

CIRCULAR LETTER.

TO THE CHURCHES COMPOSING THE WESTERN NEW BRUNSWICK BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

The founders of the Baptist churches in these Provinces were mighty in the Scriptures, and were distinguished alike for their soundness in doctrine, as they had been taught by the Spirit of God, and for practical obedience to the precepts of the Lord Jesus Christ. We would desire to emulate their faith and practice, and would earnestly exhort you in this our annual epistle, that you "stand in the ways and see, in order that the promise, 'ye shall find rest to your souls,' which was made to Israel after the flesh, may be fulfilled in our experience, who are of the spiritual Israel of God.

The sacred writers invariably combine doctrine with precept; they rarely dwell upon christian privileges without at the same time enforcing evangelical obedience. The apostle Paul closes his argument upon the doctrines of sovereign grace in the Epistle to the Romans, with the exhortation, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." And the apostle John, after dilating upon the privileges of those who are called sons of God, adds, "every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Harmony is thus preserved between devout emotion and active obedience. Spiritual feeling is not excited, without at the same time affording a channel through which that feeling may expend itself in action. Comfort is given, not to lull into sloth and indifference, but to act as a cordial and stimulus to exertion and duty.

The doctrines of divine sovereignty, the love of God in Christ, unmerited favour to the guilty, and all those truths pertaining to the salvation of Christ Jesus, which are commonly designated the doctrines of grace, have ever been dear to the hearts of our people: nor do we thus write because we doubt the fidelity of your attachment to those fundamental principles, or the unscriptural character of that attachment, but we desire to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance, while we detain you for a short season upon this vital theme.

There are those who think that the consolatory truths of free grace and final perseverance are adverse to the perceptive and practical parts of the christian system. They would modify the broad and distinct statements of Scripture, lest they should encourage presumption; and would explain away the predestinating will of the Sovereign Ruler, lest they should hamper themselves in the free proclamation of his mercy. But ye have not so learned Christ. Those who are perfectly instructed in the way of the Lord, are prepared to take the word of God just as it stands, and insist both on divine fore-appointment and human freedom conjoined with accountability; both on the security of the believer in Christ, and the absolute necessity of holiness in heart and life; both on the agency of the Holy Spirit in producing conviction, and on the duty of exhorting men to repent, and beseeching them to be reconciled to God.

It is true that these doctrines have sometimes been taught in such a manner as to foster presumption, and militate against piety; teachers who have claimed for themselves pre-eminently the distinctive title of