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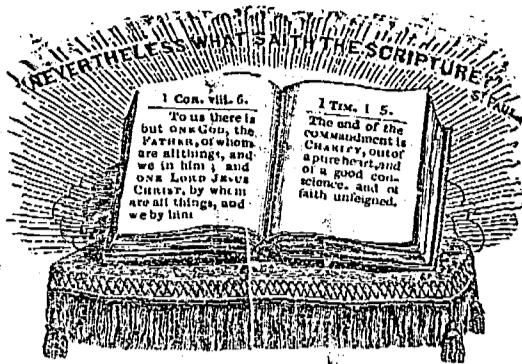
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# THE BIBLE



# CHRISTIAN

TRUTH, HOLINESS,

LIBERTY, LOVE.

VOL. V.

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## THE RESOURCES OF THE CHURCH.

### CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, TRUTH AND PIETY.

A fourth resource of the church, lies in her capacity to unfold more of character than the world without. We here speak of character, not in its most internal sense, or as related to God, but of character as a power over men, to influence their feelings and command their homage. Christian character, in this view of it, is that which by principle and worth and beauty of feeling in one man, approves itself to another, and becomes a controlling and assimilative power over him. It is no easy thing to beget, in minds not brought up in society, even a sense of character. The million live and die without once conceiving it. But no man, however dull or rude, can become a Christian without, at least, having some conception of character awakened. He must know himself and God, and himself as morally related to the moral goodness and excellence of God. He cannot smite upon his breast, like the publican, without a painful discovery of himself to prompt it; nor without so much as daring to lift his eyes to heaven, can he cry, with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and not have felt, in some degree, the greatness and purity of God. Behold a vile, brutish person, bowed in tears, and trembling with inward horror, before the tremendous majesty and glory of God! Some elementary notion of character is there descending upon him, in that shuddering before Jehovah; it is the sense of character that makes him shudder. And how can a life be spent in holy communion with God, the infinitely perfect,—how modelled after Christ, the only perfect life ever displayed in humanity, without attaining to a nicer and more heavenly sense of character, and receiving its impress. The principles of religion, too, truth, justice, rectitude, benevolence, are all such as need to lie at the basis of a good and great character. The feelings and manners of Christian piety—courtesy, gentleness, condescension, pity, gratitude, forgiveness, charity—are all such as cannot be dispensed with, in the construction of a worthy and beautiful character. Then consider the whole discipline of a Christian life, as a perpetual exercise in character. No sooner does one become a disciple than he is put upon it as a study, how to honour his calling, to be charitable and yet judicious, when to resist enemies and when to suffer them, to be cheerful without being light, serious yet not morose, when to argue and when to be silent, when to forgive and when to bring to justice, when to feel and when to reason, to have high emotions and not be a frimist, to be independent without obstinacy, to believe without credulity, to have high experiences without advertising closet transactions, to have a speech seasoned with salt yet clear of cant, to be united to God and not disunited from man. How can a disciple be drilled in such exercises, all his life long, without becoming more or less expert in discriminating character in himself and others?

The church, then, is to her disciples a perpetual school of character. We by no means affirm that all who take the Christian name become examples of moral excellence and beauty. Many seem never to have a thought about character, after they have once become satisfied of their conversion. We say of such, when they die, perhaps, that in the judgment of charity they were Christians, and truly our charity covers a multitude of sins. At the same time there are unfolded in the church innumerable examples of character from all the walks of life, such as can not be found elsewhere—examples which dignify eminence and power, cause obscurity to shine, and make adversity smile—the gentle, the pure, the good, the upright, the firm, the heroic, the holy.

And how great a power is character! Out of God's own person and his truth, there is no other so mighty and persuasive. It is that eloquence which man least knows how to resist. It provokes no resistance. Being itself only truth in life, it suffers no answer. If the beholder turns away to escape the homage he feels, its image still goes with him, to reprove his evil deeds and call him every hour to God.

Truth is another of the resources of the church, a power that God has deposited in her bosom to be developed there. Having the Christian Scriptures, she may therefore boldly say, what is denied to all schools of philosophy, that she has the truth of God. Hence it comes to pass that, while they are ever displacing each other, and after their short day of splendour is over, retiring into oblivion, the church still holds her place, gathers new strength from every assault, and stands erect as the pillar and ground of the truth. The great masters of philosophy and champions of infidelity die, by turns, into glimmer and darkness; but Christ the Messiah is the sun of righteousness rolling up into noon and the fullness of day. Already has it been proved, by an experience of eighteen hundred years, that the church's truth is invincible. It speaks to man, and its words have their own evidence in them. If reason reels away from its mysteries, reason yet returns dissatisfied without them. If human wisdom invents a better God, and a government more according to its mind, human wisdom is soon frozen by its own meagre truth, and returns to Christ for warmth. Such is the Christian truth, the virtues it teaches so excellent, the hopes it offers so definite and so consonant to human wants—it brings God so near and displays the divine feeling so attractively, it paints human character so truly and offers a remedy so adequate, that if spurned or rejected, it will yet be sought.

We do not say that all the points of Christian doctrine are settled, or that nothing remains to be done to unfold their relations, and set them forth in the harmony of their reasons. Neither do we say that there is no disagreement about the essential truths of the Christian scheme. That were to maintain that its victory is already complete. We only say that God's everlasting truth is now in the bosom of the church. There is a process going on, too, in the church, from age to age, whereby her views of the Christian plan are being filled up, rectified, and systematized in their reasons. She is instructing herself also by her own lapses and apostacies. Almost all the possible errors she has invented and tried out. Those bold extravagancies of human learning, now so prevalent, and by which so many are perhaps unduly frightened, are among the last, and, we trust, not least fruitful efforts of aberration. Taken in the larger view, she is, in all these, only making her experiments to settle the truth, unmasking her artillery, drawing it forth into ranks and orders, and preparing, by her lines of battle encircling the globe, to complete her warfare against unbelief by a universal and sweeping defeat.

But the greatest of all resources possessed by the church, to be developed by growth, is drawn from her internal union with, and participation of, the divine nature—greater than either wealth, talent, internal population, character, or truth—greater than all together, and that, because it includes them all. The church of God is a habitation of the Spirit, the body itself of Christ, and so the fullness of him that filleth all in all. Let it not be deemed an irreverence, if we speak of a progressive development of this divine element in the church.

The piety of the church is itself such.—The life of Christian piety is the life of God; its growth a development of that life. When the holy life begins, in a renewed mind, whether infant or adult, it is only a capacity or seed of future growth; that growth but a fuller participation of the divine nature, in its power, goodness, and beauty. The same is true of the church in its collective capacity. The amount of her existence is measured, not by the numbers or noise she makes, but by her participation of the life of God. According to her measure in this, is she clear in understanding, benevolent in emotion, self-denying in action, patient in suffering, powerful in example. Additions of grace are indispensable to all increments of power. A small root cannot support a large tree. An army of spiritual invalids cannot vanquish the world. Union to God is the soul and success of all good efforts. Without this, we only drag the church on painfully after us, as if it were an idol car, by the pull of many hands. But if we are

filled with holy piety, and earnest practical love to the cause of salvation, then the church has liberty and inspiration, becomes itself a creature of life, like the wheels of Ezekiel, because the spirit of the living creatures is in it.

There is also another aspect to this growth of piety. Not only does the internal life of the tree extend its reach, but the outward bulk manifests the fact. The church, in like manner, is to the world's eye a development of God. Being the body of Christ, she is, in some sense, though not in the sense of Mr. Brownson and the Papists, a perpetual Christ in the earth—in the sense, we mean, not of her political organization, but of her practical or internal spirit. By this she becomes the light of the world, as her Saviour was—a perpetual manifestation of the Spirit, or what is the same, of the Divine Nature. This, too, is the main source of her power over the world. It is not because she runs to and fro, because she strives and cries, but because she lives a life above nature,—herein lies her capacity of impression. Without saying 'this is God,' the world is moved as by the presence and power of God. Her Christ-like grace of love, purity, truth, and beneficence are a divine atmosphere about her, and her atmosphere enters the breath and the blood, while her arguments only play about the head. To approach her is to be convinced of sin, righteousness, and a judgment to come. To be thus, in her Christian growth, a demonstration of the Spirit, to have the divine nature flowing out thus impalpably but really on the world, gives her an assimilative power in the nature of vitality; so that if she gains a convert, whether at home or in the ends of the earth, (for place is nothing,) it is not by external conquest, but by virtue of her own internal life—the life of God.

Furthermore, there is, we apprehend, a certain fixed relation between those exertions of spiritual influence which are immediate, and those which flow immediately through the church; else why has not the Spirit left the church behind and poured itself, as a rushing mighty wind, into the bosom of the whole world in a day? There needed to be an objective influence, as well as one internal; else the subject of the Spirit would not know or guess to what his internal motions are attributable, and might deem them only nervous or hysterical effects, or possibly, if a heathen, the work of some enchanter or demon. But the objective influence of a holy life, coupled with holy teachings from the church, starts the contemplative powers, occupies the knowing principle, and explains the immediate influence and its object, offers to view in its own holy exercises the molds of exercises to be wrought in the observer, and by its own assimilative and persuasive sympathies gives to the new feeling in him its own heavenly type and form. If we are right in this view, if there is a fixed relation between the mediate and immediate influences of the Spirit, such that one measures the other, (and we could urge many additional reasons for the opinion,) then are we brought fairly out upon the sublime conclusion, that the growth or progress of Christian piety in the church, if it shall take place, offers the expectation of a correspondent progress in the development of those spiritual influences that are immediate. The mediate and immediate are both identical at the root. If, therefore the church, unfolds her piety as a divine life, which is one, the divine life will display its activity as much more potently and victoriously without, which is the other. And as the kingdom of heaven, which was first as a grain of mustard seed, advances in the last days towards the stature of a tree, the more it may advance; for the Holy Spirit will pour himself into the world, as much more intensely and profusely. Grant us, O God! that we may not disappoint ourselves of a hope so glorious by attempts to extend thy church without that holy growth of piety on which our success depends. Pour thyself in thy fullness, and as a gale of purity, into our bosom! Expel all schemes that are not begun in Thee! Let there be good desires in us, that our works may be truly good! And that Thou mayest do thy will in the earth, do it in us perfectly!—Dr. Bushnell.

## THIS WORLD A STATE OF DISCIPLINE.

The peculiar condition of sublunary things, as imperfect and transitory, is forced on our notice by the circumstances of the external world during the period of winter. The beauty of the year is gone,—the cheerful notes of the lark, of the blackbird, of the thrush, and of the whole choir which poured the voice of love and enjoyment from earth and sky, have ceased in our land, and a brooding ominous melancholy reigns around. This is but one instance of a character impressed, as we have seen, on every thing under the sun. All are full of change and decay; and the state of the natural world is only an emblem of that which subsists in the moral world, where temptation, and sin, and sorrow, have shed their fatal blight over the once glorious prospects of rational and immortal beings.

This condition would be totally inexplicable, were it not for the light thrown on the subject by Revelation. When we are told that we are at present only in the infancy of our existence, placed here in a state of discipline, to prepare us for a higher and more perfect residence, the mystery is unravelled, and we are made to understand, in some degree at least, why it has pleased the All-wise disposer of events to place us in a world where He only displays the brightness of His perfection as it were by glimpses, and casts clouds and darkness over the rest of the scene.

It is true that evils exist; but the Christian knows that it is overruled for good. Our Divine Master does not indeed, remove calamity, but He changes its nature, and gives us power cheerfully to endure it. As His religion shows us the hand of a God of love in every thing, it causes us to regard distress, from whatever earthly source it arises, as 'the chastisement of a Father, who chastens us for our profit, that we may become partakers of his holiness.' Hence the Christian is in a condition to feel a constant and delightful dependence on Providence. Thus instructed, he may grieve, but he cannot repine; he may be humbled and afflicted, but he cannot despair. Shall a child, who knows that a Father corrects him in love, murmur under the rod? Shall he not rather bend with humble resignation, and look up with affectionate joy, to the hand which wounds that it may heal?

This would be the effect of faith in the promises of the Gospel, even although the operations of Providence were surrounded with such mysterious darkness, that our limited faculties could perceive in them no traces of Divine wisdom and goodness. But it is no trifling addition to the satisfaction with which we rest in these promises, that God frequently condescends to make bare His holy arm in our sight, that we may follow His hand, as it overrules earthly events, and controuls human passions and affections, so as to render both moral and physical evil an instrument of good.

In reference to our condition as moral agents, and with a view to the powers and faculties, which, as fallen but rational creatures, we possess, it is not difficult to perceive in what manner the afflictive vicissitudes of life operate in elevating and ameliorating our character. If life were free from evil, there would be little to employ the judgment, or call into action the latent faculties,—little to rouse, to affect, and to invigorate the human soul. The heroic virtues of fortitude and courage, for example, would be without an object, were there no perils to encounter, and no enemies to subdue. What self-abasement could there be where there was no infirmity? What meekness, what patience, what forbearance, if there were no injustice to sustain, no calamities to suffer, and no injuries to forgive? Where were the exercise of resignation in a paradise of bliss? Where the trial of faith in a land of righteousness?

The social virtues, too, as well as the personal, could, under such circumstances, only be called into partial action. How could there be any pity, where there was no distress?—any sympathetic joy, where there was no escape from danger?—any compassionate charity, where there were no sins to cover, and no wants to relieve?

Were there no evils, then, either in the circumstances of the external world, or in the moral and physical condition of the society in which we dwell, we should be placed in a state

to which our fallen nature is not suited; and some of our noblest faculties would remain unexercised and unimproved. But it is not so. Under the discipline of Providence, the Christian is tutored in the school of adversity; and is rendered prudent by disappointment, humble by error, and magnanimous by endurance. Baffled, afflicted, persecuted, but rising superior to calamity, he unfolds his patience, his meekness, his resignation. Experiencing the hatred and contempt of those whom his heart desires to benefit, he learns the divine duty of forgiveness, and is taught to persevere in offices of kindness to the ungrateful. While engaged in these severe but exalted exercises, he becomes sensible of his own inability, and is forced to exclaim, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' Thus, he is led to apply to Him who has said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Weeping for his sins at the foot of the cross, he feels the virtue of humility taking deep root and growing in his soul; and the graces of faith, of hope, and of joy in the Saviour of sinners, rising to maturity.

In a word, the disciple of the Man of Sorrows is exposed to temptation, that he may guard against it; to difficulties, that he may overcome them; to dangers, that he may rise above them. He is taught, by experience, the unprofitableness of sin, and he hates it,—the emptiness of human honours, and he despises them,—the worthlessness of earthly pleasures, and he looks beyond them.

Contemplate the servant of Jesus, as, under the guidance of Heaven, he advances through his vale of tears, gradually throwing off the load of his sins,—mixing with the world, that he may learn to despise its follies,—gaining strength by moral discipline, and improving in virtues and graces at every step. In this character, you witness the highest glory of human nature in its state of sin and suffering on earth,—a being worthy of the approbation of angels. You see a soldier taught to fight the good fight of faith, and trained to victory amidst hardships, dangers, and death,—a pilgrim travelling through the wilderness, with steady eye fixed on the Holy Land, a pupil of God, instructed in the school of His providence,—an heir of immortality, rendered, by the discipline of his mortal state, meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

In this noble, this admirable being, you no longer recognize the fallen descendant of Adam, but the adopted child of God. Amazing change! How superior is this once degraded and wretched outcast to his former self! Clothed now in the armour of God, he goes forth 'conquering and to conquer,'—surrounded with danger, but trusting in an unseen arm,—struggling with sorrow, yet kissing the hand which inflicts the wound,—troubled on every side, but not distressed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed,—eluding the snares of the world, and even successfully contending with 'principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places.'

What striking instances of the efficacy of Christian principles, exercised amidst vicissitudes and suffering, do we discover in the Apostles of our Lord, who rejoiced when they were counted worthy of stripes for the sake of their beloved Master, in whom 'tribulation wrought patience, and patience experience, and experience hope;' and whom 'hope made not ashamed, because the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts.' And, above all, what a dignified and lovely example of the same principle do we behold in Christ himself, whose whole life was an illustration of the power of Divine grace, in calling the noblest faculties into exercise, and thus rendering the character of man 'perfect through suffering;' and who could,—at the close of his earthly career, when He saw the time immediately at hand, so full of unutterable horrors, in which the whole world was to be combined against Him, in which His very disciples were basely to forsake their Master and allow him to tread the wine-press alone, and in which, during his agony, the blood-drops of anguish were to burst from His body,—who could, I say, even in this most appalling hour of the power of darkness, preserve unshaken His confidence in an unseen God, and feeling that he was not alone, for the Father was with Him, could in pious resignation exclaim, 'Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt!'

And these troubles of life prepare moral man for immortality. It is this which gives them their peculiar character, and stamps on them an inestimable value. Here is the true source of Christian consolation. What are a few fleeting years of imperfect enjoyment, or even of positive calamity, when, through that very condition, we shall be rendered meet to enter the kingdom of God, and dwell with Him for ever? Who would not go on a pilgrimage through this dark and howling wilderness, when he sees rising before him, in all their grandeur and beauty, the everlasting mansions of the promised land? Who would not cheerfully bear the light affliction of the present moment, when he knows that it is 'working out for him a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory.'

THE ESSENTIAL IN CHRISTIANITY.

The immediate purpose of Christianity is the awakening of a new life in the soul. It addresses itself not to the reason in the first instance, but to the conscience. Its first word is "repent." It seeks to change the sinner's heart—to make him feel his need of truth, and to turn him upon the cultivation of personal goodness. This constitutes its spiritual purpose, and the consequence of its action on the soul exhibits its spiritual efficacy. Nor on the sinner alone does it act with a Divine energy, working in silence, but mightily; like God's breath in creation, when the void became a universe of worlds; like God's will in providence, by which the life and order of the creation are secretly but continually maintained. On him who has been created anew it acts with its holy influence, to encourage every good purpose and sustain every right effort. In the time of our weakness it becomes our strength; in the hour of temptation, our saviour; in the day of sorrow, our comfort. It leads us from an earthly hell to a present heaven. It is a Divine power within us, renewing, sanctifying, consoling, filling us with peace and hope, with joy and love. This is its action as a spiritual instrument. And hence we say that a spiritual influence is necessarily included in any complete view of Christianity. Our Lord said this, and most careful was he to prevent any misapprehensions, like that to which the Jews were so prone, by which his religion should be thought to consist rather of doctrine and commandment than of life-giving force, or that allegiance to him consisted more in faith and outward obedience, than in the tone of sentiment which should pervade the whole character and determine the habitual experience of the soul. "The words that I speak unto you," cried he, as if to guard against this error, "they are spirit and they are life." Sadly have some of his followers—some at least who have borne his name—disguised this part of his teaching, strangely misconstruing and mischievously disfiguring the Gospel which he delivered. Let a man believe all the doctrines of religion, natural and revealed; let him observe all the external proprieties of life; let him even walk according to the rules of outward service which Christ prescribed, if this were possible without sympathy with Jesus in mind and heart; let him have faith to remove mountains or scale heaven, and obedience, such as meets the eye, enough to win the admiration of all beholders;—if he "have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If he have not recognized in Christianity a spiritual influence to which he has subjected his own soul, Jesus will not own him as a disciple. Christianity does not know him as one of the witnesses of its excellence. The spiritual influence of the Gospel is that which marks it as Divine, not less than its supernatural history, its positive truths, or its moral instruction. And if any should think that more clearly or more resolutely than either of these characteristics does its spiritual efficacy indicate its descent from above, we need not set ourselves against such a persuasion, since we remember that the Apostle spoke of Christ as "made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption;" and thus proclaimed the spiritual agencies which are enshrined in him as the representative of his religion.

Yet are all these necessary to the completeness of Christianity,—its historical basis, its doctrinal exposition, its moral instruction, and its spiritual influence. They are all essential, and whoever denies either of these, essentially, if not fatally, injures the religion of Jesus Christ.

And now, perhaps, we might go on, and show according to this test who are and who are not Christians, measuring those about us by the standard which, I doubt not, is the only true standard by which they could be judged. But this, as I have said, we neither need nor desire to do. It is better,—nay, this is needful,—that we examine ourselves by this exhibition of Christianity, and see if we deserve the name which we have taken upon ourselves. Are we Christians according to this test? Our duty is plain. Christianity has its essentials. This we must not forget. We have seen what they are. To them let us cling through all the changes of life and amidst all the fluctuations of opinions. It has its Divine history,—that let us receive and study; its positive doctrines,—those let us ascertain and believe; its moral teaching,—that let us understand and practise; its spiritual influence,—that let us welcome and cherish. Other things may be important, but these are essential. Other things may pass away, but these must remain. Many questions of interest arise, on which men may form different judgments without serious detriment; but in regard to the historical, the doctrinal, the moral, and the spiritual characteristics of the religion of the New Testament, as constituting the undeniable evidences of its divinity, and the indestructible elements of its power, there should be but one concurrent voice rising from all Christendom—the

grateful confession of every mouth, the joyful assent of every heart. Here may we find the union of believers, there the strength and glory of the Church. Ecclesiastical organizations may perish, and prescriptive forms outlive their period of usefulness; but the essential in Christianity, that is immutable, the trust of man in all ages, the means of the world's redemption. Let us hold to the essential, and, whatever others may think or say of us, our inward experience will justify our immortal hope. Christ will own us as his disciples, and the Gospel have accomplished for us, and in us, its destined and blessed work.—Unitarian Tract.

GENERAL CONTRARIETY OF WAR TO REVEALED RELIGION.

We may safely presume warriors to understand the nature and principles of their own profession. Napoleon, in a temporary fit of candor, denounced war as "the trade of barbarians," and he excluded priests from his armies, because he held the maxim, *the worse the man, the better the soldier*. Wellington himself once declared in the House of Lords, *that men who have nice notions about religion, have no business to be soldiers*. Two British officers were once cashiered for refusing, on a foreign station, to join in what they conscientiously deemed idolatrous worship; and the king, in confirming the sentence, said, "If religious principles were allowed to be urged by individual officers as a plea for disobedience of orders, the discipline of the army would sustain an injury which might be dangerous to the state."

Well, then, does the venerable missionary Ward say, "Either our religion is a fable, or there are unanswerable arguments against war, and the profession of arms." With equal truth does Jeremy Taylor aver, "If men would obey Christ's doctrine, they would never war one against another; for, as contrary as cruelty is to mercy, tyranny to charity, so is war and bloodshed to the meekness and gentleness of the Christian religion."

"War," says Robert Hall, "is the fruitful parent of crimes. It reverses all the rules of morality. It is nothing less than a temporary repeal of the principles of virtue. It is a system out of which almost all virtue is excluded, and in which nearly all the vices are included." Whatever renders human nature amiable or respectable, whatever engages love or confidence, is sacrificed at its shrine. It removes, so far as an enemy is concerned, the basis of all society, of all civilization and virtue; for the basis of these is the good-will due to every individual of the species, as being a part of ourselves. The sword, and that alone, cuts assunder the bond of consanguinity which unites man to man. Hence the morality of peaceful times is directly opposite to the maxims of war. The fundamental rule of the first is to do good; of the latter to inflict injuries. The former teaches men to love their enemies; the latter, to make themselves terrible even to strangers. The rules of morality will not suffer us to promote the dearest interests by falsehood; the maxims of war applaud it when employed in the destruction of others."

Let us put war and Christianity side by side, and see how far they agree. Christianity saves men; war destroys them. Christianity elevates men; war debases and degrades them. Christianity purifies men; war corrupts and defiles them. Christianity blesses men; war curses them. God says, thou shalt not kill; war says, thou shalt kill. God says, blessed are the peace-makers; war says, blessed are war-makers. God says, love your enemies; war says, hate them. God says, forgive men their trespasses; war says, forgive them not.—God enjoins forgiveness, and forbids revenge; while war scorns the former, and commands the latter. God says, resist not evil; war says, you may and must resist evil. God says, if any man smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other also; war says, turn not the other cheek, but knock the smiter down. God says, bless those who curse you; bless and curse not; war says, curse those who curse you; curse, and bless not. God says, pray for those who despitefully use you; war says, pray against them and seek their destruction. God says, see that none render evil for evil unto any man; war says, be sure to render evil for evil unto all that injure you. God says, overcome evil with good; war says, overcome evil with evil. God says, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; war says, if you do supply your enemies with food and clothing, you shall be shot as a traitor. God says, do good unto all men; war says, do as much evil as you can to your enemies.—God says to all men, love one another; war says, hate and kill one another. God says, they that take the sword, shall perish by the sword; war says, they that take the sword, shall be saved by the sword. God says, blessed is he that trusteth in the Lord; war says, cursed is such a man, and blessed is he who trusteth in swords and guns. God says, beat your swords into ploughshares, your spears into pruning-hooks, and learn war no more; war says, make swords and spears still, and continue to learn war.

LETTER FROM THE LATE JOHN QUINCY ADAMS TO HIS SON ON THE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

St. Petersburg, Sept., 1811.

MY DEAR SON,—In your letter of the 18th of January, to your mother, you mentioned that you read to your aunt a chapter in the Bible or a section of Doddridge's Annotations every evening. This information gave me real pleasure; for so great is my veneration for the Bible, and so strong my belief that, when duly read and meditated, it is of all books in the world that which contributes most to make men good, wise and happy, that the earlier my children begin to read it, the more steadily they pursue the practice of reading it throughout their lives, the more lively and confident will be my hopes that they will prove useful citizens to their country, respectable members of society, and a real blessing to their parents.—But I hope you have now arrived at an age to understand that reading, even in the Bible, is a thing in itself neither good nor bad, but that all the good which can be drawn from it is by the use and improvement of what you have read, with the help of your own reflection.

Young people sometimes boast of how many books and how much they have read; when, instead of boasting, they ought to be ashamed of having wasted so much time to so little profit. I advise you, my son, in whatever you read, and most of all in reading the Bible, to remember that it is for the purpose of making you wiser and more virtuous. I have myself for many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year. I have always endeavored to read it with the same spirit and temper of mind which I now recommend to you; this is, with the intention and desire that it may contribute to my advancement in wisdom and virtue.

My desire is indeed very imperfectly successful; for, like you, and like the Apostle Paul, "I find a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." But as I know that it is my nature to be imperfect, so I know that it is my duty to aim at perfection; and feeling and deploring my own frailties, I can only pray Almighty God for the aid of his Spirit to strengthen my good desires, and to subdue my propensities to evil; for it is from Him that every good and every perfect gift descends.

My custom is to read four or five chapters every morning, immediately after rising from my bed. It employs about an hour of my time, and seems to me the most suitable manner of beginning the day. But as other cares, duties, and occupations engage the remainder of it, I have perhaps never a sufficient portion of my time in meditation upon what I read. Even meditation itself is often fruitless, unless it has some special object in view; useful thoughts often arise in the mind, and pass away without being remembered or applied to any good purposes—like the seed scattered upon the surface of the ground, which the birds devour, or the winds blow away, or which rot without taking root, however good the soil may be upon which they are cast.

We are all, my dear George, unwilling to confess our own faults, even to ourselves, and when our own consciences are too honest to conceal them from us, our self-love is always busy, either in attempting to disguise them to us under false and delusive colors, or in seeking out excuses and apologies to reconcile them to our minds. Thus, although I am sensible that I have no derived from my assiduous perusal of the Bible, (and I might apply the same remark to almost everything else that I do,) all the benefit that I might and ought, I am as constantly endeavoring to persuade myself that it is not my own fault.—Sometimes I say to myself, I do not understand what I have read; I cannot help it; I did not not make my own understanding; there are many things in the Bible "hard to understand," as St. Peter expressly says of Paul's Epistles; some are hard in the Hebrew and some in the Greek—the original languages in which the Scriptures were written; some are harder still in the translations. I have been obliged to lead a wandering life about the world, and scarcely ever have at hand the books which might help me to surmount those difficulties.

Conscience sometimes puts the question—Whether my not understanding many passages is not owing to my want of attention in reading them. I must admit that it is; a full proof of which is, that every time I read the book through I understand some passages which I never understood before, and which I should have done, at a former reading, had it been effected with a sufficient degree of attention. Then in answer to myself, I say—It is true; but I cannot always command my own attention, and never can to the degree that I wish. My mind is oft-times so full of other things, absorbed in bodily pain, or engrossed in passion, or distracted by pleasure, or exhausted by dissipation, that I cannot give to proper daily employment the attention which I gladly would, and which is absolutely necessary to make it "fruitful of good works."

This acknowledgement of my weakness is



just; but for how much of it I am still accountable to God, I hardly dare to acknowledge to myself. Is it bodily pain? How often was that brought upon me by my own imprudence or folly! Was it passion? Heaven has given to every human being the power of controlling his passions, and if he neglects or loses it, the fault is his own, and he must be answerable for it. Was it pleasure? Why did I indulge it? Was it dissipation? This is the most inexcusable of all; for it must have been occasioned by my own thoughtlessness or irresolution. It is of no use to discover our own faults and infirmities, unless the discovery prompts to amendment. I have thought if, in addition to the hour which I daily give to the reading of the Bible, I should also from time to time (and especially on the Sabbath), apply another hour to communicate to you the reflections that arise in my mind upon its perusal, it might not only tend to fix and promote my own attention to the excellent instructions of that sacred book, but perhaps also assist your advancement in its knowledge and wisdom.

At your age it is probable that you have still greater difficulties to understand all that you read in the Bible than I have at mine; and if you have so much self-observation as your letters indicate, you will be sensible of as much want of attention, both voluntary and involuntary, as I here acknowledge in myself. I intend, therefore, for the purpose of contributing to your improvement and my own, to write you several letters, in due time to follow this, in which I shall endeavor to show you how you may derive the most advantage to yourself, from the perusal of the Scriptures.

It is probable, when you receive these letters, you will not, at first reading, entirely understand them; if that should be the case, ask your grand-parents, or your uncle or aunt, to explain them; if you still find them too hard, put them on file, and lay them by for two or three years, after which read them again, and you will find them easy enough. It is essential, my son, in order that you may go through life with comfort to yourself and usefulness to your fellow creatures, that you should form and adopt certain rules or principles for the government of your own conduct and temper. Unless you have such rules and principles, there will be numberless occasions occurring in which you will have no guide for your government but your passions.

In your infancy and youth you have been, and will be, for some years, under the authority and control of your friends and instructors; but you must soon come to the age when you must govern yourself. You have already come to that age in many respects; you know the difference between right and wrong, and you know some of your duties, and the obligations you are under to become acquainted with them all. It is in the Bible you must learn them, and from the Bible how to practice them. Those duties are to God, to your fellow creatures and to yourself. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself." On these two commandments, Jesus Christ expressly says, "hang all the law and the prophets;" that is to say, the whole purpose of Divine revelation is to inculcate them efficaciously upon the minds of men.

You will perceive that I have spoken of duties to yourself, distinct from those to God and to your fellow creatures; while Jesus Christ speaks only of two commandments. The reason is, because Christ and the commandments repeated by him, consider self-love as so implanted in the heart of every man by the law of his nature, that it requires no commandment to establish its influence over the heart; and so great do they know its power to be, that they demand no other measure for the love of our neighbour, than that which they know we shall have for ourselves. But from the love of God, and the love of our neighbour result duties to ourselves as well as to them, and they are all to be learned in equal perfection by our searching the Scriptures. Let us, then, search the Scriptures; and in order to pursue our inquiries with methodical order, let us consider the various sources of information that we may draw from in this study.

The Bible contains the revelation of the will of God. It contains the history of the creation of the world, and of mankind; and afterward the history of one peculiar nation, certainly the most extraordinary nation that has ever appeared upon the earth. It contains a system of religion, and of morality, which we may examine upon its own merits, independent of the sanction it receives from being the Word of God; and it contains a numerous collection of books, written at different ages of the world, by different authors, which we may survey as curious monuments of antiquity and as literary compositions. In what light soever we regard it, whether with reference to a revelation, to literature, to history, or to morality—it is an invaluable and inexhaustible mine of knowledge and virtue.

I shall number separately those letters that I mean to write you upon the subject of the Bible, and as after they are finished, I shall perhaps ask you to read them all together, or to look over them again myself, and you must keep them on separate file. I wish that hereafter they may be used to your brothers and sisters as well as to you. As you will receive them as a token of affection for you during my absence, I pray that they may be worthy to be read by them all with benefit to themselves, if it please God that they should be able to understand them.

From your affectionate father

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

## The Bible Christian.

MONTREAL, MARCH, 1848.

### THE DOCTRINE OF THE PLURALITY OF PERSONS.

Many excellent people suppose that the doctrine of a plurality of persons in the divine nature can be legitimately drawn from certain expressions which occur in the book of Genesis. It is contended that it must be inferred from the use of certain plural nouns as names of Deity. It is urged that as those nouns are constructed with other parts of speech, sometimes of the plural number, and sometimes of the singular number, that, therefore we are to conclude there is a plurality of persons in the Divine unity. Thus in the first verse of Genesis it is written: "In the beginning God [Elohim—lit. Gods] created [sing. num.] the heaven and the earth." But the first answer we make to this is, that if the literal reading in such cases be insisted on, it would prove a plurality of Gods; and this is admitted on all hands to be contrary to the whole scope and teaching of the scriptures. And we answer further, that there is no plural meaning necessarily involved in the plural form of expression now referred to. It is simply what Hebrew grammarians style the plural of *majesty* or *excellence*. Professor Stuart in his Hebrew grammar says:—"For the sake of *emphasis* the Hebrews commonly employed most of the words which signify *Lord, God, &c.*, in the plural form, but with the sense of the singular." Another reply we give to this argument to show its unsoundness is, that the same form of expression is applied not only to certain distinguished men, but to false divinities: it is applied to Moses (Ex. vii—1), to Samuel (1 Saml. xxviii—13, 14), to Dagon, an idol (Judges xvi—23, 24, and 1 Saml. v—7). These three considerations are surely sufficient to satisfy us of the futility of such an argument for a plurality in the divine nature. But we can cite good Trinitarian authority against it. John Calvin himself has pronounced the sentence of insufficiency against this first stone which is produced to construct the fabric of Trinitarianism.—"Moses," he says, "uses *Elohim*, a word of the plural number; from which it is usual to infer that there are three persons in the Godhead. But this proof of so important a doctrine appears to me by no means solid; and therefore I will not insist upon the word, but rather warn my readers against such violent interpretations."

It is farther urged that from the use of plural pronouns, in reference to the Deity, in three or four instances, we are to infer a plurality of persons in the divine nature. Thus God is represented (Gen. i—26) as saying:—"Let us make man, &c." But shall we infer a doctrine from these three or four passages which would contradict or obscure the simple teaching of ten thousand other passages in the scriptures where the Deity is represented, and referred to, by pronouns of the singular number? Can we not see in such language just a majestic mode of expression such as was usual with the monarchs of the ancient times, and customary amongst them still? Artaxerxes, King of Persia, is described in scripture (Ezra iv—18) as adopting similar language: "The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me." And what is more common with sovereigns of the present day than to issue their individual

commands in this mode: "It is our royal will and pleasure, &c.;" yet no one would ever think of inferring a plurality of persons in the Monarch who speaks thus. The proper way of regarding such expressions is to look upon them as of an anthropomorphic character, giving the conception of the historian's mind with regard to the divine proceeding, rather than a literal statement of that proceeding. To suppose the Deity really speaking involves the idea of organs of speech, which we know that God, who is a spirit, doth not possess. Such modes of representation are adopted in accommodation to our faculties, and are necessary to convey any distinct idea to our minds. Moses wrote the passage before us, yet Moses always maintained the absolute unity of God, which circumstance is full proof that no plurality of persons was ever hinted at by it. Neither the Jews of old, nor the Jews of modern times, ever interpreted such ex; ressions in any way inconsistent with the doctrine of God's strict unity. Surely their testimony in such a case is not to be overlooked. Here again, however, we shall cite the authority of a learned Trinitarian in setting this portion of Trinitarian proof aside. Concerning the text: "And God said, let us make man, &c.," Dr. Geddes remarks: "Of the Jewish writers some are of opinion that God here addresses himself to his surrounding angels, as a King to his Council of State. . . . Others, with whom agree some of our best modern critical commentators, find in the phrase "Let us make" no more than an emphatic and majestic mode of expression." . . . As a critic, I will not only say that the word *noshe* does not necessarily imply a plurality, and I believe that it is found even in the Hebrew writings applied to a single mortal, namely, in Song of Solomon i—11.—"we will make for thee a collar of gold,"—where, I am persuaded, that "we" means only Solomon himself. . . . Nor is it peculiar to the Hebrew: it is quite familiar to the Arabs. The Mussalmans are certainly no Trinitarians, yet nothing is more common in the Koran than God's speaking in the plural number. . . . I am, therefore, strongly inclined to think that the *noshe* of Genesis implies no plurality of persons.

### TRUTH AGAINST THE WORLD.

A PARABLE OF PAUL.

[From the Dial for October, 1840.]

One day Abdiel found Paul at Tarsus, after his Damascus journey, sitting meek and thoughtful at the door of his house; his favorite books, and the instruments of his craft, lying neglected beside him. "Strange tidings I hear of you," said the sleek Rabbi. "You also have become a follower of the Nazarene! What course shall you pursue after your precious conversion?" "I shall go and preach the Gospel to all nations," said the new convert gently. "I shall set off to-morrow."

The Rabbi, who felt a sour interest in Paul, looked at him with affected incredulity and asked, "Do you know the sacrifice you make? You must leave father and friends; the society of the Great and the Wise. You will fare hard and encounter peril. You will be impoverished; called hard names; persecuted; scourged; perhaps put to death." "None of these things move me," said Paul. "I have counted the cost. I value not life the half so much as keeping God's Law, and proclaiming the truth, though all men forbid. I shall walk by God's light, and fear not. I am no longer a slave to the old Law of sin and death, but a free man of God, made free by the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus." "Here," rejoined the Rabbi, "you have ease, and fame; in your new work you must meet toil, infamy, and death." "The voice of God says Go," exclaimed the Apostle, with firmness, "I am ready to spend and be spent in the cause of Truth."

"Die then," roared the Rabbi, "like a Nazarene fool, and unbelieving Atheist, as thou art. He that lusts after new things, preferring his silly convictions, and that whim of a conscience, to solid ease, and the advice of his friends, deserves the cross. Die in thy folly. Henceforth I disclaim thee. Call me kinsman no more!"

Years passed over; the word of God grew and prevailed. One day it was whispered at Tarsus, and ran swiftly from mouth to mouth, in the market place, "Paul, the apostate, lies in chains at Rome, daily expecting the Lions. His next trouble will be his last." And Abdiel said to his sacerdotal cronies in the synagogue,

"I knew it would come to this. How much better to have kept to his trade, and the old ways of his fathers and the prophets, not heeding that whim of a conscience. He might have lived respectably to an easy old age at Tarsus, the father of sons and daughters. Men might have called him RABBI in the streets."

Thus went it at Tarsus. But meantime, in his dungeon at Rome, Paul sat comforted. The Lord stood by him in a vision and said, "Fear not, Paul. Thou hast fought the good fight. Lo I am with thee to the end of the world." The tranquil old man replied, "I know whom I have served, and am thoroughly persuaded that God will keep what I have committed to him. I have not the spirit of fear, but of love, and a sound mind. I shall finish my course with joy, for I see the Crown of Righteousness laid up for me, and now my salvation is more perfect, and my hope is higher than when first I believed."

Then in his heart spoke that voice, which had spoken before on the mount of Transfiguration; "Thou also art my beloved Son. In thee am I well pleased."—Theodore Parker.

Since the introduction of our religion, human nature has made great progress, and society experienced great changes; and in this advanced condition of the world, Christianity, instead of losing its application and importance, is found to be more and more congenial and adapted to man's nature and wants. Men have outgrown the other institutions of that period when Christianity appeared; its philosophy, its modes of warfare, its policy, its public and private economy; but Christianity has never shrunk as intellect has opened, but has always kept in advance of men's faculties, and unfolded nobler views in proportion as they have ascended. The highest powers and affections which our nature has developed, find more than adequate objects in this religion. Christianity is indeed peculiarly fitted to the more improved stages of society, to the more delicate sensibilities of refined minds, and especially to that dissatisfaction with the present state, which always grows with the growth of our moral powers and affections. As men advance in civilization, they become susceptible of mental sufferings, to which ruler ages are strangers; and these Christianity is fitted to assuage. Imagination and intellect become more restless; and Christianity brings them tranquility, by the eternal and magnificent truths, the solemn and unbounded prospects, which it unfolds. This fitness of our religion to more advanced stages of society than that in which it was introduced, to wants of human nature not then developed, seems to me very striking. The religion bears the marks of having come from a being who perfectly understood the human mind, and had power to provide for its progress. This feature of Christianity is of the nature of prophecy. It was an anticipation of future and distant ages; and when we consider among whom our religion sprung, where, but in God, can we find an explanation of this peculiarity?—Dr. Channing.

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Poetry.

KIND WORDS.

What a world of deep sweetness  
There is in the tone  
That comes to us kindly  
When weary and lone;  
Enwreathed with the laurel,  
What rest could we find,  
If love never cheered us  
With words that are kind?

The floating of music,  
When morning is bright,  
May fall on the spirit  
Like droppings of light.  
For O, they are pleasant—  
The hymns of the birds;  
But never, no never,  
So sweet as kind words.

I've sat in the shadow  
Of twilight's short wing,  
And dreamed about angels  
And songs that they sing.  
They're lonely—such visions  
By fancy combined,  
But O, how much sweeter  
Are words that are kind.

O thou, who art favored  
With fortune and friends,  
In whose cup of gladness  
No bitter drop blends;  
Wherever the tempter  
Is spreading his snare,  
Remember, I charge thee,  
Thy brother is there;  
And although all degraded,  
And sinful and blind,  
Thou yet may'st redeem him  
With words that are kind.

ANGRY WORDS.

Angry words are lightly spoken  
In a rash and thoughtless hour,  
Brightest links of life are broken  
By their deep insidious power;  
Hearts inspired by warmest feeling,  
Ne'er before by anger stirred,  
Oft are rent past human healing,  
By a single angry word.

Poison-drops of care and sorrow,  
Bitter poison-drops are they,  
Weaving for the coming morrow  
Saddest memories of to-day.  
Angry words, O let them never  
From the tongue unbridled slip;  
May the heart's best impulse ever  
Check them ere they soil the lip.

Love is much too pure and holy,  
Friendship is too sacred far  
For a moment's reckless folly  
Thus to desolate and mar.  
Angry words are lightly spoken,  
Bitterest thoughts are rashly stirred;  
Brightest links of life are broken  
By a single angry word.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION.

[From Mrs. Dana's Letters.]

MY DEAR SIR,—You say I would never have arrived at my present conclusions by reading the Bible alone, and insinuate that I have received my ideas from Unitarian books. You forget my assertion, in a letter to my father, that my mind was satisfied upon the subject before I had read a single Unitarian author, excepting, of course, the writers of the New Testament. As this matter is evidently misunderstood, I will give a particular account of it. I started then in my investigation, with one idea firmly fixed in my mind—this idea was the unity of God, which doctrine is certainly revealed in the Old Testament. This, then, I considered a certain truth, and now my object in examining the New Testament was to learn whether a Trinity was there taught. I soon discovered another certain truth, namely, that Christ was a distinct being from God, and another, namely, that he was called the Son of God; and yet another, namely, that he was a human being. Here, then, were several certain truths, plainly revealed.

But I soon arrived at some passages which seemed to assert, inferentially, that Christ was God. Here, then, was something at variance with those certain truths contained in the same revelation. Here was a truth, apparently revealed, which contradicted the certain truth of the unity of God, and those three other certain truths, namely, that Christ was a distinct being from God, and that he was the Son of God, and that he was a human being. These truths were contradicted; but still I saw nothing about the Trinity.

I noted down these passages, and read on.—The rest of the book still recognized, in the plainest and most explicit manner, all those certain truths of which I have spoken. The whole tenor of the New Testament certainly proved them. Now what was to be done with those texts which seemed to contradict them? I reasoned with myself thus: if, in reading any other book, I should come to hints and statements which seemed to contradict the plain assertions, and to differ from the general scope and tenor of the work, I should endeavor to give to those hints and statements an interpretation and a meaning which would harmonize with what was plainly laid down. To do this, it would not be correct nor natural for me to assume incredible propositions. This would be no way to harmonize discordant ideas, nor to reconcile contradictions.

But this strange and unnatural plan, it appeared to me, had been pursued with the Bible. That holy book had been treated as we should not think it right to treat any other. The doctrine that Christ possessed two natures, a finite and an infinite one, had been assumed to account for those passages where he seemed to be spoken of as God. I say this doctrine had been assumed, for it is nowhere plainly laid down.—This course I could not justify, and what next was to be done?

Was it not possible that those perplexing passages might be interpreted in some other way? If they proved what they were said to prove, namely, that Christ was God, they proved that there were, at the same time, one only God, and two Gods; and that the same being had both a finite and an infinite nature. These things were contradictions, and could not be proved in any way; nor did I see anything about the mystery of the Trinity. These passages, then, must have some other meaning.—I now read the various interpretations of learned men, both Trinitarians and Unitarians, and was soon satisfied that they did not assert the deity of Christ, but that a fair interpretation could be given to all of them, which would perfectly harmonize with those plainly revealed truths, of which I have spoken, and which were likewise taught by the whole tenor of the New Testament. These passages, then, did not teach the deity of Christ. Christ was not God—the Bible was consistent with itself—and the doctrine of the Trinity existed no longer in my mind as an article of faith.

You say "you should be lost if your own reason were to be your guide." Your expression is rather indefinite, and it depends upon what your exact meaning is, whether or not I can agree with you. If you mean that it would be dangerous—aye, fatal—to depend on reason alone, I fully and heartily acquiesce in your declaration. But if you mean that reason is to be laid entirely aside, I cannot at all agree with you. Without reason, of what possible use would a revelation be? Place the Bible in the hands of an idiot, who never enjoyed the gift of reason—or of a madman, whose reason had been dethroned—and what a mockery you make of their sad misfortunes? You cannot then mean that we are to make no use of reason. But if you believe that with the revelation from our Heavenly Father in our hands, we are to use our utmost efforts to ascertain what it is that God has spoken, why, then, as I said before, in this matter we entirely agree. I am as much opposed as you can be to exalting reason above revelation—to deciding what ought and what ought not to be in the Bible; but we must certainly use our highest faculties and our best efforts to ascertain what is there. And if the Scriptures anywhere seem to teach doctrines contrary to those which they have elsewhere plainly taught, we are bound, if possible, to give those seemingly discordant passages a different construction: and if, as may be the case, we cannot find out what they mean, we must imitate the great John Locke, and humbly say so; and we must patiently wait until we enter upon a more perfect state of existence, when all will be explained to us—when all that is dark will be brought to light—when faith will be exchanged for sight.

The Rev. John Wesley, in his controversy with Toplady concerning Election, said, that he would not believe any doctrine which charged God with unrighteousness. No words nor texts of Scripture, he said, would compel him to do it. So I say in regard to the Trinity. No words nor texts of Scripture will compel me to believe that the Bible contradicts itself. We must keep reason in its right place, but we must not undervalue it. It is dangerous to use it rashly, but it is quite as dangerous not to use it at all. There is danger in everything. The very fact that we possess reason places us in responsible circumstances; and responsibility implies danger. Our reason is the highest gift of God; let us see to it that we neglect not "the gift that is in us." If we make no use of our reason, would not our Heavenly Father justly charge us with the guilt of hiding our talent in the earth? Is it not clear, that as each man, in his individual capacity, is responsible to God, so each individual must sift and determine this matter for himself? At the same time, I heartily respond to the exclamation, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall!"

Again, you observe, "When I draw instruction from the Bible, I like to take the whole of it." My dear Sir, so do I. And this is a great Unitarian principle. They take the whole Bible, and judge of detached passages by its general scope and tenor. In this position, I am glad to be able to inform, you will find yourself sustained by the whole body of Unitarians. And it is by adhering strictly to this great, this radical principle of all just interpretation, that they arrive at Unitarianism.

You are certainly laboring under a mistake when you assert that Unitarianism "would persuade men to be at peace with themselves, not to flee from wrath." Unitarianism does not persuade men to a false peace. It is not an easy, indolent religion. No, no, very far from it. Let any one read Dewey's Sermons on the Law of Retribution, and see whether Unitarianism points out an easy road to heaven. "This is a system," says Dr. Gannett, "which requires of its disciple the greatest measure of goodness that he can render, which prohibits every indulgence contrary to the strictest virtue, and imposes continual effort and conflict. Who that comprehends its requisitions would ever think of pronouncing them light. Unitarianism as we receive it, the patron of a lax morality and a worldly spirit! Verily, it requires a confidence by no means enviable to make such an assertion in the face of everything that has been said by advocate and by opposer."\*

But, the fact is, I know of no easier mode of arriving at heaven, than by the Calvinistic scheme, if that scheme be true. To depend for salvation entirely upon the merits of another, who has become our substitute, is a very comfortable thing. But then, under these circumstances, what moral progress can a man be expected to make? I joyfully acknowledge that those who hold this faith do make advances in moral growth and vigor; but I believe they do it in the very teeth of their creed, they do it because both Scripture and common sense teach them that "as a man sows, so shall he also reap." On the other hand, the Unitarian doctrine that men are to be rewarded hereafter according to their works, while it is a doctrine of reason and of revelation, is, from its very nature, a prodigious incentive to constant watchfulness and warfare. All the expressions of the Apostle Paul, in regard to the Christian's life of conflict and danger, Unitarians fully understand, appreciate, feel. They well know what he means when he speaks of "striving for the mastery." They can enter into his feelings of joyful exultation when he was able to say, "I have fought the good fight." They believe the Apostle James was correct when he said, that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." They attend to the injunction of the Apostle Peter, "Be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." At the same time, they believe that their salvation is all of grace, or favor; that it is obtained through the abounding mercy of God, in Christ; who has graciously promised to forgive the sins, and to overlook the shortcomings of those who earnestly repent and endeavor to reform. They believe that the lives which they live in the flesh, they must live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved them and gave himself for them. They endeavor to follow him—he is their example—and thus it is they live by faith in him—a faith which will inspire them with zeal and with strength to follow him "fully."

It seems strange to me, that any one can believe that the requisitions of the Unitarian faith are easy; that only those who wish to lead careless lives choose that religion. I solemnly declare to you, that I hesitate now at many things which I formerly deemed matters of trivial importance. My standard of gospel morality is higher, my views are more elevated, my aspirations after moral excellence altogether more ardent than they were before my change of argument. I earnestly wish that my standard of duty had been all my life what it is now; it would undoubtedly have saved me a vast amount of sorrow and regret. At the same time I frankly confess, that many things which I once deemed wrong I now think innocent. I have learned, I hope, to discriminate more justly between essentials and non-essentials; and I am more than ever persuaded that, instead of binding myself by certain outward rules and regulations, the only safe

\* In regard to the high tone of morality among Unitarians, Bishop Burnet says, "I must also do this right to the Unitarians as to own, that their rules in morality are exact and severe; that they are generally men of probity, justice, and charity, and seem to be very much in earnest in pressing the obligations to very high degrees in virtue."—BISHOP BURNET; *apud Field's Letters*, p. 26.—See also life of Burnet, prefixed to the "History of His Own Time," vol. 1., pp. 8, 9, Lond. 1848. DR. ADAMS says, "with regard to their moral code, the principles of the Unitarians do not seem to admit of their loosening, in the least, the bonds of duty; on the contrary, they appear to be actuated by an earnest desire to promote practical religion. Love is, with them, the fulfilling of the law; and the habitual practice of virtue, from a principle of love to God, and benevolence to man, is, in their judgment, the sum and substance of Christianity."—*Religious World Displayed; apud Field's Letters*, p. 25.

and certain way to live a truly Christian life, is to see faithfully to it that my heart is right with God.

CONVERSION TO UNITARIANISM.

[From the New York Christian Inquirer.]

It may be interesting to your readers to read some of the exercises and trials of mind of one who more than thirty years since, was converted from Calvinism of the strictest sect, to embrace the principles of Unitarianism, and unite with "a sect which was then every where spoken against." If others can say with Paul, "I was free born," it was not so with the writer; for he purchased his freedom from what is falsely called orthodoxy, "with a great price."

It may not be irrelevant to say that my parents were both Catholics, my father being educated for a priest in that church, but changed his intention as a matter of course in being married. All my early instruction was in favor of the Catholic faith, but losing my parents while young, and being brought in close connection with the orthodox Baptists, I adopted their views, and became a zealous member of that sect, and advocated with great zeal their peculiar sentiments. Being a great admirer of Dr. Gill, Dr. Andrew Fuller, and Booth, I read their works with great diligence and embraced their views of doctrines with much avidity. Gill's Body of Divinity and Commentaries were my constant companions; Fuller's "Gospel its own Witness," &c. &c., and Booth's "Reign of Grace" I considered unanswerable; and hence I became a Calvinist of the strictest sect, believing in hereditary total depravity, particular election and atonement, and that the call of the Gospel was only to the elect for whom Christ died, and that the rest of mankind were from eternity doomed to eternal misery. All the commitments of this creed—as the eternal sonship of Christ, the covenant of grace between the Father and Son, and the suretyship of Christ as the Federal head of the Church, were firmly believed by me. I need not add that being well indoctrinated in the Athanasian views of the Trinity, the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, and the five points of Calvinism, and being able also to quote every passage both in the Old and New Testaments which had any bearing upon these doctrines, I felt myself able to cope with Unitarians and Arminians of every grade. Satisfied that my sentiments were in accordance with the Scriptures, and that all who differed from me were wrong, I most zealously devoted all my energies to propagate them. I remained undisturbed in my creed, until the controversy between Drs. Channing and Worcester, which excited so much interest in New England. I took sides with Dr. Worcester and his friends against Dr. Channing and his friends, whom I looked upon with the utmost horror as being "the enemies both of the cross and crown of Christ," and that Unitarianism was only infidelity baptized with the name of Christian. The letter of Dr. Worcester I deemed unanswerable, and was more than ever confirmed in the truth of my sentiments.

About this time, however, some of my particular friends avowed themselves anti-Trinitarians, rejecting all human creeds, and taking the Bible as the only guide of faith and practice. This circumstance greatly alarmed me; and after having attempted to convince one of them of his errors without effect, he requested me as a favour to read "Yates' Vindication of Unitarianism." I reluctantly consented, adding, however, that nothing which he could say would ever convince me of the truth of Unitarianism. I recollect well although it is more than thirty years ago, that when I took Yates' work into my hands to read, I felt as if I were committing a sacrilegious act; to read such a book appeared to be a sin; but as I had promised my friend, I considered myself bound to read it. After I had finished the reading of it, I was astonished, but not convinced; astonished that so much could be found in the Scriptures in favor of Unitarian sentiments, and that even those passages which I had relied on as proving the supreme Deity of Jesus, when properly interpreted, proved the reverse. Like other Trinitarians, I maintained, that although the Old Testament did not reveal a Trinity but a plurality, yet the New Testament distinctly stated that there were three persons in the Godhead; that all those passages in the Old Testament where the Aleim says, Let us make man, &c., proved the plurality of the Godhead; but Yates, at one stroke, knocked away this chief corner stone of the Trinity, by showing that by a rule of Hebrew syntax, "Nouns signifying majesty and dominion, having a plural termination, are frequently joined to a verb in the singular number." Further examination of this argument in favour of the plurality of the Godhead, satisfied me that it was wholly unsound, and that if the doctrine of the Trinity were true, I must resort to the New Testament for the proof.

In a future communication I will relate some further particulars of the conversion of AN OLD UNITARIAN.