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The Rev. Mr. Kieherer's Narrative of his Mission to the Hottentots.

(Continued from page 299.)

WHEN we first entered upon our work, we labored to convince our hearers by arguments addressed to their understandings, but our endeavors in this way had little success. They continually raised objections and difficulties. We then resorted to another method; we insisted chiefly on the dying love of Christ, in the most simple and affectionate manner; we represented him as the all-sufficient friend of lost and helpless sinners; tenderly inviting them to come to him that they might be saved; and intreating them to give the fair trial of experience to our doctrine, by praying to Jesus. Since we adopted this method, the Lord has been pleased to make the word effectual to many souls. From time to time our hearers, who were before impenetrable, came to us, and with tears in their eyes, declared that they perceived, more and more, the truth and excellency of the gospel which we preached, finding it to be the power of God to their salvation. This was particularly the case of the tame Hottentots who occasionally heard us. About Christmas, 1799, several farmers from a distance, came to partake with us, according to the Dutch custom, of the Lord's Supper. Some of them had been awakened under the preaching of the Rev. Mr. Vofs, at Rodezand, but now came to our settlement, because it was nearer. The provisions they brought us were very seasonable and we spent several days with them in the most agreeable manner.

My garden now began to assume a flourishing aspect, and promised soon to enable me to supply at least twenty guests

with its produce, besides occasional food for the Boschemen, who, by the way, are no great admirers of vegetables. Indeed they would scarcely eat them at all, if I did not save them the trouble of cooking them, and take them to their huts ready for use.

In January, 1800, I found it necessary to take a journey to the Cape Town, for the purpose of procuring the necessary supplies for my people, particularly clothes. I was forwarded by a friendly farmer, who furnished us with a waggon and oxen. A number of Boschemen also, who had never been at the Cape, offered to accompany me. This afforded me great satisfaction, as it was a certain proof that the suspicions they had entertained of us were declining, and that they felt an increasing confidence in us.* We travelled agreeably, though slowly; our company both old and young, being obliged to walk all the way. When we stopped at night, near a fountain in the desert, we enjoyed sweet opportunities in singing and prayer; and when we entered the inhabited parts called Middle Roggefield (or Rockfield) the farmers collected the people from

* *Mr. Kicherer, when in London, mentioned to a friend that such were the suspicions the Boschemen entertained of the Missionaries at first, (wicked men having told them that they would be insnared and killed) that they would not venture to eat with him. On a certain occasion, Mr. K. wishing to gain their affections invited a number of them to partake of a refreshment which he had prepared for them. Having cut a large cake, he presented a slice to each of them. Not one of them dared to eat a morsel. Mr. K. perceiving this, and guessing at the reason, took a piece himself, and ate it before them. He then told them that he had called them together, to assure them of his friendship, and to inform them that as they were all invited to eat of that one cake, so there was one Saviour, the bread of life, for Hottentots as well as others, of whom they might freely partake, and live for ever. This satisfied them, and they all received this token of his love with pleasure.*

the adjacent country, who were glad of an opportunity to spend the Lord's day with us in public worship.

On our journey we met a Hottentot servant with some saddle oxen laden with flour for our settlement ; this was the present of a well disposed farmer, and must have proved highly acceptable to Brother Kramer, whom I had been much concerned to leave at home almost without bread.

After about a month's travelling, we reached Cape Town, having preached the gospel of Christ every Sabbath-day as we passed through the country, and have reason to be thankful that it was rendered a blessing both to Christians and Heathens. When approaching the Cape, my feelings differed widely from those of my poor Boschemen. I anticipated with delight, the pleasing scenes before me, but they were struck with dread and dismay. - Some of the first objects which presented themselves to their affrighted view were several men hung in chains for atrocious crimes, and many of the Boschemen were conscious of having deserved the same punishment. Their terror was soon increased by beholding in a few days the public execution of another malefactor. I took this opportunity of explaining to them the nature and excellence of European justice, as an ordinance of God, who had appointed civil governors for the punishment of bad men, and the reward of the good. This pacified them : they allowed the propriety of it, and said it would be happy for our settlement in the wilderness, if a similar order of things could be established there.

Soon after our arrival at Cape Town, I was called to preach at the Calvinist church, a very capacious building, then overflowing with a very genteel auditory. My Boschemen, accompanying me, were greatly struck with the large number of well-dressed people, whom, in their simplicity, they compared to a nest of ants ; and the sound of the organ was at first mistaken by them for the noise of a swarming bee-hive. From that time they entertained a higher opinion of their minister ; for, before they had been tempted to consider me as a beggarly fellow, who had come among them merely to obtain a liveli-

hood. I embraced every proper opportunity of introducing them into Christian company, and religious meetings. They seemed to receive benefit upon all these occasions, being thereby convinced of two things, namely, that the doctrine I preached was agreeable to the common creed of Christians, and also, that Christians in general were far happier than Boschemen. I grant that these convictions do not constitute saving faith in the gospel; yet, in this instance, they prepared the way for it. We waited on several of the chief magistrates, particularly Mr. Renefield, the Fiscal, by whom we were kindly received, and presented with abundance of useful articles, chiefly consisting of wearing apparel for my poor people. The Boschemen, clad in their filthy Karosses (or sheep skins) sitting in a drawing room on silk covered chairs, or parading before large pier glasses, were the objects of much good natured mirth, as well as of sincere compassion. The Fiscal did us the honor of presenting us to the governor, who was pleased to shew us great kindness. The Boschemen thanked him, in their way, for permitting Missionaries to come and teach them, no man before having cared for their souls.

It was now necessary to return to our settlement, but our journey proved very uncomfortable, the country being inundated by the copious rains which had lately fallen. At length, however, in the month of March, we regained our place, Happy Prospect Fountain, where we found our friends in good health and spirits, for which we returned our humble and heartfelt thanks to the Lord our Shepherd.*

I cannot proceed without mentioning a peculiar event which took place during my absence. The captain of the Boschemen, named Vigilant, had come to our settlement to seize a

* In a former letter Mr. K. referring to this journey, says, on my travels of eight weeks I had daily to provide thirteen people with victuals. I went out without any thing, and brought back with me one hundred and thirty-six sheep, and four cows, which the Christians did give us with a thankful heart.

sheep as his due. Brother Kramer opposing him, Vigilant stabbed the sheep, and then aimed a second thrust at our Brother, whose life was, however, providentially preserved by the interposition of a girl; who warded off the blow with her Karofs. Vigilant, being seized by Brother Kramer, whom the Lord, on this occasion, endowed with unusual strength and intrepidity, was conveyed to the next farmer, Florus Ficher, who confined him with a view of sending him for trial to Cape Town. Escaping from his keepers, he returned soon after I reached home, to our place of abode, foaming with rage, and calling upon his numerous horde to assist him in revenging the affront. Our situation was now extremely critical, but we looked up to the Lord, who observed our trouble, and in his great mercy sent us that very night my dear friend and brother, Mr. Scholtz,* from the Cape, together with a farmer and servants whose timely arrival produced the happy effect of driving this infuriated chief from our neighborhood. On this occasion we witnessed the friendly disposition of some of the Boschemen towards us, for while our lives were threatened, many of them kept watch around our habitation.

Soon after this, Brother Kramer left us to go to Hex River, and Brother Edwards departed to the Cape. I then removed, accompanied by Brother Scholtz, to Zak River, where we sat down the latter end of March, 1800, all our Boschemen following us. At this place numbers of tame Hottentots came to join us.—These people have a little property consisting of

* *Mr. Scholtz continued with Mr. Kicherer for about three years, and proved highly serviceable to him as his companion and assistant, particularly in teaching the children. He returned with him to Europe, and is now about to prosecute his studies at one of the Dutch Universities, with a view to the ministry of the gospel, we trust, among the Heathen. The Society is under great obligations to Mr. S. for his disinterested labors, and the advantages which the settlement derived from his respectable connections at the Cape.*

Sheep and oxen ; the Boschemen, on the contrary, subsist entirely on the produce of the chase, such as Tigers, Jackalls, &c. &c. or when these cannot be procured, on wretched reptiles or wild roots, and too often by the plunder of their neighbors. Though we thus increased in numbers, I cannot say we increased also in grace, for as yet, I frequently had cause to fear that no abiding impression had been made on these fickle souls, and I was in great heaviness on this account.

Just then I received an invitation to be minister at the Pearl, a rich village near Cape Town, with a handsome church. . . . My mind was greatly perplexed, for I knew not whether I ought to consider this as a temptation to divert me from my attention to the heathen, or as a call from the Lord to a more useful station. In this state of my mind, that word was deeply impressed: *'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.'* Accordingly I committed myself most earnestly to the Lord, entreating him to give me clearness in this affair, and manage it for me. My mind soon recovered its composure, and I received a strong providential intimation that it was not the Lord's will to send me to the Pearl as stated minister, some difficulty being started on the subject, which I was not anxious to remove ; and from that very time the Lord vouchsafed to bless my labors in a remarkable manner, so that many persons whose hearts had been harder than the rocks among which they lived, began to cry out *'What must we do to be saved ?'* Frequently in a literal sense, the very hills resounded with their loud complaints.

One of the first converts, at this time, was the old bastard Hottentot, John.* For some time past he felt a strong inclination to come and hear the word of God. From this design, some of the neighboring farmers, being carnal men, had endeavored to dissuade him ; insinuating that I should certainly

* *A bastard Hottentot does not mean a person of illegitimate birth, but one whose parents are not both pure Hottentots, one of them being of another nation.*

either fell or kill him. However, he could not resist his internal monitor. He came and heard. Having sat a few days under the sound of the gospel, he began to cry aloud under the painful sense of his sins, which he compared for number to the sands of the desert. Indeed he had been an atrocious offender. After he had for some time mourned bitterly on account of his transgressions, he began to speak of the love of Christ to sinners in general, and to himself in particular. This was now his darling topic all the day long, while his eyes overflowed with tears of love and gratitude. His heart was now so entirely taken up with the things of God, that he could scarcely bear to speak of any thing else; when spoken to on some worldly business he would say—"Oh, I have spoken too much about the world, let me now speak of Christ." Indeed, he did speak of him, in a way that greatly surprised me; I am persuaded he never heard any person speak the same things. He was most evidently and eminently taught of God. In the mean time his walk and conversation were such as became his profession. In his heathenish ignorance, he had four wives, and two at the time of his coming to hear the gospel. He came to me one day and said, He must put away his two wives. I asked him why? He answered, "Because when I go to God in prayer, my heart tell me it is bad; and Christ more near to me than ten thousand wives. I will support them; I will work for them; and will stay till God change their hearts; then I will take the first whose heart be changed." After a short but lively course of grace, which continued five or six months, the Lord laid him on a sick bed, from which he never recovered. He now insisted upon being carried to our place of worship, saying that as long as he could hear, he would endeavor to catch some of the words of life. Two days before his death I went to see him. I asked him how he felt. "A little low-spirited," was his answer; "for though I am sure that I have surrendered every inch of my own self to Christ, from the moment I first saw his loveliness, yet I am not so certain, at present, whether he has ac-

“ cepted of my surrender.” I endeavored to satisfy him on this subject ; but he found no clearness till the day of his departure, when calling on him again, he said to me, “ O Sir, “ I now see that the Lord Jesus love me with an everlasting “ love ; that he has accepted of me, and that he will be my “ portion for ever ; and now, though the vilest sinner on earth, “ relying on his blood and righteousness, I will die, and go “ Christ, and there I will wait for you.”

His eldest son, Cornelius, who was a servant to a farmer at a distance, came to visit his father just at this moment. He burst into tears, and said, “ Ah, my father die so happy in Jesus, “ and I have no opportunity to hear his gospel.” Moved by his sorrow, I wrote to his master, requesting he would permit him to come and live with us, I received a very Christian like letter from him, saying, that although he would not on any other account, part with his best servant, yet for the sake of the gospel he would give him leave to come. Cornelius joined us, and the Lord was pleased to bless the word of reconciliation to his soul also. At first he cried mightily to the Lord to forgive his sins, and thought to move him by the earnestness of his intreaties, yet he found no peace within, till at length he learned that he could be justified only by the blood of Christ ; he then obtained solid peace in the contemplation of the person of our Redeemer. His heart was filled with admiration, love and gratitude, and he felt a strong desire to proclaim our Saviour to those who knew him not. Indeed he thought himself called upon to forsake his wife and children, and go to distant tribes to preach Jesus to them. For half a year he struggled against this impulse ; his body wasted in this secret conflict, for he concealed from every mortal what passed in his bosom. At length, unable any longer to sustain this burden, he suddenly flung his knapsack over his shoulders, and marched off into the wilderness. Here he fell on his knees to pray ; when those words came powerfully into his mind ; “ Thou didst well that it was in thine heart ;” but it seemed added—“ Go back to thy house and family, and first try to “ bring them near the Lord ; after this I will let thee know

" what thou shouldst do." Accordingly he returned home, where he conducted himself in a pious manner, and I have reason to hope that at some future period he may become very useful to his countrymen.

If my time permitted, I could relate many more instances of the Lord's gracious dealings with our people; some of them perhaps, may appear hereafter, in detached accounts. I must not omit, however, the case of Esther. Her original name was Tray, a Coranna by birth. When she made her first appearance among us, I could scarcely persuade myself she was of the human species. Her whole carriage denoted brutality in the extreme. Her Karofs, or sheep skin garment, was the most filthy I ever saw or smelt. Many a time have I thought, Surely it is absolutely impossible that such a being should ever be converted! But, where sin and wretchedness abounded, grace was still more to abound. Soon did her penitential tears begin to flow under the hearing of the word of peace, and when asked, Why she wept? the reasons she assigned were always so pertinent and proper, that I was convinced her understanding was far superior to what I had supposed. After some time, she found herself obliged to leave her husband, who had three other wives, and followed us in all our future journies. For more than a year she continued to be uneasy under a sense of her sins; but, at length, the Lord comforted her soul; she was baptized, and is become one of the most active, industrious, and useful members of my congregation. Her conduct is unexceptionable.

About this time, several farmers having assembled at our house, to partake of the holy communion, a run-away slave made his appearance. We soon discovered who he was, and thought of sending him back to his master, agreeable to an order of government. He, perceiving our intention, determined to be revenged, and while we were at worship in the church, contrived to poison our well. Our lives would certainly have been destroyed, had not a little girl providentially watched him, when committing this atrocious act. She gave us timely notice; the slave was examined, and we found in

his clothes the remainder of the poison, which was a sort of moss, resembling human hair; this powerful vegetable has the property of contracting the bowels in a convulsive manner. The culprit was sent to Cape Town, and we returned thanks to the Lord for this great deliverance.

Another singular escape from death deserves to be recorded. In the evening of a day which was uncommonly sultry, I was sitting near an open window, when a concealed party of Boshemen, were just about to discharge a volley of poisoned arrows at me; but, by the same girl who saved the life of Brother Kramer from the dagger of Vigilant, they were detected, and made off in haste.

During our continuance here, a man whose name was Peter Goeiman repeatedly visited us from the great river, in order to hear the word. He long withstood the humbling truths of the gospel, refusing to be stripped of his own fancied righteousness, and submit to the righteousness of God our Saviour. At length, however, he yielded; and while at work with Mr. Scholtz, (being employed in making a dam for the water) confessed that he had formerly hardened his heart against the representation of the gospel, that he was in a miserable state, being unable to do any good, as he now clearly understood. He acknowledged that till lately he had been full of prejudices against our doctrine, having flattered himself that though he had done much evil, he had nevertheless done much good also. But now, since God had revealed this great truth to his mind, namely, that he had given his only begotten Son to be a sacrifice for him on the Cross, he had been gradually freed from his former prejudices, especially under a discourse from Mr. Scholtz, in which the only source of all good works, the love of God, had been explained, together with the utter inability of a natural man to perform good works. "From that time," said he, "I sought pardon for all my sins alone from Christ, and in him I have found it. Now, I believe in Jesus, and wish to be his eternal property, now I am assured that I shall one day be completely delivered from all my sin, and enjoy eternal happiness with Christ." Asking him, whether

he did not wish to commend the truth to others? he replied that he did so every day; and that his wife already afforded him some hope that she would yield to convictions, and this encouraged him, he added, to speak to others, declaring to them the name of that blessed Jesus, who had done such great things for him.

Before I conclude the narrative of my first stay at Zak River, it is proper to mention another remarkable deliverance, which the good Providence of God afforded me, from the hands of a person who came to our house under the fictitious name of Stephanos, a Greek by birth, and who, for making base coin at Cape Town, had been sentenced to death, but effected his escape from justice, a few days previous to that which was fixed for his execution. The rumor of this affair had indeed reached my ears, and when he came to my house, in the absence of the Brethren Kramer and Scholtz, who were gone six days journey from us with presents of tobacco, to invite more Boschemen to come and hear the gospel, I thought I perceived tokens of guilt in his countenance. But his conversation was so religious, and his pretence that he came to assist us in building a chapel, so plausible, that I blamed myself for harboring any suspicion, and therefore permitted him to sleep in the room next to my own. It should seem that he had contrived a scheme to murder me, that he might seize on my waggon and goods, and then depart to a distant horde. In the night, he actually approached my bed; but the Keeper of Israel, who never slumbers nor sleeps, was pleased suddenly to rouse me in a fit of terror, in which I cried out to him, as if privy to his bloody design. He was disconcerted; stammered an apology of a pain in his bowels; and then went away out of my house. In the morning I found he was gone off, having stolen my gun, and having taken with him many of the Boschemen, whom he had seduced, by pretending that the white men were coming to be revenged on them; Boschemen, having always an accusing conscience, are ever ready to take such a hint. My Hottentots pursuing them, overtook them in the desert; a truce was concluded, both parties

piling up their arms at some distance, when Stephanos was compelled to restore my fouling-piece, and dismiss our Boschemen. Thus, retiring from the country by himself, he was met by brethren Kramer and Scholtz, who obliged him to return to Zak River with them. This involved me in a fresh difficulty, and occasioned me much sorrow; for I was now certain that he was the identical malefactor who had broken prison at the Cape. I begged my two brethren to keep the wretch concealed at a distance from our premises, with a view to enable him to make his escape. In the night I met him, gave him my advice, some provision, and a bible, and suffered him to go away towards the great river, little thinking what mischief he would there do our cause, of which hereafter.

(To be continued.)

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

ON THE UNLAWFULNESS OF A MAN'S MARRYING HIS NIECE BY AFFINITY.

WHETHER it is lawful or not for a man to marry the daughter of the sister or brother of a former wife, is a question which has given rise to a good deal of disputation and uneasiness: and cases, involving this question, have come before several of the higher councils of the Presbyterian church. Those venerable bodies have discountenanced the practice, but have not given a very decided opinion on the subject; nor one which is likely to free the inferior judicatories from the perplexity formerly experienced.

With due submission and respect, I offer the following observations on the subject.

The decision of the question depends entirely, I conceive, upon the opinion we form respecting another question, viz. Whether our relations by affinity are to be considered as near

ly related to us, as those related in the same way by consanguinity. Few, it is expected, will contend that it would be lawful for a man to marry the daughter of his own brother or sister. If, therefore, our relations by affinity in the same degree, are to be viewed in a similar light, it must be equally unlawful to marry the daughter of the brother or sister of a former wife. Consequently, if it is lawful to marry such an one, it must be because our relations by affinity are not as nearly related to us as those related in the same degree by consanguinity.

Respecting the question last mentioned it is said in the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian church, chap. 24, sec. 4, "The man may not marry any of his wife's kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own, nor the woman of her husband's kindred nearer in blood than of her own." This I believe is exactly the same with the civil law of the Romans, and the laws of all Christian countries. The following are the words of the celebrated Mr. Hutchinson in his moral philosophy: "By the Roman law and the customs of all Christians, marriage is prohibited to all within the fourth degree. And the degrees are thus computed: Persons akin have had some common parent: and as many generations as have intervened on both sides from this stock, so many are the degrees. In like manner, a man is prohibited to marry any such kinswoman of his former wife as of his own, to wit. within the fourth degree."

But these authorities, however respectable, will not afford entire satisfaction to inquisitive minds. Such will wish to search things to the bottom and judge for themselves. It may be proper to proceed a step further; and enquire, 1st. What appears to be the law of nature in the case? 2ndly. What is said on the subject in the Scriptures? 1st. What is the law of nature? The following are the principle reasons assigned by moral writers, why marriage should not be between near relations.

1. Because, if marriage were lawful to near relations, their frequent intercourse would afford a strong temptation to uncleanness.

2. If permitted, it would frequently confound or invert the duties of relations, by setting some above others whom they formerly used to obey.

3. Abstaining from relations in this voluntary contract, extends the social ties, and produces a greater number of family relations.

4. It is found from experience, that marriage between near relations, especially if repeated, greatly weakens the human race, or, in other words, causes the species to degenerate.

The venerable Dr. Doddridge observes, that the reasons above stated are much stronger against the marriage of blood relations than those connected by affinity. But to me it appears, that this is true of the fourth reason only. The other three are nearly, or quite as strong against the marriage of those related by affinity. But under this head, it is of importance that we should enquire whether it appears from the common sentiments and feelings of mankind, that relation by affinity, is properly speaking, any relation *at all*, or should be, in any case, a barrier in the way of marriage. If it is not, then it would be lawful for a man to marry a woman, and after her decease to marry her daughter by a former husband. Or it would be lawful for a man to marry the widow of his son. Or for a son after the death of his father, to marry his stepmother. Against all these, nature appears at once to revolt. If then, relation by affinity renders a marriage in any case unlawful, where shall we stop? Or where shall we find a better rule than that laid down in the Confession of Faith, and the Roman law, above quoted?

2. Let us enquire what is said on the subject in the Scriptures. It is said in Genesis, and repeated by our Saviour and his Apostles, *That a man and his wife are one flesh*. Perhaps the best comment upon the strong language here made use of, and indeed that which appears to have given rise to it, is, the account we have of the formation of the woman from a part of the man. It would have been equally easy with the Almighty to have formed the woman of the dust of the earth. Doing it in the way he did, was therefore, probably, designed to convey

some useful instruction; and so it appears to have been viewed by Adam. Upon the woman's being formed and bro't to him and he no doubt, acquainted with the circumstances, he said, *'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman; because she was taken out of man.'* And as an inference from the transaction, it is added, *'Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.'* Further light appears to be cast on this subject, by the Apostle in Ephesians, v. 21, *'So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies.' He that loveth his wife, loveth himself for no man ever yet hated his own flesh,'* &c. This passage, taken in connection with that before quoted, warrants us to conclude, that the union between a man and his wife, is as close as can be between two persons: that they are to be considered, as making up but one body: and that there is such a unity of interest and feeling, that they are bound to pay the same respect to each other as to the members of their individual bodies. Considered in this light, it affords a most beautiful and interesting view of the marriage relation. When a man enters into this connection, he thereby adopts all the relations of his wife. He partakes of her affections, sympathies, and afflictions. He honors her parents, respects her brothers, sisters, &c. as his own. And in like manner, the woman adopts all the relations of her husband. This appears to me to be the light in which the marriage union is represented in the Scriptures; and I conceive, it is the most correct and beautiful ever known amongst men. Let me appeal to the feelings of every one of sensibility, who sustains this relation, if it does not correspond with their wishes and feelings. Is it not highly agreeable to the husband to observe his wife joining with him in affection and respect to his relations? And can he feel satisfied if this is not the case? And is not the wife conscious of the same with respect to her relations?—If the above representation is just, if the husband, partakes of his wife's relations in the same degree and to the same extent with his own; may we not conclude that he should observe the same rule in contracting a second marriage respecting her

relations, that he does respecting his own blood relations : and in like manner the woman, after the decease of her husband. Death dissolves, indeed, the relation between the husband and wife ; but it does not dissolve their connection with each others relations. If it did it would be lawful for a man to marry his son's widow.

But the passage of Scripture which appears more decisive on this subject is in Lev. xviii, 14, where a man is forbidden to uncover the nakedness of his aunt by affinity, viz. the wife of a father's brother deceased. The words are, '*Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy fathers brother, thou shalt not approach his wife, she is thine aunt.*' By uncovering the nakedness here, there can be no doubt but marriage is intended. If it is not, the restrictions in this chapter only go to prohibit fornication between near relations. Admitting that marriage is intended, two questions may be raised on this passage, 1, Are the laws in the xviii. chapter of Leveticus now in force? 2, If they are, does that in the 14th verse, imply that a man is forbidden to marry his niece by affinity?

As to the first question, it is plain to me, from the third verse of this chapter, and from the 24th verse to the end of the same chapter, that these laws were given because the things prohibited by them were in themselves evil and contrary to the law of nature ; and not from any peculiarity in the Jewish polity. Consequently that they are of perpetual obligation. The case seems to be different respecting the law in Deut. 25 which allows a man in a certain case to marry his brother's widow. The law last mentioned arose from a peculiarity in the system of government. It was evidently designed to keep up the several tribes and families, and thereby preserve the several inheritances distinct. This preservation of the tribes was necessary until the coming of Christ, that the fulfilment of some of the prophecies respecting him might be manifest ; and particularly that in which it was foretold that he should spring from the tribe of Judah. But all these things are now fulfilled, consequently the law is no longer in force. Admitting

then that the laws in the xviii. of Leviticus are now in force ; let us see secondly, whether that in the 14th verse implies that a man should not marry his niece by affinity.

Mr. Scott remarks on the table of kindred under consideration, "It is observable, that the marriage of uncles with their nieces is not forbidden, though from the supposed parity of the case, it is forbidden in our law." That there is such a parity in the case as is mentioned by Mr. Scott, I see no reason to doubt. If there is not, I should be glad to see the disparity pointed out ; but it should be particularly observed, that Mr. Scott's observation extends both to nieces by consanguinity and affinity. There is no express prohibition of either—In the 12th and 13th verses, a man is forbidden to marry his aunt by consanguinity ; but nothing is said respecting a niece marrying her uncle related in the same way. Yet few, it is expected, will contend that such a marriage would be lawful ; or that the parity of the case is not a sufficient objection against it. In the 14th verse a man is forbidden to marry his aunt by affinity, viz. the widow of his uncle : And why may we not conclude by the same parity as in the former case, that it is equally unlawful for an uncle to marry his niece by affinity ?

In short, if we do not admit such a parity in the case, we must deny that the relation between uncle and niece is the same as that between nephew and aunt : And moreover, if we deny such a parity, we must admit that it is lawful for a man to marry the daughter of his own brother or sister. This I conceive is the light in which the passage under consideration was viewed by the framers of the Confession of Faith. And it is, I believe, the construction which has been put upon it in all Christian countries.

But were the evidence in this case more doubtful than it is, prudential considerations alone, would be sufficient to deter one from forming such a connection. In the present state of the world, such a connection can seldom or never be necessary ; nor can it be more suitable in any respect than to marry some one amongst the thousands of those who are not related

to us. Therefore, in abstaining from such connections we sustain no injury, and are in no danger of erring. But on the other hand, if we enter into them no one can say but it may be wrong, and productive of evil to ourselves and others.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

ON reading *the Virginia Religious Magazine*, my attention was particularly arrested by an account of the death of two persons, stated in the latter part of the 5th number. The one a sage philosopher, the other a female Christian.

I have often thought, that by comparing the death of the Christian with that of the infidel, obvious advantages would appear in favor of the religion of the cross. It is not time to decide on the merits of a system, when we have seen its influence but partially tried. Systems may have something in them flattering to human nature in prosperous circumstances, but they are valuable only in proportion as they meet the condition of man in all his various exigencies. That which supports and comforts in the most trying and melancholy condition must be valuable. That which abandons the soul to horrors unknown before, should certainly be adopted with caution.

In descriptions of the death of the righteous and the wicked, I have met with few, if any, where the picture is more strikingly drawn, and the contrast made more fully to appear, than in the death of the above persons. The one is possessed of every advantage, which is generally thought by the world, suited to alleviate the distresses of the mind on the near and certain approach of death. There is in man a propensity to find out some antidote or remedy to every evil. As no complete remedy can be applied to repel the evil of death, they have had recourse to such things as appeared to them calculated to alleviate its distress. To this, have systems of philosophy been applied—even stoical insensibility has been resorted to, as the best way to escape the evil of what could not be avoided. Voltaire could now recur to considerations of a philosophical kind, suited to remove, as far as such were capa-

ble of removing, the impatience and dread of death. Besides his disciples and admirers, who through life looked up to him as superior and chief, were present with him. Their attachment to him as well as the honor of their scheme, would no doubt induce them to use every exertion to give him consolation. Every artifice would, doubtless, be employed to feed his vanity, as well as to suppress every painful apprehension.

Being a man, it is reasonable to suppose, that he possessed a greater share of fortitude in danger, than what is commonly the portion of the female part of the world. But, with all these pillars, he sinks in the hour of death! Dismayed and confounded, he then exhibits all the *weakness* of human nature. Bereft of all comforts he wears out with the horrors of his approaching doom. From dread of death and eternity, he doubly dies. How different the condition of the other. Unversed in systems of philosophy, she triumphs in the prospects of immortality, the terror and dismay of the other. Possessing, no doubt, all the timidity and weakness of her sex, she exhibits a patience and calm fortitude, unknown either to the hero or the philosopher. I own indeed, that impatience may sometimes be mistaken for fortitude. Under keen distress and anguish men are anxious for a change; if none else seems probable, they may even long for death, that they may sleep in insensibility. What men feel *now* they generally feel most sensibly; and death, the very king of terrors, may be ignorantly desired from an impatience of present sufferings. But this supposition must be groundless in the present case. Impatience has no place here. She exhibits the same tranquility of soul and submission to God when the symptoms of her approaching end were so slight as only to produce a suspicion of their real nature; no keen distress was then impelling her to desire death; nor even in the severest anguish, does her language betray impatience, but is full of pious resignation to the will of God. The contrast between these two is striking in life, but it receives its finishing touch in death.—To what are we then to attribute the difference? To the influence of truth—the truth of the gospel—its consoling promises—its animating

prospects, in comparison with which, earthly pomp and grandeur sink out of sight, and in comparison with which nothing in existence is more desirable.

How ought we then to admire that goodness which has unveiled eternity to man, so as to carry his views beyond the narrow limits of time, and even animate him with the prospect of dying.—How consoling those truths which need neither philosophy nor natural fortitude to aid them in the support of the soul in death! But for those, eternity only, would have taught the things of itself, and that in a manner not to cheer, but to surprise and confound a guilty world; conjecture would have been spent in vain; God and eternity would still have been shrouded in impenetrable night—man would have died in darkness and have risen in despair.—But when God reveals himself, all is easy, all is plain. When the Gospel shines, life and immortality are brought to light—This makes us know ourselves as well as instructs us in the ways of God. By this we see the path that leads to life, never discovered by human sight alone, and by this are we taught to shun the road that leads to destruction.

How blind to his own interest is he who rejects this source of the most important information to man, and chooses darkness rather than light—Such reap the dreadful reward of their infatuation and wickedness. Darkness follows them to the grave and leaves the benighted soul to enter eternity without a ray of hope. The condition of such is both to be dreaded and pitied—we should cautiously shun their course if we would escape their end.—The way to *die the death* of the righteous is first to *live the life* of the righteous.—For this the Gospel is the only and complete director—“Search the Scriptures,”—Let us live by faith upon their promises, and they will always be found a sufficient support in times of trial—They will refresh the heart like “the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land.” When fear shall surprise the hypocrite in death, these remove the distresses of the pious soul, and enable him calmly to descend to the grave, with a firm belief of a glorious resurrection.

REMARKS ON THE LATE REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

THE glory of Christ and the success of his kingdom, of all things lie nearest to the heart of a christian while he lives and acts in character ; and this does not depend on one or two, but on many causes. We are told in prophecy, that his people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations ; and by our Lord, that they are not of the world, but that he has chosen them out of the world, and therefore the world hates them. It is therefore perfectly natural to see their attention much engaged with what we have heard for years past from so many distant parts of our country, of a revival of religion and the opposition made to it ; nor is it strange to see a vast difference of opinions. This emboldens me to give my opinion very briefly through your magazine ; and I have in my eye, not the profane and ignorant, who care for none of these things, but rather very many who think all they hear is new, strange and out of the common way in which they have been used to hear, think and speak, and therefore doubtful ; and it is true that there has not been any very great or uncommon revival of religion here within the memories of most who are now living. But if we think a moment, I presume we shall all agree that the conversion of any sinner is, in a certain sense, a miracle. Now can any thing be more weak or wrong, than to lay down a uniform rule how that is to be done which is quite above nature ? Yet this is the very disposition of human nature. It is never so ardent to do any thing as that which cannot be done, either in spiritual or temporal things ; witness the long pursuit after the discovery of a perpetual motion, &c. But say some, falling down and crying out, we do not understand. I suppose neither did the apostle Paul until after he did fall and rise again ; nor the jailer who fell at his feet afterwards ; the Psalmist was made to roar through the disquietness of his heart, and Habakkuk quivered and rottenness

entered into his bones. Now, what if these peculiar circumstances had not happened to them? these things in themselves were not their conversion; the want of them would not have hindered it, had it pleased God to substitute something in their place, There was fire, storm and earthquake, but the Lord was not in them, yet they went before the still small voice. If we read the accounts of the conversion of Luther, Junius, Beza, Bolton, Latimer, and Haliburton, we shall find many peculiarities for which no Scripture examples can be given. But will any man say for want of that all was a delusion with them? I presume not. But say some, a division has taken place in Kentucky among the friends of this work, it will all end where it began. But how would it have done if the church had objected to the Apostles because they once had a thief and a traitor among them? or to John, the last of them, because a party went out from him that never truly belonged to him? There are a few in Kentucky cast out of the church, or rather, who have cast themselves out; but it is weak if not wicked to strive to attach their folly and weakness to the church to which they once belonged. He would be counted a bad farmer that would reject his wheat because he found it mingled with tares and chaff. I am far from thinking well of many irregularities that have taken place in many parts of our country, but was it ever otherwise on a like occasion? I presume one great reason of the diversity of opinion on this subject is, the church is at present unhappily divided and subdivided, and it is natural for all to think best of the party to which they belong, and be the dividing line ever so small, let it be real or imaginary, a molehill will soon become a mountain, and whatever may take place beyond their own pale is immediately suspected. Can any good come out of Nazareth? and prejudiced people generally converse with and draw their information from those of the same cast with themselves. The testimony being thus partial and ex parte, a true verdict cannot be expected. If such people perceive an intimation, though no larger than Elijah's cloud at first appeared, yet it will soon overspread and darken all their horizon, notwithstanding the favourable accounts we

have had from many wise and learned men in very distant parts, as well as in many instances from the very enemies of the work themselves. Some well-meaning people doubt, because it seems of short duration in some places; but I humbly think a sovereign God is in nothing more so than in his works of grace and mercy. It is not his ordinary way to keep his people long with a full cup in their hand.

God went up from Abraham in the place where he talked with him, and Peter was but a short while on the mount until he did not know what he was saying, and his master had much to say to his disciples on a certain occasion but they could not then bear it. Upon the whole it is a good caution given us in 1st Cor. 4. and 5. '*Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come,*' and it deserves notice, that there are none so apt to judge others as those who are remiss in judging themselves.

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From the Assembly's Magazine.

ANTIQUITIES.

WHATEVER has a tendency to promote religious knowledge, will at all times be acceptable to those, who have the direction of this periodical work, especially as it comes so immediately within the letter of their instructions from the General Assembly, under whose patronage it has been begun. To this end every thing that tends to explain the practices and ancient customs of the church of God under the Jewish or Christian dispensation, and of course, to make the New-Testament better understood, will readily command a distinguished place in our Magazine.

At present, we shall introduce this subject by explaining the principal feasts or festivals of the Jews, being solemn days set apart for the honor and service of God, either as a memorial of some signal deliverance received by the special interposition of his providence, or to keep alive the remembrance of some

severe punishment inflicted for their transgressions and disobedience. The first kind were generally termed Sabbaths or Rests, and on which they offered eucharistical sacrifices, with a joyful and innocent exemption from labour. Those of the other sort, were days of fasting and atonement. In all their religious ceremonies there were special and particular provisions, by which they were distinguished, in the clearest manner, from the idolitrous practices of the Heathen Nations.

Some of these feasts and fasts were held by divine, and some by human authority. Those of the first sort, at least the most solemn of them, were the Passover, the Pentecost, and the feast of Tabernacles. These were annual feasts, and were celebrated only at Jerusalem, when all the male Israelites were obliged to appear, unless they had the best reasons for their absence. The duration of their celebration was different; some feasts were held for one day, and others for a whole week. Those that lasted a week had some days more solemn than the rest. The holiest, were called the great or good days—vid. John vii. 37. During these festivals, the parts of the sacrifices that were to be eaten, and the Shew-bread, were divided among the twenty-four courses of Priests. Criminals were by law to be executed at these festivals, that their punishment might have a proper effect on all. The Jews, therefore, were not restrained by their law, in fearing to put Jesus to death during the feast, lest the people should make a disturbance.

The feast of the Passover answers to the Easter observed by some Christians, and was instituted in Egypt on the Angel's passing over the houses of the Israelites and sparing their first born, while those of the Egyptians were universally slain. The Lamb offered on this occasion was called the Paschal Lamb and the Passover. St. Paul calls Jesus Christ our Passover or Paschal Lamb. 1. Cor. v. 7. The Passover was also called the feast of Unleavened-bread, because it was eaten on this occasion, and no other, on pain of death. This was peculiarly applicable to the second day of the feast, or the 15th day of the month.

The particulars of this feast, consisted in the killing and eating of the Paschal Lamb—the Unleavened-bread, and offering up a handful of Barley, called the Omer.

At all the feasts, and especially at the Passover, great numbers of victims, besides the Lamb, were offered up. The flesh of these was first served up at this feast, on which the Israelites supped, and afterwards eat the Paschal Lamb, of which it was sufficient that each person ate a piece of the size of an olive. This Lamb was called the *body* of the Passover, to distinguish it from the *entrails* and the *blood* that were offered upon the Altar. Thus Christ distinguished, when he emphatically said '*this is my Body,*' that is, it is not merely an emblem of the Paschal Lamb which was itself but a figure, but an emblem of my body, who am the real sacrifice signified by the Passover. The Lamb was killed on the 14th day of the month between three o'clock in the afternoon and sun set, during which time our Lord expired on the cross. After the Lamb was slain the blood was sprinkled on the Altar, and the fat and entrails consumed; the Lamb was then returned to the offerer to be eaten in his family. It was to be thoroughly roasted and not boiled, and not a bone of it was to be broken. When the family was not large enough to eat the whole, (for every one was to partake, freemen and slaves, men and women) the master invited others to partake with him. These were called brethren, companions and friends—Hence the severe rebuke of our Lord to Judas, when he called him friend or companion.

The guests leaned on their left arms upon beds round a table, on which the Lamb was set—also they had bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and a dish full of a thick sauce, to represent the mortar which they used to make bricks of in Egypt, generally made of dried dates and figs. The mode of eating, lying on the arm, and resting sometimes on each others bosoms, was considered emblematic of their rest from their slavery, and also a sign of the equality and perfect union of the guests—Thus we read of Abraham's bosom and the Son's being in the bosom of the Father.

When the guests were seated, the master took a cup of wine and water, and gave thanks to God, and then drank it, after which he gave to each one a cup, which they were obliged to drink—Thus Christ says '*drink ye all of it.*' Afterwards they ate the unleavened bread, and bitter herbs, dipped in the sauce or mixture. Then another cup, attended with thanksgiving, was drunken, when they ate again. Lastly the Paschal Lamb was eaten, and then they drank another cup, which was called the cup of blessing. The whole ceremony ended with a fourth cup and singing a psalm, called by Mark a hymn.

On the next day, after the feast of unleavened bread, on the 16th day of March, they offered up to God on the altar, the homer or gomer of oats and barley (which was a sheaf of the grain) with great ceremony.

The second feast of the Jews, was the Pentecost; so called because it was kept fifty days after that of unleavened bread, or the 15th of March, which corresponds with our Whitsuntide. It was also called the Feast of weeks, because it was kept seven weeks after the Passover, and the feast of harvest, became the first fruits of the wheat harvest, were then offered, also seven Lambs of that year, one Calf and two Rams for a burnt offering. The design of this feast was, to oblige the Israelites to repair to the temple of the Lord, there to acknowledge his absolute dominion over the whole land, and to offer him the first fruits of their harvest; and farther that they might render thanks to God for the law given on Mount Sinai on the 50th day after coming out of Egypt. This feast lasted but one day, and was accompanied with many sacrifices, offerings, and libations, with great mirth and rejoicing. It was on this day that the Holy Ghost miraculously descended on the Apostles, and thus confirmed the new Law or Gospel of our Lord.

The feast of Tabernacles, so called because the people dwelt in tents or tabernacles, and which corresponds with our Christmas, lasted seven or rather eight days, and began on the fifteenth day of the month Tisri; which answers to parts of our September and October, and by many is supposed to be the true time of our Saviour's birth. It took its rise from the Is-

raelites having dwelt in tents or tabernacles while they were in the desert, or else, as some suppose, in remembrance of the building of the tabernacle. The design of this feast was also to give thanks for the fruits of the vine, as well as of other trees, that were gathered at this time ; and to beg God's blessing on those of the ensuing year. This feast was accompanied with the greatest rejoicing, because they then prayed with particular earnestness and zeal for the Messiah's coming.

They were obliged to dwell, all the time of the feast in tents, usually on the tops of their houses. They daily offered abundance of sacrifices—They carried in their hands branches of Palm Trees, Olives, Citrons, and singing Hosannas—that is *' Save I beseech thee.'* By which words, out of the 18th Psalm, they prayed for the coming of the Messiah. In this manner was Christ conducted into Jerusalem by the believing Jews, who looking upon him as the promised Messiah, expressed an uncommon joy upon finding in him the accomplishment of those petitions which they had so often put up to heaven at this feast.

They walked every day round the Altar, with these branches in their hands singing Hosanna's and during which, the trumpets sounded on all sides. But on the 7th day, they went seven times round the Altar, and this was called the great Hosanna. To this last ceremony St. John seems to allude in the Revelations, when the Saints are represented as standing round the throne of the Lamb with Palms in their hands, and singing *' Salvation cometh from God and the Lamb.'*

The most remarkable ceremony performed at this feast was, libations or pouring out of the water, which was done every day. This water was drawn by the Priest from the Pool of Siloam, and was poured on the Altar, at the morning sacrifice, the people singing, in the words of the Prophet Isaiah, *' with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'* The Jews themselves, supposed this water to be emblematic of the Holy Ghost, therefore Jesus Christ, on the last day of the feast, cried to the people, *' If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath*

said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water, but this spake he of the spirit, which they who believe on him, should receive.' On this occasion, they testified the greatest joy and rejoicings, and the whole was very expressive of the publishing the glad tidings of salvation through the expected Messiah, and the pouring out of the holy spirit on believers.

Z.

S E L E C T E D.

ON THE TRUE DIGNITY OF MAN.

IT has been objected against Christianity, that it exhibits degrading views of human nature, injurious to virtue, inasmuch as they generate a mean and abject state of mind, and extinguish that generous pride, as it is called, which is the incentive to worthy actions. This is one proof, among many, that Christianity is little understood by those who oppose it. A small part of it only is known; and from hence conclusions are drawn as if it formed the whole.

It is true that Christianity exhibits man as fallen very low; but is it not also true, that its proper end is highly to exalt him? It represents him, indeed, as degraded even unto hell: but does it not propose, as its very object, to raise him up to heaven? How dignified do the Scriptures describe him to have been in his origin! His soul inspired by the breath of the Almighty! This beauteous globe contrived and fashioned for his habitation! Every other order of creatures subjected to him as Lord of all! He himself made capable of holding converse with his God, and actually admitted to his familiar intimacy and friendship! Are not these grand ideas? But one unspeakably more grand is yet to be mentioned. '*God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life.*' Astonishing and dignifying consideration! The eternal Son of God, equal with the

Father, assumes our nature ! Values us so highly, as thus to humble himself, that we might be exalted ; and submits to death, that we might live ! rises again from the dead ; ascends to heaven ; and seats human nature on the very throne of God ! In that nature receives the adoration of all the heavenly hosts ; and officiates as our advocate in the court of heaven ! entitles us to be called, like himself, sons of God ; and, sending forth his divine Spirit, purifies our fallen nature, and makes it meet for an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away ! To these contemplations let every meaner thought give way ; and if we boast, let us boast of that which constitutes our real dignity—let us boast of our religion and our Redeemer.

The unbeliever may, perhaps, call all this enthusiasm, and deem it no better than a visionary fable. But this being *Christianity*, he is bound either to shew us that human nature is more exalted on some other scheme, or to renounce his objection.

THE CELEBRATED OBJECTION OF MR. HUME TO THE MIRACLES OF THE GOSPEL.

WHEN the defenders of Christianity thought they had established the evidences of the miraculous history of our Saviour upon foundations which could no longer be shaken, the ingenious Mr. Hume invented an argument which revived the spirits of vanquished infidelity, and has since been triumphantly urged by all the enemies of religion, as irrefragable, and decisive against every proof that can possibly be alledged in favour of divine revelation. His celebrated argument is this,—That miracles are, in their own nature, incredible, and that, therefore, no testimony can verify them. The only rational foundation of our belief of what has ever happened, or what can happen in the world is our own *experience* of what does

constantly take place in the course of nature. Men may be false, or may be deceived, but nature never changes. As we, then, have had no experience of any miraculous changes in the order of the world, it is unreasonable to believe that any have ever existed, whatever may be the number, or the character of the men by whom they are attested.—This reasoning was esteemed by those who were inclined to reject divine revelation, to be unanswerable, and, for a moment, it seemed to its friends to be the most formidable attack which had yet been made on the authenticity of the sacred scriptures. It has since, however, been vigorously repelled, and I think effectually overthrown by many pious and excellent writers, and by none with more skill and force than by Bishop Watson in his letter on this subject to Mr. Gibbon.

But, it appears to me that Mr. Hume's redoubted argument may be destroyed by a process more simple and obvious than most of those which have hitherto been employed against it. And a plain, concise, and popular refutation of such an adversary, whose writings are in the hands of almost all young persons, may answer some of the valuable ends contemplated by your Magazine.

On Mr. Hume's principle, that no miracle is credible because it is contrary to our experience of the uniformity of the course of nature, it would be impossible for God to make any revelation of his will to the world, distinct from the structure of the world itself, whatever reasons for it might exist in the state of human nature. Such a revelation would itself be a miracle, whether made to mankind immediately by a voice from heaven, or by the more humble instrumentality of prophets and apostles. And, if by the agency of the latter, their divine mission could be authenticated only by such works of omnipotence as would be a sufficient demonstration to the world that the spirit of God accompanied and instructed them. This is a consequence of the principle, I am aware, not at all alarming to those by whom it is urged, but rather a subject of their triumph. But, I trust, there are few reasonable and serious men who are willing to say that it is impossible for God to

make any extraordinary communication of his will to his erring and miserable creatures.

But, I add, that this principle leads to atheism—acted upon to its full extent it would resist all improvements in science,—it refutes itself.

It leads to atheism. For if our own experience of the uniformity of nature is the sole test of a reasonable belief concerning whatever has been, or whatever shall be, in the history of the world, it is impossible that the world should ever have had a beginning, it is impossible that it should ever have an end. It must have existed, it must continue to exist, eternally in the same order in which we now behold it. There can be no future state of existence, no future judgment, no future retribution to the virtuous and the wicked; for these are all contrary to our experience; there can be, therefore, no foundation for religion. The world, eternal in its own nature, must exist independent on any intelligent and omnipotent cause. But the only proof of the being of God is derived from the wise order and harmony of the world; and if this is order eternal and uncreated, it would at least be unphilosophical to suppose the existence of a Deity who would then be a superfluous and unnecessary appendage to the universe. We must receive the absurd idea of an eternal succession of mutable and perishing beings governed only by their own internal and immutable laws. We must believe, that there is no God, or embrace the old Aristotelian hypothesis, which is but one step removed from atheism, that the universe itself is God.

These consequences flow so obviously from the principle, that I have been surpris'd not to find them urged with more point and force than they have been by the friends and defenders of christianity. Indeed, I have scarcely seen them touch'd except transiently by the judicious and ingenious Dr. Allen.* They are consequences, however, which, though not

* *A celebrated French Refugee in England, in his reflections on the books of the sacred Scriptures.* [See next page.]

displeasing to a part of the followers of Mr. Hume, yet, I trust, were never contemplated by the greater portion of them. Atheism has not yet become so fashionable in Great-Britain. And if they are, as I believe, the genuine results of the principles, they must be decisive against it in the opinion of every pious and virtuous man.

Another consequence of this principle, though not so gross and impious as the former, tends not less to demonstrate its absurdity;—it would, if acted upon to its full extent, arrest all improvements in science. Permit me, by a familiar example to illustrate and confirm this proposition. When first the effects of the electric or magnetic influence were discovered, how ought all philosophers, on this ground, if, on this ground a philosopher could have ever existed, to have treated the history of them? precisely as infidels have treated the history of the gospel, rejected them instantly, and without examination, as absurd and impossible, because contrary to all their *experience*. Do you say let them repeat the same experiments by which these new powers in nature were originally discovered? But, if the principle which we are combating be certain and infallible, a wise man could have no motive for making the experiment, since his own past experience of the course of nature is the criterion of whatever is possible, or credible. Even if he should repeat the experiment, I do not know whether he could consistently admit the testimony of his senses to a new fact; certainly not the testimony of other persons. And what are the greater portion of mankind to do, who have neither the skill nor the means of experimenting?

Let us take another example where no counter experience can possibly be applied. The inhabitants of a torrid climate never can have the effects of frost made obvious to their sen-

This work was published in London, 1688; and shews that the objection of Mr. Hume to the evidences of christianity, is not novel, but has only been set in a new and stronger light by that ingenious writer.

ses. Congelation is as great a mystery to them as any mystery or miracle of the christian religion. According to this favourite maxim of infidelity, then, they ought never to believe it, and the king of Siam acted right in punishing the Dutch navigator for attempting to insult his understanding by incredible stories, who assured him that in Holland, during part of the year, water became sufficiently hard to bear men, and carriages drawn by horses, upon its surface. If testimony, then, were under no circumstances, sufficient to vouch to us, facts which not only are not conformable, but which, in many instances, are wholly contrary to all our past experience, science must be arrested in the very commencement of its progress. This consequence was, certainly, not adverted to by the ingenious writer who invented, or gave its present form, to the principle against which we contend. But, when we are testing the merit of a principle, if it is not found to hold universally, or co-extensively with the latitude of its terms, it ought to be rejected. For, by what rule shall we apply it only to the facts of religion, when it is found absolutely false in its application to the facts of science?

I maintain, in the last place, that this celebrated argument, drawn from our experience of the uniformity of nature, refutes itself. For, if the physical course of nature, on which the argument rests, is found to be stable and uniform, the moral order of things appears to be not less steady and invariable. If the former of these facts, upon Mr. Hume's principle, stands in the way of the admission of any miraculous history, the latter, upon the same ground, forbids the rejection of the history, if, by rejecting it, we must contradict all the moral phenomena of human nature. Admitting, then, what can hardly be denied by the bitterest enemies of religion, that the apostles and evangelists were men of the soundest understanding,* and

* *The perfection of the moral system published by these humble fishermen, so far excelling all the philosophy of their age, demonstrates, that either they were inspired from above, to admit*

the most upright hearts, it is contrary to all that we know of the motives of conduct among mankind, that, for the sake of propagating a most improbable imposture, they should voluntarily submit to incessant toils and extreme sufferings, they should abandon honour, interest, family, all that is usually accounted most dear to the human heart, and march with intrepidity through perpetual persecutions to certain death, inflicted in the most excruciating and dreadful forms. They were evidently not frantic in their writings, which are always rational and simple, and in which there appears to be no tincture of enthusiasm; yet they yielded all their original prejudices, and all their hopes from a triumphant Messiah, to their deep conviction of the divine mission, and the miraculous power of a suffering Master, for whom they encountered every actual evil, and every possible hazard. If, then, we should suppose, with the objectors, that the gospel is not true, here are contradictions to the moral order of things, that is, to all the ordinary principles of conduct among men which have ever occurred to our *experience* in other cases, not less wonderful, and out of the course of nature, than the miracles themselves for which the apostles, and companions of our Lord, and witnesses of his life, made such astonishing and almost incredible sacrifices.*

This so much vaunted objection, then, against the miracles of the gospel evidently refutes itself, inasmuch as in its application to the established moral order of things it contradicts the conclusion which the enemies of religion have so triumph-

which, is yielding the question, or they were men of superior minds to the profoundest writers of Greece or Rome. Which is yielding almost as much.

* Some men have encountered great dangers, and endured great sufferings even for an erroneous opinion; but there is a wide difference between dying for an opinion, and in attestation of a fact.

antly drawn from their physical order. This particular view of the subject merits, and, to give it its full force, would require a more extensive elucidation. But, that I might not encumber your Magazine, I have chosen to represent it with all the conciseness which I thought in any way consistent with perspicuity. It ought to carry with it the greater conviction to the objectors, since they equally subject the natural and the moral world to the laws of necessity, so that the ordinary and natural motives of human conduct must be those also, which are certain and necessary. S.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

ON INFIDELITY, NO. III:

Incredulus, Odi. Hor.

ANOTHER objection, frequently made by the enemies of Christianity, is, that the Bible contains so many strange stories; so many mysteries, incomprehensible doctrines, that no man, who exercises his reason, can believe it to be the word of God. And we very often hear Christians termed credulous, superstitious fools, fanatics, enthusiasts, and many other coarse indelicate names, which it is needless to mention, as I by no means design to expose Unbelievers, by collecting into one disgusting groupe all the railing accusations, and bitter words which have been spoken against the followers of Jesus.

It would be easy to show that this objection is invalid; and that the greatest sceptics that ever lived, have believed a thousand things as much above their comprehension as the most mysterious points in Christianity. Indeed the fact is, that every man, every day that he lives, without the least hesitation, believes things, that he cannot comprehend. There is no need of inducing particulars here; every man's observation will suggest instances enough. Should any one, however,

doubt the truth of what is asserted, let him recollect what he always has believed respecting the production of plants; the nourishment of his own body by food, or any of the most common processes of nature and he will at once perceive, that he is perpetually surrounded with mystery. And if these things be so, the objection will appear to be without force; unless it is pretended, that in all the works of God we are to expect mysterious, incomprehensible points; but that in a revelation from Him, every thing is to be perfectly on a level with our narrow capacities. But it is not my intention to urge this answer to the objection. This would be only repeating what has often been said before. What I mean to show, is, that Infidels in respect to religion, are at least as credulous as those whom they are daily in the practice of ridiculing for their credulity.

It may be remarked here, that men are frequently imposed upon by names. Unbelievers have stiled themselves philosophers; and multitudes have allowed the title; they have ridiculed Christians for their easy faith, and many have supposed that no man could be a Christian, without being an easy credulous fool. But let us examine this point a little. He is a real philosopher, who on every subject proportions his assent to the evidence: he is credulous, who believes without sufficient evidence. He understands the right use of reason, who balances difficulties on every side, and chooses the least; he is either unfair, or ignorant who rejects at once without examination, whatever carries the appearance of difficulty. With these observations before us, let us examine what right unbelievers have to assume to themselves, the title of *men of reason, and philosophy*; and reproach Christians with superstition, and credulity, and I know not what.

I shall in the first place notice those who stand highest in the ranks of Scepticism: those I mean, who profess to believe that there is no God. Now these men either believe that the world existed from eternity; or else, that it sprung up by chance. He who supposes the first, believes the absurdity of an infinite succession of finite beings. He who admits the second, must

believe that an effect can be produced without an adequate cause, or in fact, that an effect is produced by nothing at all. Now whether this is proportioning assent to evidence, I leave every man to judge. In the same way, let it be determined whether a man who can believe in this way, has any right to laugh at the Christian for his credulity.

The account given by Moses of the creation of the world, and the chronology of the same author, has been a copious subject for the exercise of infidel wit, with one voice it has been rejected, and this, as is pretended, for want of evidence. But let us hear what these scrupulous philosophers say on this subject. And let one speak for all. A very great philosopher, and unbeliever, who cannot believe what Moses wrote, is persuaded that a great many years ago—nobody knows when—by some volcano in the sun, this earth was thrown out, boiling like lava from a burning mountain, and some how or other—nobody knows how—was set in motion round the sun; and after a very long lapse of years—nobody knows how long—having gradually become cool, it was covered with vegetable mould, after which, trees, and all kinds of plants, and finally men, sprouted up from the soil. Now this is all mighty fine and philosophical; and men who receive it are philosophers of course. But we, who see evidences of the truth of the Mosaic history in the state of the world, in the history of past ages, in the reasonableness of his account, and in many other things, are credulous fools. I could mention several other curious, and laughable fables, which these same philosophers have invented on this subject, did I not fear that this would give too ludicrous an air to my paper, and I rather apprehend too, that the simple unlettered Christian, credulous as he is, would hardly be persuaded that grave men, and philosophers, doubting, hesitating, scrupulous, unbelieving philosophers, can believe such strange stories.

But let us proceed, and we shall find farther proofs of the wonderful credulity of unbelievers. There are Christians now in the world; and it is as firmly established as any histori-

cal fact can be, that the author of this sect lived about eighteen hundred years ago in the land of Judea; and suffered death under the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate. And yet a late writer* against Christianity pretends, that originally this system was nothing more than the worship of the sun under the name of Chris-en! I know not whether any have received this notion: it however is probable that they have: and they would have Christians to believe it too. Indeed they must excuse us. We cannot be so credulous. Tacitus, an ancient enemy of our religion, is much more worthy of credit. "Auctor no-
 " minis ejus, (says he, speaking of Christians) Christus, qui
 " Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum,
 " supplicis affectus erat—Christ the author of this sect, who,
 " in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death by the procurator
 " Pontius Pilate." But it is needless to produce proofs of this point: let us proceed. It is certain too that Christ left but few disciples upon the earth; and, that they were the instruments of spreading this religion through the civilized world, in the space of three centuries. Here arises a very important question for solution. By what means this religion was thus rapidly spread through the world? The Christian thinks that nothing but the interposing power of God could have brought about this event; the Unbeliever attributes it to priestcraft, to fraud, and to various other causes. Let us examine this matter a little. If any adequate cause, but the interposition of Heaven, can be assigned, then I will admit that Christians are as credulous as they are represented; but if not, I think that we ought to hear no more of the easy faith of the disciples of Christ. Before we proceed to this examination, I beg leave to make a remark, which, perhaps, may appear paradoxical. It is this, that the most credulous are not always the easiest to be convinced, Thus for the sake of example, those, who by philosophers, and generally, and scornfully enough too, denominated the Vulgar, and who are pro-

* Volney.

verbially credulous, so strongly believe that the earth is at rest in the center of the universe, and that the Sun and Stars revolve round it, that no reasoning of the philosopher, however cogent, can convince them of the error. A thousand instances of this kind might be adduced. One more only shall be brought forward, not taken from subjects of philosophy, but from common life. There are now in this country multitudes of people who put as much confidence in what are called *signs*, as ever a superstitious heathen did in his *omens*: such, for instance, as stumbling when one is going out of doors, having salt spilt towards one when at table, being crossed in the road by certain kinds of animals. And all the reasoning in the world will never convince them that this is mere folly. Now the true cause of this I imagine is not the want of capacity to understand the reasoning in either case, for it is very obvious; but the contrary opinion is so strongly impressed on their minds, that it entirely excludes the truth, and it may be said *that through excessive credulity they will not believe*. In the same way I apprehend that multitudes have in some way or other, they scarcely know how, taken up the notion that Christianity is a strange mysterious unaccountable thing, entirely repugnant to all reason and philosophy; and this opinion so strongly possesses them, that the most cogent arguments are entirely without effect, and they may be said to be infidels, through excessive credulity. Under the influence of this temper they will swallow as great absurdities as were ever imputed to Christianity by its most inveterate enemies. Let us proceed now to the examination of the question before us; only remarking farther, that whatever may be thought of the observations just made, or of their application, this will not effect the point before us.

The principal instruments in the first propagation of the Christian religion were the apostles of Jesus Christ. These, according to their own account were unlearned and ignorant men; and would therefore be looked on with contempt, by the proud self important doctors of their own nation, and by

The haughty philosophers of Greece and Rome : They taught the religion of a man who had been crucified ; which was matter of great offence to Jew and Gentile. Among their own countrymen they had to encounter an attachment to the Jewish religion, rendered inveterate by the force of education and habit. Among the Gentiles they were set in opposition to the monstrous mass of polytheism, established by law, and supported by the arm of an intolerant magistracy, and by the unyielding prescriptions of custom, and by the inflexibility of religious bigotry. They were opposed to a religion, which, in its daily ceremonies encouraged, or at least permitted unbounded gratifications of the appetites ; and whose most hallowed mysteries gave opportunities for assignation and intrigue. In addition to this there were in every town of Italy, of Greece, of Asia Minor, of Egypt, and indeed of most parts of the Roman empire, men of learning and acuteness termed philosophers. These were considered the public instructors of mankind. And when the apostles of Christianity came forward, assuming the same office, and teaching the weakness of human nature, the insignificance of their philosophic dogmas and the folly of their wisdom ; their pride was deeply wounded, and they were inflamed with the keenest malignity against these humble fishermen. And still farther, these humble preachers boldly declaimed against the vices of that most dissolute and profligate age ; and taught the necessity of repentance of mortification and self-denial, and of a holy life. They did not, however, hold out the idea that this consisted in occasional flights of enthusiasm, in great horrors, and succeeding raptures ; but in the diligent and faithful discharge of all the duties resulting from all the relations of life. We see then a religion to be demolished, which was supported by the potent arm of civil authority, by the mighty power of custom, by the deadly bitterness and obstinacy of religious bigotry ; by the art and cunning of a priesthood, as knavish, and as powerful as Christian priests have ever been represented ; by all the wit, and learning, and acuteness of philosophers in short by all orders and ranks, and conditions in life. And in the room of this there was to

be established a religion teaching these mysterious doctrines so offensive to modern infidels ; inculcating a pure morality, denouncing eternal destruction against the impenitent perpetrators of iniquity ; and offering life, and the favor of Heaven only to the pure in heart. Now he who can believe that in such a combination of circumstances, such men, preaching such doctrines, could establish Christianity on the ruins of heathenism by their unassisted powers, may forever hold his peace respecting the credulity of Christians. He who can believe this can believe that any effect, however great can be produced by any cause however inadequate. He that believes this, can believe the story about the earth being tossed out of the sun by a volcanic eruption—or any thing at all.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

A DISCUSSION OF SOME POINTS RELATIVE
TO INFANT BAPTISM.

NO. I.

Some difficulties which result from the opinion that Infant-baptism is not an Apostolical practice.

THAT, which can be used with as much propriety, and success, on one side of a dispute, as the other, deserves not the name of an argument, and ought to be discarded from both. Of this kind, are confident assertions, the insinuation of improper motives and defect of understanding, and every species of invective. A positive, dogmatical air, may influence the weak and ignorant, but will have no weight with the candid inquirer after truth. With such, a writer, or speaker cannot injure himself more, than by affirming things to be evident and certain, which remain in doubt and obscurity. It is very common for those who oppose infant baptism, to assert, that nothing but prejudice, and interested motives, can prevent any one from seeing, and acknowledging, that they are right.— This appears to me to evince, not only a want of candor, but

also, a very superficial acquaintance with the subject in dispute. On whichever side the truth may lie, it is not self-evident, but requires attention, impartiality, and labor, to extricate it, and place it in a clear point of light.

As an advocate for infant baptism, I am ready to acknowledge, that the subject is attended with no small difficulty; and I will, in this paper, state some of the consequences which follow from the contrary opinion; that it may appear how little reason the Baptists have for their confident boasting, that no difficulties adhere to *their* scheme.

1. It is, a necessary consequence of the denial of infant baptism, that for at least a thousand years, one of the most distinguishing, and important ordinances of Christ's church, was utterly lost; and that during this long period, no person was regularly admitted into the church of Christ. Yea it follows, that there was no visible church—No ordinances administered agreeably to the will of God—No persons qualified to administer, or receive the Lord's supper; or to preach the gospel, or perform any other duty of a church officer or church member.

Now is it credible, that Christ would leave his church to err in a matter so fundamental to its external constitution, for such a length of time? Is it consistent with his promise to his disciples, and their successors, just before he ascended on high? '*Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world?*' Can it be reconciled to his solemn declaration to Peter, when he had made a noble confession of his divinity. '*On this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it?*' I do not suppose, that Christ has promised to preserve his church pure from every error, but he has promised to preserve his church in existence; and a regular entrance into it, is necessary to its existence. There can be no visible church without members and ministers, but according to the principles of the Baptists, there can be neither, constituted agreeably to the will of the Head of the church, without baptism.

Will it be said, that churches existed in some obscure valley, or remote region, who practised *scriptural* baptism through

this long period? I ask where? What historian mentions them? If none, then it is bare conjecture—unfounded assertion, which cannot be admitted. It is in vain to refer us to the Waldenses and Albigenses, for as it cannot be proved that they denied infant baptism, so neither can their origin be traced to a period sufficiently early, to answer the purpose. I know it is a favorite opinion with Dr. Gill, Gall, and others, that these people were baptists, but though it may be admitted, that Peter Bruis, and a few more, as early as the eleventh century, did deny infant baptism, yet that this was the doctrine of the persecuted churches in the valleys of Piedmont, is entirely unsupported by authentic history; and there is one fact, which divests the opinion of every degree of probability. After the reformation, in the year 1530,* the remnants of these desolated churches, united with the Swisse churches, who all held and practised infant baptism, and there was found to be an almost perfect agreement between the doctrine and discipline of the Reformed churches, and the most ancient catechisms of the Waldenses.

2. But another consequence, more embarrassing than the former is, that upon Baptist principles, it is impossible there ever should be a regularly constituted church, with proper officers authorized to administer ordinances, without a new revelation: and consequently none of those persons now called Baptists have been regularly baptized; nor have they amongst them any persons qualified to administer this ordinance. Unless they can shew that there has been a regular succession of Baptist churches, in the world, since the Apostle's times, the consequence now stated is inevitable. For, suppose I were now convinced that true Christian baptism was utterly lost for a thousand years past, and were to administer it according to what I believed to be the Scriptural mode, it would not be valid, because I would not be a proper administrator, never having been baptized myself; and there would be no possibility of reviving the original practice without a new commission.

* See *Musheim's Ecc. Hist.*

Lampe's Synopsis.

If the minister of another denomination baptizes a *believer* by immersion, yet the Baptists will not hold it to be true and valid baptism, because the administrator is in their opinion unbaptized himself. I have known instances of this kind, in which a person baptized at adult age by a Pedobaptist minister, by immersion, was rebaptized upon joining the Baptist church.

I would ask then who baptized the first preachers of the present sect of Baptists? Undoubtedly some one who was himself unbaptized according to their notions.—The first instance being unscriptural and irregular, all which follow and depend upon it, must be so also.—The streams cannot be purer than the fountain from which they issue.

We need not be told again that it might have come down regularly through the Albigenses, &c. for even if they were baptists, which we have proved they were not; yet those who are on this continent, and in most places of Europe, never received their baptism from them. The founders of this religion did not wait for an administration from beyond the Alpes, but proceeded as though they had had a special commission from Heaven, like the apostles, to which indeed they at first and many of them, long since pretended.

The only evasion which can be made, is, that when the church becomes very corrupt *that* is proper to be done, which would not be so in an ordinary state of affairs. Though this doctrine was advanced by some Protestants at the time of the reformation, yet I entirely dissent from it, and consider it a dangerous principle which opens the door for every man of enthusiastic mind to violate the rules of Christ's church, and to intrude himself into offices, and to the performance of duties, to which he was never called, whenever he shall be of opinion that the church has become corrupt.

It would be much better to say, that Christ would never suffer his church so far to fail, as to make such irregular proceedings necessary; but if he did, a new revelation would become necessary, to direct us how a reformation should be made.

3. A third consequence of the denial of infant baptism, is, that all the other churches of Christians upon earth, are not true churches. Their ministers are irregular and have not entered the sacred office according to the will of Christ; and all their administrations in the church are unauthorized. It is therefore unscriptural for them to preach or administer the Lord's supper. And consequently unlawful for the people to hear them or encourage them.

Upon this principle, the Protestant and reformed churches, however eminent for their knowledge, piety, and good works, were no churches of Christ, and those most excellent reformers, Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, Melancton, Cranmer, Knox, &c. were not the authorized ministers of Christ. But if we wish to find the true church at that glorious period, we must go to Munster, and the other places where the Anabaptists held their frantic meetings.

The present Baptists are guilty of a great inconsistency with respect to this matter. They boldly affirm that infant baptism is no baptism, and that no unbaptized person has a right to partake of the Lord's Supper; and so they exclude from their communion the members of all other churches, however pious, and prohibit their members from communing with other churches; and thus far they are consistent with themselves. But they will admit the preachers of other denominations into their pulpits, and will hear and encourage them, as though they were regular ministers of the Gospel, which, upon their principles, is altogether inconsistent; for surely a man cannot be a regular officer in the church, before he is a regular member. And if it be wrong to hold fellowship with a man as a private member of the church, it must be much more so to hold ministerial communion with him.

4. A fourth consequence of the opinion of the baptists, is, that an universal change must have taken place in the church with regard to the subjects of baptism, and yet not the least mention made of it, by any ecclesiastical writer; yea, so imperceptibly was this revolution brought about, that men, the most distinguished for their knowledge of ecclesiastical affairs,

knew nothing of it, in the age which immediately succeeded it.

We know, that errors, and heresies did very early make their appearance ; but they excited much attention, and met with vigorous opposition ; and a particular account of them has been left on record by cotemporary writers ; so that in most cases, we can tell who broached and propagated them, who most zealously opposed them, and where, and when they were condemned, or prevailed. But with respect to infant baptism, we find no writer speaking of it as an error, or innovation. Tertullian, the only one of the Fathers who dissuades from the practice, does not pretend that it was a new thing in the church, or that it was contrary to the Scriptures ; but his words evidently imply the contrary : and his advice is not confined to infants, but extends to all unmarried persons, because he had adopted the opinion that sins committed after baptism, were scarcely pardonable. All the rest of the Fathers who mention infant baptism speak in favour of it ; and it evidently appears that they had never heard of any dispute respecting it, for when in a large Synod the question was proposed whether the baptism of infants should be, like circumcision, deferred to the eighth day, it was unanimously agreed that such delay was not necessary—no one of the assembled bishops stating any question as to the right of infants to baptism, which proves most satisfactorily, that at that early period, about the middle of the third age, which was not more than 160 years after the death of the apostle John, there was a universal consent and agreement on this subject. And some of the Fathers, who had travelled far and read much, and who were not so remote from the times of the apostles, as we are from the reformation, declare,* that the practice was derived from the apostles, and one of extensive knowledge, though it would have greatly favored his cause to deny it, yet declares that he never heard of any heretic who disputed the right of infants to baptism.

* *Origin.*

This then, upon Baptist principles must be the state of the affair.—The apostles baptized none but believing adults, and when they left the world, all christian churches had the same uniform practice, and knew that infants were improper subjects of baptism: but in one or two hundred years after their death, a total change took place in the sentiments and practice of the church, nobody knows when, or by what means. And so silently and secretly was this alteration effected, that no dispute ever arose on the subject, and so universally did it extend, that out of thousands of churches planted in Asia, Europe, and Africa, not one as far as our information goes, retained the primitive and apostolical practice, which they had been taught. And so perfect was the oblivion which had overspread this transaction, that the most extensively learned men, who lived in the succeeding ages, and possessed hundreds of books written in the primitive age, which are now lost, and many of which were histories of the church, had no knowledge of this great revolution, but *simply* supposed that the practice which they pursued had been received from the apostles. And so little were they acquainted with the ideas and arguments of the Baptists, that not one of them seems to have entertained a suspicion that it was contrary to Scripture. If any man can credit all this, why then he may be a Baptist, but for my part I think this single consequence sufficient to overthrow the opinion from which it flows. Until new light can be cast upon the history of the church for the first ages, it will hang as a dead weight to the Baptist system, and in the eye of sound impartial reason must sink it. The evasion which will be attempted, is that there are many popish ceremonies, which claim as early an origin, and may by the same argument be defended, to which I answer, Let it once be made appear, that any practice of the Roman church prevailed as early, as universally, and with as little opposition.—That by learned and good men it was declared to be an apostolical rite—and that no one was ever heard of by them, who denied it: and moreover let it be shewn, that the said practice, is as consentaneous with the spirit, and letter of the Scriptures, as infant baptism, and

I will promise, not to renounce this practice, but to adopt the other, whatever it may be, as a part of the religion of Christ.

5. A fifth consequence of the Baptist system is, that it renders it impracticable to bring all the human race into the church of Christ, even if the time should come when all would be members of Christ's body. The command of the Saviour is to '*baptize all nations,*' which seems at least to imply that all might possibly become proper subjects of baptism: and those who insist so much upon the express words of this commission ought to consider that these words do include infants, for *they* make up a large part of every nation. The Scriptures predict a glorious state of the church yet future, in which '*all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest.*'— Now in that happy period it is to be presumed, that a great portion of the human family will be regenerated from the womb; and that it will be as common for children, as soon as they can speak to give evidences of a pious disposition, as it is now to discover the contrary.

But according to the Baptist scheme, infants must not be taken into the church, even if we knew them to be regenerated, and thus a part of Christ's lambs would be excluded from his fold, notwithstanding the tender regard which he shewed to such when upon earth. To this it may be answered, that as soon as a child can speak, and exhibit evidences of sincere piety, it may be baptized, but this is inconsistent with Baptist principles. According to them, the proper subject of baptism, must make a profession of faith, and must understand the nature, and feel the obligation of the duty to be performed, which an infant is incapable of doing as soon as it may exhibit signs of a renewed heart. Children of three or four years of age have often given satisfactory evidences of piety, but will any one say that a child of this age is capable of judging for itself that baptism is a duty, and that it ought to be performed by immersion, or by any other mode in particular? I would ask then what would the Baptists do with a child of this kind? If they would baptize it without a profession they would practise to a certain extent, infant baptism, and all the

common objections from the want of knowledge and understanding in the subject would apply, and they would concede the main principle which is in contention between them and us. But if they would refuse, then the difficulty above stated occurs, that they would not admit into Christ's church those persons whom he has marked, and discovered to be his own. And I would also ask when will this age of infancy be over? Where shall be drawn the line between infancy and adult age? Here a new difficulty meets us.—Suppose such a state of the church as has been mentioned, as future—suppose the influences of the Holy Spirit copiously shed on persons of every age, down to the infant of a day old—And suppose children of all ages, according to the clearness of their conceptions, exhibiting evidences of love to God, or a disposition prompting them to seek him and obey him, where would the Baptist begin in admitting these children into the church? Would he receive the babe which could just lisp the Saviour's name, and reject the speechless infant at the breast, merely because its organs were not yet formed to utterance? Or rejecting both, would he fix on some higher age as the age of discretion? Whatever period that might be, it would be an arbitrary selection, for there are none such clearly marked in the progress of human nature, from infancy to manhood: and the administrator must necessarily receive some and reject others, where the shades of distinction would be scarcely perceptible.

But moreover, when the spirit of God operates on the minds of infants, or very young persons, the steps of the change are not so evident as in adults: and if we require what is called '*An experience*,' (with which the Baptists never dispense,) we will greatly obstruct the access of God's children to him in the ordinances of his appointment. In short, upon this plan we would be perpetually embarrassed in receiving members into the church, at a time when piety would be common among persons of tender years. And even in the present state of the church, the Baptist scheme seems better to suit those places, where the people are without religious education, and

are almost in the condition of Heathens as to religious knowledge, than those in which attention has been paid to the instruction of children in the principles of religion, and where the people have been long formed into regular churches. Hence the Baptists proceed very much as if they were at the first planting of christianity ; and hence they are too favorable to the opinion, that men must have run to some lengths in sin and remained some time in unbelief, before they can be sincere converts of religion. They are therefore less alarmed at the vices and extravagances of youth, even their own children, and calculate less upon the efficacy of religious education than others. And whether it be the effect of their principles or not, it is a fact, that the children of Baptists are brought up with less care, and under fewer restraints than those of any other professors ; and they are consequently more generally wild, and discover less reverence for things sacred than others. This is becoming a matter of greater and greater notoriety every day, the more fully their system comes into operation. Some of them indeed speak in favor of the religious education of youth, but few of them practice it, and many are entirely hostile to it. This is an evil of a most serious nature—producing a more baneful effect, than hundreds of speculative errors, which are but slightly related to our daily practice. If wholesome culture be not applied to the minds of men in their infancy, we may indeed in some few cases boast of a more visible change, but the state of society, civil and religious, will be most deplorable. I mean to cast no unjust reproaches, nor uncandid censures upon this society. I am willing to admit, that to a certain extent they have been useful, and that many pious persons are to be found amongst them ; but at the same time I appeal to every impartial observer, whether it be not a fact, that in those places where Baptist churches have been longest established, there is a great laxity in morals among the people generally, and a high degree of irreverence with respect to sacred things amongst the youth in particular ?

The opinions of the Baptists appear to me to be founded on narrow and superficial views of the Scriptures. They do

not consider how widely different our situation is from that of the Jews and Gentiles to whom the gospel was first preached: they therefore apply those passages of Scripture which had reference to the primitive state of the church, to the present state without any allowance for the change of circumstances. They bind us down to the express letter of the Scriptures by rules, which the Scriptures nowhere authorize; and often triumph in the mere sound of words, where a liberal and just interpretation of the text, would make nothing in their favor.

Q.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

PHILANDER TO POLITUS.

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

LETTER I.

SIR,

YOU express surprise at my having asserted that the religious man has greatly the advantage of the irreligious for the attainment of happiness, even in the present life. You admit that in respect to our eternal welfare, religion is a matter of the highest importance. But as to this world, you have always thought the gloominess of devotion, and the innumerable restraints which religion imposes on its votaries, must greatly diminish the number of their pleasures and the sum of their happinesses. You are far from being singular in this way of thinking. The young, the fashionable, the rich, the voluptuous, are very generally and deeply infected with this prejudice against religion. They take it for granted, without seeking for any proof, that it is a sad and slavish bondage, destructive of all the best pleasures of life. By the way, I must be permitted to observe, that were this view of a religious life,

even perfectly just, it would not afford a reasonable plea for the neglect of religion one single hour. Is not the duration of our life absolutely uncertain? Are not heaven and hell, eternal happiness and eternal misery, things of infinite moment? If then the path of religion, this thorny, uninviting, and miserable path, as many suppose it, be the only one by which we may escape hell and obtain heaven, is it not manifestly our interest, as God has made it our duty, to engage at once, with all earnestness and perseverance, in running the race which is set before us? Is it the part of wisdom to sit balancing between the petty pleasures of a few years and *'that exceeding great and eternal weight of glory,'* which is the prize of the Christian; between the little sacrifices and pains of this fleeting life and *'that undying worm, that unquenchable fire,'* which are the inevitable portion of all who work iniquity and neglect religion? Surely these questions can be answered but in one way, and must extort that answer immediately from every considerate mind.

But I have called this notion of a religious life a prejudice. I have asserted, that the very reverse of it is true. And in my turn, I cannot but feel surprise that you should deem this assertion a novel one; for it has been repeated among Christians a thousand times. However, you call upon me to vindicate the position I have taken; and I cheerfully accept the call. There are indeed some intrinsic difficulties in the subject. It is, in the nature of the case, not very easy to compare pleasures of different kinds, and to weigh them with precision against each other. Still more difficult is it duly to impress the result of such a process upon a mind which has experienced the pleasures only of one side of the comparison: for such is our nature that the idea we form of any sensation, pleasure, or pain, which we have never felt, must necessarily be very imperfect. Yet notwithstanding these difficulties, so fully am I persuaded of the goodness of my cause, and so much do I rely on your good sense and candor, that I do not doubt of convincing you that what has been asserted of the tendency

of religion to increase even our present happiness is no idle fancy nor specious theory, but the simple truth and matter of fact.

Should I rest the decision of this question solely upon the testimony of those who have a reasonable claim to the character of real Christians, I know not what could be objected to the mode, nor why the result should be considered inconclusive. And I well know what that result would be. Consult as many as you please of the multiplied records of religious experience. Or consult living Christians, whose sober sense and strict veracity you acknowledge, and whose word you would most readily believe in every other case. It is evident that Christians alone are competent to decide on the point as a matter of experience; for they have known what are the pleasures of sin, and what are those of religion. Inquire of those especially who have enjoyed all the pleasures which health and riches and honors and power and cultivated taste and successful genius could bestow, and who are now not ashamed to be the avowed, humble and faithful disciples of Jesus Christ. Ask them whether religion has diminished or increased their happiness. Their united answer will be substantially the following: "We have tasted the pleasures of the world. We will not say that they were no pleasures: but many of them were productive of far greater and more lasting pain; and even the best we have found very transient and unsatisfactory. But God, in his rich mercy, has now given us pleasures emphatically worthy of the name, in communion with himself through our Lord Jesus Christ, in the keeping of his holy commandments, and in the glorious hopes inspired by his gospel. We knew not what true felicity was until we found it here. It is true, religion calls for sacrifices and self-denial; and we often experience painful conflicts between the flesh and the Spirit, between our wayward inclinations and a regard to our duty. Yet all these are abundantly compensated by the delight of victory over sin, the smiles of our God, and the approbation of a good conscience. Even our earthly satisfactions are improved by the sentiments of grateful piety which religion has

taught us to mingle with them. In a word, we know that we are much more happy in the service of God than we ever were or could be in the ways of sinful or mere worldly pleasure." Some of this language may appear to you rather unintelligible; but the conclusion of the whole is such as cannot be misunderstood.

Again. As you acknowledge the divine authority of the Bible, its declarations will, with you, be decisive. And I think they are most abundantly in my favor. I shall, at present, only quote two or three passages, which appear to me plainly and directly to teach the doctrine for which I contend. '*The ways of wisdom,—says the wisest of men, meaning by wisdom the same thing with religion—the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her.**' The Apostle Paul asserts, that '*Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*'† But I request your particular attention to those very remarkable words of our blessed Lord himself—'*Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters or father, or mother, or wife or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.*'‡ That is, he shall be compensated with happiness an hundred-fold, even in this world, for all these losses, and this notwithstanding the persecutions he shall suffer; as well as obtain everlasting felicity in heaven. Do not these texts, though a mere specimen of what might be advanced, fully evince the truth of my proposition?

I am aware indeed, of some apparently strong objections, which may be deduced from the Scripture itself. These I shall at a proper time consider, and, as I hope, remove to your satisfaction.

* *Prov. iii. 17, 18.* † *1 Tim. iv. 8.* ‡ *Mark x. 29, 30.*

But I design to go farther than all this. Besides appealing to the testimony of Christians, and the authority of God's word, I will endeavor to show, from the nature of man, and the nature of genuine experimental religion, that the position I defend is, and must be true. This will lead us into an excursion of some considerable extent : but I trust we shall not find it uninteresting, and I pray God it may be greatly useful to us both. For the present, however, I will relieve your patience, by subscribing myself, &c.

PHILANDER.

FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

AMONGST the many sources of error in the Christian world, may not a *religious curiosity* be entitled to rank amongst the most fruitful? By a religious curiosity, I mean a propensity to pry into every secret connected with religion, to unravel its mysteries and reduce every thing to a plain, easy and comprehensible system.—For this I know no better name than what I have given it, although considering it as it often is, the offspring of human pride, it merits a harder appellation.—While the attention of men is directed to the most interesting truths of religion, there is little or no diversity of opinion. These are plain and obvious, and if men would content themselves by believing and practising these, without attempting to discover how much more may possibly be known, it would probably contribute much more to the cause of truth and real holiness than the exercise of such a curiosity ever will or can do.

That moral evil exists—that man is naturally opposed to holiness—that there is a necessity for a change of heart and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Scriptures state in characters so legible that '*he who runs may read.*'—On these subjects the most unlettered Christians are found to agree ; and indeed, on these subjects considered simply as truths, the

most ignorant Christian is a good divine.—He reads what the Scripture states to be fact—he believes the statement—he remembers it and acts upon his belief, without any enquiry into other things which may be but remotely connected with these, and only mentioned in an incidental manner where these truths are exhibited at large.—With respect, also, to the perfections of Deity, so far as his character is revealed in the Scriptures, there is little, if any, difference of opinion—These mentioned certainly are to us the most interesting subjects of religion—I mean not to exclude others which are intimately connected with these, and concerning which, as it respects their truth, the word of God is explicit and full.

But '*vain man would be wise, though he were born as the wild ass's colt,*' not contented to receive and act upon the plain truths of Scripture, he must amuse himself with others which give more room for a display of lively fancy and keen conjecture.—The mode of all these things must be understood. Even the character of God must be so completely investigated, that little or no mystery remain attached to it—The mode of his government must be understood—his sovereignty must be reconciled with the moral agency of man—the trinity must be explained—*how* and *when* man becomes a sinner—how the ways of God can be justified in permitting evil to exist—whether any plan could have been adopted by infinite wisdom better than the one already adopted, and in which we see both moral and natural evil to exist.—All these questions and many more must be solved by the enquirer, nor will any thing less than certainty satisfy him. So far as these subjects can be clearly and certainly known from Scripture, it is doubtless proper and useful to pursue them; for God never designed that we should be ignorant of those things which he has revealed.—But when we take uncertain ground, where the expressions are dark and mysterious—when we labor to establish an opinion by far fetched inference; our investigations may weary or amuse ourselves and others, but will not benefit the cause of simple truth.—From the effect of such investigations it would sometimes appear as if plain truths had been kept out of sight

until a theory had been formed on subjects of a more intricate kind.—A wild and uncertain system is formed, the effect of much labor and logical reasoning—it must be true—other things must be tried by it and made to agree, or be rejected—Thus the plainest truth is warped from its original design, and made to speak the language of a favorite scheme.—The more men indulge this theoretical spirit, the fonder they become of idle speculation—It is so in other subjects, and so in religion—Every thing must be completely understood in all its parts—Even eternity must be fathomed, and incomprehensibility comprehended. If in such a case the theorist himself should stand firm in the truth, others are often led into error by circuitous reasonings which they cannot understand.—But perhaps it will be objected that the evil arises not from the reasons of the speculatist, but from the ignorance of the world, and thence may be infered the necessity of increasing their knowledge by the very means here censured.—Could any certain information be obtained by such speculations, the objection and inference would be just, and so far as any can be obtained, the objection will be allowed its full weight—But improvement in knowledge supposes an additional acquaintance with truth, not with probabilities only; and these last are the general result of a *religious curiosity* in the mysteries of religion.—It is therefore not calculated to inform men—It may induce them, as it too often does the speculatist himself, to despise the common path in which there is neither danger nor glory, and excite them to conjecture what *may* be truth, instead of receiving in the love of it what *certainly* is.

The mind cannot always be on the stretch.—If, impelled by its own curiosity or allured by others, it is led into the mazes of conjecture, it becomes weary and endeavors to find a resting place on some certain ground—If it has not progressed so far as to have lost sight of that on which it once stood firm, it may still safely return.—But it often happens that the mind becomes so involved in the pursuit, that it cannot return to its original condition, but embraces whatever appears only probable, or becomes sceptical on every subject.

But, it will be asked, are all exertions of the human mind to be checked, and is it improper to exercise its powers but upon plain and obvious truths? The observations here made are not intended to prevent improvement, nor to cramp the energies of the mind, but to prevent their eccentricity and direct their course—Much labor may be lost if it is not rightly directed.—It is not enough to know that we ought to act, but also when and where our actions may be useful.—There are subjects, on which it is useless to dwell—no discoveries can with certainty be made—They are, in a word, beyond the reach of our powers—Speculations on these must be useless at best, and they are seldom free from dangerous consequences.—One of the first things we should do is to enquire what are the proper subjects of human knowledge—What can the human mind completely and fairly investigate—after this is determined we may proceed with safety and hope for success.—It must in the mean time be acknowledged that it is a nice point to decide, and evils may arise from a mistake on either hand—If we are over timid we may rest ignorant of many useful truths; and if we overleap the bounds prescribed to the powers of the human mind, we are involved in uncertainty, and our research will be likely to terminate in error. But on religious subjects is doubtless the safest to err on the side of modesty—The consequences will not be so dangerous—Philosophy may admit of many bold conjectures which may nevertheless be very harmless, and the most unskilful philosopher may be a very good man—But religious subjects are much more sacred—They should be handled with reverence. On these, nothing conjectural should be admitted—God has given us certainty on all interesting truths, and nothing but absolute certainty ought ever to satisfy us.—If there are subjects on which God has not given us this, there is but little probability that it will be obtained by any human exertion.—A heathen may form conjectural opinions on religion, perhaps, without a crime—He has nothing to guide him but conjecture founded on the works of God—He is, at first, ignorant of the truths of the Gospel and cannot be likely to loose by enquiry.—Our condition is very

different, God has given a revelation of all things really need-
ful for us. Beyond this he has forbidden us to search—The
silence of his word on many points of controversy as well as
our own capacities, have fixed bounds to our curiosity.—We
take too much upon us when we attempt to pry into things
which God has veiled from human view—The corrupt heart
is always ready to presume on forbidden ground—It is likely
to proceed far upon it, when it has the specious pretext that
it is engaged in religious enquiry. It is not our business to
form religious systems, but to receive and act upon that alrea-
dy established on the sure basis of everlasting truth.

Every thing cannot be known here.—Let, then, our re-
searches be confined within the bounds of certainty and safety.
Were our curiosity satisfied by a complete knowledge of those
subjects which now remains mysterious or uncertain; it is pro-
bable we would press our enquiries still farther—We find that
amongst the plain truths of religion, things of a mysterious na-
ture are incidentally mentioned—were these mysteries unra-
veled, others beyond these might again be brought to view in
the course of the necessary explanation—an infinite chain of
subjects would no doubt be presented to the mind, to discover
all of which is not to be the employment of the present life,
much less completely to understand them—To avoid error,
we would act wisely to let mysteries remain as they are—ne-
ver to attempt to be wise beyond what is written, nor to con-
clude that on any subject of a mysterious kind, or one in which
the divine character is concerned, we have come at the truth,
because we have labored it into a comprehensible form.

R.

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FOR THE VIRGINIA RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE.

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Extract from the journal of a Virginia Missionary.

PASSING lately through a neighborhood where I had
preached several years ago, I called on an old acquaintance
and relative, who has for some time past professed religion.
Of his first awakening he gave me the following account.

“ You may remember the time when you preached at — I was one of your hearers. Until that time I had been quite careless about the salvation of my soul ; and for some years a profane swearer, and otherwise grossly wicked. My heart was not affected by any of the solemn truths which you delivered on that occasion : yet from that day I felt very awful and abiding religious impressions. When I saw and heard you, I was led to reflect, that a few years ago we were children and playmates together ; that now you were become a Christian, and a minister of the gospel, while I remained a miserably impenitent sinner, under the wrath of God, and in danger every moment of dropping into hell. These reflections produced in my mind the most alarming convictions of sin, and so fastened them upon me that they were not to be shaken off. I was constrained to betake myself to prayer for divine mercy ; and so continued until, as I trust, I obtained the pardon of my sins by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

How various are the methods of the Holy Spirit in bringing sinners unto God ! And how strangely does he bless the labors of his ministers often, while they seem to themselves to be spending their strength in vain ! I remember well that on the day referred to I concluded, with sorrow of heart, that I had preached the gospel without the least success. Yet God was pleased to make me instrumental in awakening this person ; and that not by my preaching, strictly speaking, but merely by my presence. Let not the preacher of the gospel despond because he sees no immediate and striking effects of his ministrations. Go forth, messenger of heavenly mercy, with a patient and cheerful spirit ; proclaim the glad tidings of salvation wherever thou shalt be called. *‘ In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand ; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, this or that. ’* The Lord may, by thy instrumentality, be performing strange and secret works of grace, which thou knowest not now, but which thou shalt know to thy surprise and joy hereafter.

PHILANDER.

L I T E R A R Y N O T I C E .

THE
ASSEMBLY'S MISSIONARY MAGAZINE ;

OR
EVANGELICAL INTELLIGENCER,

*Published under the patronage of the General Assembly of the
Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America.*

BY WILLIAM P. FARRAND.

Appointed editor of the work.

“ The design of this work is, in the first place, to promote the religious edification of the readers ; and in the second, to increase the funds of the Assembly, destined to the support of missionaries, and the purchase of books of piety, for gratuitous distribution among the poor ; to which funds, after defraying the expence of the publication, the whole pecuniary income from the Magazine will be constantly added.”

The publication of this Magazine commenced with the present year.

P O E T R Y .

PSALM CXLV. 10.

*All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy Saints shall
bless thee.*

GREAT God ! how wonderful art thou
In all thy works and ways !
To thee shoud' all thy creatures bow,
And meditate thy praise.

Bright seraphs that surround thy throne
Their noblest honours bring ;
From blis to mortals yet unknown
Superior praises spring.

In mystic harmony above,
The planets roll along,
And teach the universe thy love,
In never-ceasing song !

The winds that sweep along the sky,
 By thee directed, breathe :
 And clouds and vapours float on high,
 Or drop in show'rs beneath.

From darkest shades thy lightning breaks,
 And darts thy glory near :
 Thy voice in awful thunder speaks,
 And fills the wretch with fear.

Compar'd with thine immensity,
 The sea a drop abides ;
 'Tis peopled, ebbs and flows by thee,
 And foams or gently glides.

The summer's heat, the winter's cold,
 The season's all proclaim :
 As each their various scenes unfold,—
 Thy goodness still the same.

In flow'rs, and fruits, and trees, and herbs,
 The earth thy bounty gives ;
 And men and reptiles, beasts and birds,
 And ev'ry being lives.

Thy mighty hand, thy watchful care,
 Direct each fleeting hour ;
 And Nature's countless forms declare
 Thy wisdom, love, and pow'r.

Yet in thy law alone, we view
 Thy justice and thy grace ;
 Deep truths that Nature faintly drew,
 And Reason could not trace.

But in Moriah's work divine
 We learn the wond'rous plan,
 Where Justice, Love, and Mercy join,
 To teach rebellious man.

His doctrines teach, his deeds explain,
 his death and triumphs prove
 The first and best of truths we gain,
 That our great God is Love.

ALIQUIS.

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