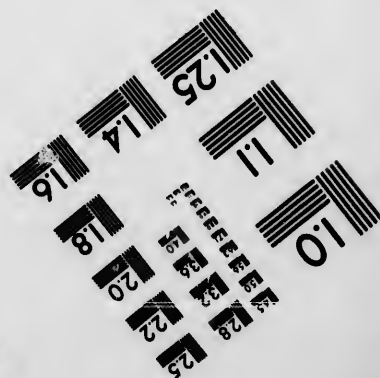
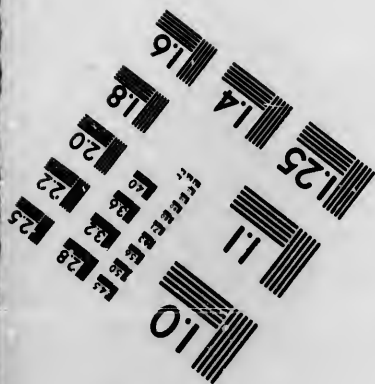
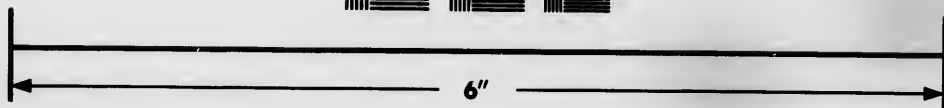
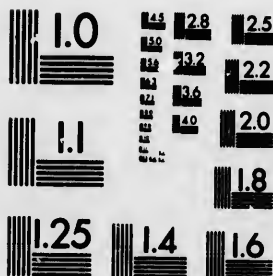


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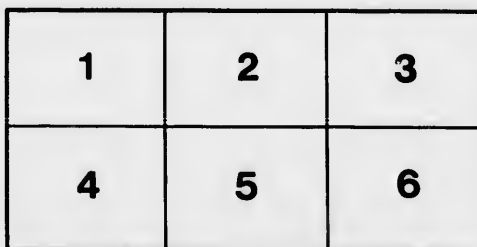
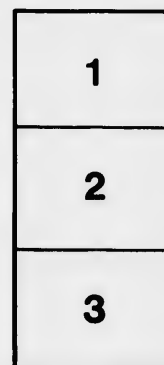
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THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS,

THE PILLAR AND THE GROUND OF THE TRUTH:

A SERMON,

PREACHED ON THE CREDIT MISSION, AND AT TWO OR THREE
OTHER PLACES, ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS,

BY BENJAMIN SLIGHT,

WESLEYAN MISSIONARY.

[Lived for twenty years with the Indians of the Hudson River]

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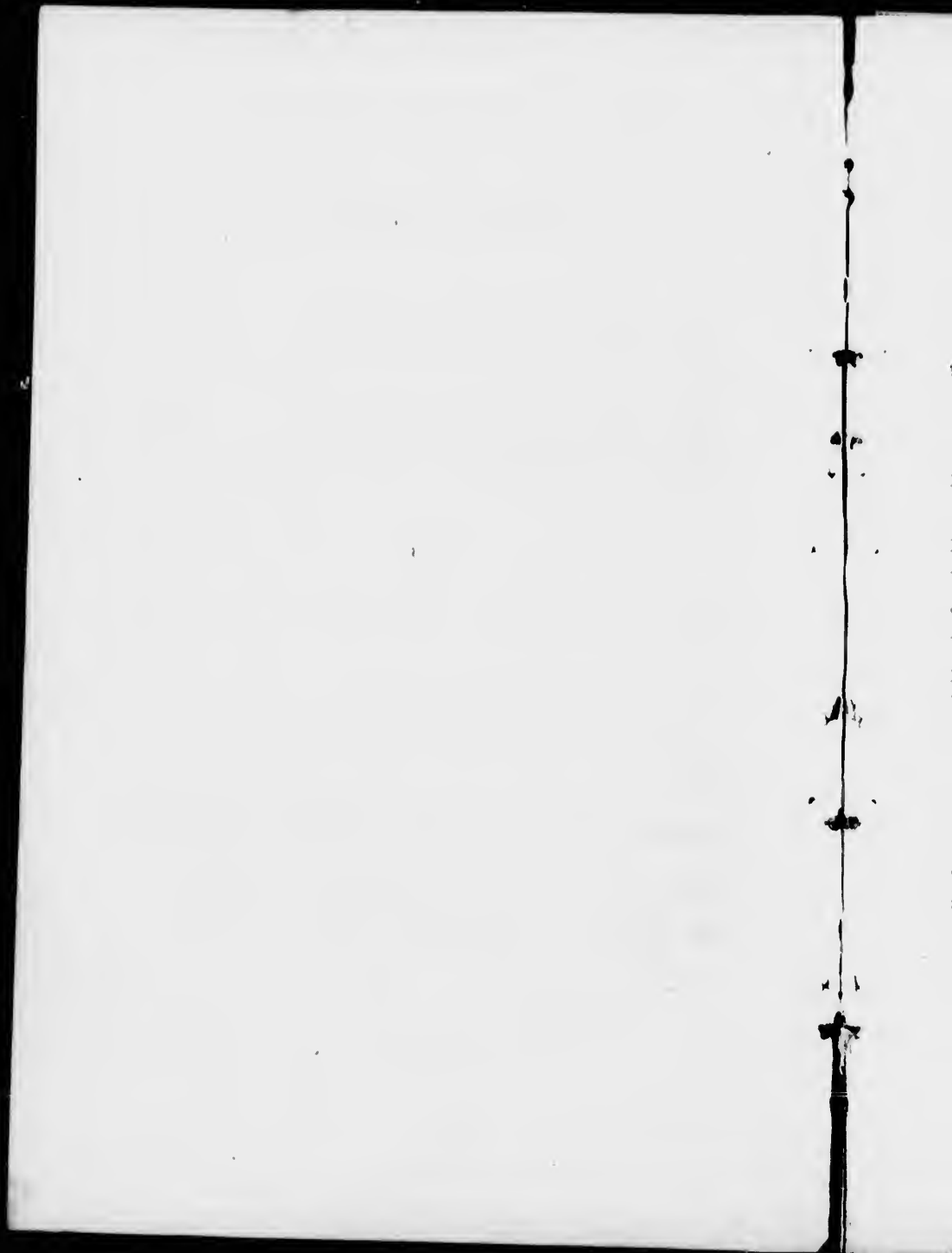
"Certainly it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth."—Lord Bacon.

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THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS, THE PILLAR AND THE GROUND OF THE TRUTH.

1 TIMOTHY, iii. 15, 16.

"The pillar and the ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

"WHAT IS TRUTH?" This important question was put to Him who himself was "the truth," and who came into the world for the purpose of bearing witness to the truth. But the proposer of the question showed himself so little interested in the subject, that he went away without waiting for an answer; and thus, no doubt, deprived himself and us of interesting instruction on an important subject. As it respects ourselves, however, we have no reason for regret, having a full and complete revelation of God's mind and will in the Bible.

In spite of all the vacillations of men there is such a thing as truth, and there is certainty in the perception of it. Truth, in general, may be said to be the agreement of our ideas with the real nature of things: and there is something in the very constitution of our nature which determines a man to believe or disbelieve. It becomes an object of our knowledge by the evidence on which it is built. To claim a full assent of the mind it must be either *self-evident*, perceived intuitively, or demonstrable,—dependent on proofs. However, there are different kinds of evidence, derived from different sources, and they demand the assent of the mind according to the degrees of conviction they afford; for there may be a partial assent of

¹ John, xviii. 38. Lord Bacon commences his short Essay on Truth with this quotation.

the mind, where a proposition is short of demonstration. The scale of evidence and of assent, consequent on it, may be traced as follows :

There may be an assent to a *doubtful proposition*, called *human faith*. Human faith is built upon human testimony, and human testimony, when solitary, is doubtful on account of the possibility of our being deceived either from the ignorance or misrepresentation of the testifier. Assent may be yielded to a *probable proposition*, which is termed *opinion*, being short of demonstration. It may be yielded to a *certain proposition*, which is denominated *sentiment* ; also to a *certain and evident conclusion*, demonstrated through the medium of certain propositions, or by reasoning, which is called *science*. Again, *assent may be yielded to a self-evident axiom*. Such an axiom is above all proof. It is termed *intelligence*, or that which brings certainty to the understanding, the terms of which present themselves to our reason, and *demand* our assent, and which we cannot withhold and be at the same time accounted rational.

But assent is also claimed to propositions on another ground, viz. on their being built on *divine revelation*. Here is *absolute certainty*. God cannot deceive, or be deceived. Hence *absolute faith* is due to the testimony of God. Revelation never contradicts either sense or reason, although it often transcends both : hence divine truth, although it demands the *exercise* of our reason in order to its reception, cannot be submitted to the *test* of human reason.

Do you then repeat the question, What is Truth ? I answer, It is that which God has been pleased to make known unto us by revelation. And the mystery of godliness, or the verities of our holy religion, testified by God himself, is "the pillar and the ground of the truth."

The opinions of the heathens, ancient and modern, on every subject in which men's best interests are involved, are dark, confused, and imperfect ; they were but a baseless fabric, founded only on error or fiction.² But Christianity affords us clear views, communicates certain information, and it is based upon a firm foundation.

"Here is firm footing ; here is solid rock ;
This can support us ; all is sea beside."

² On this important subject, the reader may consult, with great advantage, Dr. Ellis's "Knowledge of Divine Things from Revelation, not from Reason or Nature ;" and Horne's Introduction, vol. i. ch. 1.

It is one of the dogmas of a fallen church, that she is the pillar and the ground of the truth; that she is the only and the infallible announcer of the truth; and that her dictum is to be received as *the truth*. On the contrary, the truth is the pillar and the ground of the Church; both are derived from the Lord Jesus Christ; and the visible church is only in reality the Church of Christ as far as she holds the truth. If the truth subsists, the Church subsists; if the truth degenerates into error, the Church degenerates into Antichrist. The truth is therefore not absolutely built upon the Church, but the Church is known by the truth. The words of the text are read by the best critics,—“The mystery of godliness is the pillar and ground of truth, and without controversy a great thing.”

With a view to our receiving proper instruction from this important passage of Holy Writ, let us consider,—

I. THE MYSTERY WHICH IS ATTACHED TO GODLINESS.

The pagans had what are termed their “mysteries;” and it is probable that it was in reference to them that the term sometimes occurs in the New Testament. The pagan mysteries are supposed to have originated in Egypt,³ and from thence were transmitted to the Greeks by Orpheus, and through them to the Romans. The pagan priesthood boasted that they were in possession of a higher and purer doctrine than that which they publicly taught. They alleged that the vulgar were so base and impure as not to be capable of receiving their higher and sublimer instructions. It was therefore concealed from them, and only taught to the learned,—to princes, nobles, and men of distinction. The persons admitted were termed the “initiated.” They had to undergo a severe course or preparation. Austere penances were imposed upon them, and strict secrecy was enjoined concerning the knowledge they acquired. This knowledge was imparted by symbolical representations, and scenic exhibitions, in caverns, during the silence and darkness of the night.

Learned men⁴ have espoused different opinions as to the real nature

³ Enfield's History of Philosophy, B. i, c. 8. The Druids had similar ceremonies and observances. Probably those people, called Free Masons, formed their system from this model, as it appears to coincide with the accounts we have given us of those ancient mysteries.

⁴ A controversy was maintained on this subject. Dr. Hill and Bishop Warburton contended for the usefulness of these practices, and Dr. Leland has shown that they

and design of those mysteries. On the one hand, it has been argued, that the remains of the ancient and pure theology was thereby developed, that error was exposed, the true nature of God and his worship was taught, and morality promoted. On the other hand, this has been strenuously denied. It is possible this might be the foundation of their celebration, and the original design of their establishment. But if so, these vestiges of truth were mixed with fables, and disguised by the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphical mode of representation. It has been asserted that those processes were frequently conducted under the patronage of the most licentious and sensual deities, and that the most indecent objects were exhibited and carried in procession. Probably the Apostle refers to this when he says,—“It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.” And it is a well known fact that some of the best and wisest philosophers disapproved of the mysteries; and, at last, they became so infamous in respect both of morality and good order, that it was found necessary to suppress them.

But, in the Christian religion, the term mystery is not merely an arbitrary designation. It has in reality its mysteries. It has been introduced by the symbolic and allegorical representations of the former institutions, the whole of which were typical of Christianity; and it has symbolical acts and figurative institutions belonging to itself. Its sacraments are mysterious; for the term sacrament signifies the hidden meaning of an external symbol; and perhaps they were so termed in allusion to those very mysteries.

Although Christianity has its mysteries, they differ essentially from those of the pagan. The reason why they at all retain the character is of quite a different kind.

1st. Mystery sometimes signifies *a matter hard or difficult to be understood.*

In the Gospel there are “some things hard to be understood;” yea, some things which the human faculties will never be able to apprehend. We shall never, even when we see face to face, and “see him as he is,” understand the mystery of the Trinity, and the union of the divine and human natures in one person. At these awful subjects

were not designed to answer those pure and elevated purposes; and that if such a design had been entertained, they were not calculated to answer it. See Horne’s *Introd.*, vol. i. c. 1.

we shall ever wonder and adore, but we shall never understand them : they will ever remain secret things. But, as to the principal part, and main design of it, the Gospel is not in this sense a mystery. It is suited to the plainest capacities ; it is milk for babes ; he that runneth may read ; a wayfaring man though a fool need not err in tracing the divine paths.

2nd. The term sometimes bears the signification of *a matter difficult to be believed through the prejudices of men.*

Much experience and observation painfully convince us that prejudice blinds the mind.⁵ From a variety of causes it is prepossessed and biassed ; and then no matter howsoever clearly a thing is stated, or by whatsoever arguments it may be supported, it is rejected, and cast aside as worthless, and as utterly false. The Gospel was “ to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness ;” although containing in itself the highest wisdom, and possessed of the greatest power. “ The natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God ;” yet they are “ spiritually discerned” by the simplest believer. They are “ hidden from the wise and prudent,” but “ revealed unto babes.”

3rd. It sometimes designates *a thing long concealed, or kept secret ; not developed, or manifested to the world.*

From this consideration it is that the Gospel is called “ the mystery which hath been hid from ages.” (Col. i. 26.) “ The mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God.” (Eph. iii. 9.) The Gospel had been so comparatively kept secret from the Gentiles. We are not to understand that God wished, from want of love to mankind, to keep him so long in ignorance. “ In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son.” Mankind needed to be gradually enlightened by the progressive developement of the truth, to prepare them for the reception of it in all its fulness and splendour. It would not have been judicious to have let it burst upon them in the full blaze of Gospel day. This would have been similar to bringing a man, who had long been shut up in a dark cell, suddenly to behold the glittering rays of the sun at noon day.

⁵ For the nature and causes of prejudices, and for the preventing or curing them in ourselves, see Watts' Logic, part 2, c. 3. His Improvement of the Mind, part 2, c. 5 ; also Locke's conduct of the Understanding, sect. 10, 14, and 33.

But now God has revealed, manifested, and gloriously displayed his Gospel. He has made provision, "to give all men to see what is the fellowship of the mystery." But (now) we all, (both Jew and Gentile,) behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord. Jesus Christ has commissioned his servants to go into all the world and preach it to every creature. They are directed to seize all occasions and opportunities of making it known; to sow beside all waters; to preach it privately and publicly—from house to house, and in the highways and hedges, in the temple, synagogue, and places of public resort. The instruments employed in making it known, in conformity with the spirit of the subject, cry,

"O for a trumpet voice,
On all the world to call,
To bid their hearts rejoice
In Him who died for all!"

4th. The term mystery signifies *what is naturally hidden or secret in itself, which the human faculties could never have found out, but which to be known at all must be revealed.*

This is the character of a great part of revelation. Divine discovery comes in to the aid of human infirmity, and makes known unto us those things utterly beyond the faculties of man to discover.

"Mysterious these—because too large for eye
Of man, too long for human arm to mete."

This is the meaning of the term in the text. The particulars in which it consists, could never have entered into the heart of man to conceive; but are now by being revealed quite intelligible. In like manner, elsewhere, the Apostle uses the term mystery, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." These passages answer the character given above. They evidently declare what was hidden or unknown, till revealed, but afterwards easily known: and thus the Apostle speaks of a man's understanding all mysteries, i. e., all revealed truths of the Christian Religion.

God has revealed to us and made arrangements for the universal spread of those glorious truths, formerly unknown to the bulk of mankind: truths which are the wonder of angels, but overlooked by multitudes of men, for whose benefit they are revealed.

Such is the nature of the mysteries connected with Christianity; but the text calls us to notice:

II. THE PARTICULARS IN WHICH THIS MYSTERY CONSISTS.

It is the wonderful and sublime doctrine which is revealed in the Gospel, and specified in the text, in six particulars, which we will now proceed to notice in order.

1st. God manifested in the flesh.

A real incarnation of Divinity: a clothing of the Divine nature with human flesh. The Word which was in the beginning with God, and was God, was incarnated.⁶

Divine names, titles, attributes, works, and worship are ascribed and paid to him; truly a wonderful coincidence of circumstances, which places the truth beyond ambiguity. True, he was in the form of a servant, yet frequently the Godhead was *manifested*,—the Divinity burst forth through the humanity. This was eminently the case on the Mount of Transfiguration, in the wisdom of his discourses, the power of his miracles, and in the holiness of his spotless life. “Show us the Father,” said Philip to the Saviour, “and it sufficeth us.” The disciple wanted some visible representation of God, such as was sometimes granted to the prophets. Jesus replied, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?” and then added these remarkable words, fully proving that God was manifested in the flesh: “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; believest thou that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” We have a sufficient manifestation of *God* in the *flesh*, to claim our assent, and to excite within us wonder, adoration, and love:

“Fall prostrate, lost in wonder, fall,
Ye sons of men, for God is man!”

⁶ These sentences at once contradict the bold and awful assertions of those who deny the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ, of every shade of distinction—errors which are awfully prevalent, and preached under specious pretences, in the present day; and the ancient errors of the Docetæ, who taught that the body of Christ was a mere appearance or phantom. There is much usefulness in the ancient creeds, and great utility in having them constantly repeated before the congregation, as a constant caveat against error, and as a means of perpetuating truth.

But as to any more,—how shall we describe that which is indescribable, how shall we speak of that which is “unspeakable,” how shall we know that which “passeth knowledge !”

It is not only a mystery to man, with his more shallow intellect, but to angelic minds, for these “things the angels desire to look into,” and bending down, they keenly pry into these mysterious facts.

“’Tis mystery all, let earth adore :
Let angel minds enquire no more.”

2nd. Justified in the Spirit.

Justified *in*, or *by* the Spirit. The Holy Spirit justified his claim to Messiahship. Jesus appeared in a lowly form ; in the infirmity and frailty of mortal flesh ; poor, despised, persecuted, and, at last, crucified. Under these circumstances, then, his claim to the high character should be substantiated. This has been done fully and triumphantly by the Holy Spirit.

1. He was *predicted* by the spirit of prophecy.

“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” The Holy Spirit moved holy men to testify of him. All these prophecies have been accurately and minutely fulfilled, and in this manner the divine mission of our Lord Jesus Christ has been confirmed to all diligent and attentive enquirers.

2. The Holy Spirit *identified* him.

The Holy Spirit descended upon him in a visible form at his baptism. At the same moment a voice was heard from heaven declaring, “*This* is my beloved son, hear ye him.” Thus accurately designating and identifying the person of whom he spake.

3. The Holy Spirit *filled* him.

He possessed this Spirit without measure in his gifts and graces. This was fully made to appear in his doctrine, life, and miracles. It was so conspicuous that even the enemies of his divinity were constrained to confess it. “No man can do these miracles (say they) except God be with him.” Certain officers having been sent to seize him, and returning without having accomplished their object, they alleged as a reason, “Never man spake like this man.”

4. By the Spirit he was *raised from the dead*.

"Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." (1 Pet. iii. 18.) He had professed to be the Son of God. This was denied by the generality, and he was charged with foul blasphemy. He put it to this test, I will rise again from the dead. If, therefore, God did raise him from the dead, he justified his claim. No man can admit his resurrection, without admitting his Deity. Hence the Apostle says, he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, (powerfully demonstrated to be the Son of God,) according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. i. 4.)

5. He *baptized his disciples* with the Holy Spirit. This was the case particularly on the day of Pentecost. This remarkable event was predicted by the Baptist; and our Lord himself often promised the Holy Spirit to his disciples. His descent upon them is a well-attested *fact*. It was published among those who had the means of proving its falsity, had it not been true. The *effects* produced proves it to be by supernatural agency. They spake with tongues—they were filled with Divine power—and three thousand prejudiced Jews were converted in one day. Admitting all this, which no one can successfully contradict, how can it be accounted for otherwise than by admitting our Lord's claim to Deity? The bare promise to send the Holy Spirit indicated his claim to Divinity, and the event showed it was not unfounded.

Thus was our Lord fully and satisfactorily "justified by the Spirit."

3rd. Seen of angels.

This circumstance being mentioned with the others which constitute this glorious mystery, intimates that there is some special reason for that intent observation which they apply to the Saviour. They are represented as having an intense curiosity and interest in the subject; and as applying diligent research in ascertaining the matter. St. Peter, when speaking of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow," adds, "which things the angels desire to look into." (1 Pet. i. 11, 12.) St. Paul gives us the same idea. He represents the angels as studying these lessons through the medium of the Church. It is there, as on a great theatre, where these astonishing scenes are displayed; there Jesus Christ is set forth as evidently

crucified amongst us; and there where angels become our fellow students when the Gospel is thus displayed. "To the intent (says he) that now, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known *by the church* the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. iii. 10.) They regarded redemption as an astonishing spectacle, far more sublime and mysterious than the creation of the world, or the administration of Providence. When the world was created, angels, with joy and admiration of mind, were spectators of the whole process, "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." They have also been witnesses of the great acts of providential interference. But, above all, redemption excites their admiration, and elicits their loudest songs of praise.

Why do angels so diligently observe the Saviour, and so studiously contemplate his redeeming acts? Is it barely on account of the high interest they take *in us*? Or are they *themselves* in some way or other interested in it? Some suppose that through Christ some gift unknown to us was conferred upon them. They are not fallen creatures, and, of course, need not redemption; but yet, in some way or other, might be benefited by it. Without going into fanciful conjecture, we may assert through these studies they undoubtedly enjoy more light, have brighter views of God, and more accurate and enlarged knowledge on various subjects connected with sin and holiness. They know more of God; the attributes of God are more clearly illustrated; consequently their bliss is heightened, and their glory increased. Or, possibly, as some think, they are confirmed and established in bliss, and rendered secure in their blest estate.

An angel foretold his birth; (Luke i. 26,) angels paid him homage at his entrance into the world; (Heb. i. 16,) announced the event to the shepherds, and joined in rapturous concert on the joyous occasion; (Luke ii. 8—14,) watched over his tender infancy; (Matt. ii. 13, 14,) ministered to him in the desert; (Matt. iv. 11,) supported him in his agonies; (Luke ii. 43,) and attended him at his resurrection and ascension. (Luke xxiv. 4; Acts i. 10.)

4th. Preached unto the Gentiles.

This is termed a mystery in other places. (Eph. iii. 4—6; Col. i. 25.) This is a mystery inasmuch as it is contrary to the prejudices and preconceived notions of the Jews—a thing they could not have imagined

of themselves. Our Lord's ministry was confined to Judea. But before his ascension into heaven, he commanded his disciples to teach the Gentiles, and qualified them for the work by the gift of the Holy Spirit, in consequence of which they spake with tongues. Without these gifts they would not even have attempted to preach to the Gentiles. This excited admiration in the beholders. Also men influenced by merely worldly motives must have viewed the conduct of the Apostles with surprise. The Gentile world was sunk in idolatry: they must testify against it, and for this must expect nothing but vile treatment. All this considered properly, renders it a mystery that he should be "preached unto the Gentiles."

5th. Believed on the world.

This is a mystery. All circumstances considered, it is what never could have been anticipated. There were, no doubt, men enough who would designate the attempt to promulgate the truth as the very height of folly, and the essence of madness, in the same manner as they have the efforts to propagate Christianity among the heathen in our day.⁷ Consider,—

1. *The lowly State of the Saviour.*

He was poor and mean, despised and rejected, and finally crucified as the vilest malefactor. Is it not an astonishing mystery that such a person when preached to a speculating and prying age, should be "believed on," and that men should be induced to place their hope and trust in him?

2. *The Instruments.*

If they had been acquainted with philosophy, science, and literature; if they had been splendid orators, and acute logicians, no wonder if in moments of enthusiasm they had carried away the multitude with them. But they were plain men—men who did not affect these arts. God, indeed, had given them "a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries were not able to gainsay nor resist." (Luke xxi. 15.) He had endowed them with that natural eloquence which is the power of persuasion; yet, says St. Paul, Christ sent me to preach the Gospel, not with the enticing or persuasive words of man's wisdom—with the

⁷ The early and extensive propagation of Christianity is a triumphant proof of its truth. See Horne's Introduction, vol. I. ch. 2, sec. 4.

most elegant idiom, with artificial periods, and a studied elocution—lest the Cross of Christ should be made of no effect,—lest the success realized should be ascribed to human eloquence, which ought to be attributed to the agency of the Holy Spirit. But it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, to save them that believe, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of man. Thus God chose the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (1 Cor. 1 ch.) But is it not a mystery?—does it not confound all human reasoning, that, by such instruments, such great things should be effected?

3. The *obnoxious nature of the truths* they preached.

If, like Mohammed, they had gone forth to preach a religion which gave a licence to the indulgence of every passion and appetite of our nature, and fostered every licentious desire; we should not have wondered at their success. But on the contrary, they preached a religion which gave no countenance to their indulgences, but prohibited every sinful pleasure. They taught mankind, that if they would enter the regions of the blessed, they must deny themselves, and take up their cross; they must crucify the flesh with all its affections and lusts.

4. The *oppositions* they had to contend with.

The sources of these oppositionary efforts were alike in Jew and Gentile. The Gospel was equally unpalatable to both of these grand divisions of the human race; it was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness. All the *political* influence in the world was opposed to them; kings, princes, and states. All the *learned* influence possessed by men was directed against them. Philosophers of all sects and denominations, howsoever divided among themselves, were united in opposition to the publishers of the glorious Gospel. All the talent possessed by literary and philosophical men was employed against the reception of Jesus Christ. All the *superstitious* influence

in the world was against them. They were opposed by systems of false religion, backed by the learning of ages, and venerable for their antiquity; systems which had every attractive, grand, and imposing accompaniment; supported by the craft of the priesthood, the prejudice of the people, and the powerful arm of the Roman Empire. If Christianity prevailed, it must not barely get established along with other sects, but it must overturn the formidable opponent, crumble into dust or evaporate into air that which had been adored for ages. But why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?—Why did the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed?—saying, let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. Truly he that sitteth in the heavens did laugh: the Lord had them in derision, and maugre all opposition, and all combination, he *has* set his king upon the holy hill of Zion.

The triumphs of the Gospel have greatly surprised men of infidel minds. They have supposed that it arose only from the superstition of that and succeeding ages; and that if they could but banish this superstition from the human mind, they would then be able to destroy the religion of Jesus Christ. An association of men of this character, with hatred to our holy religion in their hearts, and “crush the wretch” for their motto, attempted to effect this object. They possessed learning, energy, zeal, and influence; they diligently applied themselves; they had a fair chance for the experiment; but notwithstanding all their designs and efforts, in these increasingly enlightened days,

“More and more it spreads and grows,
Ever mighty to prevail;
Sin’s strongholds it now o’erthrows,
Shakes the trembling gates of hell.”

Christ has been and still is believed on in the world.

5. The *dangers* to which they were exposed who professed it.

The preachers of the Gospel could not hold out hopes to those who should become their followers, of privileges and immunities of a temporal kind. They had to announce, “Silver and Gold have we none” to bestow; the “kingdom” of our master “is not of this world;” but on the contrary, if you embrace our doctrine, you shall

be brought before kings and rulers ; not to be exalted to dignity, or to be raised to posts of honour and emolument ; but to receive the sentence of bonds, imprisonment, and death, in its most horrid and appalling forms. These things they often realized. The sufferings of the Church have been often narrated, and are well understood. But, notwithstanding all this, Jesus was believed on in the world. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed," that, we are assured, the number of disciples increased in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the *priests* were obedient to the faith. It was received by the rich, the honourable, and the noble : it spread into Cæsar's household. "The Lord *added* to the Church daily" of all sorts and conditions of men ; and in one day was added three thousand souls, and speedily "multitudes both of men and women." So great was the increase, that simple addition cannot notify the amount, but it is said "believers were *multiplied*;" and, to complete the climax, we are informed, "the numbers of the disciples were *multiplied in Jerusalem greatly*."

6th. Received up into glory.

We have a well authenticated historic relation of this miraculous fact in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. In this transaction there was an exertion of the Divine energy. By it Jesus Christ was acknowledged as a person whom God sanctioned ; and consequently all his doctrines proved to be divine, his atonement of infinite value, and, in short, it is one of the many striking evidences of the truth of our holy religion.

There is no mystery in his divine nature being received up into glory. As a Divine Being, that glory was his before all worlds were in existence ; he left it when he humbled himself, and stooped to our nature. But the mystery is in the human nature being received there, and seated at the right hand of God. On the Divine Throne now sits our own nature. What a mystery ! God is ever reminded of man. He sits there as a pledge and security that we shall sit with him, if we believe on him and obey him. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my Throne, even as I also overcame, and am sat down with my Father in his Throne." What a matter for gratitude and joy !

On surveying these six particulars in which the mystery of godliness consists, ought we not to be filled with silent awe and adoration?—ought we not to be filled with gratitude, and to burn with love?

“Ye everlasting hills—ye angels bow!
Bow ye redeemed of men! God was made flesh,
And dwelt with man on earth!
O love divine!
Shout, angels! Shout aloud, ye sons of men!
And burn, my heart, with the eternal flame!”

This will furnish a theme for eternity. Eternally will his saints triumph, and shout, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

III. THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS IS THE PILLAR AND THE GROUND OF THE TRUTH.

A pillar is that on which any projecting, or other unsupported part of a building rests:—the ground supports the whole. Hence the expression refers to the foundation of the truth; that on which it rests, and the stay by which it is in every part held together. The mystery of godliness sustains this relation to the truth;—all saving truth rests upon it.

1st. The incarnation of Jesus is the *foundation and support of all the doctrines of the Gospel—of the whole scheme of salvation.*

All those glorious doctrines are deducible from it, and they cannot possibly be derived from any other source. Repentance and remission of sins *can* be preached in his name in consideration of his being a Divine Saviour, and as such having made atonement for the sins of men, but not otherwise. What encouragement would men have to repent and to expect pardon, if Jesus Christ were not God manifest in the flesh. Take away the incarnation of Jesus, and what truth of any distinguishing character remains? All else in Christianity would be but a shadow; a mere figment of the imagination; but lay this as the foundation, and then a beautiful and glorious structure—the fair and magnificent temple of truth rises to the skies.

2nd. The incarnation of Jesus is the *support of each individual sinner.*

If there were no atonement, if God were not reconciled to guilty men by a vicarious sacrifice; where could the sinner lean and stay his sinking soul? He must inevitably sink in utter despair were it not for the thought that his Redeemer is infinite, and by consequence, the provision boundless. But the persuasion of this truth induces him to fly to this hope set before him, and fills him with strong consolation. He sees God can save to the uttermost whosoever comes unto him through this appointed medium. So strongly impressed is he from such a view of his Saviour, that if he had a thousand souls, he dare venture them all on this foundation, believing it will not give way: or if he were a thousand times more polluted by sin than he actually is, he could with confidence come to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Yes, the incarnation of this divine person, is the pillar and the ground of the truth;—the atonement rests upon it;—the promises rest upon it;—and here he finds he has firm footing and strong confidence. While casting his guilty soul upon it, he sings,—

"Fix'd on this ground will I remain,
Though my heart fail and flesh decay;
This anchor shall my soul sustain,
When earth's foundations melt away.
Mercy's full power I then shall prove,
Loved with an everlasting love."

To conclude the subject, observe,—

1. The importance of salvation.

It is not a matter of indifference that we remain unsaved. If it had been a merely trivial matter—if we had been merely in some circumstances bettered by being interested in Christ, he would never have emptied himself of his glory, and left the bosom of his Father. It is our all, our life, our more than being. Therefore seek it: rest not without it: seek it now, and with all your hearts.

2. It is our duty to spread the knowledge of this salvation over the world.

If it be so deeply important let all the world know of it; and let nothing be left undone which you can do, in order to their obtaining that knowledge.

"The bliss for Adam's race designed,
When will it reach to all mankind?"

