

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

NUMBER I.

JULY, 1849.

ARTICLE I.

DENOMINATIONAL EDUCATION.

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The connexion of the Church of God, with the general education of the people, is a subject in regard to which more is said, and felt, than thought. It is a subject at all times, and every where, of immense importance; and no where, and at no time, more so than at present in this country. Perhaps it may not be useless, to attempt an examination of the question, as one of principle, and to make an effort, candidly and thoroughly, to estimate the grounds upon which its determination ought to rest. It is certainly a very serious thing for the Church as a body, or any Denomination, in particular—either to omit a high duty—or to intrude violently into matters belonging to other authorities not less divinely instituted than itself. And it is therefore not without its value to recall public attention, from exhortations and emotions, delivered and excited upon this subject, as if it were one settled past doubt, in a particular way, to a serious revision of the original grounds of decision in the case, and a fair estimate of the great principles which must control it—or if they are neglected, must ultimately defeat all our attempts to control them.

There are several aspects in which our duties are obliged to be considered. if we would arrive at clear views in relation to them. We are under obligations to do many things, and to abstain from doing many things, considered merely as separate and individual beings; beings created,

of the venerable Augustine. He had set apart the last years of life for revising and completing his theological works. He commenced with preparing what he called his *Retractiones*; which is no other than a critique on his own writings. Some of his followers would scarcely admit that he could be in error; but he made no such pretensions himself. He rejoiced in the confession that he had made some progress in the truth, and was not ashamed to expose, before his death, what he regarded as his earlier errors.

Augustine lived to see Northern Africa overrun, and his beloved Hippo besieged, by the ruthless Vandals. In the prospect of approaching trials and sufferings, it was his daily prayer,—either that God would deliver the city, or that he would give to his servants grace to endure whatever might be inflicted, or that he might himself be taken out of the world. In the last particular (we hope in the second) his prayer was heard. In the third month of the siege (which lasted fourteen months in all) the great Augustine was taken to his rest. He died, A. D. 429, in the 76th year of his age. And though we are far from endorsing all that Augustine wrote and taught, still, we doubt whether the man has lived, since the days of Paul, the influence of whose writings upon the religious world has been so great, so enduring, and on the whole so happy, as those of the renowned bishop of Hippo.

ARTICLE III.

A PLEA FOR DOCTRINE AS THE INSTRUMENT OF SANCTIFICATION.

That a deeply seated prejudice exists in many parts of the Church against the systematic exposition of the doctrines of the Bible, is too obvious a fact to be questioned. It probably falls within the experience of every pastor, to see the gathering frown, the averted shoulder, and the drooping head, as soon as certain doctrines are announced

as the theme for discussion. It does not excite our surprise, that the world of the ungodly should manifest this displeasure : for the same "carnal mind" which is "enmity against God," is enmity likewise against the truth of God. But that professing Christians should engage in this unholy crusade against doctrinal religion, and that even ministers of the gospel should sigh over the earnest proclamation of its truths, and accuse the faithful witnesses of "daubing with untempered mortar," is certainly a most afflictive and atrocious scandal.

Yet this strange phenomenon is not inexplicable. In the case of some, it is owing to a latent scepticism of the doctrines themselves. Having received them upon trust, an heir-loom from their fathers, they have felt neither interest nor zeal enough to carry them through the labour of a thorough and independent investigation. If it be not easy to prove the truth of these tenets, it is still more difficult to disprove : yielding therefore to the indolence of scepticism, they find it an easier, and far less responsible, disposal to class these doctrines among the *αντιλεγόμενα*—the things that are spoken against, and of course doubtful. And does not the great apostle himself exhort us not to engage in "doubtful disputations?" All publication of these disputed topics then is decided to be a wicked agitation of the Church ; and the luckless incendiary must undergo the tortures which inquisitorial hands have made ready. He may live in charity with all mankind, and his love be attested by the most abundant labours, still he is branded upon the cheek as a bigot and a sectary. He may entreat sinners even with tears, and lay his appeals scorching hot upon the conscience, and cause the hair to stand on end with his frightful warnings ; yet if he graft his appeal upon a doctrine, he is cold as an iceberg, and his eloquence is but miserable croaking.

In the case of others, this opposition to doctrinal preaching results from too timid concessions to the clamours of the ungodly. It is an old device of the adversary to drown the gospel by the sound of haut-boys and kettle-drums. That, for example, was a pretty artifice to set an ancient city by the ears, and to lead the chorus, "great is Diana of the Ephesians ;" for it effectually stopped the mouth of Paul,

and saved the labour and the uncertain issue of an argument. The devil is not less "full of all subtlety" now than he was then: and when the world which "lieth in wickedness" lifts its voice against the gospel, "some crying one thing and some another," the timid Christian, not understanding who it is that stirreth the uproar, proposes a parley: "let us speak softly to them and thus endeavour to catch them with guile." Experience ought to show that it is a crazy enterprize to outcraft the devil, and an enterprize in which the Nathaniels will most likely have the disadvantage. A doctrine, so effectually disguised as to be smuggled through the sinner's "carnal mind" without awakening opposition, will be equally ineffective, whether preached or suppressed. Nay, if we will for the most part cover the austere features of religion with a becoming cap, we may readily gain permission to make an occasional show of valour. Satan himself will consent to our showing up even the doctrine of reprobation, and that with flourish of trumpets, if it be only once in the year. He may well afford to compromise with our consciences for one sabbath, if we compromise with him for the remaining fifty-one. There are ministers of the word of whom this is but too truthful a likeness: after a careful and studied suppression of all the distinctive points in their creed, once in a while (perhaps at Synodical and Presbyterial meetings, where they are strong because strongly backed) they make a sally from some one of the five points, and then retreat hastily again into the citadel—prodigiously elated with their own valour, while all the world beside knows it only as the shameful confession of their habitual cowardice. Another form in which the same spirit of concession exhibits itself, is the craven apology which too often accompanies the truth when it is preached. The sinner cannot be told that he is a sinner and deserves to be damned, unless the message is preceded with a thousand regrets that his feelings should be hurt in the matter; and God cannot be suffered his divine prerogative "to have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and whom he wills to harden," until it be first covered by a blasphemous apology from the preacher. How many ministers of the word are thus systematically giving aid and comfort to the spirit of rebellion and infidelity, so rampant upon this apostate globe, is

doubtless reserved among the terrible revelations of the judgement day. But that many, through excessive fear of exciting the prejudices of men, fail to preach the offensive doctrines of the cross with a bold and manly tone, is too painfully forced upon our daily observation.

A third reason for the existence of this zeal against doctrine is a violent spirit of party and sect. This may appear strange to those who can account for the Christian's love for the truth only upon the ground of bigotry. Yet does this charge lie with more force upon the other side. Amid the clashing of denominations, not a few betray great uneasiness lest the characteristic views of their sect should drive away some to another communion, and thus the Church of their party be shorn of its proportions. With such, the question whether souls are led to Christ Jesus the Lord is wholly subordinate to this, whether they are led to *them and to their side*.

A fourth cause of this outcry against the inculcation of doctrine is found in the indolence and sluggishness of men. It requires some attention to follow an argument through, from the premises to the conclusion; and a cozy nap in the middle, leaves the hearer at fault in the inferences. But a good exhortation is like the Polypus: you may cut it off at any of the joints, what is left is sure to be alive; and what is better, the sting of an exhortation is always in the tail, just where the refreshed sleeper wakes up to enjoy it. In the days of the Owens, the Howes, and the Erskines, consideration and thought were required of the hearer, no less than of the preacher; but in this age of steam pressure and labour-saving inventions, conclusions are to be reached without the tediousness of argument, and all the passions of the human heart are to be stirred to their depths, without informing the understanding or enlightening the reason. Men can be craned up into the Church, and perhaps into heaven, through the agency of weights and pulleys, and any given amount of religious emotion be pumped up by mechanical processes, without any of the travail of thought. A preacher, if he would not be voted a bore, must hash up and spice his doctrine with all the art of a French cuisinier. Hard fate is theirs, who having, through days and nights of severe and patient thought, quarried out a noble and massive truth, must then

chip into elegant slips to suit those who can only be attracted by the small fretwork of the Christian scheme.

But a fifth reason — we charitably believe more general and more influential than any other — is found in the mistaken impression that doctrine is not necessary to sanctification; if it be not rather a hindrance to that blessed work. To the minds of such, preaching consists simply in a free and generous exhortation, or else in the statement and enforcement of some practical duty. The former of these bears so directly upon the feelings, and the latter upon the conduct, that the connexion of both with progress in holiness is open to the view. But the manner in which an abstract truth is taken up into the experience, or by what process of assimilation it goes into the character, is not so immediately apparent. These speculations seem therefore to be an idle waste of opportunity for growth in grace: and the diversion of the mind from practical to speculative subjects is thought to inflict a most serious and permanent injury. It is observed further, that Christians of opposing doctrinal creeds obtain reputé for holiness of heart, and the conclusion is drawn that one type of piety is as good as another; or that the true type is as likely to be reached by one system as another; or perhaps, best of all by no system whatever. A shrewd mind might suspect then, that after all, the old adage is not far wrong that "ignorance is the mother of devotion." But seriously, ought it not to be considered that some difference must exist between superstition and religion? and that he who feels and acts, he cannot tell how nor why, falls rather into the former of the two categories? and that where true piety is admitted to exist, it is of some consequence into what mould it is cast? and that one type of Christian experience may be every way more valuable than another? This subject is of sufficient importance to justify the writer in an attempt to trace the influence of doctrinal truth upon practical godliness: and it can hardly be presumption to hope that from such a discussion the reader will not arise without profit.

There are five stages into which the ordinary religious progress of Christians may be divided. It is not meant that these are so perfectly distinguished from each other, that no feelings or sentiments are common to any two of

them. On the contrary, the essential elements of true piety—faith in Christ and repentance for sin—must be found in the first, in the last, and in all the intermediate stages. Indeed, each succeeding stage must include all that preceded: yet this does not forbid that it be distinguished by characteristics peculiarly its own. Thus, while at every step in his career the Christian must have the essential features of a converted man, still at different points his piety may assume a different outward expression, and these may be severally compared. Nor is it implied in the following classification, that every Christian passes through the entire series. God may deal with the soul in a way to show forth conspicuously the sovereignty of his grace. The Holy Ghost may so remarkably illumine the mind in the true nature of gospel holiness, and may so fully sanctify the soul, that the more early and laborious stages of Christian progress may seem to be overleaped, and the slow, tedious lessons of ordinary experience may appear to be superseded by His instantaneous teachings. Yet even these cases will prove no exception to the doctrine of this article; they rather afford a more complete illustration of the position that no degree of sanctification is attained, whether higher or lower, but through the influence of gospel truth upon the mind.

The first of these stages, where we ordinarily find the young convert, is marked by the predominance of the emotional in religion: the attention is almost exclusively given to the developement of the affections; and forms and exercises are made the determining evidence of one's Christian state. This is altogether natural. To one who has just been "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," the very transition from such opposite states must occasion the liveliest emotions. In proportion, too, as the previous exercises of the convinced sinner have been dark and forbidding, will the present emotions of the converted man be vivid and joyful. If the sense of God's wrath was before appalling, the mere thought of a gracious and full pardon will be now transporting. If, while the prayer was shut up in the heart, he was almost suffocated with the feeling of despair, the free and cordial intercourse, now opened with God, affords him a joy, which gives him the happiest conception of heavenly bliss.

These strong emotions and vivid frames, are thus in exact agreement with the laws of our spiritual economy. The young Christian yields himself passively to the wild delirium of delight, with which he is so happily intoxicated; and as yet, no suspicion throws its dark shadow across his path. It is not wonderful that, to him at least, these frames should be the all of religion, and that the degree of religion should be measured by the vividness of his exercises. He does not stop to inquire how far these feelings may result from a temperament naturally sanguine and ardent; nor what allowance, if any, should be made for the lower exercises of those who are, by nature, sluggish or melancholy. It has not occurred to him, that the brilliancy of one's emotions is, to some degree, dependent even upon the condition of the bodily frame, and therefore no infallible sign of the exact state of the soul. Much less has he reflected that, to one just sinking into despair, the mere notion of a pardon obtained, whether it be true in fact or not, procures relief which is, at once, the precursor of a spurious joy. The painful discovery is reserved to a later day, that a false hope may beget emotions as vivid and a joy as great, as those inspired by the hope which "maketh not ashamed." Yet, in this matter, "days will speak, and multitude of years shall teach wisdom." No long interval is required, before the novelty of these exercises wears away; and by a necessary law of our nature, these keen emotions subside into a frame of heart more equable and of a lower temperature. By the same fatal error, which made religion to consist in pleasing emotions, the young convert seeks now to reproduce them, not as at first by a believing view of Christ, but by artificial stimulants directly applied to the affections themselves. The result is inevitable: after a protracted struggle, in which he is conscious of frequent and painful alternations, all his joy finally collapses into settled gloom or despair.

This is the first lesson taught by experience, that best earthly teacher; and it prepares the way for the second step in Christian progress, which has a busy activity for its external sign. We place this stage in advance of the preceding, since it is less selfish and goes out more in sympathy with other beings and with the requirements of the divine law. The passage from the one to the other,

it is not difficult to explain. That exclusive devotion to his own happiness, which, as we have seen, resulted only in bitter disappointment, naturally suggests the hope that an opposite course will be more successful. He suddenly awakes to the truth that "no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself:" and as the conviction presses upon his conscience, that in a high sense every man is his "brother's keeper," he lends a quick obedience to the command, "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Of course the prevailing type of his experience is now a bustling, active, out-of-doors religionism. He becomes the zealous supporter of the thousand and one operations within and without the Church for doing good; and if perchance he have wit enough to invent some new patent method of purging society of all its evils, and can cause his name to be rung over a whole continent, conceives that he has reached the culminating point of all holiness. For a time he is happy. He feels of necessity that degree of pleasure which always attends the wholesome exercise of our powers, both mental and corporeal. He is intoxicated with that peculiar enthusiasm, so easily generated in a crowd, and which is so readily communicated by sympathy. He may enjoy also that delightful exhilaration imparted by the successful issue of our own schemes without reference to their intrinsic merit. All this, however, may consist with a superficial knowledge of his own heart, with low impressions of the majesty and holiness of God, and with narrow views of the spirituality and extent of the law. How many are there in the Church of Christ, who, after a long life, are apparently not advanced beyond these two first stages of Christian progress! Either wholly absorbed in watching the changing hues of their own transient emotions, or else bustling about with a noisy and ostentatious zeal in the discharge of external duties! It is not implied that in either case, the profession of religion is wholly vain; but only that the experience is defective, and is simply preparatory to what is graciously ordained to follow. As in the first stage, the young Christian is at fault, not in having strong affections and exquisite enjoyment, but in making these the sum total of religion; so in the second stage, the ground

of impeachment is not that the Christian is active in his Redeemer's service, but that he takes no higher view of Christianity than as a mere circle of duties. But as the first step was only the antecedent to the second, so the second step prepares in turn for the third. These schemes at last stale upon the taste, or some sudden temptation throws him out of the routine of duty; or the good spirit directly teaches him that there is an inside as well as an outside to religion. A voice of solemn warning sounds forth from the scriptures, "though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

Under this training, the Christian rises another step upon the scale, into the third stage of religious progress: which is characterized by a profound sense of the vileness of sin, and a corresponding depth of humiliation before God. Under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit, he lingers no more about the porch, but passes into the interior of experimental religion. He is led through "the chambers of imagery" within his own soul, and traces the abominable and polluting idolatries portrayed upon the walls round about. He deplors the shortcomings of his best deeds, and the daring impiety of his acknowledged sins. The soil is turned up deeper and still deeper under the plough, and he bewails that depravity of nature which is the source and spring of all his actual transgressions. He finds his "heart deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and proportional with these discoveries of his own vileness, are his discoveries of God's terrible holiness. With Job he exclaims, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." He is indeed not less active than he was before, nor less anxious that "the candle of the Lord should shine brightly upon his tabernacle," but he at the same time pours contempt upon all his former pride, and glories in nothing but the Cross of Christ, and in that "blood of sprinkling" which "purges his conscience from dead works." Religion assumes more completely to his mind its true character, that of a living principle which seeks its only real development in right actions and glowing affections. There is no more certain evidence of growth in grace than is

furnished in this growing knowledge of our own sinfulness: a knowledge which penetrates beyond the outward act into the hidden character, and which traces the deep pollution of this behind all occasional influences to its inborn corruption. The agonizing confession, "behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did by mother conceive me," places the penitent at once in right relations to God, and the passionate exclamation of Paul, "wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" is adopted as the spontaneous expression of his spiritual grief, and throws him also in proper dependence upon the grace and power of God. Indeed so essential an element of true holiness is this self-knowledge and consequent prostration of heart, that God not unfrequently prepares a man for eminent attainments in grace by laying the foundations of his religious character in overwhelming convictions for sin, before the first ray of hope dawns upon the soul. But ordinarily, these first convictions are only deep enough to drive the sinner from every refuge of lies, in utter helplessness, to the cross of the Redeemer. These further discoveries of the evil and extent of sin are usually reserved to this stage of Christian experience upon which we are now dwelling. Truly, it is a dark and wintry season to the believer when the great lesson he is set to learn is the plague of his own heart: but it is the season, to appropriate the striking figure of John Owen, when the sap runs down into the roots of the tree, which thereby send their fibres farther and deeper into the soil.

Yet profitable as this experience may be, it is not the most comfortable to the soul. The Christian pilgrim does not plant his feet within the land of Beulah until he ascends to the fourth and next stage, and fully recognizes the freedom of the sons of God. It is a happy discovery when the Gospel is not looked upon as a scheme of duties so much as a charter of privileges. After the long and painful search into the hidden wickedness of his own nature, it is like the opening of spring to the saint when he reads and comprehends that "where sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound;" when he "receives not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adop-

tion, whereby he cries Abba, Father." He is delivered from that fear of death which brings the soul in bondage, and sounds to its depths the faithful saying, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief." His views of sin are none the less regretful because he now regards it only in the light of the cross. But while his heart is broken with penitence, it is at the same time melted by the contemplation of infinite love—that love which "forgives his iniquity, and remembers his sin no more." He walks in the light, because he has been turned out of himself. He takes no thought of his own sin, but he will take equal thought of his Saviour's grace. He balances this over against that; and while confessions are yet upon his lips, thanksgiving for redeeming and pardoning mercy is welling up within the heart.

There is but one other stage of the believer's progress before he shall cross the threshold of eternal glory. It is when he stands upon the Delectable Mountains, and through the glass of an abiding and infallible assurance is able to view the gates of the Celestial City. There have been many seasons in the past when he could scarcely doubt his "acceptance in the Beloved"—seasons when he has been brought into the banqueting house, and under the banner of love; when the ravished soul could exclaim, "my beloved is mine and I am his"—"his left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." But these precious seasons have been always brief. The temptations of the adversary, the bewildering cares and seductive pleasures of this world, his own want of watchfulness, some sudden surprisal into sin, the remaining spirit of legalism which creeps anew into the heart, and nestles itself again where once it was expelled—these are among the causes which, singly or combined, so often mar or destroy his peace. But now that his views of truth are more clear, and his experience more full—now that he has learned the devices of Satan, and the treachery of his own heart—and especially, now that his Christian career covers a larger tract, and he is able to institute a safer comparison between his own exercises—his "peace flows like a river." The Holy Ghost likewise, having renewed, enlightened, purged and sanctified, now perfects

his work, by bearing a gracious witness to his own operations. Through His testimony, itself a new and special act of grace, the Christian comes to

————— "read his title clear
To mansions in the skies;"

in the enjoyment of that "love which casteth out fear," he begins to *know* in whom he has believed, and to rejoice in "full assurance of hope to the end."

These five stages, which we have so rapidly traversed, do certainly cover the usual progress of the Christian in holiness; and none will deny that at the end of this career he is left upon a far higher elevation than he occupied at its beginning. We have not aimed to survey and to map down all the varieties of religious experience. This would require, in the place of a few pages, a book as long as a life. It is sufficient for the purpose in hand to seize upon those broad features which mark out the leading divisions, without going into minute details.

The connexion of all these remarks with the design of this article will now be perceived, if the reader will carefully observe that in no case has it been possible for the Christian to ascend from the lower to the higher forms, except as the doctrines of the word of God have been brought to bear upon his mind and conscience. How shall the young convert be disenchanted of his selfishness, and be brought out of the charmed circle that he has drawn around himself? How shall he be put in sympathy with other beings, and become a man of *work* as well as of *feeling*, unless the doctrine of his allegiance to God shall be pressed upon his conscience? He may, indeed, in the indulgence of a legal spirit, work for hire, and bring his labours and charities as the price with which to purchase the favour of God. But the fountain of selfishness shall not be dried up within, nor his activity become the activity of love, nor his work the work of obedience, until he recognizes the claims of the Most High upon him. In other words, the doctrine of the divine supremacy must be drawn forth from its concealment. He must learn that as God is the first cause of all things, and comprehends the existence of all creatures within his own, so His glory must needs be their last end. He learns further, that this law of moral gravitation, which binds all crea-

tures to the eternal throne, binds also, in happy harmony, obedience to God, with the enjoyment of God—and through this established harmony, he finds his only true happiness in the very tributes which he pays to the majesty and supremacy of the Divine Being.

By this process alone, then, is the Christian lifted from the first to the second stage of his progress. While he is entranced by his joyful emotions, or while seeking, by every incantation, to reproduce the holy spell, the promised Teacher comes from above, takes this great truth of God's supremacy out of the Scriptures, and reveals it to his understanding. This, in turn, branches out into all the departments of life. All his varied relations to God as his Creator and Preserver, and again as his Redeemer and King, come to be considered. Under these, all his relations to his fellow men, as they are found in the world and in the Church—all the multiplied duties which grow from the ties of family, of kindred, of country, are unfolded. All the Christian duties which he owes to his brethren in Christ, to the Church collective, to the ungodly around him, and to the long-forgotten heathen abroad—these all spread themselves under his eye. A voice from on high speaks to him thus: "These diversified relations I make you to possess, that in fulfilling them you may serve me." These paths of life, which cross each other at a thousand points, intersecting at every angle, are paths of obedience to God.

In like manner, Gospel doctrine is the mighty lever which raises to the third stage of Christian experience. While pacing, with self-complacent zeal, the usual round of external duties, or else seeking, with dissatisfaction and fear, to make out a full tale of service, by newly-invented labours, the truth is brought home with fresh power to the soul, that "God is a Spirit," and they alone worship truly who "worship in spirit and in truth." The mind awakens to new and overpowering conceptions of the holiness of God. The Holy Ghost, who is the author of these discoveries, takes the law as the great exponent of that holiness, and with it measures the whole experience of the man. The entire life and conduct is subjected to a severe scrutiny. Every action is weighed in the balance—every motive is brought to the touch-stone—every principle,

which can become the spring of action, is analyzed—all the emotions and affections are subjected to the “Refiner’s fire.” In a word, the whole experience is fused, while the law goes through it in its detective processes, searching down into all that has ever been said, or done, or thought, or felt, or imagined, or purposed. Nor is the law the only instrument employed to increase these wholesome convictions for sin. The Holy Ghost takes the soul now from the thunderings of Sinai to the melting scene of Calvary, and shows him the holiness of God taking vengeance of sin even upon the person of the Divine Redeemer. Here is holiness—not lying in cold and stately repose upon the bosom of precepts and commandments, but stirring itself with burning activity to execute the awful penalty. Here too is law in mysterious conjunction with love—holiness shining not only with its own dreadful splendour, but tinged and mellowed with the softer radiance of mercy and compassion. It is at the foot of the Cross that the law searches most into the evil of sin. Here the believer learns how odious his transgression is, viewing it under the double light of law and of grace:—filthy sin! which puts itself both against majesty and mercy, offending equally against the honour and the heart of God! Here he feels not only *convictions* for sin, but also *penitence*. He bows before the throne of his Father with deepest humiliation, and loathes the exercises which before he applauded. This entire change in the outward type of his experience has been wrought by the doctrine of God’s infinite holiness: and the transforming discovery of this holiness was afforded by the law—that law which is “exceeding broad,” which was promulgated from Sinai and “magnified” upon Calvary.

The work of conviction is, however, at this point, only half completed. The same severe analysis, which has been made of the Christian’s life and exercises, is now applied to his inward and habitual character. The law searches into the hidden recesses of his nature: the dark understanding is suddenly explored with the torch of truth, that its appalling blindness may be disclosed—the impure affections are plied with tests, showing with what natural promptness they recoil from good, and with what instinctive tenacity they cleave to evil—the treacherous

memory—the rancid imagination—every power, every passion is explored, till the humbled Christian bows again before God, and cries: “behold I am vile!” Yet these confessions are not made without an inquiry into the mystery of this deep and natural iniquity. Here again we trace the teachings of the Almighty spirit; His text-book again is that wonderful volume which He has inspired; and the scholar is carried further still into those deep doctrines which form its mysterious alphabet. The first covenant, formed in Paradise, is unrolled; the federal relation of Adam to his posterity, is revealed; his own moral connexion, with the first transgressor, is understood; the imputation of the first sin; the righteous condemnation which is consequent upon this; the sinful nature which is thereby inherited; the natural fruit which is borne in outward transgressions; all these doctrines no longer lie hid in the Bible, but come forth with power to his soul, and abase him in the dust. He may well indulge his spiritual grief, and continue to “write bitter things against himself,” when he must not only deplore his life, but also bewail his nature, confessing alike his original and his actual sin. From all this, is it not apparent that our profound and abiding convictions for sin—those convictions in which are laid the foundations of a solid and noble christian character—depend upon the revelation of Gospel truth to the understanding and heart? and can these truths be suppressed—or, if taught, be shown only under a veil—without inflicting injuries which shall be as lasting as eternity?

This connexion between the doctrines of grace and practical godliness, becomes more obvious as we continue to ascend the scale. Let us next take the Christian when he apprehends fully the liberty of the Gospel, and luxuriates in the privileges of his adoption. How shall he step from the condition which was last described into this, where darkness gives way to light, and grief to joy? Solely by the influence of divine truth upon his heart, as he is carried further into the sanctuary, and nearer to the Ark, to the mercy seat, and to the glory of God between the cherubim. While he is gloaming over the dark discoveries of inward and hereditary corruption, he is taken up by the spirit into the heavens. He discovers, in the lan-

guage of Erskine, the sacred three "sitting around the council board of redemption." The plan of salvation devised, is doubly to him the ground of hope and confidence—having its foundation in free and eternal love, and confirmed in all its provisions by the mutual pledges of the contracting parties. From the covenant itself, he turns to consider the competency of Him who is to execute it.—The trustee, into whose hands it is committed, is "Jehovah's fellow." That essential divinity renders him equal to the work; it is the full fountain from which may flow more "exceeding great and precious promises" than he is able to conceive, and abundantly qualifies Him to fulfil all possible conditions upon which these promises shall be suspended. The filial relation of this surety to the eternal Father, comes for special consideration; and the sonship of Christ is seen to be the ultimate foundation of the sonship of believers: these are adopted into the relation of sons, because He, to whom they are united, is the only begotten Son. From the qualifications of the trustee, attention is next drawn to the discharge of the trust itself. His active obedience is compared with all the precepts of the law, and is ascertained fully to agree. His death is found to be in obedience to the penalty, and thus to satisfy the claims of justice, in behalf of all for whom it was endured. His resurrection from the dead, and subsequent ascension, with His human nature, into heaven—besides being seen to be essential parts of the Christian scheme—are traced as the final seals placed upon that finished work, attesting its acceptance before the Father. The whole nature of justification is understood as resting upon imputed righteousness. It is seen that only those are justified who are, by faith, united mystically with Christ—that all such are permitted freely to share in His mediatorial reward; and that they are fully qualified for the service and enjoyment of God, by the new birth which they experience of the Holy Ghost. The life, thus begun, is seen to be continued through the indwelling of the Spirit, and by virtue of the intercession and kingly power of their great and living Head. It is comprehended further that the honor of Christ, and the consummation of His glory require the preservation of the saint in a state of grace upon earth, and his perfection in a state of glory in heaven.

This renewed nature, which is seen to be the necessary concomitant of a justified state, must also show itself in a life of obedience and of love. Good works are clearly perceived to be the fruit of faith, and the needful evidences of a sound conversion; so that the Christian is, on the one hand, not distressed by false and distorted views of their value; and is preserved, on the other hand, from that filthy antinomianism, which not only ventures to tamper with sin, but even to remove that brand of reprobation, which a God of holiness has fixed upon it.

These and other cognate doctrines afford to the believer a most refreshing view of the Gospel economy. He discovers that, in the covenant of grace, privilege is made the foundation of duty, and not duty the foundation of privilege. He regards the Gospel as the great manifestation of the grace of God, and not merely a republication of the law—a charter of blessings, and not a new code of duties. Privileges the most invaluable, and an inheritance the most abiding, are secured through the rich and sovereign grace of God; and the title to both comes through the free promises of the Gospel alone. The type of piety, now displayed, is in happy correspondence with these more enlarged and evangelical views of the Christian scheme. The yoke of legalism is broken from the neck—the spirit of bondage is lifted from the heart; the Son has made him free, and he *is* free. With a cheerful and confiding heart, he communes with his Heavenly Father—with a generous and growing love, he walks in the path of righteousness. His faith steady, his penitence sincere, his humility deep, his love ardent, his obedience prompt, and his peace abiding—he goes on his way “leaping and praising God.” Can any doubt that he is ripening for Heaven, when to the ardour of love is added the activity of zeal, and to the self-knowledge of the penitent, the filial reverence of a confiding Son? Shall that type of piety be disparaged, which has been steeped in the grace of the covenant, and like the rainbow of the same, spans the whole arch of Gospel truth?

The influence of these doctrines is equally felt in the last stage into which we have divided the progress of the Christian, when he attains to an unwavering assurance of his “acceptance in the beloved.” The constant contem-

plation of the covenant with all its glorious promises, gives renewed occasion for the exercise of faith; and these multiplied acts of faith strengthen more and more the presumption that he is in a gracious state. But above and beyond the strongest probability which can thus be established, he rejoices in the direct testimony of the spirit of adoption. He is made to know that the same blessed agent who first renews, then sanctifies, enlightens, comforts and seals, also shines upon his work, and witnesses to his own gracious operations. He is taught further that like all the other influences of the same "free Spirit," this is an act of sovereign grace. Not expecting it through the operation of merely natural laws, he learns to pray for it as a special gift. It becomes an object of faith, and is therefore embraced within the prayer of faith. He receives this blessing as he receives every other which is purely of grace; just as he receives the light which disperses his ignorance, or the consolation which assuages his grief. In all these cases alike, the doctrine has led to the discovery of the grace which is finally so happily incorporated into the experience of the faithful.

We have now finished the proof by which it was proposed to show the sanctifying influence of doctrinal truth upon the renewed heart. It would have been easy to put the argument into other forms. We might have reasoned *a priori* upon the very nature of truth; but this would have been attractive only to speculative minds, fond of discussions which call for the display of great metaphysical acumen. A full inquiry into the history of the Church in former ages, or a faithful comparison between the types of Christian experience which any one may see around him, would perhaps have afforded a satisfactory demonstration to others: but this mode of proof would be invidious. We have preferred the simple and experimental train of thought which has already been presented, because it is level to the comprehension of the plainest reader of this periodical. Let it be observed now that we are not content with saying doctrinal instruction is useful, and may be blessed among other agencies to the edification of saints. Much beyond this do we pitch our conclusion: it is, that in every case truth is necessary to godliness. In no instance whatever is a

single step taken in the divine life, save as the magnetic influence of truth draws the soul a degree nearer to Christ, the centre and sum of all truth. It is not implied that the doctrines of the Bible produce this result in a merely natural way, acting upon the mind only in accordance with the established and general laws which regulate it. Thousands there are who have the most admirable speculative knowledge of Christianity, who yet have never felt its saving power upon their hearts. But this is only to say that Christianity may be to some merely a philosophy—a divine philosophy, perhaps, yet only a beautiful intellectual system. The Gospel is understood as *a science*, but is not felt as *salvation*. It claims to be more than the worldly wise shall ever comprehend—it is reconciliation with God to those who are at enmity with Him—it is the way of life to souls “dead in trespasses and sins.” To the Greek who seeketh after wisdom, Christ Jesus will appear little more than another Plato, and the Gospel only another Academy; but to the renewed man Christ is known as a Saviour from sin, and these holy mysteries are needful as food for the soul. To him a living power is imparted by which the truth is taken up into his experience and becomes assimilated to the soul, even as digested food becomes assimilated to the body. The Holy Ghost is indeed the only sanctifier, and accomplishes this work by an immediate influence upon the soul—yet truth is the instrument with which he effects every transformation. As in the first creation the understanding was made the leading faculty of the soul, all the other powers being under its direction,—so this original order, which sin destroyed, is restored in the new creation. The spirit of God therefore not only acts upon the mind, without which he would not deal with man as a rational and accountable being, but his work of illumination holds precisely the same place in the order of his operations that the understanding itself holds among the faculties of man—it is his primary and leading work, introductory to the whole, and necessary to the completion of every part.

To those who should seek our advice, we would recommend the careful and systematic study of the doctrines of the Bible, as singularly conducive to a healthy and growing Christian experience. Many an humble child of God

undoubtedly is enabled to receive and feed upon the essential truth of these doctrines, who cannot put them forth to others in an abstract and logical form—yet this does not show that even he might not be aided in attaining a fuller comprehension of the doctrines by availing himself of lucid and compact expositions of them. Indeed we utter a long cherished conviction, when we say that next to the Bible, from which all that relates to God and the soul must be drawn, there are no books we would sooner recommend for an experimental and devotional use than the Calvinistic standards. We place them in the hands of children and think their office discharged when the “form of sound words” is transferred to the memory. How few think (to appropriate a child’s expression,) to “learn these things by heart!” Many a Christian will devour a whole library of books of devotion and pious biographies, trying to draw on a ready-made experience, as he would a glove, when a better manual of practical religion is almost thumbed out in the hands of his child. Let him put ninety-nine hundredths of these volumes into the fire, and thoroughly digest his Shorter Catechism, and he will come forth a stronger, brighter, happier Christian, and in sooner time, than if he had read the memoirs of all the saints and martyrs from Abel until now. The taste of the Church is so superficial that we should not wonder if the reader is smiling at this as a conceit, rather than a matured conviction, of the writer. We would only plead with him for the experiment. Let him take the doctrine which he conceives most remote from practical life, and the most hidden among the deep things of God—let him ponder over it till his mind has taken a firm and abiding grasp of it—let him trace its relations to other doctrines, and to the whole scheme with which it harmonizes—above all, let him pray over it, until it is so revealed that he feels its power over his own spirit. Let him pass on thus through the whole system of grace, not leaving one doctrine till he has obtained clear and consistent views, and has felt it as *a fact* incorporated with his own experience: and must he not come forth a strong Christian at the end? How much room has he to grow, who has not felt the living power of *all* truth upon his soul? We have met with not a few of the Lord’s people who seemed to be station-

ary and uncomfortable, simply because they had outgrown all their previous measures of knowledge, and yet could with difficulty be persuaded to abandon the past to itself. Like indolent children, they would not turn over to a clean page and press on in new discoveries, because this was difficult; but perversely turn back over the blackened leaves of the past, weary of spirit because they could find nothing refreshing and invigorating to the soul. We have burned to lay open before them the train of thought now submitted to the reader. We have desired to hurry them along with us to the great temple of truth—to throw open before them its ample doors—to conduct them from court to court, from chamber to chamber—and to usher them even into the most Holy Place, where the glory of God lies revealed, yet more concealed, under the sublime mysteries of the Christian faith. With what holy rapture would we witness the chastened freedom, and the elevated devotion with which they would bow before Him who has condescended to reveal Himself even under a veil! What a vigorous piety would be exhibited in the Church of the Redeemer, if it would feed upon such aliment as this!

If, then, doctrine occupy the place here assigned to it, it should form the staple of all preaching; and the fullness and plainness of his doctrinal instructions should be the test of every preacher's fidelity. He is sent as a witness for the truth, and the burden of his work must be the delivery of his testimony. He may inculcate most amply all the duties and charities of life, yet only as the corollaries of Christian doctrine; otherwise he degrades the Gospel into a system of mere morals. His aim is to lead souls to Christ: to do this, he must show who Christ is, what he has done, and what his offers to mankind are. This will lead the preacher through the whole circuit of Bible truth. Exhortation is good: but exhortation presupposes instruction—otherwise it is but frothy declamation. Exhortation is only the edge of the sword, of which doctrine must be the blade. Let the appeal come burning hot from the heart—let the exhortation be of keenest edge: but let it be doctrine drawn to a point, and driven in its practical bearing upon the conscience.

But fidelity in doctrinal exposition involves more than

some may imagine. The given truth must first be understood; all its metes and bounds must be known; how it acts upon other truths and is acted upon by them; its exact position in the scheme, viewed as a whole; all this must be thoroughly comprehended. A preacher may isolate it for minuter examination, as he may separate a ray of light by passing it through the prism; yet he must present it in its harmonious combination, or it will give no light to the hearer. Further, he must steep his own soul in the truth, before he can have the unction needful to preach it. He is bound to show it in its relations to Christian experience: and how can he do it if he has not felt it in his own? He who is only intellectually conversant with a given doctrine, has the more laborious and anxious part of his preparation still to make—unless he is satisfied to be a moralizer rather than a preacher. Alas! how much occasion has been given to hearers of the Gospel for the unfortunate association existing in their minds with the term “doctrinal preaching!” With some it is a mere synonyme for angry controversy, and the Ambassador of the Prince of Peace is suddenly metamorphosed into a bloody gladiator. In the minds of others, it is associated with abstract speculations, professional technicalities, and logical forms; a doctrinal preacher is one who discourses in syllogisms, and his sermon is but a demonstration upon the anatomy of the Gospel. But he alone *preaches* the doctrine who, having felt its power, knows where to place it in its proper niche, both in theological science, and in the hearts and affections of the Lord’s redeemed. Let the Church but be blessed with such a ministry, thus skillful in the word of knowledge, then shall “Zion arise and shine—beautiful upon her mountains will be the feet of them who bring good tidings, who publish peace—then shall her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.”