

C. H. M. Wright

# NEW-BRUNSWICK RELIGIOUS AND LITERARY JOURNAL.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, good will toward men."

VOLUME I.

SAINT JOHN, SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 1829.

NO. 11.

## DIVINITY.

BY J. EDMONSON.

PROV. XV. 7.—*The lips of the wise dispense knowledge.*  
[Concluded.]

### II. THE DISPERSION OF KNOWLEDGE BY THE LIPS OF THE WISE.

Divine providence, for wise and gracious purposes, has endowed men with the power of speech, whereby they can communicate their ideas to one another, with clearness and precision. Without this faculty, ignorance would still hold its gloomy empire over the human mind, and men would stand nearly on a level with the brute creation. But by this heavenly gift, there is a mutual communication of thought: light is added to light, and the general fund of knowledge is astonishingly increased. This contributes largely to the stock of human happiness; for the wise enjoy the exquisite pleasure of communicating knowledge, and the ignorant that of receiving instruction. When this blessing is wisely improved, it conveys the greatest good, but when abused, it becomes a dreadful scourge. *The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning. But an ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is a burning fire.* Prov. xvi. 21, 27.

Wise men carefully improve the gift of speech. Having acquired a rich store of useful knowledge, it is the delight of their hearts to disperse it abroad. That they may do so in the best way, they prepare their knowledge for dispersion, as the husbandman prepares his seed, before he scatters it in the field. By careful study, they select what is useful, arrange their plans of communication, and then go forth into the field of the world, to sow the useful seed. But as the husbandman considers the quality of the soil, and the seed that is proper for it; so the wise man considers the capacities and dispositions of men, and what kind of knowledge is most likely to promote their best interests. *Zarah*, the root of the Hebrew word, which our translators render *disperse*, signifies the spreading abroad that kind of knowledge which is clear and well winnowed. There is evidently an allusion to corn which has been made clean by the fan, before it is used as seed. Holden, in his paraphrase of this verse, says, "The speech of the wise and good spreads knowledge abroad that is solid, clear, and winnowed clean from the chaff of obscurity, levity, or error." Such knowledge improves the understanding, amends the heart, and reforms the life; while that which is mixed with error, or which is unskillfully arranged, spreads darkness over the understanding, creates disgust, and produces no good fruit. On hearing erroneous and unskillful teachers, we are led to inquire, in the language of the Lord to Job, *who is this that darkness counsel by words without knowledge?* Job xxxviii. 2.

Some men of weak intellect, ardently desirous of public applause, disperse foolish conjectures, and doubtful opinions; pretending to explain what all wise men have ever deemed inexplicable. According to their account, they perfectly understand the mystery of the Trinity, the secret counsels of God before the foundation of the world was laid, the foreknowledge and decrees of God, and the nature of the invisible world. Nearly allied to these are our famous dealers in Allegories, by which they can prove any thing they please. A single metaphor, in their apprehension, may have twenty different meanings. Is Christ compared to the vine? They tell us the comparison holds good in as many particulars as the vine has properties. Are good men called sheep? In explaining this figurative allusion, they give us all the properties and peculiarities of that animal, affirming that each is included in the metaphor. Perhaps the idea intended to be conveyed by the comparison is overlooked, and the sense of the passage, as well as its beauty and strength, entirely lost; and thus the holy scriptures are perverted, and the multitude misled, merely to display the inventive faculty of a weak and vain teacher. Common sense, without much learning, will cure this evil.

It is the proper business of a *Gospel Minister* to disperse knowledge. This is his high calling, and, to ensure success, he enriches his own mind with valuable treasures of sacred learning. Laborious and painful studies in the closet, prepare him for the pulpit, from whence he dispenses knowledge largely, both to saints and sinners. Under his ministry, Christians in every state, whether babes, young men, or fathers in Christ, are taught those things which pertain to the kingdom of God. *He is like unto a man that is an householder, which brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.* Matt. xiii. 52. That this is the design of God, in the appointment of the ministry, is clearly evident: *For the Priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is Messenger of the Lord of Hosts.* Mal. ii. 7.

From the pulpit, a Messenger of the Lord of Hosts, explains and enforces divine commands, opens and applies precious promises, and states the awful threatenings of his God. By this means the careless are alarmed, the fearful are encouraged, and the pious are edified. He teaches his flock to pray to God for a supply of all their wants, to praise him for all their enjoyments, and in all things to love, honour, and obey him. He teaches them how to govern themselves and their families, and how to perform every social and civil duty. At the same time he carefully points out their weaknesses, frailties, corruptions, and sins; and directs them to look up, by a living faith, to the Lord Jesus Christ for a full salvation both from the guilt, the dominion, and pollution of sin. He makes known to them the adorable perfections of God, the character and offices of Jesus, and the nature and operation of the Holy Ghost.

But a preacher of the word of God, does not confine his instructions to the pulpit. He frequently goes from house to house, as the pastor of his flock, scattering the seeds of knowledge with liberal hands. He visits the sick, the fatherless and the widow; and pours instruction and consolation into their troubled hearts. When he mixes with company, in the private circles of friendship, he is not out of his work. There he watches for suitable opportunities of conveying instruction to all around. He does not, like a stern inquisitor, or a jesuitical hypocrite, put on gloomy and melancholy airs; for thus, in his apprehension, would render no service to the cause of truth. You see him cheerful without frothy levity, and serious without gloom or melancholy. The manner in which he dispenses knowledge, on these occasions, is not stiff or formal, haughty or overbearing; but easy, affable, and sweetly engaging.—While he conducts himself upon this plan, he is honoured in all companies as a pleasant companion, a faithful friend, or a venerable father.

If it be enquired, where a minister of Christ should disperse knowledge, the answer is obvious: the whole world is before him, and he is commissioned to *preach the gospel to every creature.* Mark xvi. 15. When he talks with men or women in the house, or by the way, he should endeavour to pour light into their minds; so that no one may leave him, unless it be his own fault, without some degree of mental improvement. One, perhaps, objects to do this, because he is not in his own parish, and another, because he is not in his own circuit: bless you, the wide world is your parish, and the ends of the earth your circuit. You should be like the sun in the firmament, whose going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it. Ps. xiv. 6. Providence may send you to the east or the west, to the north or the south; but you will not be sent out of the field of action, until you are called to a better world. Go forth, therefore, in the name of the Lord, abide in your work, and leave the event to him. Thus you will live respected, die lamented, and your memory will be precious.

While the ministers of religion are employed in dispersing knowledge, pious parents and heads of families are instructing those children, servants and other domestics who are placed under their imme-

diately care. Children, when they come into the world, have every thing to learn. To teach them necessary truths, in a plain familiar way, is the delightful task of prudent parents. Menial servants, generally speaking, are extremely ignorant. Masters, who reap the advantage of their labours, are bound, not only to afford them sufficient support, but to teach them good things. Indeed, all who live under the roof of a wise man, are sure to improve in knowledge. What a wide field of usefulness is there to him in his own habitation! May the heads of families seriously consider this; and humbly pray for wisdom to direct them in this important work! Their station in life is truly honourable; may it prove extensively useful!

Wise tutors, who are entrusted with the education of youth, are honourably employed in the dispersion of knowledge. It is no objection that they teach for hire; for that is absolutely necessary in the present state of things. Without a just remuneration of their labours, they cannot live; and in this, as well as in other employments, *The labourer is worthy of his reward.* 1 Tim. v. 18. Those tutors who are truly wise, do not confine their instructions to literary subjects: the importance of holy living forms a considerable part of their plan. There are, indeed, many persons employed in the tuition of young people, who are void of true wisdom themselves; but what prudent parent would venture to place his children under their care? Let all who are employed in this way, consider the high responsibility of their profession, both as it relates to this world, and that which is to come; and let their first care be, to attain that wisdom which will render them useful to their pupils in particular, and to society in general.

There are many wise men, in the private walks of life, who disperse knowledge without noise or ostentation. Actuated by pure benevolence, they do good on a small scale, with heartfelt satisfaction. Though obscure, and unnoticed, by the world, they have a circle of relatives, friends, and acquaintance, and, however small that circle may be, they labour in it with considerable success. The seeds of knowledge which they scatter, frequently take deep root, and produce good fruit. In the day of judgment, when the secrets of men's hearts shall be revealed, thousands of this description will appear with honour before the judge.

A wise man dispenses knowledge where it is most wanted. His labours are not confined to one sect of professors, or to one class of men. His countrymen in general, and those of his own sect in particular, claim his first care; but at the same time, he cares for men of every country, and of every sect. When divine Providence opens his way, he is as willing to instruct the savage Indians as the most polite and refined nations. He loves all the human race, whether they live on continents, or in the islands of the sea; and whether he is placed with children or adults, he still proceeds in his work.

An experienced teacher, carefully considering the states and wants of those who hearken to his counsel, conveys that kind of knowledge which he deems essentially necessary, to promote their best interests. Their intellectual powers, inclinations, tempers, and prejudices, are various; but having an extensive and minute acquaintance with human nature, he is able to surmount these difficulties. Thus the apostle Paul, whose talents as a public teacher cannot be called in question, carefully studied human nature, and prudently adapted his discourses to the circumstances of those who heard him. In reference to this he says, *To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*—1 Cor. ix. 22. This was the plan of the other apostles, who were constantly warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom that they might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Col. i. 28.

The motives of a wise man, in the dispersion of knowledge, are pure and honourable. He is not influenced by a love of empty fame; which, in his