

THE REMONSTRANCE.

Oh! ever thus from childhood's hour, I've seen my fondest hopes decay, I never loved a tree or flower, But 'twas the first to fade away,

I never nursed a dear gazelle, To glad me with his soft black eye, But when it came to know me well, And love me, it was sure to die.

MOONS.

Why hast thou thus from childhood's hour, Fix'd hopes on things which soon decay? Why hast thou loved a tree or flower Untaught that such must fade away?

Would wisdom choose a dear gazelle, Howe'er it roll'd its soft black eye, As that which long could know thee well, And love thee long, when sure to die?

Lo! now thou'rt come to manhood's hour, Hast seen thy fondest hopes decay, Bid thy soul speed in heav'n-born power, To bliss which no'er can fade away.

In faith behold enduring joys, Sprung up on earth from light above; Despair life's gilded infant toys, And rest in God, for "GOD IS LOVE."

CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BRIEFLY STATED.

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The eleventh article of the Church of England thus states the doctrine of man's justification, as revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

"We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the Homily of Justification."

This doctrine, as is well known, makes one of the most important points of difference between the reformed Churches and the Church of Rome; and was insisted upon by Luther as the sign to distinguish a standing from a falling church. So that its opponents, among other perversions, represent it as depending on Luther's authority, rather than on that of Scripture; and have even ventured to call it "the Lutheran heresy."

Yet it is, in fact, the basis of the gospel revelation; and the question, whether we are justified by FAITH, or no, is in reality the question, whether we have, or not, an interest, a personal interest, in the covenant of the Gospel. It belongs to the very nature of the Gospel scheme that by faith alone can that interest be obtained.

The Gospel revelation sets up, upon the assumption, that the state of mankind is a state of moral ruin, and consequent condemnation. In what manner and by what circumstances they were brought into such a state, is not discussed at any length. A few sentences incidentally occurring in this Epistle, contain nearly all that is said in the New Testament concerning the origin of the evil. But the ruin is implied throughout.

"So God loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"The Son of man is come to save that which was lost."

"God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

"Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."

"The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

These passages—and every reader of the New Testament is aware how largely they might be multiplied—all concur in either positively affirming, or virtually implying that the spiritual condition of mankind is a state out of which they need be delivered, and out of which there is an intention of delivering them. But by what method of restoration? This question comes next to be considered.

Is their deliverance to originate in themselves, and to be effected by an intrinsic process, or to be the work of a foreign and external agency? Is it to depend on what man is to do in his own person, or on what is wrought for him by another? Either mode is conceivable. Here are persons in a state of condemnation; and the question is, How are they to be accounted righteous, how justified before God? In the Old Testament the prophets declared, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him; and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." "I am well aware that this is not the whole case; but as far as appears from these sentences, which induce for the purpose of illustration; when a David, or a Manasseh, should repent of their transgressions, humble themselves before God, 'cease to do evil, and learn to do well,' God would be pleased to pardon the sins into which they had fallen through frailty, through temptation, through the influence of Satan, and to receive them again to favour, because of their repentance." In such a case, the salvation of mankind might resemble the account which is given of the cure of Naaman the

Syrian, when, in obedience to the command of Elisha, he bathed seven times in the river Jordan, and was recovered of his leprosy. Naaman was healed through what he did; and though there was much that was miraculous, there was nothing that was vicarious in his restoration.

The Gospel, however, takes a different line. The deliverance which it proclaims, is altogether extrinsic: not dependent upon what man has done or is to do; but is already wrought; and is to be received, not gained: freely conferred, not wrought out by repentance or obedience. The Gospel does not speak in the words of the Law, "This do, and thou shalt live;" but its language is, "Thy sins be forgiven thee: Go in peace."

Accordingly, the declaration of Jesus Christ represents him as the sole and absolute Author of salvation. When he revealed the purpose of his incarnation in the synagogue of his own city, Nazareth, these were his words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. When he commissioned his messengers, this was the invitation they were to convey: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'" The account of the divine plan which he gave in the gospel revelation is this: "God sent his Son into the world that the world through him might be saved." "He that believeth on him is not condemned; he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." For the "Son of man came... to give his life a ransom for many."

This revelation of the divine will, declared by our Lord in his discourses, is reasoned upon and fully explained by St. Paul: who sets forth the two different ways in which man might be accounted righteous before God. He might be justified by complete obedience. It "should be our righteousness, if we observed to do all the commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us." If, however, men are thus to be accepted on account of that which they perform, their works must be perfect, their obedience complete and universal. The language of Law is and can be but one: it must condemn every one "that continueth not in all things that are written in the law to do them." "And since no man ever has so continued, or will continue; (for what man is he that liveth and sinneth not?) therefore, by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified before God: 'being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.'" And the whole is summed up by the apostles in a few decisive sentences. "This is the record; that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life." "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." "He bore our sins in his own body."

"He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

Here, then, two states have been described; a state of condemnation, and a state of salvation; and two parties have been brought before us, one requiring deliverance, the other granting it: one in a ruined condition, the other proposing the means of repairing that ruin.

The next question respects the mode in which the deliverance offered by the one party, is to be secured by the other. It were a possible case, that a propitiation should have been made and accepted for the sins of men, and that they whose sins were so blotted out, had remained ignorant of the grounds of the mercy shown them, or the means by which it was procured. And indeed we know not the extent to which the atonement is available to multitudes, whose ears have never been gladdened here on earth with the "tidings of great joy;" as it was made available, we are assured, to those righteous men who desired to see the things which God in due time revealed, but did not see them: as it is made available, "we doubt not, but earnestly believe," to those infants in whose behalf the blessing of reconciliation is claimed. In the same manner as a rich benefactor might be made aware, that a friend was involved in inextricable debt; he might satisfy the obligations, and relieve him from the threatened ruin; and the debtor himself know nothing more than that his debts did not appear against him.

This, however, is not the case, as regards those to whom "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" is actually revealed. That is first wrought out by the sacrifice of the cross, and then proposed to man's acceptance. The benefit is to be obtained by a personal appropriation of that sacrifice to ourselves; that personal appropriation which originates in Faith within, and is outwardly sealed by Baptism.

So the Lord declared: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth on me, shall never die. Believeth thou this?" "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me: and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life;

John x. 27, 28. + Matt. xxviii. 19. + Acts ii. 38. § Acts xiv. 13. + Rom. x. 9. ¶ Acts viii. 26-39. + So John v. 21. Matt. xiv. 16 + Our church has anticipated the question, which might otherwise arise here, 'Why then are infants baptized, when by reason of their tender age they cannot believe?' Because they promise faith by their surerries; which promise, when they come to age, themselves are found to perform."—Church Catechism.

and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

In accordance with these promises, the apostles delivered their message. "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house." "If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." When Philip explained to the Ethiopian how the prophecies of Isaiah which he had been reading as he journeyed were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ: how it was he who had been "led as a sheep to the slaughter," and "whose life was taken from the earth;" he exclaimed, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." "I believe that it is he whom God hath sent to be a Prince and a Saviour;" he who should "redeem Israel." Then Philip baptized him; and "he went on his way rejoicing."

Here, then, is one, who perceived that he needed something which he had not: something whereby he might be justified before God, and obtain reconciliation with him. He perceived that what he needed was in Christ Jesus; that peace with God was to be procured through his propitiation; he believed that Jesus was the Son of God, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Therefore he claimed to himself the benefit, in the prescribed way, being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And thus he was accounted righteous before God, who before was not accounted righteous; he, at least, who had no reason to presume upon his acceptance, had now become partaker of an actual covenant, by which God had declared that whoever entered into it, is passed from death unto life.

"He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved."

To be concluded in the next number.

MORAL PROBABILITY OF THE SCRIPTURE MIRACLES.

This consists of two parts: (1.) A distinct reference of the event to a power which we feel to be capable of producing it,—namely a direct interposition of the Deity. (2.) The perception of an adequate object, or a conviction of high moral probability, that an interposition of Divine power might be exerted in such circumstances, or for the accomplishment of such an object. Such are the miracles of the sacred writings. As events opposed to the common course of nature, they are, by the supposition, physically improbable in the highest degree. Were they not so,—were they in the lowest degree probable according to our conceptions of the course of nature, they could not be miracles, and consequently could not answer the purpose for which they are intended. But notwithstanding this species of improbability, they carry with them all the elements of absolute credibility,—namely, the highest species of testimony, supported by a moral probability which bears directly upon every element of the statement. This may be briefly referred to the following heads:—

1. The human minds had wandered far from truth respecting God; and on the great questions of his character and will, a future state, and the mode of acceptance in his sight, the light furnished by reason among the wisest of men was faint and feeble. On points of such importance, there was the highest moral probability, that the Deity would not leave mankind in this state of darkness, but would communicate to them some distinct knowledge.

2. It is farther probable, that if such a communication were made to man, it would be accompanied by prodigies or miraculous events, calculated to shew beyond a doubt the immediate agency of God, and thus to establish the divine authority of the record.

3. There is no improbability that the power of the Deity should produce deviations from the usual course of nature, capable of answering such a purpose. For what we call the course of nature is nothing more than an order of events which he has established; and there is no improbability, that, for an adequate end, he might produce a deviation from this order.

4. An important branch of the moral probability of the whole statement of the sacred writings, arises from the character of the truths themselves, challenging the assent and approbation of every uncontaminated mind. This part of the subject resolves itself into three parts:—the truths relating to the character and perfections of the Deity; the high and refined morality of the gospel; and the adaptation of the whole provisions of Christianity to the actual condition of a man as a moral being. The former carry a conviction of their truth to the mind of every candid inquirer; the two latter fix themselves upon the conscience or moral feelings of all classes of men, with an impression which is irresistible.

This mode of reasoning is not chargeable with that kind of fallacy which has sometimes

been ascribed to it, that it professes first to prove the doctrine by the miracle, and then to try the miracle by the doctrine. The tendency of it is only to deduce from the various elements which really enter into the argument, a kind of compound evidence, the strongest certainly which, on such a subject, the human mind is capable of receiving. It is composed of the character of the truths,—the moral probability of a revelation of clear knowledge on subjects of such infinite importance,—and the highest species of testimony for the miraculous evidence by which the revelation was accompanied. There are principles in our nature calculated to perceive the manner in which the different parts of such an argument harmonize with each other; and, upon every principle of correct reasoning, it is impossible to conceive any thing more highly calculated to challenge the serious attention and absolute conviction of every sound understanding.

This imperfect view of a deeply interesting subject, will be sufficient to show the fallacy of the objection which has been urged against the credibility of miracles,—that they are contrary to our unalterable experience of the established course of nature. There might have been some degree of plausibility in the argument, if these events had been alleged to have taken place in ordinary circumstances; but the case is essentially altered, and this kind of improbability is altogether removed, when, in the alleged deviation, a new agent is introduced entirely capable of producing it. Such, as we have seen, are the miracles of the sacred writings; and the question in regard to their probability is, not whether they are probable, according to the usual course of nature, but whether they are probable in the circumstances in which they are said to have taken place, namely, in the case of a direct interposition of the Deity for certain great and adequate purposes. This is what we call the moral probability of a miracle; and in such a case, our estimate of probability must be founded, according to the principles already stated, not upon our experience of similar events, but on the knowledge which we derive from other sources, of the power of the agent to whom the event is ascribed. Now the agent to whom miracles are ascribed is the Supreme Being, the Creator of all things, the stupendous monuments of whose omnipotent power are before us, and within us, and around us. What we call the established course of nature is merely an order of events which he has appointed; and the question of probability is, whether it is probable, that for certain adequate purposes, he should produce a deviation from this order. For such a statement, indeed, we require strong, numerous, credible, and concurring testimonies; but it comes to be simply a question of evidence; and there is no real improbability, that, in these circumstances, such events should take place.

In this manner, then, there is entirely removed from the statement the improbability which is founded upon the uniformity of the ordinary course of nature; because it is not in the ordinary course of nature that the events are alleged to have taken place, but in circumstances altogether new and peculiar. —Dr. Abercrombie on the Intellectual Powers.

CONSTRAINING MOTIVES.

If the gospel really was a communication from heaven, it was to be expected that it would be ushered into the world by a miraculous attestation. It might have been considered as giving a faithful delineation of the Divine character, although it had not been so attested; but it could never have impressed so deep a conviction, nor have drawn such reverence from the minds of men, had it not been sanctioned by credentials which could come from none other than the King of kings. As this conviction and this reverence were necessary to the accomplishment of its moral object, the miracles which produced them were also necessary. Under the name of miraculous attestations, I mean merely those miracles which were extrinsic to the gospel, and did not form an essential part of it; for the greatest miracles of all—namely, the conception, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord—constitute the very substance of the Divine communication, and are essential to the development of that Divine character which gives to the gospel its whole importance.

The belief of the miraculous attestation of the gospel, then, is just so far useful as it excites our reverence for, and fixes our attention on the truth contained in the gospel. All the promises of the gospel are to faith in the gospel, and to those moral qualities which faith produces; and we cannot believe that which we do not understand. We may believe that there is more in a thing than we can understand; or we may believe a fact, the causes or modes of which we do not understand; but our actual belief is necessarily limited by our actual understanding. Thus, we understand what we say when we profess our belief that God became man, although we do not understand how. This how, therefore, is not the subject of belief; because it is not the subject of understanding. We, however, understand reality,—namely, that sinners might be saved, and the Divine character made level to our capacities; and therefore this is a subject of belief. In fact, we can as easily remember a thing which we never knew, as believe a thing that we do not understand. In order, then, to believe the gospel, we must understand it; and in order to understand it, we must give it our serious consideration. An admission of the truth of its miraculous attestation, unaccompanied with a knowledge of its principles, serves no other purpose than to give a most mournful example of the extreme levity of the human mind. It is an acknowledgment that the Almighty took such a fatherly interest in the affairs of men, that he made a

direct manifestation of himself in this world, for their instruction; and yet they feel no concern upon the subject of this instruction. Nevertheless, they say, and perhaps think, that they believe the gospel. One of the miraculous appearances connected with our Saviour's ministry places this matter in a very clear light. When on the mount of transfiguration, he for a short time anticipated the celestial glory in the presence of three of his disciples, a voice came from Heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son; hear ye him." He was sent to tell men something which they did not know. Those, therefore, who believed the reality of this miraculous appearance, and yet did not listen to what he taught, rejected him on the very ground on which it was of prime importance that they should receive him.

The regeneration of the character is the grand object; and this can only be effected by the pressure of the truth upon the mind. Our knowledge of this truth must be accurate, in order that the image impressed upon the heart may be correct; but we must also know it in all the awfulness of its authority, in order that the impression may be deep and lasting. Its motives must be ever operating on us,—its representations ever recurring to us—its hopes ever animating us. This will not relax, but rather increase our diligence in the business of life. When we are engaged in the service of a friend, do we find that the thought of that friend and of his kindness retards our exertion?—No. And when we consider all the business of life as work appointed to us by our Father, we shall be diligent in it for his sake. In fact, however clearly we may be able to state the subject, and however strenuous we may be in all the orthodoxy of its defence, there must be some flaw in our view of it, if it remains only a casual or an unimportant visitor of our hearts. Its interests are continually pressing; eternity is every moment coming nearer; and our characters are hourly assuming a form more decidedly connected with the extreme of happiness or misery. In such circumstances, trifling is madness. The professed infidel is a reasonable man in comparison with him who admits the Divine inspiration of the gospel, and yet makes it a secondary object of his solicitude.—Erskine's Internal Evidence.

INSUFFICIENCY OF MAN'S RESOURCES.

The gospel alone is able to make man happy. Philosophy cannot do this. The utmost it can do is to gauge the mind of man, and tell how capacious it is—how much of the ingredient called happiness it needs to fill this greedy soul of ours. But philosophy is only a gauger of empty barrels, and can neither apply the new wine of consolation, nor tell you where to find it; and if you would know how much misery may co-exist with much philosophy, you have only to read the inner life of such a man as Mirabeau—a man of universal knowledge, of gorgeous imagination, of exuberant eloquence, the idol of a people who, alas! had no gods but the like of him,—but himself without God, and so without hope. Science cannot make you happy. It is contagious; it is enough to make a man a chemist to accompany Davy in his investigations, and witness the poetic enthusiasm with which he prosecuted his midnight researches, and the boyish ecstacy with which he skipped about his laboratory in possession of some unprecedented prize: but it is heart-withering to read the records of wretchedness, the exclamations of ennui and dreariness with which his later journals abound. And neither can the arts of life make you happy. Art has done its utmost to make the outer man easy and outer life amusing; but it all stops outside. You may put an aching heart into a balloon, and send it up into the fields of light and air, but it will come down the same bruised and broken heart which it first ascended. You may whirl a guilty conscience along the gleaming track of the merry railway some thirty miles an hour; but the cares, the remorse, the forebodings which were booked at the entrance will all come out at the other end, and haunt it still. You may put a wounded spirit into a picture gallery or a playhouse, and regale it with the wondrous creations of genius, but the picture of joy is like the picture of fire, it makes nobody warm; and from the exhibition of some radiant landscape or blissful home-scene, or the rehearsal of some side-splitting comedy, the heart-broken wretch is hurried by a fatal plunge into the bosom of the Thames or the New River.—From a Lecture by the Rev. Professor Hamilton, of the Presbyterian College, London.

CAUTION FOR THE TIMES.

When all is agitation around her, when the intellect of man is working out new trains of thought, and devising new systems of philosophy, when the sphere of sense is itself expanding, and nature seems to be developing her hidden mysteries,—it is hard for the Church, and still harder for the Christian, to be satisfied with the ancient truth of God, and to rest upon revelation as given once and forever in its completeness! The temptation is toward development,—development of doctrine, or development of practice,—the one running into rationalism, the other into superstition. In either case is it the worldly spirit creeping into the Church, and manifesting itself, according to the genius of the country, or the age, or the individual, in bold speculation, or ascetic devotion. Whichever may be the shape it takes, it is alike injurious to the power of the Church, alike fatal to her impression upon the world. Infected with either tendency, she cannot do her errand of mercy; or if she does, mingles so much error with her work of truth, that it soon corrupts and perishes. While, therefore, brethren beloved, we are seizing the opportunities which God, in his providence, is affording us, let us be careful so to maintain the Church which

Ch. v. 12-21. + John iii. 16. Matt. xviii. 11. + John iii. 16. John v. 40. + John v. 26. Isa. li. 7. + Ezek. xviii. 27. Ps. li. + 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12.