

getting that the Jews lived under a theocracy, in which God was the Civil as well as Ecclesiastical Governor—a form of government which never existed before, and which can never exist again. Thus, therefore, looked on all the pretensions of the Church as with suspicion, and their ministers entered forward with great hesitancy on the leading political questions of the day. But the evil consequences of this mode of procedure soon became apparent. It was forgotten that the mighty power of Christ was founded on the Atonement; that his Theocracy was Mediatorial, is the Mercy-Seal; and that his Kingdom is a Kingdom of the world. Political debates and matters of church policy occupied their attention to the exclusion of the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel; and, hence, Boston remarks, at the commencement of his labours: "And for the Sabbath's Sermons, they were but coldly enough received; but remarkable was the pricking up of ears, when anything relative to the gospel fell in." As the necessary result of this mode of teaching, many were well informed on constitutional questions, who were profoundly ignorant of the very first truths of the Gospel. Boston gives us a remarkable instance of the kind of religious knowledge possessed by this class of his parishioners. Nov. 18, 1797—"I saw M. D., a dissenter, whom I could never see before. I was in the next village, and she was coming thither, but owing my horse at the door, she went home again. I went to her house, and she came in the door, having, as appeared, no will that I should come in. I asked her what were her scruples. She did not readily answer, but at length abruptly said, 'The oath sealed with his blood.' Question. What, mean you by that, the Covenant—the Solemn League and Covenant? Answer. They say that there was such a thing. Q. And was the Covenant sealed with Christ's blood? A. Yes. I showed her her mistake. Q. How many covenants has God made with Man? A. Two; the covenant of grace and the covenant of works. Q. Which of the two covenants was first made? A. The covenant of grace. Q. Who were the parties to the covenant of works? A. The Lord. Q. But with whom did he make it? A. With the body and blood of Christ. Q. How many Gods are there? A. Three. Q. How many persons are there in the Godhead? A. Three; the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Q. Which of them was our Redeemer? A. The Father. Q. What, or who is Christ? No answer. What state are you in by nature? No answer. Q. How think you to be saved? A. By serving God as well as we can. I dealt with her as with a potted lark; but by no means could I obtain so much of her as to be willing to submit converse with her for her instruction." Thus did Cameronianism obscure the doctrines of the Gospel; and questions of Ecclesiastical order took precedence of the Atonement.

To a limited extent, similar results have been produced, in modern times, by the extreme advocates of voluntarism. During the heat of controversy, we have heard little else preached in some pulpits for a quarter of a year together than voluntarism; and the result was, that a spiritual deadness overspread many congregations, and many were political voluntaries who never were Christians. It was forgotten that zeal for religious liberty is not religion. The result was, that many pled for voluntarism as a political principle, who were the enemies of the cross of Christ—practical contemners of his grace and disowners of his authority. And such will always be the result when a subordinate principle, whether true or false, becomes supreme.

Another great discouragement with which Boston had to contend, was the prevalence of profane swearing. And the most remarkable circumstance was, that "praying persons, and persons praying in their families, were horrid swearers at times." This was an evident proof that their religion was a mere form; not a living reality, but simply the whitewashing of the sepulchre that concealed dead men's bones. The Old Dissenters, or Cameronians, seem to have been just as guilty of this sin as their neighbours; for Boston thus alludes to them, in his Body of Divinity, when denouncing this sin, "Tell these things to your neighbours that lie at home unnecessarily on the Lord's Day. None are likely to be more guilty of such things than they. Be so kind to their souls as to let them know, that if they continue in these things, what has been said here against them, seeing they were obliged to have come

and heard my message from the Lord, shall witness against them at the great day, as well as against those who have heard the same, if they continue in such a way. And, 10. that all nations groan or mourn, all go to the house of God, and are present at it, and all coming of whatever kind, to the end with their voices against it."

Boston lived in the very atmosphere of such practices, for, at that time, the dissenting churches were almost supplied with Bibles. What then was the explanation of such a remarkable state of things? Boston incidentally gave the requisite explanation. "There being little knowledge of religion," says he, "among them, all the time of confusion and persecution, as that John Anderson, of Haverhill, told me of a time, when there was one Bible in the church, but the minister's, his father's, and another, they drank to the principles of Presbytery in the greatest height, with the principles of Christianity." About the time of the persecution, the whole country was covered with natural war, hence called in this day The Period, and there the persecuted would feel called to on the fury of their persecutors. The intolerance of this dissent was exceedingly rude and unchristian, being therefore, and generally added to the sting of a cruel persecution. Their intolerance, therefore, would be the result of previous habits, transmitted from a preceding age, when an imperfect Christianity could not tolerate, when the Covenant nearly occupied the place of the Atonement.

But there was sunshine in Boston's life as well as shade. He had some fruits of his labors, at the very commencement of his ministry. "James Diggar," says he, "an elder, with his family, were the family which was the most comfortable to me as a minister of the Gospel. So it was all along, and so it continues to this day. May the blessing of God, whose I am and whom I serve, rest on them from generation to a generation." May the glorious gospel of his Son enrich them early, and maintain its ground to the end; of the which I have seen some comfortable instances already." This fervent prayer was signally answered. The descendants of this family were always distinguished for their piety. The mother of the late Dr. Robert Dabney, Professor of Protestant Theology to the United Brethren's Church, was the granddaughter of the James Diggar, mentioned by Boston. William Diggar, the brother of James, having accompanied his minister to the communion at Prospect, suddenly died. This death was a triumph and he expired with the words of victory on his lips. "Among his last words," says Boston, "were, Farewell son, moon, and stars; farewell, dear minister—and farewell the Bible; which last words especially made great impression on me. He blessed God, that ever he had seen my face; which was no small comfort to me, especially in these heavy circumstances." Thus, was Boston's fidelity to his Divine Master remarkably honored. He gradually obtained a strong hold of the affections of his parishioners; and, at this day, his whole maintain a place in the Parish of Fitchburg only second to the Bible. Long after the grave had closed over this devoted servant of God, an unworthy successor of this great and good man, attacked his works in the press, and then commenced a violent trade against Boston's personal character. One of the parishioners, who had been taught by his associates to venerate the very name of Boston, rose up in a state of very great excitement, and stretching forth his clenched fist toward the preacher, said, "Hail off Tammas Boston, Sir; hail off Tammas Boston." What a striking proof of the production; "The memory of the wicked shall rot, but the righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance."

Boston lived in the very atmosphere of prayer. Before selecting a text, he asked counsel of the Lord in prayer. When he felt any difficulty in preparing a sermon upon it, he went again and again to the Lord for light and direction; for he firmly believed that that Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures could only explain their contents. On the Sabbath morning, he repeatedly prayed that the Spirit might blow upon him with his Divine Influences; and after the sermon had been delivered, he prayed that the dews of heavenly influence might descend on the incorruptible seed of the Word of God. He was also jealous of himself with a godly jealousy. If he indulged in a wandering frame of mind, or if he was not suitably affected by Divine truth, he confessed his sin before a Throne of Grace; and frequently maintained the most fearful struggle with temptations against feelings which the vast majority of mankind have agreed not to call

* By the term Dissenter, and Old Dissenter, Boston means the Cameronians; or, as they call themselves, Reformed (1) Presbyterians.