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THE
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CONSISTING OF
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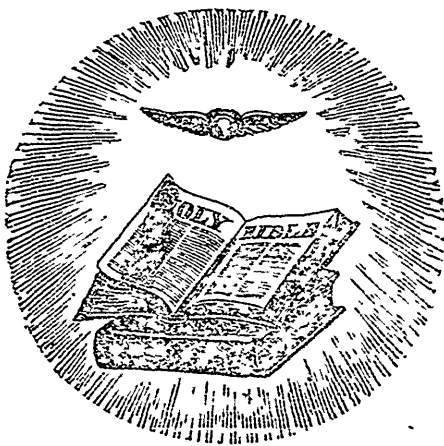
TENDED TO PROMOTE

THE

Knowledge, Belief and Practice, of Christianity, as delineated

IN THE

NEW TESTAMENT.



“ PROVE ALL THINGS, HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD.”

HALIFAX, N. S.

PRINTED BY J. S. CUNNABELL—ARGYLL-STREET

1833.

28139- June 1/33

THE
CHRISTIAN GLEANER.

Vol. I.

JANUARY, 1833.

No. 1.

“PROVE ALL THINGS, HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD.”

PREFATORY REMARKS.

To the enquiry which may be made, Why add another to the number of religious papers, when so many are continually issuing from the press? the following ideas of a living author seem applicable:—That of all the religious periodicals of the day, very few are, strictly speaking, of an independent character; they being generally devoted to the interest of some one particular sect, whether among the established or dissenting churches, and destined to the support and advancement only of such views and measures as are at the time approved by those members who assume the lead of that party, or who superintend those publications. Under such auspices, whether from prejudice, or perhaps a sincere conviction that it is their duty to discountenance the discussion of any thing like innovation on what they deem to be expedient in religion—it is indeed rare to find in their pages, an article, though deduced only from the Bible, and written in the spirit it inculcates, which opposes as unscriptural, any doctrine or practice of the party with whose interests those works are identified. The enquiry as to what saith the Lord, though professed by them all, seeming to be, at least, on many such occasions, the furthest from the principles which influence them.

Besides considerations of this nature, others equally obvious, may lead the sincere enquirer after truth to estimate the necessity and value of a religious paper, which, unswayed by any mere party or personal motive, would embody in one work, a collection of papers on a variety of important and interesting subjects, established from the plain statements of Scripture, or fair unsophisticated reasoning from its obvious and liberal import—all aiming to promote the knowledge, belief and practice of primitive Christianity, unshackled by human systems of divinity.

How far this miscellany will accord with its design, as more fully stated in the annexed Prospectus, will best be appreciated by a careful and impartial perusal of the contents of the present number.

PROSPECTUS OF THE CHRISTIAN GLEANER.

It is proposed to publish by subscription, a work under this title, which is intended to comprise interesting selections from various sources, of a

VOL. I.

A

MAN
1833

literary, moral, and religious tendency; but chiefly those which have for their professed object—To investigate and to incite to the knowledge and practice of primitive Christianity—the religion of the Bible;—To establish the authority and all-sufficiency of the Scriptures of truth, for the faith and practice of Christians;—To disentangle them from the perplexities and metaphysical subtleties of system makers of theology;—To destroy sectarianism, and in its stead to promote Christian union upon the only foundation upon which it can exist or be preserved—by exhibiting the truth itself of the New Testament, its simple facts and plain statements as the only scriptural and true bond of peace and unity among believers—not men, nor their jarring creeds or speculations respecting these truths—and by proving that the errors and contentions among Christians arise in no respect from any necessary obscurity in the Divine revelation; but chiefly from erring mortals, contrary to its spirit and express teaching, trusting to their own understandings, as if infallible, and teaching for doctrines, their own opinions, and the commandments of men, thus imposing on themselves and on others. The sincere enquirer after divine truth is soon discouraged and bewildered, rather than instructed with the endless variety and contradictory nature of the speculations and comments of men, perhaps well intentioned and ingenious, which he meets with, on the subject; each claiming from him peculiar regard for its own system, and each opposing the other. Occasionally however in his researches, he finds some plain and intelligent guide, whose instructious carry conviction to his understanding, and like a beacon amid surrounding obscurity and danger, enlightens him on his way, pointing him to the true haven of knowledge, and exposing to him the error and the danger of those who deviate from it; these, though possessing much intrinsic interest and merit—though perhaps the result of rigorous and candid investigation—having borne perhaps the strictest scrutiny of friend and foe, without the detection of error,

“ Like many a gem of purest ray serene
Which dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear”—

lie hid from others alike pursuing the same object, who, if duly apprised of their existence and real import might appreciate their worth and profit from their instruction—different and opposite reasons tending often to render them thus inaccessible to numbers—sometimes from being found only in works of a larger and more expensive kind—sometimes from their circulation being limited to publications of a local, ephemeral or party nature, with which they are identified; and often are they prejudged to neglect, unread, through the misrepresentation, prejudice, or blind partiality of sectarian zeal, whose errors perhaps they profess to expose. To collect some of these into a volume, and thus far contribute to their impartial examination, and to the promotion of their professed design, is the chief office of *The GLEANER*. Its conductors having no personal end

in view whatever—no party to please or build up, no desire to offend any, but rather to do good to all men—these selections will be made from any source, when conducive, to sustain the truth or expose error. Opinions and practices, by whomsoever held, whether scriptural or unscriptural, not persons nor parties, will be considered as fair subjects of its investigation. The GLEANER, considering all truths, whether doctrinal or practical, as intended for the examination and reception of all men, to whose notice they may be presented—that no one has any moral right to hold them as private property so as to consider their propriety or justness, being enquired into, or even contended against, as a personal offence against themselves—that if these be adopted and retained, only because they are sincerely believed to be consistent with the oracles of truth, all would be pleased to have them strictly tested by that standard, that if found consistent with its dictates, others may thus be allured to come with them and pursue the same path of righteousness and peace—that if weighed in the balance of the sanctuary and found wanting, they themselves may be induced to forsake the evil way they have been unconsciously pursuing.

This being then the general design of The GLEANER, willing to be always controlled by the jurisdiction of the Bible alone, and with no peculiar temptation or wish, intentionally at least, to oppose any thing that it enjoins, or to enjoin any thing that it opposes—its pages are referred to that unerring test to be approved or condemned—adopted or rejected, according to its decision.

For reasons which may render it expedient, and to contribute to their impartial examination, the Conductors of this Miscellany will exercise their own discretion to acknowledge or not the source from whence their materials are gathered; that neither undue deference on the one hand nor prejudice on the other, which may attach to particular names, may unduly influence any against forming an unbiassed judgment of its contents. Not *who* among the wise—the rulers—have held this or that sentiment? but *how far* is it consistent with the revealed will of God? should be the primary enquiry of every real disciple of Him who enjoined on his followers in this respect, to call no man master on earth;—to take heed how they heard, and what they heard,—that one is our Master,—that to him we must stand or fall,—and that none can be considered innocent, if possessing the means of correct information, they substitute any error, by whomsoever taught, in place of a truth distinctly revealed in the Word of God.

“*Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.*”

ADDRESS TO ALL THAT LOVE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IN SINCERITY.

[The following is the substance of an Address, lately published by some Christians who united together to promote union and reformation among believers, on scriptural grounds; and which is deemed an appropriate selection, as an introductory article to the Gleaner.]

Dearly Beloved Brethren,

THAT it is the great design, and native tendency of our holy religion, to reconcile and unite men to God, and to each other in truth and love, to the glory of God, and their own present and eternal good, will not, we presume, be denied, by any of the genuine subjects of Christianity. The nativity of its Divine Author was announced from Heaven, by an host of angels, with high acclamations of "Glory to God in the highest, and, on earth, peace and good will amongst men." The whole tenor of that divine book which contains its institutes, in all its gracious declarations, precepts, ordinances, and holy examples, most expressly and powerfully inculcates this. In so far, then, as this holy unity and unanimity in faith and love is attained, just in the same degree, is the glory of God, and the happiness of men, promoted and secured. Impressed with these sentiments, and at the same time affected with those *scandalous* divisions, which have so awfully interfered with the benign and gracious intention of our holy religion, by exciting its professed subjects to bite and devour one another, we cannot suppose ourselves justifiable, in withholding our sincere, humble and earnest endeavours to heal and remove them.

Should we speak of competency, viewing the greatness of the object, and the manifold difficulties which lie in the way of its accomplishment, we would readily exclaim, with the apostle, "who is sufficient for these things?"—But, upon recollecting ourselves, neither would *we* be discouraged; persuaded with *him* that, as *the work* in which *we* are engaged, so likewise *our* sufficiency is of God. But after all, both the mighty and the many are with us. The Lord himself, and all that are truly his people, are declaredly on our side. The prayers of all the churches, nay, the prayers of Christ himself, John 17, 20, 23, and of all that have ascended to his heavenly kingdom, are with us. The blessing out of Zion is pronounced upon our undertaking. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee." With such encouragements as these, what should deter us from the heavenly enterprise, or render hopeless the attempt of accomplishing, in due time, an entire union of all christians in faith and practice, according to the word of God? Not that we judge ourselves competent to effect such a thing; we utterly disclaim the thought; but we judge it our bounden duty to make the attempt, by using all due means in our power to promote it; and also, that we have sufficient reason to rest assured that our humble and well-meant endeavours, shall not be in vain in the Lord.

The cause that we advocate is not our own peculiar, nor the cause of any party, considered as such; it is a common cause, the cause of Christ and our brethren of all denominations. All that we presume, then, is to do, what we humbly conceive to be *our* duty, in connexion with our brethren; to each of whom it equally belongs, as to us, to exert themselves for this blessed purpose. And as we have no just reason, to doubt the concurrence of our brethren, to accomplish an object so desirable in itself, and fraught with such happy consequences; so neither can we look forward to that happy event, which will forever put an end to our hapless divisions, and restore to the church its primitive unity, purity and prosperity, but in the pleasing prospect of their hearty and dutiful concurrence.

Dearly beloved brethren, why should *we* deem it a thing incredible, that the church of Christ should resume that original unity, peace and purity, which belongs to its constitution, and constitutes its glory? Or, is there any thing that can be justly deemed necessary for this desirable purpose, but to conform to the model, and adopt the practice of the primitive church, expressly exhibited in the New Testament? Whatever alteration this might produce in any or all of the churches, should, we think, neither be deemed inadmissible nor ineligible. Surely, such alteration would be every way for the better, and not for the worse; unless we should suppose the divinely inspired rule to be faulty or defective. Were we, then, in our church constitution and managements, to exhibit a complete conformity to the apostolick church, would we not be, in that respect, as perfect as Christ intended we should be? And should not this suffice us?

It is to us a pleasing consideration, that all the churches of Christ, which mutually acknowledge each other as such, are not only agreed in the great doctrines of faith and holiness, but are also materially agreed, as to the positive ordinances of Gospel institution; so that our differences at most, are about the things in which the kingdom of God does not consist, that is, about matters of private opinion, or human invention. What a pity, that the kingdom of God should be divided about such things!! Who, then, would not be the first amongst us, to give up with human inventions in the worship of God; and to cease from imposing his private opinions upon his brethren, that our breaches might *thus* be healed? Who would not willingly conform to the original pattern laid down in the New Testament for *this happy purpose*?

Are we not all praying for that happy event, when there shall be but one fold as there is but one chief shepherd? What, shall we pray for a thing and not strive to obtain it!—not use the necessary means to have it accomplished! What saith the Lord to Moses upon a piece of conduct somewhat similar? “Why criest thou unto me? Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward, *but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand.*” Let the ministers of Jesus but embrace this exhortation,

put their hand to the work, and encourage the people to go forward upon the firm ground of obvious truth, to unite in the bonds of an entire Christian unity; and who will venture to say, that it would not soon be accomplished? “Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people,” saith your God. To you, therefore, it peculiarly belongs, as the professed and acknowledged leaders of the people, to go before them in this good work—to remove human opinions and the inventions of men out of the way, by carefully separating this chaff from the pure wheat of divine and authentic revelation; casting out that assumed authority, that enacting and decreeing power, by which those things have been imposed and established. To the ministerial department, then, do we look with anxiety. *Ministers of Jesus*, ye can neither be ignorant of, nor unaffected with, the divisions and corruptions of his church. His dying commands, his last and ardent prayers for the visible unity of his professing people, will not suffer you to be indifferent in this matter. *You will not, you cannot*, therefore, be silent upon a subject of such vast importance to his personal glory, and the happiness of his people—*consistently* you cannot, for *silence gives consent*. You will rather lift up your voice like a trumpet, to expose the heinous nature and dreadful consequences of those unnatural anti-christian divisions, which have so rent and ruined the church of God. Thus, in justice to your station and character, honoured of the Lord, would we hopefully anticipate your zealous and faithful efforts, to heal the breaches of Zion, that God’s dear children might dwell together in unity and love—But if otherwise—* * * we forbear to utter it. See Mal. ii. 1-10.

Oh! that ministers and people would but consider, that there are no divisions in the grave, nor in that world which lies beyond it! There our divisions must come to an end! We must all unite there! Would to God, we could find in our hearts to put an end to our short-lived divisions here, that so we might leave a blessing behind us; even a happy and united church. What gratification, what utility, in the mean time, can our divisions afford to ministers or people? Should they be perpetuated till the Day of Judgment, would they convert one sinner from the error of his ways, or save a soul from death? Have they any tendency to hide the multitude of sins, that are so dishonourable to God, and hurtful to his people? Do they not rather irritate and produce them? How innumerable and highly aggravated are the sins they have produced, and are at this day producing, both amongst professors and profane. We entreat, we beseech you then, dear brethren, by all those considerations, to concur in this blessed and dutiful attempt—What is the work of all, must be done by all. Such was the work of the tabernacle in the wilderness. Such is the work to which you are called—not by the authority of man—but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. By this authority are you called to raise up

the tabernacle of David, that is fallen down amongst us; and to set it up upon its own base. This you cannot do, while you run every man to his own house, and consult only the interests of his own party. Till you associate, consult and advise together; and in a friendly and christian manner explore the subject, nothing can be done. We would, therefore, with all due deference and submission, call the attention of our brethren to the obvious and important duty of co-operation. Unite with us in the common cause of simple evangelical Christianity—In this glorious cause we are ready to unite with you—United we shall prevail. It is the cause of Christ, and of our brethren throughout all the churches, of Catholic unity, peace and purity—a cause that must finally prosper in spite of all opposition. Let us unite to promote it. Come forward then, dear brethren, and help with us. Do not suffer yourselves to be lulled asleep by that syren song of the slothful and reluctant professor “The time is not yet come—the time is not yet come, saith he—the time that the Lord’s house should be built.” Believe him not. Is it time for us to sit still in our corruptions and divisions, when the Lord, by his word and providence, is so loudly and expressly calling us to repentance and reformation? “Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust, O Jerusalem; arise, loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion”—Resume that precious—that dear-bought liberty—wherewith Christ has made his people free; a liberty from subjection to any authority but his own, in matters of religion. Call no man father, no man master upon earth; for one is your Master even Christ, and all ye are brethren. Stand fast, therefore, in this precious liberty, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. For the vindication of this precious liberty we have declared ourselves hearty and willing advocates. For this benign and dutiful purpose have we associated, that by so doing, we might contribute the mite of our humble endeavours to promote it, and thus invite our brethren to do the same. As the first fruits of our efforts for this blessed purpose, we respectfully present to their consideration the following propositions—relying upon their charity and candour, that they will neither despise nor misconstrue our humble and adventurous attempt. If they should in any measure serve, as a preliminary, to open up the way to a permanent scriptural unity amongst the friends and lovers of truth and peace throughout the churches, we shall greatly rejoice at it. We by no means pretend to dictate: and could we propose any thing more evident, consistent and adequate, it should be at their service. Their pious and dutiful attention to an object of such magnitude will induce them to communicate to us their emendations; and thus what is sown in weakness, will be raised up in power. In a matter, therefore, of such confessed importance, our christian brethren, however

unhappily distinguished by party names, will not, cannot withhold their helping hand. We are as heartily willing to be their debtors, as they are indispensably bound to be our benefactors. Come, then, dear brethren, we most humbly beseech you, cause your light to shine upon our weak beginnings, that we may see to work by it. Evince your zeal for the glory of Christ, and the spiritual welfare of your fellow-christians, by your hearty and zealous co-operation to promote the unity, purity and prosperity of his church.

Let none imagine that the subjoined propositions are at all intended as an overture towards a new creed, or standard, for the church; or, as in any wise designed to be made a term of communion; nothing can be farther from our intention. They are merely designed for opening up the way, that we may come fairly and firmly to original ground upon clear and certain premises: and take up things just as the apostles left them; that thus disentangled from the accruing embarrassments of intervening ages, we may stand with evidence upon the same ground on which the church stood at the beginning. Having said so much to solicit attention and prevent mistake, we submit as follows:

PROP. 1. That the church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one; consisting of all those, in every place, that profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures, and that manifest the same by their tempers and conduct, and of none else, as none else can be truly and properly called Christians.

2. That, although the church of Christ upon earth must necessarily exist in particular and distinct societies, locally separate one from another; yet there ought to be no schisms,—no uncharitable divisions among them. They ought to receive each other as Christ Jesus has also received them to the glory of God. And, for this purpose, they ought all to walk by the same rule, to mind and speak the same thing; and to be perfectly united in the same mind, and in the same judgment.

3. That, in order to this, nothing ought to be inculcated upon christians as articles of faith, nor required of them as terms of communion; but what is expressly taught, and enjoined upon them in the word of God. Nor ought any thing be admitted, as of divine obligation in their church constitution and managements, but what is expressly enjoined by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles upon the new Testament church; either in express terms, or by approved precedent.

4. That, although the scriptures of the Old and New Testament are inseparably connected, making together but one perfect and entire revelation of the Divine will, for the edification and salvation of the church; and, therefore, in that respect cannot be separated; yet as to what directly and properly belongs to their immediate object, the New Testament is as perfect a constitution, for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament church, and as a perfect rule for the par-

ticular duties of its members, as the old Testament was for the worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament church, and the particular duties of its members.

7. That, although doctrinal exhibitions of the great system of divine truth, and defensive testimonies in opposition to prevailing errors, be highly expedient; and the more full and explicit they be for those purposes, the better; yet, as these must be in a great measure the effect of human reasoning; and, of course must contain many inferential truths, they ought not to be made terms of Christian communion: unless we suppose, what is contrary to fact, that none have a right to the communion of the church, but such as possess a very clear and decisive judgment; or are come to a very high degree of doctrinal information; whereas the church from the beginning did, and ever will consist of little children, and young men, as well as fathers.

8. That, as it is not necessary that persons should have a particular knowledge, or distinct apprehension of all divinely revealed truth, in order to entitle them to a place in the church; neither should they, for this purpose, be required to make a profession more extensive than their knowledge: but that, on the contrary, their having a due measure of scriptural self-knowledge, respecting their lost and perishing condition by nature and practice, and of the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, accompanied with a profession of their faith in, and obedience to him in all things according to his word, is all that is absolutely necessary to qualify them for admission into his church.

9. That, all who are enabled, through grace, to make such a profession, and to manifest the reality of it in their tempers and conduct, should consider each other as the precious saints of God, should love each other as brethren, children of the same family and father, temples of the same spirit, members of the same body, subjects of the same grace, objects of the same divine love, bought with the same price, and joint heirs of the same inheritance. Whom God hath thus joined together, no man should dare to put asunder.

10. That, division among christians is a horrid evil, fraught with *many* evils. It is anti-christian, as it destroys the visible unity of the body of Christ, as if he were divided against himself, excluding and excommunicating a part of himself. It is anti-scriptural, as being strictly prohibited by his sovereign authority—a direct violation of his express command. It is anti-natural, as it excites christians to contemn, to hate and oppose one another, who are bound by the highest and most endearing obligations to love each other as brethren, even as Christ has loved them. In a word, it is productive of confusion, and of every evil work.

11. That, in some instances, a partial neglect of the expressly revealed will of God; and, in others, an assumed authority for making the approbation of human opinions, and human inventions, a term of communion, by introducing them into the constitution, faith, or worship of

the church; are, and have been, the immediate, obvious, and universally acknowledged causes of all the corruptions and divisions, that ever have taken place in the church of God.

12. That, all that is necessary to the highest state of perfection and purity of the church upon earth is, first, that none be received as members, but such as having that due measure of scriptural self-knowledge described above, do profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him in all things according to the scriptures; nor 2dly, that any be retained in her communion longer than they continue to manifest the reality of their profession by their tempers and conduct; 3dly, that her ministers, duly and scripturally qualified, inculcate none other things than those very articles of faith and holiness expressly revealed and enjoined in the word of God: Lastly, that in all their administrations they keep close by the observance of all divine ordinances, after the example of the primitive church, exhibited in the New Testament, without any additions, whatsoever, of human opinions or inventions of men.

From the nature and construction of these propositions, it will evidently appear, that they are laid in a designed subserviency to the declared end of our association; and are exhibited for the express purpose of performing a duty of previous necessity—a duty loudly called for in existing circumstances at the hand of every one, that would desire to promote the interests of Zion—a duty not only enjoined, as has been already observed from *Is. lvii. 14*, but which is also there predicted of the faithful remnant, as a thing in which they would voluntarily engage. “He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; and shall say, cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way; take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people.” To prepare the way then for a permanent scriptural unity amongst Christians, by calling up to their consideration fundamental truths, directing their attention to first principles, clearing the way before them by removing the stumbling blocks—the rubbish of ages which has been thrown upon it, and fencing it on each side, that in advancing towards the desired object, they may not miss the way through mistake or inadvertency, by turning aside to the right hand or to the left—is, at least, the sincere intention of the above propositions. It remains with our brethren, now to say, how far they go towards answering this intention. Do they exhibit truths demonstrably evident in the light of scripture and right reason; so that to deny any part of them the contrary assertion would be manifestly absurd and inadmissible? Considered as a preliminary for the above purpose, are they adequate, so that if acted upon, they would infallibly lead to the desired issue? If evidently defective in either of these respects, let them be corrected and amended, till they become sufficiently evident, adequate and unexceptionable. In the mean time let them be examined with rigor, with all the rigor that justice, candour and charity will admit. If we have mis-

taken the way, we shall be glad to be set right; but if, in the mean time, we have been happily led to suggest obvious and undeniable truths, which if adopted and acted upon, would infallibly lead to the desired unity, and secure it when obtained; we hope it will be no objection, that they have not proceeded from a general council. It is not the voice of the multitude, but the voice of truth, that has power with the conscience—that can produce rational conviction and acceptable obedience. A conscience that awaits the decision of the multitude—that hangs in suspense for the casting vote of the majority, is a fit subject for the man of sin. This we are persuaded is the uniform sentiment of real christians of every denomination. Would to God that all professors were such—then should our eyes soon behold the prosperity of Zion; we should soon see Jerusalem a quiet habitation. Union in truth has been, and ever must be, the desire and prayer of all such—Union in Truth is our Motto. The Divine Word is our Standard; in the Lord's name do we display our banners. Our eyes are upon the promises; "So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun." When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

N. B. The two following queries are subjoined for the sake of a clear definition of the leading and comprehensive terms, viz: *faith* and *obedience*—which comprehend the whole of the christian religion.

1. Are not law and obedience, testimony and faith, relative terms, so that neither of the latter can exist without the former? that is, where there is no law, there can be no obedience; where there is no testimony, there can be no faith.

2. Again, is not testimony necessarily confined to facts, and law to authority, so that without the latter, the former cannot be? that is, where there are no facts, there can be no testimony—where there is no authority, there is no law. Wherefore in every case, faith must necessarily consist in the belief of facts; and obedience, in a practical compliance with the expressed will or dictate of authority. N. B. By facts is here meant some things said or done.

FALSE STANDARDS OCCASION FALSE ESTIMATES.

MANKIND, in their commercial dealings, are often defrauded by the use of false balances, weights and measures. In the concerns of religion, standards are used for estimating the characters and actions of men. Here, as well as in commerce, they may be false standards by which men may deceive, and be deceived. By adopting a false standard, the people of one sect may overrate their own worth, and undervalue the worth of people of other sects. It hence becomes a serious question, whether false standards are not in use at the present day? and whether these are not the occasion of much censorious judging, as well as of self-deception?

Ever since Christians were divided into sects, creeds or confessions of faith have been set up as standards of character, or tests of moral worth. That many of these standards have been false, may be obvious from the following considerations:

1. In all the creed-making sects, each sect has a standard of its own, which is different, and in some particulars, often directly opposite to that of another sect. Of course there must be a false standard with one or the other, and perhaps with both of the two clashing sects.

2. It is a known fact, that the creed of a sect may become so changed in a course of years, that what was once deemed essential, is afterwards deemed erroneous; still the sect may retain its distinctive name.

3. All party standards are formed by substituting the inferences or explanations of fallible men for the language of the inspired writers: and these tests, formed in the words of man's wisdom, are *preferred* to the language of the bible, and are passed as a substitute for the word of God, as bank-bills are made a substitute for silver and gold. Is there nothing in this, of too near an approach to self-sufficiency and self-exaltation?

5. So far as articles of faith are made a test of character in the New Testament, they are the following:

That Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God; and

That God raised him from the dead.

A belief in the first of these articles was the test of discipleship during the ministry of Christ. After his crucifixion, a belief in his resurrection became necessary to a belief that he was the Messiah. Hence a belief in the second article was required, as added by the apostles. Accordingly Paul, in stating the faith required, said, "This is the word of faith which we preach—that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." John, in stating the object for which he wrote his gospel, said, "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name." To persuade people to believe the two articles which have been named, was the great object of the sermons recorded in the Acts of the apostles. These, if I mistake not, are the only articles of faith, a belief of which is spoken of in the New Testament as necessary to the Christian character, or as connected with regeneration, pardon, or eternal life.

A cordial belief in these articles naturally led to obedience to the precepts of Christ, and these are the appointed *standard* or *test* of moral character. Avowing a belief in Jesus as the Messiah, appears to have given such satisfaction to the apostles, that, on such a profession, 3,000 persons were admitted as converts or believers on the day of pentecost, the very day on which their profession was made. To be a disciple of Christ, then, meant to be a pupil or learner in his school. For admission to this school, or the church of Christ, no articles of faith were

proposed as terms, but the two which have been mentioned. We are not, however, to suppose that nothing was required of disciples but a *belief* in these articles, nor that Christ instituted no other test of moral character. As the followers of Jesus were then a persecuted people, to acknowledge him as the Messiah under such circumstances, afforded much evidence of integrity of heart; and when a person made this profession, he implicitly professed a desire to come under the guidance of Christ, and a willingness to conform to his precepts and example. Henceforth the precepts of Christ were to be regarded by him as the rule of duty, and the test of Christian character. That this is a correct view of the subject, may appear from the following passages:

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that *doeth the will of my Father* who is in heaven.” Mat. vii. 21. “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and *doeth them*, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house upon a rock.” v. 27. “And whosoever does not bear his cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” Luke xiv. 27. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” John xiv. 21. “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love.” John xv. 10. “This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.” v. 12. “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” v. 14. “Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John ii. 9, 4.

Besides these plain declarations, as to the proper standard of Christian character, we are assured both by Christ and his apostles, that works of obedience will be rewarded at the final account, and that works of disobedience will be punished. But where shall we find in the bible the least evidence, that any man will be rewarded or accepted on account of his belief of such doctrines as are at this day made the test of Christian character? I know not; and I suspect that, after due examination, every honest man will be able to say the same.

After all we have done by means of the above documents, to afford a clear, precise, definite, satisfactory view of the proposed reformation, some, perhaps, will still complain, that we have not been sufficiently explicit, because we have not given a detailed account of the various errors and corruptions in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, which ought to be reformed; nor yet of the deficiencies that ought to be supplied, in order to the restoration of the christian religion to its primitive constitutional purity in faith and practice. Such complainants ought to consider, that to have given a complete detail of all the existing errors and corruptions of Christianity, would have required more time, talent and paper than we had at our disposal; or, than we could appropriate to such a purpose, were the necessary documents presented in due form.

But, whoever imagined, that in order to ascertain the truth upon any subject, a statement or refutation of all possible or actual mistakes respecting it, was necessary. We suppose no one ever thought such a thing. All that can be required as necessary to accomplish and secure the proposed reformation, we think we have precisely stated; for what should it be, but an exact conformity in all things to the *divine* standard of faith and practice. True, says the objector, did all understand it alike, our divisions, with their causes, might thus soon be terminated, or rather, had never existed. What then? shall the cause of reformation be abandoned or postponed, till all understand and think alike about the meaning of the divine standard? If so, we presume it should never be attempted. Or are the words and phrases of the holy scriptures, chosen by the revealing Spirit, less intelligible, and, of course, more liable to be misunderstood, than are those of human invention? Were they not sufficiently intelligible, to the first Christians, and sufficiently understood by their successors for ages, to answer the purpose for which they were given? And, if intelligible then, why are they not so still? Have they lost their meaning through age, and become obsolete—a dead letter? Some, it appears, seem to think so, for they are heard to say so. But, how do these doctors know that their verbiage is not as liable to be misunderstood as the language of the holy apostles? Or, that the people who adopt their phraseology, are more uniform in their religious views and notions, than they would be if they used the phraseology of the holy scriptures? Did not the apostles mean to be understood? Did they not use great plainness of speech? Were they not under the guidance of the Holy Spirit? If, under this guidance, they labored to be understood, and missed it, we had better let it alone; for what can the man do that comes after an inspired apostle? Surely no better than that which has been already done. Thus are we thrown back again upon the original standard, as the only rational ground that can be assumed, for putting a legitimate and happy end to our heinous and destructive divisions. Adopting *this*, regulating ourselves by *it*, and conforming to *it* in word and deed—speaking as *it* speaks, and practising as *it* enjoins, we shall once more exhibit and enjoy the christian religion as it was originally exhibited and enjoyed. “The exhibition being made as formerly, not in the words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, speaking spiritual things in spiritual words.” Thus will the enjoyment correspond with the testimony, being such as the belief of the divine testimony of the infinite mercy, condescension, and love of God manifested in Christ, is calculated to inspire. Thus filled with righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, by the belief of the divine testimony—with the law of Christ, which is the law of love, and the ordinances of gospel worship fairly before us, as prescribed in the sacred page, we shall find ourselves duly disposed and thoroughly furnished for all good works.

ON THE IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF CHRISTIANS
SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES, AND MAKING THEM
ONLY THEIR CREED, OR RULE OF FAITH AND PRACTICE.

THE advocates of popular errors possess an advantage over any who may advocate unpopular truths. Having got the public ear and confidence—having the consciences of the people formed to their hands, and their modes of reasoning established to their wish, it is easy to retain their understandings and their consciences in their service:—Thus, an intelligent Christian with a Turk, or a Protestant with a Catholic, in their respective countries, stands little chance of being even patiently listened to. The most logical inductions and correct reasonings he may use, can be converted into pure sophistry, silenced in the one case, by the magic of the prophet's name, or the ignominy contained in the epithet, "You Christian dog," and in the other, by the argument of the inquisition or the infallibility of the Pope. In Protestant countries there is in like manner a magic in names, creeds, formularies and early associations, against which reason and scripture are often alike unavailing. Notwithstanding these and other discouragements against a free inquiry into religion, many now see it to be the duty and privilege of every individual christian, to inquire as far as he is able, into every thing that his religion requires him either to believe or practice; and if there be any to whom God, in his providence, hath given a capacity and opportunity of enquiring into truth with more leisure and exactness than others, that they should use these talents not only for themselves, but for the instruction of others who have not had the same advantages. As christians should be exemplary for virtue and goodness, so should they be distinguished from a corrupt world, by a diligent search after truth, and an open profession thereof. In this way the doctrine of Christ prevailed in the hands of a few weak men, without either power, riches, or learning; in opposition to the leading interests of the world in the hands of self-interested priests, powerful princes, proud philosophers, the wisdom of men, and the prejudices of the people under the influence of superstition and ignorance. A diligent search after truth is the most commendable exercise of a christian: it is a precious treasure when found, and should be pursued for its own sake, listened to with attention, temper and charity. As it is of divine origin, it should secure the respect it deserves, not only by an inward conviction, but by an open declaration of its force, and efficacy. Every man that would be free, honest and wise, has an intimate concern in the success of truth, and is under a moral obligation to contribute all in his power to its advancement; and this, whether it agrees or not with the received opinions of men, either ancient or modern; or with schemes of religion established in national churches, or adopted by dissenting parties, as these are not the rules of our faith—the scriptures alone claim that honour.

The reformers, as a late author says, gave a violent shock to popery, by separating from the church of Rome, casting off the Pope's supremacy and infallibility, translating the scriptures into the vulgar tongue, and asserting them alone to be the only rule of faith and practice; but they made a grand mistake, after they had drawn schemes of faith from the scripture, (honestly, no doubt, to the best of their abilities), either they or their followers, as if infallible, erected these schemes, though differing much from one another, into rules to be universally received; thus contradictorily and partially teaching the people to exercise their own judgment in rejecting the doctrines and worship of Rome; but, at the same time, not allowing them the exercise of that judgment, to choose or reject the systems formed by themselves. The Bible, it is true, was allowed to be read, but only in the sense of these systems. Any that disputed *them* were loaded with party names, and Christian professors were led to hate and separate from one another. In Protestant schools, men were educated for the ministry, and taught the doctrines they were to preach, after the mode of Popish schoolmen, from human systems of divinity; metaphysical notions, terms of art and distinctions, were retained and still applied to christian principles. Their several creeds and churches were established and enforced by the secular power; and the magistrate required his people to believe after the particular confession or articles he espoused,—subscriptions to human schemes were demanded, and men were constituted judges of scripture doctrine for whole nations and communities, and conscience was *again* made responsible to earthly tribunals,—worldly emoluments were annexed to a supposed right belief, and heavy penalties inflicted upon recusants, except when the magistrate pleased, on some occasions, and under certain limitation, to grant a toleration. Strange to say, to grant a toleration that a man might exercise his unalienable right of using his own understanding and think for himself in a matter in which God calls upon him to act, and which another cannot do for him. This was, in fact, only a change of Popes—the popery remained with the inconsistency of professedly renouncing human infallibility, and yet imposing and persecuting as infallible—rejecting human authority, and in many cases pleading for it—permitting the scriptures to be read, but only to be understood in the sense of schemes formed by men. To say that these men were the ablest divines is nothing to the purpose, *if true*—for unless infallible as well as able, they had no power or right to do what the Holy Spirit had already done, and which no creature should ever have had any hand in after he had finished revelation as a rule of faith; all scripture being given by inspiration of God. Nothing could more prove human pride and weakness than thus to impose their own decisions upon the consciences of their fellow christians, concerning the faith and practice of religion. This was to lead them from subjection to Christ alone the Lord and law-giver, and to destroy their own fundamental principle of the reforma-

tion "that the Bible, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants" containing a complete rule of faith and practice; and as such are clear and intelligible in all necessary points to every private christian.

Our Lord himself forbids us to call any man master, in this respect, but himself; and his word teaches that it is the privilege and duty of every believer to examine and judge for himself. The Bereians were declared to be more noble than those of Thessalonica, because they searched the scriptures daily, to see if the things reported to them were true.

If the teaching even of Angels or Apostles, Gal. i. 8. was to be examined before received, how unwarrantable the claim of any since the inspired apostles' time, authoritatively to impose their creeds or speculations respecting divine truth as terms of church communion, instead of the truth itself—it being always to be kept in mind, that there is a vast difference, and no necessary connection, between the simple facts and plain statements of revelation themselves, and men's opinions respecting them. The first being the bond of christian union, the other ever having been the fruitful source of contention and schism, even among real believers. It must therefore be highly commendable for every christian to search the scriptures for himself, that he may be enabled to compare the doctrines of men with the pure word of God. The sayings and doings of God, as revealed by his Spirit in his word, constitute *truth*, which cannot be altered or amended by nations, or councils, or agreement of parties. It is not what a divine may invent, or a society approve: like its author, truth is unchangeably the same. It was early corrupted by the ignorance or superstition of men: that it is still misunderstood by many who esteem themselves true protestants, is evident from the fact of the variety of existing sects, in national and dissenting churches; each party making their creed, or opinions respecting the facts of the Bible, the only bond of union and the ground of separation from, or of persecuting one another. It is only by a diligent and important study of revelation, that any can expect to find that divine truth without alloy, which can remedy these evils; and whatever pains it may cost, the discovery of so rich a treasure, will amply reward the free enquirer; and every christian must do it for himself if he would have a religion he can call his own, as God has revealed his will for the belief and guidance of men individually, and according to which they are individually to be judged. Besides, if we shall attempt to learn religion from the various systems into which the contending parties among men have manufactured it—considering how few comparatively have time or are qualified to follow, or appreciate the merits of the learned or intricate disputes that have been maintained respecting them—we may in the issue lose our pains, and be liable to be tossed about with every wind of doctrine; and after all may have christianity still to learn, and be led perhaps to the conclusion that religion had not been at the foundation among the disputants. It is no rea

son why we should neglect the study of the scripture, because the learned and the professed teachers of religion have differed so much about them; but rather a reason that we should be thankful that we are directed to examine and judge for ourselves, from a source which is able to make all wise unto salvation, who really are willing, as little children, to be taught through it by God himself. It would indeed be a reflection on his wisdom, goodness and equity, to suppose, that he cannot make his mind and will to be known to all as intelligibly as one man can do to another, in such things as he requires every man to know. The pretence that the scriptures are unintelligible to common capacities, is false and derogatory to the character of God. Upon this are founded the arrogant pretensions of human teachers, of dictating to others on matters of faith. It is the very foundation of popery, which professes to make provision in the infallibility of its church for the supposed abstruseness of divine revelation. The people being once persuaded that it is dark and above their capacities, are easily led to submit their consciences and understandings to their spiritual teachers of religion; and to this may be attributed the ignorance and indifference respecting the scriptures, which too generally prevail. To mend this supposed defect, religion has been summed up in systems, which, by authority, are imposed upon whole nations, as tests of orthodoxy to the adult, and rules of religious education for youth, who, by their parents and tutors, are taught to lay up these summaries in their minds, as the only necessary truths to be known, and which it is criminal to call in question. The ground work being thus laid in their acquaintance with human doctrines, they are confirmed in their adherence to them, by being admitted to all the privileges of the church they belong to, by shewing a very superficial knowledge of what they have learned in their childhood. From that time, they hold themselves bound to believe and maintain, as scriptural and true, all these doctrines adopted by the party they happen to belong to—and more or less to separate from christians who hold other views,

Hence they rest satisfied with what they have attained, and are consequently often as wise at sixteen, as at sixty years of age; and as another necessary result, when they use the scriptures, it is with a strong bias in their minds in favour of what they have already been taught to receive as undoubted truths. What is not agreeable to these, they pass over superficially, or force into the service of their cause. Thus they take a method the very reverse to that of finding the truth. For whereas all doctrines should be tried by the scriptures before they are received as truth, they first receive the doctrines, and then make the sense of scripture agreeable to them. Such searchers are not likely to find the truth, nor yet to embrace it when it evidently appears—what is plain and obvious to a free enquirer, is dark and obscure to them. “How can they believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only.” John v. 44.—Many, under this influence, consider it a mark

of humility to distrust their own judgment respecting what the statements of the Bible are, and to submit to the decision and teaching of their favourite men or books on these subjects—forgetting that while professing much self diffidence in this, they are really judging for themselves in a matter that requires greater qualifications than learning religion from the word of God itself. For is not the choice of such men and books, an act of their judgments? and who taught such ignorant persons, as they reckon themselves to be, to judge so precisely in so many things, where there was such danger of being mistaken, and yet not to judge of the facts and statements delivered for their belief and practice by the unerring wisdom of God?

Some excuse themselves from the duty of searching the scriptures, and the use of means to enable them to judge for themselves, by pretending that Providence puts them in such a situation of life, that they cannot spare from other avocations the time necessary for the purpose. Be astonished O heavens! at this audacious reproach against the Providence of God. Who, O man, has thus condemned thee? Not the compassionate Saviour, who bids us first to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and hath promised that all other things shall be added—forbidden us to have anxious care for the things of this world, knowing not what a day may bring forth. Not the Apostles, who direct us to seek those things which are above, and not to set our affections on things on the earth. Reader, ponder well the divine question, “What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul? What is your most material concern in life? Is it not to labour to know and to do the will of God? and where has God revealed his will concerning us, but in his word? What is become of the Sabbaths you have had, when by the laws of God and of the land in which you dwell, you cease from labour. Here is one seventh of your life providentially free from entangling cares. Add to this, the days and the hours spent in dissipating pleasures of various kinds, perhaps, many of sloth and indolence; and it will be found unjust for men to complain of want of time, who can spare so much for any other pursuit which they may choose to engage in.

The men that keep thy law with care,
And meditate thy word;
Grow wiser than their teachers are,
And better know the Lord.

ON THE CONFIRMATION OF THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

ALL revealed religion is founded upon facts. Testimony has respect to facts *only*; and testimony, that it may be credible, must be confirmed. These points are of so much importance as to deserve some illustration. By *facts* we always mean something said or done. The works of God and the words of God, or the things done, and spoken by God, are those facts which are laid down and exhibited in the Bible as the foundation of all faith, hope, love, piety, and humanity. All true and useful knowledge is an acquaintance with facts; and all true science is acquired from the observation and comparison of facts. And he that made the heart of man, and gave him an intelligent spirit, knows that facts alone can move the affections and command the passions of man. Hence the scheme of mercy which he has revealed to the world is all contained in, and developed by the works of mercy which he has wrought. Facts have a meaning which the understanding apprehends and the heart feels. According to the meaning or nature of the facts, are its effects upon us. If a friend has risked his life, his all to relieve or save us, we cannot but confide in him and love him. If an enemy attacks our life, property, and reputation, we naturally cannot but hate him. Nothing but the command of a benefactor, or the will of some dear friend who has laid us under obligation to himself, can prevent us from hating our enemies. If a beloved friend has sustained some great misfortune, we must feel sorry; or if he has been rescued from some great impending calamity, we must feel glad. Our joy in the latter case, and our sorrow in the former, arise from the nature or meaning of the fact. The feelings corresponding with the nature of the fact, are excited or called into existence the moment the fact is known or believed. It is known when we have witnessed it ourselves, and it is believed when reported to us by credible persons who have witnessed it. This is the chief difference between faith and knowledge.

As existences or beings must precede knowledge, so facts must precede either knowledge or belief. An event must happen before it can be reported to others, it must be reported before it can be believed—and the testimony must be confirmed, or made credible before it can be relied on. Hence in the order of nature, there is first the fact, then the testimony, and then the belief. A was drowned before B reported it, B reported it before C believed it, and C believed it before he was grieved at it. To this there is no exception. If there was nothing said or done, there could be no testimony, and so no faith. Religious affections spring from faith. It is therefore of great importance that this subject should be disentangled from the mysticism of the Schools. Laws call for obedience, and testimony for belief,—where there is no law, there can be no obedience—and where there is no testimony, there can be no faith. As obedience

cannot transcend law, so faith cannot transcend testimony. John's testimony went to so many facts. On his testimony we can believe only as far as he has testified,—and so of all the other witnesses. The certainty of faith depends upon the certainty and credibility of the witnesses. But not so its effects. The effects depend upon the facts believed—the certainty, upon the evidence.

I may be equally certain, that John was beheaded and that Jesus was crucified; the testimony may be equally credible and the faith equally strong, but the effects produced are not the same. The facts believed, have not the same meaning, are not of the same nature, and do not produce the same feelings or effects.

The more ordinary the fact, the more ordinary the testimony necessary to establish it. That A B, aged ninety, confined with sickness for some time, died last night, requires only the most ordinary testimony to render it credible. But that C D has lived to one hundred and forty, and enjoys unabated vigour of mind and body, requires stronger testimony. But still all facts happening in accordance with the ordinary and natural laws of things, require but good human testimony to make them worthy of credence. It is only extraordinary and supernatural facts, which require supernatural testimony, or testimony supernaturally confirmed. This is the point to which we have been looking in this essay; and now that we have arrived at it, let it be asked, How has the testimony of the Apostles and Evangelists been confirmed?—To confirm a testimony, is neither more nor less than to make it credible to those to whom it is tendered; or, to express the same idea in other words—*it is to give men power to believe it*. Now it will not require the same amount of evidence to enable an astronomer to believe that the earth's shadow struck the moon last eclipse, as it would to convince an Indian. To make any testimony credible to any order of beings, regard must therefore be had to the capacity, attainments and habits of those beings. To confirm the testimony of the Apostles concerning the Messiah's death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, as Lord of heaven and earth, imports no more and no less, than that it should be rendered every way credible to such beings as we are, or that we should be made able to believe it. A testimony confirmed, and yet incredible to those to whom it is tendered, is a contradiction in terms. But why so emphatic on the word *confirmed*?—Because the inspired Apostles in the word of God have laid great stress upon it. With this in view, our Saviour answered the enquiries from John respecting who he was—“Jesus answered and said unto them, go and shew John again those things which ye *do see and hear*, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, &c.” Matt. xi. 4, 5. Luke vii. To the Jews he often adduced the same confirmation of the testimony as rendering their rejection of him inexcusable. “The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. “John v. 36. x, 25.

“If I do not the works of the Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him. John x. 37. xv. 24. The Apostle John says, “Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but *these are written that ye might believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. John xx. 31. It is therefore highly important that we understand and pay a due regard to the confirmation of the testimony. The testimony is one thing, and the confirmation is another. The highest confirmation which men require in all questions of facts, is a solemn oath or affirmation, that the things affirmed are true. But we have seen that supernatural facts require supernatural confirmation. Hence when the confirmation of the gospel is spoken of in the apostolic writings, it is resolved into the doings or works of the Holy Spirit,—“Demonstrations of the Holy Spirit” are the confirmatory proofs of the Apostolic Gospel. When Paul delivered the testimony of God, or the testimony concerning Jesus to the Corinthians, he says, “It was confirmed among them.” And if we examine into the confirmation of the testimony, as Paul explained it, we shall find that he makes the spiritual gifts, or those extraordinary and miraculous powers which the apostles themselves displayed, and which so many of their converts also possessed, an assurance, or confirmation, of what he promulgated. We shall attend to the light which one of his Epistles to the Corinthians throws upon this subject. After thanking his God for the favour bestowed upon the disciples in Corinth, when he first visited them, he proceeds to specify the *special* favours bestowed upon the disciples in that city.” You were enriched, says he (Ch. i. 5.) with every gift by him, even with all speech, and all knowledge, when the testimony of Christ was confirmed among you; so that ye came behind in no gift. In chap. xii. he mentions these diversities of gifts—the word of knowledge—the gift of healing—power of working miracles—discerning of spirits—diverse kinds of tongues, &c. &c. Now the Corinthians were put in possession of these, “when the testimony of Christ was confirmed among them. For says Paul, I came not to you with the excellency of speech, but with the demonstration of the spirit and of power; that your belief of my testimony, or your faith might not rest, or be founded upon human wisdom or eloquence, but upon the power of God, evinced in the demonstrations of the spirit, which confirmed my testimony among you. For had it not been for these demonstrations of the spirit and of power, your faith could not have rested upon an immoveable basis. A demonstration that cannot be seen or heard, is, in our mother tongue, no demonstration at all; and a faith that rests only upon what we imagine we feel, or even really feel in our hearts, is a faith resting upon itself. The testimony and the confirmation, must be alike extrinsic, or there is no confirmation. The Bible, as we have asserted, lays great stress upon the

confirmation of the testimony. It unequivocally teaches us that the visible, audible, sensible, demonstrations of the spirit and of power, were that supernatural attestation of the testimony respecting Christ which made it credible. The twelve Apostles, and the seventy Disciples, whom Christ called and sent forth to preach the gospel, received the power of working miracles, to confirm their testimony, Luke ix. 10.

Mark informs us also that Jesus Christ commanded the original, divinely qualified witnesses, to proclaim the glad tidings to every creature, with this assurance, "That all who believed and were baptized, should be saved; that all who disbelieved should be damned; and that signs should follow them that believe; and, adds the historian, 'they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following,'" Mark xvi. 20. The narrative of the labours and success of the Apostles corroborates the above. Peter's testimony on Pentecost was confirmed by sounds from heaven, and tongues of fire resting on each of them, and divers tongues spoken by them; and when they heard his testimony and saw the signs, thousands believed. When Peter cured Eneas of the palsy, the people who saw him turned to the Lord, Acts ix. 35.; when he raised to life Tabitha, this was known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord, Acts ix. 42.—The people of Samaria, hearing Philip, and seeing the miracles which he did, believed, and were baptized, both men and women. Acts viii. 6. 12.

To this end also, the Apostles prayed that they might be enabled with all boldness, to speak the word—by God's stretching forth his hand to heal, and that *signs* and *wonders* might be done by the name of his holy child Jesus, Acts iv. 30.—The Lord enabled Paul and Barnabas to speak boldly in his name, by giving *testimony* unto the word of his grace, and granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands," Acts xiv. 5.—11. and Paul appeals to the Corinthians, that his "preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that their faith might be founded only in the power of God, 1 Cor. ii. 4. Truly, says the Apostle, to the same church, the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds. 2, Cor. xii. 12. So also to the Thessalonians he could say, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. 1. Thes. i. 5. No man could have acknowledged Jesus of Nazareth to be the Almighty Lord, the Son of God, but by that demonstration of the Holy Spirit, convincing them of the truth; and the Jews' resisting this evidence, and ascribing it to Beelzebub, seems to be of the nature of the sin against the Holy Ghost. See Math. xii. 23—32. We are thus taught the necessity and great importance, of *our* now also receiving the faithful saying, upon the same evidence; that our faith and hope also may not stand on the wisdom of man, but on the demonstration of the Spirit, and the power of God; for how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at

the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will. Heb. ii. 3.

The Bible does not teach us as the school men do, that the infusion of the Holy Spirit into the hearts of disciples, as the spirit of adoption, the spirit of holiness, is that demonstration of the spirit which enables men to believe. All the converts to christianity in the New Testament, are represented as converted only by what they saw and heard, and the spirit of adoption and of holiness was promised to them, and to them only, who believed and obeyed the gospel.

“In the last day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink—*He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters; but his spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive*” John vii. 37.

To the same effect the apostle tells the Ephesians—“After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” Ephes. i. 13. Paul says to the Galatians, “Ye are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Gal. iii. 26.; and *because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, Abba, Father.*” Gal. iv. 6.

From all that has been said, the following conclusions are apparent, and of much practical importance, particularly to those who labour in word and teaching—

1st. The testimony which God has given, or the testimony which the apostles gave concerning Jesus, as the Messiah, the Son of God, the all sufficient Saviour of sinners, is a credible testimony, a well confirmed testimony; and, as confirmed by the demonstrations of the Spirit and power of God, worthy of all acceptation; and by it, men, otherwise *without strength*, are made able to believe. Hence all who wait for the testimony to be especially confirmed to them, wait for what they have *no promise* nor right to expect, and which indeed God cannot bestow without implying, that the testimony is otherwise unworthy of belief or what we commonly call incredible.

2dly. Every one who says he cannot believe, says that the testimony is incredible, that God has not confirmed it; and in so doing, expressly contradicts the apostle, who says, the report is credible, is true, and worthy of all reception; that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—or else he means, that he will not believe it. He that believeth not makes God a liar, because he says that the testimony is not true, and is condemned *because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God.* “This is the condemnation that *light* is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light”—John iii. 13.

3dly. The primitive disciples, as the New Testament teach us, were enabled to call Jesus Lord of all, the King eternal, immortal, and invisi-

ble—to worship him and trust in him, from the demonstrations and power of God, confirming the truths of the testimony concerning him; and as it is the sovereign will of God, that sinners are begotten by the word of truth. James i. 18. 1. Peter i. 23. and thus have the privilege of becoming the sons of God, John i. 12. Gal. iii. 26. so faith coming by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. As far as any can be instrumental in producing faith in the minds of others, all that is necessary in those who preach Christ, is to do what the apostles did, *viz.*—to do justice to the whole testimony of God, and to be able to give a reason of the hope which they entertain, by adducing the evidences of the gospel. It is quite a different thing to be able to declare the speculations of men, to support systems of divinity according to the men we call masters; or be able to relate a variety of feelings, real or imagined—it is another, and one of vast moment, to be able to declare the scripture truths and plain statements which God has revealed and confirmed by his power—the truth as it is in Jesus. The apostles never commanded any man to narrate his own feelings as a reason of the hope which he had in the Messiah, in preference to, or in competition with, the confirmed testimony, the only ground of hope and source of good works in sinful man. The truth believed, imparts consolation and peace to ourselves—our behaviour will be a corroboration to others, that we have believed—but the demonstration which the Spirit has afforded alone can enable any man to say that Jesus is the Lord.

4th. As the first christians were thus convinced by the words and works of God the Spirit, and enabled to believe by the attestations which he gave—so *after they believed* and obeyed the gospel—they had as we have seen, the Holy Spirit imparted into them, as the Spirit of adoption and the Spirit of Holiness. So will it be with those who now believe and obey the same gospel, upon the same evidences and for the same reasons.

5th. As Jesus when on earth, finished the work of redemption, but in heaven is now our High Priest—so the Holy Spirit on earth, after his ascension, finished the confirmation of the testimony. And in addition to that work which makes redemption credible, he sheds his influence in the hearts of them who believe and obey the gospel. If any man can make himself happy from any supposed change in himself, without obeying the gospel, he deludes himself. It is only in obeying the truth that any man can be sanctified and comforted by it. Those who will be exposed to vengeance, when he comes again, will be they that knew not God and obeyed not the gospel, 1. Thes. i. 7. If then all who undertake to preach Christ would, instead of preaching their own speculations and systems, or even their real experiences—would declare, illustrate and enforce the simple facts and plain statements of the Scriptures, would exhibit the truths and the evidences of the bible confirming them, knowing nothing in this respect, but Jesus Christ and him crucified; and instead of leading them to wait and pray for good signs or power

to believe—would persuade them as the apostles did, to believe the gospel, there is every scriptural hope to be indulged, that the gospel would run and be glorified, and sectarianism would wither as the grass—and believers be not divided and contending together, as they now are for men, or their opinions, but become united for the truth's sake, in the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace.

ON THE METHOD OF TEACHING DIVINE TRUTH.

AMONG the various things that have contributed to impress Christians with false views of the qualifications of christian teachers, usually denominated in Scripture Elders, Bishops, Pastors, the modern method of sermonizing has had considerable effect. As long as it is supposed that the elders must be able to conduct a discourse in the usual mode, the schools of philosophy, or at least the forms of a learned education, must be passed through in their way to the office. Many who are apt to teach from the Scriptures, and who have all other pastoral qualifications, must be excluded, and the elders must spend much unnecessary time in preparing every week for their public labours. To be able to deliver a discourse, consisting of a chain of ideas growing out of each other, gradually unfolding and regularly connected, with attention to unity, proportion and language, merely from having studied the subject, must cost immense pains and long practice, and is the attainment of few, either in the pulpit or senate. To be obliged to write and commit to memory one or two discourses every week, must be an insupportable drudgery, and a waste of much precious time. Besides, to fill up and adjust the proportion of different parts, it is difficult to avoid frequently introducing trite, stale, and common-place ideas. Few of the best even of printed sermons are unexceptionable in this view. Were every thing to be retrenched but what is essential to the illustration of the subject, and the strength and clearness of the reasoning, they would generally be much reduced.

A comparison of the modern method of teaching divine truth with that employed by our Lord and his apostles, will point out a more easy and effectual way. Upon this, as upon every other subject, the Scriptures are no doubt able to instruct us. Among all the specimens which we find in them, there is nothing that bears the most distant resemblance to a modern sermon.

What is recorded of our Lord's discourse to the disciples going to Emmaus, contains a most instructive example for teaching believers from the Scriptures. The point in which they discovered ignorance, and upon which he meant at that time to instruct them, was the necessity of the Messiah's suffering, previous to his entering into his glory. Instead of selecting a text as the subject of a sermon, dividing it into heads,

enumerating a number of particulars under each of them, he taught immediately from the Scriptures, referred directly to the suitable passages, and by them proved that Christ "ought to have suffered these things," Lukc xxiv. 26, 27. How simple, how instructive is this mode of teaching! Without any danger of embarrassment, the man who is thoroughly acquainted with what he is to teach, can imitate this model of instructing, and nothing can be so powerful to enlighten and convince a church, as this immediate appeal to the word of truth, or so well calculated to enable the mind to retain what has been said. It is the Scriptures themselves that speak; the business of the teacher is to lead the hearer to attend to their full import, and impress him more deeply with the truth which they contain. There is no difficulty in the method; the chief preparation is to be fully acquainted with the import of the passages appealed to, and be able with readiness to refer to each of them in their proper order. In this way also, the mind of the hearer is not distracted with intricacies, nor kept upon the stretch to comprehend, follow, and retain a tedious chain of reasoning. If the teacher does his part, the church will readily perceive the justice of his remarks, and when they return to their chambers, will be able with ease and pleasure to retrace the whole discourse. This will afford food and substantial nourishment to the mind.

It was in the same way he taught, when he afterwards appeared among the disciples, as they were assembled in Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 44,—46. "Thus it is written," implies that he referred to the passages in Moses and the prophets, and "thus it behoved Christ to suffer," implies that he instructed the disciples from them with respect to his death and resurrection, as he had before done to the two on their way to Emmaus.

I do not mean by this to approve or encourage what is by some practised in imitation of scriptural teaching, which consists in merely stringing texts together, almost without observation on their application to the point in hand, or at most with some dry, dull and stale declamation, no way calculated to interest, or enlighten either a church, or a promiscuous assembly. Though this is by some looked upon to be the only scriptural teaching, and opposed as such to clerical preaching, it derives no authority from the teaching of Our Lord and his apostles, who usually quoted Scripture to apply and reason from it. Had our Lord merely repeated the passages which he adduced without reasoning from them, the disciples could not so readily, nor so fully have comprehended their application. Nor does this at all imply that the Scriptures are more obscure in their language than any other book of the same date. The difficulty in understanding them arises chiefly from our slowness to receive the truth contained in them. The wisdom of God is so unlike to the wisdom of man, that it is with difficulty we can admit the former, when the latter finds a ready reception. For this reason, our Lord in the passage referred to, and on various other occasions, upbraids his disciples as fools, and slow of understanding. Men are always to be ad-

dressed as rational creatures; and if we wish more fully to impress them with the portion of Scripture to which we refer, we ought forcibly to appeal to the importance of its evident meaning. It was while Christ was expounding and applying the things concerning himself, in Moses and the prophets, that "he opened the understanding of his disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures."

The method of teaching which I am recommending, is not only the most simple and the best calculated to instruct, it is not only the most suitable for the unlearned, but is also equally calculated to give scope to the useful application of all the erudition of the most learned. This method of teaching requires more extensive knowledge of the Scriptures, more advancement in the divine life, and a more solid judgment, than the usual mode of preaching. With little acquaintance with the Scriptures as a whole, and with little general knowledge, a man may patch up an ordinary sermon. The difficulties consist in the method being technical, to observe which, it is necessary to learn the art in this, as in all other trades. Such a sermon gives scope rather to a trial of invention, than of a knowledge of the word of God. When a man has got a knack of dividing and enumerating particulars, and becomes sufficiently acquainted with the arcana of the pulpit, he may readily make a sermon upon any popular text. When he has got his heads and particulars, it will be an easy thing to pour out some pious rhapsody on each of them. In this consists much of what is called evangelical preaching. The close reasoning of others, the unity of design, the adjustment of the different parts, and the subserviency of the whole to one general point, requires greater attention, as such discourses must generally be written and committed to memory: they may, however, be composed without a more extensive knowledge of the Scriptures. But without some particular knowledge of the Scriptures, not merely as to the detached parts which may be the subject of illustration, but also as a whole, it is impossible to follow the scriptural method with acceptance, or to edification.

In the manner here employed by our Lord, should every part of the truth with respect to his person, character, and work be taught; and also, his laws and ordinances; not neglecting order and arrangement, so far as these might contribute to ease, perspicuity and edification. Though there is nothing of modern system in the Scriptures, it is evident from Heb. vi. 1, 2. and other passages of Scripture, that the teachers in the first churches proceeded in an orderly manner in teaching divine truth; and though there is nothing to countenance the divisions and technical arrangements of a modern sermon, our Lord seems on the occasion referred to, to have proceeded in the most natural order. In his exposition, he began with Moses, and went through all the prophets.

Paul's manner of teaching fully coincides with that of his master, and confirms the propriety of these observations. In speaking to the Jews in the synagogue, as they acknowledged the Scriptures, and expected a Messiah, his usual practice was to reason with them out of the Scrip-

tures, "opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that Jesus, whom he preached to them, was Christ," Acts xvii. 3.

But it is not only profitable to pursue this method when we mean fully to establish any particular part of faith; the reading of Scripture, and teaching from it, either in order, or as particular portions of it may seem difficult, suitable or important, is also exceedingly profitable. Our Lord's manner was to enter into the Synagogue every Sabbath day, to read the Scriptures, and to teach the people from them. Indeed, if it is the contents of the Scriptures which a church is to be taught by its elders, in what other way is it rational to teach them than by a direct appeal to the oracles of truth themselves, by collecting for the proof and illustration of every point, the evidence that lies scattered through them? How shall a church more effectually become acquainted with divine truth, as it is contained in the Scriptures, than by the public reading and teaching from large portions of them every first day of the week? The Scriptural examples of preaching from a detached passage, do not consist in a few words to be treated as the foundation of a tedious process of reasoning, but in large portions, which are diffusively illustrated. Thus, our Lord spake from that noted passage in the 61st chapter of Isaiah, which he read in the Synagogue of Nazareth, Luke iv. 18. Thus also Philip instructed the Ethiopian eunuch from the 53d chapter of Isaiah, Acts viii. 29.

Nothing is more striking than the difference that is discovered in the New Testament between the TEACHING of the churches and the PREACHING to unbelievers. In the latter, we find the substance of all to be the preaching of Christ. The gospel is exhibited for belief, accompanied with all the motives that are calculated to excite the hopes and fears of men, Acts ii. 16—40. iii. 12—26. iv. 5—12. viii. 5—35. ix. 20—22. xi. 20. xiii. 14—41. xvii. 3. 22—31, &c. We discover no solicitude about unity and proportion. Paul reasoned before Felix of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, after he had declared to him the faith of Jesus. A lively statement of facts, a forcible address to the conscience, a bold appeal to the evident meaning of Scripture, is much better calculated to arrest the attention of the sinner, than a tedious chain of argumentation, conducted after the manner of the schools. How the apostles taught the churches, we may learn from the epistles. They never forgot, indeed, to bring the gospel to their minds, 1 Cor. xv. 1. as it is by keeping this in mind we are saved, and from the belief of it all our obedience flows; but they taught them also the whole range of divine truth, confirmed them in what they had already received, and exhorted them to continue in the faith, warning them of their dangers and trials, Acts xiv. 22, &c. They instructed them by expounding the things concerning Jesus from the Old Testament, warning them against seducers, and refuted every thing contrary to sound doctrine. See Rom. Gal. and Heb. *passim*.

It is equally obvious, that the apostles addressed Jewish and Gentile unbelievers in a different manner. The Jews they endeavoured to convince by appealing to their Scriptures, because they acknowledged the obligation of these ; but unbelieving Gentiles are not usually pressed with the Scriptures of the Jews, which they did not believe. The latter they addressed upon principles that could not but approve themselves to common sense and conscience, attested facts, of which they were eye-witnesses, and confirmed their testimony by miracles. Thus Paul addresses the Athenians, Acts xvii. and thus he addresses Felix, Acts xxiv. reasoning upon righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, in such a manner as to produce the most sensible effect upon his conscience, though he did not receive the truth with respect to Jesus. In addressing unbelievers, both these methods ought to be followed. Though the body of the people acknowledge, there are many who deny, or do not fully admit, the inspiration of the Scriptures. It is necessary then to shew that Christianity is founded in *evidence*, and not a cunningly-devised fable ; that it is not a system of enthusiasm or superstitious fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Many of the opportunities of preaching Jesus, were derived to the apostles from the occasions of defending themselves and their doctrine from the aspersions and misrepresentations of their enemies. Christians and Christianity are still misrepresented, and charged with many things which they abhor. The character given of them by Suetonius is still substantially applied to them ; " They are a race of men addicted to a new and wicked superstition." In publishing the gospel over the world, especially where the churches are little known, and most misrepresented, it might be profitable, instead of a sermon on a particular subject, to imitate the apostolic orations, and by a bold appeal to the whole scheme of Christian doctrine, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Without doubt, on all such occasions, the chief features of Christianity ought to be exhibited and defended, as Paul did before Felix, and such precious opportunities ought not to be taken up in illustrating particular points of doctrine, as in the teaching of a church. By a simple but nervous statement of facts, by an appeal to the Scriptures and to conscience, Paul obliged Agrippa to call out in open court, " Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." The life and soul of apostolic preaching ; the whole spirit, impetuosity and fire of their addresses, is lost in the phlegm of a modern sermon. If we wish that sinners should be pricked to the heart with the apostolic doctrine, let us deliver it as the apostles did.

In teaching a church, it is preferable to impress the truth upon their minds by putting them in mind of things with which they are well acquainted. There is a distinguishing patience in the teaching exemplified and recommended by the apostles. In doing this, however, instead of trite observations perpetually recurring, the attention ought to be arrested and retained by striking remarks delivered in an impressive and earnest manner, which never fails to follow, and never appears without a full participation of the spirit of the truth recommended

Finally, it appears that the manner of inculcating divine truth exemplified in the Scriptures, is very different from that employed, and that attention to the Scriptures on this subject, would contribute greatly to facilitate the labours of the elders, allow them much additional time for searching the Scriptures, and would also be the most effectual method of instructing a church. To hear the mind of Christ, his people would be led immediately to his own word, and enabled, and accustomed to search for themselves. Their knowledge will not be that of a system of doctrines, but of the Scriptures. It is notorious, that among sects who relish nothing but systematic preaching, we find many well acquainted with the respective systems, who appear much at a loss when their attention is called to the divine word itself. Nothing is easier than to discover whether a man has drawn his opinions from his system, or from the Scriptures themselves. How different is the cant and technical phrase of those who study the Scriptures in the writing of the old divines, from the simplicity and clearness of him who drinks out of the pure fountain of truth.

A MODEL OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING,

Exhibited in the discourse of Peter on the day of Pentecost, in illustration of the preceding Article, on "The Method of teaching Divine Truth."

Let the following matters, necessarily preliminary to a public discourse, be maturely considered.

1. The audience must always be regarded in its proper character, before it is addressed, and before the propriety of an address to it can be correctly appreciated.

2. The object to be gained must always guide the Speaker in the selection of his theme; and to this object, all his thoughts and arrangements must be turned.

These things premised, let us consider what was the character of Peter's audience; "Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." They were intelligent in the law and the prophets, expected a Messiah, held the tradition of the times, and are regarded by the Speaker as acquiescing in the deeds of the Jewish Rulers respecting Jesus, the Nazarene.

Next, the occasion of the speech, was the excitement produced by the gift of tongues; and the question agitated by the multitude at that time assembled, was, "*What does this mean!*" To settle this question, was the first object of the apostle, a preliminary to his grand design. His theme was the Holy Spirit; and his ultimate object was to prove, that God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified, both Lord and Christ. Let us now hear, how he under the direction of the Holy Spirit, accomplished this great design.

“Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words : for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day ; but this is that which is spoken by the prophet Joel ; and it shall come to pass in the last days, (saith God,) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh : and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams : and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit ; and they shall prophesy ; and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath ; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke ; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come : and it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Ye men of Israel, hear these words ; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know ; Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain ; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death : because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face ; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved : therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad ; moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope : because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life ; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which he now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens ; but he saith himself, ‘ The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool.’ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Acts ii. 13-36.

ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSE.

1. An explanation of the miracle before them. In doing this, Joel’s prophecy is adduced and applied to the gifts of the Spirit, visible and audible, of which the audience were witnesses

2. A narrative of the life, miracles, death, and resurrection of Jesus, is next presented, in order to give a proper direction to their minds as to the bearing of the miracle before them.

3. A concentration of the evidence in proof of his resurrection, from the prophecies of David, and the testimony of the living witnesses.

4. His exaltation to the right hand of God, proved by the descent of the Holy Spirit and from other prophecies of David.

5. The miracles and the prophecies are shown to give assurance that God has constituted Jesus both Lord and Christ. Thus his grand object is gained. Conviction is produced: and he pauses for the effects, or is interrupted by another question.

The points introduced and touched with a master's hand in this discourse are numerous. That God approved the life of Jesus, is alleged from "the wonders and signs which God did by him." That the Jews had full opportunities of testing his miraculous displays, is affirmed from their being done "in the midst of them;" and that they were not ignorant of them is boldly asserted to their face. That Jesus being delivered into their power was in accordance with the counsels of God long ago promulgated; and was not as they supposed, because God cared not for him:—that his resurrection was by the power of God and in proof of his righteousness:—that he was now seated on the right hand of God; and, in consequence of a promise to that effect, he had received the Holy Spirit, which was now at his disposal:—that his exaltation must terminate in the total abasement and destruction of his enemies. And, as the conclusion of the whole matter, "Let all the house of Israel know, as most certain and not to be gain-sayed, that God had exalted him in heaven whom they had judged and condemned as unworthy to live on earth." These are chief matters in this discourse, and show the point to which the eye of the speaker was from the first to the last directed.

The argument of the discourse was irresistible. It is briefly this. All the gifts, and wonders, and signs of that day are ascribed to Jesus; and as the witnesses of his resurrection were the most large and distinguished participants of them, consequently their testimony is not to be rejected; and the amount of their testimony is, *that Jesus is made Lord and King*. Submission, or destruction from his presence, is the only alternative. To this point are the audience brought.

"Now, when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Verses 37-40.

Such was the discourse of the first christian preacher under the new economy. His manner was most conciliatory. "Men and brethren;"

“Men of Israel, hear;” “Let me speak freely;” all was candid and benevolent—all was in the spirit of the message which he delivered—nothing wanting in gravity, dignity, firmness, uncompromising faithfulness and the most condescending tenderness and compassion. It was all logic, reason, point, testimony, proof. There was no declamation, noise, tinselling, painting, and mincing in the set phrase of the rhetoricians of this world. No enthusiastic appeals to the passions. It was all addressed to the understanding and the heart. The preacher forgot himself wholly in his subject. His Master filled his eye, his head, and his heart. He saw, he heard, he felt nothing but the glory of the King in the salvation of his countrymen. That Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, was never more convincingly preached; and never was the truth told with more plainness, force and persuasion.

The best commendation of the sermon, however, remains to be told. Three thousand souls gladly received the message, understood the argument, believed and were baptized. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 41, 42.

ON THE PRIMARY INTENTION OF THE GOSPEL, AND ITS PROPER AND IMMEDIATE EFFECTS ON THOSE THAT RECEIVE IT.

THAT the reconciliation of a guilty world, in order to complete salvation, was the proper and primary intention of the Gospel, is evident from the uniform tenor of the Gospel testimony, as recorded in the New Testament. The Gospel itself is called the word of reconciliation, and the apostolic work of preaching it, is styled the Ministry of reconciliation. As though God did beseech men by them, they prayed sinners in Christ’s stead, “be ye reconciled to God,” 2 Cor. v, 18—21. The immediate effect of their preaching on all who sincerely believed, and were suitably affected by their testimony, was reconciliation. “When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,” Rom. v, 10; “And having made peace through the blood of his Cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; and you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death,” Col. I, 20—21. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself not imputing their trespasses unto them. “Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, all things are become new; and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. v. 17. From these

and a multitude of passages, we are taught that the proper and immediate intentions of the Gospel, was reconciliation of sinners to God by Jesus Christ, through the forgiveness of sins, and that the effect of this publication on all that understood and believed it, was reconciliation to him in order to their complete and final salvation. "For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life, Rom. v. 10.

Moreover it is equally evident from the above and many other Scriptures that the reconciling effects of the Gospel in all that were reconciled by it, was the belief of a full and free pardon of all their sins through Christ, and for his sake, on the account of the propitiatory sacrifice which he voluntarily made of himself upon the cross, which is therefore called the atonement or reconciliation. Indeed when we contemplate the state of the world, in the light of divine revelation, we find that all, both Jews and Gentiles, had sinned and come short of the Glory of God; that the whole world was become guilty before him; there was none righteous, no not one; none that practised good and sinned not; that except a few spiritual characters among the Jews, whose minds were supported by the promised Messiah; all mankind were alienated from the life of God through the blindness of ignorance, and were enemies to him in their minds, by wicked works. Such then being the actual state of mankind, a state of guilt, condemnation and enmity; and man being still considered as the object of divine benevolence, we see the indispensable necessity of the means which infinite wisdom and goodness devised to effect a change for the better, among such guilty creatures; namely, the proclamation of a full and free pardon of all offences, to all without respect of persons, in such a way as brought it equally near to, or within the reach of all; which was effectually done by preaching the Gospel to every creature.

The Angels who first proclaimed the Saviour's advent to our earth intimated the glad tidings, as "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," Luke ii. 14. The Lord just before his ascension into Glory, beginning "at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scripture, the things concerning himself," Luke xxiv. 27. Thus he opened their understandings, that they might understand the Scripture, that it was thus written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," v. 15-17. In the Acts of the Apostles, we have ample testimony as to the manner in which the glad tidings were declared to sinners, and the effect of joy and peace, of filial fear and love to God, of sorrow for sin, of reformation of life, which the belief, that there was forgiveness with God, imparted to them. Both to Jew and Gentile, the Apostles proclaim a gracious pardon through the blood of Jesus to all who received that testimony respecting him. To the convinced and convicted Jews on the day of Pentecost, Peter said, "repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," Acts ii. 38.

“Him,” (said Peter) “hath God exalted with his right hand, a prince and a Saviour for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins,” v. 31. And again, Acts x, 43. “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.” And Paul at Antioch to both unbelieving Jews and Gentiles proclaims the same glad tidings, the true Gospel of our Lord; “Be it known unto you *therefore*, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him, all that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses,” Acts xiii. 38.

While God thus evinced his infinite love to sinners in giving his only begotten Son to die, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life; he equally manifests his holiness, justice and truth, in not sparing his son, who bore our sins in his own body, on the tree, dying the just for the unjust; being thus wounded for our transgressions, being thus bruized for our iniquities, by whose stripes we are healed; God evinces his hatred to sin, lays an adequate foundation for the righteous exercise of mercy, secures all the glory to himself, while affording consolation to the perishing guilty, by a full and free pardon of their sins. “And you being dead in your sins, and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses,” Col. II. 13.

All therefore that believed and were baptized for the remission of their sins, were as fully persuaded of their pardon and acceptance, through the atonement of Christ, and for his sake, as the faithful word of God could make them, or as they were of any other article of Gospel testimony. The Eunuch *believing* the glad tidings declared to him by Philip, in expounding to him the 53rd chap. of Isaiah, after being baptized in his name, went on his way rejoicing. Acts viii. 39. The jailer and his household, in the same way *rejoiced*, believing in God, Acts vi. 33.

It was these glad tidings, of forgiveness which alone could cleanse the conscience from the guilt of sin, and enable sinners with any just ground of confidence, to draw near to God in full assurance of faith, having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed with pure water, Heb. x. 22. Without this justification which he received by faith in the divine testimony, how could the sinner have had peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, or have rejoiced in hope of his glory? Rom. v. 1—2; or how could he have been reconciled to God by the death of his Son, had he not believed according to the testimony, that he had redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of divine grace, thus most graciously manifested? or why could he have received baptism, the import of which to the believer was the remission of his sins, had he not believed the divine attestation to him in that ordinance, that believing, and being baptized in his name, his sins were pardoned? Thus Ananias says to Paul, Acts xxii. 16, “And now,

why tarriest thou ? arise. and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Every one then, from the commencement of christianity, who believed the Gospel testimony and was baptized, was as fully persuaded of the remission of his sins, as he was of the truth of the testimony itself. The fulness of evidence with which the Scripture attests this blessed truth, will abundantly appear and reward those who search the divine revelation to see if those things are so. In the mean time from what has been produced from that divine source, we may see with what propriety the pure and primitive preaching of the Gospel, was called the ministry of reconciliation, how admirably adapted it was to that gracious purpose; and how just and adequate a reason there was for the great joy, consolation and happiness that always accompanied the reception of the Gospel in the New Testament; and also for the unfeigned love to God and Man, which it produced, enabling them by faith in God's promise to overcome the world, even joyfully to suffer all things for Christ's sake, so that the Apostle John could confidently make this appeal, "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Such was the primitive faith, such the genuine effect of the Apostolic Gospel, with all who really believed it. Many no doubt professed to believe who did not truly understand the Gospel, and therefore could not truly believe it; yet every one that was baptised, making the same profession, believed himself, and was esteemed by his brethren a justified person. Hence we do not find a single instance in the New Testament, of a doubting christian; not a single hint for the direction or encouragement of such. How different the New Testament examples are from the present professing world, the judicious reader need not be informed. But surely if similar causes, produce similar effects, the same Gospel, and the same preaching, would as necessarily produce the same faith that it did in the beginning in all them that believed it—peace with God, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF THE NATURE AND CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

NATURE will be very partially investigated, if the point of inquiry should be considered, as belonging to her *impenetrable secrets*—and the volume of revelation will be examined quite as imperfectly, if the matter in doubt should be regarded as one which that authority was never meant to determine. But, is the constitution of the primitive church among the things about which inquiry will be in vain? are we to view the man who is employed in the devout study of the New Testament, in the hope of obtaining certain information on this subject, as a person busied in urging questions to which the inspired writers have agreed that no an-

swer should be given? It would be marvellous if it were so—This, however, would seem to be the judgment of a large body of persons, and of persons who seem to cherish a sincere reverence for the word of God—They appear not to be aware of any absurdity or of any incongruity in the notion of a state without enactments, or of an executive without law. By a kingdom, we understand an arranged commonwealth: and can there be arrangement where there are no statutes to require it? By a disciplined body we understand a regulated body, and can there be regularity where there is no rule? The laws of a kingdom, and the provision made for the due execution of them, are arrangements which, in proportion to their wisdom and equity confer prosperity and greatness on a people—are means adapted to an end; the end proposed being the national welfare. And if there be not satisfactory information in the New Testament, as to how the kingdom of Christ is to be constituted, and how its laws are to be administered, in what way are we to account for so material an omission?

Many regard inquiry on this as a hopeless task, because so many, and so opposite opinions have been so long held relative to church government, and because the instructions which occur on the subject in the New Testament are often conveyed incidentally, as if they were not intended to be wrought up into a system. But if these objections prove any thing, they prove too much. For the opinions on this point are not more opposite or numerous, than those which exist with regard to most of the doctrines, or truths of Christianity, and even on some important branches of moral obligation. And it is no less true of the religious doctrines and the moral lessons contained in the New Testament, than it is of its polity, that they are not taught after the manner of a system; and if we ought on these accounts to distrust the guidance of the apostles and Evangelists in matters of ecclesiastical regimen, we ought consistently to distrust their guidance in every other case subject to similar objections. It is, however certain that a matter may be debatable, and still very true; and it by no means follows that because many have missed the right path, no man shall find it. Christianity has always been rejected by the larger portion of the human race. It is nevertheless from heaven, and so may the New Testament reveal that constitution of a Church which is of divine origin and authority, which is nevertheless rejected by the larger portion in Christendom. It is not more strange that the majority of professing Christians should corrupt, than that the majority of men should reject the Gospel. Both result from the same cause—man is earthly, the gospel is heavenly, its Kingdom not of this world.

The meaning of the word Church should be determined—it simply signifies an assembly or congregation, and is sometimes used in the New Testament to denote a gathering of persons into one place, without any reference to their object or character. In one place the mob is called the church, Acts xix. 32. In verse 39. the same word is applied to an Assembly called by the magistrate, But in the language of the New

Testament, the term has a more limited application, referring either to the Universal Church, including all who embrace the Gospel, Ephes v. 25, Col. I. 24, or to some particular congregation of believers. As "the Church at Jerusalem, Acts viii. 1. The Church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, Rom. xvi. 5. We read of the churches in Judea, Gal. i. 22, of the churches in Galatia, &c. and were the primitive use of this word restored, we would hear of the churches in England, in Scotland, &c. Names rarely undergo a change of this kind, but as the consequence of some material alteration in the state of things with which they are connected. The name of the Christian Assembly would not so generally, and with many so exclusively have been given to the place of meeting, had not superstition, the offspring of ignorance, interposed to effect this innovation; nor the national application of the term, styling the numerous assemblies of a kingdom, and even out of a kingdom, as the church of that kingdom—if a polity unknown to the "churches of Judea," and the "churches of Galatia," had not risen up to call for this mode of expression and idea.

From the apostolic history it is evident, that every Christian Church, was an association strictly voluntary. On the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread, Acts xx. 7, 1 Cor. xi. 10—33, thus statedly commemorating the foundation of the church's hope, the resurrection and the dying love of Christ, and to observe other parts of worship, for their mutual edification—attending to the apostolic doctrine in teaching, social prayer, praise and exhortation, and for fellowship, or contributing as far as God had prospered them for the poor, Acts ii. 42. Heb. x. 25. 1 Cor. xvi. 1—2. Col. iii. 16—iv. 16. 1 Thes. v. 27.

What the magistrate should have done with regard to such Assemblies, we do not stop to enquire. It is obvious that what he did, was to put down rather than to sanction them. Such assemblies were convened however, and continued to be, even when life became the hazard of attending them. This in the primitive church was not done by constraint but willingly. How much establishments, founded on a principal of coercion, have departed from this principle of willing service, is too obvious to need illustration.

Though we have said these associations were voluntary, and that no man possessed any moral authority to compel any to a profession of the Gospel, or to enter into Christian fellowship, yet it was nevertheless the duty of every rational creature to whom the Gospel was preached to receive it, and receiving it, to avow himself its disciple and conform to its laws. The constitution, laws, and institutes of this society were not to be rejected or altered by any; none could refuse obedience to the will of the Lord and be guiltless. None had any authority to make church covenants or institute religious observances. The apostles alone had power conferred on them to teach infallibly the things of the Kingdom, they being inspired, spake the words which the Holy Ghost taught, Acts I. 3—8. 1 Cor ii, 13—he therefore that despised or rejected Apostolic teaching, despised

not man but God—Matt. x. 40. 1 Thes. iv. 1–8. 1 Cor. xiv. 37. 1 John iv. 6. We learn the importance the apostles attached to the ordinances they delivered to the churches, by their censuring any deviation from them, and their recommending adherence to them. “Be ye followers of me even as I am also of Christ: now I praise you, brethren, (says Paul) that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances (or traditions) as I delivered them to you;” 1 Cor. xii. 1–2. And the same ordinances were delivered to every Church; for he says “for this cause I have sent unto you Timotheus who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where, in every Church, 1 Cor. iv. 17—xiv. 57.

Hence it follows, that an injunction to any Church, or its practice respecting the ordinances and will of the Lord, having apostolic sanction, comes to us as a revelation of the Lord’s will, on that particular point.

The Redeemer did not employ the coercive weapons of a worldly kingdom to make his people willing, for they are unsuited and unequal to such a purpose. The means he has provided are effectual in his hands ever to produce willing obedience. The truths which his Gospel brings to the understanding are such as affect the gratitude, the hopes, the fears of the heart, through that medium constraining the rebellious to submit themselves and to make submission their delight. It seeks the accomplishment of a spiritual end, and seeks it only by spiritual means. The same motive which constrains believers to give themselves to the Lord, constrains them to give themselves unto each other. And as it was their duty to assemble and associate themselves together for the purposes of religious fellowship and worship—so it was their duty in their associated capacity, to make the known will of the Lord, the sole guide of their proceedings. Their fellowship was clearly meant to be a fellowship of believers, saints, and one in consequence, in which no man who was not credibly possessed of that character could be entitled or at all qualified to share. And whatever the steps were, by which the body of believers were led to form a judgment, that the person who was admitted to their society was also really a believer of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is certain that such a judgment was formed of them, and that when circumstances arose, to alter this judgment with regard to any man who had obtained a place among them, that person, as being incapable of entering into the design of Christian Communion, was to be put away, 1 Cor. v. 7—11.

This union of believers therefore arose from what was peculiar to them as compared with the world, and from what they were in common as the disciples of Jesus. It sprang at once from the singularity and the sameness of their faith, their experience, and their hopes. What they were as men was a small matter, but what they were as Christians was of infinite moment; in this sentiment, which lies at the foundation of Christian fellowship, the sincere believer can alone sympathize. To be admitted to a Christian Church was not a step in any way connected with

secular distinction; and to be excluded from such a body was not to be exposed to any disadvantage as a member of Society. While in every case of admission or exclusion, the freedom of these assemblies did not consist in a liberty to act according to the dictates of passion or caprice, but according to their general and honest conviction, as to the requisitions of the law of Christ.

If the independence of these bodies were invaded, it must have been from within or without, from persons of their own body, or from the authority of the magistrate; with reference to the magistrate, it is certain that their polity was established and their affairs conducted without his interference. The independence of such communities with regard to the state is beyond dispute. No doubt, an indispensable obligation is laid upon every man, and accordingly upon every Christian magistrate, to promote the cause of Christianity, to the utmost of his power. But as no man is authorised to do evil, that good may come; neither is the magistrate allowed to act respecting the Church of God but as his word directs, things may be lawful and not expedient; but in the casuistry of Christians, nothing should be deemed expedient which is not known to be lawful.

The great end proposed by a civil government must be an outward submission. The great end proposed by the gospel is an inward renovation. The one authority meddles not with the inclination and motives; the other makes every thing to depend upon them. So long as the men who are known to constitute an assembly professing christianity, are also known to be good subjects, without which they cannot be consistent christians, they are entitled to the protective power, whose shield should be over them alike in their social intercourse, and in their religious exercises. But if churches look for any thing more than protection, they must expect something less than independence. If they condescend to be pensioners, they must cease to be free. But the independence and peace of churches may be assailed from within; Christianity may impose a powerful restraint on the disorderly feelings of avarice and ambition, while these are far from being extinguished; and it should be remembered, that especially in seasons of external prosperity, men professing religion, but really under the dominion of a worldly temper, have often obtained a place among the converts of the Gospel, and troubled the churches.—If the independence of the primitive churches could be impeached from any source, it would be from the example of the apostles. But they were inspired, and consequently infallible teachers; they were companions of the Lord, and instructed by himself—were the chosen witnesses of his resurrection, and had power to work miracles, to confirm their mission and their testimony. Their authority and their qualifications were peculiar and could not descend to others. With regard to these unerring instructors, no church in the primitive age, could pretend to be independent of them altogether—any more than churches now, without abandoning all claim to the character of disciples, bound to hear Christ's word through them. As John says

“ We are of God, he that knoweth God heareth us, he that is not of God, heareth not us, hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error,” Jo. iv. 6.

We find however, that the exercise of the authority of these inspired men of God was marked by the utmost tenderness and caution. “ It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to them, that no other burden should be laid on the churches, than what arose from necessary things. They resisted every attempt to impose any religious service on believers as necessary, which was not rendered so, by the most obvious design of Christianity, or which had not divine authority for its sanction. That which Paul had “ received of the Lord”, was that, and from aught that appears, the whole of that which he delivered to the churches. This connected as it was with a clearer discovery of spiritual things, was that disentanglement from “ the yoke of bondage,” which every believer was to be careful to preserve, that liberty in Christ Jesus, in which he was to stand fast: concerning such things as meat and drink, or a holy day, no man was to be allowed to judge them. The apostles therefore neither possessed the authority nor the inclination to render unnecessary things obligatory. The claim of superiority therefore, of any individual, or of one congregation over another, is not to be found in any thing recorded in the New Testament. The apostolic office ceased necessarily with the men who first sustained it. While the twelve survived, it was their authority alone, that even seemed to affect the independence of the Christian community which they had formed. At their death it became unquestionable, that every Christian Church possessed, as a Church, all the freedom of a separate republic, regulated by the inspired principles and regulations, left them by Christ through his apostles.

The words of Mosheim to this point are very emphatic; he writes, “ neither in the New Testament, nor in any ancient document whatever, do we find any thing recorded, from whence it might be inferred, that any of the minor churches, were at all dependent on, or looked up for direction to, those of greater magnitude or consequence; on the contrary, several things occur therein, which put it out of all doubt, that every one enjoyed the same rights, and was considered as being on a footing of the most perfect equality with the rest.”

In states the most free, persons may be deputed from each, to constitute an assembly representing the whole, and for the whole, to consider themselves bound by the decision of this general body. But in religion it is not only true, that no body of persons have a right to take upon them this representative character, with regard to other bodies; but also that no community or individual, is at liberty to concede such a power to the wisest, or the most holy of uninspired men. It is contrary to that law of accountability, which is essential to the nature of a moral action and lies at the foundation of all true religion. “ Call no man Master; and be ye not called Rabbi of men,” “ One is your Master.” “ To our own Master we standeth or fall.” “ Let every man be persuaded in his

own mind." These are maxims without which nothing can be done, "as to the Lord and not as to Men." But they are contravened by every ecclesiastical association which presumes in reference to Christian societies to go beyond the limits of mere opinion or advice. It will not be pretended that any man possessing the means of correct information, will be accounted innocent in substituting any error, which may happen to be taught by a Priest, Magistrate, or other, in the place of the truth, which is distinctly revealed in the word of God.

But how was this right of private judgment, and the independence of the primitive churches to be preserved. The means provided for this end will be found partly in that influence of the people, which is so observable in the constitution of these societies, and chiefly in the place assigned by them to the word of God. They had the necessary power to admit or exclude members, as has been already shewn. The persons admitted, were those who gave satisfactory evidence to the brethren that they were disciples, converted from darkness to light, from the Kingdom of Satan to the Kingdom of God's dear Son, willing subjects brought by the power of the truth and spirit of God to the obedience of the faith; they therefore virtually pledged themselves, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together—to maintain a conversation becoming the Gospel—to respect the claims of those who according to Scriptural rules, and by their own choice, had been set over them in the Lord. They would consider their bond of union to be for the truth's sake, for his sake by whose Gospel they were begotten to a lively hope—and would love the brethren. If they loved him who beget, and them who were begotten, they would desire to obey his Commandments. "By this," says John, we know that we love the Children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments," John v. 2. And as these are plainly revealed, while all selfish desires were checked, they would go to the law and to the testimony, and looking to that one model, would be transformed more and more, as into one image; would be brought more and more to see eye to eye, and to be of one mind in all things. Pertinacity in sin was to be followed by exclusion. "The man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject." This last act of discipline, if carried so far, was to be the act of the church: if he should neglect to hear them acting according to the word of God, our Saviour's command concerning such, is, "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican" Mat. xviii. 17. There was no force, save that of respect for the love of Christ, which could oblige any man to seek a connexion with a Christian Church; nor any other motive which could oblige a church to receive additions to their members; nor any other influence could constrain to the choice of a Bishop or Pastor, and making provision for his support, if he required it; nor to his acceptance of the office. All was the voluntary obedience of children to their heavenly Father, delighting to do his law, and was the secret which knit their hearts together for the truth's sake; and which prevented all

strife and precluded unnecessary debate—nonedoing, in any case his own will, but the revealed will of him in whose name they were united. With such ready minds to know the truth, each would be glad and impartially to hear a suggestion from any brother which might enlighten his mind as to the revealed will of God.

It is always to be distinctly kept in view therefore, that the power of churches in matters of discipline, and in the choice of officers, and in their worship, *is by no means legislative*; but is to be in all things regulated by the supreme authority of holy scripture. Their province is to execute, not to enact. To administer without partiality, without hypocrisy, the whole law of Christ; and to abstain from the enforcement of any thing which shall not appear in their general and honest judgment, really to be part of the law. As no church can possess legislative authority, it cannot of course concede a power which it does not possess; and, it in consequence, is not at liberty to admit the legislative interference of any body distinct from itself. As the statute book is unerring and complete, the neglect of any part of the instructions contained in it, is a neglect of duty, and can never cease to be injurious; and all additions or supposed amendments of that record, have proved to be corruptions of it, the fruitful source of disunion and hatred, strife and persecution, among professed Christians.

Paul assures us, that when the Redeemer ascended on high he constituted the authorities in his Church, which were required for its edification; and they are thus described, “some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and teachers,” Eph. iv. 7—12.

The apostolic office, it must generally be admitted was such as could not be transmitted to the men of any future generation, though their authority, still exists in their words. They were personally called by his own voice, and qualified to work miracles, to prove their divine mission, and to preach and teach infallibly the whole scope of their commission; they were actual witnesses of Christ’s resurrection, Acts i. 8—22. 2 Cor. xii. 22. 1 Cor. ix. 1—xv. 8. The prophetic character ceased necessarily when miraculous inspiration ceased, and if that of the evangelist had any subsequent existence, it must have been in the case of persons who were preachers without being Pastors. Pastors and teachers seem to be the only functionaries constituted by the Saviour with a view of permanence; and both these terms from the manner of their introduction, and from other facts, appear to designate the same person the office of Pastor, or Bishop always including that of teacher. The qualification belonging to the Bishop or overseer, are laid down by the Holy Spirit in the Apostolic word; and when they are appointed by the Church to have the oversight and rule agreeably to these dictates and directions of the Holy Spirit, (1 Tim. iii. 1—14. Titus i. 5—10;) then they may fitly be exhorted “To take heed to themselves, and to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers.” In the nature of things, a Church must exist first without officers, Acts xiv, 23. Titus i. 5.; but it is the duty of every Church to have elders appointed as soon as they can, that the things that

are wanting may be set in order, Titus i. 5. But in the providential absence, or want of an elder, there is nothing in the word of God to prevent a church observing all the ordinances of Christ, as delivered to them by the apostles, as far as the qualifications or gifts of its member render it practicable, 1 Cor. xi. 1, 2, 23. The Scriptures which refer to the Bishop's office, teach us that there was a plurality of Bishops in the primitive Churches, and we must infer that they were consequently necessary to their well being, Acts xiv, 23—xx, 17—xxi, 18. Phil. i, 1 Titus i, 5. What Paul says to Timothy, strengthens this opinion, besides shewing that it was their duty to make necessary provision for their elders or Bishops—he says “ Let the *Elders* that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, *especially* them who labour in the word and doctrine.” 1 Tim. v. 17.

The word bishop, which is beyond controversy, synonymous with the word Elder, or presbyter, occurs in such a manner, in the introduction of the Epistle to the Philippians, as not only to shew, that more than one person in that Church sustained this office, but that there was no official precedence among them. The epistle is addressed to the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons. This language seems to present a complete description of the Church and its officers. It appears that there were female Deaconess in the primitive churches, Acts ix. 39—41. Rom xvi. 1. 1 Tim. v. 9—13. We may be sure they were useful; and if churches now would follow the directions left for making a proper choice, they would experience the good effects in many situations of delicacy and difficulty, to which females whose duty it was, might alone have access, and be fitted to minister relief. But let it be remembered that the Apostolic Churches attended not only to their officers, but to the manner in which they obtained them. When a church was gathered, we have seen that the apostles did not ordain Elders and Deacons immediately. It was necessary that the churches should have time to try their members and become acquainted with their endowments and gifts, that they might observe whom, by their qualifications, the Lord in his word had pointed out for the work and their choice.

It appears then, from this brief sketch and investigation, that a Christian Church is a voluntary assembly of devout baptised believers; that the object for which such believers are thus associated, is the preservation and diffusion of the religion of the Gospel—as the ground and pillar of the truth, from whence light is diffused, as a city on a hill which cannot be hid. That they sanctified the first day of the week, the Lord's day, assembling together on that day, for worship and mutual edification, for growth in grace and in knowledge, and continuing stedfastly to attend to the apostolic doctrine, the teaching, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

That in prosecuting these objects, every such assembly is free from all foreign control. That the only rule of government, faith, and practice, to be acknowledged in a Christian Church, is the word of God—and tha

the only offices are, Bishops and Deacons;—the term Bishop, referring to Christian Pastors, as including one class only,—the term Deacon to assistants who were to relieve the Pastors from the secular business of their charge. All these facts of a Christian Church, have a necessary dependence on each other. If the Christian Church, be not a voluntary assembly, then it will not consist of believers only, and all that follows would be inapplicable. Believers are alone capable of yielding an implicit deference to the authority of Scripture; and accordingly are alone capable of promoting the great designs of Christian Association. There must be a Christian temper, else there will not be submission to Christian discipline and deference to God's word. We are not ignorant that much has been said with a view to shew that this scheme of polity and complete deference to God's word, in worship as well as in other matters, is inexpedient, and is inseparable from gross abuses, nor are we ignorant, that every scheme of human legislation, as it approaches, nearer to what it should be, becomes increasingly liable to the same objection. But when Jesus founded his Kingdom, and intrusted his subjects with a large share of liberty; he provided also for the tuition of those subjects, that they might be found to use their freedom, as not abusing it, not converting their liberty into a cloak of licentiousness. Every thing therefore depends on limiting the members of a Christian church to those who, in the scriptural judgment of Charity, partake of the Christian character; and above all making the word of God and not the judgments and views of expediency, either of ourselves, or of any others, our only rule and guide, in all things relating to faith and practice. Where this is not done honestly, without double mindedness or worldly policy, to the best of human ability, the leading attribute of such an association is wanting.

THREE INHERITANCES.

1. ADAM'S ESTATE.

ADAM, as soon as born from the earth, was invested with an estate, real and personal, ample as is the terraqueous globe, with all its riches, mineral, vegetable, and animal. His residence was in Eden, but his patrimonial inheritance, bestowed by God his father, extended North, South, East, and West, from Pison's head to Pison's head again, embracing all within the five zones that lives or moves in air, in water, or on land. The tree of knowledge of good and evil, which stood in the midst of Eden, was the only reservation, in token of the sovereignty of him from whom Adam received and held the inheritance. But against this stood the tree of life, to which he had free and unlimited access. He held this estate by a grant from his Creator, not on condition of his pay-

ing one barley corn per annum, but on condition of his obedience to one positive command, which, to make it still more divinely generous, required not the doing of any thing, but the simple withholding of his hand from the fruit of a single tree. His obedience to this command was, however, his tenure of the inheritance. If he transgressed, all was forfeited. Such was his inheritance, and such was the tenure of it. He disobeyed the divine injunction, and in so doing, forfeited the whole estate.

God chose, rather than to vacate the whole premises, to respite Adam for a time, to debar him from the tree of life, and to doom him to incessant toil, until he should finally return again to the bosom of his mother earth.

Meantime children are born to him, and inherit from him his nature, and whatever lease interest he had to the soil on which he lived, which was not for any stipulated time, because the forfeiture was complete, and the respite was wholly unconditional. This great family inheritance has been parcelled out amongst the sons of Adam, with all the circumstances of his bankruptcy entailed upon it. No stipulated tenure for any definite time, but a simple life-interest, whether long or short, is inherited by his descendants.

Through the mismanagement of his children, the inheritance has been still more encumbered; and on one occasion, with the single exception of one family, the whole premises have been vacated, the real estate has been greatly damaged, and the personal property, the goods and chattels, almost wholly destroyed. No project has ever been set up to redeem it on the part of the Original Proprietor; for he has promised to destroy it with fire, and then to create new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness shall flourish.

Concerning the inheritance it is of some importance to observe—

1. That it was freely bestowed upon Adam, irrespective of any thought, volition, or deed on his part. So that his possession of it was of pure favour.

2. The continued enjoyment of it was made dependant upon his allegiance, loyalty, or obedience to him who bestowed it.

It was forfeited by him in consequence of the transgression of a positive law.

4. The title which was then vouchsafed him, secured to him no definite possession of it, and was encumbered with many curses.

5. As all this transpired before a child was born to him, his descendants inherit in him, and from him, no other right or tenure than that which was bestowed upon him after his apostacy and exile from Eden.

But no creature other than those in Adam, or descended from him, has any right or title to the inheritance which God vouchsafed to Adam after his apostacy. These things noticed, and we proceed to the consideration of the second notable estate.

2. ABRAHAM'S ESTATE.

Abraham was called out of Ur of Chaldea. He left Haran in the 75th year of his age, and went down into Canaan. While in Canaan, God appeared to him and *promised that land to his seed*. He afterwards confirmed this promise in a solemn covenant, and promised to multiply his descendants, and in the 4th generation to put his posterity in actual possession of the land.

When Abraham was 99 years old, these promises are all renewed and enlarged. He receives additional pledges that God would establish his covenant with him and his seed after him, and give Canaan for an everlasting possession. To these developements and additional promises, he annexes circumcision as a seal, and calls it the covenant in the flesh—“My covenant shall be in your flesh, for an everlasting covenant.” Isaac is promised, and the covenanted blessings, both concerning the land and Messiah, are stipulated through him. He is a child of promise. At this time Abraham and Ishmael, and all his male servants were circumcised. These promises are renewed to Jacob, and Canaan gurranteed to his seed. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, dwell in it in *tents*, but have no actual possession of it; the right to the land is vested in them for their seed, but possession is deferred till the cup of the Amorites is full, till 430 years after the first promise. Canaan, at that time “the goodliest land on the face of the earth,” is selected as the inheritance of Abraham’s seed through Isaac and Jacob, and the best earthly blessings which under the existing circumstances of Adam’s estate could be vouchsafed, are guaranteed by promise in this land.

The time arrives, according to promise, for taking possession of the land. The incumbrances under which it lay during the occupancy of the seven nations, are now to be removed. The descendants of Abraham arise in the faith of God’s promise to march into the land. Moses is their leader. Into the faith of the mission of Moses and the promise of Canaan are they immersed in the Red Sea, and under the cloud. They all pass under the cloud and through the sea. God feeds them on their journey from the storehouses of heaven. The clouds drop manna down upon them.

When Moses gave the stroke,
From Horeb’s flinty side
Issued a river, and the rock
The Hebrews’ thirst supplied.

Their garments waxed not old in all their travels through the wilderness; yet they murmured against Moses and against God. On Sinai God met toem, proposed to make a compact with them, to become the God of the nation, and to make them all his peculiar people. They acceded. Moses meditates the covenant. Their national institutions and worship are ordained by God. He takes them by the hand as his bride; is married to them; takes them under his protection and guides them on to the

promised inheritance. They are tried in the wilderness. Moses and Aaron die. Joshua is raised up a leader. He and Caleb alone, of all the adults which crossed the Red Sea, with the nation then existing, cross the Jordan and take possession of the land. God verifies his word to Abraham, and his promises to Isaac and Jacob. They received that inheritance as a gift; for God gave it to Abraham by promise before circumcision, and before the law. Neither circumcision nor the law, nor obedience to the law, entitled them to that inheritance. It was a free gift, received by faith. Those who fell, fell because of unbelief. "We see they could not enter in because of unbelief."

But now the continued enjoyment of the inheritance is made to depend upon obedience: "If you be *willing and obedient* you shall eat the good of the land." But if they rebelled against the Lord, he would cast them out of it. They did so; and he ejected them. They repented, and he forgave them and brought back some of them. They again apostatized from God and crucified his Son. Then he scattered the remnant of Judah and Benjamin to the utmost bounds of the earth, and gave their land to the destroyers. Jerusalem shall continue to be trodden under foot of the Gentiles until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.

As the matters now stand, the Gentiles have no right to Abraham's estate, and the literal and fleshly descendants of Abraham have no right to any other land than Canaan. They admit this even in the 19th century. They hold not, as a nation, any territory among the Gentiles. They claim Canaan as their inheritance; but having broken the covenant, they cannot now possess it. But their right to the inheritance under all conditions was in Abraham. It is only as the descendants of Abraham, and as connected with him in the original grant, they can claim possession. On this inheritance be it observed—

1. That it was a free-gift bestowed to Abraham, and in him to his seed, and was first possessed by his heirs through the obedience of faith.

The continued enjoyment of it was made dependent on the allegiance and obedience of the heirs, according to the tenor of the Sinaitic agreement.

3: It was forfeited to them that apostatized from that institution.

4. The descendants as a people or nation had the promise of it always; but no individual had any personal assurance of it for any definite period of time.

5, But no person other than those in Abraham, either by natural descent, or by agreement, according to the compact, had any right, title, or interest to any part of that inheritance.

MESSIAH'S ESTATE.

God has constituted his son "*heir of all things.*" He is not, like Abraham, the heir of a world, but of all worlds. His is the eternal inheritance. All things were created for him. He is now made Lord of his own inheritance. All things are put under his feet. He has all authority in

heaven and earth. His, now, is the kingdom, the power, and the glory. His Father gave him power over all flesh that he might be able to give eternal life—the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading,—to as many as are given to him.

He is all benevolent, and willing to divide the inheritance; for it can be shared amongst many, greatly to the honour, interest, and happiness of all. He is willing to have many joint heirs, and God has conferred it upon him that he might bestow it upon others, to his own glory and their honour and felicity.

All things that are desirable, whether present or future, belong to it. Angels, authorities, and powers, celestial and terrestrial; apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers, of every rank; the world, life, death, immortality, are amongst its treasures. Pardon, adoption, sanctification, the Holy Spirit, are its present earnest, in token of the full fruition of heirs of God through Christ. To be an heir of God is surpassing admiration. No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has conceived the magnitude of such riches, honours, bliss; but all is ours in Christ: for the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As in the first inheritance the right of enjoyment, such as it is, was vested in Adam; and in the second, or typical inheritance, in Abraham, by a political arrangement through Isaac and Jacob; so in the third, it is vested in the Messiah, and subject to the accompanying regulations concerning the actual possession and continued enjoyment.

Whatever right any person has to the estate of Adam, is derived simply from natural relation; whatever right any Jew had to the promised land, was derived from natural and political relation to Abraham by a covenant in the flesh; so whatever right any Jew or Gentile has to the eternal inheritance, is derived from Spiritual relation to Messiah, according to the will of him whose inheritance it is.

The will of the donor or original proprietor, in all cases, settles the principal on which the actual possession and continued enjoyment shall depend. Hence, in reference to the earthly and heavenly Canaan, which are made analogous to each other, there is to each a will appended. The Old Will and the New Will, as they are sometimes called, accompany the two inheritances. No person can inherit but according to the will of the Testator. Now it is altogether unreasonable, and without precedent, for any Jew to expect to inherit the Messiah's estate by virtue of his natural or political relation to Abraham: for Messiah's estate is not willed through the flesh or through political relation to Abraham. A Gentile might as reasonably claim a portion in Canaan by virtue of his descent from Adam, as for a Jew to claim inheritance with Christ because he is descended from Abraham. For as respects the promises made to Abraham concerning the Messiah, it was decided that men must be Christ's before they can be Abraham's seed, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance, according to the promise concerning it. Again, as no Gentile can claim a right to Canaan, so neither can he claim a portion in the

Messiah's estate by virtue of relation to Adam. The inheritance is Christ's, It is in him we have obtained an inheritance. Those who belong not to his family can have no portion in his estate.

But as the pilgrimage of Israel from Egypt to Canaan is made adumbrative of our progress to the eternal inheritance, we must regard the things appointed to them, and which happened them on their journey, as types, and as "written for our admonition." They believed the promise, were immersed into Moses, ate the manna, drank from the rock, and kept the institutions. Such as did so, obtained the inheritance; such as did not do so, failed of the inheritance. To us the inheritance lies beyond Jordan. We must believe the promise, be immersed into Christ, eat his flesh, drink his blood, keep the institutions, and hold fast our begun confidence unshaken to the end.

Behold the love of our God! He has washed us from our sins in the blood of his Son, adopted us into his family, inspired us with his Spirit, made us heirs, and given us the hope of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. But all this is in his Son, and according to his own will. The receiving it in whatever way God is pleased to convey it, derogates not from the favour of the donor. It is to the intelligent as full a proof of the wisdom and goodness of God, that he has conveyed this estate to the adult or discriminating portion of his family in the manner revealed, as it is to have prepared for men such an inheritance before the foundation of the world. The necessity of receiving it in some way militates not against the awful and glorious saying, "The wages of sin is death. But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

UNFULFILLED PROPHECY.

THE prophetical parts of the inspired volume are too generally neglected, even by pious and intelligent men. It is only necessary to recollect that they are from God, to admit their great importance to every one desirous of consulting and knowing his revealed will. One evil arising from the prevalent inattention to them is, that crude, and erroneous interpretations are readily received by many as soon as proposed, because they know nothing to counteract them. This interesting subject has of late years, in a very striking manner, occupied the attention of many pious and intelligent Biblical Students of different denominations. As many of the readers of the Gleaner may desire to know what are their general views on the subject, the following may be considered as a summary of the opinions of the majority of the writers, respecting unfulfilled prophecy, in the words of one of its most prominent advocates.

I. That the Millenium is not begun.

II. That, that period is to be ushered in.

First:—By judgments on Christendom;—

A—On protestant nations first, because most highly favored. Query? Is Tyre the type of Britain?

B—Jews the instrument of these judgments, on the last confederacy of Christendom.

Secondly:—By the return of the 12 tribes to their own land.

Thirdly:—By the coming of the God-man Christ, to sit upon his throne.

Fourthly:—By the resurrection of believers.

III. That the Chronology of the present day, is between the 1260 days of Daniel and John, and the 1335 of the former; and that we are under the sixth vial of the Apocalypse; supposing the 1335 commenced at the same epoch as the 1260.

IV. That the types which shadow forth the present time are, 1. The period which elapsed between the coming out of the Wilderness and the crossing of Jordan. 2. The time between the proclamation of Solomon during David's life time, and his coronation. 3. The preaching of Elias, that is John the Baptist, who bore witness to the immediate coming of Christ, against the Pharisees, as well as the Sadducees and open sinners.

V. That the signs of the times are the fulfilment of those characteristics given for that purpose in 2 Tim. iii. 1—8. The French revolution, answering to Math. xxiv. 24, and sixth seal, and five first vials of the Apocalypse; and the division of all men now as before the first advent into three great classes—the indifferent—Sadducees, or moral and respectable sceptics—and Pharisees, or religious world, with their societies.

VI. That during the Millennial dispensation, the inhabitants of the renewed earth, will be under a different covenant from that which the present inhabitants are under. That they will not be subject to the influence of original sin. That the brute creation will participate in the blessedness of that period. It is not meant, however, that these points are all considered equally clear.

THE LITERAL FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY, FROM BEGG.

“In endeavouring to ascertain the meaning of scripture prophecy, it is important to observe, that, from the very nature of most of its predictions, they are only capable of a literal interpretation. Were christians to attend with care to their contexts, and even to circumstances introduced in the various prophecies sometimes spiritualized, they would find in these alone, checks sufficient to prevent such a perversion of their meaning and design. But it is also farther to be observed, that to explain away all the predictions concerning the *glory* of Christ, is to justify his rejection by the Jews, notwithstanding of the plain declarations of his humility and sufferings. For, if we are at liberty to spiritualize all the prophecies which foretell his reign in glory, how can we blame them for adopting a similar mode of interpreting other predictions not more clear and far less numerous? Besides, this is a method of interpretation which

seems not only repugnant to reason, but is quite inconsistent with that literal fulfilment which prophecy has hitherto received. If all past predictions, except where figures are obviously used, have had their fulfilment *literally*, even when the minuteness of prophecy was extreme, on what principle of interpretation is a mode of fulfilment yet unprecedented now to be expected? We can point to a long series of predictions which have been literally fulfilled, and to others which are being so at this very day, in their utmost minutiae, and can see no reason to suppose that those which, for ought we can tell, may relate to the ensuing month or the ensuing year, are not to have a literal fulfilment also, as no intimation is given by the Spirit of Prophecy of a period at which this mode of their accomplishment shall cease. Thus alone can the criterion divinely given, by which to distinguish the *true* prophet from the *false*, be of any avail: "If thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath *not* spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously." Deut. xviii. 21, 22. And the minuteness with which prophecy has hitherto been fulfilled, proves how safely the rule may be applied. The past dealings of God in this respect, which show the perfect correspondence between the prediction and its accomplishment, have, however, been much neglected; and hence, perhaps, the unwillingness so often displayed, believably to receive the promises he has bestowed, without the intervention of our own limitations; and hence, also, our unbelieving fears to submit divine predictions concerning the future to the ordeal which Jehovah himself has prescribed.

"But of the evidence to be derived from the past fulfilment of prophecy, did our limits permit the prosecution of this branch of the argument, the history of nations and individuals would furnish abundant and valuable illustration. We might take the scripture predictions concerning the state of different countries, and show how amply they are verified by the accounts of recent travellers, wholly unconscious of the coincidence, and, in some cases, with views decidedly hostile to Revelation. Or, taking history as evidence, we might trace the literal fulfilment of prophecy in the rise and fall of empires—the scenes of their splendor, and the means of their overthrow. We might refer to the judgments poured on cities famed of old, and in the height of their glory when denounced of the Lord;—of Nineveh, of Babylon, of Tyre, of Jerusalem, and others: and might gather thence evidence incontrovertible of the literal fulfilment of prophecy in circumstances the most improbable to human foresight—by me is the most unlikely in human estimation—and with a specification of incidents so apparently insignificant as would, perhaps, never have been recorded had not the minds of historians been under the immediate control of him whose omniscience they thus unwittingly attested. The very improbability of such prophecies ever being fulfilled, renders their accomplishment a more glorious display of that divine attribute which

Jehovali claims as peculiarly his own, and in proof of which he even appeals to prophecy. Some, who have not inquired upon the subject, are apt to imagine, that, although intimations of a general nature have been given, particular circumstances are not condescended upon. This opinion, however, is far from being correct. There is often a perfect delineation of inferior circumstances, and this, in some instances, to a degree altogether astonishing; as when, in picturing forth Idumean desolation, the prediction includes the provision of a mate for every vulture: "There shall the vultures also be gathered, *every one with her mate*. Seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read, no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate; for my mouth it hath commanded, and his Spirit it hath gathered them." Isa. xxxiv. 15, 16.

"These remarks derive much confirmation from a recent publication by the Rev. Alexander Keith, titled, "Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion derived from the Literal Fulfilment of Prophecy;" from which, did our limits permit, we should gladly have availed ourselves of extracts. But for the illustration of our views, we prefer making a selection of scripture predictions concerning the humiliation of Christ, with reference to their fulfilment.

"The patriarch Jacob had left the consolatory assurance that the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh came, (Gen. xlix. 10.) and, accordingly, it was not till about the time Christ publicly appeared in the temple, in the twelfth year of his age, that the last king, Archelaus, was dethroned and banished. The Redeemer was not only to be of the tribe of Judah, but of the family of David; and his genealogy, both by natural and legal succession, have, in scripture, been preserved as evidence. Matt. i. Luke iii. Isaiah predicted that a virgin should conceive and bear a son; and, in due time, the fulfilment of the glorious prophecy was attested to Mary's espoused husband by an angel from heaven. Isa. vi. 14. Matt. i. 20. Prophecy had pointed to Bethlehem Ephrata, as the place of his nativity; and two of the Evangelists inform us Jesus was born there. Micah v. 2. Matt. ii. I. Luke ii. 4, 6. The Prophet predicted to Jerusalem the approach of her lowly King riding upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass; and the Evangelist records its exact fulfilment, when Jesus so entered the city amid the hosannahs of the multitude. Zech. ix. 9. Matt. xxi. I. Prophecy declared, "When we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him;" and we know that "he came unto his own, and his own received him not." Isa. liii. 2. John i. 11. It was said by the Prophet, "We hid, as it were, our faces from him;" and the Evangelist informs us, "All his disciples forsook him and fled." Isa. liii. 3. Matt. xxvi. 56. The Saviour, in prophecy, complained of being laughed to scorn; and his Evangelists narrate the contempt with which he was treated: "Herod with his men of war set him at nought," and the Roman soldiers having arrayed him in the emblems of mock royalty, bowed the knee before him in derision. Psal. xx. 6. Matt. xxvii. 29. Luke xxiii. 11. If he said,

"I hid not my face from shame and spitting," the pen of inspiration records that he was thus ignominiously treated. Isa. L. 6. Matt. xxv. 67. Prophecy had foretold, "They shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek;" and its fulfilment was witnessed, when "they spit upon him, and took the reed and smote him on the head." Mic. v. 1. Matt. xxvii. 30. The prophecy is, "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth:" the fulfilment is, "When he was accused of the chief Priests and elders, he answered nothing." Isa. liii. 7. Matt. xxvii. 12. The Prophet predicted he should be "despised and rejected of men," and when, by their law, a prisoner must be released, the Jews clamorously preferred Barrabas, a robber and murderer, to the holy Son of God. Isa. liii. 3. Mark xv. 15. Did prophecy portray him as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief?" He not merely "endured the contradiction of sinners," but suffered under the hiding of his Father's face, and in our room experienced the bitterness of divine wrath, till in his agony he sweat blood, and exclaimed that his soul was "exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Isa. liii. 3. Heb. xii. 3. Matt. xxvi. 38. If it was foretold that he who did eat his bread should lift his heel against him; "Jesus answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish the same shall betray me." Psal. xli. 9. Matt. xxvi. 23. It was predicted that he should be prized at "thirty pieces of silver;" and it is also narrated, that Judas covenanted to betray his Master into the hands of his enemies for that sum. Zech. xi. 12. Matt. xxvi. 14, 15. And the Lord said unto the Prophet, "Cast it into the *potter*;" and when the traitor returned the reward of his treachery to the chief Priests, "they took counsel and bought with it the *potter's* field to bury strangers in." Zech. xi. 13. Matt. xxvii. 8. In prophecy, the Saviour complained, "They shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him seeing he trusted in him;" and in the very words did not the chief Priests with the scribes and elders, "mocking him," say, "He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him?" Psal. xxii. 7, 8. Matt. xxvi. 43. In prophecy, the Saviour complained, "They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink;" and it was verified when, at Golgotha, "they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall." Psal. lxix. 21. Matt. xxvii. 34. The Prophet foretold that "threescore and two weeks" of years after the edict for rebuilding Jerusalem, the Messiah should be cut off; (Dan. ix. 26.) and history testifies this to have been the precise time that elapsed between the giving of that decree by Artaxerxes and the death of Christ. If it was promised that he should pour out his soul unto death; Jesus said, "It is finished, and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." Isa. liii. 12. John xix. 30. 'Though to be put to a violent death, and "cut off out of the land of the living," it was added by the Prophets, "but not for himself; for the transgression of my people was he smitten;" and accordingly he who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," "bare our sins in his own body." Dan. ix. 26. Isa. liii. 8. Heb. vii. 26. 1 Peter ii. 24.

Yet the Prophet declares, "He was numbered with transgressors;" and the Evangelist records, that "with him they crucified two thieves, the one on his right hand and the other on his left." Isa. liii. 12. Mark xv. 27. The prophecy is, "They pierced my hands and feet;" and an incredulous disciple was convinced of the reality of his Master's resurrection by witnessing in his hands the print of the nails by which he had been transfixed to the accursed tree. Psal. xxii. 16. John xx. 27. Again, it was predicted, "They shall look on me whom they have pierced;" and it is also recorded, that "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith there came out blood and water." Zech. xii. 10. John xix. 34. If it was farther foretold, "they part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture," Inspiration also informs us, that in this very manner did the attendant soldiers divide the Saviour's raiment. Psal. xxii. 18. John xix. 23. The Passover had typified, and the Psalmist predicted of the Righteous One, that "the Lord keepeth all his bones, not one of them shall be broken;" and the beloved disciple saw and bore record, that while, at the request of the Jews, the legs of the malefactors were broken, the Saviour, being already dead they brake not his. Psal. xxxiv. 20. John xix. 33. It was predicted that he should be with the rich in the state of the dead; (Isa. liii. 9,) and it is also recorded by the various Evangelists, that Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counsellor, having begged from Pilate the body of Jesus, wrapped it in fine linen, and laid it in his own new sepulchre, wherein never man before was laid. It was again said in Prophecy, "Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;" and early in the morning of the third day, his resurrection was declared to his disciples by an angel whose countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. Psal. xvi. 10.—Matt. xxviii, 3. And, lastly, it was prophetically declared, "Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive." And so it is recorded, that "while his disciples beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight." Psal. lxviii. 18. Acts i. 9. Eph. iv. 8."

"Prophecy has hitherto been literally fulfilled, and there is the same ground as ever for believing that it will still continue to be so. And indeed it is to be remarked, as a singular inconsistency, that even those who are most strenuous in maintaining the spiritual interpretation of all prophecies which relate to the *future*, seldom pretend that this has hitherto been the way in which prophecy has been fulfilled. They will admit that, in almost all that relates to the *past*, the predictions have received their plain and proper accomplishment; and just as the time has elapsed, the point for commencing this spiritual fulfilment has been advanced.

"But from the continued operation of the same principle—of which up to the present hour we are not left without exemplification—and from the entire absence of all authoritative imitation of any intended alteration, we may reasonably infer—nay, we are bound to believe, that in this respect no such change is designed, and that any interpretation assuming this as its basis, is altogether unwarranted.

“In maintaining the literal fulfilment of prophecy, we are not, however, to be understood as denying that the prophetic scriptures contain many *figures*, which are only to be explained as figurative language must always be. In pleading for the literal fulfilment of prophecy, we are only asking for it the same principle of interpretation that is extended to other compositions. In every case, except that of interpreting God's word, it would be considered as the highest injustice to an author to change entirely the meaning of the language ordinarily employed, simply because figures occasionally occurred; nor would any one consider himself warranted to interpret even the figures themselves otherwise than in consistency with the connecting statements given, discriminating the one from the other. Yet without the least pretence to *divine authority* for the principle, statements in scripture, given wholly or partially in unfigured language, are equally subjected to the spiritualizing process, and meanings extracted which nothing less than a *new revelation* could enable the reader to discover; or rather, it may be said, which is *itself* a new revelation, having never been in the written language, to be in any way elicited from it.

“Although the Apostle Paul speaks of the seed of Abraham (Rom. xi. 17)—*under the figure* of “branches broken off,” and to be yet again “*grafted* into their own *olive tree*,” no one supposes that the use of such a figure is a reason for denying that the *literal Israel* is there meant. Yet such is the very treatment given to the Old Testament prophecies.

“But fidelity to the word of God requires, that where figures do *not* occur, figurative interpretations be *not* introduced; and where figures are introduced, that they be really interpreted as such.”—

“The legitimate conclusion from this literal fulfilment of Prophecy in times past surely is, that predictions concerning the future will have a similar accomplishment, and that, as Jesus was really born of ‘a virgin,’ so will he also ‘come with the clouds of heaven,’ when there shall be ‘given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him.’ Is. vii. 14—Dan. vii. 13, 14. That, in the day of his power, he will as certainly come to Egypt ‘riding on a swift cloud,’ as, in his humiliation, he entered Jerusalem seated on an ass. Is. xix. 1—Zech. ix. 9. That as ‘the spirit of whoredoms in the midst of Israel’ has hitherto blinded them, that ‘they have not known the Lord,’ they *shall* ‘know that the Lord of hosts hath sent’ him, when he shall inherit Judah, his portion in the Holy Land. Hos. v. 4—Zech. ii, 11, 12. That as, when formerly he tabernacled with men, he broke not the bruised reed, nor quenched the smoking flax, so shall he yet ‘go forth as a mighty man, stirring up jealousy like a man of war’ Is. xlii. 3, 13. That as he really submitted to oppression and affliction, while ‘he opened not his mouth,’ so will he, in the day of his fierce anger, ‘destroy and devour at once.’ Is. liii. 7; xliii. 14. That as the humble Shiloh truly came ere the sceptre had departed from Judah, so will the Lord when he builds up Zion, appear in his glory. Gen. xlix. 10—Ps.

eii. 16. That as, when he formerly appeared in our world, the Jewish nation saw in him no form nor comeliness, so will he be 'the desire of all nations' when he comes again. Is. iii. 12—liii. 2—Hag. ii. 7. That as, at his coming, he was truly 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' he will, at his return, 'rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in his people.' Is. liii. 8; lxv. 19. That as the children of Israel have really remained 'many days without a king and without a prince,' so they will, in the same sense, have this reproach removed, when, in the latter days, they 'shall return and seek the Lord their God, and *The Beloved, their King,*' Hos. iii. 4, 5. That as he who 'is to be Ruler in Israel' was really born in Bethlehem, so, when he has 'returned unto Zion, he will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.' Micah v. 2—Zech. viii. 3. That as 'the city and the Sanctuary' were really destroyed by 'the people of the prince' who came to execute the vengeance of God, so will the house of the Lord of hosts 'be built' again when he is 'returned to Jerusalem with mercies.' Dan. ix. 26—Zech. i. 16. That as really as his disciples 'hid their faces from him' in the hour of his distress, shall 'many people and strong nations come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.' Is. liii. 3—Zech. viii. 22. That as on Calvary he really 'made his soul an offering for sin,' so will he reign 'in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.' Is. liii. 10; xxiv. 23."

What reason can be offered for putting a spiritual interpretation on the one class of predictions, in the above series, which was not extended to the other? Notwithstanding the unbelief of the Jews, those concerning his sufferings and death were fulfilled to the very letter; and what is there in the language of the other which should induce us to adopt a system of interpretation so opposite in its nature? This mode of spiritualizing certain prophecies appears the more exceptionable when we perceive, that while one clause of a sentence is allowed to have a literal signification, another is understood spiritually, although there is nothing observable which can direct to such a change—the system being still farther encumbered by the difficulty of managing certain portions which will in no way bear to such accommodation as it requires. Have we, then, no reason to fear that in thus introducing an unauthorized system of prophetic interpretation, we may be "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"? Instead, therefore, of unreasonably persisting in adherence to such opinions, and putting upon prophecy a meaning it cannot bear, let us inquire whether the more natural and the more obvious sense be not that which the Spirit of God designed. The answer to this inquiry may perhaps be read in the fact, that prophecy has hitherto been fulfilled in its proper sense; while the consequences of abandoning this mode of interpretation by the Jews, form a beacon which ought ever to be kept in view. By overlooking the plain declarations of his sufferings and death, they would not receive the despised Nazarene as their anointed Lord. Let us not, in defiance of their punishment, reject the

more numerous declarations of his coming and kingdom in glory. Let christians attend to the lofty descriptions of the holy prophets—let them weigh their united evidence—let them examine the multitude of these predictions, and the sublimity which pervades them—let them consider the harmony with which they all bear testimony to His coming and abiding with his people—and let them then reflect whether it is probable that all these promises, clear as they seem, and literally as prophecy has hitherto been fulfilled, do not in reality imply, and afford evidence of the truth of Christ's personal reign on earth during the Millennium."

ON THE WEEKLY OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE following sentiments of eminent men of different persuasions, on this subject, are not intended to justify this practice by the opinions of men, but to show that christians, simply attending to the word of inspiration, and though variously situated, yet guided by the same Spirit, have in different ages, and under different circumstances, arrived at the same conclusion.

The following is from *William King*, Archbishop of Dublin, in a "*Discourse concerning the Inventions of men in the Worship of God.*"

"Christ's positive command to do this in remembrance of him, &c. must oblige us in some times and in some places; and there can be no better way of determining when we are obliged to do it, than by observing when God in his goodness gives us opportunity; for either we are then obliged to do it, or else we may choose whether we will ever do it or no; there being no better means of determining the frequency than this of God's giving us the opportunity. And the same rule holding in all other general positive commands, such as in those that oblige us to charity, we may be sure it holds likewise in this.—Therefore whoever slight or neglects any opportunity of receiving, which God affords him, does sin as certainly as he who, being enabled by God to perform an act of charity, and invited by a fit object, neglects to relieve him, or shuts up his bowels of compassion against him, concerning whom the Scriptures assure us, that the love of God dwells not in him. And the argument is rather stronger against him who neglects this holy ordinance; for how can it be supposed that man has a true love for his Saviour, or a due sense of his sufferings, who refuses or neglects to remember the greatest of all benefits, in the easiest manner, though commanded to do it by his Redeemer, and invited by a fair opportunity of God's own offering.

"It is manifest that if it be not our own faults, we may have an opportunity every Lord's day when we meet together; and therefore that church is guilty of laying aside the command, whose order and worship doth not

require and provide for this practice. Christ's command seems to lead us directly to it: for, "Do this in remembrance of me," implies that Christ was to leave them, that they were to meet together after he was gone, and that he required them *to remember him at their meetings whilst he was absent*. The very design of our public meetings on the Lord's day, and not on the Jewish Sabbath, is, to remember and keep in our minds a sense of what Christ did and suffered for us till he come again; and this we are obliged to do, not in such a manner as our own inventions suggest, but by such means as Christ himself has prescribed to us, that is, by celebrating this holy ordinance.

"It seems then probable, from the very institution of this ordinance, that our Saviour designed it should be a part of God's service, in all the solemn assemblies of Christians, as the passover was in the assemblies of the Jews. To know, therefore, how often Christ requires us to celebrate this feast, we have no more to do, but to inquire how often Christ requires us to meet together; that is, at least, every Lord's day.

"And the same is further manifest, in the second place, from the examples of the Apostles, and of the churches of God, in the New Testament. They cannot be supposed but to have understood what Christ meant by these words, 'Do this in Remembrance of me;' and if it appears that they did make this feast *a constant part of ordinary worship*, we may safely conclude that Christ meant it should be so. And here it is observable that we do not find any solemn stated meeting of Christians for worship in the whole New Testament without it.—

"When you come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper;" which intimates that one main design of their coming together, was and ought to have been to eat the Lord's supper; though by their misbehaviour they so corrupted the ordinance, that it could not be called his supper.

"If one should now reprove Christians, whom they observe to misbehave themselves in church, in these words, 'When you come together into one place, that is not to hear the word of God preached to you; for one is talking and another is sleeping; would not every body conclude, that in the opinion of the reprover, the hearing of the word of God preached ought to be one end of their coming together? And surely, then, the Apostle's saying, that when you come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper, &c. gives us ground to conclude in his opinion, eating the Lord's supper ought to be one constant end of our coming together. Which is further manifest from the advice he gives them, verse 33, 'Wherefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, tarry one for another.' One end, therefore, of their coming together, was, as children come together in a family at meal time, that is to be fed at their father's table: for what the Apostle called in the former verse coming together into one place, in this verse he calls coming together to eat; intimating that a main end of their coming together into one place was to eat."—

“I have endeavoured all along to confine myself to the plain words of Scripture, and to use arguments only, as the meanest might be able to judge of from their Bibles: yet in a controverted place of Scripture, concerning the meaning of a command of Christ, relating to some positive duty, I take the constant practice of the church, from the Apostles downward, to be a good means of determining the sense of it; and as there is not any example of a stated assembly for worship in the New Testament without the Lord's Supper, so I think there is not any example of that nature in all antiquity. For the truth of this I appeal to those who are skilled in it. The nearer we come to the Apostles, we shall still find the Lord's Supper the more punctually observed, as a constant part of the ordinary service of the church; and it is remarkable, that when some who had been present at the prayers and preaching of the church, began to go away without receiving, (which was a corruption that came in about 300 years after Christ,) it was so great an innovation and breach of the Scripture rule, that the church decreed whoever was guilty of it should be excommunicated. See particularly the 9th of those commonly called “the Canons of the Apostles,” and the 2d Canon of the Counsel of Antioch. Thus the practice of the church continued for many ages. And though the generality of men could not be persuaded constantly to partake of the Lord's Supper, after the discipline of the church was dissolved, and the piety of men began to cool, yet still it was celebrated on the Lord's day, according to the first settled practice of the church.

“And, indeed, the corrupt practice of the solitary masses of the Papists, is a further evidence of its being counted originally a part of the ordinary worship of God. I think it is confessed by all, even by the priests themselves, that these masses had their origin from the universal corruption and negligence of Christians; for whilst the people had either piety or zeal, they communicated with the bishop or minister in every assembly, at least a competent number of them: but when piety and devotion were in a manner lost in the corrupt ages of the church, it came to pass that though the minister consecrated the elements every Lord's day, according to the example of the Holy Scriptures, and antiquity, yet he could prevail with few or none to receive with him, but was often forced to receive alone. This was a great corruption, and a falling from the Scripture precedent; but the Roman church, instead of reforming the abuse by obliging the people to receive as formerly, corrupted her principles as well as practice, and decreed it lawful and sufficient for the priest to receive alone. Yet this abuse shows us what should be, and what has been the practice; and that the church has constantly reckoned the Lord's Supper as an ordinary part of public worship in Christian assemblies on solemn days; and surely, then, to lay it aside can be termed no less than an invention of our own, since we can neither in Scripture, nor in the church of God, for 1400 years together, (which is a sufficient commentary

on the Scripture text,) produce one example of a stated solemn Christian assembly without it."

We shall now hear the celebrated John Wesley. After *fifty-five* year's reflection upon the subject, he decides that christians should show forth the Lord's death every Lord's day. He prefaces the 106th Sermon, Luke xxii. 19. with this remark:

"This discourse was written above five and fifty years ago, for the use of my pupils at Oxford. I have added very little, but retrenched much; as I then used more words than I now do. But I thank God, I have not yet seen cause to alter my sentiments, in any point which is therein delivered."

The Sermon is titled "The Duty of Constant Communion." concerning which he says—

"It is no wonder that men who have no fear of God, should never think of doing this. But it is strange that it should be neglected by any that do fear God, and desire to save their souls; and yet nothing is more common. One reason why many neglect it is, they are so much afraid of *eating and drinking unworthily*, that they never think how much greater the danger is, when they do not eat it or drink it at all."

In speaking of *constantly* receiving the supper, Mr. Wesley says—

"I say *constantly* receiving. For as to the phrase of *frequent* communion, it is absurd to the last degree. If it means any thing else than constant, it means more than can be proved to be the duty of any man. 'For if we are not obliged to communicate *constantly*, by what argument can it be proved that we are obliged to communicate frequently? yea, more than once a year? or once in seven years? or once before we die? Every argument brought for this, either proves that we ought to do it *constantly*, or proves nothing at all. Therefore that indeterminate, unmeaning way of speaking, ought to be laid aside by all men of understanding. Our power is the only rule of our duty. Whatever we can do, that we ought. With respect either to this or any other command, he that, when he may obey if he will, does not, will have no place in the kingdom of heaven."

"The most common excuse for not obeying is, 'I am *unworthy*; and he that *eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*.—Therefore I dare not communicate, lest I should eat and drink my own damnation!"

In speaking of what Paul says of "eating and drinking unworthily," he observes—

"This is not our unworthiness: but the disorderly and unworthy manner of eating the supper—one is *hungry* and another is *drunken*.' But what is that to *you*? Is there any danger of *your* doing so? of your eating and drinking *thus unworthily*? However unworthy you are to communicate, there is no fear of your communicating thus.—If then you fear bringing *damnation* on yourself by this, you fear where no fear is. Fear it not for eating and drinking unworthily; for that, in St. Paul's sense, you cannot do."

“ An objection against constant communion is, that it abates our reverence for the sacrament. Suppose it did, what then? Will you thence conclude, that you are not to receive it constantly? This does not follow. God commands you ‘ to do this.’ You may do it now, but will not: and to excuse yourself say, ‘ If I do it so often, it will abate the reverence with which I do it now.’ Suppose it did; has God ever told you, that when the obeying his command abates your reverence to it, then you may disobey it? If he has, you are guiltless; if not, what you say is just nothing to the purpose. The law is clear. Either show that the Lawgiver makes this exception, or you are guilty before him.

“ It has been shown, first, That if we consider the Lord's supper as a command of Christ, no man can have any pretence to christian piety, who does not receive it (not once a month, but) as often as he can: secondly, that if we consider the institution of it as a mercy to ourselves, no man who does not receive it as often as he can, has any pretence to christian prudence: thirdly, that none of the objections usually made, can be any excuse for that man who does not, at every opportunity, obey this command and accept this mercy.”

To be continued.

ELIXIR OF HEALTH AND LONGEVITY.

In 1323, a person of the name of Villars, in Paris, gave out that his uncle, who, it is well known, had attained very nearly to his hundredth year, and died then only in consequence of an accident, had left him a certain preparation, which possessed the power of prolonging a man's life to upwards of a century, provided he lived with sobriety and exercised daily in the open air. When this individual happened to observe a funeral, he would shrug up his shoulders in pity. “ If the deceased,” said he “ had followed my advice he would not be where he now is.” His friends, among whom he distributed his medicine gratuitously, observing the conditions required, experienced its utility and praised it incessantly. He was thence encouraged to sell it at a crown a bottle; and the sale was prodigious. Now the remedy was in fact nothing more than the water of the river Seine slightly acidulated; those who made use of it and were attentive, at the same time, to regimen and exercise, soon found their health greatly improved. To others, who were neglectful, he would observe, “ It is your own fault if you are not perfectly cured; you have been intemperate and indolent, renounce these vices and you will live at least a hundred years.” Some took his advice, and the very decided advantage which these latter derived from Monsieur Villar's drops caused him to increase rapidly in reputation and wealth. At length however, it was unfortunately discovered, that Villar's remedy was composed almost entirely from water—his practice was now at an end—men

had recourse to other empirics, of a far more dangerous character; and to specifics and advice, much less efficacious and rational in their nature.

SIMPLICITY OF GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION.

“O how unlike the complex works of man,
 Heav'n's easy, artless, unencumber'd plan!
 No meretricious graces to beguile,
 No clust'ring ornament to clog the pile;
 From ostentation as from weakness free,
 It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
 Majestic in its own simplicity.
 Inscrib'd above the portal, from afar
 Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
 Legible only by the light they give,
 Stand the soul-quick'ning words—*Believe and live.*
 Too many, shock'd at what should charm them most,
 Despise the plain directions, and are lost.
 Heav'n on such terms! (they cry with proud disdain,)
 Incredible, impossible, and vain!—
 Rebel, because 'tis easy to obey;
 And scorn, for its own sake, the gracious way.
 These are the sober, in whose cooler brains
 Some thought of immortality remains;
 The rest, too busy or too gay to wait
 On the sad theme, their everlasting state,
 Sport for a day, and perish in a night,
 The foam upon the waters not so light.”

Question. Why are so many good people so much divided in their general-views of the Scriptures?

Answer. “Because they belong to different sects, and have different systems, and they rather make the Bible bow to their own system, received by tradition from their fathers, than make their system bow to the Bible; or in other words, each man, too generally, views the Bible through the medium of his system, and of course it will appear to him to favor it. Just as if A, B and C should each put on different coloured glasses; A puts on green spectacles, B yellow, and C blue: each one of them looks through his own glasses at a piece of white paper, and each concludes he is right, not remembering that he has his spectacles on. Thus to A it appears green, to B yellow, and to C blue. They begin to argue on the subject, and it is impossible for any one of them to convince another that he is wrong—each one feels a conviction next to absolute certainty that *his* opinion is right. But D, who has no spectacles on, and who is standing looking on, during the contest, very well knows that they are all wrong; he sees the spectacles on each man's nose, and easily accounts for the difference. Thus one professor reads the Bible with John Calvin on his nose, another with John Wesley on his nose, a third with John Gill on his nose, and a fourth with good old Thomas Boston, or the good old lights of Scotland. Thrice happy is the man who lifts the Bible as if it had dropped from heaven into his hand alone, and whose eyes are anointed with the true eye salve that he may see.”

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