

ing the Bible develops. It supplies subjects fitted in the highest degree to increase their vigor and to widen their range. It lifts from earth and the insignificant objects that crowd it, confinement to which tends to dwarf and shrivel up the mind—and bears it forward to an eternity where everything is vast and lofty. It presents objects the most glorious—subjects the most interesting—events the most exciting—objects, subjects, and events, in all of which we are personally involved. There is food for all the powers of the mind—argument for the reason—poetry for the imagination—and, facts for the memory. The character and government of the Divine Being—the present position and future destiny of the human soul—the nature and awards of the unseen state—a book containing information on such matters as these, is surely well fitted to stimulate our dormant faculties, and furnish for them the most nutritious aliment. And has it not, in point of fact, been found to hold true, that where the Bible is circulated and read, mind is active; whereas, on the other hand, where the Bible is absent, mind has lain in a stagnant state? Contemplate the *ancient heathen*. Left to the light of nature the eyes of their understanding were darkened.

With the exception of a few eminent philosophers, who, like stray meteors shot athwart the gloom, darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people. And amongst *modern heathen*, does the picture differ? There is every thing in the gods they worship, and the services in which they engage, to produce mental stagnation. Is lying prostrate before a senseless quadruped, a loathsome reptile, or a shapeless block, calculated to elevate and expand the mind? Will the going through a tedious round of meaningless ceremonies have this effect? Point to any great literary character in India, China, Burhna, or Japan, or to any works of great literary merit that have issued from their presses. The attempt is fruitless. Throughout the realms of Heathenism mind is eclipsed. And what of those periods and places in which the candle of the Lord has been hid beneath a bushel? We wend our way up the stream of time to the *middle ages*. The word of God is bound. Instead of having free course, it is immured within monasteries. The precious parchments are removed far from the public eye; and what is the result? An arrest is laid on the wheels of human progress. Intellectual effort is unknown. Men's minds are at a stand. If withdrawn at all from the dissipating pleasure of the tournament and the chase, or the brainless enthusiasm of the crusades, it was only to listen to idle tales, or to be occupied in discussing the most trivial questions. In so far as the achievement of any important discovery is concerned, or the adding anything worth speaking of to the sum of human knowledge, these thousand years are a blank, as well as a blot on the page of history. And why so? Just because the Bible was a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Soon as the water of life began to flow, the wheels on which the rust of centuries had gathered, began to revolve. The world was in motion. We turn to those centuries where that system, which prevailed during the dark ages, is still rampant, and what do we meet with? The same mental stagnation.—Glimpse at Spain, Mexico, Italy, the South and West of Ireland, and the lower section of our Province. Is it in such a soil that genius flourishes—that intellectual giants are produced—that science, literature, and the Arts, make progress? Is it from such sources that the prominent authors of the day come forth, and those works with whose fame the world rings? Behold me, my friends, the men of loftiest intellect have been invariably *Bible men*. Witness, for example, Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle, and, to come down to our own day, Thomas Chalmers. And when we contemplate the triumphs of mental effort with which the age we live in is crowned; and consider that all these

are traceable directly or indirectly to the impetus imparted to the human mind by the best of books, we are constrained to exclaim, "what hath God wrought!"

2. The Bible is the *refiner of the human feelings*. Wherever the Bible is not, we look in vain for that tender sensibility—that exquisite delicacy—that beaming benevolence which lend such a charm to the character of their possessor. The victims of Paganism, of Mahometanism, or of false forms of Christianity, have their feelings as well as their faculties benumbed. Their ideas being sensual, their feelings are almost necessarily selfish. In most instances they are past feeling, and given over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. Those social relations in which such scope is supplied for the play of the finer feelings of our nature, are, to a large extent, unknown. In none, save "the lands of the Bible," is the marriage tie respected, and woman assigned her rightful position in the social scale. The relation of *husband and wife* is unrecognised wherever idols are worshipped, and the ersect waves. If there be any thing wearing the semblance of marriage, it is based on martial conquest, or mere mercenary exchange. The woman is made in life the menial of the man, and at death suffers martyrdom for his sake. Her duty is to serve at his table; her destiny is, to expire on his pile. In no regions unless by the Bible, do we discover woman promoted to higher privileges than in Greece and Rome, during the days of their ancient glory. And yet we in vain look for that refinement of feeling, and those social graces which mark the Christian wife. Her charms were prostituted to the basest purposes. Instead of the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, there was too much of the character of her whose feet go down to death, and whose steps take hold on hell. The Bible is the grand elevator of the female sex. None, therefore, should be more hearty in the work of Bible circulation, than those represented by the faithful few, who were "last at the cross and first at the sepulchre." "The Bible has an appropriate place for woman: a place for which she is fitted, and in which she shines. It does indeed exclude her from the corruption of the camp and the debates of the forum. It does not invite her to the professor's chair, nor conduct her to the bar, nor make her welcome to the pulpit, nor admit her to the place of magistracy. It bids her beware how she overleaps the delicacy of her sex, and listens to the doctrines of effeminate debaters, or becomes the dupe of modern reformers and fashionable Journalists. It claims not for her the right of suffrage, nor any immunity by which she may usurp authority over the man. And yet it gives her her throne, for she is the queen of the domestic circle. It is the bosom of her family. It is the heart of her husband and children. It is the supremacy in all that interesting domain where love, and tenderness, and refinement of thought and feeling preside"—(*G. Spring*.) What holds good in regard to the relation of husband and wife, holds equally good in regard to the relation of *parent and child*. The Bible legislates for the one as well as the other. *Home*, that sweet word around which cluster so many hallowed associations, finds no place in the vocabularies of those people who know not the joyful sound. The delights of the domestic circle—those nameless sources of gratification which spring out of the bosom of filial and parental love, to them are unknown. The first of Romans contains a faithful picture of their state. "Disobedient to parents—without natural affection—implacable—unmerciful." Visit the banks of the Tiber, we see a Roman Emperor poisoning his own mother, and Seneca, one of the strictest of ancient moralists, acting as his abettor and advocate. Visit the banks of the Ganges, we see parents plunging their healthy children beneath its sacred waters, and children abandoning their superannuated parents, to be

devoured by crocodiles, or scorched by the sun. The Bible gives laws to the fireside—draws out, refines and ennobles those feelings which centre there. It says to children, "Obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." It says to parents, "Provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up," &c. And what are those hospitals for the sick which dot the surface of Christian lands—those asylums for the insane, the blind, the deaf and dumb—those churches and schools for the benefit of the destitute—those philanthropic schemes which are being carried out for the social and spiritual amelioration of the human family. What are these but so many practical proofs of the tendency of the Bible, to stir the emotions of the human heart—to refine and intensify those benevolent feelings which find harbourage there—and surely the contemplation of such practical results is well fitted to *inspire the language before us, "what hath God wrought!"*

R. F. B.

ON PRIVATE JUDGMENT.

No. I.

Being Notes of the introductory Lecture delivered before the Montreal Young Men's Christian Association, by the Rev. D. Fraser, A. M., December, 1853.

Whatever may be the fault of our treatment, no thoughtful mind will deny, that the theme announced is reasonable. Many questions in literature, many problems in science, many disputes in politics and history, may remain unsolved for scores of years, without detriment to the essential interests of mankind. But the liberty of the individual human spirit to think and to decide, on its own responsibility; cannot remain a matter of indifference, and must not be questioned in our enlightened community, without eliciting a prompt and resolute vindication. It is well, and very needful, to assert the right of free discussion, for without this, our civil liberties are not worth a ten years' purchase. But free discussion itself is a thing of naught, or a thing of mockery, without the associated liberty of individual thought and judgment, in regard to all truths presented by reason or by revelation to the mind.

The term "private judgment" is perhaps hackneyed. But the subject is not often fairly discussed, or justly understood. I altogether mistake the character of the epoch in which we live, and the circumstances in which Protestant Christians are placed, if we are not summoned by the events of the time, and the course of its vehement controversies, gravely to review the whole subject of individual right and responsibility in regard to truth, to sweep away mis-statements and misapprehensions, and satisfy our minds respecting the solid grounds on which the principle of private judgment claims to be maintained. Are we in so serious a matter as the reception of truth, blindly to follow a dictation—or may every one demand to be fully persuaded in his own mind?

Such is the question, and the latter alternative expresses, in a manner, what is commonly termed "private judgment." It is right that we afford some explicit definition before we proceed further—and therefore we say—that *negatively*, the principle of private judgment denies the right of any man or men to dictate what you shall believe, simply because of such dictation.—Then viewed *positively*, it imports your duty and privilege, to be fully persuaded in your mind, and to believe nothing until you are satisfied that it is true.

Starting from this definition or explanation, I ask your attention to three views of this important principle, which I seek to develop and defend, to wit—the *necessity of private judgment*—the *right of private judgment*—and the *responsibility of private judgment*. And in course of