

13. I bring but one instance mores At the command of your soul, your hand is lifted up. But who is able to account for this? For the connexion between the acts of the mind and the outward actions? Nay, who can account for muscular motion at all, in any instance of it whatever? When one of the most ingenious physicians in England had finished his lectures upon that head, he added, "Now, gentlemen, I have told you all the discoveries of our enlightened age. And now, if you understand one jot of the matter, you understand more than I do."

The short of the matter is this. Those who will not believe any thing but what they can comprehend, must not believe that there is a sun in the firmament, that there is light shining around them, that there is air, though it encompasses them on every side, that there is any earth, though they stand upon it. They must not believe that they have a soul, no, nor that they have a body.

14. But, secondly, as strange as it may seem, in requiring you to believe, "That there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One;" you are not required to believe any mystery. Nay, that great and good man, Dr. Peter Brownie, some time Bishop of Cork, has proved at large, that the Bible does not require you to believe any mystery at all. The Bible barely requires you to believe such facts, not the manner of them. Now the mystery does not lie in the fact, but altogether in the manner.

For instance: "God said, Let there be light, and there was light." I believe it: I believe the plain fact: there is no mystery at all in this. The mystery lies in the manner of it. But of this I believe nothing at all; nor does God require it of me.

Again: "The Word was made flesh." I believe this fact also. There is no mystery in it; but as to the manner, how he was made flesh, wherein the mystery lies, I know nothing about it—I believe nothing about it. It is no more the object of my faith, than it is of my understanding.

15. To apply this to the case before us. "There are Three that bear record in heaven—and these Three are One." I believe this fact also, (if I may use the expression,) that God is Three and One. But the manner how, I do not comprehend: and I do not believe it. Now in this, in the manner, lies the mystery: and so it may; I have no concern with it. It is no object of my faith; I believe just as much as God has revealed, and no more. But this, the manner, he has not revealed: therefore, I believe nothing about it. But would it not be absurd in me to deny the fact, because I do not understand the manner? That is, to reject what God has revealed, because I do not comprehend what he has not revealed.

16. This is a point much to be observed. There are many things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." Part of these God hath "revealed to us by his Spirit;" revealed, that is, unveiled, uncovered: that part he requires us to believe. Part of them he has not revealed; that we need not, and, indeed, cannot believe: it is far above, out of our sight.

Now, where is the wisdom of rejecting what is revealed, because we do not understand what is not revealed? Of denying the fact, which God has unveiled, because we cannot see the manner, which is veiled still?

17. Especially when we consider that what God has been pleased to reveal upon this head, is far from being a point of indifference—is a truth of the last importance. It enters into the very heart of Christianity: it lies at the root of all vital religion.

Unless these Three are One, how can "all men honour the Son even as they honour the Father?" "I know not what to do," says Socinus in a letter to his friend, "with my untoward followers. They will not worship Jesus Christ. I tell them, it is written, 'Let all the angels of God worship him.' They answer, However that be, if he is not God, we dare not worship him. For 'it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'"

But the thing which I here particularly mean, is this: the knowledge of the Three-One God is interwoven with all true Christian faith, with all vital religion.

I do not say that every real Christian can declare with the Marquis de Renty, "I bear about with me continually an experimental verity, and a plenitude of the presence of the ever-blessed Trinity." I apprehend this is not the experience of babes, but rather of fathers in Christ.

But I know not how any one can be a Christian believer, till he "hath (as St. John speaks,) the witness in himself;" till "the Spirit of God witnesses with his spirit, that he is a child of God:" that is, in effect, till God the Holy Ghost witnesses that God the Father has accepted him, through the merits of God the Son; and having this witness, he honours the Son and the blessed Spirit, "even as he honours the Father."

18. Not that every Christian believer adverts to this; perhaps, at first, not one in twenty; but if you ask any of them a few questions, you will easily find it is implied in what he believes.

Therefore, I do not see how it is possible for any to have vital religion, who denies that these Three are One. And all my hope for them is, not that they will be saved, during their unbelief, (unless on the footing of honest heathens, upon the plea of invincible ignorance,) but that God, before they go hence, will "bring them to the knowledge of the truth."

SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE HARDENING OF PHARAOH'S HEART.

Exod. iv. 21; ix. 16.

THE hardening of Pharaoh's heart has been a fruitful source of malignant cavil with the adversaries of the Bible: some of whom have not hesitated to affirm that this single chapter is sufficient to destroy the authenticity of the entire Scriptures—while others, more decently and speciously, assert that a just God could not punish the Egyptian monarch for a hardness of heart of which he himself was evidently the cause. This is the objection in all its force. Let us now see how little foundation there is for it.

"When we meet with an assertion apparently contrary to all the truth and equity in the world, it is but common justice to any writer, human or divine, to suppose that we mistake his meaning, and that the expression employed to convey it is capable of an interpretation different from that which may at first present itself. We cannot, for a moment, imagine that God secretly influences a man's will, or suggests any wicked, stubborn resolution to his mind, and then punishes him for it. We are, therefore, to consider, by what other means, not incompatible with his nature and attributes, he may be said, in a certain sense, and without impropriety, to harden a man's heart. There are many ways by which we may conceive this effect to be wrought, without running into the absurdity and impiety above mentioned. The heart may be hardened by those very respites, miracles, and mercies intended to soften it; for if they do not soften it they will harden it. God is sometimes said to do that which he permits to be done by others, in the way of judgment and punishment: as when his people rejected his own righteous laws, he is said to have 'given them' the idolatrous ones of their heathen neighbours, 'statutes that were not good.'—The heart may be hardened by his withdrawing that grace it has long resisted; men may be given up to a reprobate mind; as they would not see when they possessed the faculty of sight, the use of that faculty may be taken from them, and they may be abandoned to blindness. But all this is judicial, and supposes previous voluntary wickedness, which it is designed to punish."

Further: no person who candidly peruses the history of the transactions with Pharaoh, can deny that what the Almighty did to Pharaoh and the Egyptians had a tendency to soften rather than to harden his heart; especially as it was not until after he had seen the miracles, and after the plagues had ceased, that he hardened himself, and would not suffer the Israelites to depart. The threatened plagues were suspended on a condition with which he refused to comply, and then only were they inflicted. It is, moreover, well known that Hebrew verbs in the Hiphil conjugation, signify to permit or to suffer to be done, as well as to cause to be done: hence, nothing more is meant

than to leave a man to the bent and tendency of his own disposition. Thus Pharaoh was left, and he is said to have made his own heart stubborn against God. He sinned yet more, and hardened his heart. The proper rendering, therefore, of Exod. iv. 21, is—I will permit his heart to be so hardened that he will not let the people go. So, in Exod. ix. 12, it ought to be translated, Yet the Lord suffered the heart of Pharaoh to be so hardened that he hearkened not to them. And a more literal rendering of Exod. ix. 15, 16, would remove the discrepancy which seems at present to exist in our common version, which runs thus: For now I will stretch out my hand and smite thee with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. In the original Hebrew the verbs are in the past tense, and not in the future, as our authorised version improperly expresses them—by which means an apparent contradiction is produced: for neither Pharaoh nor his people were smitten with pestilence, nor was he by any kind of mortality cut off from the earth. The firstborn, it is true, were slain by a destroying angel, and Pharaoh himself was drowned in the Red Sea; but there is no reference whatever to these judgments in the two verses in question. If the words be translated as they ought, in the subjunctive mood, or in the past instead of the future, this seeming contradiction to facts, as well as all ambiguity, will be avoided: For if now I HAD STRETCHED OUT (shalachti, had sent forth) my hand, and had smitten thee and thy people with the pestilence, thou SHOULDEST HAVE BEEN cut off from the earth. But truly on this very account have I caused thee to subsist, that I might cause thee to see my power: and that my NAME might be declared throughout all the earth, or, in all this land.

Thus God gave this impious king to know that it was in consequence of his especial providence, that both he and his people had not been already destroyed by means of the past plagues; but that God had preserved him for this very purpose, that he might have a further opportunity of shewing Pharaoh His power in the remaining plagues, and of manifesting that He, Jehovah, was the only true God, for the full conviction of the Hebrews and Egyptians.

Lastly, our authorised translation of Exod. vii. 13, (and he [that is, God] hardened Pharaoh's heart,) is incorrect. It ought to have been, AND THE HEART OF PHARAOH WAS HARDENED, as the original is rendered by all the ancient versions, without exception, and by the most judicious modern translations. The same phrase is correctly translated in our authorised version, in Exod. vii. 22, viii. 19, and ix. 7.—Hartwell Horne.

"Write fifty."—Luke xvi. 6.

As the steward did not mean to defraud his master, and is only accused of being extravagant and profuse, it is probable that this abatement in the annual rent was much in consideration of the crops having failed. Viewed in this light, it becomes an act of kindness and generosity, well deserving the commendation which it received, ver. 8. It is remarkable, also, that in the case of the person indebted for wheat, (owed wheat) the abatement (ver. 7) is only one-fifth; but he who was to have furnished oil is excused on paying only one-half. This is a further presumptive proof that they were tenants, and that the wheat and the oil were due for one year's rent—because the steward, after his accusation and disgrace, was not likely to be guilty of a further and more glaring act of injustice, and therefore the measure of abatement, we may suppose, was regulated by the degree of failure in those respective products of land. Now, it is known that wheat is a hardy plant, and may be depended on with more security, as yielding an average crop oftener than most others; but the olive-tree, and indeed all other fruit-trees, are, with respect to their produce, much more precarious and uncertain. This may afford a just ground for the difference of abatement in the two debtors, or tenants.—Hewlett.

HE who changes from opinion to opinion, and from one sect or party to another, is never to be depended on; there is much reason to believe that such a person is either mentally weak, or has never been rationally and divinely convinced of the truth.—Dr. A. Clark.