

SOLUTION OF DOCTRINAL DIFFICULTIES.

A WORLD of difficulty and of theological controversy might be saved, if the mind—instead of employing itself upon particular points—could be conducted at once to the grand source of the solution of all difficulties. Many have difficulties about the doctrine of election, or the sovereignty of God, or the terms of reconciliation to God. These difficulties seem to inhere only in the intellect, and it is natural to think that verbal explanations may remove them; but as they result from the blindness that is in the heart, the only effectual way to remove them—is to secure the removal of that blindness. This remark may have illustration in the recorded experience of Merle D'Aubigne, the historian of the Reformation. When a student in Germany he was perplexed with doubts, and applied to an old and experienced teacher with a detail of the difficulties of which he wished a solution. The teacher refused to touch them, saying, "Were I to rid you of these, others would come; there is a shorter way of annihilating them. Let Christ be really to you the Son of God, the Saviour, and the Author of eternal life, and the light of Christ will disperse all your darkness, and the spirit of Christ will lead you into all truth." The enquirer says, "He had shown me the way, I saw it to be right, but it was hard to follow it; but afterwards, when studying the Epistle to the Ephesians with two others, we came to that passage, 'Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,' &c.; the expression, '*exceeding abundantly*,' he says, fell upon his spirit like a new revelation. They all knelt in prayer, and their supplication, deep and thrilling, penetrated the heavens. "When I arose in that room," he says, "I felt as if my wings were renewed like the eagle's. From that time I comprehended that my own syllogisms and efforts were of no avail, and that Christ was able to do all by the power that worketh in us. The habitual attitude of my soul was to be at the foot of the cross." The experience of Dr. D'Aubigne in this case has been the experience of thousands.

For the solution of all our difficulties, Christ offers himself, through his Spirit, as our effectual teacher, who shall lead us into all truth. He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He is the teacher of the truth, in that he is the life. In giving us Divine life He

opens a light upon the soul which dispels its darkness. His Spirit is the living soul of the whole system of Christian truth. Christianity it not simply a doctrine, or a theory, or a habit,—it is a life; and its doctrine comes effectually to the mind only as it comes along with the life, and life comes only from Christ's Spirit of life. It is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ that sets us free from the law of sin and death. Life only can produce life,—as it is fire that kindles fire. The transformation of the soul, and with it the true enlightening of the mind, is by "the power that worketh in us." The soul that receives Christ receives him as a sun, throwing light over the new creation. The Spirit—in new creating the soul—fixes its attention upon Christ, and sheds abroad the glory of Christ. He first prepares the heart for the discovery of Christ, and then makes that discovery open upon the mind as a rising sun. The preparation consists in convincing the mind of its sin and misery. After this conviction comes the discovery of the work of Christ in its true glory. The work, then, of solving difficulties of doctrine is properly a work done upon the heart by the Spirit of God. It does not follow from this that ministers should never attempt the solution of doctrinal difficulties, but rather that they should attempt it in a way to direct the sinner to the true source of all effectual relief and satisfaction in such perplexities.

—P. R.

FRAGMENTS.

What a marvellous Gospel is that which opens a free portal to friendship with God for every sinner who will; and into which, if any sinner enter, he will find purification as well as peace!—*Chalmers*.

I resolve to neglect nothing to secure my eternal peace, more than if I had been certified that I should die within the day, nor to mind anything which my secular duties demand of me, less than if I had been insured I should live fifty years more.—*M^cCheyne*.

We never better enjoy ourselves than when we most enjoy God.—*Dr. Whitchote*.

Let thy afflictions be ever so many, yet they are not so many as thy mercies, or so many as they might have been had God consulted with thy sins, with thy deserts, or with his own justice.—*Boston*.

Every place is alike to him who goes nowhere without God.—*C. Winter*.