

mind of the apostle to write his several epistles to the Corinthians, etc., intended them for a rule to after ages; for had that been the case, he would have made them as plain and clear as he did the law to Israel, so that every one should understand them alike. And although the law to Israel does not concern us in the present day, yet everyone that sees it reads it alike—it admits of no controversy. But not so with the writings of the apostles; for the best and wisest of men disagree respecting them. And the scriptures of the primitive Christians, from the early ages of Christianity, have been made a principal cause of the division, the controversy, the war, and the persecution and cruelty, that have convulsed and drenched Christendom in blood ever since it has been called Christendom.

And does it not impeach the wisdom and goodness of our great benefactor, to suppose he ever intended those writings as a rule, when the best of men cannot understand them alike?

But the reason is obvious. The gospel law is inward and spiritual, and cannot be comprehended in outward characters, but must be written in every heart distinctly, as our states and conditions are all different and distinct; and it is always suited to the state and condition of every heart, and of course must act diversely in each mind, according to the diversity of their several dispositions, propensities and passions. Therefore no literal law, or creed, can take place under the gospel, except in moral or outward things; for no outward law can bind the soul, as the government of the soul is exclusively the prerogative of God, and not of man.

Thou sayest, the same argument would operate against preaching the gospel; but I say nay, not in the least degree; for if the minister is under the right influence, he would be led more or less into the very state and condition of the hearers, and his

words will carry their own evidence, being clothed with power. But it cannot be so with epistles written to certain states a thousand years ago. And I make no doubt but thou seest clearly, that should we now go to make up a rule, or creed, from the writings of primitive Friends, what breach of harmony, nay, what confusion it would make in society. And, although preaching the gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, is the best and most excellent of all outward means, and it was all Jesus directed his disciples to practice, yet I will also admit that epistles may be written suited to the time in which they are written. Nevertheless, if the right improvement was made by every generation, truths would be so opened in every age as to supersede the use of what had gone before. Thus an advancement in reformation would be experienced, old things would be left behind, and new things in the wisdom of truth would be opened on the minds of honest travelers Zionward.

But, alas! instead of pressing toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, how many are looking back to the weak and beggarly elements, to which they seem willing to be in bondage.

Had the successors of the apostles attended, as they ought to have done, to the command given by Jesus to his disciples, to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit, as no doubt they were directed to do by the disciples, that being the only necessary and sufficient qualification to preach the gospel, as the disciples had done, with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven accompanying their words, and so in succession from generation to generation, the apostasy could never have entered. But instead thereof they turned their attention to the letter, one crying I am of Paul, another I am of Apollos, etc., and neglected the spirit; hence divisions and contentions originated in the