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LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE UNTO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS.—HEBREWS X. 24.

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DIVINITY.

In commencing this Religious Journal, the Editors think they cannot better meet the expectations of their readers, or promote their spiritual improvement, than by presenting them, as the first article in "Divinity," with the following excellent sermon, preached and published many years since, and designated

GOD'S LOVE TO FALLEN MAN.

"Not as the offence, so also is the free gift."
ROMANS V. 14.

1. How exceeding common, and how bitter, is the outcry against our first parent for the mischief which he not only brought upon himself, but entailed upon his latest posterity! It was by his wilful rebellion against God that "sin entered into the world." "By one man's disobedience," as the Apostle observes; *the many, or polloi*, as many as were then in the loins of their forefather, "were made," or constituted, "sinners;" not only deprived of the favour of God, but also of his image—of all virtue, righteousness and true holiness; and sunk, partly into the image of the devil—in pride, malice, and all other diabolical tempers; partly into the image of the brute, being fallen under the dominion of brutal passions and grovelling appetites. Hence also death entered into the world, with all his fore-runners and attendants—pain, sickness, and a whole train of uneasy, as well as unholy, passions and tempers.

2. "For all this, we may thank Adam," has echoed down from generation to generation. The self-same charge has been repeated in every age and every nation, where the oracles of God are known; in which alone this grand and important event has been discovered to the children of men. Has not your heart, and probably your lips too, joined in the general charge? How few are there of those who believe the scriptural relation of the fall of man, that have not entertained the same thought concerning our first parent; severely condemning him that, through wilful disobedience to the sole command of his Creator,

"Brought death into the world, and all our woe!"

3. Nay, it were well if the charge rested here; but it is certain it does not. It cannot be denied that it frequently glances from Adam to his Creator. Have not thousands, even of those who are called Christians, taken the liberty to call his mercy, if not his justice also, into question, on this very account? Some, indeed, have done this a little more modestly, in an oblique and indirect manner; but others have thrown aside the mask, and asked, "Did not God foresee that Adam would abuse his liberty? And did he not know the baneful consequences which this must naturally have on all his posterity? And why, then, did he permit that disobedience? Was it not easy for the Almighty to have prevented it?"—He certainly did foresee the whole. This cannot be denied: for "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;" rather, from all eternity, as the words *apocryphal* properly signify. And it was undoubtedly in his power to prevent it; for he hath all power both in heaven and earth. But it was known to him, at the same time, that it was best, upon the whole, not to prevent it. He knew that "not as the transgression, so is the free gift;" that the evil resulting from the former was not as the good resulting from the latter—not worthy to be compared with it. He saw that to permit the fall of the first

man was far best for mankind in general; that abundantly more good than evil would accrue to the posterity of Adam by his fall; that if "sin abounded" thereby over all the earth, yet grace would "much more abound;" yea, and that to every individual of the human race, unless it was his own choice.

4. It is exceeding strange that hardly any thing has been written, or at least published, on this subject; nay, that it has been so little weighed or understood by the generality of Christians; especially considering that it is not a matter of mere curiosity, but a truth of the deepest importance; it being impossible on any other principle,

"To assert a gracious Providence,
And justify the ways of God with men;"

and considering withal how plain this important truth is to all sensible and candid inquirers. May the Lover of Men open the eyes of our understanding, to perceive clearly that, by the fall of Adam, mankind in general have gained a capacity;

First, of being more holy and more happy on earth, and,

Secondly, of being more happy in heaven, than otherwise they could have been!

1. And, first, mankind in general have gained, by the fall of Adam, a capacity of attaining more holiness and happiness on earth than it would have been possible for them to attain if Adam had not fallen. For if Adam had not fallen, Christ had not died. Nothing can be more clear than this; nothing more undeniable: the more thoroughly we consider the point, the more deeply shall we be convinced of it. Unless all the part-takers of human nature had received that deadly wound in Adam, it would not have been needful for the Son of God to take our nature upon him. Do you not see that this was the very ground of his coming into the world? "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and thus death passed upon all," through him in whom all men sinned. (Rom. v. 12.) Was it not to remedy this very thing that "the Word was made flesh," that "as in Adam all died, so in Christ all" might "be made alive?" Unless, then, many had been made sinners by the disobedience of one, by the obedience of one many would not have been made righteous: (verse 19:) so there would have been no room for that amazing display of the Son of God's love to mankind: there would have been no occasion for his being "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It could not then have been said, to the astonishment of all the hosts of heaven, "God so loved the world;" yea, the ungodly world, which had no thought or desire of returning to him, "that he gave his Son" out of his bosom, his only-begotten Son, "to the end that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Neither could we then have said, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself;" or, that he "made him to be sin," that is, a *sin-offering*, "for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him." There would have been no such occasion for such "an Advocate with the Father," as "Jesus Christ the righteous;" neither for his appearing "at the right hand of God, to make intercession for us."

2. What is the necessary consequence of this? It is this: there could then have been no such thing as faith in God thus loving the world, giving his only Son for us men, and for our salvation. There could have been no such thing as faith in the Son of God, as "loving us and giving himself for us." There could have been no faith in the Spirit of God, as renewing the image of

God in our hearts, as raising us from the death of sin into the life of righteousness. Indeed, the whole privilege of justification by faith could have had no existence; there could have been no redemption in the blood of Christ; neither could Christ have been "made of God unto us," either "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification," or "redemption."

3. And the same grand blank which was in our faith must likewise have been in our love. We might have loved the Author of our being, the Father of angels and men, as our Creator and Preserver: we might have said, "O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" But we could not have loved him under the nearest and dearest relation—as delivering up his Son for us all. We might have loved the Son of God, as being "the brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person;" (although this ground seems to belong rather to the inhabitants of heaven than earth;) but we could not have loved him as "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree," and "by that one oblation of himself once offered, making a full sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." We could not have been "made conformable to his death," nor have known "the power of his resurrection." We could not have loved the Holy Ghost, as revealing to us the Father and the Son; as opening the eyes of our understanding; bringing us out of darkness into his marvellous light; renewing the image of God in our soul, and sealing us unto the day of redemption. So that, in truth, what is now "in the sight of God, even the Father," not of fallible men, "pure religion and undefiled," would then have had no being; inasmuch as it wholly depends on those grand principles,—"By grace ye are saved through faith;" and, "Jesus Christ is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

4. We see, then, what unspeakable advantage we derive from the fall of our first parent, with regard to faith;—faith both in God the Father, who spared not his own Son, his only Son, but "wounded him for our transgressions," and "bruised him for our iniquities;" and in God the Son, who poured out his soul for us transgressors, and washed us in his own blood. We see what advantage we derive therefrom with regard to the love of God: both of God the Father and God the Son. The chief ground of this love, as long as we remain in the body, is plainly declared by the Apostle: "We love Him because He first loved us." But the greatest instance of his love had never been given, if Adam had not fallen.

5. And as our faith, both in God the Father and the Son, receives an unspeakable increase, if not its very being, from this grand event, as does also our love both of the Father and the Son; so does the love of our neighbour also, our benevolence to all mankind, which cannot but increase in the same proportion with our faith and love of God. For who does not apprehend the force of that inference drawn by the loving Apostle: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." If God SO loved us;—observe, the stress of the argument lies on this very point: SO loved us, as to deliver up his only Son to die a cursed death for our salvation. Beloved, what manner of love is this wherewith God hath loved us; so as to give his only Son, in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal? What manner of love is this wherewith the only-begotten Son of God hath loved us, so as to empty himself, as far as possible, of his eternal Godhead; as to divest himself of that glory which he had with the Father before the world began; as to take upon him the form of a servant, being found