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LIFE OF JUSTIN THE MARTYR, CONCLUDED.

That the vulgar made Gods of the most brutish objects such as dogs, cats, wolves, goats, hawks, dragons, beetles, crocodiles, &c. &c.

This zeal in the cause of christianity, set a keener edge upon the malice and rage of his enemies, particularly that of the philosopher Crescens. He finding it impracticable to confute Justin by force of argument, determined to foil him by force of the secular arm. Marcus Antoninus the Emperor, was not more remarkable for his attachment to philosophy than to the most rigid superstition. He had been, from his youth, educated in the Salian College, and had there gone through all its offices in his own person. His opinions of the christians were, that their resolute and undaunted firmness in death, arose from mere stubbornness and obstinacy, rather than from a judicious and deliberate consideration of principles or expectations. Crescens found means to ingratiate himself into his favor, and soured his mind against Justin. Indeed the Emperor had been forewarned of this by Justin himself, having been publicly told by him, that Crescens, or some other of their titular philosophers, would lay snares to undermine, torment and perhaps crucify him.

He had given great offence to Crescens by the closeness of his arguments, and the severity of his reproofs for his wickedly and ungenerously traducing the Christians as atheistical and irreligious. Justin had told him, ' that he talked about

things which he did not understand, feigning things of his own head, only to comply with the humor of his seduced disciples and followers. That in reproaching the doctrines of Christ, when he did not understand them, he discovered a most wicked and malignant temper, and showed himself far worse than the most simple and unlearned, who are not wont rashly to determine on things not sufficiently known to them; or if he did understand their greatness and excellency, then he showed himself much more base and disingenious, in charging upon them what he knew to be false, and concealing his inward sentiments and convictions, for fear lest he should be suspected of being a christian.

Justin was in a short time accused, cast into prison, and afflicted with many preparatory tortures, in order to martyrdom. He was brought, with six others, before Rusticus, Præfect of the city, who was universally accounted a wise statesman and great philosopher, and was particularly addicted to the sect of the Stoics. He had the ear of the Emperor, having been his tutor, and highly honored by him. He endeavored to persuade Justin to obey the gods and comply with the Emperor's edicts. Justin plainly told him, that no man could be considered as criminal, who obeyed the commands of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The Præfect then enquired in what sect and discipline he had been educated. Justin answered, 'that he had endeavored to understand every profession of philosophy and had tryed every method of instruction, but had finally taken up his rest in the christian discipline, however unworthy it was esteemed by those, who, led by error and false opinions, knew nothing of it, but its name.' Wretch that thou art! said the governor, art thou then taken with that discipline? I am, replied Justin, for with right doctrine do I follow the christians. Being asked what that doctrine was, he answered, 'we believe in one only God, the Creator of all things visible and invisible; and confess our Lord Jesus Christ, to be the Son of God, foretold by the prophets of old, and who shall hereafter come to be the judge of mankind, a Saviour, a Preacher and

Master, to all those who are duly instructed by him : that as for himself, he thought himself too mean to say any thing becoming Christ's infinite Deity ; that this was the business of the prophets, who had many ages before, foretold the coming of this Son of God into the world.' The Præfect then severally examined Justin's companions, and turning to him said, hear thou, who are noted for thy eloquence, and thinkest that thou art in the truth. If I cause thee to be scourged from head to foot, thinkest thou, that thou shalt go to Heaven ? He answered, 'that though he should suffer all the Præfect had threatened, yet he humbly hoped that he should enjoy the portion of all true christians, well knowing that the divine grace and favor were laid up in store for all such.' And when again asked, whether he thought he should go to Heaven and receive a reward ? he replied, 'that he not only thought so but knew it, and was so certain of it that he had not the least cause to doubt it.' The governor then positively ordered them to go and sacrifice to the gods. 'No man,' replied Justin, 'that is in his mind, will desert the true religion, to fall into error and impiety.' They were threatened, that unless they immediately complied, they should be tormented without mercy. 'There is nothing, said Justin, which we more earnestly desire, than to endure torments for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved. For this is that which will promote our happiness, and procure us confidence before that dreadful Tribunal of our Lord and Saviour ; before which, by the divine appointment, the whole world must appear.' To which the rest assented, adding, 'dispatch quickly what thou hast a mind to, for we are christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols.' The governor then pronounced this sentence : "they who refuse to do sacrifice to the gods, and obey the imperial edicts, let them be first scourged, and then beheaded according to law." These holy martyrs rejoiced and blessed God for the sentence passed upon them, and that they were thought worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. They were then returned to prison, whipped, and afterwards beheaded. This was done about the year 145.

Justin was a man of a pious mind and virtuous life ; tenderly sensible of the honor of his master, and the great interests of religion. He did not value himself on account of his great abilities, but on all occasions, gave the glory to the divine grace and goodness. He had a true love to all men, and an ardent concern for the welfare of souls, whose happiness he continually prayed for and promoted, even that of his most enraged enemies. In his apology to the Emperor, he thus concludes, ' I have no more to say, but that we shall endeavor, what in us lies, and heartily pray, that all men in the world may be blessed with the knowledge and entertainment of the truth !' In the pursuit of this noble and generous design, he feared no dangers, and delivered himself with the greatest freedom and impartiality. He acquainted the Emperors, how much it was their duty to honor and esteem the truth—that he came not to soothe and flatter them, but to desire them to pass sentence according to the exactest rules of justice—that it was their duty, and infinitely reasonable, when they had heard the cause, to discharge the office of righteous judges, which if they did not, they would finally be found inexcusable before God—that if they went on to persecute and punish such innocent persons he warned them beforehand, that it would be impossible they should escape the future judgment of God.

Justin regarded not the persons of men, nor was frightened by any dangers that attended his duty ; and therefore in his conference with Trypho, he says, that he regarded nothing but to speak the truth, not caring who was disobliged by it, yea, though they should instantly tear him to peices.

When after the death of Antonius Pius, and his being deified by the Senate, it was pretended that divers miraculous cures were ascribed to the remedies that had been revealed by this imaginary deity ; Justin observed, that it was not difficult for the devil, when God is pleased to permit him, to discover remedies for the diseases which himself had inflicted, in order to procure the admiration of the vulgar, and, as Ba-

ronius observes, that he might oppose false miracles to the true ones, which were wrought by the christians.

Justin not only preached but wrote. He published many works for the benefit of the christian church, describing their general and peaceable conduct; with their innocent but useful lives.

He particularly details the manner of their public worship: He says, 'Upon Sunday we all assemble and meet together, as being the first day, where on God parting the darkness from the rude chaos created the world; and the same day whereon Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, rose again from the dead; for he was crucified the day before Saturday, and the next day (Sunday) he appeared to his apostles and disciples. By this means observing a kind of analogy and proportion with the Jewish Sabbath, which had been instituted by God himself. For as that day was kept as a commemoration of God's Sabbath, or resting from the work of creation, so was this set apart for religious uses, as the solemn memorial of Christ's resting from the work of our redemption in this world, completed on the day of his resurrection.' Therefore being so met, 'as soon as the preacher has finished his discourse, the people all rise up and offer their prayers to God.' Tertullian confirms this, when he says, that christians in their public prayers, looking up to Heaven, spread abroad their hands because innocent; uncover their heads because not ashamed; and without a monitor, because they pray from the heart. And Origen says, 'a true christian prays in every place, closing the eyes of his senses but erecting those of his mind.'

Though Justin lived but a little better than one hundred years after the crucifixion, yet the gospel was then spread far and wide; he says, 'there is not a nation either Greek or Barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wander in tribes and live in tents, amongst whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the Universe by the name of the crucified Jesus.'

Justin was a man of smart and pleasant wit, a clear judgment to consider and weigh the differences of things and to adapt and accommodate them to the most useful purposes, all which qualities of the mind were greatly improved by the advantages of foreign studies, being learned both in the christian and ethnic philosophy, and well acquainted with history and every sort of learning. The only thing he failed in, was the knowledge of the Hebrew and other eastern languages. Eusebius says, that ' he was a monument of singular parts, and a mind studiously conversant about divine things, richly fraught with excellent and useful knowledge.

There have been some objections brought against the excellent character of Justin, and who is there that has left a memory free from censure. He is said to have held some unorthodox opinions. True it is, that he had some notions not warranted by the general sense of the church, especially in later ages, but scarce any but what were held by most of the Fathers in those early times, and which for the most part, are speculative, and have no ill effect upon a good life. First he has been charged, with too much kindness and indulgence to the more eminent sort of heathen, and particularly toward *Socrates*, *Heraclitus*, &c. Such indeed he seems to allow, in some sense, to have been christians, and affirms, that Christ was in part known to Socrates. Again he says, that whatever wise and excellent things, either philosophers or poets have spoken, it was from that seed of the *logos*, the word, or reason that is implanted in all mankind. Thus he says, that Socrates exhorted the Greeks to the knowledge of the unknown God, by the inquisition of the word. But he no where affirms, that Gentiles would be saved, without the entertainment of christianity; nor that their knowledge was of itself sufficient to that end, but so far as they improved their reason and the internal word to the great and excellent purposes of religion, so far they were christians, and a kin to the eternal and original word; and that whatever was rightly dictated or reformed by this inward word, either by Socrates among the

Greeks, or by others among the Barbarians, was in effect done by Christ himself, the *word* made flesh.

Another opinion with which he was charged, was his belief in the millenium or reign of 1000 years. This indeed he asserts, that after the first resurrection of the dead, Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, beautified and enlarged, where our Saviour with all the holy Patriarchs and Prophets, the Saints and Martyrs should visibly reign 1000 years. He confesses, indeed, that there were many sincere christians, that would not subscribe to this opinion, but that there were also many of the same mind, with him, as Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, Nepos, Appolinarius, Tertullian, Victorinus, Lactantius, L. Gallus and many more.

Justin also held, that the souls of good men are not received into Heaven till the resurrection, that when they depart the body remains in a better state, where being gathered within itself, the soul perpetually enjoys what it loved ; but that the souls of the unrighteous and the wicked, are condemned to a worse condition, where they expect the judgment of the great day ; and he reckons it among the errors of some pretended christians, that they denied the resurrection, and affirmed that their souls immediately after death, were taken into heaven. Nor herein did he stand alone, but had the almost unanimous suffrage of primitive writers voting with him, as Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Hilary, Prudentius, Ambrose, and Augustin, there being a general concurrence in this, that the souls of the righteous, were not upon their dissolution, presently translated to heaven, (or the full and final state of the blessed) that is not admitted to a full and perfect fruition of the divine presence, but into certain secret and unknown habitations, (prepared by their Redeemer) where they enjoyed a state of imperfect blessedness, waiting for the accomplishment of it, at the general resurrection, which intermediate state they have described under the notion of Paradise and Abraham's bosom.

Justin has also been accused of magnifying the power of man's will, but this he did not more than most of the Fathers

of the first ages, till the Pelagian controversy. How far this is just, taken in a bad sense, learn from their language. Justin in his dialogue with the Jew, says, 'it is in vain for a man to think, that he can rightly understand the mind of the ancient prophets, unless he be assisted by a mighty grace derived from God.' Irenæus says in his book against hereticks, 'as well may the dry ground produce fruit without rain to moisten it, as we who are at first like dried sticks be fruitful unto a good life, without voluntary showers from above, that is (as he adds) the laver of the Spirit.' Clemens of Alexandria, affirms expressly, that as there is a free choice in us, so all is not placed in our own power, but that by grace we are saved, though not without good works; and that to the doing of what is good, we especially need the grace of God, a right institution, an honest temper of mind and that the Father draws the soul to him; and that the powers of the will are never able to wing the soul for a due flight to Heaven, without a mighty portion of grace to assist it.' Origen observes, 'that the mysteries of christianity cannot be duly contemplated without a better afflatus and a more divine power; for as no man knows the things of a man save the spirit of a man that is in him, so no man knows the things of God, but the Spirit of God: it being all to no purpose, unless God, by his grace, does enlighten the understanding.' So Tertullian asserts, 'that there is a power of divine grace stronger than nature, which has in subjection the power of our free will.' Yet these Fathers are often charged with magnifying the power of man's will. Thus evident it is, that when the Fathers talk highest of the powers of nature, they never intended to exclude and banish the grace of God.

Some other disputes, or disallowed opinions may be probably met with in Justin's writings, but which are mostly nice and philosophical.

ESSAYS, MORAL AND RELIGIOUS.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

A series of letters on the tendency of religion to promote the happiness of mankind in the present world.

PHILANDER TO POLITUS, LETTER IV,
SIR,

It affords me much pleasure to find that your prejudices against a life of piety are wearing away. Let me, however, again remind you that mere reasoning can never give you a complete idea of the sweetness of devotion. It must be experienced, or it cannot be adequately understood. My aim in writing these letters is at once to convince your understanding of the happy tendency of piety, and to excite your heart to an earnest and persevering pursuit of it. With these views I proceed in the discussion before us.

My second argument is that piety saves us from the thralldom of vicious appetites and passions, the great sources of misery to mankind.

That much the greater part of the evils of life spring from our irregular and criminal propensities is not a point of abstruse speculation, but of indisputable fact. The passions which govern men are indeed very various; and some of them more manifestly criminal and more rapidly ruinous than others. But who is there, destitute of the love and fear of God, that is not subjected to the tyranny of at least some one unreasonable propensity, by which his tranquility is often disturbed, and his enjoyments more or less embittered? Who has not observed and lamented the dreadful consequences of unbridled passions, both to their subjects and to others connected with them? And what but the commanding energy of religious affection can restore and preserve order in the soul? Let us select a few instances by way of illustration.

Observe the victim of habitual drunkenness. Without the means of gratifying his depraved appetite, he is miserable beyond expression. And what a train of evils does its gratification produce! time wasted, quarrels fomented, reason prostrated, fortune neglected or squandered, friends disgusted and lost; the whole character degraded below that of the beasts that perish, the dearest connexions reduced to want and beggary, and the body hastened to an untimely grave, as well as the soul to eternal destruction. 'Who hath wo? (says the wise man;) who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.' For whatever temporary gratification it may afford, 'at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.' The fear of God is the best preservative against this insinuating and destructive vice; and almost without exception the only deliverer from its power. And will any rational man deny the superiority in point of happiness of him who lives temperately over him who is under bondage to the intoxicating bowl? The drunkard himself does not deny it in the hour of sober reflection.

Contemplate next the man of pleasure, the votary of sensual indulgence. The miseries which flow from lawless lust are much like those of drunkenness, but more speedy and more extensive. Those principles of human nature which attract the sexes to each other produce, when exalted by sentiment, and governed by virtue, the purest felicity of the present life. But how large a portion of the wretchedness of mankind may be traced to their perversion as its cause! The debauchee makes great sacrifices and pays dearly, even now, for his transient, insipid and guilty gratifications. He is the victim of anxious cares and terrors, the destroyer of his own health of body and strength of mind, the seducer often and betrayer of unsuspecting weakness, the author of shame and anguish to himself and others. 'Marriage, (says the Apostle,) is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and

adulterers God will judge.' And he does often judge them, even in this world, with punishments exemplarily terrible. 'The end of a strange woman is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell.' From this gulph of iniquity and ruin religion has power to preserve the young, surrounded with temptation; and even to deliver the wretch who is thus plunging into destruction temporal and eternal. And is not that chastity which the gospel enjoins, that honorable love on which the Almighty smiles, infinitely more happy than a life of wandering debauchery? How much do the slaves of forbidden pleasure mistake the road to true felicity!

Turn your eye now for a moment to the gaming table, that infatuating resort, where time is murdered, and fortunes are ruined by the arts of fraud. Mark the features of the groupe. Some are exulting in the gains of iniquity, while others are frantick with grief and repentment. And those who now triumph are soon, in their turn, to be made the prey of superior skill in this trade of deception. It requires, I think, no great discernment to see that the life of a gamester is the very reverse of peace and happiness. So obvious, indeed, and so numerous are the evils produced by this shameful propensity, to individuals, to families, and to the community, that laws have been enacted to restrain it, (though alas! too seldom executed,) in every civilized nation. Who will compare the short-lived triumph of the gamester, covered with baseness and infamy which he cannot hide even from himself, with the tranquility of the good and upright man who enjoys the fruits of his honest industry with the blessing of his God?

I wish it could be said with truth that those vices, and others of the like nature and tendencies, were very rare amongst mankind. But alas, it is far otherwise. Their subjects are numerous; and the misery they produce incalculable. At the same time there are many other domineering passions, which though more subtle and more slow in their

operation, are not less hateful to God, nor less injurious to human happiness.

Is it possible the covetous man can be happy, whose whole soul is devoted to the acquisition of riches; who sacrifices every pleasure, and almost every moral principle, to an object which, while he approaches it, seems forever increasing its dimensions and its distance? Does not experience prove that 'he who loveth silver is never satisfied with silver nor he that loveth abundance with increase? such a character is even proverbial for foolish labour and restless anxiety. His days are spent in care! his nights in watching. Disappointments and losses often plunge him into the deepest distress. Enslaved to the idolatry of gold, the covetous man is a stranger to the pleasures of a benevolent heart, and to the sweet charities of social life. His mind loses those manly sentiments and feelings which adorn human nature; and he becomes callous to every other gratification but the gloomy one of brooding over his heaps of wealth, which he fears to lose, and has not a heart to enjoy. The wise king of Israel draws an exquisite picture of such a character, which we often see exemplified in our days. 'There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother: yet there is no end of all his labour: neither is his eye satisfied with riches; neither saith he, for whom do I labour and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity; yea, it is a sore travail.' Now from this fruitless vanity, this sore travail, religion saves her disciple, by giving him a right estimation of this world, and fixing his highest affection on God and things above. The Christian is no longer under bondage to worldly passions. He feels himself but a pilgrim here; his eternal home and inheritance are in heaven.

There is no passion more universal amongst mankind than pride. It is that spirit by which 'men think more highly of themselves than they ought to think,' and treat with negligence and contempt those whom they account their inferiours. It was probably the first sin that entered into God's

creation; and certainly made a principal part of that transgression by which our first parents involved themselves and their posterity in ruin. Every man condemns it; yet every man cherishes it in his bosom, until it is banished by the spirit of devotion. It would be easy to show the absurdity of pride, and how peculiarly odious it is in the sight of God. But I am at present principally concerned with its tendency to the unhappiness of its subject. And this is indeed very great. Mankind take pleasure in wounding and mortifying a proud spirit; and its morbid and excessive sensibility exposes it to be pained by the slightest affronts. Besides, as pride dislikes to own a superior, or even an equal, and as there are so many of this temper, it must evidently be a source of endless feuds and contentions. Hence the wise man observes, 'only by pride cometh contention; yea, pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.' Perhaps there are no pangs so exquisitely keen as those of wounded and fallen pride. And I think the providence of God often seems to fix especial marks of his displeasure upon this impious passion. 'Better is it,' therefore, 'to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.' The humble spirit is a spirit of peace and quietness. While 'God resists the proud, he gives grace' of every kind 'to the humble.' He who thrusts not himself forward into the general contest for preeminence will escape its solitudes and disappointments. He who 'walks humbly with his God' will not find his happiness much affected by the neglect or the disesteem of men. Now this happy temper is an essential part of genuine piety. The whole gospel of Christ is calculated to make us meek and lowly: humility is the leading characteristic of a Christian.

Very nearly allied to pride is ambition: by which I do not mean the thirst of political power merely; but also that universal restlessness and discontent of mankind with the stations and circumstances in which divine providence has placed them, and their painful struggles to imitate and outdo their neighbors in a thousand things which have no connexion

with the real wants or substantial happiness of human life. This Spirit has often been made the theme of wit and ridicule; but it is not to be rectified by satire. It pervades every rank and every situation; and is certainly a fruitful source of unhappiness. It fills the mind with envy, a feeling as painful as it is abominable. From this busy and endless turmoil the pious man escapes. Feeling himself an heir of immortal glory, he looks with a just indifference on the frivolous and fleeting distinctions of worldly wealth, magnificence and power. 'I have learned,' said once a poor, despised, persecuted disciple of Christ, who had formerly moved in a very different sphere; 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.'

Once more: how general amongst men is the spirit of revenge on the reception of an injury: a disposition unhappy in itself, and calculated to aggravate and to multiply injuries without end. What extensive and dreadful calamities have often arisen from trifles, which a forbearing and forgiving spirit would have suffered to die away at the beginning, but which impatient resentment fanned into a flame. He who cherishes malice in his heart may possibly make its object miserable; but he inevitably makes himself so, whether his malice be gratified or not. The Author of our frame has ordained that our malevolent passions should carry a part of their punishment in their very exercise; and that the infliction of vengeance, so eagerly desired, should speedily recoil in bitterness on the revengeful. Now our holy religion absolutely destroys the source of all these evils. It requires us most carefully 'to follow peace with all men'; to forbear from every sentiment of malice and retaliation of injuries; 'to pray for enemies', and 'to overcome evil with good'. And the injunctions are enforced by a motive impressive to the mind beyond all comparison. 'Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you'.

With these brief illustrations I must dismiss this part of the subject. You will pursue it in your own reflections as far as you please. And the more you consider it the more highly will you value the gospel of Christ, which delivers us from all these 'vanities and vexations of spirit, by withdrawing our hearts from every excessive attachment to this world, and fixing them upon a treasure pure, perfect, and everlasting, reserved for us in heaven.

A third argument to prove the happy tendency of piety, is the pleasure of an approving conscience, contrasted with the misery of conscious guilt.

God has implanted in our nature a most important faculty, by which we are led to compare our thoughts, words, and actions with a standard of duty, and to perceive, with conscious pleasure or pain, their agreement or disagreement. This faculty we call conscience, or the moral sense. And its decisions are generally much enforced by the intimate reference they bear to the approbation or disapprobation of God, and to that retribution which we are to receive at his hands in a future world. Conscience is not indeed an infalible guide in matters of right and wrong. There are, however, many points of duty immediately and intuitively evident; and of many others the discovery is almost unavoidable. Hence conscience is never without means to exercise its power. It follows the wicked man wherever he goes; for it is in fact himself. It reproofs those dark iniquities which he conceals from every human eye; corrodes his gayest pleasures with the gall of self-condemnation; and turns the down of his pillow into thorns of torture. How often have the pangs of remorse thrown a gloom of darkness and distress over all the glory of the sinner! How often have the apprehensions of divine vengeance rendered life itself an intolerable burden, and prompted the despairing wretch to cast it impiously and violently away! 'the spirit of a man will bear his infirmity! but a wounded spirit' a spirit wounded with guilt and overwhelmed with the wrath of God, 'who can bear'? And though many live in sin without this

lively sensibility or extreme anguish : yet there are few who do not in some degree feel the lashes of guilt. And the few who have their consciences seared, through long and uninterrupted prosperity in the ways of sin, gain nothing by this temporary and fatal security. Sooner or later the awful reality of their situation must be seen and felt. It is literally true, as a general rule, that by the harrassing influence of irregular appetites and passions, the rebukes of conscience, and the terrible prospect of death and judgment, 'the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith God, to the wicked.'

The gospel gives peace to the conscience by applying 'the blood of sprinkling' for our pardon, and by leading us to the love and practice of universal righteousness. For this is essentially the prevailing character of every Christian. By these means he is restored to peace with God, and with himself. Conscience is to him no longer an accusing enemy, but a friendly monitor, and a minister of the purest delight. The pious man, though he relies upon nothing but the mercy of God in Christ for eternal life, yet tastes a sacred pleasure in the approbation of God and of his own mind. He covets no extensive theatre for the display of his virtues to applauding multitudes ; but is satisfied with that honour which comes from his heavenly Father and from his own unbribed judgment. Amidst the troubles of life, under the misconstructions of the ignorant and reproaches of the malicious, the simple consciousness that he has done his duty, and approved himself to the great and righteous Judge, bears him up with unshaken fortitude and tranquillity. An approving conscience is a continual feast, 'Our rejoicing,' says the Apostle, 'is this, the testimony of our conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity, by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.' Who that has wisdom to make a right judgment of happiness would exchange the sunshine of his own breast, and the smiles of Heaven, for the empoisoned bowl of sinful pleasure ? Can any thing more fully exhibit the absurdity and

folly of sin, than the consideration that it involves the sinner in a perpetual warfare with himself, as well as with his Creator?

Surely this one argument in favor of a pious and virtuous life, briefly as I have handled it, ought to be deemed sufficient to decide the cause. And here I will close the the present letter, by subscribing myself &c.

PHILANDER.

ORIGINAL LETTERS.

LETTER 7:

Dear Friend,

YOUR letter afforded me more pleasure, I dare say, than you expected it would when you wrote it. It not only revived in my mind a recollection of many pleasing occurrences, and gave me a farther evidence of that candor and friendship which you possess in so large a measure, and which is so agreeable to me; but likewise confirmed me in the opinion that you have some serious impressions on your mind about religion. I hope you find your thoughts frequently exercised on a subject, to which, it is possible you may remember, they were once very averse. Your being "more than ever convinced that there is no lasting happiness in this life," I trust was the result of deliberate reflection, and not a hasty conclusion drawn from the circumstance of being separated from your friends, however dear they may be to you, and however desirable their company. For a firm persuasion of this important truth, will have an undoubted tendency to direct your mind, which is continually aspiring after happiness, to seek it in something beyond this life, where it cannot be found but by enjoying the favor of God, and being possessed of true religion. But permit me to ask you, if you possess the same senti-

ments at all times? Are you so fully convinced of the insufficiency of created good, as to give over your expectation of obtaining happiness from it? Have you not some scheme in view at this very time, in the acquisition of which you promise yourself great satisfaction? Are you of the same opinion, when you are in the actual possession of some pleasure you have long desired and sought? People are very apt to deceive themselves, and to imagine that a disrelish for the enjoyments of life, which frequently arises from nothing more than some disappointment or melancholy humor in the constitution, is a conviction of their unsatisfying nature. I am unwilling to suppose this to be your case. Your natural vivacity, and cheerful disposition forbid me to entertain such a thought, and your next sentence more clearly shews the contrary. You say, "I wish I could think seriously of these things, and get my affections placed on that happiness which will endure forever. But I have a bad heart and live in an ensnaring world. I want to think about good things, but when I try, evil thoughts will intrude and get foremost." A happy indication I think of your becoming truly religious; for when one begins to watch his thoughts, and fight against the intrusion of bad ones, there are great hopes of his obtaining true piety; and without serious thoughtfulness, and consideration, I do not believe any pretensions to religion will be lasting. Well, if it is your resolution to endeavour to secure the salvation of your soul, I congratulate you on your happy choice, and pray for your encouragement in so important an undertaking. You may meet with some difficulties, and contempt from the inconsiderate, but you will rejoice the heart of all the lovers of Jesus, and especially of those, whom I know you love, and wish above all to please. How happy will it make your dear parents? and how happy are you in having parents who would encourage and pray for your success in such a pursuit of unfading happiness. You don't know how soon you may leave them, or they be snatched away from you. A more favourable

ble opportunity of endeavoring to make your peace with heaven may never be afforded than the present. Why then would you defer it? Nothing can be more reasonable than to devote yourself to him who died for you, to whom you are indebted for every mercy. For admitting every thing religion promises to be an uncertainty, they make the wisest choice who take it for their portion. They loose nothing in this world, or nothing worthy the attention of a wise man, for they can enjoy life as well, and relish all its comforts in as high a degree as others; and then, if religion is a reality, they are infinite gainers. But happy for us we are not left in this state of uncertainty. We believe upon the infallible authority of his word who spoke creation into existence, that "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

" Firm are the words his prophets give,
 " Sweet words, on which his children live;
 " Each of them is the voice of God,
 " Who spoke, and spread the skies abroad.
 " Each of them powerful as that sound
 " That bid the new made world go round;
 " And stronger than the solid poles
 " On which the wheel of nature rolls."

I conclude with assuring you, that I have a very grateful remembrance of your kind wish expressed in the latter part of your letter; which does so much honour to the disinterested benevolence of your heart, that it is with pleasure I subscribe myself, your obliged friend &c.

Q.

INFANT BAPTISM, No. IV.

TESTIMONIES OF THE FATHERS.

HAVING already, taken a cursory view of the evidence in favor of infant baptism, which arises from the early history of the christian church, given to us by inspiration; I will now proceed to inquire, what light is cast upon this subject, by the writings of those holy men, who lived immediately after the times of the Apostles.

The first author who is commonly cited as giving his testimony in favor of the practice now in question is *Irenæus*, who was a disciple of Polycarp, and is considered by Jerome, as a man of the Apostolical age; and is said by Tertullian to be a most accurate searcher into all doctrines. He suffered martyrdom at Lyons, before the end of the second century. There is however some ambiguity in the passage quoted from this Father, and his testimony does not appear to me to be as satisfactory as that of many others; yet it is extremely probable that he alludes to infant baptism. His words are these "Christ came to save all by himself who are REGENERATED, infants, little ones, and children; young men and old men." Now it is well known to all who are in the least conversant with the language of the Fathers, that they use the word regeneration as synonymous with baptism; and indeed they more frequently express the external rite of initiation into the Christian church by the former than by the latter word.

The next ecclesiastical writer, who mentions the baptism of infants, is Tertullian, who flourished about the beginning of the third century. His words are these, "Jesus Christ
 " says indeed, *hinder not little children from coming to me*, but
 " that they should come to him as soon as they are advanced in years, as soon as they have learnt their religion,
 " when they may be taught whither they are going, when
 " they are become christians, when they begin to be able to
 " know Jesus Christ. What is there that should compel this

“ innocent age to receive baptism? And since they are not
 “ yet allowed the disposal of temporal goods, is it reasonable
 “ that they should be intrusted with the concerns of heaven?
 “ For the same reason it is proper to make those who are not
 “ married wait for some time, by reason of the temptations
 “ they have to undergo till they are married, or have attained
 “ to the gift of continency. Those who shall duly consider
 “ the great weight and moment of this divine sacrament, will
 “ rather be afraid of making too much haste to receive it,
 “ than to defer it for some time, that they may be the better
 “ capable of receiving it more worthily.” In the same passage
 he says, “ What necessity is there, to expose Godfathers, to
 “ the hazard of answering, for those whom they hold at the
 “ fonts since they may be prevented by death from perform-
 “ ing those promises which they have made for their chil-
 “ dren?” Upon the above passage I would observe that as
 far as the opinion and reasoning of Tertullian have any weight,
 they are evidently in opposition to infant baptism, but at the
 very time that he gives his opinion against the practice, he
 furnishes a strong testimony in favor of its prevalence. He
 opposes it, not as an innovation, which had lately crept into
 the church, but as an established custom, which for a particu-
 lar reason, he wished should be altered; and it is not difficult
 to discern, that this reason was an apprehension that sins com-
 mitted after baptism, were scarcely pardonable, which pre-
 vailed so much not long after this period, that many converted
 from heathenism, deferred their baptism, until the hour of
 their death.

I have already observed in a former number, that it is not
 the opinions, but the testimony of the Fathers, which ought to
 have weight with us on this subject. In their opinions, they
 were very liable to error, but in their knowledge of the uni-
 form practice of the church they could not be mistaken. If
 it should be said, that it is very improbable that Tertullian
 would oppose the uniform custom of the church, with regard

to the baptism of infants, especially if he had known that it was derived from the Apostles. I answer, that in this very passage, he does oppose what all must acknowledge to have been an Apostolical practice, the baptism of unmarried persons, and upon the same grounds which he opposes infant baptism. And it will produce no surprise to find him rejecting one Apostolical custom, when we are informed, that shortly afterwards, he rejected the Catholic church itself, and adopted the heresy of the Montanists. But as the prevalence of the practice at this period can be fully established by other unexceptionable witnesses, I am willing that we should make no use of the testimony of Tertullian; and I would not now have produced his words, had I not been anxious to let the reader see that however opposed he was to the practice of infant baptism, his testimony is altogether in favor of its existence and antiquity.

Origen, a man of most extraordinary genius and learning, was born towards the close of the second, and died about the middle of the third century. From his writings we have three clear testimonies in favor of infant baptism. The first is in his 14th. homily on Luke "Little ones, are baptized for the remission of sins." And again in the same discourse "By the sacrament of baptism, the pollutions of our birth are put off, and therefore infants are baptized."—"What reason can be given for the practice of baptizing infants, except this; that none is free from pollution, no not if he be but a day old."

The second testimony, of this eminent man, is in his 8th. sermon on Leviticus, where he has these words "Let it be inquired, since baptism is given for the remission of sins, why, according to the usage of the church, *that baptism*, is given to infants."

His third testimony, is found, in his discourse on the epistle to the Romans, where we have these remarkable words "*The church hath received a tradition from the Apostles, to give baptism unto infants.*"

Cyprian, was made bishop of Carthage, in the year 248, and ten years afterwards received the crown of martyrdom. The

year before his death (viz. 257) he sat in council with sixty-six bishops, whose decrees may be seen in his Epist. (58) to Fidus, which is still extant. Fidus had proposed the question whether it was lawful for infants to be baptized on the second or third day; or whether it was necessary to wait until the eighth, as was directed in the case of circumcision. By the way, it may be observed, that the propounding of such a question, shews that at that time, it was commonly believed that baptism held the same place in the New which circumcision occupied in the Old dispensation: and that no doubts were at that time entertained of the right of infants to baptism. But if this truth were not sufficiently evident from merely proposing such a question to a numerous council of bishops, their unanimous answer, will remove every shadow of doubt. They determined without a dissenting voice, "That the mercy and grace of God ought not to be denied to any infant, however young—that if any were to be kept from baptism, it should be rather those of full age who have committed great sins: but since these, when they embrace the faith, are not prohibited from baptism, much more, ought not the infant to be forbidden who being new-born hath no sin but that which he hath derived from Adam by his birth"—In the conclusion they say "that as none were to be refused baptism, so especially this was to be held and observed with respect to infants and new-born children."

Here then, we have the testimony of a whole council, consisting of above sixty bishops in favor of infant baptism; and as they were not brought together to decide this question, the unanimity of such a number, may be considered as decisive evidence, that in the time of Cyprian, there was but one opinion and one practice in the whole Christian church, with respect to infant baptism. If they had been collected, to determine whether infants ought to be baptized, it would have furnished evidence, whatever their design might be, that there were some antipedobaptists at that time, for it was not usual for councils to meet, for the consideration of questions, not disputed.

But as the question before them was, whether infants might lawfully be baptized before the eighth day; whilst they gave their opinion upon this point, they implicitly teach us, not only, that *they* all believed in infant baptism, but that nobody else doubted of it.

As to the authenticity, and genuineness of the Epistle of Cyprian, which contains the decrees of this council, we have the fullest satisfaction. It is quoted by Jerome, in his dialogue against the Pelagians; and Augustine cites it more than once, and sets it down almost entire, as a testimony of great weight against Heretics. In his 28th. epist. to Hyeronymus, he says, "Blessed Cyprian decreed with a number of his fellow-bishops, that a child new-born, might be properly baptized, not thereby making any new decree but retaining the faith of the church before most firmly established."

About the same period, lived the author, whose work goes under the name of Dyonisius the Ascopagite. In his discourse concerning the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, he proposeth it as a question; "why children who cannot yet understand, are notwithstanding made partakers of the *sacred birth* from God." By which baptism is undoubtedly intended. In answer to this question, he says, "Many things of which we do not now see the reason are worthy of God.—We affirm of this the same things, which our *divine guides* have handed down to us." Again, "Our divine guides appointed that infants should be admitted after the sacred manner." By divine guides, faith Maxentius, "is meant the Apostles." Which is evident enough. It ought not to prejudice the testimony of this writer, that his book has been falsely ascribed to Dyonisius the convert of St. Paul at Athens; for this has come to pass in all probability, though the ignorance of transcribers, who finding the author's name to be Dyonisius, hastily supposed that he was the very person mentioned in the Acts. It is agreed by all, that the writer was a very learned man and his antiquity will appear from this circumstance, that as early as the year 420 Theodorus debated the question, whether or not the author was Dyonisius the Ascopagite,

Gregory Nazianzen, flourished about the middle of the fourth century. From whom we have the following testimony: "If thou hast an infant, let not iniquity get time, but let it be *sanctified*, let it be consecrated to the spirit: and whereas the Heathens use charms, and amulets to secure their children, do you bestow on them the *Trinity*, that great and good phylactery or preservative."—Orat. 4, on Baptism. In the same discourse he says; "What shall we say concerning those that are yet children, and neither know the loss, nor are sensible of the grace of baptism? Shall we also baptize them"? To which he answers; "Yes, by all means, if any danger press, they should be *sanctified*, when they have no sense of it, that they may not die unsealed and uninitiated." In proof of this he observes, that, circumcision, which was a sacramental seal (*mustike sphragis*) was used to those that had no exercise of reason. After this, it is true he proceeds to give his own private opinion, that those children who were in no danger of death, might defer it, until about three years of age, when they might be taught to answer something, although they did not understand the meaning of the words.

In the same century, lived Ambrose, speaking of those who made Adam's sin no otherwise hurtful to posterity than by the example, he presses them with this absurdity, that their opinion, "*nullifies the baptism of infants*, which in this case, would be capable of adoption, but not of pardon." He says in another place, "By Jordan's being driven back, are signified the mysteries of baptism, by which the littles ones that are baptized are cleansed from the sin of their natural state."

In the close of this age also, lived Chrysostom, whose death is placed in 407—one of the most celebrated preachers of antiquity. In his homily to the Neophyti, he has these words "For this cause we baptize children although they have no sin." These words deserve to be particularly noticed, because the Pelagians made a great handle of them in the dispute about original sin. They interpreted the words, as though Chrysostom had said, that infants were free from *origi-*

ginal sin; But Augustine confuted them, by referring to the word (*amartemata*) used by Chrysostom, which properly signifies actual sins. Again, in his 4th. homily on Genesis speaking of baptism as the christian circumcision, he says, "It hath no determinate time but is lawful in childhood, middle life and old age."

Jerome, was born in 342 and lived until 420, and is esteemed one of the most learned of the Fathers. In his 9th. Epist. to Lata, he says; "Unless you believe that those children of Christians who receive not baptism, are the guilty persons, and not their parents who neglected to bring them to Christ's embraces &c."

In his dialogue against Pelagius, (lib. 3) the question being asked by Crito; Why infants are baptized, Atticus answers; "That their sins may be pardoned"—And again "the infant is freed in baptism from the bond of Adam's sin."

Paulinus, was cotemporary with Jerome, from whom we have this testimony; "The Priest brings the infant out of the font, white as snow, in body, in heart, in habit."

Next comes that great champion of orthodoxy, St. Augustine, who was born in the 4th. and died in the 5th. century. The passages in his writings in which infant baptism is expressly mentioned and vindicated, are too numerous to be quoted. But he affirms that it had been the perpetual doctrine of the whole church in all ages before him, expressly including that of the Apostles.

In his discourse concerning baptism written in opposition to the Donalists Lib. 4. c. 23, he has these words, "This is held as tradition by the *universal church*, when little infants are baptized which certainly are not yet able to believe with the heart, or confess with the mouth, and yet no Christian will say that they are baptized to no purpose." He then proceeds to observe, that as in the case of Isaac the seal of the righteousness of faith preceded, and righteousness itself followed in riper age, so also, "In baptized infants the sacrament of regeneration precedes, and if they hold fast christi-
an

piety, conversion in the heart follows, the mystery whereof hath been already received in the body."

Speaking, in another place, of infant baptism, he says, "The doctrine itself gives us no trouble, being long since established in the christian church, by the highest authority." Again, "The question between them and us is not whether infants are to be baptized; for that infants should be baptized *nobody doubts*; and although they contradict us on the question which relates to its benefit, yet of this they entertain no doubt."

In this dispute with the Pelagians, he says "Doth Christ profit infants that are baptized, or doth he not? He must needs say, that he doth profit, because he is prest with the authority of the church our mother"—"If they say that Christ does not profit infants baptized, they of necessity affirm that infants are superfluously baptized, but this, these very heretics dare not say, for they fly to this evasion, that they are not baptized for salvation, but for the kingdom of heaven."

Epist. 89. "The baptism of infants is not superfluous, in order that by regeneration they may be freed from the condemnation received from Adam"

Enchiridion c. 42. "From the infant new-born to decrepid old age none are to be prohibited from baptism."

I will conclude this list of testimonies by producing the decrees of the councils of Carthage and of Miletus on this point; both of these sat about the beginning of the 5th. century.

"Whosoever denies that infants are by the baptism of Christ freed from perdition, and made partakers of eternal life, let him be anathema."

In the second it is said, that the catholic church, every where diffused, always understood and asserted that this was an Apostolical practice.

I will now subjoin a few authorities to prove that baptism was a customary rite among the Jews, administered both to natives and proselytes:

"The Israelites do not enter into covenant but by these three things, by circumcision, by baptism, and by a peace-offering"—*Talmud*.

"The Jews in old time did not enter into covenant but by circumcision and baptism"—*Gemara*.

"By three things the Israelites entered into covenant, by circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice"—*Maimonides*.

Again, "In all ages as often as a gentile will enter into the covenant and receive the yoke of the law upon him, it was necessary that circumcision and baptism should be used for him, besides sprinkling of the sacrifice, and if it were a woman baptism and sacrifice, according to Num. xv. 15 as to you, so also to the proselyte"—*Maimonides*.

And as to the origin of this practice, the Jews supposed that it took its rise at the time of the giving of the law on Sinai, and was authorized by this command "Go to the people and sanctify them to day, and to-morrow" (Ex. xix. 10) So Maimonides says, "Baptism was in the desert before the giving of the Law, according as it is said—thou shalt sanctify them."

"He wants the rite of a Proselyte forever unless he be baptized, and circumcised"—*Gemara Babylon*.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

THE HISTORY OF JACK VINCENT.

Showing what a sad thing it is for parents not to train up their children in the fear of the Lord.

RIDING, not long since, past one of those places of vice and drunkenness, which are so numerous on our public roads, I heard the voice of distress. Though I have always made it a point not to stop at such houses, yet here, I thought, ought to be an exception to my rule. The calls of humanity should

never be neglected. I immediately alighted and went in. But such a scene of horror! Gracious Heaven! exclaimed I, to what miseries are the children of men exposed in this world!

There lay, on a dirty mattress, in one corner of the room, a sick man just on the verge of eternity. His body was emaciated to a skeleton. His visage was deformed with horror. His trembling lips, his distorted features, his wildly staring eyes, all spoke the anguish of his soul. Beside him sat a young female, I suppose about twenty years of age, upon whose countenance there was pointed a settled gloom, which indicated the deepest distress. She silently bended over a pale, sickly looking infant, which lay in her lap. It was the sick man's wife. Near the bed stood, leaning on a staff, a woman, whose face was deeply furrowed, and her limbs were decrepit with age. Her anxious countenance, her officious care, soon informed me that she was the mother to the son of sorrow, who lay on the bed. The only other person in the room was an old man, who exhausted by watching and fatigue, had fallen asleep on a narrow dirty bench—It was the father. My presence put a stop to the wailings which I had heard. As I entered, the dying man raised a hopeless eye towards me, and gave a groan which entered my soul.

I was unable to speak—An awful silence prevailed in the room, which was rendered more dismal by the profane, noisy, vulgar mirth of a drinking party in the only other room of the house. The sick man, at length, with that extraordinary strength, which dying persons sometimes have, half raised himself up, stretched forth his arms, and exclaimed with vehemence, "O God! O God! I am lost forever! Save me! Pray for me! Hold me! I am gone!" Then sinking down, he gave a deep convulsive groan and expired.

The scene which ensued is indescribable. The wife, silent and immovable as a statue, was swallowed up in grief too mighty for utterance. The mother, in all the agonies of maternal distress, cried with the royal mourner, O my son! my

son! would to God I had died for thee! While the Father, starting from his homely couch, stared wildly about, with an air of distraction. The drunken wretches in the adjoining room, hearing this unusual cry, rushed tumultuously in, and seeing the lifeless body of the man, and the distress of the family, struck with remorse and shame, and terror, they hastily retired.

I endeavored to perform the offices of humanity to these afflicted people. And while I was thus engaged, there stepped in an old Gentleman, whose first appearance greatly prepossessed me in his favour. His countenance was placid; his eye beamed benevolence; and the very tones of his voice spoke the softness of his heart. Influenced by the principles of that religion which he professed, he had, with a parental tenderness assisted these poor, afflicted people. After administering that consolation which Christianity affords, and giving some necessary directions, Old Mr. Jervas invited me to his house. I gladly accepted this invitation; and from him I received the following narrative.

“Jack Vincent was born of honest, and respectable parents, in one of the neighbouring counties. They are professors in the Christian church, and are thought, by all their neighbors, to be truly pious people. Their principal fault, as far as I have known, is the indulgence with which they treat their children; and the neglect of ‘training them up in the nurture, and admonition of the Lord.’ To this, and nothing else, do I ascribe the unhappy life, and miserable death of the unfortunate young man, whom you saw expiring in such agony, a little while ago. Jack was the eldest son, and the favourite. He was, indeed, a lad of fine parts, and would have made a respectable and useful member of society, had he been properly trained. But neglect and indulgence ruined him. As soon as he began to utter his wants, his wishes were gratified without restraint. If Jack cried he must have a lump of sugar or a sweet cake to make him quiet. If a servant vexed him,

he was encouraged to strike him. Every thing was made to bend to his will. Thus every passion grew stronger by indulgence; so that I have seen him, (for I have always been very intimate in the family) by the time he was four years of age, upon being crossed in his inclinations, fall upon the floor, and rave, and cry, until what he asked for was given. But parents when they have thought proper to deny any thing to a child, ought never to yield to its importunity. My own rule, Sir, always has been, to speak to children with caution; to answer all their requests with deliberation; and when once I have given an answer, they never apply to me again on the same subject.

There was another thing, which was greatly injurious to Jack. I remarked, I believe, that he was a sprightly lad. His childish sallies of wit, as was very natural, greatly delighted his parents; and their weak fondness made them consider many of his little, mischievous pranks, as instances of his smartness. Thus cats, dogs, little servants, and every thing about the house, capable of feeling, were "*play places for his wit.*" His parents would, indeed, often reprove him for these unlucky tricks. But it was commonly done in such a laughing way, that the child could see plainly enough, that in their hearts they were not displeased. This, instead of checking, would encourage him to go farther. Many parents, in this way, act very unwisely. If a child does wrong and deserve reproof, it should be given seriously; but if he is doing right, why reprove him at all? Children have much more sagacity, at a very early age, than many people suppose. They know very well, when you jest, and when you are in earnest. And if you are in the habit of reproving them in a jesting way; they will soon get into a habit of disobeying you; and very possibly, of totally neglecting your commands. In this way poor Jack Vincent was greatly injured. He did not fear his parents; and constant indulgence, and unrestrained gratification of his desires, soon brought him to love to have his own way, better than he loved them. I observed before, that his parents are

thought to be pious people. Somewhat impressed with the advantage, and necessity of a religious education, they frequently attempted to give their son that instruction, which they believed to be important; but this was quite a painful thing to the child, and they were so foolishly fond, as to neglect their duty, because the performance of it crossed his inclinations. The hope, which so frequently soothes both the love and vanity of parents, that their children will, after all, *turn out well*, was cherished by them, to the neglect of those endeavours, which alone can lay any rational foundation for hope in such a case. Jack, however, was put to learning his catechism, but instead of learning it, he would be out, hunting birds nests, playing marbles, or engaged in some other childish sport. So that the *Sabbath was Jack's chief play day*. He was often then, to be seen rambling from one plantation, to another, with half a dozen little negroes at his heels, from morning till night. After much trouble, however, he was prevailed upon to get his catechism, so that he could say it to the minister; and this was thought to be enough. His parents indeed persuaded themselves, that this was all that they could do. Many parents, are on this point strangely mistaken—— But I ask your pardon, Sir, said Mr. Jervas, I was to give you the history of Jack Vincent, and I find that I am continually digressing to other people. I begged him, however to go on: assuring him that I was highly entertained with these occasional remarks; that I considered them as the result of long experience, and observation; and that they made his story more interesting—— Well, replied he, smiling, I am an *old man*, and must talk, I suppose, in an *old man's way*.—Parents then, I remark, are often strangely mistaken in this point. I have met with many, who think that they have done their duty, if they have taught their children, when very young, to repeat the Lord's prayer, and a year or two after to repeat the catechism. If in addition to these things, they take their children to church, when it is convenient, they wonder what more is necessary; and are surprised that they do not walk in the paths of piety. It we

do no more than this, however, very little is done.—But to return to Jack Vincent. He was indeed, sometimes required to go to church ; but when there, he was permitted to sit or stand, to go out or come in, just as he chose. Thus he was instructed in nothing valuable, either at home or abroad. And he soon became the disturber of whatever congregation he happened to be in. Jack at first went out of church, merely because he hated confinement, and his parents excused it, because it was hard upon a young thing like him to be confined so long. But this threw the lad into the very worst company to be met with in our country. The most loose, idle, vulgar, fellows in the world, are those who go to church for no purpose but to behave amiss. Whether it is pure wickedness which leads them *to glory in their shame* ; or stupidity, which leads them to suppose that this is *smart and clever*, I know not. But such there are, infesting almost every place of public worship, in this part of the country. What a pity it is, that parents will suffer their children to act in this way ! And how sad the case, is, when parents themselves set the example ! As to my knowledge is frequently done. When Jack fell in with this set he rapidly grew worse. He soon lost that modesty, which is the last fortress of youth. For when a young man becomes incapable of blushing, I generally consider him as hopeless. And when I heard Jack Vincent, reply, “ I dont care,” to a companion of his, not so graceless as himself, who reproved him for swearing, in the presence of a grave and respectable clergyman, I gave him up as ruined. It was unfortunate for Jack, that among those companions, who frequented the corners of churches in time of public service, he fell in with Tommy Lowrey. He was the son of parents, who had a greater reputation for piety, than any other persons in the neighborhood. But they were of that mistaken class, who suppose that religion requires a sad countenance, a melancholy air, and perpetual sighing. These honest people were determined to train up their children, in the paths of virtue, and piety : and were continually giving lectures to Tom. But this, which is in itself

a very good thing, was done in such a way, as to have the very worst effect in the world. Deep, heavy sighs, were uniformly the prelude to religious conversation with their children. And whatever they said, was spoken with such a gloomy, forbidding countenance, and a tone so melancholy, that the child was frightened almost to death. Religion, instead of being represented in its own lovely colours, was shown in the gloomy garb of superstition. In this way, Tom soon contracted the most mortal aversion to all religion, and to all religious instruction. And while his pious, but mistaken parents, were endeavoring, in their way, to impress his youthful mind with the fear of his Creator, he was often employed in meditating future schemes of mischief, to be communicated to Jack Vincent, and to be accomplished together with him. With this companion, Jack constantly associated. And as Tom's mind was much more hardened than the other's, by his constant resistance to parental admonition, he was always foremost, in the wicked pranks of childhood : and the more deliberate villainies of riper years.

There was another thing very injurious to the young person of whom I am giving you an account. A lad of his sprightly turn was, you may suppose, very fond of amusements. And there was not a *horse-race*, a *muster*, or a *court*, but Jack must go. Here he fell in with many bad companions, and into many wicked courses. At first he was shocked to see a man rolling in the dirt, as drunk and as filthy as a beast : it wounded him to hear the profanity, which is so frequently heard in our court-yards. But he soon became reconciled to these things. By drinking drams at his father's (for though old Mr. Vincent is a very sober man, yet he unfortunately keeps up the bad custom not only of drinking drams himself ; but also of suffering his children to do so too) by this bad practice, I say, poor Jack soon began pretty highly to relish the taste of good liquor. *Musters* and *courts* were proper places to indulge this liking. And by the time that he arrived at the age of fifteen, he was sometimes seen reeling in the court-yard. As Jack was what is called a *jolly fellow*, he must make one in every loose party,

that was formed in the neighborhood. His presence was the animating soul of these companies of dissipation. It is true that he did not finish his career, without many lashes, and sometimes terrible alarms of conscience. I remember once, returning from a muster in a drunken frolic, he proposed riding a race with one of his foolish companions; the proposal was instantly accepted, and the unfortunate youth was thrown from his horse, and taken up for dead. The near prospect of death frightened Jack; and he very solemnly promised that he would never ride another race, or drink to excess again. For sometime, he behaved very soberly; attended church; and seemed often to be greatly moved. Every body hoped that Jack Vincent would become a christian. But alas! these hopes were soon nipped in the bud. His fatal attachment to the bottle ruined him. In an evil hour, he was overcome by temptation. And every serious impression was erased. In addition to all these things, some wicked companion put into his hands some of the low, coarse publications against christianity, which have so much abounded in the few years last gone by. Jack had not now one single principle which would preserve him from the gulph of ruin, which was opening before him. He had never been instructed in the evidences of christianity; so that the falshood and futility of the common place objections to our religion were not at all perceived by him. And even if this had been the case, he had plunged so deep in vice, and was so determined to indulge himself, that to *disbelieve* was now, in a certain sense, necessary to his peace. He therefore, greedily drank in the poison. Then indeed his ruin was certain. He that fears not God, does not regard man. He that feels no dread of futurity, has but feeble motives to restrain him from vicious courses. Jack however, had learned the modern *cant* about *priest-craft* and *superstition* and *reason*, and he thought himself mighty wise indeed! At every public place, he had around him a throng of giddy, thoughtless wretches, who laughed at his buffoonery, and drank the liquor with which he was ever ready to supply them. Thus he went on

as the scripture saith "waxing worse and worse;" Corrupt himself and corrupting others.

In the mean time, however, Jack fell in love with a girl in the neighborhood: a handsome, good natured, thoughtless young thing, who was captivated by his lively insinuating manners, and easy address; and who resolved to marry him, contrary to the warm remonstrances of her parents. This is not the first girl, that I have known ruined in this way. Few will grow wise by the experience of others. Easy manners, gaiety, and wit, with young, thoughtless females, supply the place of sober habits, religious principles, and all those solid qualities which are necessary to domestic felicity. Jack, indeed, promised that he would forsake his evil courses, and live a life of sobriety. And she, foolishly enough, trusted his promises; influenced no doubt, by a secret hope, that she would have power over him sufficient to reclaim him entirely. If he loves me, said she, as I am sure he does, he will certainly try to make me happy. I will soon convince him, that I shall be miserable, if he persists in the practices which it is said he follows, and he will do so no more. But it is running a dreadful risk to calculate in this way. Poor Fanny! how miserably has she been disappointed. They were married: and for a few weeks, every thing seemed to augur well. Jack kept sober; set about business: declared that he was quite happy, and his wife exulting in the fancied realization of her hopes, could not help boasting to her mother the prudence of her choice. But better experience soon taught her that though "*Young folks think old folks to be fools, yet Old folks know young folks to be fools.*" Jack rode out one evening, and was to return in the course of two hours. But the appointed hour arrived, and he did not appear. Nine o'clock came, but no Jack was to be seen. His wife became impatient and anxious. She started at every sound, expecting her husband. But she had to spend a sleepless night alone. He did not return until the following evening. The affair was this: In

his ride, he met with some old companions, who insisted on his joining them in a little frolick which they had just planned. At first he gave a positive denial: but was at last prevailed on to alight, and take one drink of *grog*. "Surely," said he, "though I have promised not to drink too much, *one glass will do me no harm*." Without much difficulty, he was persuaded to take a *second*; and then a *third*; until he became quite warm. Cards were then introduced. Jack got into a contest with a profest gambler, who dexterously wrought upon his feelings, while he was quite enflamed. He betted largely; lost—raised his bet—and lost again—until before morning came, he had lost a thousand dollars. To a young man just beginning the world, this was a very serious loss. Though he had been most scandalously cheated, yet Jack was a *lad of too much spirit*, not to pay his debts of *honor*. His property was sacrificed to satisfy the demands of the gambler. You can imagine, better than I can describe, how these things distressed his wife. All her tow'ring hopes of happiness were humbled in the dust: and she saw inevitable ruin hanging over her. One would have supposed that this severe stroke would completely check the unhappy man; but it only accelerated his fall. The first step in vice always renders the second more easy. Jack was induced now to venture farther than before, in order to make up his losses. "Fortune will, certainly change" thought he, "before long—I will not always have bad luck." Thus did he go on, still losing, and still deluding himself with the vain hope, that by some lucky stroke, he would recover what he had lost: until in less than a year, his property was totally gone. Want stared him in the face; and he had recourse to deep drinking for relief. His feelings were sometimes wrought up to a pitch of indiscrible horror. His wife brought him a son—but this event, so pleasing to most parents, only served to heighten his distress. He had intailed want, infamy and misery upon his child. The presence of this infant, and the woman he had so greatly inju-

red, rendered his home intolerable. I have seen him sometimes, with a perturbed countenance, and haggard looks, stealing along some unfrequented path, to the little tavern, which we have just left, where he would spend day after day in intoxication. A few weeks ago, he attempted to commit self-murder; but in the moment of executing this dreadful design, his principles of infidelity failed him; and his whole frame was so dissolved by terror, that he only gave himself a slight wound. In the agonies of a condemned soul, he flew to the tavern, where he drank such a quantity of ardent spirit, as threw him into violent convulsions. His constitution was before broken by intemperance, and he never recovered this shock. As death approached, however, the solemn truths of religion burst upon his mind with irresistible energy. The consciousness of having blasphemed his Savior: ridiculed that religion, which only can pluck the sting out of death; and renounced the only foundation of human hope, filled him with agony. I endeavored in vain to turn his attention to a crucified Redeemer. Despair had taken hold of his soul; and he sunk under the stroke of death: in the horrible manner, which you have just witnessed. His parents, you see, are cut to the heart, with the dreadful end of their darling son. The affliction comes the heavier, because they have much to reproach themselves with. How keenly must parents feel, when, seeing the son of their love die the death of the sinner, they feel the consciousness of having neglected the precept of scripture "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*"

Thus ended Mr. Jervas—And I sincerely wish that parents may take warning by the awful fate of the unhappy Jack Vincent, and *Bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

PHILO,

SOLUTION OF A TEXT OF SCRIPTURE!

The following Sermon was preached by the Rev. GEORGE A. BAXTER, at Bethel, on the ordination of the Rev. William M^r Pheters.

(PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE LEXINGTON PRESBYTERY.)

1 Timothy, iii. 1.—This is a true saying, if any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

WHEN our Saviour instituted his church in the world he intended to form it into a regular government. He never gave any countenance to those plans of insubordination, which some have attempted to introduce into ecclesiastical matters. Intending to erect his church into an orderly kingdom, he appointed all the officers necessary for the management of its affairs, and the exercise of its authority. The principal of these offices, is that of a gospel minister, which the present occasion, as well as the words of our text leads us to consider. *He that desires the office of a bishop, desires a good work.*—In treating the subject arising from these words, we shall pursue the following order :

I. We shall make some explanatory observations on the office of a gospel minister—

II. Consider the qualifications it requires—

III. The duties it imposes—and,

IV. The treatment to which it is entitled.

I. According to this order, we shall proceed in the first place to make some explanatory observations on the office of a gospel minister. My first observation is, that the scriptures do not appear to give any ground for the distinction of a superior and inferior order of the clergy. Some of the protestant churches, however, hold a different opinion on this subject. They suppose that the word bishop designates a superior order of the clergy,

and that of presbyter or elder an inferior class. I might produce several passages of scripture to refute this opinion, but shall content myself with the following. 'For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.' *

It requires no comment, to shew, that the Apostle here uses the words elder and bishop as synonymous. He sets out with specifying the qualifications which ought to be regarded in the choice of an elder, and, at the very same time, applies all his directions to the choice of a bishop.

My next observation is, that a minister holds an authority delegated to him by the great head of the church: this is evident, because our Saviour has entrusted them with the exercise or discipline and government, enjoining it upon them to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all authority; and to discharge the episcopal office of his church, so as to promote the edification and good of his people. It is also evident, from the terms by which ministers are sometimes designated in scripture, particularly from their being called ambassadors of Christ. 'Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God.'† But to guard that doctrine from the abuse to which it is liable, and has sometimes been exposed, it ought to be remembered, that their authority goes no farther than what the scripture authorises. They are not to lord it over the consciences of men; or to consider themselves as lords of God's heritage. Their business is to carry into effect that system of government which Christ has laid down in the holy scriptures. When they confine them-

* *Titus i. 5, 6, 7.*

† *2 Cor. v. 20.*

selves within the limits, and act according to the directions of the word of God, then it is that they are supported by this solemn sanction—‘he that despiseth you despiseth me.’ With these restrictions, we are certainly to understand what our Saviour says to his disciples, and through them to the officers of his church in every future age, ‘verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.’* This part of the subject suggests a very useful caution, both to the officers and the people of the church of Christ. The officers should take heed not to abuse a commission which is so sacred, and the limits of which have been fixed by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, and the people should beware of trifling with church discipline, and of inconsiderately opposing it, lest whilst they apprehend themselves as dealing only with their fellow-creatures, they should be found opposing an ordinance of God.

Another observation, is, that the ministerial authority is conferred by regular ordination. I know, indeed, that they are not wanting in the present day, who consider ordination as unimportant or unnecessary. They suppose themselves to be called of heaven to the sacred office, and to have received their commission immediately from God. When the matter is rightly understood, I am far from denying the propriety of a divine call, but a divine call can never be intended to supersede the institutions of heaven. Ordination is certainly an appointment of scripture, and sanctioned by the example of the primitive church. If, therefore, we are to pay any regard to the scriptures in matters of church government, we must not lay this ordinance aside. Besides the reasonableness and necessity of the institution, have a strong claim on our attention. The great head of the church, seems to have appointed ordination as the only sure rule by which the people could know who were ministers and who were not. Such a rule appears to be indispensibly necessary.

* *Matth. xviii. 18.*

It is the duty of a christian to receive the sacraments, and he can receive them only from the hands of regular ministers; if then there be no rule for ascertaining who are regular ministers, the people can never know that they live in the performance of their duties. But there is no way of ascertaining this, in the present state of the church, but by ordination. In the primitive church indeed, they had officers commissioned immediately by Christ himself. This, in a great degree, constitutes the difference between an apostolic office, and that of the common ministry, the apostle receives his commission immediately from heaven, and the minister receives a similar, though inferior authority, by ordination. But then Apostles, and all extraordinary officers whose commissions were immediately from God, performed miracles, or carried with them some supernatural evidence of their authority. And if any person pretends to an immediate commission from heaven, to preach the gospel now, and does not confirm his pretensions in the same way, he ought to be treated as an impostor. We cannot infer the ministerial authority of a man, from his preaching the truth in an acceptable manner; for then every man of piety and talents might begin to preach, and administer the sacraments without any ceremony, and in contradiction to the rules laid down in the sacred volume. It would not even do to say God blesses his preaching; for we are incompetent to search the heart, and a man's converts may appear promising for a time and not prove real converts at last. In fact nothing but miracles can be considered as sufficient to prove an immediate commission: and as the age of miracles has ceased, all pretensions to such a commission, or to any other commission than what is conferred by regular ordination, ought to be treated as enthusiastic presumption.

My last observation is that election, as well as ordination, is necessary, before a clergyman obtains the right of exercising his ministerial authority in any particular church. The

truth of this observation arises from the nature and privileges of churches considered as voluntary associations: these privileges are countenanced in scripture, and constitute a part of that spiritual liberty, which we have a right to enjoy, but should be careful not to abuse—a liberty, some degree of which, is absolutely necessary to the sincerity, if not to the purity, of religious worship. There are many denominations of clergy, whom we admit to be regularly invested with the ministerial functions, and yet from diversity of opinion, we cannot in conscience submit to their instructions, or government. That clashing of opinion, which attends all human affairs and which could not be wholly excluded from religion, even in the days of inspiration, makes it necessary that the people should have the right of choosing their pastor. This election may be either general or particular—general, when a minister is brought into the fellowship and communion of a certain denomination, by those appointed to exercise its government, and particular, when he is called by a congregation to discharge among them the episcopal office. We shall now proceed,

II. In the second place, to *consider the qualifications which the ministerial office requires*. The first qualification which I shall mention, is real vital piety. There are a great many reasons why this qualification should be necessary, and the majority of them so obvious, that it will be sufficient barely to mention them. It seems, indeed, to be one of the greatest absurdities in the world, for an unregenerate man to obtrude himself into the sacred desk. Shall an enemy to God undertake to advance his honor, or promote his interest in the world! Shall any one make it the business of his life, to explain and enforce the doctrine of scripture, when the scriptures contain the sentence of his everlasting condemnation? With great propriety it was once said by an eloquent preacher, “when an unregenerate man comes into the pulpit, he carries his own death warrant in his hand.” It is related of a distinguished preacher, in the earlier days of the church,

that on a certain occasion he was induced by the fear of persecution to comply with some idolatrous ceremonies, which afterwards appeared to amount to something like a denial of our Saviour. The next time he went into the pulpit, the first thing that met his eye, was the sixteenth verse of the fiftieth Psalm, 'But unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant into thy mouth.' The conviction of this passage, struck him dumb at the time, and for several days afterwards kept him in a state bordering on distraction. And I am persuaded that no unregenerate man, were not his conscience fatally asleep, would ever attempt to preach the word of God. One consideration which makes religion necessary in a minister, is, that it is the best preparative for receiving and understanding the truths of the scriptures. The depravity of the human heart, is the original source of all error, and whatever an early education or orthodox instruction may have done for us, we are never secure even against essential errors, until we possess a sanctified heart. But supposing our doctrinal sentiments should be correct, practical religion is to be learned only from experience: and how shall that man lead others in the road to heaven who has never travelled it himself—the blind would lead the blind, and our Saviour has told us what would be the consequence. Besides an irreligious minister could not delight in his office and of course, could not be diligent in performing the duties of it: and what is still more important, nothing can be done in the ministerial office without the divine blessing, and an irreligious man has but little reason to expect that.

But I think it not only necessary that a minister should possess religion, and that in an eminent degree, he ought to be a man of the most upright, exemplary, and prudent conduct, patient, and forbearing, and able, on all occasions, to command his own temper. I mention this, because there are some professors of religion, of whom charity would teach us to hope well, who are, notwithstanding, subject to a fickleness and in-

consistency of conduct, which would be very incompatible with the office of the gospel ministry. Together with the qualifications already mentioned, I think it very desirable, if not absolutely necessary, that a minister of Christ, should possess, in a good degree, the assurance of faith, and a warm zeal for glorifying God in the gospel of his Son.

It is undoubtedly of great importance, that the work of the ministry should not be committed to weak or ignorant men, who might be unable to teach others; competent gifts, as well as graces are indispensibly requisite. I do not mean, that candidates ought to be rejected for the want of preeminent talents, but a gospel minister ought to possess a mind naturally sound, and well cultivated. A liberal education may not in all cases be indispensibly necessary—uncommon natural talents combined with certain circumstances, may compensate in some degree for the want of improvement; but generally speaking, I think what is commonly called a liberal education ought to be required. A minister of Christ should certainly attend to all those branches of human learning, which might enable him to deliver his message with propriety; and in order to understand his message he ought to be acquainted with the sacred scriptures, in the original languages. There may be some dispute as to the course of study most proper to effect the first of the purposes, or to qualify a man for speaking, but it is certain that to accomplish both the purposes just mentioned, a considerable course of human learning, is absolutely requisite.

But there are some denominations in the world, who declare absolutely against the necessity of a learned ministry, and in support of their sentiments, alledge the example of our Saviour, who chose fishermen and mechanic's to be the first ministers of the new testament. Their error however, as happens in almost every case of bad reasoning, consists in comparing things which do not resemble. It is true that our Saviour in the first instance, chose mechanic's and fishermen

to publish the gospel: but to say nothing of the advantages which these men derived from his personal instructions and example, for upwards of three years; when he sent them into the world, he endowed them with miraculous qualifications; he enabled them to perform miracles, to speak all languages that were necessary, and by a supernatural inspiration, instructed them what they ought to speak. 'But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.'* Here now, were men, endowed with every qualification, that can be conceived of, or supposed necessary for the purpose. The gift of miracles which arrested the attention and carried conviction to the consciences of the world—the gift of tongues which contributed to the same end, and also furnished them with an opportunity of communicating the treasures of the gospel to all nations—and the spirit of inspiration, which enabled them to give the most appropriate and salutary instructions, on every occasion. I should think, if any thing can be inferred from our Saviour's example in this case, taking the whole of it together, it would be that a minister of Christ, ought to possess all qualifications necessary for convincing and instructing the world.

But those with whom we contend, will suppose that by possessing real religion, and being taught in the school of Christ, they obtain all the knowledge and qualifications which are necessary. In reply to this, I will readily admit that religion is the best preparative, for understanding the word of God, and I have no doubt the divine Spirit, conspiring with the use of means, greatly assists a pious minister in his studies. But distinct from the qualifications which grace may confer, there are others absolutely necessary, and which may be acquired

* *Matth. x. 19, 20.*

by a course of human means. It will, no doubt be admitted, as of the first importance, that a gospel minister should have a correct knowledge of the holy scriptures, for without this he is no better than the blind leading the blind. But to understand the holy scriptures, we should be acquainted with them, in the original languages, we should be acquainted with the history of those customs, and events, in the midst of which the inspired penman wrote, and to which they frequently allude; we should be versed in literary science, so as to understand the different modes of writing—the different phrases and figures with which all compositions abound, and the rules of interpretation, to which all writings human or divine, must be subjected, without some knowledge of this kind we shall not be qualified even to follow a good Commentator on the scriptures, or to form any opinion for ourselves. But how is this knowledge to be obtained? It may as already said be obtained by human means, or it might be conferred by the extraordinary inspiration of the divine Spirit. But those who neglect the natural means, and pretend that divine teaching gives them all necessary knowledge, are pretending to an inspiration which supercedes the use of means, and is therefore very distinct from the common operations of grace; for common grace does not supercede means, but encourages and assists in the use of them. But when any one makes pretensions of this kind, he ought to support them by miracles, or some supernatural evidences. The teaching of which he speaks is a secret miracle, and amounts to something like that inspiration which the apostles possessed, and if it be of this kind it needs a publick miracle to make it credible. All pretending therefore that we are taught by the divine Spirit what things we ought to learn, as others learn them, should be rejected in the present day, as self-righteous presumption: and if any people give credit to such pretensions, they are manifestly in the high road of error and delusion: and what is worse, they put themselves under the influence of a delusion, which cannot be corrected or reasoned down because they do not profess to be led by reason, or

evidence, or scripture, but by the unsupported assertions of a fellow creature. It perhaps would be well to recollect, that the plain line of distinction between impostures, and the real messengers of heaven, has been pretty much the same in every age. An impostor never proves his assertions. Mahomet had his secret miracles and inspirations, but he did not pretend to confirm them by any publick miracles; and modern imposters, have their illumination and teachings for which they can give no evidence but their own assertion. On the other hand the real messengers of grace always deal with mankind as with reasonable creatures; when they introduced a divine revelation into the world at first they confirmed it by sufficient and undeniable miracles, and since the age of miracles has ceased they require the belief of nothing but what can be proved from a revelation sufficiently authenticated. These observations will, I trust, be sufficient to shew that the improvement or knowledge necessary for the ministerial office are not to be expected in a supernatural way, and therefore that a course of scientific education is absolutely necessary. But let it be remembered, that although all knowledge may be useful to a clergyman, his principal attention should be turned to the subject of divinity. His business is to understand and teach the doctrines of the word of God, and every man ought to be better acquainted with what belongs immediately to his own profession, than with any thing else. I have now taken a brief view of the principal things necessary to qualify a man for preaching the gospel. What I have mentioned are real and cordial religion, a prudent and upright moral deportment, a good degree of the assurance of faith, a fervent zeal for glorifying God in the gospel of his Son, and a mind sufficiently improved with useful knowledge. These things taken together and connected with a favorable train of providences, constitute what may be termed a divine call to the ministerial office. They are very much mistaken, who suppose a ministerial call to consist in blind impulses

or impressions. of which a person can give no rational account, and which have no relation to his fitness for the work. A ministerial call comprehends all the necessary qualifications for the office, both human and divine. And a ministerial call without ministerial qualifications, is the greatest absurdity in the world.

III. In the third place we were to consider, *the duties which the ministerial office imposes*. On this part of the subject, as well as upon every other part of it, I think it necessary to consult brevity. The subject itself is very extensive, and if every thing were to be said which might be said, it would make a volume rather than a sermon. I shall make a few remarks on the part of the subject now before us as it respects example, instruction, and discipline.

1. It is incumbent on a minister to exhibit a good example, this is in fact the duty of all christians, the eyes of the world are upon them; they are a city set on a hill; and indeed the opinions mankind in general form of religion, is more influenced by the example of the church than by any thing else. But a good example on the part of a minister is more particularly requisite, as his station in the church is more conspicuous, and his conduct more closely watched. There is a strong disposition in the people of the world to justify their behaviour, and even their vices, by the mistakes of the clergy. If they can find any thing in the conduct of a minister, which bears even a distant resemblance to their own faults, they lay hold of it with avidity, and circulate it with exaggeration. Hence the necessity of avoiding even the appearance of evil, that if possible, no ground may be given for injuring the christian cause. A minister in his deportment, should avoid every thing light or foppish; in his intercourse with the world, whatever favors of duplicity or over-reaching, and in what relates to religion he should always be solemn and sincere. His whole conversation should be seasoned with piety, and the gravity of his character always supported. There is a wonderful delicacy in the character of a clergyman; I

have known men celebrated through life and after death, for their virtuous behaviour, who were addicted to a number of vices, any one of which, would have ruined the influence of a clergyman, and covered him with disgrace for years, perhaps for life. This fact it is true, is for the honor of religion, as it shews the superior purity, expected of those who make a distinguished profession of it, but it shews at the same time, with how much caution a minister ought to act. Perhaps the exhibiting of a proper example is the most difficult, and at the same time the most important of a minister's duties; it gives weight to every thing he does, and without it all his labors will lose their efficacy. I shall give two general directions to assist in the accomplishment of this all important purpose. The first is, to reflect much on the great object of our mission. A minister stands between the living and the dead; his labors are directed to the salvation of sinners, and he must soon give an account of his stewardship to the Judge of all the earth. Let him familiarize these considerations to his mind, and they will form the best guard on his conduct. In the second place, he ought to beware of what some would term little faults. A great many little things, have a strong influence on the character; and it is oftener by these than by gross misdemeanors, that his respectability and usefulness is impaired.

2 I shall next speak of the duty of instruction. This is comprehended in a great measure, though not entirely, in preaching the word of God. The danger of unfaithful preaching is perhaps no where more strongly painted than in the language of Ezekiel; 'So thou O Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me... When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand... Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked

of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.*

One of the great ends of preaching is to convince the careless. This requires plain, honest, and sincere dealing.—Plain, honest, and affectionate statements should be given them of the guilt and danger of sin, and perhaps generally conveyed in the language of scripture. Nothing should be kept back through the fear of man or the desire of popularity, and yet rash or coarse expressions, calculated to give unnecessary offence, should be carefully avoided. There may be an honest policy in preaching the gospel of Christ—the wisdom of the serpent, and the harmlessness of the dove. There are certain avenues which more surely reach the heart; and the man who understands human nature, may lay hold of these with propriety, or rather it is his duty to do it. The best rule on this subject, is to feel a strong desire for the salvation of those to whom we speak; this will convert all our knowledge into the proper channel, and frequently communicates an instinctive something to our address, which is most likely to be accompanied with the divine blessing. A minister may sometimes feel a temptation to expose the vices of his enemies, for his own gratification, and that under the appearance of declaring the truth with faithfulness: but such conduct would be very wicked, and perhaps the motives of it would often be detected—Sincerity has a stamp peculiar to itself, which can hardly ever be counterfeited successfully.

Another great end of preaching, is to direct the awakened sinner. When a sinner is once awakened, the moments are precious and critical, and none of them should be lost. The conscience labouring under a sense of guilt, will seek for rest, and often finds it where it should not. Every effort should now be employed to guard the sinner from falling back into unbelief—from resting on a false hope, or from settling on any thing short of the Lord Jesus Christ. Some seem to act upon

* Ezek. xxxiii. 7...8...9.

the belief that when convictions is once begun, we may safely trust the work to God himself. It is certainly true, that all our preaching on this, and every other subject, will be unavailing, without the superintending agency of the divine Spirit. But the divine Spirit co-operates with means, and although skilful instruction may be frequently baffled, it is no doubt frequently the essential means of salvation.

The edification of Christians, is also an important end of preaching. It is true, persons may be very ignorant when they become Christians, but is far from desirable that they should continue so. It was indeed once thought that ignorance was the mother of devotion; but the fact is, knowledge is necessary to give piety its true direction, and unfold the christian character to advantage. Religion without knowledge, either degenerates into thoughtlessness, or blind zeal. I hope, indeed, the truly pious will always have light enough to keep them back from the worst excesses of fanaticism; but they may do much injury to the christian cause. On the other hand, if all the churches of Christ were properly instructed in the doctrines of grace, and all the various branches of duty, it would wipe off much imperfection from the christian character; and there would be less of that stumbling which hardens the wicked, grieves the judicious christian, and mars the beauty of the church. For this great purpose, sermons ought to be instructive; they ought clearly to unfold those doctrines of the gospel, more immediately connected with repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; these doctrines promote humility, tenderness of conscience, and lead to the genuine and extensive reformation of the human heart. On certain occasions too, it will be the duty of a minister to defend the christian system in general, or to defend particular doctrines, and refute particular errors, and he should always be ready to improve unusual dispensations of divine providence. But as already said, preaching does not comprehend all the instruction a minister should com-

communicate. He should make his conduct and conversation instructive, he should visit the sick, and take every opportunity of making his people wiser and better.

The next ministerial duty of which we shall speak, is discipline. Our Saviour when he instituted his Church, formed it into a regular kingdom, appointed laws for its government, and officers for carrying those laws into effect. When, therefore, the discipline of the Church is properly administered, it carries with it, the force of a divine Government. The rules of discipline, and church government, are in the first place to be looked for in the holy scriptures, and whatever they establish on the subject, should be conscientiously observed.— But it is not to be expected that the scriptures should direct all minute cases, or furnish rules, which would literally apply to all occurrences. Whenever, therefore, the scriptures do not direct us, the government of the church must be conducted by those principles and rules, which are essential to the good order of all societies, or voluntary associations. Moral writers do not scruple to say, that those rules which are essential to order, carry with them a divine sanction; inasmuch, as God is the God of order. One of these rules, as it applies to the church, is, that in all matters, which fairly come before the members of the church, at large, a majority must govern. Another is, that all regulations not anti-scriptural, which are sanctioned by a majority of the church, should be religiously observed. These rules are not literally enjoined in scripture, and yet, as there could be no orderly society without them, I apprehend they carry with them, a divine authority. But according to these rules, it would seem that those of our communion, ought, in consistency, to acknowledge, that church government is rightly administered, when it is agreeable to our Standard or Constitution, which is our interpretation of the sacred scriptures, as they relate to this point. If these views of the subject were fairly attended to, it might prevent a great deal of trouble, with respect to ecclesiastical matters. It is

a matter of regret and astonishment to see how church discipline is sometimes treated. There are people who enter the church as though all right belonged to them alone, they wish to trample on its regulations at pleasure, and complain loudly of the bigotry of those who would prevent their doing so. But if such people would consider it, all the bigotry lies at their own door. If a church be a voluntary association, what right have they to change the rules (for to violate with impunity is to change them) which the will of a majority have sanctioned. The principles of such conduct are tyranny, they have little reason, and less scripture, on their side, and those who inconsiderately act upon them, are acting a dangerous part. They are trifling with the rules of that church which our Saviour calls the kingdom of heaven, in a manner in which they would not trifle with the regulations of any petty society whatever. This leads me to observe, that many of those, who make the greatest out-cry, about what *they* call religious liberty, are in reality, among the greatest religious bigots in the world. The first object of their clamor, no doubt is, to free themselves from the power of others; but another as ardently desired, is, to get all power into their own hands. This observation, if I am not greatly mistaken, applies to all men who do not live quietly under the rules of that church, to which they have attached themselves, unless their consciences oblige them, either to attempt a reformation, or to withdraw: and when a good man attempts reformation, he will proceed in an orderly constitutional manner, or if he withdraws, he will withdraw quietly.

IV. In the fourth place, we shall consider *the treatment to which the ministerial office is entitled*. This part of the subject brings into view the reciprocal duties of the people to their clergy. My first observation here is, that some of the duties of the people are correlative with those of ministers, and supposed by them. Of this kind, particularly, is an attentive hearing of the gospel, and a submission to discipline. For

why is so much apparatus provided for publishing the gospel? why is the blood of him that dies unwarned required at the watchman's hand, if those who receive the warning are not bound to improve it? And we have already shewn the nature of discipline, and the reasonableness and necessity of submitting to it, so far as it is an ordinance of God.

I shall next observe, that a certain degree of respect is due to the ministerial office. If they be the ambassadors of Christ, this will confirm my observation, for the representatives of a prince, especially if they behave with propriety, are always treated with respect in proportion as their master is respected. The respect and friendship due to the office, will lead real christians to bear with the imperfections and failings of the men, for ministers are but men, and will always have their imperfections. The same principle, will teach them to be cautious in believing, or circulating unfavourable reports, respecting the clergy, on slight evidence, or of judging them harshly, where their motives are not known. Indeed this kind of forbearance, is due to all persons, but it is required more particularly for the clergy, as much may depend on their maintaining an upright character, and as they are at least, as liable to misrepresentation, as any other description of men. But we are not to infer from what I have said, that the clergy should be spared, when guilty of gross offences. In that case, the interest of religion requires, that they should be impartially dealt with. I do not hesitate to say, that gross offences in a clergyman, are more criminal than in others: they are bound to abstain from vice, by the same obligations, which bind others, and the sanctity of their office, should form an additional motive.

The respect due to their office, should procure for ministers a candid and patient hearing of what they deliver, as the counsel of God. It is not, indeed, the duty of the people to follow their instructions in a blind implicit manner; the word of God, is the test by which every opinion should be tried.

But on doubtful points, it seems not too much for the people to suppose, that their minister might be better qualified than they, to form an opinion, and this would produce a deference, which would make them cautious in rejecting what he might advance.

Another duty of the people, which it may seem delicate to mention, but which I find pointedly inculcated in the word of God, is that of giving their minister a worldly maintainance. I know some denominations make a great out-cry against the doctrine of supporting the clergy, and abuse, in the most illiberal terms, those who professedly receive any thing like a compensation for their ministerial labors. There is no person more opposed than I am to unfriendly bickerings between different denominations ; but as the charge just mentioned, has been repeatedly made, and urged against us in the most acrimonious language, I think it neither indecent nor improper to shew its futility. My first enquiry shall be whether those who make this charge, are consistent with themselves, for the doctrine they advance on this subject, is I confess, not wholly inapplicable to their other principles. They require no expensive education to qualify their ministers, nor do they enjoin laborious study, and preparation to form their discourses for the public : if then their sermons cost them nothing, it seems not improper that they should give them to the people for nothing. But do they act thus ? We do not find them laboring with their hands for subsistence. They derive their living from the altar. And, perhaps if all calculations were made, the sum necessary to support the appearance they make, would not fall so far below what is received by those against whom they so loudly exclaim. But the charge of mercenary principles must be tried by the sacrifices made to the interests of religion. And what have those sectarians to boast of here ? They frequently tell us they were " called from labor to labor in the vineyard of their Master." And probably a young man without funds, or any other resources than his own labor, would not find it easy to support himself more comfortably

than these persons do, by the emoluments of their office. But on the other hand, suppose a young man had acquired an education, sufficient to introduce him into any of the learned professions, I will not ask this congregation, whether such a man, would not make considerable sacrifices, by devoting himself to the gospel ministry. I have now taken, what I believe to be a candid view of this subject, and the result appears to be, that the persons whom I oppose, have charged mercenary motives on men, who sacrifice much more largely, than they do, for the interests of christianity.

But I apprehend the honest inquirer, will find but few duties so fully and strongly inculcated, as that of supporting the gospel. The texts of scripture on this subject are pointed and numerous, both in the old and new testament. It is true, the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthian church, that he had laboured, working with his hands rather than be burdensome to them; yet, as he acted only as a missionary among them—as the church at that time was not organized—and as he inculcates the duty of supporting the gospel, at the same time when he reminds them that they had not supported him, I am certain that nothing can be inferred from his example in that case, to invalidate the many precepts, which he himself as well as the other inspired writers, have given on this point.

As this duty is strongly and plainly inculcated in the word of God, so it is very reasonable in itself. If a man spends his youth and his patrimony in acquiring the qualifications of an office, and must afterwards employ a life of study, in discharging the duties of it; is it not reasonable when you call him to discharge this office for you, that you should compensate him for his labors? and more especially if you promise him a stated salary, and, what you yourselves, will pronounce a low and inadequate one, does not justice and duty require that you should fulfil your promise?

But it should also be recollected, that the interests of religion are deeply concerned in this matter. Place a man in penurious or embarrassed circumstances, overwhelm his mind

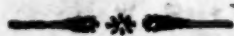
with the cares of providing for a rising family, and it is impossible that he should make that proficiency in knowledge, necessary for the respectable discharge of his ministerial duties. And, indeed, few things militate more against the propriety and respectability of congregations themselves, than repeated delinquencies, and accumulated arrearages. When I speak of respectability, I do not use the word merely with reference to the opinions of the world. That respectability, which arises from the conscientious performance of scriptural duty, is no doubt acceptable to God. And I will further remark, that the merit or demerit of ministers, will and must be reflected on the society of which they are members; for it belongs to the nature of all societies, and is a condition inseparable from their very existence, that if their principal officers become contemptible the society itself must appear so.

I shall now conclude this part of the subject with two observations. The first is, that what is engaged or stipulated for religious uses, is not more to be considered as a debt due to individual ministers, or persons, than as a debt due to God for the maintenance of his worship. He who gives us all, reclaims a part for his own glory. In this light the subject has been viewed in the Jewish church, and among the primitive christians; and on this ground it is, that God challenges the non-performance of it as a robbery committed against himself—*ye are cursed with a curse for ye have robbed me even this whole nation.* My next observation is, that no man will ever be the poorer for any prudent liberality in supporting the church of Christ. The scriptures abound with promises on this subject, and those promises can easily be fulfilled without a miracle. Every man has so much of his property, and so many of his affairs in a fluctuating state, that the providence which governs the whole world can easily compensate or punish us by insensible methods. But the rewards of this duty are not always insensible; the performance of it may lead to piety or morality in our families or neighborhoods, which will save us in a great measure from the extravagancies of vice. And it is much

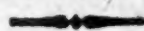
easier to support the gospel, than to bear the tenth part of the expences which vice brings in her train.

I have now gone through the principal duties arising from the contract which is this day to be ratified. I feel it incumbent on me, to declare, that I have not been thus particular on account of any peculiar suspicion with respect to the minister and people immediately interested; but still when a contract is very important it is also important that the duties of it should be fully understood. The present contract is of the most interesting nature, and has for its object, the most important consequences in the world—nothing less than your present and everlasting felicity. ‘Behold’ says the Psalmist, ‘how good and pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity;’ with how much propriety may this be applied to a church, preserving its purity and peace at the same time—submitting to discipline—discharging its duties—and walking in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord. If there be any thing in this world which bears even a distant resemblance of heaven, it is such a church. And where we see a general and conscientious regard to all the precepts and institutions of Heaven, we have every reason to conclude, that a great measure of divine grace rests upon that people, and that multitudes are preparing for the fellowship of the saints in light. And shall we my brethren, entertain the hope that the solemnities of this day, will conduce to these important ends. Happy indeed will it be for this people, if they are faithfully instructed in the counsel of God, and if they receive the truth in the love of it—if they teach these things diligently to their children, and ‘bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.’ Then shall piety spread from heart to heart, and from family to family, and in the morning of the resurrection it shall be said, that this man and that man were born here. But the reverse of this picture would be gloomy and melancholy indeed. A people trampling on the word of God—converting its ordinances into instruments of strife and

contention, and whilst the light of divine truth shines around them, sinking into formality and forgetfulness of their Maker—to such a people, the gospel will become a favor of death unto death. My brethren, whether you are disposed to improve the dispensations of grace or not, it is our duty to declare that the kingdom of heaven has come nigh unto you. The banner of the gospel is now erected in this place—and the servant of the Lord, whom you will soon see consecrated to the sacred office, is like his divine master, set for the fall or rise of many among you.



RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.



Extracts from the Appendix to the Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society.

THE first is an extract of a letter from the Rev. Dr. Dalrymple, one of the ministers at Ayr.

“ I give you joy, and would take some small share of it myself, that we have lived to the day of a British and Foreign Bible Society. In the 82d year of my age, and 59th of my ministry; next to both deaf and blind; it is little that I can do in an active way to assist in so glorious a design: but that little shall not be wanting. This evening I intend to overture our synod for a collection, after the good example of the presbytery of Glasgow, and I hope to succeed.” (p. 34.)

Mr. Kieseling a respectable merchant in Nuremberg thus writes.

“ Your letter afforded me such joy that I could not contain myself, but immediately went to the Rev. John Godfried Schoener, one of the most respectable ministers of our city, in order to communicate to him the joyful news from a far country. He was no less affected than myself; and we agreed to appoint a meeting of christian friends on Ascension-day,

at which we unanimously resolved to unite for the formation of a Bible Society, and by a printed letter, to invite our christian friends throughout Germany and Switzerland, to assist us in so noble an undertaking.

“ When sometimes I am privileged to give away a Bible or New Testament, father and mother, son and daughter, are running after me, thanking me a hundred, and a thousand times, kissing my hand and my coat, shedding tears of joy, and loudly exclaiming; ‘ May God bless you: may the Lord Jesus bless you in time and to all eternity.’ Really I felt sometimes a foretaste of heavenly joy, so that I could not sufficiently bless God, for having entrusted me with the honorable commission of steward of the kind benefactions of others. But the more I disperse, the more the petitions both of ministers and schoolmasters increase, not only from Austria, but likewise from Stiria, Carinthia, and Hungary, insomuch, that I am afraid to present their petitions.” (p. 36.)

The address circulated by the Nuremberg Bible Society, throughout Germany, closes with the following appeal.

We confidently hope for the success of our undertaking. If in England, according to the latest accounts, even hard working artisans have contributed their mite towards the support of the Bible Society, can we suppose that less zeal for the good cause will be displayed by our German and Swiss reverers of the sacred writings?

“ The inherent value of the book, the religious wants of the people, the critical circumstances of the times, the present tranquility of the States; all these, besides many other urgent reasons, loudly call for attention to this important undertaking.

“ O ye, who know and revere the Bible, which yet remains the Bible of all religious parties, lend your aid in promoting it. Ye who on the brink of the grave, can dispose of your property at pleasure, think on the words of the just Judge of the world, *I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink.* If the blessing be already so great for him who ministers

to the bodily wants of his fellow creatures, how much greater will it be for those, who, constrained by the love of Christ, provide for satisfying the hungry after the living word of God, and lead thirsty souls to the pure wells of salvation!" (p. 41.)

From the letter of a Roman catholic priest, in Swabia, we gladly extract a few passages.

"I had the pleasure to learn, from a copy of your letter, addressed by Mr. Tobias Kiesling, of Nuremberg, the great number of zealous friends of the bible in London, who are filled with a noble desire to send out the pure word of God, as the best preacher, into the world. This account excited in my breast the most heart-felt joy and gratitude towards that God, 'who is the only Giver of every good and perfect gift;' but I felt also lively emotions of unfeigned love and affection for you, and for all the members of that venerable Bible Society, for whom I wish a thousand blessings. May the Lord Jesus through whom all blessings are communicated to us, be the beginning and end of their praiseworthy undertaking! and may his name be glorified for it to all eternity.

"What particularly induced me to write, was your question, whether the Bible was still prohibited to the catholics? Being convinced thereby, that you was mindful even of the poor catholics I was particularly moved and edified; for indeed, nothing is more affecting than that love which embraces all, without the least distinction; "for God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." I felt myself, therefore, constrained to thank you, in the name of all honest and well disposed catholics, for these your fraternal sentiments.

"In answer to your question I observe, properly speaking, the Bible has never been prohibited to the catholics. The council of Trent only states, *Indiscriminata lectio Sacra Scriptura interdicta est.* Well informed catholics took this always in that sense only, that not all books of the Bible *promiscuously*, should be put into the hands of the common people referring chiefly to some books of the Old Testament. Besides, this

prohibition of the council of Trent has never been admitted as binding by the whole body of the Roman catholic clergy in Germany; but so much is true, that all blind bigots of our church have always spread the opinion, that it was entirely forbidden for all laymen to read the Bible; and this prejudice, is alas! still deeply prevalent among the greater part of the people. There are however, at present, many of our clergymen, both in Swabia and Bavaria, who strongly recommend the reading of the Bible, chiefly of the New Testament; and do every thing in their power to promote it. I have, for my own part distributed many New Testaments, and some Bibles among better enlightened catholics; and several of my dear brethern in Christ do the same. We are however, not able to satisfy all the demands for Bibles." (p. 43, 44.)

"I am sure we could dispose of a good number of Bibles and New Testaments. The people seem to get more and more desirous of the Bible; and the number of clergymen is increasing, who not only would tolerate but commend the reading of it.

"I feel a very great desire to witness the formation of a similar Bible Society amongst the Roman catholics; and indeed I will make some attempts, though I foresee many difficulties, and can hardly suppose that so many active and benevolent friends of the Bible, are to be found amongst the Roman catholics, as would be requisite for such an undertaking. Your question, however, respecting the catholics, inspires me with the hope, that your society is desirous to extend its beneficial influence likewise to the catholics, wishing only to know, whether a dispersion of Bibles amongst them would be practicable: and, indeed, it would not only be practicable, but desirable in the highest degree." (p. 44.)

"I cannot express, in terms sufficiently strong, the fervency of my joy, and love towards all who, throughout England, heartily believe in Jesus Christ as their only Saviour, and zealously endeavour to extend the Redeemer's kingdom. I am"

brace them all as the beloved and elect of God, as friends and brethren in Christ, let them be of whatever name, or belonging to whatever church or denomination. The more distant the countries, and the more different the outward forms and establishments are, the more I rejoice, if I am privileged to hear, that our ever-faithful Lord and Saviour is gathering from amongst them a flock of believing people. Truly, God has a numerous *Army of Reserve* in England, who do not bow before the Baal of the age, nor sacrifice to the God of the times: Let all who know his name, glorify him for this mercy! May the peace of God, and the all-sufficient grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!" (p. 45.)

ERRATA.

No. I, Vol. 2, In the poem *Salvation in Christ*,
Verse 1, line 2, for calm read *balm*.

Verse 14, line 2, for grace read *blood*.

Errata for the Sermon.

Page 228, line 3 from top, after 'appeared' insert *to him*.

— 5 from bottom, after 'ought' insert *also*.

229, 12 bot. for *the purposes*, read *these purposes*.

230, 13 top, for *the purpose*, read *their purpose*.

232, 3 top, for *impostures* read *impostors*

— bottom line, for *ministirial* read *ministerial*.

236, line 10, top, after 'but' insert *it*.

240, 8, top, for *maintainance* read *maintenance*.

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