor and immortality. Such a principle is faith, and while the man who possesses it verifies, in the whole course of his experience, the vital truths which it embraces; he feels it to be a matter of small moment what opinion he may entertain on the disputed questions respecting Prelacy or Presbytery; Immersion or Sprinkling; Election of persons, or Election of characters; irresistible efficacious grace, or grace that may

be frustrated by free will in man, and a thousand other such points as figure largely in the systems of polemic theology. On such matters of opinion, let others dogmatize; his concern is to live the life that he now lives in the flesh by the Faith of the Son of God who loved him and gave himself for him.

On the other hand a distinction ought to be made, for a most manifest distinction exists, between such opinions as these, and dogmas of that school of Unitarians of which Belsham was the head, dogmas that militate against the fact of human depravity, the efficacy of the death of Christ as the means of effecting "the atonement," and the necessity of regeneration by the holy Spirit in order to that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Such dogmas are not to be considered matters of opinion; but elements of unbelief. The man who honestly holds them may be a Deist, a Socinian, a sceptic. He has obviously no faith in the Christ of the Bible, and of course, no just claim to the name Christian. But there are multitudes in this Western Country to whom the general name Unitarian applies, who possess the faith above described, and are far enough from the school of Belsham.

#### NOTE, B.

Calvin commenting on Job III 15, 16 has these words "*Se toti mundo propitium ostendit, cum sine exceptione omnes ad Christi fidem vocat, quæ nihil aliud est quam ingressus in vitam.*"—God shows himself propitious to all the world, when he, without exception, calls *all* to faith in Christ, which is nothing else than the entrance into life:" and, on 1. Tim. II. 5 he says "*Cum itaque commune mortis suæ beneficium omnibus esse velit, injuriarum illi faciunt, qui opinione sua quempiam arcet a spe salutis,*" "Since, therefore, Christ is willing that the benefit of his death should be *common to all men*; they do him injustice, who by their opinion exclude *any one* from the hope of salvation. And in his "Institutes" Book I. Chapter 5. sect. 1, he says "*Quia ultimus beatæ vitæ finis in Dei cognitione positus est, ne cui preclusus esset ad felicitatem aditus, non solum hominum mentibus indidit illud quod dicimus religionis semen sed ita se patefecit in toto mundi officio, ac sic quotidie palam offert, ut aperire oculos nequeant, quin eum aspicere cogantur:* For as much as the knowledge of God conducts to a happy life, that access to happiness might not be precluded to *any man*, God has not only implanted in the minds of men *the seed of religion*, [so to speak; but he has likewise so manifested himself in all the fabric of the world, and presents himself daily to them in so plain a manner, that they cannot open their eyes without being compelled to behold him." I could name certain Calvinists here in the West, to whom offence, has been given by preaching these very doctrines.

On the mystery of the mode of the subsistence of God, Calvin expresses himself thus, "I like not this prayer, O holy, blessed and glorious Trinity. It savors of barbarity, The word Trinity is barbarous, insipid, profane—a human invention, grounded on no testimony of God's word—the Popish God, unknown to Jesus Christ and the Apostles." Luther on the same subject says "The word Trinity sounds oddly, and is a human invention. It were better to call Almighty God, God, than Trinity." The *thing* denoted by this term Trinity these reformers did not pretend to be able to explain. Nor do any of the Orthodox now. It is a mystery. Why, then, attach so much importance to the word, and to other forms of speech employed in what *seems* to be an explanation of it?

For the above quotations, see *Fletchers Checks*, Vol. 5. p. 83—and *Western Messenger* Vol, II. No II. p. 81.

Since the foregoing pages were written I have read "Luther on the Epistle to the Galatians;" from which I have selected the few following extracts. The reader will readily perceive their bearing upon the subject here presented to his consideration. Commenting on Chap. I. verses 15. 16. 17. he thus speaks of his character "under the Popedom:"—"I did so highly esteem the Pope's authority, that to dissent from him, even in the least point, I thought it a sin worthy of everlasting death. And that wicked opinion caused me to think that John Huss was a cursed heretic, yea, and I accounted it an heinous offence, but once to think of him, and I would myself, in defence of the Pope's authority, have ministered fire and sword, for the burning and destroying of that heretic, and thought it an high service unto God so to do."

"And the more holy we were, the more were we blinded, and the more did we worship the Devil. There was not one of us, but he was a blood-sucker, if not in deed, yet in heart."

The case was quickly changed when he became a Protestant; he then found that the same "malice and rage, those fires of hell" which he had, in the days of his sectarian bigotry, directed against others, were turned upon himself. Commenting on Verse 15th of the 4th Chapter, he says: "So also at this day the name of Luther is most odious to the world. He that praiseth me, sinneth worse than any idolater, blasphemers, perjurer, whomonger, adulter, murderer or thief."—and again, on Verse 29th he says: "So, at this day, they accuse Luther to be a troubler of the Papacy and of the Roman Empire. If I would keep silence, then all things should be in peace which the strong man possesseth and the Pope would not persecute me any more. But by this means the Gospel of Jesus Christ should be blemished and defaced. If I speak the Pope is troubled, and cruelly rageth. Either we must lose the Pope, an earthly and mortal man, or else the immortal God, Jesus Christ, life and Eternal Salvation. Let the Pope perish then, and let God be exalted; let Christ reign and triumph forever."

On Chapter 5th Verse 16th he says: "Therefore the apostle hath given this rule for the faithful, that they should serve one another through love, that they should bear the burdens and infirmities one of another, and that they should forgive one another. And without this bearing and forbearing through love, it is impossible that peace and concord should continue amongst Christians. For it cannot be, but that thou must needs often offend and be offended. Thou seest many things in me which offend thee, and I again see many things in thee which mislike me. Here if one bear not with another through love, there shall be no end of dissention, discord, envy, hatred and malice."

The word *Heresies* in the 19th Verse of the 5th chapter—for which he uses the term *Sects* he thus explains: "By the name of Sects Paul meaneth here, not those divisions or contentions which rise sometimes in the government of households or of common-weals for worldly and earthly matters; but those which rise in the church about doctrine faith and works. Heresies, that is to say, sects, have always been in the church, as we have said before in diverse places. Notwithstanding the Pope is an Arch-heretic and the head of all heretics: for he has filled the world as it were with an huge flood of infinite sects and errors. What concord and unity was there in so great diversity of the monks and other religious orders? No one sort or sect of them could agree with another: for they measured their holiness by the straightness of their orders: Hereof it cometh that the Carthusian will needs be counted holier than the Franciscan, and so likewise the rest. Wherefore there is no unity of spirit, nor concord of minds, but great discord in the papistical church. There is no conformity in their doctrine, faith, religion or serving God, but all things are clean contrary. Contrariwise amongst the Christians, the word, faith, religion, sacraments, service, Christ, God, heart, soul, mind & understanding are all one. Outward conversation, the diversity of states, degrees and condition of life, hindreth this spiritual concord and unity nothing at all, as before I have said. And they which have this unity of the spirit can certainly judge of all sects, which otherwise no man understandeth: as, indeed, no divine in the papacy understood, that Paul in this place condemneth all the worshippings, religions, continency; honest conversation and holy life in outward appearance, of all the Papists, Sectaries and Schismatics: but they all thought that he speaketh of the gross idolatry and heresies of the *Gentiles* and *Turks* which manifestly blaspheme the name of Christ."

Let the reader substitute the word sect for Pope, in the following passage, taken from Luthers comment on Chapter VI Verse 1st and look around him and within him: or rather, let him look first within him and see whether he may not find a Pope there. "But as for the Pope's synagogue, like as in all other matters it hath both taught and done clean

contrary to the commandment and example of Paul, even so hath it done in this thing also. The Pope with all his bishops have been very tyrants and butchers of men's consciences. For they have burdened them from time to time with new traditions, and for every light matter have vexed them with their excommunications: and that they might the more easily obey their vain terrors, they annexed thereunto these sentences of Pope Gregory, "It is the part and property of good minds to be afraid of a fault where no fault is." And again, "Our censures must be feared, yea tho' they be unjust and wrongful." By these sayings, (which were brought into the church by the Devil,) they stablished their excommunication and this Majesty of the Papacy, which is so terrible to the whole world. There was no need of such humility and goodness of minds, to be afraid of a fault where none is. O thou *Romish Satan*, who gave thee this power to terrify and condemn men's consciences, that were terrified enough before with thy unjust and wrongful sentences? Thou oughtest rather to have raised them up, to have delivered them from false fears, and to have brought them from lies and errors to the truth. This thou omittest, and according to thy title and name, to-wit: *the man of sin and child of perdition*, thou imaginest a fault where no fault is. This is indeed the craft and deceit of Antichrist, whereby he hath most mightily established his excommunications and tyranny. For whosoever despised his unjust sentences, was counted very obstinate and wicked: as some princes did, howbeit against their consciences: for in those times of darkness, they did not understand that the Pope's curses were vain."

It is true indeed that sects nowadays do not curse and anathematize, as was the fashion once with His Holiness of Rome: but they employ another weapon which has a more immediate and certain effect upon the person at whom it is hurled—I mean calumny.—I shall give an instance or two.

Some time in the summer of 1835 I was preaching at the house of a friend about thirty-five miles from Bloomington. Glancing my eye over the columns of a Religious Newspaper—"The Christian Advocate,"—my attention was taken by a speech or extracts from a speech, quoted there, which purported to have been spoken in Ireland:—or perhaps, it was a narrative, for, in this particular, my recollection is not distinct. Whatever it was, however, it contained, among other specimens of coarse declamation, a reflection on the Calvinists, of the following import. That they desired no Millennium, but the groans and wailings of the damned &c.—I gave expression to the feelings of indignation, by saying to the individual who, as I understood, took the Paper, and who was sitting by me at the time, that the price of the Paper was too high, considering its character, for if the article I was reading was a fair specimen, it was stuffed with lies. At that instant a foot-note by the Editor caught my eye.

It was to this effect: "We do not think the above a fair statement of the opinions of Calvinists." On seeing this I recalled the censure I had pronounced: still I was of the opinion—and may have expressed it on the occasion—that ribaldry of this sort should not be honored with a place in a Religious Periodical.

Some short time after I received a letter; in which the writer, after referring to the remarks I had made on the occasion observes, "The offensive remarks alluded to were made in a conversation relative to the merits of the Paper or Papers published by the Methodist Episcopal Church entitled the Christian Advocate.—Now Sir, could I view your charge as merely indicative of your private feelings or bearing towards the economy, in part or in whole, of that Branch of the church with which I am connected, as an unworthy—&c. I should in the exercise of that charity "that hopeth all things" gladly have left your charge unnoticed.—But supposing you to be possessed of the information that generally prevails with the reading portion of the community respecting the order observed in conducting our Periodicals, your charge assumes a degree of importance not to be overlooked. It impeaches the authority by which the Editors are appointed—It brands as retailers of falsehood all that associate with the Editors in filling their columns—and calls in question the veracity of all such as support by their money or influence the establishment referred to.—Inasmuch as this charge has originated within the range of that part of our work committed to my oversight, I hope you will permit me in behalf of the Ministry and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church not only to offer my plea of "not guilty," but also, in the spirit of meekness, as a Brother in the Fellowship of saints, to Protest against your charge as unwarranted, and inconsistent with that generous courtesy and liberal christian sentiment, so frequently professed and recommended by you in your public ministrations.

Leaving the matter with you for a reply, or otherwise reserving to myself the privilege of a suitable remonstrance, I am

with true respect yours &c."

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How strikingly, in the above letter, do we see the unhappy influence of sectarianism upon the mind of one, who, though personally unknown to me, is, no doubt both a gentleman and a christian. Had this not been his character, he would have blazed abroad the story of my "offensive remarks" without giving me any opportunity to make either apology, explanation or defence. This credit is due to him as a man. As a member of a sect his letter shews him in a less amiable light. A brother in Ireland had pronounced this sentence of *reprobation* upon the Calvinists, that they desire no other Millenium than the groans of the damned. Nothing worse could be said, with truth, of the Devil himself. Yet this precious morsel

of christian charity and brotherly love must be brought over the sea; inserted in the columns of a *Religious* Periodical; and, though softened a little by a short and gentle remark in a foot-note, given to the numerous families of the sect in this country—to be read by them—on the Sabbath—to prepare their minds for the public worship of that God who is no respecter of persons, and for that holy Heaven from which shall forever be excluded “whatsoever worketh an abomination or maketh a lie!”—And because I expressed my disapprobation of such conduct in the Editor of the Paper, through which this moral poison was infused into the minds of thousands, in such terms as the honest indignation of every unprejudiced mind must have, on any the like occasion, suggested, the writer of the above letter seems disposed to charge me with the design of casting reproach on the whole Methodist Episcopal Church. Now this is one of the fruits of that sectarian “economy” and of that sectarian spirit which pervades, to an alarming degree, the “economy” of the ecclesiastical organization of every sect, or nearly every sect on earth, and which, if it continue to grow and increase, as it threatens to do, there will soon be no such thing as genuine christianity in christendom.

To illustrate some of the views given in the preceding pages I state another fact, or rather the origin of another fact which has produced some commotion in this region. It is extensively known that certain false accusations were brought against me, not before the Board of Trustees, to whom I am accountable & who alone have the power of censuring me, or removing me from office, and whom my accuser himself in the Paper containing the charges calls “honorable men”—but before the Legislature. These charges were endorsed by two names, both members of the Board of Trustees at the time, both residents in the town of Bloomington at the time and both prominent members of the Methodist E. Church. Of one of them J. O. Howe I shall say nothing here, as his name was endorsed on the charges by his wife, while he was confined to his bed by severe sickness and not in a condition to know fully the import and tendency of the transaction. The other C. G. Ballard, had been but a short time a trustee. During the whole of it he had shown, for a stranger, a disposition that might be called eager to be on very friendly terms with me. Being a classleader in his church he solicited me to preach in that church and to contribute to the purchase of a Parsonage for it. With these requests I readily and cheerfully complied. He visited me in my room in the college very frequently. Was zealous and full of schemes. Among others he urged this; that a certain professorship should be established, to be called the *Wesleyan*—it would conciliate and gratify the Methodists. I was indeed desirous that the Professorship should be created and that a gentleman, who was spoken of for that purpose, a preacher of some distinction in that church, should be the person to occupy it.

But I objected to the name, not because of any antipathy I might be supposed to have either to Wesley, or that numerous and powerful sect of which he was the founder, but simply because it was a sectarian name. I would have had the same objection to the name of Calvin, or to the name of any other man with which the bitter feelings and atrocious prejudices of sect had become associated. I had a still stronger reason for my opposition: By accepting the place which I held in the Institution I had virtually pledged myself to the public to keep it clear of sectarianism: and to consent to call any professorship by the name of Wesley, would be to give to his followers a pledge inconsistent with the former: so that, in the one case or the other, I must prove unfaithful—a predicament in which I could not consent to be placed—All this I candidly stated to Mr. B. at the time. Hence *his* enmity.

By his own act Mr. Ballard's name has gone before the public in this case: he cannot therefore complain that I have, in the above statement, done him injustice.

I might relate many more instances in which *christian brethern* have taken an active part in that bitter and relentless persecution which the spirit of sect has raised against me, and which has sought to accomplish its ends by throwing out and spreading abroad vague, general and indefinite slanders in the halls of legislation, and in other places, and by other channels where they could not be met or refuted. Nor have there efforts at detraction been confined to one sect alone. Certain brethren of the Presbyterian church have, by letter and otherwise, taken up and circulated, to my injury, allegations having no better, or more authentic origin than evil surmises and the idle fictions of rumor. It has, for instance, been reported far and wide, that I am verging fast towards Infidelity; I have received, I know not how many letters, from points more than a thousand miles apart, written by friends, who seemed to entertain serious apprehensions that there might be some truth in these reports. I have, therefore, thought proper here to say, that for all such surmises and suspicions there exists no foundation whatever, unless it be in the fact that I preached some time ago, in the Unitarian Church in the city of Louisville. This is the head and front of my offending. I regret that this has given umbrage to any: but I do not repent of it, for I am honest in the conviction which I entertain now as I did then, that I was doing my duty: The proof is short. "Preach the Gospel," said the Master—and I submit to no authority contrary to *His*—"to every creature"—a description this which doubtless includes those who were, on the occasion, the audience that I addressed. But were they Christians? demands the orthodox censor. This, I see, is a question which is undergoing grave discussion among the orthodox in another quarter. In my humble judgment it very much resembles the question once put to Christ, 'Master, are there few that be saved?'

—and it demands a similar answer. If the disputants in this case were as deeply and tenderly concerned as they ought to be in determining the question of their own christianity, each one for himself, they would probably find less concern or less difficulty, in admitting the evidence which they might have in the case of others. Eleven years ago I came to this region entertaining strong prejudices against the people called New Lights: but having had, during that space of time, opportunity to observe the spirit and manner of life of some among them; and being disposed to judge of them, as of all other, by the prescribed rule, “By their fruits ye shall know them,” I have been constrained to admit their claim to be “of the household of faith,” without enquiring what might be their opinions on “*The Five Points*,” or on any of those questions in Scholastic Theology, which have vexed and torn the minds of christians who have aspired to be wise above & beyond what is written. Of these people one distinguished individual did uniformly unite in communion with the Presbyterian church here, so long as he lived. Possibly others of the same church used the same privilege. It was natural, therefore, for me to think that I should give no offence to such as were “weak in the faith” by acting as I did in the instance just referred to.—But possibly my christian brethren of different religious Persuasions—have taken the alarm on my account, because it is generally supposed that I have withdrawn from my connexion with the Presbyterian church. To such I would beg leave to say a word or two on this matter, in addition to the remarks made in the preface. Till the issue of the troubles which began with the trial of the Rev. Albert Barnes, I had not supposed that my connexion with the Presbyterian church required that I should hold *all and every* of the *opinions* contained in her Standards. The manner in which this case was conducted convinced me that my brethren of the Old School, with whom, *in measures* I had always acted, thought otherwise. This led me to doubt whether, holding the views which I did, I could honestly continue in their ecclesiastical connection: for if subscription to “the Confession of Faith” is to be taken in the strict and rigid sense of professing to hold the *opinions* taught in it, then I could not subscribe, or, what would amount to the same thing, continue in a connexion based upon a former act of subscription *thus construed*. There are, I know, those who think this is being over-scrupulous, and who themselves act otherwise. I do not judge them. All I mean to say is that such a course of conduct will never do for me. Others may act so and be at peace with themselves: I could not. Under these impressions I applied to the Presbytery of Vincennes—it is now near a year since—to be dismissed. A dismission I knew they could not grant me, according to constitutional forms, unless I had expressed a design to attach myself to some other Proebtery. I supposed, however that, in these times of revolutionary movement, they might dispense with

forms in the case. They refused, however. So that I still stand in fact in connexion with the Presbyterian church as heretofore. For I resolved not to renounce its jurisdiction. To sever old connections with those whom we love is always painful, however gently it may be done. I have concluded, therefore, to make the candid and open avowal that follows—of my *Faith*—my Belief and my opinions, or rather my *ignorance* and leave it with my brethren then to suffer me to remain in *their* church, or to cut me off.

#### MY FAITH.

“The Lord Jehovah—for in Him is everlasting strength—I trust *with* all that I have and am, and *for* all that I need, being encouraged so to do, by his love and mercy towards the human race, as manifested in & through his Son Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man—and sealed and applied by the Holy Spirit of promise and of sanctification to all such as love and obey Him. This is my faith.

#### MY BELIEF IS,

1. That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and that, though God has appointed an order of men whose official duty it is to study, explain, and inculcate this rule; yet every man is left to the free exercise of his own understanding and conscience to interpret it for himself.

2. That God made man holy and happy and placed him in a probationary state; from which he by transgression fell, so that “by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men for that all have sinned.”

3. That from this fallen state, in which by nature all are “far gone from original righteousness,” God hath so far recovered man as to place him under a dispensation of Mercy, though Christ as Mediator—“the propitiation for the sins of the whole world—the light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world:”

4. That Faith, or trust in God, as he is manifested to every man according to the light which he enjoys, whether Jew, Pagan, or Christian, and proving itself to be genuine by good works, as there is opportunity, is not indeed the *meritorious*, but the appointed, and the appropriate, condition of acceptance with God through the Mediation of Christ:

5. That, in the act of passing into this state of acceptance, man is “born again,” regenerated by the Spirit of God; whereby his moral nature being developed and strengthened obtains the ascendancy over his animal propensities and selfish desires:

6. That the present is a state of progress both in the good and the bad of mankind:

7. That, in eternity God decreed to do whatever in time he does; and to permit whatever in time he permits: the actions of men and other free-

agents being contemplated in the decree in the same order and under the same conditions, as they actually take place in time; consequently, that the Providence of God and the acts of his moral Government being vindicated from all partiality and injustice, his decrees are vindicated:—I adopt the views of Sherlock on this subject:

8. That man's salvation is owing to the grace of God; his perdition, to himself:

9. That, after this life, all will have their destinies fixed, by the righteous judgment of the Mediator, to whom "all judgment" has been committed, in an endless condition, of felicity to the good, and misery to the wicked:

10. That, of all kinds of service or worship that can be rendered to Almighty God, moral virtue is the most acceptable; justice, truth, honor, integrity, charity and beneficence taking precedence of all rites and religious observances, according as it is written, "I require mercy and not sacrifice."

These are the principal articles of my religious belief. If interrogated any further I can give only

#### MY OPINIONS.

As to those I hold myself open to conviction, and shall modify or reject them—not according to interest, or convenience, or the dictum of authority—but according to the light which God in his goodness may see fit to impart to me.

1. On the subject of the Trinity I know not how better to express my opinion than in the words of Scott; whose excellent commentary has obtained such extensive circulation both in England and in this country. He says, in his remarks on John XV. 26. "The Holy Spirit is here said to *proceed* from the Father; and many suppose this to refer, not only to his being sent forth from the Father and the Son (as the Son was from the Father) a willing messenger to apply the salvation of Christ to the hearts of his chosen people; but to what is called his *eternal* procession from the Father; by which is meant something in a measure answering to the *eternal generation* of the Son, yet distinct from it. But these are incomprehensible mysteries, and (though inserted in most of the ancient creeds and formularies) seem not to be explicitly and evidently revealed: perhaps it is better therefore to adore in silence, than to attempt any explanation of such subjects; which not being clearly revealed cannot otherwise be at all discovered or understood."

2. On the subject of the Atonement, my opinion is, that the sacrificial phrases used in the Bible respecting it are to be understood, not as conveying the idea that its object is to appease the wrath of an angry Deity, but as any expedient chosen in the wisdom of God to show his love towards sinful and rebellious man and thereby to win his confidence in God as the

God of his salvation, to whom, forsaking his sins, he may return in the hope of pardon and acceptance through Christ the Mediator.

In support of this opinion I adduce a passage or two from M'Gee on the Atonement" a work accepted with the Orthodox.

Page 1st. He says—"through this voluntary degradation and suffering"—of Christ namely—"a way of reconciliation with the Supreme Being has been opened up to *the whole human race*"—Page 28. 'The sacrifice of Christ was never deemed, by any who did not wish to calumniate the doctrine of atonement, to have *made* God placable, but merely viewed as the means appointed by divine wisdom, by which to bestow forgiveness.' Page 35. He speaks of "the *vicarious import* of the Mosaic sacrifice," referring to this phrase in a note, Page 197 he says "I have used the expression *vicarious import*, rather than *vicarious*, to avoid furnishing any color to the idle charge made against the doctrine of Atonement; of supposing a real substitution in room of the offender, and a literal translation of his guilt and punishment to the immolated victim; a thing utterly *incomprehensible*, as neither *guilt* nor *punishment* can be conceived, but with reference to *consciousness*, which cannot be transferred. But to be exposed to *suffering*, in consequence of another's guilt; and thereby at the same time to *represent* to the offender, and to release him from, the punishment due to his transgression, involves no contradiction, whatever. *In this sense*, the suffering of the animal may be conceived a substitute for the punishment of the offender; inasmuch as it is in virtue of that suffering, the sinner is released. If it be asked what connexion can subsist between the death of the animal & the acquittal of the sinner, I answer, without hesitation, I know not. To unfold divine truths by human philosophy, belongs to those who hold opinions widely different from mine on the subject of atonement. To the Christian it should be sufficient, that scripture has clearly pronounced this connexion to subsist,"

Again, Page 250, referring to the phrase "*to bear the sins of others*" which so often occurs in the scriptures in relation to this subject, he says "I will not contend that this should be called suffering the *punishment* of those sins, because the idea of punishment cannot be abstracted from that of guilt;—But it is evident, that it is notwithstanding a judicial infliction; and it may perhaps be figuratively denominated *punishment*, if thereby be applied a reference to the actual transgressor, and be understood that suffering which was *due* to the offender himself; and which, *if* inflicted on him, would *then* take the name of punishment. In no other sense can the suffering inflicted on one, on account of the transgressions of another, be called a punishment; and, in this light the bearing the punishment of another's sins, is to be understood as bearing that, which in relation to the sins, and to the sinner, admits the name of punishment, but with respect to the individual on whom it is actually inflicted, abstract-

ly considered, can be viewed but in the light of suffering.' To these remarks he subjoins, in a note, the following remarks from Martini. The note is in Latin. I give it in a literal translation: "Whoever, by suffering ills and inconveniences, removes the misery of others and promotes their safety, in whatever way it may be done, he, according to the manner of speaking used by the Ancients generally & especially by the Hebrws, is said to atone for their sins, as though an expiation before God were made in their behalf. The Arabs use very often a similar form of speech, "*Let my soul be your redemption*" with God namely, that is, I would not refuse to endure the most bitter sufferings, even death itself, provided I could by this means, yield you affectual aid in shielding you from dangers and promoting your safety and happiness. To understand the reason of these forms of speech it is necessary to keep in view an opinion prevalent among the ancients, the Hebrews especially, according to which they looked upon calamities, especially such as were unusually shocking and terrible, as inflicted by the immediate hand of God, and that they could not in any other way be averted, but by substituting in the place of man an innocent victim which, by suffering the punishment due to him, might appease the divine anger."

Again, Page 105, he says "On this subject Dr. Priestly thus represents the arguments of the orthodox" "Sin being an offence against an infinite Being, requires an infinite satisfaction, which can only be made by an infinite Person, that is, one who is no less than God himself. Christ, therefore, in order to make this infinite satisfaction for the sins of men, must himself be God, equal to God the Father,"— On these remarks of Priestly he observes, "with what candour this has been selected as a specimen of the mode of reasoning, by which the doctrine of atonement as connected with that of the divinity of Christ, is maintained by the established church, it is needless to remark. That some few have thus argued, is certainly to be admitted and lamented. But how poorly such men have reasoned, it needed not the acuteness of Dr. Priestley to discover. On their own principle the reply is obvious,—that sin being committed by a finite creature, requires only a finite satisfaction, for which purpose a finite person might be an adequate victim."—Yet I may observe here, that the reasoning in the above passage quoted from Priestley and ascribed by him, unjustly, as M'Gee thinks, to the "orthodox" of the established church," is what I have heard I know not how often, from the lips of the orthodox in the Presbyterian church.—It results from introducing the infinite into our systems, as an element of reasoning.

3. On the doctrine of imputation my opinion is, that the scriptures teach and reason confirms the following points.

1. That nothing can properly be imputed to me but my own act & deed, or the act & deed of another which I have made my own, by consenting to or

approving it.

2. That my act may be reckoned for *more* than its value, on account of its reference to something else, or some other circumstance attending it; or on account of the mere generosity and goodness of him with whom I have to do.

3. That my act, if good, will certainly be imputed to me by God as a righteous judge: if bad, it may not, but be pardoned by him as a gracious Sovereign, as if I comply with his terms, it certainly will.

4. There is, however, another and less proper sense of the word impute; though it rarely occurs in the scriptures: that is, when any delinquency, considered as a debt, or any meritorious service performed for another, is reckoned or transferred to his account.—In this last sense I can see no impropriety in saying that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us and our sins to him: though such phrases ought to be explained whenever used. Stronger terms than even these are employed in Scripture: as, for instance, where Christ is said to be made sin for us &c, we the righteousness of God in him. Yet such language, let it be remembered, is not in our idiom; and if not prudently interpreted, may lead, as indeed it has led, into all the absurdity and monstrous pride and folly of antinomianism.

5. On the desert of sin, my opinion is that "every sin does" *not* "deserve the wrath and curse of God both in this life and that which is to come." A little daughter, three years old, bites her brother's finger while teasing her:—it is a sin. The mother smiles instead of chiding:—that is another sin. Do they both deserve the wrath and curse of the Almighty to rest on them eternally? Are the interests of piety and virtue likely to be promoted by the opinion—(the article of *faith*!) implied in the affirmative to these questions? yet this opinion does result from the introduction of the infinite as an element into our reasonings.—I fear that somehow religion has come to be such a matter of the head, that the spirit is never awakened by it. Hence we can digest moral absurdities with all ease—and then the next thing is to *act* them!

To the opinions of Adam Smith on this subject I cordially subscribe—"Man," says he, "when about to appear before a being of infinite perfection, can feel but little confidence in his own merit, or in the imperfect propriety of his own conduct. In the presence of his fellow creatures, he may often justly elevate himself, and may often have reason to think highly of his own character and conduct, compared to the still greater imperfection of theirs. But the case is quite different when about to appear before his *Infinite Creator*. To such a being he can scarce imagine that his littleness and weakness should ever seem to be the proper object either of esteem or of reward. But he can easily conceive how the numberless violations of duty, of which he has been guilty, should render him the ob-

ject of aversion and punishment; neither can he see any reason why the divine indignation should not be let loose, without any restraint, upon so vile an insect. If he would still hope for happiness, he is conscious that he cannot demand it of the justice, but that he must entreat it of the mercy of God. Repentance, sorrow, humiliation, contrition at the thought of his past conduct, are upon this account, the sentiments which become him. He even distrusts the efficacy of these, and naturally fears, lest the wisdom of God should not, like the weakness of man, be prevailed upon to spare the crime, by the most importunate lamentations of the criminal. *Some other intercession, some other sacrifice, some other atonement*, he imagines, must be made for him, beyond what he himself is capable of making before the purity of divine justice can be reconciled to this manifest offenses.

The doctrines of revelation coincide, in every respect, with those *original anticipations of nature*; and as they teach us how little we can depend upon the imperfection of our own virtue, so they shew us at the same time, that the most powerful intercession has been made, and the most dreadful atonement has been paid for our manifold transgressions and iniquities." (Theory of Moral Sentiments, p. 204.)

All this is reasonable and scriptural. But, for the purpose of giving to the doctrine of the need for an atonement the greater prominence, the Westminster Divines affirmed the opinion which forms the answer to the 84th question of their catechism; and thus they did, for sake of their *system*, what scripture does not warrant and what reason and moral sentiment condemn.

6. To what Timothy has said on the subject of "the perseverance of the saints," I would here add, that when the principles on which a man acts have become strengthened, settled and consolidated by habit, they are so thoroughly wrought into his character, that it is never likely to undergo any essential change afterwards. Before this, it possibly may. Both of these things reason teaches and experience demonstrates. And this view of the subject is, I think, confirmed by scriptural authority. Peter, after exhorting those to whom he writes to "add to their faith virtue" and so forth, adds for their encouragement, "for if ye do these things ye shall never fail—They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength &c.—The righteous shall hold on his way and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger.—The path of the just is like the shining light; it shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—With these proofs the tenor of the sacred writings every where accords. But, as Timothy has shewn in his remarks, the point in dispute here is of no practical importance whatever, so long as "perseverance to the end" in the way of righteousness is held to be necessary to complete the proof that we are actually in it.

In natural philosophy there is what is called a Heliocentric view; that is, such a view of the solar system as would be presented to an eye placed in the Sun: and there is a geocentric view, that is such a view as has the earth for its centre of vision. Calvinism attempts to take a view of things in religion which is analogous to the former: Arminianism contents itself with the latter. I adopt the views of neither system. The truth lies often between both: and so, I think, it is in this case.

7. It is my opinion—and when I have stated this, in which I know my readers will agree with me, I shall trouble them no more with my opinions—it is my candid opinion that I am vastly ignorant. The mode of the divine subsistence—the atonement—the compatibility of efficacious grace and freeagency—the WORD made flesh and dwelling among men—the entrance of sin into the world—regeneration by the Spirit;—these are in some respects all mysterious to me. I cannot work them into any system in the manner of a science. Nor do I vex myself on this account; since some of them at least are represented as somewhat mysterious even to the angels—“into which things the angels desire to look.’, I would fain be as good as the best, but I have no hope to be reckoned the greatest of theologians. My earliest rational impressions on the subject of religion were received from the eager perusal of the works of Watson, Porteus, Sherlock, Atterbury and other worthies of the church of England, who, while they avoided all bold and dogmatical speculation about the mysteries of Christianity, insisted much on its practical influences, using the light of nature along with that of revelation, uniting reason and faith, piety and morality—assigning to the heart and lungs of the christian their respective and appropriate functions, while they did not neglect the head. The dogmas of such “Masters in Israel,” as have rendered themselves conspicuous in the fields of polemical theology and as leaders of sects, however they may be regarded by their followers respectively, are not necessary to my faith. It stands apart from them all, deriving no support from their props. It is firmer without them. And—let it stand—plumb on the Rock of ages—and when the tempest rises; the winds blow; and the floods come—Reader! may God, in his mercy, through Him who loved us and gave himself for us, prepare thee and me for that hour of trial! Amen! In the mean time, I shall take leave of thee, by recommending to thy attentive perusal the two following extracts, the first from the writings of Hannah More, the second from those of Robert Hall. And mark well the last sentence of the second.

“My very soul is sick of religious controversy! How I hate the little narrowing names of Arminian and Calvinist! Christianity is a broad basis. Bible Christianity is what I love; that does not insist on opinions indifferent in themselves—a christianity practical and pure which teaches holiness, humility, repentance and faith in Christ; and which, after sum-

ming up all the evangelical graces, declares that the greatest of these is, charity."

"That union among Christians which it is so desirable to recover, must we are persuaded, be the result of something more heavenly and divine, than legal restraints, or angry controversies. Unless an angel were to descend for that purpose, the spirit of division is a disease which will never be healed by troubling the waters. We must expect the cure from the increasing prevalence of religion, and from a copious communication of the Spirit to produce that event. A more extensive diffusion of piety among all sects and parties, will be the best and only preparation for a cordial union. Christians will then be disposed to appreciate their differences more equitably, to turn their chief attention to points on which they agree, and in consequence of loving each other more, to make every concession consistent with a good conscience. Instead of wishing to vanquish others, every one will be desirous of being vanquished by the truth. An æwful fear of God, and an exclusive desire of discovering his mind, will hold a torch before them in their inquiries, which will strangely illuminate the path in which they tread. In the room of being repelled by mutual antipathy, they will be insensibly drawn nearer to each other by the ties of mutual attachment. A large measure of the spirit of Christ would prevent them from converting every incidental variation into an impassible boundary; or from condemning the most innocent and laudable usages for fear of symbolizing with another class of Christians. The general prevalence of piety in different communities would inspire that mutual respect, that heartfelt homage for the virtues conspicuous in the character of their respective members, which would urge us to ask with astonishment and regret, Why cannot we be one? What is it that obstructs our union? Instead of maintaining the barrier which separates us from each other, and employing ourselves in fortifying the frontier of hostile communities, we should be anxiously devising the means of narrowing the grounds of dispute, by drawing the attention of all parties to those fundamental and catholic principles in which they concur.

"To this we may add that a more perfect subjection to the authority of the great Head of the church, would restrain men from inventing new terms of communion, from lording it over conscience, or from exacting a scrupulous compliance with things which the word of God has left indifferent. That sense of imperfection we ought ever to cherish, would incline us to be looking up for superior light, and make us think it not improbable that, in the long night which has befallen us, we have all more or less mistaken our way, and have much to learn and much to correct. The very idea of identifying a particular party with the church would be exploded; the foolish clamor about schism flushed, and no one, however mean and inconsiderable, be expected to surrender his conscience to the claims of

ecclesiastical dominion. The New Testament is surely not so obscure book, that were its contents to fall into the hands of a hundred serious impartial men, it would produce such opposite conclusions as must necessarily ensue, in their forming two more separate communions. It is remarkable, indeed, that the chief points about which real Christians are divided, are points on which that volume is silent—mere human fabrications, which the presumption of men has attached to the Christian system. A large communication of the Spirit of truth, would insensibly lead Christians into a similar train of thinking, and being more under the guidance of that infallible teacher, they would gradually tend to the same point, and settle in the same conclusions. Without such an influence as this, the coalescing into one communion would probably be productive of much mischief; it certainly would do no sort of good, since it would be the mere result of intolerance and pride acting upon indolence and fear.

‘During the present disjointed state of things, then, nothing remains but for every one, to whom the care of any part of the church of Christ is intrusted, to exert himself to the utmost in the promotion of vital religion, in cementing the friendship of the good, and repressing, with a firm and steady hand, the heats and eruptions of party spirit. He will find sufficient employment for his time and his talents in inculcating the great truths of the gospel, and endeavouring to form Christ in his hearers, without blowing the flames of contention, or widening the breach which is already the disgrace and the calamity of the Christian name. Were our efforts uniformly to take this direction, there would be an identity in the impression made by religious instruction; the distortion of party features would gradually disappear, and Christians would every where approach towards that ideal beauty spoken of by painters, which is combined of the finest lines and traits conspicuous in individual forms. Since they have all drunk into the same spirit, it is manifest nothing is wanting but a large portion of that spirit to lay the foundation of a solid, cordial union. It is to the immoderate attachment to secular interest, the love of power, and the want of reverence for truth, not to the obscurities of revelation, we must impute the unhappy contentions among Christians, maladies which nothing can correct but deep and genuine piety.’

#### ERRATA.

A few occur, which the reader can readily correct. The references to the Notes, except A. and B. are to be disregarded. ✓











