

THE
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[No. 3.]

INTENTION AND EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY.

[*Selected.*]

THE history of the world down from its first page till the present time represents man to be precisely such a being, in respect to moral character, as the bible describes him. In his natural, or rather preternatural character, he exhibits himself to be ignorant of God, alienated from him, filled with enmity, hatred, selfishness, ingratitude, and a false ambition. However the reflex light of christianity in civilized nations, and what is called the science of morals approbated and enforced in the social compact and forms of government of Pagan nations, have imposed restraints upon these evil principles, have offered rewards to virtue and assigned punishments to vice, still the radical principles of human depravity exhibit themselves in the children of nature, under the best human culture; and thereby prove, that, however they may be restrained, they still exist in all the bitterness of moral corruption. Hence all the crime, misery, and wretchedness, which appear in the human family. A mind alienated from God is alienated from man. This is a truism of greater momentum in morals, than any axiom of Newton's in physics. Hence every scheme which has been adopted for moralizing and improving the social character of man, which has not been based upon the above truism, has failed of its object. Like the universal *specifics* of empirics, or the nostrums of quacks, they have proved the disgrace of their authors, and the injury, if not the ruin, of the too credulous recipients. The christian scheme of moralizing and improving the world recommends itself to the philosopher upon his own principles; while false philosophy ascribes effects to inadequate causes, and would produce results, regardless of the fitness of means, true philosophy requires adequate causes, and means suitably adapted to the ends in view.—Thus the christian

scheme of moralizing and felicitating the world is based upon the actual condition of the human family, and regards every symptom and exhibition of the complex case of human vileness. But it begins at the root of the disorder. Perfect moral health can be enjoyed only in the temperature of perfect love to God, and the food of perfect obedience to his will. A comfortable degree of this health can be enjoyed in this life only by a reconciliation to the mind of God, which necessarily produces benevolence in its manifold exhibitions towards man. The christian scheme of ameliorating society in this world, and fitting man for heaven, is based upon these leading principles:—

1. That man is alienated from God through ignorance of him, and by his wicked works.

2. That this ignorance, alienation, and these wicked works, must necessarily, eventuate in his ruin, unless he be delivered from them.

3. That wicked works proceeding from alienation of mind, and alienation of mind proceeding from ignorance of the moral character of God, the true and rational course of procedure to the deliverance of man from this state, commences with imparting to his mind just views of the character of God, which, when apprehended, reconcile the mind to God and necessarily produce philanthropy or benevolence to man. On these principles, which the wise men of this world on other subjects call philosophical, does the christian religion proceed.

The rudiments of christianity, or the first lessons which it imparts, are comprehended in one sentence, viz, "God is love." This does not, in its scriptural connexions, represent him as having no other perfections, natural or moral, but that of love: but it represents him in his procedure to men, in the whole origin and process of the work of reconciliation, in the amelioration of the character and condition of men, as super-eminently displaying benevolence or philanthropy.

To bring man to love God and one another, is the high end of the christian religion. This is happiness. The happiness of heaven is the happiness of perfect love. The intelligent christian expects to be introduced into a society of the most refined and exalted intelligences, whose love to each other will be incapable of augmentation. Hence the standard of christian perfection is graduated by love to the brethren—and just in so far as we have progressed in the cultivation of complacent affection and benevolence, so far have we obtained a taste for the society of the saved.

One leading design of the institution called the church, was to give its members a taste for the society of heaven; for the fact is, but very few have any taste for such a society. and for such

entertainments as the intelligent and perfect christian pants after, in the upper world. Many christians talk a good deal about heaven; would like, it is true, to be in the palace of the Great King, but they would rather be in the kitchen amongst the servants, than amidst the attendants that wait upon his royal person. They think more upon being safe than upon the high enjoyments, and talk more on escaping the burning lake than on all the rational delights of pure and exalted spirits before the throne of the Almighty.

Men have made many attempts to promote good will amongst a few—whom nature, interest, solemn pledges, climate, or country had united. But these are poor substitutes for the great scheme of consociation devised and published by the Almighty. Every tie has been broken or worn out, which men have devised as a substitute for the ties of enlightened christian affection. But what consideration can unite men in the purest affection, as the manifold cords of the christian religion?

The one faith, the one hope, the one Spirit, the one Lord, open a new world of relationships. Christians are united by the highest, strongest, noblest ties that human reason knows; each of which is stronger than death, and more triumphant than the grave. That we are redeemed by the same blood, bought by the same Lord, purified by the same Spirit, embraced in the same love of the Father; that we are to be joint participants of the same glorious resurrection, co-heirs of the same immortality, and joint inheritors of the same triumphant kingdom; that we are to be fellow guests at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, to attend the funeral of nature, and to be fellow citizens with all the pure and exalted intelligences in the universe in one enraptured throng for ever, are considerations, if realized, ought, one would think, to produce but one feeling towards the household of faith, banish all discord, cover all defects, excite all sympathies, and elicit all brotherly love.

This is that fountain, the streams of which are pure morality. That formal, stiff, forced, mechanical, and legal morality which appears detached from these principles, which grows from another root, is like the wild olive or forest grape, which, while exhibiting some of the appearances, possess not those valuable properties, on account of which, we appreciate those cultivated by man.

INFIDELITY, AND THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

No. 3.

The author of the dissertations has not yet been allowed room to explain himself fully upon the term *experience* as employed and interpreted by Mr. Hume. We shall allow him another

paragraph. It may be objected by our sceptical friends, for whose benefit more especially these essays appear, that we are somewhat influenced by partisan partiality in giving so much of the argument on one side and so little on the other. Think again, friend objector. A child may ask a question, or a simpleton may propose an objection, requiring volumes of reply. It is always fair and equitable in any advocate to bring up the strongest objections in the most condensed form against the system he designs furthering, and then oppose them with all the vigor of his power.

Besides, Are you not acquainted, Mr. Sceptic, with the strength and potency of your own cause? Is it necessary for us to furnish you with arguments when you boast of so many already? Were we so benevolent, you would scorn such favors. We therefore only present so much of the objection on the part of infidelity as gives occasion and proper direction to the argument on the part of christianity. This is reasonable—this is honorable. You, O man of doubts, already perceive the justness and fairness of this course, or will at least on further reflection.—Listen then again to the Doctor of Aberdeen :—

“In proposing his argument, the author [Mr. Hume] would surely be understood to mean only *personal* experience; otherwise, his making testimony derive its light from an experience which derives its light *from testimony*, would be introducing what logicians call a circle in causes. It would exhibit the same things alternately, as causes and effects of each other. Yet nothing can be more limited than the sense which is conveyed under the term experience, in the first acceptance. The merest clown or peasant derives incomparably more knowledge from testimony, and the communicated experience of others, than in the longest life he could amass out of his own memory. Nay, to such a scanty portion the savage himself is not confined. If that therefore must be the rule, the only rule by which testimony is ultimately to be judged, our belief in matters of fact must have very narrow bounds. No testimony would have any weight with us that did not relate an event similar at least to some one observation which we ourselves have had access to make. For example, that there is such people on the earth as negroes, could not, on that hypothesis, be rendered credible to any one who had never seen a negro, not even by the most numerous and unexceptionable attestations. Against the reception of such testimony, however strong, the whole force of the author's argument evidently operates. But that innumerable absurdities would flow from this principle, I might easily evince, did I not think the task superfluous.”

As the privilege has not been given the Doctor to enter into close combat upon the subject of miracles, we shall grant him this opportunity when we hear one more objection from Mr. Hume. It is in these words :—

“As the violations of truth are more common in the testimony concerning religious miracles, than in that concerning any other matter of

fact, this must diminish very much the former testimony, *and make us form a GENERAL RESOLUTION, never to lend any attention to it, with whatever specious pretext it may be covered.*"

The Doctor replies—

"Never did the passion of an inflamed orator, or the intemperate zeal of a religionist, carry him further against his adversary than this man of speculation is carried by his prejudice against religion. Demagogues and bigots have often warned the people against listening to the arguments of an envied, and therefore detested, rival, lest by his sophistry he should be seduced into the most fatal errors. The same part this author, a philosopher, a sceptic, a dispassionate enquirer after truth, as surely he chuses to be accounted, now acts in favor of infidelity. He thinks it not safe to give religion even a hearing. . . .

. . . The old way of scrutiny and argument must now be laid aside, having at length been discovered to be but a bungling, a tedious, a dangerous way at best. What then shall we substitute in its place? The essayist has a most admirable expedient. A shorter and surer method he recommends to us, the expeditious way of *resolution*.—"Form" says he "A GENERAL RESOLUTION *never to give any attention to testimonies or facts urged by religion, with whatever specious pretext they may be covered.*" . . .

"Before the remark of the author can be of any use in directing our judgment, as to the evidence of miracles attested, we must consider whether the original tenets of the witnesses would naturally have biassed their minds in *favor* of the miracles, or in *opposition* to them. If the former was the case, the testimony is the *less* to be regarded; if the latter, so much the *more*. Will it signify on this head to acquaint us, that the prejudices of the witnesses must have favoured the miracles, since they were zealous promoters of the doctrine, in support of which those miracles are said to have been performed? To answer thus would be to misunderstand the point. The question is, Was this doctrine the faith of the witnesses, before they saw, or fancied they saw, the miracles? If it was, I agree with him. Great, very great allowance must be made for the prejudices of education, for principles, early, perhaps carefully, and deeply rooted in their minds, and for the religious affection founded in these principles; which allowance must always derogate from the weight of their testimony. But if the faith of the witnesses stood originally in opposition to the doctrine attested by the miracles; if the only account that can be given of their conversion, is the conviction which the miracles produced in them; it must be a preposterous way of arguing, to derive their conviction from a religious zeal, which would at first obstinately withstand, and for some time hinder such conviction. On the contrary, that the evidence arising from miracles performed in proof of a doctrine disbelieved, and consequently hated before, did in fact surmount that obstacle, and conquer all the opposition arising thence, is a very strong presumption in favour of that evidence; just as strong a presumption in its favour, as it would have been against it, had all their former zeal, and principles, and prejudices, co-operated with the evidence, whatever it was, in gaining an entire assent.

"Hence there is the greatest disparity in this respect, a disparity which deserves to be particularly attended to, betwixt the evidence of miracles per-

formed in proof of a religion *to be* established, and the evidence of miracles performed in support of a religion *already* established.

“The boldest infidel will not deny that the immortality of the soul, a future and eternal state, and the connexion of our happiness or misery in that state, with our present good or bad conduct, not to mention the doctrines concerning the divine unity and perfections, are tenets which carry no absurdity in them.

“Now, as whatever is possible, may be supposed, let us suppose that the dogmas above mentioned are all infallible truths; and let the unbeliever say, whether he can conceive an object worthier of divine interposal, than to reveal these truths to mankind; and to enforce them in such a manner as may give them a suitable influence on the heart and life. Of all the inhabitants of the earth, man is incomparably the noblest. Whatever, therefore, regards the interest of the human species, is a grander concern than what regards either the inanimate or the brute creation. If man was made, as is doubtless not impossible, for an after state of immortality; whatever relates to that immortal state, or may conduce to prepare him for the fruition of it, must be immensely superior to that which concerns merely the transient enjoyments of the present life. How sublime then is the object which religion, and religion only, exhibits as the ground of supernatural interpositions! This object is no other than the interest of man, a reasonable and moral agent, the only being in this lower world which bears in his soul the image of his Maker; not the interest of an individual, but of the kind; not for a limited duration, but for eternity; an object, at least in one respect, adequate to the majesty of God.

“Can the Pagan religion—can, I should rather say, any of the numberless religions (for they are totally distinct) known by the common name of Pagan, produce any claim of this kind that will merit our attention? If the author knows of any, I wish he had mentioned it; for in all antiquity, as far as my acquaintance with it reaches, I can recollect no such claim.—Will it be said, that the monstrous heap of fables we find in ancient bards, relating to the genealogy, production, amours and achievements of the gods, are the miracles on which Greek and Roman Paganism claims to be founded?

“If one should talk in this manner, I must remind him, first, that these are by no means exhibited as *evidences*, but as the *theology* itself; the poets always using the same affirmative style concerning what passed in heaven, in hell, and in the ocean, where men could not be spectators, as concerning what passed upon earth; secondly, that all those mythological tales are confessedly recorded many centuries after they are supposed to have happened; no voucher, no testimony, nothing that can deserve the name of evidence having been produced, or even alleged, in proof of them; and thirdly, that the intention of the writers seems to be solely the amusement, not the conviction of their readers.”

Upon this subject something is still in reserve, and an extract or two may still be expected from the Doctor's dissertations.

CONDUCTOR.

FAMILIAR CONVERSATIONS

BETWEEN FATHER OMEGA AND HIS SON ALPHA.

No. 2.

SINCERITY.

ALPHA.—Another item in the faith of the preacher, and upon which he dwelt with great force and eloquence, was the influence or power of sincerity. He enlarged upon this more than any other point, and illustrated with numerous and forcible figures, the nature, operation, effects, and virtues of this quality of mind. As I had no means of taking notes, having attended the meeting incidentally, I cannot recall Mr. Orthodox' own words; but the substance of his remarks proceeded upon the principle that if a religious professor was really sincere, it mattered not materially what were his peculiar doctrines or practice.

OMEGA.—My son, was the preacher himself sincere? But, —see that you have not, either intentionally or unintentionally misrepresented him. Inconsistency itself is not so inconsistent as the person who first speaks of the importance of essentials, and then immediately teaches that it makes little difference whether or not these essentials are received, believed, or obeyed, if there is only sincerity. Your memory, without doubt, has failed you in attempting to retain and rehearse the whole discourse; for surely at least the preacher allowed the audience partially to forget what he advanced regarding essentials before speaking so palpably contradictory.

ALPHA.—It appears to me, father, upon reflection, that to be consistent is one thing, and to deliver a sermon is another, and that there is little connexion between consistency and a sermon. But I am now more interested in substantiating my statements in reference to the teachings of Mr. Orthodox. I cannot suspect my recollection, for it is generally faithful. I may forget words, or the mere verbiage of language, especially a surrounding circumnavigating style to which preachers are frequently addicted; but the thoughts, the views, the doctrines, the real essence of a discourse I cannot so easily forget.

OMEGA.—My beloved, your re-affirmation and explanation are perfectly satisfactory. And, indeed, let me say, that your first statement was well understood; but I designed in throwing out a few hints to impress you with the necessity and morality of being cautious and candid, least you should learn a very popular lesson, one that would add nothing to your intelligence or virtue, that of judging and condemning without evidence and without trial—"judging before the time." The connexionless distance between what is called a sermon and consistency, is apparent to every man of reflection and discernment. Sermons, frequently, pronounced in my own hearing, seem to have been manufactur-

ed by machinery, and that too from the most unharmonious materials. No later than last evening I was reading a volume filled with a choice selection of sermons, where I learned from the best episcopal authority, that the sovereign of England, whether king or queen, man or woman, is properly the head of the church; and then in the very next sentence it was made exceedingly simple that bishops and curates were legally entitled to their salaries.

ALPHA.—The preacher introduced one figure especially, in speaking of sincerity, which was forcibly impressed upon my memory. He threw his imagination over an area of country some two thousand miles square, showing with much ability, the various climates, process of germination, natural productions, and degrees of rapidity that fruit requires to, mature within a country so extensive. But still, said he, suppose a peach grown from a tree in the center of this two thousand miles, and another at the southern extremity, and a third at the northern extremity; each one is still a peach; and the buyer in the market asks not where they are produced, but he looks at the fruit. He forthwith applied this illustration to christian doctrines and duties in the sight of God. It was said that He judges no man by his views, but that he looks at the heart.

OMEGA.—God, our heavenly Father, we know, my son, looks at the heart, but he looks also at his own law, and will not account him sinless who neglects or disobeys it. The positive ordinances of the bible cannot be disregarded with impunity. Laws, whether human or divine, are made to be obeyed, and it is either a weak or an undignified government that enforces not its own enactments. The sophistry concerning the peach may be scattered to the four winds by a single breath. Certain combinations of influences, or the concurrence of certain fixed laws, are necessary to produce a peach; and in whatever climate this fruit is found, these influences or laws are also found. We may now take this same figure, and show, that a christian, invariably, is one who knows certain divine laws and submits to them, although indeed, like fruit upon different trees or even upon the same tree, there may be a great diversity of moral size and moral flavor among christians. With me, scripturally speaking, a man is either a christian or he is not. We have no dictionary for the definition of a half christian, or two descriptions of christians, made in divers forms by divers means. An individual, however ignorant and unlearned in other respects, is constituted a christian by knowing and obeying divine laws; and no one can be more than a christian, however intelligent, learned, or talented. Some good people indeed speak of good christians; but this style belongs to the impure speech of the apostasy. It is like speaking of a wooden tree or of liquid water. As Paul affirms in reference to dis-

cipleshlp or membership, that in Christ "there is neither male nor female"—that they are all "one"—so we say of the name christian, that it is a sort of positive name which admits not of qualification.

ALPHA.—There is as much difference, father, between your views and the views of Mr. Orthodox, as the distance between New York and London. I am desirous of making many inquiries respecting some of these things which you have intimated, but cannot now, as you taught me the necessity of fixing the mind upon one subject at a time, in order to facility and proficiency in learning. But opportunity will yet be offered.—According to the preacher's definition of religious sincerity, if he intended what he said, religion is an exception to all things else, natural or artificial. Were I to become the commander of a vessel, and design to sail from Quebec to Dublin, if, instead of the mariners compass, I depended upon sincerity, I might be driven to some port of Russia, or France, or England, or peradventure be tossed by the devious wave up into the Gulph of Mexico, and finally land at New Orleans. In navigation, I am certain that a captain, however sincere, could never arrive at the intended harbour without a compass.

OMEGA.—The popular view of a sincere man or a sincere professor, seems, in my view, to subvert the truth, throw down the land-marks of law, and paralyse the authority of divine revelation. Let us, by way of illustration, make sincerity our text, and preach from it a short sermon.

In the first place, sincerity disposes to honest and undesguised action, because it implies as well as shows a genuineness of principle or motive, which, indeed is a high recommendation. Nothing can be accomplished, great or small, without motive, whatever be the quality or character of that motive; and if deficient of the grace of sincerity, we are compelled to consider the motive hypocritical, immoral, and vile. To say that the motive which has induced to a certain action is insincere, is to impeach to a greater or less degree with villany.

But, in the second place, although we thus speak, sincerity alike disposes to vice and to virtue! Sincerity, accompanied with the knowledge, belief, and obedience of God, constitutes a christian and gives all the happiness of a good conscience; while sincerity accompanied with ignorance and blind devotion, bends the knee of the pagan in all the variety of idolatry,—and he who thus worships his own peculiar god, made after the latest fashion, is to be esteemed as much *as respects motive*, as the most exemplary christian. Those who pay their periodical devotions and enthusiastic addresses to Confucius or to Ashtaroth, are as genuinely sincere as those who worship the God of heaven and earth, be-

cause it is not a true object of worship that consecrates motive, else we could never find a hypocrite in a church-yard.

Still, in the third place, it may be argued by those who preach the power of sincerity, that we carry the principle too far in referring to pagans and idolators, and therefore, withdrawing from forbidden ground, we shall keep within prescribed limits. We hasten to christian lands and christian professors. And, to say nothing of Catholics, what think you, my son, will you see and hear if you accompany me in reviewing some of the grenadier ranks of Protestantism in reference to this contest? O for the monsters of ancient times—the giants of former days—rather than the boasting dwarfs of modern date! Yonder, towards the spiritual north, in a cathedral decorated like a theatre, is a pious worshiper, kneeling upon a soft velvet cushion, devoutly reading his sunday prayers from a beautifully bound prayer-book, gilded and lettered in gold, with a well assorted supply of silk braid to mark the places. Ask if he is sincere. He is insulted; for sincerity constitutes the only religion he has. Now look one hundred and fifty degrees south, immediately beneath the sectarian equator, where the sun-shine of fervid partisan zeal arrests the damps and chills of the colder north, and behold that fervently wild worshiper—praying with all his lungs—singing in glorious shouts,—and wrestling with the holy spirit in awful groans and pitiful tears; and while he deeply groans and travails in anguish to deliver his whole soul, still feels that there are “groanings that cannot be uttered,”—and again ask if this wrestling, agonizing, glory-getting saint is not sincere! This is enough. We proceed no further. Our review here ends. It is indisputable that such extremes exist among protestants; and the fact that they, in their party communities, have no fellowship with each other, accounting one another as heathen men and publicans, proves to a demonstration that they are not believers in their own theory that sincerity constitutes christianity.

But again, in the fourth place, there is no limit nor latitude to the power of sincerity. It rises infinitely above, beyond, and superior to all law, obligation, or authority. Its metes and bounderies have never yet been ascertained, and possibly never will, until God, by an immediate and miraculous interposition, vindicate the perfection of his own law. Sincerity chooses the left hand and refuses the right, or chooses the right hand and refuses the left, or rejects both and takes none, according to the dictates of its own counsel. The majors and minors of all law, celestial and terrestrial, are alike unregarded and unbinding. It claims a universe for itself. It makes, gives, contrrolls, annuls, enforces, or despises law with the power of sovereignty, and is a universal savior.

ALPHA.—I was reading this morning of the overthrow and

utter destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; and now since the virtues of sincerity have been discovered, we lament that the inhabitants of these cities were not sincere, for had they been blessed with sincerity they had not perished.

OMEGA.—A singular but good idea. And, to carry out the preacher's doctrine fully, not only would the destruction of these Sodom sinners have been averted by sincerity, but had they possessed it in sufficient quantity and quality, they would have been taken up into glory and received the reward of eternal blessedness.

ALPHA.—Had it been common and courteous for one so young and inquisitive as myself to converse with a preacher, I would have taken this liberty; for a number of curious facts were brought to my mind while hearing him enlarge upon this subject.

OMEGA.—It was well you did not. In one so young, and indeed in any one, as the manners of society now are, it would have resulted injuriously. Good people, in the abundance of their zeal, are sometimes chargeable with being more willing than wise. Still, there was great room for commentary. I have seen a resolute young man go out in a cold winter's morning without gloves or overshoes, sincerely thinking that he would be sufficiently warm, and in less than an hour return home with his feet and fingers frozen. I have seen persons, who, unacquainted with the laws of their body, were sincere in eating and drinking what brought upon them dyspepsy, and induced a premature death. I have seen men who sincerely transgressed the laws of the land ignorantly, and after appearing before a judge and jury, were disgraced and fined for their ignorance and crime. And I have seen a description of people called Jews who would argue with the utmost sincerity that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God nor the promised Messiah. —Sincerity must be accompanied with truth to entitle it either to respect or christian regard. CONDUCTOR.

RELIGIOUS REVIVALS.

I would have as much religion *always* as there is in any revival, divested, perhaps, of some extraneous matter. But I uncompromisingly oppose periodical religion; or, rather *annual* religion; for, revival matters are so managed as to "*get up*" revivals at stated seasons of the year. It will not take much of the spirit of prophecy to foretell, that about next January revival meetings and efforts will begin to multiply, and begin to produce showers of "Divine grace" by February, only to be completely dissipated by April.

But, *why* do April showers, perhaps the chilly winds of March, dissipate or supersede these showers of Divine grace? Because revivals must give way to business. January brings leisure to merchants, tradesmen, &c., to get up revivals till the money-making season again returns. I submit, to christians and to all, if this periodicity of revivals, and at *such* times and seasons, too, does not tell a story touching revivals that should make those blush whom it may concern.

Let me not, by any means, be understood to speak against man's exercising the religious feeling. So far from it, I would advocate our exercising the religious sentiments more *all the time*, than they are now exercised even in revivals. But, I would *not* have these exercises *fitful*, but perennial. The day of Pentecost should have lasted till now, and even swept down the vista of all coming time, till the last human being gave up the ghost. The principles advocated in this essay, *show* that religion should be the *paramount* feeling, pursuit, occupation, of man, and not a winter's coat, that he can put on when he cannot make money, only to be put off when he can. Money should be the one to give place to religion, and not religion to money-making. And this subjecting the "Spirit of God," as revival influences are called, to the worldly spirit, tells a deep, dark story on the religion of the day—tells it that it is both animal, and secondary at that, while it *should* be *primary*, and in-wrought into the very texture of all we do, say, feel.

I am fully persuaded, that the Bible does not inculcate, does not even sanction the revival spirit, or measures, or converts of the day. For, those that are *converted* by impulse, and, therefore disqualified to enjoy constant, permanent religion, as well as to shine as a steady christian light upon the sinful darkness of the surrounding world.—*Fowler on Religion.*

CHAPTER OF EXTRACTS.

If the reader has a taste for variety, he may always be gratified by examining the assortment of matter labeled, Chapter of Extracts, in which department we design inserting many of the choice pearls of truth. Although the connexion or the relationship of these literary & religious gems may be as difficult to trace as the exact relationship between the inhabitants of Spain and Africa, or between the most remote descendants of the three sons of Noah, yet, we can assure the reader they will be selected in view of their value, and that they will invariably repay for an attentive perusal. The verses may at times be unusually long, and again quite short; and sometimes the subject of one verse may have some little bearing upon another; but generally no such affinity may be expected.

It requires but little reflection to discover that the fiercest disputes about religion are about what the bible does *not* say, rather than what it *does* say—about words and phrases coined in the mint of speculative theology.

Among christians there is now, as there was at the beginning, a very great diversity in the knowledge of the christian institution. There are babes, children, young men, and fathers in Christ now, as well as in the days of the Apostle John. This, from the natural gifts of God, from the diversities of age, education, and circumstances, is unavoidable. And would it not be just as rational and as scriptural, to excommunicate one another because our knowledge is greater or less than any fixed measure, as for differences of opinion or matters of speculation?

If God has bestowed better gifts or better opportunities on one man than on another, by which he has attained more knowledge, instead of thanking God for his kindness to the community, they beg God to take him away; and if he will not be so unkind, they will at length put him from them under the charge of heresy. In most instances the greatest error of which a brother can be guilty, is to study his bible more than his companions—or, at least, to surpass them in his knowledge of the mystery of Christ.

It is a virtue to forget scholastic jargon, and even the names of the dogmas which have convulsed christendom. It is a concession due to the crisis in which we live, for the sake of peace, to adopt the vocabulary of heaven, and to return the borrowed phraseology of the schools to its rightful owners—to speculate no more upon the opinions of Saint Austin or Saint Origen—but to speak of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—of the gospel, of faith, of repentance,—of baptism, of election,—of the death, of christ, of his mediation, of his blood,—of the reconciliation, of the Lord's supper, of the atonement, and of the church of God, in all the phrases found in the Record, without any partiality—to learn to love one another as much when we differ as when we agree, and to distinguish between the testimony of God and man's reasonings and philosophy about it.

There is nothing more essential to the union of the disciples of christ than *purity* of speech. So long as the earth was of one speech, the human family was united. Had they been then of a pure speech as well as of one speech, they would not have been separated. God, in his just indignation, dispersed them; but before he scattered them *he divided their language*. One

of his Prophets, who lived in a degenerate age, who prophesied against the corruptions of his day, when he spoke of better times, of an age of union and communion, was commanded to say in the name of the Lord, "Then will I turn to the people a *pure language*, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him *with one consent*." Purity of speech is here declared to be prerequisite to serving the Lord with one consent.

The christian revelation is addressed to man as he *is*—not as he *has* been—nor as he *shall* be. It is addressed to man as an intellectual and moral being; and is adapted to the wants of his intellectual and moral condition. It contemplates him as fallen and degenerated from his primeval state, and proposes a remedy adequate to his moral disease in its most aggravated and chronic forms. But this remedy must be applied in the order of Heaven—according to the prescriptions and direction of the great Physician. All the symptoms must be attended to, and the remedies applied in the order laid down or prescribed. Reverse that order, or confound its parts, and death, or an aggravation of the disease, may be the consequence; mingle with these divine prescriptions those of human philosophy, and they become weak and inefficient.

Ministers cannot pray instead of their flock, and thus excuse the latter. Nor believe for them. Nor be benevolent for them. Nor do the works meet for repentance for them. And I really fear, that the mere fact of the existence of ministers of religion, is generally abused in this way. We would feign be religious *by proxy*.

If any divine, or even the Westminster divines, can speak more learnedly, more intelligibly, more definitely, than the inspired oracles of God's spirit, what is the value of inspiration? The less inspiration the better!

Revelation is founded upon fact, and therefore there is not in all its rich and varied contents one abstract proposition. Facts are stated; and these are left to speak for God. Thus God and man are both known by what they do and what they say: for, with us, *facts* are things done, whether done by the simple volition, the word, or the hand of an operator. By his works and by his word God is known.

The christian facts, found in the testimony concerning what Jesus did and said, are the basis of the christian religion. These facts, stated, proved and illustrated, is the whole business of preaching and teaching. 1 Cor. ii. 5, xv. 1, 2, 3, &c. Each of

these facts has a moral influence, or is itself a moral seal, which, in the hands of God's Spirit, delineates the moral image of God upon the human heart and character.

Nine times in ten, mere opinion, when let alone, will die a natural death, or lead an inoffensive life. But if you want an opinion to live, gain power, make a party, and descend to after times,—call a council, get up a debate, assemble the orators, and keep it for a few years before the public mind, and then you secure a party.

FAITH.

Much has been written on the nature of that faith to which the promise of salvation is made, and various have been the definitions given of it, many of which have served no other end than to perplex the subject.

Every body knows that faith or belief, in the ordinary sense of the word, is that CREDIT which we give to the truth of any thing which is made known to us by report or testimony, and is grounded either on the veracity of the speaker, or on the evidence by which his words are confirmed.

But many are of opinion, that justifying faith must be something more than this. They do not think that *mere belief*, be its object what it may, contains in it any real virtue or moral excellence, that may rationally account for a sinner's being justified, and therefore include in its very nature the exercise of love and other holy dispositions of heart. Yet they would not be understood to mean that sinners are justified by the exercise of holy dispositions of heart. Yet they would not be understood to mean that sinners are justified by the exercise of holy dispositions, or (as they speak) by faith considered as a *work*. A caution which intimates an apprehension that their idea of faith is very liable to such a misconstruction; and indeed if faith be a *work* at all, it is not easy to conceive how sinners are justified by faith *without works*. The Apostle Paul, however, never gave any such caution, because he did not look upon faith as a work, but on the contrary, opposes it, both in its own nature and in point of justification, to all works of every kind, and makes it to correspond with pure grace.

Faith or *belief* is evidently used by the inspired writers in the same sense in which it is commonly used and understood among men in ordinary cases. They never gave the least hint that they had any uncommon idea annexed to that term, nor did they give any directions *how* to believe, or act faith, though they insist much upon *what* men are to believe, and upon the divine *evidence* of its truth. It is also remarkable, that we do not find any of the first converts inquiring what faith is; or in what man-

ner they were to believe. Hence we may reasonably infer, that the apostles used the word faith in its ordinary sense, which required no explanation, and that their hearers did in fact so understand them.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews defines faith in this manner, "Now faith is the CONFIDENCE of things hoped for, the CONVICTION of things not seen." Chap. xi. 1. Faith is here expressed by the two words *confidence* and *conviction*, and its objects are *things hoped for*, *things not seen*. Things hoped for must be future good things revealed and promised; and *confidence* in relation to such things must be a *confidence of persuasion*, founded on God's faithfulness and power, that what he hath promised he will undoubtedly perform; for it is explained thus,—a being *persuaded* of the promises—a *judging him faithful* who hath promised—a being *fully persuaded*, that what God hath promised he is able also to perform. This confidence of faith in divine promises is inseparable from *hope*; for it is the confidence of things hoped for, and so is said to be a *believing in hope*, viz. of obtaining the good things promised. Again, faith is here defined more generally, the *conviction of things not seen*. Things not seen include not only things promised but things testified; not only good things to be hoped for, but evil things to be dreaded; not merely things future, but things past and present. All of them, however, so far as they are the objects of faith, must be *things not seen*; for faith is opposed to sight, it being a conviction of the truth and reality of things made known by revelation, and is grounded on the authority of that revelation, considered as the word of God. To illustrate and confirm this simple notion of faith a little farther, we may observe,

1. That the gospel is held forth as a *witness, record, or testimony* concerning this great truth, That Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that God has given eternal life in him to all who believe. Those who were sent to testify the gospel of the grace of God are termed *witnesses*. John Baptist "came for a witness to bear witness of the Light. The apostles were "chosen witnesses" to testify this truth unto the world. Not only so, but the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit are represented as three concurring witnesses to the same important truth; and hence it is termed the *witness or testimony of God*.

2. The immediate design of all testimony or witness-bearing is to *produce a belief* of the truth of what is testified. This is the declared design of testifying the gospel. John "came to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe."—"He that saw it bear record—that ye might believe." This is also the design of the miraculous works by which the gospel testimony was confirmed:—"Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of my Father believe me not:

But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and [!] in him." "The same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God." Agreeably to these observations,

3. Faith is described to be a belief corresponding to that which is spoken, testified, or preached. Abraham, whose faith is set before us as an example, "believed according to that which was spoken." Such also was the faith of the Thessalonians, "our testimony among you was believed;" and of the Corinthians, "so we preached, and so ye believed." We all know what it is to receive or believe the witness of men in the most important affairs of human life, and by this the apostle John gives us an idea of that faith which the gospel requires, without making any difference whatever in the nature of believing, but only substituting the testimony of God in place of men's; "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." We receive men's testimony by believing that they are true in what they declare; so "He that RECEIVETH his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true." In the former case we believe *men*, in the latter, God; but this difference respects only the object, the nature of belief being the same in both cases. The witness of God is *greater* than that of men; but this does not alter the nature of belief, but only increases the degree of it, by giving us greater assurance; for men are fallible, and may be deceived themselves, or wish to deceive us; but neither of these is possible with God, to whom omniscience and faithfulness are absolutely essential. That by RECEIVING the witness of God, the apostle means nothing more than simply *believing* it, is clear, for he expresses its opposite thus, "He that BELIEVETH NOT God hath made him a liar, because he BELIEVETH NOT the record that God gave of his Son." From the whole, therefore, it is evident that faith is neither more nor less than *belief*, and that saving faith is a *belief of the gospel*, or of God's testimony concerning his Son.

As to its effects upon the heart such is the important, interesting, and salutary nature of the saving truth testified in the gospel, with its suitability and freeness for the chief of sinners, that it is no sooner *perceived* and *believed* than it takes possession of the will and affections, and becomes in the soul the ground of its hope, trust, and reliance; the object of its desire, acceptance, esteem and joy; and the principle of every holy, active, and gracious disposition of heart.

McLEAN'S COMMISSION.

ABUSE OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The first and great mark of one who corrupts the word of God is, introducing into it human mixtures; either the errors of oth-

ers, or the fancies of his own brain. To do this, is to corrupt it in the highest degree; to blend with the oracles of God, impure dreams fit only for the mouth of the devil! And yet it has been so frequently done, that scarce ever was any erroneous opinion either invented or received, but Scripture was quoted to defend it. And when the imposture was too barefaced, and the text cited for it appeared too plainly either to make against it, or to be nothing to the purpose; then recourse has usually been had to a second method of corrupting it,—by mixing it with false interpretations. And this is done, sometimes by repeating the words wrong; and sometimes by repeating them right, but putting a wrong sense upon them; one that is either strained and unnatural, or foreign to the writer's intention in the place from whence they are taken; perhaps contrary either to his intention in that very place, or to what he says in some other part of his writings. And this is easily effected; any passage is easily perverted, by being recited singly, without any of the preceding or following verses. By this means, it may often seem to have one sense, when it will be plain, by observing what goes before and what follows after, that it really has the direct contrary; for want of observing which, unwary souls are liable to be tossed about with every wind of doctrine, whenever they fall into the hand of those who have enough of wickedness and cunning thus to adulterate what they preach, and to add now and then a plausible comment to make it go down the more easily.

A third sort of those who corrupt the word of God, though in a lower degree than either of the former, are those who do so, not by adding to it, but by taking from it; who take either the spirit or substance of it away, while they study to prophesy only smooth things, and therefore palliate or colour what they preach, in order to reconcile it to the taste of the hearers. And that they may do this the better, they commonly let those parts go that will admit of no colouring. They wash their hands of those stubborn texts that will not bend to their purpose, or that too plainly touch upon the reigning vices of the place where they are. These they exchange for those more soft and tractable ones, that are not so apt to give offence.

WESLEY'S SERMONS.

ADDRESS.

[From the *Millennial Harbinger*.]

There are three things to which we most affectionately and devoutly invite the attention of our brethren in the kingdom of the Messiah. These are the religious training of their families—the order, worship, and discipline of the congregation—and the

conversion of the world. What do you more than others, brethren, in these three great objects of Christian care and enterprize? We honor the Bible as sufficient not only to make us wise to salvation, but as divinely adapted to accomplish the man of God for every good word and work. Do we use it thus' in our daily practice, and in the education of our families? Do we teach it to our children and those under our care, as we teach them the learning, the science, and business of this world; or do we rather devote our thoughts and our efforts as if we valued the acquisitions of *this* life as the pearl of great value, and the things of the life *to come* as of inferior importance? Are our families nurseries for Christ and heaven, or are they schools for training our children to live according to the flesh, according to the course of this deceitful world, the fashion of which passes away? These are questions which the word of God and conscience constrain every head of a family to propose to himself.

Again, are the congregations walking in the admonition and consolations of the Apostles' teaching? Do they continue steadfast in the teaching, in the breaking of the loaf, in the fellowship, and prayers of the Apostles? Do the brethren meet regularly, timely, and zealously on every first day, as health and opportunity permit; or are they content to appear in the Lord's house once a month, as convenience and inclination may prompt? Do they meet rather for the sake of hearing a preacher of some note, or for commemorating the Lord's death and resurrection, and keeping his holy institutions? Do they tenderly and affectionately cultivate all brotherly kindness and love, and admonish one another by their example to take heed lest there be in any one of them an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God? If any brother seems to grow cold and remiss in waiting upon the assemblies of the brethren, do the brotherhood inquire after him as an absent member of a family? Do they in all tenderness and affectionate regard, endeavour to stir him up to his duty? Or do they, in a censorious spirit, first arraign him as an evil doer, and propose to him exclusion, unless he forthwith render satisfaction? Is the discipline of the congregation at one time so exact that scarce a Christian can continue in it without censure; and at another time so lax that scarce a defaulter or an evil doer can be excluded? Is every thing done decently and in order, that no stumbling block is thrown in the way of saint or sinner? Are the congregations walking in the Holy Scriptures, growing in knowledge, and in favor with God and all the people?

Again, what is doing for the conversion of the world? Are you brethren, to whom the Lord and your brethren have given ability and opportunity to win souls, ardently and perseveringly engaged in this work, gathering fruit to eternal life? Are you enduring hardships as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and labor-

ing in season and out of season in proclaiming the word ; or are you seeking your own things only or chiefly, and not the things of Jesus Christ? Do you complain of the brethren that they will not sustain you while you labor for the Lord and for an eternal crown ; and cannot you trust in the Lord and look to him for reward? or do you think that because the brethren do not do their duty, that you will help the matter by not doing yours?—Will two wrongs make one right?

And you, brethren, of whom they complain, do you think that it is the duty of only one or two citizens in the kingdom to leave their wives, and children, and farms, and labor for the Lord ; and yours to wait upon yours wives, and children, and farms, without spending one day's labor, or the value of it, in a month, for the conversion of those who are living and dying in their sins? Has the Lord said that one in fifty shall labor all the year for him, and the forty-nine shall labor for themselves? Has he thus called the honored one per cent. or two per cent. of his citizens, and doomed the remainder to toil for their own appetites and passions, and leave their treasure in the earth? Has the Bank of Heaven decreed that no deposits shall be made in it but by one or two in every hundred who have the gift of giving out the knowledge of salvation ; and that he that speaks shall receive a hundred fold, and he that gives labor, or sustenance, or money, (their representative) shall never draw either principle or interest from the treasury of God?

QUESTIONS—REMARKS—ANSWERS.

A gentleman for whom I entertain a high regard has forwarded me a manuscript, designed for the public through the Witness, containing no less than eight queries. As, in my judgment, the first three contain the strength and excellency of the whole eight, I have taken the liberty of omitting what is considered superfluous, trusting that the reply to those inserted will be satisfactory upon the whole subject of communication. Space, with us, is precious, and we have resolved to be frugal. Unwilling, however, to withhold any part of a communication without the fullest satisfaction, and determined to avoid even the appearance of injustice, I promise, that, if, on reflection, the writer cannot be reconciled to the course pursued, but still thinks the points before his mind not fairly or fully examined, the other queries will be forthcoming as originally intended, at a season when we may

have more room and leisure to reply. Without further preliminary we shall permit our friend to propose—

QUESTIONS

FOR THE WITNESS OF TRUTH.

Mr. D. Oliphant,

Sir,—On the 7th page of the Witness of Truth, I found a thrilling and pertinent question which together with several others, brought to my mind by reflecting on the one there asked, another which I wish the Witness honestly and candidly to answer immediately, and if as you say on page 24, “our Witness has given no pledge respecting the extent of its testimony,” I sincerely hope for the credibility of the Witness and the satisfaction of those interested that the Witness in this case will tell “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.” You ask on page 7th, “Is there a foe too strong for our commander?” And I wish to ask—Is Christ our commander, “the captain of our salvation?” 2nd. Are men who are enemies to God by wicked works *his* foes or enemies. 3rd. Will our commander subdue and reconcile “his foes to God” or will the great in-jority of them prove too strong for him and remain in a state of sin, wretchedness and endless rebellion to “our commander,” his laws and government through the endless ages of eternity?

Plain, pertinent, candid and scriptural answers will be expected in the next number of the Witness.

AN ENQUIRER.

• Athol, Nov. 24th, 1845.

To speak the whole truth upon any question based upon any thing usually found in nature or the bible, appears, at first thought, to require only a little knowledge and a little candor. It is a capital mistake. An ordinary mind may understand much in both these departments; but the most gifted genius cannot explain any thing perfectly or fully. THE WHOLE TRUTH is a phrase embracing a range of thought equal to a universe. Concerning any action of man, or any testimony connected with such action, to utter the whole truth may be as easy as breathing; but to say all that can be said upon any thing done by the Sovereign of heaven and earth is above human mind or human knowledge.—The stars on a painted canvass, and the stars spread out in the great natural canopy by the finger of God, are not more dissimilar than these two kinds of testimony. It may be at once pleasing and easy to speak truth in reference to subjects both natural and revealed; but to speak *the whole truth*, EVERY THING POSSIBLE TO UTTER, is what no sane mind attempts. As soon would I become the merchant of my own conscience and sell it for any thing but virtue, as take an oath to speak THE WHOLE TRUTH upon any one topic within the dominions of creation and revelation, or upon the three questions inserted above: for after studying upon them seven years, and writing seven volumes upon each of them,

some distant connexion among the family of truths might still be wanting to constitute the *whole* truth. I can without difficulty explain the whole process of planting a tree; but I would rather give my life than give my bond to describe between January forty-six and January forty-seven the whole process and causes of its growth. Of the truth of these remarks the querist may hereafter be more fully convinced.

I am now prepared to consider and answer our ENQUIRER'S questions in the same full and explicit manner as any other questions of similar import and interest.

1. To the first query I unequivocally answer, *Yes*. When the word commander was employed, it was designed to convey the same meaning as the Apostle in using the word "captain" in reference to our salvation.

2. If the second query be apprehended, I also emphatically answer, *yes*, the enemies of God are the enemies of Christ.— Until it be shown that there is less connexion between Jehovah and his "Anointed" than is proved from the bible, we shall always regard the enemies of the one as the enemies of the other.

3. There are three distinct ideas in query third. The phrase *subdue his foes to God*, evidently what is conveyed in the first member of the sentence, requires to be interpreted. To subdue foes to God, in the same sense in which they are reconciled to God, is impossible. We have no language, biblical or literary, authorizing this style of expression. Those who believe on Jesus, and confide in him as the captain of their salvation instead of yielding to the prince of apostacy, are reconciled to God; and those who reject him, being rebels to his government, he will subdue as incorrigible foes. Therefore, in the second place, neither a *great majority* nor a *great minority* of the enemies of Christ will "prove too strong for him." For it is declared that he will "put *all* enemies under his feet." "The prince of the kings of the earth" can never be defeated even partially. As *all saints*, universally and without exception, shall enjoy "the glorious liberty of the sons of God," so *all sinners* shall as universally be the subjects of his "righteous indignation." And again, lastly, as we have no record of an after-gospel to be preached in another world to those who have left this world charged with rebellion against the Most High, and as the scriptures are explicit upon this point, I believe that sinners, dying in their sins, shall be forever sinful and forever wretched.

In accordance with a rule already enjoined upon myself in reference to questions and answers, I cannot, my dear sir, further elaborate these replies, or examine more closely the subject of your inquiries in their present form; but should you exercise yourself upon these observations in patience, I will, all things favorable, enter more fully into your difficulties in the Witness for February.

CONDUCTOR.

QUERY.

Is the word of God, which is called the New Testament, a *dead letter*, as many affirm, or is it not? A.

REPLY.

Three hundred and twenty five years have elapsed since Luther wrote his letter of disconnection with the Pope, and now such a question asked! How unaccountably slow the progress of reformation.

In reference to the matter of answering, Solomon gives us two different kinds of maxims, for two different kinds of men. And as the ways of prudence have not materially changed since these rules were written, and as all men are not alike constituted, some perceiving the truth more readily when presented in contrast, and some by plain speech, we take the liberty of replying to this query in manner and style as follows:—

1st. The bible is a dead letter to those who belong to an inflexible church, that interprets or withholds it as expediency or policy may dictate.

2nd. It is a dead letter to all who consider that ecclesiastical ministers and bishops may have sufficient faith, knowledge, and holiness for themselves and all who confide in them.

3rd. It is a dead letter to every one who is waiting at some theological Siloam until some undefinable spirit from the world of spirits enlighten his own spirit.

4th. It is a dead letter to all theorists who may be acquainted with its doctrines but who never acknowledge the divinity and excellency of these doctrines by living unto God.

But, again, 1st. The bible is a living letter to those who are members of that church which is founded upon the "Lord's Anointed," and the ambassadors ordained and commissioned by him.

2nd. It is a living letter to all who read it rationally with a view to receive its testimony. "Seek and you shall find."

3d. It is a living letter to every one who peruses it as a revelation from God, and who considers that its author had both the ability and desire to make it simple.

4th. It is a living letter to every honest man, who, studying its teachings, acquires a knowledge of its doctrines and precepts, and then carefully and conscientiously orders his life accordingly.

CONDUCTOR.

"The bee has its sting and the rose its thorn, and while we rejoice in the influence of the press, we must not forget that whatever has the ability to benefit has equal power to injure; and that the press may be so unwisely managed, and its influence so misdirected that it will displease where it should delight, and wound

where it should defend."—Engaged in a new business, and at the commencement of a new year, the above extract has been studiously and we trust wisely examined, and also treasured, for the purpose of giving a righteous direction and a dignified circumspection to our public labours through the medium of the press for the year eighteen hundred and forty-six.

EXCELLENT SAYINGS.

I wisdom dwell with prudence. Receive my instructions, and not silver; my knowledge rather than choice gold. For by me shall thy days be multiplied, and the years of thy life increased. The righteous shall flourish as a branch. The fear of the Lord prolongeth days: he is in the way of life who keepeth instruction. SOLOMON.

The following lines, copied from the PICTON SUN, but originally taken from the MILLENNIAL HARBINGER, were written by one of the Students of BETHANY COLLEGE; and judging that they embody sentiments to which every reader will subscribe, not only as being interesting and elegant but ennobling and appropriate, we offer no apology for their insertion.

NO TIME TO LOSE!

No time to lose! When we are young
On airy wings the moments fly:
To all things fancy gives a tongue,
And views them with enchanted eye.

No time to lose! Those days have sped
Like dreams of thrilling ecstasy:
Their scenes of transport long have fled;
Their songs have lost their melody.

No time to lose! The years pass by;
They come to be improved no more:
In vain we wish, in vain we sigh,
We cannot squander 'd time restore.

No time to lose! The golden hours
Are seeds that fruit immortal bear;
Let others cull time's fading flowers,
And wreaths of earthly fame prepare.

No time to lose! O what is time!
A meteor's glare—an ebbing wave—
A treasure rich—a gift sublime—
And yet a passage to the grave.

No time to lose! A fearful thought!
Let toys to me no more be known;
With this let every hour be fraught—
My time alone belongs to God.