

AN  
**OUTLINE**  
OF THE  
**HISTORY OF THE CHURCH**  
IN THE  
STATE OF KENTUCKY,  
*DURING A PERIOD OF FORTY YEARS:*

CONTAINING  
**THE MEMOIRS OF REV. DAVID RICE,**  
AND SKETCHES OF THE ORIGIN AND PRESENT STATE OF  
PARTICULAR CHURCHES, AND OF THE LIVES AND LA-  
BOURS OF A NUMBER OF MEN WHO WERE EMI-  
NENT AND USEFUL IN THEIR DAY.

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not, led by your feelings, they are a fallacious guide; suffer not your judgments to be biassed by your love or dislike to any description of men. I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say. Now, my Christian friends, I do with a heart bleeding for Zion's wounds, with love and esteem for you, bid you an affectionate farewell.

DAVID RICE.

## II.

*A SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CITIZENS OF KENTUCKY, PROFESSING THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE, OR HAVE BEEN, DENOMINATED PRESBYTERIANS.—By the Rev. DAVID RICE. (First printed in 1808.)*

DEAR BRETHREN,

There is reason to suppose that some of you are willing to know my opinion of the present state of religion in our country, probably thinking my knowledge of it more accurate than it really is. Be this as it may, my late tour through part of this state, and the information I have received from other parts, give me some idea of it, which I am willing to communicate. If my information should not be in all respects accurate, you will correct it by the best means in your possession.

The present state of religion in this land, I think, must appear truly distressing to every friend of Zion. The night, years ago predicted, is now come; the clouds of darkness, then collecting, have overspread our horizon.

Here, however, it is proper to observe, that a number of the professors of christianity better understand the great principles of the reformation than formerly, are more attached to them, and sensible of the danger of departing from them. This is one good effect produced, or rather occasioned, by the religious revolutions which have taken place in our country. In this respect we are much better prepared for a revival of religion than we were ten years ago.

Of those who formerly professed the doctrine of salvation by electing love and free sovereign grace, many seem now to abhor the doctrine of particular election. They must consequently conclude, that what distinguishes man, the good from the bad, the believer from the unbeliever, is their better improving a spark of grace given to every man by some exertion of their own will. The doctrine taught by such is, that now, under the gospel, every man may be saved if he will. This proposition, rightly explained, is a precious truth of God's word; but as commonly used and understood, it leads into a fatal error.

The abettors of this doctrine of free will do not realize that the chief difficulty, the main obstacle in the way of fallen man's salvation, is *unwillingness*: that man's depravity greatly consists in this: that until this is removed, nothing is, or can be, effectually done: that

the proud, selfish, unholy heart of man, the carnal mind, which is enmity against God and his law, is equally opposed to the holiness of the gospel.

If salvation signified nothing but a deliverance from the misery of hell, all men would be willing to be saved: but if it implies a forsaking sin, as it certainly does, no unregenerated man was ever willing to be saved, nor ever can be. There is the same opposition to the gospel as to the law, and for the same reason; that is, because it is holy. It is impossible a man should be willing to be saved from sin while he is willing to live in the practice of it, which is the case of every natural man. This opposition of the will of man to the law and gospel universally reigns in every human heart; for there is none that doeth good, no not one; and it ever will reign there until nature is renewed by divine grace.

If man's salvation is suspended on this willingness, the whole human race must inevitably perish, unless made willing, in a day of Christ's power, by an act of sovereign grace. Offering salvation on condition of this willingness, though it is called preaching free salvation to all, is, if you go no further, preaching the doctrine of black despair to every truly convinced sinner who is well acquainted with his own heart. Such an one finds in himself no hatred to sin, no love to God, no delight in his law, no true faith in Christ, no true desires to accept of Christ as a King and Saviour from sin. Though he knows he has no righteousness of his own, yet he feels a self-righteous disposition, and an unwillingness to be entirely beholden to free grace. These bad dispositions of heart stand as an effectual bar in the way

of his accepting a free salvation: and unless the gospel provide for the removal of this, he must sink into despair. Unbelief and enmity to holiness rejects this free salvation: he then has nothing to look to but the undeserved goodness of him who has mercy on whom he will have mercy.

It is ignorance of the corruption and self-righteousness of the heart, makes men fond of this doctrine. Pride is the root of sin in the human heart: to this pride the gospel is directly opposed, and one great design of its institution was to destroy forever every vain imagination of man.—Therefore it is that the pride of the heart, or the will, is directly opposed to the gospel: the opposition between them is mutual. The grace given to every man, if it does not overcome this opposition to the holiness of the gospel, will prove of no effect; but will leave every man in a state of sin and ruin: if it does overcome it, every man will be willing, he will actually choose Christ and free salvation through him: in other words, he will be converted and become a true christian.

There are some who imagine that the moral inability, or depravity of nature, derived from Adam to his posterity, is excusable in them; or that all the bad actions which flow from this depravity are not blame-worthy.

If this doctrine be true, the posterity of Adam were by the fall entirely deprived of reason, and reduced to a state of brutality; or else, if men would have existed at all, there would have been a race of rational crea-

tures under no obligation to their Maker to act reasonably.

On the presumption of this doctrine's being true, it was impossible for any of the posterity of Adam ever to have committed one sin had they been left in their natural state; and it will follow as a consequence, that all the sin committed by them was occasioned by the mediation of Christ. It will also follow, that if most men finally perish, the mediation of Christ, or, which is much the same thing, the grace given by him to every man, will occasion more men to be damned than saved. Another consequence would be, that Christ came not to redeem men from the curse of the law, but from the misfortune of being children of Adam; putting them first into a capacity of sinning, and then into a capacity of being saved or damned.

Would it not be much better frankly to acknowledge this to be a subject we do not understand? Or rather to take the account we have of it in the sacred Scriptures, without any of our presumptuous comments on the subject?

There are some men amongst us who go a step farther, and deny the agency of the Holy Spirit in a work of conviction and faith in Christ. They assert that men never receive the Spirit of God until they believe. Here I think they are guilty of equivocation: others, as they know, when speaking on this subject, by the Spirit mean a divine agent, the third person of the adorable trinity: but they mean a holy disposition, and then prove their doctrine by scripture; but do it in such a

way as induces us to think they do not believe in the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost.

Others profess to have advanced to a state of perfection. Perfection in holiness is the object of the ardent desire and pursuit of every good man. But to mistake that for perfection which is not such, may prove dangerous, and even fatal.

One class of these, in order to maintain their notion of perfection, acknowledge it does not consist in a complete conformity to the moral law; but call it a perfection in love. They do not seem to mean *comparative*, but *sinless* perfection. Perfection, if the word is properly used, must mean that they love God just as constantly, as purely, and as ardently, as he requires them to do, and their neighbours as themselves; without this their love is imperfect: and if their love is imperfect, they are not perfect in love; and of course want that very perfection which the law and gospel both demand.

The moral law is the standard of perfection for moral agents. It was so formerly, and is so still; for Christ came not to destroy the law or the prophets: but as the perfection of which we now treat falls short of this standard, it must necessarily be a kind of solecism in morals, an *imperfect perfection*. Set aside the standard God has given, and it is easy for the self-righteous, self-flattering heart of man to admire its own attainments and think itself perfect. Men may boast of perfection while they manifest to others great imperfection in knowledge and virtue.

Another class seem to have come by their perfection in a different way. Their inward feelings or ex-

ercises of soul, which they think are all from the Spirit of God, they call the Spirit within them, or Christ formed in their hearts: and taking these to be an infallible guide, if they can keep them up from day to day, and act under their influence, they think themselves perfect.

These, I am informed, profess to give the Holy Ghost to others. Is this information true? If so, they must suppose that their inward feelings are the Spirit of Christ within them; and if they can by their pious appearance and tender addresses excite similar feelings in others, this is giving the Spirit. Others, receiving from them these pious impressions, imagine, sure enough, that they receive the Holy Ghost from them. Is satan here transformed into an angel of light? Or, are men so completely transformed into credulous dupes as to become the sport of every daring impostor?

Is it true that some of these encourage men to confess all their sins to them by a promise of pardon? If this be a fact, I should suppose they think, or rather pretend, that Christ is within them, and they the organs by which he acts, or agents employed by him: and he, we know, has power on earth to forgive sins. Are these men insane enough to believe they have this power? Are they playing with the credulity of mankind? Or labouring to sink the christian religion into contempt? I know not which of the two is the most astonishing, the arrogance of the pretenders, or the credulity of their disciples.

Is it true that a certain man professed a kind of triumph in the absurdities of these people, as being hap

illy calculated to expose christianity to contempt? Does this gentleman believe that those absurdities, which christianity evidently condemns, prove it to be absurd? Is that law, which condemns all murderers to be hanged; calculated to countenance murder? Or will the perpetration of murder reflect disgrace upon the law? If he imagine so, there is reason to apprehend that he also is smitten with a partial insanity. On this subject the rules of logic in his brain are inverted, and he, as well as the fanatics he admires, has become *insanus secundum quid*.

Some set aside a number of the precepts of heaven; I mean those relating to baptism and the Lord's supper; and some of the precepts of morality, that is, those which refer to the marriage relation, and how many more I know not, and this must pass for a greater degree of holiness and refinement in morals than others have obtained. Do such plead they are not subject to ordinances? That they are like unto the angels in heaven, who neither marry nor are given in marriage? And is not this establishing perfection at the expense of God's word, and the duties therein enjoined on human creatures? Holiness does not consist in eradicating the principles of nature, but in governing them agreeably to God's word, so as to answer the ends designed by our Creator.

Do they say they have resurrection bodies? And do they know what they mean by this? If they mean incorruptible bodies; like the saints in glory, does any body believe them? Can it be believed that their bodies are like unto Christ's glorious body, when we see

in them all the common marks of weakness, decay, and corruption? Do we believe their word in contradiction to our own senses and our reason? And why do we believe them? Because they are such pious holy men!!! Satan clad in the shining robes of a Seraph would still be the father of lies, and his doctrines like himself would be abhorrent to faith.

In the midst of all this error and confusion, many of our professors are mere lifeless, orthodox formalists, who are more inclined to expose error with violence, than to humble themselves and pray for a reformation. They boast of the soundness of their principles and strong attachment to them, but at the same time in practice deny the power of godliness. They exclaim much against the passions, are unfriendly to all intense concern about their souls, and excuse their coldness by the irregular or excessive heats of others. By the doctrine of the imperfections of God's people, and by the extravagant pretensions of others, they excuse themselves in the neglect of many duties, the badness of their tempers, or the irregularity of their lives, esteeming these the common imperfections of the best christians. They cannot well bear the doctrine of assurance in this life, and seem to think it a comfortable evidence of the truth and reality of their religion, that they doubt whether they have any or not. But professors of this character have so long existed in our country, and their character and conduct been so frequently and justly exposed, that it is unnecessary to enlarge upon them here.

Many of the true friends of Zion, and lovers of the souls of men, on viewing these things, are abashed and confounded, and know not what to think or how to act. By those who are going on with zeal and warmth these are esteemed cold and lifeless, and perhaps graceless, or mere apostates; because their hopes are turned into fears, their joys into sorrows, and they are mourning over their follies and errors.

A melancholy consequence of all this is, that many are filled and almost overwhelmed with perplexing sceptical doubts.

Some are doubting of their own religion; not because it appears to them to be unscriptural, but because they see many, whom they esteemed better christians than themselves, either turned back to a course of vice, or carried away with gross errors. Others doubt of the reality of the religion of almost all others, and think it nothing but a delusion or disorder of the passions. Others conclude, or at least have some apprehension, that there is nothing in experimental religion at all; that it is all a mere delusion, arising from the temperament of the body, or excited by passionate addresses, animal exertion, and the like. Others imagine that because ministers are disputing about the doctrines of religion, there is no truth in any of them; but that all are doubtful at least. Too many conclude there is no reality in religion at all; but that it is all priest-craft or king's-craft: that the only way is to make the best of this poor miserable world, having nothing better to expect. The youth, the poor unhappy youth, find themselves free from the restraints of religion, and rejoice

in their liberty; are sceptical in their opinions, and hasting to a confirmed and inveterate infidelity: they neglect religious worship, or attend it without reverence, or any serious thoughts of improvement.

There appears to be some, who, under a hypocritical pretence of being ministers of the gospel, are labouring to destroy the christian religion and promote infidelity. This was undoubtedly the case with the man who taught the people that a certain man, now living, was the prophet foretold by Moses—Deut. xviii. 15, and assured them, that all who would not hear that prophet should be destroyed, that is, as he explained it, annihilated from among the people. Such preachers will probably excuse their malicious hypocritical exertions by the goodness of their intentions.

These things will soon lower the standard of morals in our country, sufficiently reduced already—produce an inundation of vice and immorality; and thus greatly injure religious and civil society. The manners of the people will be more vitiated; government will hold a looser reign; idleness, dissipation, and audacious wickedness more prevail; theft, robbery and murder, already too prevalent, will continue to increase, and we shall ripen fast for destruction. Religion and civil liberty, it is to be feared, will soon be in exile.

The different sects mentioned above are sure the millennium is approaching. The Semi-Pelagians and Arians are supposed to be the great instruments God has raised up to usher in and advance the *latter-day glory*. The disciple of Moses's prophet assures us, as I am informed, that Sergeant is the man who is called to

this glorious work. Is not the same privilege claimed by those who have resurrection bodies, are as holy as angels, can forgive sins, and give the Holy Spirit? Surely, one would think, they must have an exclusive right to this distinguishing privilege: all must relinquish their claim, and humbly bow to them.

One says, lo here is Christ; another, lo he is there. Go ye not after them.

“Here are new and farther advances in holiness than the world has ever known before—progressive from one step to another; for the infirmities and complaints of former prophets, apostles and ancient saints, are heard no more: nothing but innocence and joy remains. I see, I feel this is right: it must be so. I feel the millennium now begun in my soul.” Thus men will reason, and thus they conclude.

By this time you may be tired of this picture of deformity, and ready anxiously to inquire, what is it that has brought religion into this unhappy state?

To this I reply, several things have concurred to produce these evils.

The first I shall mention is a mistake about the leading of the Spirit of God.

By the Spirit, as the word is sometimes used in scripture, (John xiv. 26—xv. 27—xvi. 13, 14, 15,) we are to understand a divine agent, the third person of the adorable Trinity, who operates upon the mind, opening the understanding to understand the scriptures, applies them to the heart, and by them produces a holy disposition. By the Spirit in other passages is meant the holy disposition produced by this divine agent.

Taken in the first sense, the Spirit is a Creator; taken in the second, it is a creature of Divine Power. The Spirit in the first sense is an infallible guide, whose directions we may always follow with safety: but his ordinary way of teaching is by the written word, and not by any new revelation of doctrine or duty not already revealed in the Bible, nor any new spiritual meaning which the words were not calculated to express. The Spirit in the other sense of the word, is not the guide of our actions, or the rule of our faith and practice, but an inward principle of action, inclining and enabling us to follow the directions of the written word. We are not to learn what is truth or duty by the teachings of the Spirit within us; but we are to judge of the Spirit within us, and what is truth and duty, by the teachings of the Spirit without us, i. e. by the word he has inspired.

The Spirit within us may be, and commonly is, attended with many natural and moral imperfections; ignorance, vanity, self-sufficiency, &c. If we follow it as thus attended, it may lead us into a wilderness of error and sin.

It has made some imagine they have received particular messages from heaven, to deliver to particular persons, and to carry and deliver them in the name of the Lord, and in such manner as to bring disgrace upon the religion of Jesus.

It has led some to reprove their fellow creatures for their sins, in a haughty, domineering way, foreign from the spirit of the gospel, in a way exactly suited to excite the strongest prejudices against religion.

It has led others to think themselves called of God to preach the gospel, and to go on, relying on their inward call, and neglecting almost every ministerial qualification required in the sacred Scriptures. Some of them utter a strange mixture of sense and non-sense, truth and error, medicine and poison, with as much confidence as if all been inspired by infinite wisdom. No preachers less qualified, and none more confident. Thus following the Spirit, men disgrace, and, were it possible, would destroy the heaven-born religion of Jesus, which is the work of the Spirit of God.

Another thing which has contributed to produce the melancholy effects above mentioned, was mistaking the nature of various bodily exercises, ascribing them to a wrong cause, and, especially, overrating them.

Whatever affects the mind will also affect the body, the organ by which its acts. These affections of the body will be different, according to the different constitutions of the bodies which are the subjects of them, and various other circumstances.

The first bodily exercise, which appeared in our worshipping assemblies, was *falling*. This was succeeded by involuntary convulsive *laughing*, by the *jirks*, by an involuntary motion a little resembling *dancing*, &c. &c.\*

\* The very unjust estimate which has been formed of those bodily exercises in our country, has produced incalculable mischief to society. It gave currency to certain agitations, which, at first, were merely accidental, or, at most, only sympathetic. It impressed them with the signet of heaven, and taught the uninformed mind to view it as horrid profanity to utter a sentence against them. That imposing awe with which the uninstructed part of society viewed those exercises—that extravagant admiration with which

These were supposed by some to be the effects of an extraordinary diabolical agency, by others to be the effects of a miraculous operation of divine power and grace. Both these mistakes contributed to raise these

they were hailed and courted every where, by well-meaning people, as the wonderful power of God, and that unrestrained freedom with which they have been permitted to operate, has been the hot-bed of every extravagance of opinion and practice which exists among us. We need not wonder that a schismatic spirit, or even Shakerism, has arisen up, and should still make progress, when we consider how corporeal agitation has been admired and fostered. This made religion a mere animal thing with great numbers—feeling became the test of truth, and thus the flood-gate was opened for a torrent of error, both in sentiment and religious practice. From that sympathy which exists between mind and body, there can be no doubt that the latter may be, and often is, considerably affected under real and genuine impressions of religion, but those agitations of the body should never be estimated—they should never be considered as distinguished marks of piety. That which may be the result of a certain irritable organization of fiber—that which occurs in a great many cases of morbid excitement—that which may be, and often has been, successfully imitated by artificial stimulus—that which has been associated with pagan idolatry as well as with every hideous corruption of christianity, should never become matter of admiration, much less of triumph, with any one. Let those who have been in the habit of encouraging bodily exercises, read what history records of the violent, but similar agitations of poor savages, in worshipping false gods. Let them review the convulsions, and various animal motions, which happened among deluded thousands at the tomb of the Abbe de Paris. Let them peruse the biography of canonized saints of the Popish hierarchy, and the progress of the Mystics, the French Prophets, and many other fanatics, and if I am not mistaken, they will have little occasion to boast, and may, perhaps, learn how little confidence should be placed in things of this kind. There may be cases in which it will be christian to bear with bodily motions, without either praising or reviling them; but to look upon them as allied to animated religion, to halloo them as glorious eviden-

agitations into vast consequence. The one made them matter of great dread, the other of ardent desire. Both helped to preserve, perpetuate, and extend them. The truth is, we knew not what was the cause, and this we ought modestly to have acknowledged. We ought, however, to have remembered that bodily convulsions, the jirks, &c. are never mentioned in scripture as evidences of a graceless state, or a delusion of the devil; nor yet as evidences of a work of God's grace. In a religious view, we ought to have thought but little of them, and endeavoured to have turned off the attention of the people from them to the great fundamental doctrines of religion, to the exercises of the mind, to the dispositions of the heart, and to a holy practice. Some, it is true, did this, but it was almost at the expense of their reputation as Christians. Most acknowledged that religion did not consist in these bodily agitations; yet many were more offended at hearing them calmly opposed, than at hearing some of the great fundamental principles of the Christian religion corrupted or contradicted by a warm lively preacher.

A careful observer of these bodily exercises, must sometimes have seen that the subjects of them were deeply affected with the truths of God's word, and at

ces of a great revival, and to interrupt the solemn services of the sanctuary for their full and unrestrained exercise, is to open a wide door for the introduction of hypocrisy and every evil work; and thus in an indirect way to subject the religion of the Divine Saviour to reproach and contempt. In this way the church has been stricken through with many wounds, and it will be long, I fear, ere she recover from them. May the Lord redeem Zion from all her troubles.

*Anon.*

first view would be apt to think these impressions their only cause. In other instances, he would observe that religious impressions were very superficial. In other instances, again, it could not be discovered that a knowledge and sense of religion had any hand in producing the effect.

A number of instances of the first kind being observed by some good men, they were incautiously induced to draw the general conclusion, that all must be from a good spirit, and this led them to act improperly. In instances of the last kind, the cause was no doubt sympathy; a powerful principle, known to be sufficient to produce similar effects in cases where religion had nothing to do; but of which few instances had been known by any of the inhabitants of Kentucky. Where religious impressions were superficial, sympathy was no doubt the principal, though not the sole agent. And even where the mind was deeply impressed with divine truth, it is not unreasonable to suppose that this principle co-operated in producing the bodily affection, at least in a number of cases, in giving them their particular cast, and in spreading them through the land.

Where these bodily agitations were very great, and attended with some superficial impressions of religion, both together might very much terrify and alarm the subjects of them, and these terrors might be succeeded by transports of joy and songs of praise; the one without any knowledge of God and his law, the other without any knowledge of Christ and the gospel. Too often all was ascribed to the mighty power of God's

grace; the persons were said to have got religion, and proclaimed new born heirs of glory.

Thus the poor creatures were flattered into the belief, that they had passed from death to life, without any scriptural evidence to satisfy their own minds, or the mind of any body else. Of these, many have fallen into error or sin, and more may yet fall.\*

\* Of such converts the opinion is frequently and confidently advanced that they really had religion, but have fallen and lost it. It would be desirable if people would be more modest on a subject where, to say the least, all doubt cannot be dissipated. For, indeed, I do not know how any one, unless indued with inspiration, is to know that such unfortunate persons ever had religion. There is the highest authority for believing just the contrary. Our Lord has said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." John viii. 31. Continuance in the word, or lasting obedience to the commands of Christ, is here made the test of discipleship, and of course there is reason to believe that those who do not continue in his word never were really disciples. St. John forms this very conclusion concerning apostates in his time. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have *continued* with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." 1 John ii. 19. Christ himself guards against this peremptory kind of judging, or rather of pronouncing in favour of those who make, or may have made, high pretensions to piety, by assuring us that it is not worldly zeal, and imposing appearances, that give evidence of religion, but obedience to the will of God, and by placing before us what will happen to many splendid professors at the day of judgment. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. *Many* will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done *many wonderful works?* And then I will profess unto them *I never knew you:* Depart from me ye that work iniquity." Matt. vii. 21—23. The good shepherd "knows his sheep, and they follow him;" but these, with all their lofty

By mistaking the cause of these bodily exercises, we were led off from the simplicity of gospel truth and gospel worship; and many having a religion chiefly consisting in affections, not excited by the truths of God's word rightly applied, were prepared for being led into any error by such as could excite their feelings.

Another cause of the sad state of religion among us, I take to have been a wrong manner of preaching the word.

That manner of preaching is wrong, in which the enunciation, looks, gestures, and tone of voice have a greater effect than the truths delivered. Deeply wounding is that method of preaching which is more suited to terrify, or raise into transports of joy, than to inform the understanding, convince the judgment, convict the conscience, or open the way of life to dying souls. There is great mischief done, and sin committed in the pulpit, by warm, lively preaching, as well as by cold, lifeless preaching. The one inspires men with false hopes and joys, the other sinks them into a profound sleep.

When the terrors of hell are denounced in the most awful terms, but the law not explained in the meaning of its precepts, in its spirituality and extent; when our obligations to obedience are omitted, or slightly touched, and the justice of the penalty not shewn, that man-

claims to piety, he never knew—they were none of his. Comp. John x. 27—29. This is not written with a view to solicit controversy, for of that, alas, we have had enough already, but simply to suggest a caution against hasty and positive decisions on character, which may be false, and certainly are premature.

*Anon.*

ner of preaching is wrong. When there is made a tragical representation of the sufferings of Christ, but the great ends of his sufferings and death are omitted, viz. the magnifying the law and justice of God, and at the same time, and by the same transaction, displaying the abundant riches of grace; such a method of preaching the gospel is both censurable and destructive. When a number of tender stories are told, such as Joseph's being sold into Egypt by his brethren, the distresses of the antediluvians in the time of the deluge, Abraham's offering up his son Isaac, or the mournful parting of friends at death, and told with a tone of voice and gestures suited to move the tender feelings of nature, but no profitable instructions intermixed, it is doubtless a spurious and hurtful kind of preaching, for it is neither law nor gospel, but a species of ghostly romancing on sacred subjects, which must injure rather than edify the hearers. If people's affections are much excited by any of these means, and they induced to think that such are holy affections, they are miserably deceived, and this deception may prove fatal.

When we speak in the name of the Lord, and on subjects of infinite importance, we ought to be deeply sensible of our insufficiency, have a holy reverence of God, and an affecting sense of his presence, purity, majesty, and glory; then will our posture and actions be grave and decent; our words well chosen, and our pronounciation solemn, tender, and energetic. Our manner will be in some measure calculated to communicate the same knowledge and sense of God, which we feel impressed upon our own hearts.

Due solemnity, without earnestness, can scarcely exist; but there may be great earnestness without solemnity. When we want the latter, we are apt, in the room of it, to substitute the former. When we are destitute of solemnity to affect the heart, we substitute earnestness to excite the passions. Then will the features be unnaturally distorted, and the gesticulations violent: we may clap our hands, and stamp, and shout, though we are saying little to the purpose. This manner, where it does not excite disgust, may stir animal nature, and strongly excite the passions, though it has little tendency to affect the heart with the solemn and important truths of God's word. People may take these strong passions to be the lively exercises of grace, and thus rest assured that they are in a happy state, though utter strangers to real religion.

So much may be said about feelings and lively exercises, as to turn off the attention from the great object of religion, and beget in men an admiration of their own feelings, instead of the excellencies of Christ, in whom all fulness dwells; to admire Christ within them more than Christ on Mount Calvary, or at the right hand of the Father. This is idolatry: it is worshipping Christ within us, which is a mere creature, more than Christ without us, who is over all, God blessed forever. Or, it is worshipping the spirit within us, which is no more, even where it is of God, than a created principle of holiness; which amounts to much the same as worshipping ourselves more than our Creator.

But the above is not the only wrong preaching in the world. There are others, who to avoid the blunders

above mentioned, study to be orthodox in their sentiments, correct in their arrangements, elegant in their style, and graceful in their delivery; but speak on the most important and interesting truths, with all the coolness of one demonstrating a problem of Euclid. This cool dispassionate manner naturally induces the people to believe the truths delivered to be of little importance; or, that it is improper to be much affected with them; or, that religion is a cool rational thing, which should inform the understanding, but never touch the heart. A manner of preaching as inconsistent with the rules of oratory, as with the life and spirit of the religion of Jesus. Its natural tendency and common effect is to produce, keep in countenance, and nourish up a set of poor lifeless formalists, who are apt to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, and stumble over a crucified Saviour into the abyss of ruin.

To these unhappy ways of preaching add a wrong manner of exhorting, i. e. a manner suited to answer the bad ends above mentioned; but little to inform the judgment, humble and purify the heart, or teach men to distinguish between true and false affections. A number have been exercising their gifts as exhorters, who had scarce a talent for any thing, but addressing the passions of men. Such addresses, where the judgment is not rightly informed, are unhappily calculated to deceive the souls of men, and prepare them for the reception of error. Whatever excites their lively feelings, they imagine comes from the Spirit of God in the speaker, and so must be right.

Some, I am informed, say that what they cannot feel they will not believe; which is certainly a strange, if not a criminal inversion of things, or turning religion topsy-turvy. Will they also add, that whatever they can feel they will believe? If so, then their delusion is complete, and they are capable of being led any where, by one who can take hold of their feelings.

There is another thing, which I fear often deceives the souls of men, that is, receiving them into christian communion under the notion of their being converted persons, when the evidence of their conversion is very slight, and welcoming them as brothers or sisters with expressions of confidence and joy, while they are ignorant of the first principles of christianity, and strangers to the difference between natural feelings and spiritual affections.

Before their reception into the communion of the church, they perhaps were modest, fearful, self-diffident, careful to inquire into the nature of their religion, and the evidences of its reality; but now, since they have the testimony of a minister, a church session, or perhaps a whole church, in favour of their conversion, the matter is put out of dispute. These experienced christians, they think, know all about it, and so they are confident of their good estate. When their feelings are excited, they find comfort in them; at other times they look back at their former experiences, to the time they obtained religion, or first got a hope.

By this imprudent and presumptuous method of some ministers and churches, I am afraid, many are deceived to their eternal ruin, and the progress of many weak,

though sincere christians, towards heaven, greatly retarded. Young beginners in religion, often stand in more need of ballast than sail. They are apt enough to be confident and self-sufficient, and to be driven out of their course by the strong gales of affection, without the breath of ministers and churches to increase the blast. Since their confidence is supported more by the testimony of man than the testimony of God in his word, it would not be strange at all, should they enjoy much more comfort now than they did before their reception. The great question is, from what does this comfort arise, and by what is it supported? This they should be daily and seriously asking themselves; and never rest until they find the distinguishing scriptural marks of the real christian in their temper and conduct.

When a person is sick, it is frequently the case that every neighbour who visits him, is officiously prescribing a medicine, though he knows not the nature of the disorder, the quality of the medicine, or its suitability to the particular case of the patient. Such officious quackery is often seen in administering to diseased souls. The cordials of gospel comfort are administered where the case calls for remedies more active and unpleasant in their operation. The seeds of consolation are sown in hearts never broken up by the plough-share of the law. The hurt of the daughter of my people is healed slightly, by crying peace, peace, when there is no peace. O that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the many thousands of the daughters

of my people, slain by these unhappy methods of spiritual cure.

It is easy to observe, that all the deviations from truth mentioned above, are agreeable to the pride of the human heart, and tend to nourish and increase it. The scriptural doctrine abases the fallen creature, and ascribes all the glory of man's salvation to free, sovereign grace. It maintains that we must be made willing in a day of divine power; that it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do. That God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. But when we conclude that there is a small spark of grace given to every man, and that this spark is to be blown into a flame by a self-determining power in the will, our salvation must be ascribed in a great measure to the will of man, notwithstanding the word says, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." If the question is, Who made thee to differ? the proper answer will be, according to the doctrine under consideration, the self-determining power of my own will. This must be the main string which sets the whole machine in motion, without which, all will prove ineffectual.

Here man takes a considerable part of the honour of his salvation from God and ascribes it to himself, which is quite agreeable to the pride and self-righteousness of the heart of man.

Add to this, that the moral inability derived from Adam to his posterity, excuses all the bad actions which flow from it, and that therefore they are not punishable.

How many millions of sins are blotted out by this bold stroke, or rather never suffered to exist? Nothing is a sin now but what is committed against this given universal light; and as this is but a small spark, a glimmering taper, the sin committed against it must be proportionably small. Here we see, as we proceed, the evil and danger of sin diminish; they become less and less, and the grace of God, in the salvation of sinners, also diminishes in the same proportion. And still, let it be observed, how natural and agreeable all this to the pride of our hearts.

The way is now cleared for a farther conclusion.— *That faith is not the gift of God; or that the Spirit of God does not work faith in us; and that for this reason, that we never receive the Spirit of God, until we believe.* The Spirit here means a holy disposition. According to this scheme, man does not need the Spirit of God, considered as a divine agent: for faith is a physical act, there is nothing morally good in it; and it is an act by which the unregenerate man receives the Spirit of God from his word, by which he is transformed into the divine image, born of God, and has Christ formed in his soul.

Here observe, man is farther exalted, pride swelled, and sovereign grace diminished. “You may blunder on and break your shins,” says one, “I will go straight to heaven.” “You are but ankle deep in gospel truth,” says another, “but I am up to the waist.” Such rough boastful expressions, such swelling words of vanity, though praised and imitated by people of a similar cast, betray the horrid source whence they spring.

All the above prepare the way for another astonishing step. When this spirit within, this supposed Christ formed within us, these inward feelings, for all these expressions, in my view, mean the same thing, are strongly and constantly excited, and we come to have a very high opinion of them, we imagine ourselves perfect, pure, and spiritual, like unto the angels in heaven. Here pride has raised the creature to an astonishing height. Will not the next step exalt him to the throne of God? Ah, yes; pride, if it could, would dethrone the Deity and presumptuously usurp his government.

The former errors are the several grades by which men ascend to this pinnacle. I do not recollect ever to have heard of one rising to this tremendous height in any other way. It is wrong notions of the Spirit, of being led by the Spirit, or of following the Spirit, which prepares the mind for this unsufferable arrogance.

We have laid the foundation for the spread of these fatal errors, by the manner of treating souls under strong impressions of mind or agitations of body. When we have seen men under these strong agitations, have not many gathered about them with astonishment? and called upon others to come and see the mighty power of God? When they have risen up in transports of joy, have they not, even in their hearing, proclaimed them converted, and given thanks to God on their account? when at the same time they knew not whether it was the power of God, of man, of the devil, of sympathy, or what, that produced these effects? This was the direct way to deceive their souls, puff them up with pride, and prepare them to be led blindfold to ruin

by their affections. With regard to many, it has no doubt answered this fatal end.

This, and the high encomiums often passed on young beginners, prepared and disposed them to despise the ancient reformers, to stop their ears to age and experience, to slight creeds and confessions, which had been highly esteemed by the most pious and judicious christians for centuries, to treat old authors with contempt, and to follow new notions, by which they might be distinguished from professors of former ages. It prepared them to be led by their passions from error to error—errors too, which were subversive of the christian system, dishonouring to God, and destructive to the souls of men; so that now it is hard to tell what they are or what is their creed. I say, *led by their feelings*: for by their feelings men have been drawn off from the doctrines of the reformation, which are the doctrines of the bible, into all the errors mentioned above. Neither themselves, nor their leaders, knew where they were going. By their affections, men were induced to renounce the doctrines on which poor guilty sinners depend for pardon and salvation. Yea, by their affections, some have been induced to argue against the doctrines on which they had trusted for their own salvation. Let such say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!"

That we had a revival of the spirit and power of christianity amongst us, I did, do, and ever shall believe, until I see evidence to the contrary, which I have not yet seen: but we have sadly mismanaged it; we have dashed it down, and broken it to pieces. Though I hope a number will have reason to bless God for it to

all eternity: yet, we have not acted as wise master-builders, who have no need to be ashamed.

Several years ago some saw we were doing this; but had not spirit or influence sufficient to prevent it. The first thing which alarmed their fears was, our overrating bodily exercises. They did not then know some of the causes of them as well as they think they now do; but saw that men were making that an evidence of a work of God's spirit, which the scriptures did not, of which they saw the danger. A second thing was our boasting, if I may so term it, of the greatness of the revival; which, if it did not arise from pride, naturally led to it. No doubt but the extraordinary circumstances that attended the work, occasioned this blunder; but they did not justify our conduct. The third was our breaking through the regular order of religious worship, and making it give way to other exercises, some of which are not appointed in the word. This confused the minds of men, turned off their attention from the word, prejudiced their minds against the the work, and even against religion itself. The fourth was a disorderly way of praying: twenty, fifty, or an hundred, all praying at once with audible voices, which appeared to by-standers as a confused jargon of nonsense, so that not none could say amen to their prayers or giving of thanks. This they thought calculated to prejudice the minds of men against the duty of prayer, and that it did in fact produce this effect there can be little doubt. They were grieved to see men earnestly praying for the conversion of sinners, and by their manner of doing it, throwing a bar in the way of their con-

version. The fifth was our taking such direct methods to fill the minds of young converts with self-conceit. We were often saying they prayed most powerfully, or they out-preached the ministers. The natural tendency of this was, if not to ruin them forever, yet greatly to retard their growth in humility and its sister graces. The sixth was our countenancing dancing as a part of religious worship, and vindicating it from scripture. This they thought corrupting the simple worship of the present dispensation, by adding to it a supposed Jewish ceremony; which christians have no warrant to do. This the more exposed religion to ridicule, as dancing is mostly practised by the vain and irreligious. The seventh was our long night or camp meetings. This they thought calculated to produce some very disagreeable effects: at least expose religion to the reflections of its enemies, in circumstances in which it could not be clearly vindicated. They also thought that persons being intensely engaged, for days and nights together, with little refreshment of food or rest, might oppress the animal system, and produce some kind of religious insanity.

Had ministers and aged christians, with gentleness and prudence, discountenanced these things, they would probably never have arisen to much height; but they were rather encouraged by too many, and so went on until they produced their genuine effects; some of which are disagreeable enough.

There is another thing, which might have been placed in front, which contributed largely to reduce us to our present unhappy state; I mean a neglect of the

knowledge of the fundamental principles of the christian religion.

These fundamental principles should be taught in systematical order, so as to show the connexion and dependence of one truth upon another, and the harmony of the whole. This, though a matter of very great importance, has been very sadly neglected. Parents have criminally neglected to instruct their children; schoolmasters have had their share of the guilt, and ministers have sinfully neglected their flocks. Six or eight ministers have frequently attended at one place on sacramental occasions; when one half of them would have been much better employed, had they spent the time in catechising the youth.

Though we imagine we know more than our forefathers, the truth is, we have more notions, but less knowledge. Our knowledge consists of fragments, scraps picked up here and there. Hence we are unsettled in our judgments, and liable to be tossed about with every wind of doctrine and cunning craftiness, by men which lie in wait to deceive. By many it is now thought unnecessary even for ministers thoroughly to study the system of religion before they undertake to teach. The modern mistaken notion of preaching by the Spirit, is likely to prove fatal to the cause of truth and piety.

It is no doubt matter of serious inquiry, Can we be recovered from our present unhappy state? And if so by what means?

With regard to the first question, it may be answered, The grace of God is sufficient, and this grace

have reason to hope for in the use of appointed means; for he has said, "I will heal your backslidings and love you freely." But as to the second, our great misery probably is, that we can see that others are to blame, but are disposed to justify or excuse ourselves. Every one being right in his own eyes, we will not own that ourselves are guilty of contributing to the evils which prevail.

Let us correct this vain opinion of our own infallibility, which we are so apt to entertain. Let us be jealous of our own hearts and our own ways, rather than that of others; endeavour to correct what is amiss in ourselves, and then we shall better discern what is amiss in others, and better know how to rectify it.

This advice, I know, is contrary to the blindness, selfishness, and pride of our hearts; and therefore we shall find a compliance most difficult. If we have adopted any new system of doctrines, pride, more than conviction or conscience, may incline us to adhere to it, especially if we have many followers. For this reason it is, that I place this in the front, and urge it as the first thing that calls for our attention.

It is not to be supposed that each of us is equally guilty; but I fear none of us is entirely innocent. If we have not been formal lifeless preachers or professors, on the one hand; nor, on the other, contributed to the errors and divisions which abound, we may by sinful omissions, or bad performances, have provoked God to cover Zion with a cloud in his anger. We should realize that in permitting these awful things, God is contending with us for our sins, and using means to hum-

ble our hearts. He has said he will stain the pride of all glory; and he will stand to his word.

It is incumbent on us ingenuously and deeply to repent of our follies and sins, to look to him whom we have pierced and mourn.

Let us reflect on what was said in the first part of this epistle, and seriously consider what darkness, discouragements, doubts, and perplexities, the present state of things has brought upon the minds of God's people. How many professors of religion have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; and returned with the dog to his vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire: how many seeking souls have lost their serious impressions, and become as careless, earthly, and sensual as ever, if not more so. How many careless sinners are greatly emboldened in their sins, and hardened in unbelief and contempt of the gospel: how many who had a speculative belief of the truth of the gospel, are now strongly prone to infidelity, and are in the way fully to fall into it: how many youth and children are prejudiced against the great truths of God's word, and have their minds steeled against instruction and reproof: how many precious souls are fatally deceived by false feelings, false convictions, hopes, and joys: how the great God, his holy law, and gospel, are dishonoured: how Jesus Christ and his precious cause is wounded in the house of his friends: how the church of Christ, for which he shed his precious blood, is injured: and what incalculable damage civil society will sustain by having the restraints of religion removed from vice and immorality.

With these things full in our view, let us most seriously consider what part we have acted in producing these unspeakable evils. Many common professors of religion have been guilty in various ways; but perhaps none more so than we, the ministers of the gospel. What have we done! Dear brethren, what have we done! Let us realize the greatness of our guilt, abhor ourselves, repent in dust and ashes, fall down at the feet of sovereign mercy, pleading for a pardon through the atoning blood of Christ. Let us look to the all-sufficiency of his grace, to recover us from our sinful state, and enable us better to act our parts in future. We should not only openly and freely confess our sins before God; but also one to another, when circumstances render it proper.

It is our duty, it is what the honour of God, our own interest, and the interest of Zion, call for, to return to that system of doctrines and duty, which we formerly professed, and from which some of us have greatly departed.

This system is contained in the subordinate standards of our church, correctly arranged and plainly expressed. This is the system which was adopted, though under various modifications, by almost all the protestant reformed churches. These are the doctrines which God has owned and blessed for the preservation and revival of Christianity in every age, and by which he is now calling the heathen nations from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: and what is more, these are the great doctrines which he has revealed in his word, for the instruction and salvation of man;

on which thousands and millions have ventured the life of their souls, and multitudes sealed with their blood.\*

Departing from this system, corrupting or neglecting it, has produced most of the divisions and disorders which have injured and disgraced the churches of Christ in every age. Departing from this system, cor-

\* Cowper, the celebrated author of the *Task*, a man no less distinguished for his piety than for his great and splendid talents, makes the following just remarks on this subject, in a letter to a young clerical friend: "Let your divinity, if I may advise, be the divinity of the glorious reformation: I mean in contradistinction to Arminianism, and all the *isms* that were ever broached in this world of error and ignorance. The divinity of the reformation is called Calvinism, but injuriously; it has been that of the church of Christ in all ages; it is the divinity of St. Paul, and of St. Paul's Master, who met him in his way to Damascus." See *Haley's Life of Cowper*. Those who embrace this divinity must expect opposition and abuse. It is so adverse to the strongest prejudices of man, so mortifying to vanity, and so deeply wounding to all his corruptions, that it was to be looked for, that error, under every possible shape, would be in array against it; and hence we find, that champions of every erratic sect, have levelled at it their most envenomed shafts. From Atheism, down to the least hurtful form of error, we are able to trace the same rooted antipathy; the same unceasing opposition to this scheme of theology. However variant and multiform their respective creeds may be, errorists of every name and complexion have one point of union; all agree to hate and vilify what they falsely call Calvinism. Peruse the writings of Atheists; Deists, Catholics, Quakers, Mystics, Socinians, Arians, and many more, and it will be observable that the same spirit of revolt to that system is manifest, and not unfrequently that the very same arguments are made use of to impress it. Even writers of travels and other works of science, men who surely ought to be polite, must pause to make a pass at this *austere divinity*, and mingle their execrations with the blasphemings of Bolingbroke and the ravings of Swedenborg. This is proof infallible to my mind, that it is not of the world, or the world would love its own. *Anon.*

rupting or neglecting it, has occasioned all the evils we have now so much reason to lament; the gross errors into which have run, and are still running. These disorders are never likely to be healed until we return, but will probably wax worse and worse, and at length terminate in atheism and the ruin of thousands: it being, as was observed in a former address, the natural termination of the errors mentioned.

We have tried experiments enough already, sufficiently to prove, that we are not the persons who are to mend the system of religion, and prepare things for the millennium. - No: we are too weak and too vain for such business as this.

A true revival of religion, the latter-day glory, will never be effected by hunting after, or embracing new notions, or finding out easier ways to heaven. Never by relaxing the laws and government of God, lessening the evil of sin, undervaluing the character of the Redeemer, the merit of his atoning blood, or the perfection of his righteousness; nor by rejecting the operation of his Holy Spirit as needless. But by better understanding the old system, feeling more powerfully the old truths in their transforming influences; by living more constantly by faith in Christ; not on Christ within us, but on Christ who died for us on Mount Calvary, suffering the penalty of the law in our stead; by better understanding the rule of our duty, and studying more honestly and perseveringly to conform to it in practice; by being more meek and lowly in heart, more prudent and tender in our walks, more temperate in our enjoyments, pure in our love to the brethren, just

in our dealings, and charitable to the afflicted. In a word, to live to God more, and less to ourselves.

This is the way for the gospel to appear in its purity and power, and produce its genuine effects; the way to honour the religion of Jesus, and promote the kingdom of grace. Thus let our light shine before men, and sinners will be converted, and the God of grace glorified in their salvation.

But it may be said by some, several of the doctrines of the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church I do not believe, how then can I return to them again?

When this is really the case, it is a serious business, and ought so to be treated by the doubting persons, and by those with whom they are connected. If they cannot get their scruples removed by private means, they should make them known to a proper judicature. This judicature should, with meekness and love, use their best endeavours to remove these scruples. If this cannot be done, and the matters in dispute should not be of very great importance, they may be passed by with perhaps only a friendly caution.

In this case, love to the church, modesty, and prudence, will induce the doubting brethren to say but little on these points either in public or private.

If the articles scrupled should be judged fundamental to the christian religion, and the scruples cannot be removed by all the mild methods which can be taken, they should openly and candidly declare themselves no longer members of the Presbyterian church, and no longer claim the privilege of preaching as its ministers.

Then they would be entitled to the respect due to honest men.

But should I, or any other man, receive orders to preach as a Presbyterian minister, solemnly adopt their system of doctrine as a term of my admission, and afterwards, changing my sentiments, disapprove of some of the fundamental principles of the church, and endeavour to discredit them, still professing myself a Presbyterian minister; should I, by preaching, catechising, or conversation, endeavour to lead the people off from the doctrines of the church, I should not only thereby forfeit the character of a Christian, but also my claim to common honesty; I should act an uncandid, deceitful, dishonest part. Should I, after this, make the greatest pretensions to love, discover the greatest zeal, profess the highest degree of holiness, what claim have I to be credited? None at all, unless upon the absurd, detestable principle, that the end will sanctify the means; or, which is much the same, that we may serve God in all the ways in which we have served the devil; or that it is right to speak falsely for God, or act deceitfully in order to promote a good cause.

By such uncandid steps as these, (I speak on what I esteem good authority,) some have mounted higher and higher, until they have the assurance, as is said, to profess perfection in holiness. Surely he must be a credulous man indeed, who can believe their profession. It is violating truth, and profaning things sacred, by gross dissimulation, instead of perfection in holiness. It appears more like annihilating the difference between virtue and vice, and destroying both natural and

revealed religion, than making extraordinary progress in the divine life. Whether Wishaupt's system of seduction is any where else in actual operation or not, this is a pretty exact copy of the original.\*

\* Whether there be an alliance actually formed between certain sectaries of our country and the systematic opposers of religion, is not absolutely clear to me, though some do not hesitate to assert, that proof can be had of such a coalition having taken place several years ago. Be this as it may, one thing is undeniable, that those very sectaries have been loudly trumpeted, and their doctrines ardently abetted, by a certain description of men, whose views cannot be mistaken. It is a fact no less unquestionable, that the maxims and opinions of these two classes of innovators have a congenial aspect and the strongest features of assimilation. The points of coincidence are in many instances striking, but in none more so than those of the boasted energies and perfectibility of man. That visionary perfection and power to *energize* it, which is the boast of every fanatic among us, is equally conspicuous in the pages of Godwin and the horrid journals of illuminism. Let it be remarked too, that the compliment of infidels is reciprocated by our innovators in religion. It is no uncommon mode of expression among them to say, that "Deists are much nearer the truth than Calvinists." This remark, while it proves an existing harmony of sentiment between them and Deists, proves also, that the christianity of such people is far from being genuine. For if Deism, which is just the opposite of real christianity, be nearer to what they call truth than other systems, then is their *truth* opposed to the christianity of the Bible. It is impossible they can be near truth if Deism be far from it. I wish it never to be forgotten, that what we have seen acted in this country between the avowed enemies of the christian religion and many of its pretended friends, was exhibited on another theatre. The Atheistic sophists of France some years ago patronized the Mystics and French prophets with unbounded ardor, and no doubt with the very same intention with which our western infidels are now doing their work of ruin. It is quite unimportant whether there be an actual coalition or not, between these unhappy men, since they mutually praise one another, and act in concert, and since they

For men to adopt certain articles of the Confession, as I understand some do, and still profess to believe them in what they call an explained sense; and when they come to give their explained sense, explain the true meaning all away, is also to impose upon mankind by acting a disingenuous part. The experiment has been tried before now with great success. It prepared the way for a set of clergymen solemnly subscribing articles at their ordination, and preaching against them all their life time. Their Confession of Faith and their preaching were constantly at war. But we are not under equal temptations to such gross dissimulation.

In our state, deception is growing rapidly. It has not only got into the market house, but I fear is also getting into the house of God, and defiling his holy temple.

Let us grow in the knowledge of God as he is revealed in the word, as omniscient, as almighty in power, infinite in holiness, inflexible in justice, unbounded in goodness, and absolute in truth. Contemplate this infinitely great and glorious object, until filled with holy reverence and esteem, humble adoration, and ardent gratitude; until we see that, as creatures, we are nothing in his sight, and as sinners, less than nothing, and lighter than vanity. I say, contemplate that God who chargeth his angels with folly, and in whose sight the heavens are not pure, and we shall be little disposed to admire ourselves and our own attainments; but would

have the same points of affinity and repulsion, and virtually conspire to promote the dark business of subverting christianity.

*Anon.*

rather view ourselves as less than the least of all saints. Yes, a proper view of the glory of God's holiness would stain the pride of all our glory, and induce us to think but little of our own perfections. If we knew more of Jesus Christ, as the brightness of the Father's glory, the Creator of the universe, the Redeemer of lost sinners, the great Governor and Judge of the world, we should not so much admire Christ within us. We should think less of the Spirit within us, if we knew more of the Spirit who worketh in us both to will and to do.

Our ignorance of God makes us ignorant of ourselves: our ignorance of ourselves fills us with vanity, leads to despise others, and esteem this an age of superior light and knowledge, and ourselves its great luminaries. This vanity, the child of ignorance, prepares the mind for the reception of every new error advanced with confidence and a specious appearance of piety and zeal: we esteem it a new acquisition—a further advancement towards perfection.

A proper knowledge and sense of God, impressed upon our hearts, would restrain many of those gusts of passion, that flutter of animal spirits in which some seem to think religion chiefly consists: it would weigh down, balance, compose, and solemnize our minds, and produce an habitual esteem of the excellency of Christ and the gospel of free grace, and a sacred regard to the laws and government of God.

Is it possible that we should see another and a true revival of religion in this country? It is impossible with men, but with God all things are possible.

When we seriously view the general state of religion, and the state of our particular churches; the growing inattention of the people, and especially the youth; how greatly have we blundered, and how liable to do so again; how have we provoked God and exposed ourselves to his displeasure, we have reason to fear he will disown us forever, and remember mercy no more, and thus sink into despair. But let us turn our eyes from earth to heaven, and check these despondencies by considering the infinite goodness and almighty power of God, and still hope for salvation; hope that God would heal our backslidings and love us freely.

Let ministers endeavour to be better acquainted with each other, and with the people, and more united in their affections and exertions.

Perhaps one cause of our unhappy divisions was the want of mutual acquaintance and confidence. Our unhappiness was, we came from various parts of the continent, and brought with us our little local differences, manners, and prejudices. Most of us being young, we had but little knowledge of ourselves, experience of the world, and, especially, acquaintance with religious revivals. None were natives of this country, and but few educated in it. We were so widely dispersed that we had not time and opportunity to become properly acquainted. Had we been better acquainted, and more united, we should probably have made *one exertion* to promote religion, and *one exertion* to prevent or cure what was amiss and hurtful to the cause. When one saw what, to him, appeared hurtful to religion, and out of a friendly regard mentioned it to others, he would

not, for this reason, have been esteemed an enemy to the work and treated with shyness. A deficiency in one might have been supplied by another, to the edification of the whole. Errors in judgment or practice might have been prevented or cured in time. The work might have been preserved from a number of hurtful excrescences, its credit preserved, and a thousand evils prevented. We should now learn wisdom from what is past, correct former errors, and endeavour to act more wisely in future.

Let us all, and especially ministers, exert ourselves more and more to promote a proper regard to the great fundamental principles of Christianity; and, at the same time, with equal zeal and diligence, inculcate the life, power, and practice of it. These should ever be united, and always go together. By these means, and not by angry controversy, let us oppose every erroneous principle and practice. In this let us be firm, steady, and persevering, leaving events to that God with whom is the residue of the Spirit.

All who name the name of Christ should be anxiously engaged to depart from all iniquity, and live the lives of Christians, not being conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds. Christians should carefully observe the precepts of morality, be temperate and sober, and make conscience of relative duties: do justice and love mercy, as well as walk humbly with God. Do justice to their country, to themselves, their neighbours, their relations, and their ministers. In vain we pretend to glorify God, or expect to enjoy the true comforts of religion, while we live in the

wilful known neglect of these moral duties; of which neglect many warm lively professors are known to be guilty. They are glorifying God with their lips, but he is condemning them in his word. They are indulging pleasing hopes of heaven, but God is angry with them every day, and hell is their certain portion.

Parents should realize themselves ministers of God's word to their families, that their houses are Christian churches, and the souls of their children and servants their charge.

A good moral life, arising from a sense of duty to God, is a much better evidence of a sound conversion, and more recommends religion, than the warmest talk, the most lively feelings, or greatest transports of joy, raised on particular occasions. Indeed, all that assurance and those joys, that do not tend to humble us before our Maker, and fill us with holy reverence, empty us of self, lead us to exalt Christ, resign to the will of God, and obey his commands, are greatly to be suspected. Such religion commonly exists no longer than these lively feelings can be kept up, because there is wanting an inward principle of spiritual life, there being no habitual change in the temper of the heart.

My dear brethren, the christian religion, which we have the happiness to be taught, and the great honour of professing, has always met with much opposition in our guilty world. All the power of persecution, all the arts of vain philosophy, all the delusions of error, have been armed against it. The reason is, it is directly opposed to the carnality, worldliness, and pride of the human heart. Yet it has been, and shall be, preserved in

the world: for the church is founded upon a rock, and infinite wisdom, grace, and power, has assured us that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it. When persecution failed, when the rage of Jews and the power of Rome could not effect its ruin, the sunshine of peace and prosperity, the arts of sophistry, the errors of professed friends, proved more successful engines, and more threatened the demolition of this building of heaven. But God is on our side: Michael and his angels are fighting against the dragon. Let us then not be discouraged, but join the heavenly host, and fight against those formidable foes under the banner of the Prince of peace. If we are called upon earnestly to contend for the truth, either from the pulpit or the press, let us do it in meekness and love, with firmness and perseverance. The best way to carry on this war is for ministers and people to be very humble, imbibe much of the spirit of Christ, and follow his example.

Though against the principles of our church in particular, philosophers should attempt to reason, and partizans or errorists exclaim, in or out of the pulpit, all this is no evidence that we are wrong, and ought not to discourage us. Let us not quarrel for our principles, but understand, believe, and practise them.

Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away by the error of the wicked one, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: To him be glory both now and ever. Amen.