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ORIGINAL.

AGUR AND HIS PUPILS.

LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, IN ALLEGHENY, NOVEMBER 8, 1860.

BY PROFESSOR SPROULL.

MY YOUNG FRIENDS—Assembled to resume our labors, in our mutual relation, as teachers and students, it is our first duty, as it should be our first impulse, to express our gratitude to God for his kindness to us since the time of our separation. Our lives are spared, and the blessing of health is continued with us. That member of the class who, by a severe visitation, was under the necessity of leaving during the last session, has been restored to a comfortable state of bodily and mental vigor, and may be expected at a future day in the Seminary. Let us not be unmindful of the loving kindness of God manifested to us by these visible tokens, and let it be the language of each one of us, uttered from the heart: "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefit toward me?"

Four of those with whom, on past occasions, we have met in the prosecution of our work, have been licensed by their respective presbyteries, and sent forth to preach "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." The church is thus reaping the fruit of her efforts in founding the seminary—available means are increased for cultivating waste places, and furnishing additional supplies to societies and missionary stations—the knowledge of the truth and testimony of Christ is more widely spread, and these young laborers have realized the desire to be useful, that should be an active principle influencing to engage in the service of Christ. Let it be our earnest prayer, that our divine Master would accept these services, and make them effectual by his blessing, that we may be encouraged in our labors, and have the confidence that he has called us to our work; and then we can look forward with well founded hope to the enjoyment of his gracious approval and

abundant recompense when our work is done, and we honorably released from service.

The utility of literary and theological schools to prepare candidates for the work of the ministry, is now generally conceded. There are but few, and they justly termed enthusiasts, who ignore intellectual training as necessary to qualify for expounding the words of eternal life, and conducting, with success, Christ's embassy to sinners. More there are, who look on such institutions rather as a human device than as of divine appointment. It becomes, therefore, an inquiry of some importance, whether for this, as well as for the other appliances which the church needs to carry out the design of her Head, she has a warrant bearing his imprimatur? And this inquiry will be answered in the affirmative to the satisfaction of the intelligent and pious, if it be made to appear that schools for training a ministry existed in the church with divine approval, at a time when communications of the will of God to men were direct and immediate.

The term, "sons of the prophets," is one with which all attentive readers of the Bible are familiar. The connections in which it occurs makes it clear that it does not indicate the literal sons of those who exercised the prophetic office. Those so called were evidently the pupils of the prophets, who availed themselves of their teaching in preparing for ministering in God's name to his people. The designation occurs frequently in the record of the official acts of Elijah and Elisha, and it is scarcely to be doubted, that these men of God were at the head of the several schools where pious and devoted youth attended to receive instruction. Schools of this kind, as appears from 2 Kings, chap. 2, were located at Gilgal, Bethel and Jericho. And it seems from 2 Kings, chap. 6, that afterward want of room at Gilgal caused the founding of another school at Jordan, at the suggestion of the students. The mention, too, of "companies of prophets," in an earlier period, 1 Sam. 10:5, and 19:20, shows that in the days of Samuel there were classes of youth whose hearts God had inclined to his service, and who availed themselves of the occasional, if not the stated, instructions of that eminent seer. In this way we may well conclude, such men as Gad and Nathan, of whom honorable mention is made in the history of David's reign, were trained for the invaluable service which they rendered to that monarch, in the eventful period when he occupied the throne.

From these scriptural facts, and in the application of the principle already adverted to, that approved examples are preceptive, it is a plain and fair induction, that it is the duty of the church to found and sustain institutions of learning for the education of her youth, who have devoted themselves to the service of Christ. And it needs but a reference to her history, to be convinced that her success in promoting the cause of her Lord has been in proportion to her diligence in preparing suitable laborers to do his work. In the discharge of this solemn trust committed to her, it is not the least important part of her duty, to see that those to

whom she assigns this task, have a proper sense of the responsibility of their position, and of the source whence alone fitness for its performance can be obtained. And they behoove, moreover, to make it the ground work of their instructions, to show to their pupils how little they know—how inefficient their own efforts to acquire knowledge, and to lead them to the Great Teacher, who alone can make wise unto salvation. This line of thought is marked out in the introductory address of Agur the son of Jakeh, to his pupils, to which I propose now to direct your attention.

The address to which I refer, is contained in Prov. 30:1-6. I give the following rendering of the passage:

Words of Agur son of Jakeh, the weighty saying, uttered by that eminent man, to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal. That a brute am I, rather than a man, and have not the understanding of Adam. I have not learned wisdom, neither have I the knowledge of the holies. Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his closed hands? Who has bound up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the extremities of the earth? What is his name, and what the name of his son? if thou knowest. Every word of God is pure; a shield is he to them trusting in him. Thou shalt not add to his word, lest he reprove thee, and thou art convicted of lying.

Who Agur was and when he lived, we have no information, except what is furnished in this chapter. His words here recorded appear to have been added by the scribes of Hezekiah to their compilation of Solomon's Proverbs, which they collected from some fragmentary papers, left by him in an unfinished state. The style of Agur so much resembling that of Solomon, and the matter of the address being so excellent, it forms a fit sequel to the wise sayings of the great proverbialist. There is good reason to believe that Agur was a teacher in a religious institution for training youth for discharging prophetic functions in the church. Such schools, there is no cause to doubt, continued down to the time of Hezekiah and afterward, where Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah and other later prophets were prepared for the work to which they were called. And how reasonable the supposition, that Agur having been eminently successful in his responsible calling, the Spirit of God directed the men of Hezekiah to give to the church an epitome of his instructions as a guide to others, called in after times to a similar service. As a part of the "all Scripture given by inspiration of God," we are sure it "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

What this teacher taught his scholars, is styled, first, "words," and then a "burden," or "grave saying." His instructions were delivered to them orally. He spoke and they hearkened. The living instructor possesses advantages over books, in imparting knowledge. What is uttered and addressed to the hearing, makes a deeper impression than what is written and addressed to the sight. "Faith comes by hearing," and knowledge also, its inseparable accompaniment. The matter spoken was of great moment. It was weighty. The word in the Bible in this place is rendered "prophecy." Elsewhere it is rendered "burden." These truths

which constitute the prophet's message, are of the deepest interest, respecting, as they do, the glory of God, and man's present and eternal welfare.

It is further characterized as the "saying of the man," or rather the oracular speech of a great or eminent man. Agur was in a place of authority, and what he said was entitled to the most earnest consideration. That he was qualified for the position that he occupied, appears from the summary of his instructions given in this chapter. He was pious, his morality was of a high tone, and his knowledge, though respecting, chiefly, religious and moral subjects, extended to natural things, as well. Before God he was an humble suppliant; in the presence of his fellow men he was a faithful reprovcr of their folly and sin, and among the works of God he was a wise observer, and had the skill to turn his acquirements in knowledge of natural things to a good account in his endeavors to promote human welfare.

The names of his students are given: "Ithiel and Ucal." They were few in number—only two. Such instructions as Agur gave had no attractions for the multitude. It is so now, and will be so until men see the intrinsic excellence of truth, and its value as the means of promoting man's temporal and eternal well-being, in bringing him back from his revolt, and restoring him to friendly relations with his Maker.

The names of these pupils are significant. "Ithiel" means, "with me God," or inverting the order, "God with me." This is a very proper and expressive designation of one who, like Enoch, "walked with God." The idea is that of one who lives near the throne, and has daily fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. Well would it be if all students were Ithiels. The repetition is not to be understood as indicating another pupil of the same name, but to show the excellence of that which the name expresses. It is emphatic—"to Ithiel, even to Ithiel." "Ucal" signifies a "strong one;" also an "eater," or "devourer." Both meanings, taken in a figurative sense, convey the idea of ability to learn—facility for acquiring knowledge. A mind strong and greedy for knowledge is a desideratum in a student, and makes the labor of the teacher easy and pleasant. The practical lesson taught by these designations is, that piety and talents are indispensable requisites in the ministers of Christ, and if we distinguish, piety is of special importance. "To Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal."

Henry, in his preface to this chapter, quaintly styles this passage, "Agur's Confession of Faith." The title is, in the main, correct. It was very proper that he who proposed to teach, should show that he had learned the first principles of the oracles of God, that he might commit these to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also.

This epitome of truth includes three subjects:

- I. Man fallen and degraded.
- II. God inconceivably excellent and glorious.
- III. The will of God revealed to man.

I. Man fallen and degraded.

1. The language employed to utter the feeling of conscious degradation, is strongly expressive. "I am a brute rather than a man, and I have not the understanding of Adam." The comparison is not between any one and any other of the sons of men. It is between man as he is, and man as he was and as he should be. The contrast between man now in his fallen state, and man as he was before he fell, is as great as between the irrational and the rational. The moral image of God was lost, and the soul is as destitute of the knowledge of the true God and of those sentiments that should influence it to serve him, as the beasts that perish. To this the testimony of Scripture is direct. Jer. 10: 14—"Every man is brutish in his knowledge," or, as in the margin, "more brutish than to know." This was Asaph's confession—Ps. 73: 22—"I was brutish, and did not know; as a beast with thee." To creatures void of reason man is sent that he may learn. Job 12: 7, 8—"Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee." And a comparison with animals proverbially stupid is to his reproach and dishonor. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." Is. 1: 3.

And the amplification of this idea in a negative form, adds to its force and expressiveness. "I have not the understanding of Adam." Adam had, in his state of innocence, knowledge of God. He was endowed with a capability of distinguishing and choosing the good. This was lost by the fall. The fatal act—the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—blinded man's intellectual vision, and left him the sad consciousness of degradation and wretchedness, without a ray of divine light to reveal to him a way of deliverance, or to encourage him to make any effort to recover what he had lost. That this is no overwrought description, is evinced by the testimony of Scripture. "My people are foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have no understanding; they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Jer. 4: 22. "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." Eph. 4: 18.

2. The inability of man to extricate himself from this state of ignorance and wretchedness is confessed. It would seem reasonable that the knowledge of what he had lost might stir him up to earnest efforts to repair the damage sustained by the fall. But this is not the case. "I did not learn wisdom." Heavenly wisdom can never be obtained by the mere cultivation of the intellect. It is bestowed, not acquired. "The Lord giveth wisdom." Prov. 2: 6. And this truth of our natural unteachableness needs to be known and pondered by all who would be truly wise. "The world by wisdom knew not God." 1 Cor. 1: 21. "The natural man re-

ceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. 2 : 14. The testimony of one who was endowed with this knowledge is conclusive, as it regards its source and the mode of its communication. Gal. 1 : 11, 12—"The gospel which was preached of me is not after man : for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

This knowledge, unattainable by human efforts, is described by its object. "The knowledge of the holies." Holiness, whether in infinite perfection in God, or as found in the angels who kept their first estate, or in men to whom it is restored by a supernatural work, is an object of which all men are by nature ignorant. The "beauty of holiness" none can see, but those whose eyes God has opened. The confession is true and humbling—"I have not the knowledge of holiness."

It might be thought that however true all this is, it was an unseasonable confession for one to make when about to enter on the task of instructing others. A little judicious reflection will correct this mistake. Learners in the school of Christ need first of all to be taught that the mere cultivation of their minds is not all, nor the chief part of what is required, in order to be fitted to go forth to do his work. A process of self-emptying is a good preparation for receiving of the fullness that is in Christ. The more any one is convinced of his ignorance, and of his inability to acquire knowledge, the more diligently will he apply himself to Him who is the Great Teacher, that he may be instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him." "If any man among you seemeth to be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." "If any man think he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

II. The second subject of consideration is, God inconceivably excellent and glorious.

1. And here, at the outset, we have to grapple with the difficulty arising from the magnitude of the subject demanding our attention. This is strongly presented in the interrogative form. "Who hath gone up into heaven and come down?" The mind, from the depths and darkness of its degradation, when called on to contemplate an object so vast, so high, so glorious, falls back nonplussed and perplexed with the greatness of the task, and of its own inability to perform it. Its confession is, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." The first thought is, that if there be knowledge of the Highest among beings who have sunk themselves to the lowest depths of intellectual and moral debasement, some one must have passed over the intervening distance, and in the light of heaven learned these mysteries in order to reveal them to others. This is a dictate of the natural understanding, and it requires to be wisely guided in order to produce beneficial results. In the direction we are by nature disposed to give it, it is wrong, perniciously wrong and dangerous.

On this point the caution given by Moses is repeated and enforced by Paul: "This commandment which I command thee this day is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Deut. 30 : 11-15. "Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down: or, Who shall descend into the deep, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart." Rom. 10 : 6-8.

It is the misdirection of this inquiry that has led many into the mazes of an infidel philosophy, and it is to be feared will lead many more. Supposing it possible for human reason to ascend the stupendous height, they have made the attempt and returned baffled, but not convinced. For them the portals of heaven were not thrown open, and to them the glory of the true God was not revealed. Mistaking the glimmering taper of their own reason for the light of the seven lamps that burn before the throne, they claim to have achieved the task of going up into heaven and coming down. How great their folly, and how bitter its fruit! "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire and compass yourselves about with sparks. Walk in the light of the fire and of the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow."

But the inquiry is susceptible of an affirmative and satisfactory solution. There is One who has gone up into heaven and come down. Him the Scriptures reveal, and through him a way of intercourse has been opened between the "High and Lofty one who inhabiteth eternity," and our fallen and degraded race. By the union of our nature to himself, the Son of God raised it up to heaven in the high honor conferred on it; by his humiliation in our nature, he came down from heaven. In this most mysterious oneness the problem is solved. The Theanthropos has ascended and descended. And this he claims as his peculiar honor. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven." John 3 : 13. "He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." Eph. 4 : 10. "No one knows the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." Matt. 11 : 27.

2. In the light of the revelation communicated from heaven through this divine medium, we may contemplate Him who is infinite in being and perfection. Here modesty and reverence become us. The caution to Moses it is wise to regard. "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." But as "the works of God are sought out of all them that have pleasure therein," we may humbly learn from the doings of his hand something of his

greatness and glory. To the inquiries, "Who hath gathered the wind in his closed hands? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established the ends of the earth?" even Reason, from a survey of these agencies and their operations, gives an answer. These are the doings of a Being eternal, almighty, most wise and most good. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork." And Scripture sets its seal to the truth, and gives a clearer revelation of it. "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." Rev. 4: 11.

The controlling of the winds, the bounding of the waters, and the fixing of the limits of the earth, present the principal phenomena that occupy the attention of the inquirer into natural things. And leaving out of view an intelligent First Cause, adequate to produce all visible effects, these phenomena must remain inscrutable mysteries. It is not, however, in our day, the mode by which truth is opposed, to deny a First Cause—but to admit it; such a cause, at the same time, as can be conceived of and comprehended by reason. On this quarter, truth has sorely suffered from her pretended friends, during the last fifty years. "Because they know not God, they glorify him not as God, but become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart is darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools."

In these inquiries, there seem to be historical allusions. By the passing of wind over the earth, the waters of the flood were assuaged. By the same agency the Red Sea was divided, and after Israel had passed through, its waters were restored to their place. The "breaking up of the fountains of the great deep," and the "opening of the windows of heaven," caused the flood that punished the inhabitants of the old world for their sins. Water was the instrument of the final overthrow of Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

There is, moreover, reference here to the creation of all things. "In the beginning, the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters." The firmament divided the waters above it from those beneath. The aqueous parts of the earth were separated from the solid, and seas and dry land were formed. How natural the inquiry, and how interesting, too, Who has done all this? Reason answers, that it was done by a being of wisdom, power and goodness. But the question demands a more satisfactory answer. That answer revelation gives. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breathing of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap: he layeth up the depth in store-houses." Ps. 33: 6, 7. "Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driest up the mighty rivers. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter." Ps. 74: 15 and 17. "He looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven, to make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure." Job 28: 24, 25. "He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them. He

hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand." Job 26: 8, 10, 14.

And the interest of the subject is increased to the pious, when an answer to these inquiries is sought in the administration of the kingdom of grace. The wind is a scriptural emblem of the Holy Spirit. "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden." Song 4: 16. "Prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." Ez. 37: 9. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." John 3: 8. In the administration of the covenant of grace, the Holy Ghost is sent by the Father and the Son to apply the purchased blessings. The Father gave the Spirit not by measure to the Son, and he now, in his exalted state, sends him as the Comforter of his people. "He has the residue of the Spirit," and gives or withholds according to his wise counsel and sovereign good pleasure.

Waters swollen into floods is, in Scripture, a frequent symbol of the judgments of God. "With an overflowing flood he shall make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies." Nahum 1: 8. "I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." Ps. 69: 2. The binding or restraining of the waters metaphorically represents the turning away of the wrath of God. "Who has done this? Who has bound these floods of divine indignation in a garment? The same who ascended up to heaven and descended; the same who has the residue of the Spirit. He whom the sorrows of death compassed about, and whom the floods of the ungodly made afraid." He rolled back the billows of divine wrath, and saved his people from being swallowed up in them. To him, in this gracious exercise of his power, may be applied the suggestive inquiries of God to Job: "Who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued from the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?" Job 38: 9-11.

And the same almighty agency arrested the ruin that sin brought on the world. The language in the 75th Psalm is specially significant as applied to the God-man. "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it." He who is the "brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person," upholds all things by the word of his power. He has set up and established the ends of the earth.

When, therefore, we, guided by the light of revelation, look at the evidence of the existence and perfections of God as exhibited in the work of creation, in the dispensation of Providence, and in

the achievement of human redemption, we see written in letters of light the answers to these inquiries. These are the works of him who is from everlasting, almighty, most wise and good, revealed in Jesus Christ. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by him are all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist: and he is the head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." Col. 1: 15-18.

Remainder in our next No.

THE JEWS.

SHALL THEY RETURN TO THEIR OWN LAND? AND SHALL THEY HAVE ANY PECULIAR HONOR?

SOME men of distinguished character and profound erudition, take different sides in answer to these questions. In a previous essay, I reviewed the opinion of an eminent divine of Scotland on that subject. In this, I wish to make some animadversions on the writings of Professor Hengstenberg, of Berlin. He is confessedly a very learned man, and wants to be accounted a Calvinistic, evangelical divine. On two or three points, however, I think he is wrong. 1. He reckons that the witnesses are slain. 2. That the Jews will not return to the land of promise. 3. That they, when converted, will have no peculiar honor. On all these points I think this very learned man has counted without his host. 1. The witnesses have not been slain—for *they are neither dead nor risen from the dead*. They have not yet ascended to eminence and conspicuous dignity, to the confusion of their enemies. 2. *They have not yet finished their testimony*, nor continued their term. There yet exists a conflict between them and their antichristian enemies. 3. *The thrones which John saw in vision are not yet erected*, nor are those possessed of the spirits of the martyrs seated on them. The seventh trumpet has not yet sounded, nor are the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.

But let us contemplate the other topics. The Jews shall return to their own land, because, 1st. *It is their own by promise and grant*, from Him to whom all the earth belongs. He that has scattered Israel according to his threatening, can and will gather them according to his faithful promise. If this is not to take place, why are they preserved a distinct people? When the penalty exhausts itself (as Dr. Burns remarks), and the reversal of the long attainder arrives, "Then shall they no more be termed forsaken, nor their land be any more termed desolate," Is. 62: 4; then the curse that has been written in rock, hill and plain, shall give place to

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[Concluded from last number.]

3. THERE are personal relations in the Divinity that demand the attention of the diligent inquirer after religious truth. To these the interrogations refer, "What is his name? and what is the name of his Son?" The idea of plurality in the Godhead is not less certainly taught in the Scriptures, than is the necessary and essential unity of the divine nature. The name by which God is first made known in his word, is in the plural in the original. The same idea of plurality is contained in the expressions, "Let us make man in our image;" "The man is become as one of us;" "Let us go down and there confound their language." Gen. 1:26; 3:22; 11:7. This great mystery of personal distinctions in the Godhead, was known to the Old Testament church. It must be so, for such are the relations of the divine Persons to one another in the plan of redemption, and such their parts respectively in its procurement and application, that a knowledge of these persons in their essential and voluntary relations precedes and leads to the enjoyment of its blessings. Whatever the church behooved to know at any time, in order to salvation, was revealed to her. This is not a discovery of reason, but a truth supernaturally made known. And such is its importance, that it must have a prominent place in the instructions given to those who are preparing to bear the message of peace from God to men. "What is his name?" and "What is the name of his Son?" are inquiries, the answers to which must be sought only in the oracles of God.

That there is here a distinction of persons, is evident. Father and son are, among men, personal designations, and the analogy as suggested in the inquiries, leads to the conclusion, that in the Godhead there are personal relations. And if not here, yet else-

where, the proof is abundant, that there is a third subsistence, called the Spirit, in the unity of God, and yet distinct from the Father and the Son. The conditional clause, "if thou knowest," subjoined to the inquiries, is not a hypothetical supposition implying the possibility of acquiring this knowledge by unassisted reason, but it is a challenge strongly denying such a possibility. There is one of whom all the preceding acts are predicated, and he has a Son. These are truths revealed in the Bible, and beyond this it is not safe to venture. What is comprehended in the name by which the Triune God has made himself known to us, none can tell. That there are three divine persons distinguished by personal names and properties, and in their operations *ad extra* acting in economical relation, are truths that demand our belief on the firmest ground. In these deep things of God faith takes the precedence of reason, and leads it forward in its legitimate exercise. There is nothing more unreasonable than to reject any truth authenticated by the testimony of "him who cannot lie." And to believe a proposition thus authenticated, though lying beyond the domain of human research and investigation, is not only consistent with, but required by right reason. Hence the human understanding never acts with more light than when it gives its assent to the proposition taught in the divine word, that "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one." 1 John 5:7.

We are thus brought to the consideration of the third topic.

III. The will of God revealed to man. If it be so, that implicit belief is to be yielded to all the asseverations of the Bible, it is of no little importance to be satisfied that it is worthy of such confidence. We are led in the discussion to consider,

1. Its purity. "Every word of God is pure." The purity of the Scriptures furnishes an argument for their inspiration. As the Bible professes to be a revelation of the will of God, it must be as free from all moral taint as its divine author. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil." Whatever proceeds from him, must partake of his immaculateness. In his word, no less than in his works, must this perfection of his nature be manifested.

The correctness of this conclusion *a priori*, will appear from an examination of the sacred Scriptures. A morbid delicacy or a fastidious taste may be offended at some of the plain utterances of the Bible in relation to certain forms of the violation of the divine law. But to the judicious it will readily appear that if these sins are to be condemned at all, it must be in language just such as is employed. It will not do to describe and denounce sin by using ambiguous euphemisms. And while the most scandalous sins are expressed in plain language, there is always in the same connection, warning against them as evils most to be shunned. Offense taken at such portions of the Scripture, indicates a mind not entirely stainless. It should ever be remembered, that "unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving, there is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled." Titus 1:15.

It is a consideration of no little weight in favor of the purity of the Scriptures, that just in proportion as they are read and applied, they promote the moral welfare of society. The friends of the Bible have often challenged its enemies to a trial of its excellence by this test. Whether in the case of individuals or communities, it is an incontrovertible fact, that a people who read and love the Bible, are distinguished from those who slight and neglect it, alike by their morality and their intelligence. This can readily be accounted for on the principle that it is a communication from God, designed and adapted to raise man from the degradation of his sinful state, and restore him to the moral position from which he fell. The Scripture claims no more for itself than facts accord to it. "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." Ps. 119: 9. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." John 15: 3.

In another aspect of the subject it is equally true that the word of God is pure. It is uncorrupted by human interpolations. All the ingenuity of its enemies has never succeeded in so changing its meaning by surreptitious alterations, as to pervert it from its original design, to be an instrument of evil. This can be accounted for only by a reference to the providence of God, that, notwithstanding the favorable opportunities to promote, in this way, the interests of the kingdom of darkness, has preserved it in its pureness and integrity.

And the declaration, "Every word of God is pure," asserts in the plainest language the Inspiration of Scripture. If every word is God's word, then every word is inspired. "Every word" here, and "all scripture," 2 Tim. 3: 16, are terms of the same import and application, and to both the statement applies, "given by inspiration from God." The truth of the affirmation in question follows from the premises of the *plenary* inspiration of the Scriptures, and from no other theory respecting their origin. And the important truth is elsewhere stated in similar terms. "Thy word is most pure." "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

2. Its power. It produces confidence in God, and thus evinces its divine origin. The Author of the word "is a shield to them trusting in him." It is reasonable to suppose that the word is adapted to the end designed by its Author, to bring man back from his revolt and rebellion. To this all the feelings and inclinations of the natural man are averse. The tendency of the evil heart of unbelief is to depart from the living God; and against this all human persuasion and arguments are unavailing. Here is manifested the secret, but resistless energy of the word of God. It is "quick and powerful." "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Ps. 19: 7, 8. "The ingrafted word is able to save the soul." James 1: 21. It strips the proud of his self-righteousness and

self-confidence. It overcomes his enmity, and leads him to seek reconciliation with God at the mercy seat.

It is no exception to these views, that the word has no efficiency in itself to produce these results; but does so only by the divine blessing accompanying it; for the fact of power from above attending it, is an indorsement of its claims to be of God. Means that he has not appointed, he will never own. He "desireth truth in the inward parts," and will never sanction a forgery or a falsehood. It is because the Bible is his word that his Spirit makes it effectual in bringing sinners into his kingdom of grace. "Our gospel," says Paul to the Thessalonians, "came to you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

And those who are thus led to trust in God, find him to be all that he proposed to them in his word. Experience gives no reluctant, nor uncertain testimony, to the saving power of divine truth. Its language is, "He is a shield to them trusting in him." The sinner, enlightened by the word, finds no safety in himself, and is enabled to flee for refuge—to lay hold on the hope set before him. He finds that the name of the Lord is a strong tower. Waiting on God in the belief of his truth revealed in the Scriptures, he renews his strength—he runs and is not weary, he walks and does not faint.

3. Its perfection. "Add thou not unto his words." "The law of the Lord is perfect." In the revelation of the will of God there is no place for human emendations. In it there is neither defect nor redundancy. He whose knowledge is infinite, adapted with infinite skill the communications that he has made to men, to the end for which they were given. God is light, and in him is no darkness, and the light that emanates from him partakes of the perfection of his own nature.

That the "Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the only rule of faith and manners," is no less true than that they "are the word of God," and the former truth follows as a necessary conclusion from the latter. The charge under consideration is but an iteration of a precept given to the church in an earlier period of her existence. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it." Deut. 4:2. It is the height of presumption to sit in judgment on the wisdom of God, and determine where, in the revelation which he has given, there is need either for curtailing or supplement. Of such impiety the humble student of the Word will not be guilty; his instructions lead him to a very different use of the Word, to be followed by the most beneficial results. "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." James 1:25.

4. Its sacredness. The Author of the word is its custodian, and he will see that it shall suffer no violence by human hands. "Add thou not unto his word, lest he reprove thee, and thou be convicted of lying," presents the prohibitory precept enforced by

a solemn sanction. He will chastise and punish (as the word means, Ps. 94 : 10) such audacity. They who dare to cast a reflection on his honor as the only Lawgiver, shall receive the due desert of such temerity. Their falsehood and impiety shall be exposed to the world, to their shame and confusion.

History furnishes apt exemplifications of the displeasure of God against those pretenders who have invaded his rights, as the Source of all revealed truth. The name of "false prophet" is fastened, as a brand of infamy, on the author of the Koran and those who followed him in perpetuating his gross delusions. "Coming with signs and lying wonders," and "speaking lies in hypocrisy," describe the great apostasy, the main part of which consisted in making the word of God of no effect by human tradition. These systems of error and wickedness God is even now, in his wondrous providence, reproofing and rebuking; and he will yet more effectually reprove and rebuke them. The issue of the great conflict between truth and error embodied in their respective representatives, though future, is recorded with the accuracy of history for the comfort of the friends of the truth and testimony of Christ. "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast and them that worshiped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Rev. 19 : 20. And those fearful comminations with which the pure and perfect Word of God closes, proclaim its sacredness and inviolability. "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things that are written in this book." Rev. 22 : 18, 19.

And now, my young friends, let these truths have their proper influence and effect on your minds:

1. See that you are duly impressed with your state as fallen, degraded and wretched. In a sense of sin and humiliation on account of it, there is a proper beginning for attaining to knowledge, holiness and happiness. A conviction that you need the instruction of the Great Teacher, will stir you up to go often to him to learn his will. Be not ashamed to acknowledge to him your ignorance and your unteachableness. "I have not learned wisdom, nor have I the knowledge of holiness."

2. Live near God in daily walking with him. Be Ithiels as well as Ucali. Unless your talents and literature be sanctified, they will prove a curse to yourselves and others. It is painful to think of any one entering the ministry who is a stranger to the religion that he professes to teach and commend to others. Make sure work of your interest in Christ, that though you should be the savor of death in them that perish, you may still "be unto God a sweet savor of Christ."

3. Ever rely on the instructions of Christ by his Word and

Spirit. In our day, many in the pride of their hearts say, who will ascend into heaven to bring down a revelation of the mysteries of God, his purposes and his works? Beware of such presumption. He who has ascended has also descended. Christ is in his church, and he is with all who seek him to instruct them in the knowledge of the true God and eternal life.

4. Have high and reverent thoughts of God as he has exhibited himself in his works. "These are great, and they are sought out of all who have pleasure in them." Science is in its proper place when it is subjected to revelation and made a handmaid to religion. The displays of the perfections of God in creation, providence and redemption, should excite in your hearts feelings of holy admiration and devout homage to him as infinitely excellent and glorious.

5. Let faith in revealed mysteries precede and direct your reason. Having ascertained what God has made known, hesitate not to believe it, even though there be in it some things hard to be understood. Accept a revelation from him as most reasonable, and leave it to him to reconcile what may seem to be discordant, and explain what may seem mysterious.

6. Have implicit confidence in the Word of God. Trust your own souls to its guidance, and labor to be prepared to commend it to the faith of others. Following its leading, you will be safely conducted. Its doctrines will teach you, its precepts will direct you, its promises will comfort and cheer you. Account it an honor to serve Christ, and believe that those who honor him, he will honor. "Be not weary in well doing, for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not." "And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

THE DUTY OF COVENANTERS IN REFERENCE TO THE ASPECT OF THE TIMES.

THROUGH the medium of the Holy Bible, in their own tongue, the call of the Gospel has been made to the white population of the United States. To this inestimable advantage it is to be ascribed that this race occupy all places of power, trust and wealth. Yet, in the language of Scripture, they have almost all "with one consent began to make excuse," and have gone, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.

Under such circumstances the duty of the King's servants is plain: "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the halt, and the blind." And again, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

The African race, who may be most truly characterized as these helpless, despised outcasts, have been ignored and passed by, even