

view ; though he may be able to trace, the rise and progress of states and kingdoms, their various dependencies, and the operation of the causes which have led to a change in their government or to an annihilation of their power, yet the operation involved in the new birth, as well as the agent who achieves it, can neither be seen, nor influenced by him. That the change is the result of divine power, seems involved in the very phraseology of John iii. 3., inasmuch, as the term translated "again," might with propriety, be rendered "from above." Nicodemus himself, from the questions he immediately put to our Redeemer, seems to have been impressed, at least, with the difficulty of the change—"how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Our Lord in his answers to these questions, not only points out the spiritual nature of the change, but the blessed agent by whom it is accomplished, "verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

It is indeed surprising, that any man, reflecting for a moment, on the vastness and universality of the change, should be led to ascribe it to any cause, short of Almighty power. But it is the case, that some have ascribed it to an external rite—we mean the ordinance of baptism—or at least, have associated it too closely with it. Others have adopted an opinion equally erroneous, and have regarded it solely as the result of moral feeling, operated upon by some external causes, which leading them to the renouncement of evil practices and to the improvement of the mind, they have passed from death unto life, been renewed in the spirit of their minds, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, created anew unto good works. Thus, do both of these classes ascribe an effect to causes utterly inadequate to its production. They do this too, in opposition to many explicit declarations of the word of God, which no unprejudiced mind could fail to comprehend. We are there described, as spiritually dead, as sick and infirm, as carnally minded and at enmity with God, and as full of all impurity and defilement ; and can any external rite, however expensive and splendid, can any eloquence however persuasive, or argument however strong, raise the dead to life, communicate health to the diseased and strength to the feeble, change the dispositions of the mind, and purify that which is unclean? There is room for no other conclusion, than the one with which the Bible furnishes us, "it is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing."

The necessity of being "born again," claims our attention, but leaving the consideration

of this subject, we would conclude with a single remark. Though confessedly unable to accomplish this mighty change in our own behalf, yet, there is a possibility of ascertaining, whether upon us the spirit of God hath put forth his quickening and sanctifying energy. It would, indeed, be a wonder of no ordinary magnitude, if a change, to which the word of God attaches so much importance, and which, in language so bold and in figures so expressive it represents, were to have no visible trace, evincing its reality. It is not a change of which its subject will long remain ignorant. Its effects will sooner or later rise up before his view. To every man then the determining of the question, whether he has undergone this change, is one of personal and paramount interest. If with us it be still a matter of uncertainty, if we have good reason to suspect, or to conclude, that we are still of the number of the unregenerate, let us not for an hour, rest in a state so unhappy and perilous ; and though the difficulty of the work alarm us, let us be encouraged by the assurance, that the Lord waiteth to be gracious, and by the declaration, "I will yet for this be enquired of the house of Israel to do it for them."

Q.

C.

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JOURNAL OF A MISSIONARY TOUR WITHIN THE PRESBYTERY OF BATHURST.

To the Editor of the Christian Examiner.

PERTH, 6th January, 1830.

SIR,

The following notes of a missionary tour made by me last summer, by appointment of Presbytery, may perhaps, interest some of your readers, and at the same time give an idea of the manner in which the Home Missionary operations of the Presbytery of Bathurst are at present carried on.

Yours, &c.

THO. C. WILSON.

On the 21st day of June I left home, preaching at Ramsay on the 22d and 23d, and assisting at the administration of the Lord's Supper there, on Sabbath the 24th.

On the afternoon of Monday the 25th, I started from Ramsay, on my missionary tour, being prevented from starting sooner by heavy thunder