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ART. I.—*The Origin of the Episcopate in the Christian Church.* By Dr. F. C. Baur. Tübingen, 1838. pp. 187, 8vo.*
J. Addison Alexander

THE Presbyterian and Episcopalian are agreed in this, that the affairs of the primitive church were administered by Bishops, Presbyters, and Deacons; that Bishops were ministers or preachers of the gospel, of the highest rank; and that they possessed the power of ordination and of discipline. So far as these points are concerned, nothing is gained, on either side, by proving from the Scriptures or the Apostolic Fathers, that there were three orders of church-officers, and that the Bishop took precedence of the others. This is admitted and contended for, on both sides. If Clement or Ignatius says that nothing can be orderly performed without the Bishop, or insists upon his title to obedience and respect, this is nothing more than modern Presbyterians profess to teach and practice. The point, at which the parties really

* Ueber den Ursprung des Episcopats in der Christlichen Kirche. Prüfung der neuestens von Hrn. Dr. Rothe aufgestellten Ansicht. Von Dr. Ferdinand Christian Baur, ordentlichem Professor der Evangelischen Theologie an der Universität zu Tübingen.

which necessarily tarnishes their skin with the tawny or red colour. "Add to this," says he, "their constant anointing their bodies with bear's oil, mixed with a certain red root, which, by a peculiar property, is able alone, in a few years, to produce the Indian colour in those who are white born, and who have even advanced to maturity. These metamorphoses I have often seen. At the Shawano camp, I saw a Pennsylvanian, a white man by birth, and in profession a Christian, who, by the inclemency of the sun, and his endeavours to produce the Indian colour, was tarnished with as deep an Indian hue as any in the camp; though he had been in the woods only four years." And whatever may be the original cause of the red, or any other colour of the skin, we know that after a while it becomes hereditary; which we see every day exemplified, not only in the national complexion of a whole people, but in the dark or fair colour and hair in particular families of the same nation.

The Indians are almost universally well formed, and remarkably free from deformities, or bodily defects. When a number of them, from a distant tribe, visited New York, a few years ago, they were taken to the deaf and dumb asylum; and, at first, they would not believe what was told them respecting the mutes, and declared that no instances of similar defects had ever been known among them.

J. W. Geomans.

ART. V.—1. *Religion of the Bible, in Select Discourses.*

By Thomas H. Skinner. New York: John S. Taylor. 1839. pp. 323.

2. *Aids to Preaching and Hearing.* By Thomas H. Skinner. New York: John S. Taylor. 1839. pp. 305.

WE have kept the first of these books for several months upon our table, with the design of taking the first opportunity of preparing for our pages a few thoughts on the character of the work, and the subjects of the several discourses; and we now fulfil our intention, with no fear that our remarks will be deemed unseasonable, although the author has more recently given to the public the other volume.

The pious sentiments of Dr. Skinner, and his eminence and popularity as a preacher and a writer, afford high hope of increasing advantage to the cause of truth and righteous-

ness from his pen. While he makes free use of the press—a use which, in his case, we wish by no means to discourage as excessive—he owes it to his own reputation, to the edification of his contemporaries, and to the spiritual good of those whom he may secure as his readers in coming generations, to employ his talents with discretion. It is not of small importance what a man writes who can write well. He is not at liberty to lavish eminent abilities on unworthy themes; nor does it become him to handle great themes for the sake of their minor and incidental bearings: nor yet can he fitly occupy an excellent talent which he has, in endeavours to emulate or display a talent which he has not.

In estimating the comparative worth of the intellectual abilities which are appointed to the service of the church on earth, we are not permitted to assign to an inferior place the power of an attractive writer. The Holy Spirit works pre-eminently like himself while employing literary accomplishments among the means by which he takes of Christ's, and shows it to the people. And he clothes those instruments, while he uses them, with his own sacredness and dignity. Who shall say whether they are of the lower order of means or of the higher? It avails nothing to the due honour of the servants of God, that we distinguish by rank the different talents called into his service. How, or to what purpose, should we judge, whether he be the greater who settles and fortifies truth by impregnable argument, or he who wins the world's attention to it by the adventitious charms of an elegant pen?

Let both be admonished that the Lord hath need of them; and whether more of the one than of the other, let neither inquire. Shall the argument say to the trope, I have no need of thee? Truth, as a subject for the mental exercises, offers all the faculties employment. The logic she stands on yields no greater advantage to reason, than her form, dress and position may yield to taste. Persons who feel the power of truth, are wont to appreciate the greatest beauties of its language. It will never become the church to decry or to slight the power of elegant letters, till she has forgotten the profound and refined erudition of Luther, and the grace and sweetness of Melancthon; till literary taste, used as it has been and is, by many of the most successful preachers of the Gospel, shall cease to conciliate men to the hearing and belief of the word of God; nay, till the Bible itself shall be shorn of its literary splendour. He therefore performs no

unworthy office, who adds a literary charm to that truth which may have been prepared to his hand by another's logic ; who polishes arrows which another may have forged. Only let him take choice arrows for his purpose, which will be sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies, whereby the people shall fall under him. To such, his superior finish will give superior efficiency. If beautiful language speak powerful truth, the greater beauty will exert the greater power.

If it be a high service to the church for which we claim Dr. Skinner as a writer, it is one to which he may hopefully aspire. For readers qualified and disposed to appreciate their author's diligent exertion to please a cultivated taste, his books have rare attractions. His style, though wrought to excess, is manly, perspicuous, and often exceedingly forcible ; his language is select and elevated ; and although his pages have less vivacity than elegance, they are remarkably free from those intervals of extreme dulness on the one hand, and those paroxysms of sprightliness on the other, which mar the productions of many a prolific and popular writer. But what we most of all admire in his books, is the uniform and amiable ardour of piety which enlivens and illumines every page. His thoughts shine but never flash. We are never startled and arrested by passages of dazzling and elaborate brilliancy ;—a characteristic which seems beyond the range equally of his power and his ambition ;—but we glide agreeably along through the placid and luminous medium of his pious emotion, moved by the warmth of his feeling, even when least impressed by the force of his thought. This conspicuous virtue of our author covers many a peculiarity which would otherwise be far less tolerable in his style. It counteracts his rhetorical rigidity. When the reader of literary experience and discernment finds his attention caught by the extremely precise and artificial arrangement of words, he will not stop and lay aside the book with indifference, as in most other such cases he would very likely do ; but will go on without pausing, even to scan the fault. He will be carried over the bar by the tide of the author's feeling. If he sometimes meets a true thought in a false expression,* he will charge the defect rather to the writer's zeal and warmth

* As on page 116. "It is not he who studies and thinks, but he who loveth, that knoweth God." And on page 124. "As the Scriptures were given, not to afford materials for criticism and comment," &c.

in gathering strength for his favourite point, than to error in his deliberate views of the subject.

We commend the subjects of these "Select Discourses," as worthy of the ablest and amplest discussion; and while suggesting sundry infelicities in the writer's treatment of his subjects, we have the double aim, of stating and illustrating some general principles brought to our minds by the reading of this book, and applicable to all popular discussions of religious truth; and of intimating what we hope from Dr. Skinner's labours hereafter.

If any reader of the "Religion of the Bible" should drop a passing criticism on the title, he might ask with some surprise how a writer, not ambitious of eccentricity, nor vainly inclined to overrate his own productions, should think of such a title for such a book. We pass this singularity, however, with the only remark, that the title of a book may be its description or only its name. If the title in this case be only a name, it is faultless, for the reader should use it as the author does, to denote the book and not the subjects of it. So the intelligent reader will perhaps be tempted to use the title of this volume, and the more so, the farther he reads in several of the prominent essays; notwithstanding the author's prefatory explanation of his title, and his virtual apology for using it.

The subject of the first of these discourses is "Spiritual Religion." It is so called, as one of three kinds of religion here distinguished; the first being unbelief under the cloak of religion; the second, the lower grade of religious experience,—the assuming of the duties of Christianity without the enjoyment of its privileges, the third "Spiritual Religion." Three different sorts of religion. But the first is no religion at all in the Christian sense of the word; and the second, if it embrace no degree of true religious experience, is also no religion; if it embrace any degree of true religious experience it is so far spiritual religion. True, this is not intended, nor shall we be so unfair as to treat it as a fixed distinction in the writer's theology. The distinction is taken only for the occasion;—as a method chosen by the author for the time, to illustrate and enforce the obligation, and recommend the privilege of Christians, to maintain pure and lively religious affections. We are concerned only with the question, whether the method is wisely chosen for the author's own purpose, as being adapted to exhibit his subject to the best

advantage of itself, and of the system of religious duty and experience as a whole.

The distinction disregards the manifest connexion between one of these kinds of religion and another; and leaves the reader whose impressions on this point are to be formed from this discourse, to presume that to adopt the higher grade of piety, here denominated "Spiritual Religion," he must renounce the religion he already has. Of the author's first kind of religion, this presumption is just. Of this he truly says, "it were well if the world were destitute." "The form of Godliness without its power; the religion which would serve at the same time two masters; would join light and darkness, Christ and Belial, believers and infidels together, avails nothing towards true scriptural religion in any of its degrees. No matter how far and how entirely these two sorts of religion (if there is any propriety in calling them two sorts of the same thing) are put asunder. They have no affinity for each other; and are as diverse in their nature as they can be in theological definition. But the religion of "the mass of those who bear, and are not supposed to dishonour, the Christian name,"* is not thus to be set aside in the account of spiritual religion. For the difference between the piety of these Christians and the piety of Leighton, Baxter, Edwards, Brainerd and Martyn, whom the author quotes as examples of spiritual religion, is a difference rather in degree than in kind. "The hope of heaven different from that of the self-righteous, which springs from reflection on the general tenour of our conduct, regarded as an evidence of our spiritual character and state, . . . the hope of the mass of professed Christians,"† though it be "not *assurance* of hope;" though it "does not preclude doubt, but only despair; and leaves its subjects uncertain of their state, and not *sure* of their calling and election," is nevertheless to be treated as the first stage of a genuine Gospel hope; not to be cast away to make room for another sort of hope; but to be trained and cherished, till the grain of mustard seed grows to a tree; till "reflections on the general tenour of our conduct, regarded as an evidence of our spiritual character and state," shall be gradually displaced by reflections on the life-giving word of God, his glorious character and wonderful works, and all the animating objects of the Christian faith; till the hope which now only overcomes despair

* Page 16.

† Page 23.

shall extend its conquest over doubt, and grow into assurance. While therefore a writer proposes to himself the truly Christian endeavour of showing the reader the nature and value of Spiritual Religion, he can hardly secure to himself the credit and confidence due to well adjusted, complete, and consistent views of his subject, if he disregard the essential connexion between that high and holy principle and the feeble but not less divine principle of saving faith in the lowest stages of the spiritual life; still less if he adopt a set of distinctions and a course of reasoning which shut out from the reader's view the progressive character of all true and available religion in the soul.

Nor is it the mere *fact* of an essential connexion between the lower grade of Christian virtue and the higher, which we expect to find prominent in a just treatise on spiritual religion; we should judge the discussion deficient without due and studious attention to the *growth* of the spiritual principle, from the smallest beginnings to the perfect stature of the man in Christ Jesus. We cleave to the author's distinction. He insists upon it with all needful form and stress throughout the essay; we, therefore, insist upon it in testing his argument. It is the distinction between these two kinds of religion; first, "the middle path of Christianity, embracing, besides a profession of religion and the observance of ordinances, a belief of the doctrines, and an irreprehensible outward conformity to the duties of the gospel;* joined with a hope of heaven different from that of the self-righteous, which springs from reflection on the general tenour of our conduct, regarded as an evidence of our spiritual character and state.† Second, that religion which rises to the privileges of the gospel; including those lively hopes and anticipations, those holy joys and sorrows, that sensible intercourse and fellowship with God and Christ, that enrapturing communion with the Holy Spirit, that vivid and permanent earnest and assurance of heaven which the gospel warrants and encourages in every believer."‡ We take special note of what the writer embraces in the first of these two kinds of religion. It includes a hope which he would not speak against, except to lament that it should be made so generally the measure of spiritual enjoyment. It does not leave its subjects to the certain doom of unbelievers, but only fails of giving satisfying assurance to themselves.§ In

* Page 14.

† Page 23.

‡ Page 14.

§ Page 23.

other words, it is a lower measure, and feebler development of piety in the soul. While, therefore, we read successive pages of the essay, in full possession of the author's distinction between the smaller degree of piety and the greater, we fall with surprise upon one of the divisions of his discourse in which he asserts and goes on to prove, that the latter is the only kind of religion which *perceptibly advances the soul in the life and likeness of God*.^{*} This advancing in the life and likeness of God, means, as we discover from his remarks under this head, growing in grace; and the amount of this paragraph is, that no perceptible growth in grace can be experienced except by proficients in the higher attainments of the spiritual life. This we do not suppose to be our author's doctrine; but it appears the obvious drift of his inadvertent reasonings here. Would he teach that the leaven never works until the three measures of meal are largely leavened; that the blade and the ear remain stationary until the full corn comes forth in the ear; that the least of all seeds never germinates and grows, until the tree stands up in full strength and expansion?

The notable infelicity into which the writer is betrayed by the distinctions at the foundation of this discourse appears in his formal arrangement and discussion of some of the "many respects in which the kind of religion" he has delineated, "has greatly the pre-eminence above every other." When the reader has definitely ascertained his author's idea, expressed by the terms "spiritual religion," and understands him to intend a high and lively state of the religious affections, in distinction from a low and languid state of those affections, and from no religious affections at all, he is introduced to a formal argument for its superiority; and finds his attention engaged with an ardent demonstration that a high degree of piety is more scriptural than a low, or than none at all—more rational—more joyful—more increasingly God-like—more useful—and a more powerful support under evil. True; very true indeed. The soundness of the proposition is unquestionable. But from an argument of such pretensions, ought we to look for such a common-place conclusion?

Although words without knowledge yield only dark counsel to a perplexed and afflicted inquirer, they are not always entirely useless. When a superfluity of ratiocina-

tion is adopted as the medium of uttering and transmitting a glowing ardour of the soul, it is not to be denounced. A writer may reason to *some* good purpose, though he prove nothing. He may himself traverse a region of entertainment and salubrity, and to the readers, his paths may drop fatness; while the point he aims at in his course, may be of little concern to him or them. Still, though the sacred vocation of the religious teacher may not positively forbid sentimental journeys and voyages to Lilliput, after matters for serious or entertaining talk, it is nevertheless most highly honoured by that ardent piety which attends and impels reason to the most momentous conclusions. Nothing is gained by arranging religious instruction in the order of an argument, unless the conclusion arrived at be definite and worthy of distinct contemplation.

We are aware of the several uses which have been made of this discourse, in different forms of publication, by the author, and by others engaged in doing good; for all which, the attractive and valuable qualities we have ascribed to Dr. Skinner as a writer, sufficiently account. It savours throughout of an amiable Christian zeal which strongly commends it to religious people. It presents a mass and a variety of pious exhortation and counsel which cannot be read by Christians without advantage. In these respects, it is more creditable to the author than as a treatise on the nature and culture of spiritual religion. If, after extending our remarks on this part of the book already beyond our design, we should offer a thought on the tendency of this form of discussing points of religious experience, we would suggest its liability to mislead persons of small knowledge and little familiarity with the nature of true religion. We have often recoiled from the rashness and denunciation with which a class of preachers are wont to address professed believers of the less advanced and decided character; calling upon them to renounce all pretensions to faith and hope in Christ in their present state, and take for granted that to this moment they have been dead in trespasses and sins. It is neither unaccountable nor uncommon that the reviving sensibilities of a languid and backslidden child of God should be attended with alarm at the thought of the spiritual slumber from which he is rising; and that he should suspect some of the livelier and stronger pious affections of his earliest experience to have been delusive and insincere. But in the treatment of such cases by a minister of the gospel, it better suits, in

our view, the "religion of the Bible," to regard the feeblest faith in Jesus as a genuine gospel faith, and the hesitating hope which attends it, as a genuine gospel hope; to account them, in their measure, the proof and the fruit of the grace of God in the soul; and rather to cherish and encourage them, and provoke their enlarged developement and freest exercise, than discountenance them as another—a suspicious and a worthless sort of religion. It is also most unhappy for the cause of true piety, when the livelier and more bustling sort of Christians lavish censure on those of less decided character, as persons of no religion, and a discredit to the church; and when unstable believers acquire the habit of indulging alternate despair and hope, as the tide of their religious affections ebbs and flows. It should be one part of a pastor's solemn endeavour to help the feeble to judge between the true faith and hope, and the false; and having found the true, to prize it, and exhort his people to prize it, as the pearl of great value. We do not suspect Dr. Skinner of purposely aiming to encourage an indiscriminate denunciation of all or of any small degrees of piety; yet the connexion between such a practice and the form into which he has chosen to throw his discussion of spiritual religion is, in our view, too obvious to pass unnoticed.

The second discourse in this volume is entitled "Spiritual Joy." The sermonical prefix of which it was shorn to adapt it to its destined form of publication, is a part of Nehemiah's encouraging exhortation to his desponding countrymen who were giving way to heart-rending sorrow, under the convincing power of the law of God;* and the joy indicated by the text and its circumstances, is such as was naturally associated with one of the most exhilarating of all the yearly feasts of that people. The exhortation calls for those manifestations of sacred joyfulness, which befitted that holy festival; and adds as an encouragement to gladness, the assurance of that security which they who trust with most joyful confidence in Jehovah are always most entitled to feel in his powerful protection and support. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." With this passage the discourse associates spiritual joy;—the definition of which, as we gather it from a fervid and desultory paragraph through which it is diffused,† is substantially this: it is the joy of a pure heart, engaged in the animating contemplation of God

* Nehemiah 8: 10.

† Pages 47, 48.

and goodness, and in the exercise of benevolence towards his creatures. But the pretence of strict definition being disclaimed, it is announced as the object of the discussion to show the power of this joy, "as a practical principle." The body of the discourse is then built on the extended proposition: that joy "is the spring of our greatest efficiency, for good; the great mover and inciter of the soul to holy action and achievement; the sustainer also of our energies in accomplishing our benevolent undertakings; what above all things, keeps the mind going cheerfully forward in its spiritual efforts and adventures, and bears it on, without fainting or weariness, to a successful issue of its struggles and conflicts."*

"Joy is the achiever of almost every good or noble thing that is done under the sun."† Although this proposition inverted would sound more like true philosophy and common sense, it has some truth as it stands; for joy as we find on the next page, is to be taken in a very wide sense, including the "pleasurable interest" by which all classes of successful labourers "are held to their respective sorts of work." And if the principle fails, which holds people to their work, they will not achieve much, to be sure. The author's view of the practical power of joy is then presented, by showing that joy gives life and spirit to all the mental powers and operations; that it brightens, by this means, the objects of intellection; that it sustains and enlivens the performance of devotional exercises; invigorates the other affections; bears up the mind amidst assaults of outward affliction; resists the influence of worldly good; and prompts the requisite sacrifices and exertions for the universal spread of the Gospel. For the sake of these benefits to his religious character and interests, the reader is addressed with earnest persuasives to the cultivation of joy; and an abstract of several paragraphs will indicate the general position of the subject in the author's mind.

Under the vivifying effusions of joy, imagination awakes, perception becomes acute, the range of observation is enlarged, judgment is invigorated, memory is sharpened, taste refined, the whole soul, in short, is instinct with the spirit of intellectual life; and the will itself is in a great degree influenced, if not determined by joy; all the objects of contemplation, whether objects of fancy and taste, or, of faith,

* Pages 48, 49.

† Page 49.

are peculiarly vivid to the joyful mind ; the sanctuary, the place of social prayer, the closet, the solitary vale, become the gate of heaven, and the joyful Christian is inclined to pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit ; love, hope, even in full assurance, faith, every good exercise of which the mind is capable, acquire a zest and a strength from spiritual joy which nothing else does give them, and which nothing else can ; it gives faith and hope their strength to keep the soul, amidst seasons of storm and darkness, from sinking into the deep waters of despair ; it overcomes the world's attractions by presenting the superior attractions of those objects in which the spiritual mind rejoices ; it strengthens and prompts Christians to make the requisite sacrifices and exertions for the universal spread of the Gospel ; producing liberality, and engaging the interest of the people of God on the behalf of the dark and perishing nations of the earth.

In this view of the subject, joy becomes a sort of indispensable preliminary to every other good in the character and experience of men. And as such it is treated for the most part throughout the discourse.

Now the unspeakable value of spiritual joy as an ingredient of true religious experience cannot be overrated ; nor can it occupy too frequently or too profoundly the meditations of those who wish to know the nature, the evidence, and the effects of pure religion in the soul. It is one of the most inspiring and fruitful topics for a Christian teacher. No subject of fervent and intelligent discussion, excepting only the love itself of God, so powerfully seizes our attention and engages our most devout affections as this. None other so pleasingly occupies our labours in the study and the pulpit. It is the manna of the wilderness ; the water from the spiritual rock that follows the people of God ; the milk and honey of the promised land. A frigid writer on this kindling theme would be inexcusable. The very title of a disquisition on the joy of religion, prepossesses our attention, and gives us promise of a refreshing entertainment ; and we are predisposed to overlook many things on which the eye of cool and searching criticism would fasten. But when a writer makes it his chief end to teach us, not the sources, the properties, or the value only of spiritual joy, but its philosophical relations, we feel ourselves drawn aside from the train of merely devout reflection, to note the justness of his philosophy.

And hence we inquire :—Is it indeed so? Is joy in any proper sense the achiever of almost every good and noble thing which is done under the sun? Can this be said of joy with any stress with which the same thing cannot be said of almost every other pure and active principle of the human mind? Is it less true that a man's employment gives him pleasure, and that his industry and perseverance make him happy, than that his happiness makes him industrious and persevering? Which of these two forms of speech agrees best with the order of nature?

The discourse before us first defines spiritual joy to be the joy of holy love; by which we understand while reading the definition, a joy which proceeds from love, and is its natural and inseparable attendant; as heat is of sun-light; and this sense we the more thought just, from our belief in that philosophy which describes love to be a pleasurable emotion. Of course our train of thought was interrupted when we read* that "Love often exists apart from joy." Do the adversities incidental to benevolent affections in this world warrant the assertion that love is not always attended with pleasure? When does the heart love without "finding delight in loving?" And then it seems a sort of circular philosophy which defines spiritual joy† to be the joy of holy love, and afterwards describes it‡ as the parent in a certain sense, and the nourisher of love. It is doubtless true that a man is happy because he loves, and then loves the more because he is happy. It is true that perfect love casteth out fear, and whatever else hath torment; and it is also true that the grateful love of a pure and joyful mind is nourished by its very enjoyments. But it throws one's meditations on this subject into confusion to be told in one breath that spiritual joy is the joy of holy love, that is, a joy which holy love only and always yields; and in the next, that joy should be sought in order to love. So also of hope. The most obvious and usual view of the relation of hope to joy represents it as the cause, and not as the effect; as rather the fountain than the stream. And it must be only in an exceedingly qualified sense, that "the full assurance of hope is always the effect of joy reigning in the soul."§ The reflex confirmation which hope receives from joy is but an effect of its own operation. Joy springs from hope, as one of its chief sources in the Christian's soul; and hope thus strengthens

* Page 58.

† Page 48.

‡ Pages 58, 59.

§ Page 59.

itself by its own productiveness. "Faith likewise rises and approximates to vision when joy gives it wings."* Or otherwise, joy rises when faith gives it wings. The Bible speaks oftener of the joy of faith than of the faith of joy. The pleasures of faith arise from the pleasing sense of the value and attainableness of its objects, and from the congeniality of faith itself to the dependant condition and confiding temper of the Christian believer. Faith is before joy therefore in all its soarings; for what spiritual joy can a believer have in the world except what comes more or less directly from the exercise of his faith, and from the things believed in? "It must give zest and strength to every good feeling of which the mind is capable to have that feeling attended with conscious delight."† Very true. A good feeling without conscious delight must be a restless and weak affair. But when one such feeling shall have been duly discovered and proven in any human mind, it will be high time that our philosophy of mind and morals should be revolutionized.

The fifth head of the discourse‡ is a most conclusive demonstration of the power of spiritual joy to support the mind amidst the troubles of the world. Hope and faith, though needful, are powerless against the floods of trouble, without joy. There is nothing like joy to drive away sorrow.

In short, the putting happiness before holiness of heart and action, in the line of argument and exhortation, seems to us so little like the real "religion of the Bible," that we strongly incline to question the identity of the two. Whether, as an abstract proposition, the expression, *the good man is happy* be better philosophy than *the happy man is good*, it may avail little to dispute. But if the question be, by which of these propositions you will shape your persuasives to make men both good and happy, it is no light matter. Better set men's faces right, than toil to push them backwards in the ways of virtue. Nor is the question a trifle, by which of these propositions the Bible itself proceeds; whether it says, blessed is he that feareth the Lord, or, he who is blessed feareth the Lord; whether it says, the generation of the upright shall be blessed, or, the generation of the blessed will be upright; whether it says, blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, or,

† Page 60.

‡ Pages 60—62.

righteous are they which do hunger and thirst after blessedness, whether it says, believing ye rejoice, or, rejoicing ye believe. A strenuous and dogmatical obtrusion of the preposterous which betrays an ambition to thwart and confound the common thoughts of religious people in a plain matter, or to raise some gratuitous and startling novelty in theological discussion, while it violates the symmetry and the sanctity of truth, so far from abetting the pious intent, dishonours and defeats it; takes it away from the direct rays of scripture light, into the reflections of evangelized, but unregulated, fancy, and is useless and dangerous to those who do not discern it, and offensive to those who do. No writer in such a train can carry himself straight through his subject; and is liable, at every flexure, to turn upon himself, with discrepancies which demand explanations, or with contradictions which defy them. For example: On one page,* he will insist that prayer languishes for lack of pious joy, and on another,† admonish that to be infrequent, cursory, and cold in prayer, is the secret of the Christian's want of religious joy. On one page,‡ he will exclaim, until God send abroad the spirit of holy joy in the hearts of his unfaithful, unworthy people, there will not, there cannot be holiness to the Lord inscribed on men's secular pursuits, nor indifference for worldly honour, nor tranquil and submissive unconcern about the comforts of life; on another,§ Alas, that we should so love lucre, pre-eminence, and sensual pleasure—the secret of our want of religious joy. On one page (75), nothing is wanting to fill the treasury of the Lord, but that Christians should be filled with joy; on another (p. 129), nothing is wanting to fill Christians with joy, but that they fill the treasury of the Lord. Here (p. 72), let joy enter the heart, and covetousness is gone out of it; there (p. 84), love of lucre produces our lack of religious joy. Here (p. 66), joy vanquishes the sinful love of the world; there (p. 84), all forms and degrees of sin hinder joy.

Such a train of thought, as the leading one of this discourse, runs awkwardly on the track of either scripture, philosophy, or common sense. Christians are slothful, worldly minded, dejected, feeble in faith, hope, and holy love, languid in prayer and praise, and sunk in intellectual heaviness and darkness,—because they are unhappy. Men are wicked because they are wretched. Sin is the child of

* Page 56. † Page 85. ‡ Pages 67, 68. § Pages 84, 85.

misery ! Just so sickness is the offspring of pain. If a man would break his fever, let him put away his anguish, his rolling, wearisome restlessness ; for, how can organic functions go rightly on while every part is full of pain ? The writhings and turmoil of the body politic—cannot our statesmen see that these spring from nothing but the want of general happiness ? Let the community become peaceful and joyful, and how firm, pure, healthful, thrifty, and beneficent become at once the institutions of the state ? And the world of mankind,—alas, so little pious joy is felt among men that the larger portion of the world lieth in wickedness !

Well, be it so ; and to what purpose is it proven ? Suppose men so follow their common sense afar off as to fall under the intercepting influence of fervid and illusive exhortations formed on this theory. The result is an inverted use of the means of Christian improvement ; the pursuit of happiness in order to goodness. The Christian starts in the pursuit of joy, for the purpose of obtaining mental activity and illumination, and strong faith, and lively hope, and pure devotion, and spirituality of mind, and faithfulness in duty to God and to man ; and with what probability of success, those may judge best who have most experience in the process of spiritual culture. There is ample room in this course for one perverted spirit to plead the want of comfort in excuse for neglect of duty ; for another, in some raving of fanatical rapture, to magnify his goodness, through the delusive medium of a fancied happiness ; and for all to seek and find not, because they seek amiss.

The third and fourth discourses are on the subject of Doing Good.

The discussion sets out with this classification “of those who take the sacred interests of religion as their appropriate calling :” * “A part labour in the field of intellectual theology ; a part choose a life of prayer and contemplation, and a part employ themselves in works of active goodness.” This inauspicious preliminary raises sundry such questions as these : Is this triple division of the religious community according to fact ? Can the distinction be rigidly drawn ? To which of the classes alone or respectively do Edwards, and the other select models of the “Religion of the Bible,” belong ? What are works of active goodness, as strictly

distinct from labours in intellectual* theology? Is it to the body only that the activity of goodness appertains? Or does mental activity fall also within the compass of the terms? If so, why not the so called intellectual theology, and prayer and contemplation likewise, when practised in the spirit of true devotion to God and goodness? But not to dwell on this distinction and classification, which diffuses what we think an undesirable peculiarity through the discussion, we chiefly mark a few points in the treatment of the subject of the two discourses.

In the first discourse, the life of Christ is presented with great force and justness, as a life of active beneficence; and as the intended example, in this particular, for all his people. It is then shown, that the life of Christian beneficence ought to be formed by the Saviour's pattern; that all judge the Saviour's life to be the best that in such a world as this can be lived; that this imitation of the Saviour's life is presupposed in the doctrine of the spiritual oneness of Christ and his people; that such a life suits the real state of the world; that to produce such a life is what God is chiefly intent upon in all his works in our behalf; and that it is the only means by which Christianity can advance among mankind. The second part of the discussion contends that this pursuit of active goodness is of all things most conducive to correct theology, to improvement of Christian character, and to present and future happiness.

In the main, we commend the reasonings, and most heartily do we join in the solemn and pungent appeals of Dr. Skinner on this important subject; and while writing our few and fraternal strictures on some of his chosen means of illustration and enforcement, we are warmed and moved ourselves by his fervent plea in behalf of the law of love. A few thoughts first on some passages of the discussion, and then on one peculiarity of the discussion as a whole, will elucidate a principle or two which in our judgment ought to have place in the practical treatment of this and the other branches of Christian obedience.

The discourses manifest throughout, and in some places quite unhappily, the effect of the classification given, at the outset, of the lives of religious people. There is an evident effort to keep up a distinction between religion in pious mental exercises, and religion in beneficent action, as different

* What is *intellectual* theology?

elements of goodness. Yet confusion and failure attend it for want of clear definitions. Here,* active goodness is distinguished from labours in theological science, and from retired devout exercises, as a thing to be contrasted with them, and preferred before them in a separate course of religious practice; there,† it appears only as *the beneficent principle*, to pervade not only the public life, but also the labours of the study, and the prayers and contemplations of retirement. What is active goodness? For want of a clear definition to reveal at the first the subject of discourse, and to be adhered to throughout, some of the best thoughts in the treatise float in chaos. The reader perceives not what the writer would have him to do.

On page 103 occurs the following: "As the will or main purpose of God concerning his people, in all that he has done and is doing for them, by his Son, his Spirit, his servants, his word, and his high Providence, is their sanctification or personal holiness; and as holiness, in such circumstances as ours, naturally takes the form of BENEFICENCE, it is evident that what God is chiefly intent upon, in all things respecting us, is that our life should be a life of active goodness." In this wide sweep after a motive for doing good, the writer disturbs some half dozen points of no value to his main design, and embarrassing his subject with doubtful, if not inaccurate statements. Is beneficence in our circumstances the form of holiness? Even if we so enlarge the meaning of beneficence as to embrace all the expressions of love to our neighbour, would it be the only form of holiness among men? Love to God has many forms of expression which cannot, without abusing language, be comprehended in beneficence; and this is as appropriate to our circumstances as love to man. And as to our circumstances in respect of our fellow men; the mutual relations of men are reciprocal, and so are their duties. Beneficence must be answered by gratitude; and is not the form of gratitude as befitting to holiness as the form of beneficence? Could he not more safely have challenged contradiction, if he had said that holiness in our circumstances naturally takes the form of gratitude; for how frequently, in the circumstances of some of mankind, is beneficence, in its proper sense, impracticable? He would not surely insist that the good will and act of him who gives is any *more* appropriate to holiness

* Page 87.

† Page 118.

than those of him who receives. And the word "*naturally*," we suppose it refers to the nature of the holy man, or of holiness as a human attribute. Then comes up the query, Is beneficence any more natural to the saint, than other expressions of pious affection towards God ; is the second table of the law more congenial to his spirit of obedience than the first ? "What God is intent upon in all things respecting us, is that our life should be a life of active goodness." Such language would be proper if the writer believed, and if it were true, that the end of holiness is usefulness ; if the utilitarian philosophy were true, that every thing is good that does good ; and that virtue consists in doing good. To assert that God sanctifies his people mainly for the sake of their usefulness, to distinguish the life of active goodness, from a life devoted to the adoring study of the works, character, and word of God, and from prayer and contemplation, and set that forth as the chief intent of God in all things respecting us ; to represent holiness not as the ultimate good, but as means to an end, is the beginning of a departure from scriptural and rational views of holiness, the end of which it would be difficult to find far short of absurdity. But this point we are not now concerned to pursue.

A word or two on the connexion between doing good and sound doctrine. From the words of our Saviour, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God," our author takes a sentiment which he thus dilates : Page 115. "The light of true knowledge in divine things, shines with greater purity and brightness, not in the cloister of the recluse, the study of the scholar, the groves of philosophy, the halls of sacred science, but in the open and wide field where active goodness performs its journeys and its labours. On that field, assuredly more than any where else on earth rests the sunlight of spiritual truth. There is to be found *the light of life*, in which heavenly minds rejoice, the light of God's countenance, the illumination of the Spirit—that which alone deserves to be called light. He it is who best knows the truth and will know it more and more who doeth the will of God. It is not he who studies or thinks, but he who loveth that knoweth God, for God is love."

Without insisting that we exactly understand either the language of Christ or that of Dr. Skinner, we freely say, that the words of both do not convey to our minds precisely the same idea. To satisfy us that he has fairly transferred to

his page the doctrine of the Saviour's words, the writer must show that he intends by "active goodness" precisely what Christ intended by "doing the will of God." Then we should ask for assurance that what he means by true and correct theological views is neither less nor more than the Saviour would express by "knowing the doctrine whether it be of God." And when we have ascertained that his language is to be taken in its usual and obvious sense, and that it is faithful to truth, we shall be compelled to believe that the study of the scholar and the halls of sacred science are most unfavourable to a correct knowledge of the divine will; that the pious colporteur, or the industrious tract distributor knows more correct theology than Leighton, in the study of the scholar, or Edwards, in the groves of philosophy; or that Leighton and Edwards learned less of divine truth in their studies than in their good works abroad.

Dr. Skinner shows, by his own commendable practice, that he believes "the will of God" may be done in the study; and, if it be so done, the student comes in, by the terms of the Saviour's promise, for a share of true doctrine. For, that any cloud hangs over the scene of devout study, which does not equally overshadow "the field where active goodness performs its journeys and its labours," will not be pretended. Many an inquiring believer, who is searching diligently for the path of true light, would thankfully receive instruction on this point. If the different spheres of Christian duty are variegated with different degrees of light; if those who feed and clothe the poor, and teach the ignorant, and comfort the sorrowful, and *go about* doing these things, have a pledge of better knowledge of divine things than "those who study and think;" who task a disciplined and unwearied understanding in searching the scriptures, and finding out their meaning, and employing the means of securing their life-giving doctrines against perversion; who bestow their devout endeavours in the groves of philosophy, on demonstrations of the "Analogy of Revealed Religion to the Constitution and Course of Nature," or "Humble Inquiries concerning the Freedom of the Will," or explanation and arrangement of the "Evidences of Christianity," or preparing philosophical discussions of the "Religion of the Bible," and aids to preaching on the "Doctrine of Ability,"—the proof of the matter would be grateful to many who are sincerely studying the best means of growing in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus

Christ. It would afford a welcome relief also to many others who would rather go about than study, and who in their mental waywardness or indolence, lack the comforting belief that they are in the best way of gaining true and extensive knowledge of divine things.

It is more agreeable to us to blame a brother's rhetoric than his doctrines. We do not charge Dr. Skinner with the deliberate belief of what is expressed by his language above quoted. We suppose he holds, with us all, the doctrine that the humble, submissive and obedient Christian, is most likely, *cæteris paribus*, to know the truth; and we take for granted it was his intention to give strong and effective utterance to that doctrine, without undertaking to assert an exclusive preference for any particular form of obedience; and that he would teach that the spirit of Christian obedience manifested in any of its forms, the disciple to "be taught of God." If, then, he would teach, that the humble and dutiful believer is predisposed to receive true doctrine when he understands it; that his candour, his earnest attention to the sources of right knowledge, and his freedom from the intellectual confusion of a vagrant skepticism facilitate his discernment between truth and error; and that he has a promise of spiritual illumination as a gracious effect of the Holy Spirit, through his faith and obedience,—if this is the substance of the writer's doctrine, we only say, that he has chosen an unhappy way of illustrating it in this head of his discourse. If he intends either more or less than this, we choose not now to recognise it.