

of flesh and spirit! Every moral evil is to be removed by your going to a place of worship; which is just as absurd, as supposing that going to church will cure the king's evil, or wash an Etheopean white. How many of you are as careless about religion all the week, as we are?—as worldly, as grasping, as miserly, as sensual as we are, and perchance as unprincipled as the scouted worldling,—and yet, on a Sunday, you must be addressed as the dear, persecuted people of God! You must be recognized as the 'family of God,' and abundant pains taken to make you believe it! There must be signs, and marks, and evidences of christian character, so framed and laid down as to correspond with your *experiences*, or the preacher is a 'letter man,' ignorant of religion and unacquainted with his own heart!

"With a certain class, the most popular preachers of the day are subtle casuists,—men who can preach comfort from corruption, and infer saintship from sacrilege,—men who can talk about the everlasting love of God, proclaim the sovereignty of his decrees, unite sin to safety, and separate depravity from despair,—men who can determine the maximum of sin, and the minimum of holiness, in a believer—who can determine how near the precipice he may walk without danger, and how near without destruction—how much mischief he may do without remorse, and how much wickedness he may commit without being damned. They are men who can make out a secret harmony between sin and salvation, confound the dictates of conscience with the work of the Spirit, and scorch and burn all who differ in opinion from them. They are inspired. They, therefore, take no thought for the *pulpit*. Why should they? The pulpit, *abused* like 'the morrow,' like the morrow will take thought for itself. It is *given* them in that hour what they shall say; for it is not they who speak, but the Holy Spirit who speaks through them! What infatuation is this! If like the apostles they are *inspired*, why like the apostles do they not work *miracles*? Why not do the signs of an apostle?

“Hearers make preachers. Preachers know this; and they act accordingly. Instead, therefore, of addressing you as *agents*, they address you as *patients*; instead of regarding you as accountable beings, endued with life, sentiments, wills, and the power of action, they view you in the light of spiritual automatons—threshing machines or windmills. Instead of exhorting you to ‘exercise yourselves unto godliness,’ they speak against exhortations, call you the poor, dear, despised children of God; affect great tenderness of soul, denounce legalists, exclude hypocrites, and cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord. You are *comforted* by this process, and by being assured, a thousand times over, in much anger, and with much unction, that you can do nothing without the *Spirit*; and the Spirit resembles the *wind*—he comes and goes as he *pleases*.

“In this way you deprave your preachers; and in this way your preachers deprave you. Dirty hearers make dirty preachers; and dirty preachers make dirty hearers. Like priest like people; and like people like priest. A dirty congregation will always find a dirty priest, and a dirty priest will collect a dirty congregation. Men who love corruption will love to preach it, or to hear it preached; and men of ‘corrupt minds,’ will be glad of a corrupt ministry, for who does not like to feed upon that which is palatable? We do not say you are told to sin, that grace may abound; but then your corruption is not to be cured, but endured; and not endured *merely*; secretly and overtly understood, it is to be *indulged* as well as *endured*—cherished as well as permitted. On the principle of reciprocity, the pews pollute the pulpit, and the pulpit pollutes the pews. You anoint your priests with a fetid unction, and with a fetid unction they anoint you. The man who is gifted in luscious adjectives, bold hyperboles, vulgar comparisons, quaint expressions, whimsical conceits, perverse glosses of the sacred text, outrageous similes, metaphors, allegories, and spiritual conundrums,—the man whose qualifications consist in an epileptic experience—impressions, dreams, visions, mira-

culous interpositions of divine providence on very trivial occasions,—or in a proud humility of voluntary service, an ostentatious meekness, and a quarrelsome patience,—the man who idles away his time, gossips, collects news, invents anecdotes, becomes an oracle, assumes infallibility, fills the judicial bench, and consigns to endless misery all but himself and a small coterie,—the man who is *thus* qualified, is a ‘dear man of God,’ an ‘experimental’ preacher—he preaches the ‘gospel,’ and you ‘love’ him!! There is no accounting for people’s tastes. But this is monstrous.

“The folds and doublings of mental deception are innumerable, and we have observed another class of ‘experimentalists,’ who, preferring the hectic to the epileptic—the hush and flush, to the convulsive system, are deluding their hearers—and we suspect themselves too—somewhat less violently, but probably more effectually than the former class. These persons treat human nature in a very decent manner; for instead of tearing it to rags, like the German poets, or exposing its hidden parts microscopically, they are content with a few emotions, contemplations, or feeble velleities, all of which may spring from moral sentiment. This system—defective in its essential characteristics, inconsistent with itself, and not unfrequently administered in the worst possible taste, leaves the human heart under the dominion of sin at the very time its emancipation is being announced, or its freedom celebrated. It is an experience which tacitly assumes religion to consist in an *exemption*, not a *subjection*—in an *emotion*, not an *exertion*—in *impressions*, rather than *dispositions*—in *perceptions*, rather than *principles*. It supposes religion to be a thought, a sentiment, an influence, an affection of the mind—something transient, evanescent, feeble, and extremely fluctuating; the consequence is, that what is called ‘christian experience,’ embodies no great principles, seizes no great object, implies no high purpose, produces no important results. It crawls on a cabbage leaf, or moves in a viscious circle. It does not exist in the tone, in the temper, or in the holiness of a divine

principle. It knows nothing of dedication to God, or of assimilation to him. There is no plucking out of right eyes, no cutting off of right hands. Far from it. It is an experience which leaves sin unmortified, corruption unsubdued, the world uncrucified and the man unchanged. If a man is covetous it leaves him covetous, and comforts him in his covetousness; if a sensualist it leaves him sensual, and comforts him in his sensuality; if peevish, morose, envious, indolent, or influenced by any of the bad tempers, or malevolent dispositions, such he continues, and under the dominion of these he finds *comfort*. It is an experience which looks favourably upon human sinfulness; so favourably, that a man may neglect the duties of christianity, practise none of its virtues, seek none of its benefits, be entitled to none of its promises, and yet be comforted as a *christian*. It is an experience founded on wrong principles, administered as the price of popularity, and operating, in numberless instances, as a 'delusion, a mockery, and a snare.'

"Under these misnamed experiences, may be clearly enough discerned the deceitfulness of the human heart. When conscience speaks loudly and truly, you call it the *devil*, fill the atmosphere with spectres, and thus get rid of the accusation! When reasonable doubts spring up in your minds, respecting your right to the benefits of religion, these reasonable doubts are designated treasonable fears, and the sentiments of morality 'cursed unbelief.' From noble efforts you excuse yourselves on the ground of small abilities; forgetting that your aims might be high, though your attainments were low. You tell us the old man is *doomed*, though he is not *dead*; that he is impaled, though he has not yet *expired*; and that though he is not *crucified*, he is certainly *hung up*. But the truth is, you love the old man, with his deceitful deeds, too well to treat him harshly. You scold him in public, it is true; but then you 'change your voice' in private. Your feelings are too sensitive to suffer much, and but few of you have heart enough to 'hang him upon a tree.' Even where this is the case, you pity, and love, and feed him. Instead of breaking his legs to accelerate his

death, you take him down, administer restoratives, and resuscitate his decayed energies. In short, you will be worldly, selfish, and inordinate, let what will be said to the contrary, and let come what will come. You put your lives into religion, instead of putting religion into your lives, and then foolishly fancy all is right. Instead of managing your trades by religion, you manage religion by your trades,—instead of putting religion into your temporal affairs, you put your temporal affairs into religion, and, moulding religion by the world, when you ought to mould the world by religion, you recognize the form as divine, and experience much comfort in the resemblance you bear to it! By one manœuvre or another, you persuade yourselves into false conclusions respecting your state and condition; and so perfect is the deception, so complete the illusion, that while every body sees the fallacies of your pretension, and the deformities of your profession, you can discern nothing of the sort!

“Religion, you say, is eminently devout and *practical*. But in how many of your chapels is practice scouted, denounced, and stigmatized? Precepts are pernicious, and holiness is hypocrisy. You want *spiritual* preaching, and *spiritual* preachers, for a spiritual people. But this pretence, together with the whole system, is clearly a web of delusion—a tissue of gratuitous assumptions, and of manifest deceptions. For in the *first* place, what you call spiritual preaching is no such thing. There is no spirituality *in* it, no spirituality *produced* by it, no spirituality *enjoined* by it. In the *next* place, your spiritual preachers are no more spiritual in the pulpit than some others, and not half so spiritual out of it. And then in the *third* place, these spiritual people are as much under the dominion of their lusts and passions, and are as worldly, as selfish, as bad-tempered, and as indulgent to human depravity as any other class of people, and perhaps more so. From all of which, it is obvious that the clamour about spirituality, is either a feint or a deception; the origin of which may be traced

to envy, prejudice, ill temper, or to the general corrupt state of human nature.

“Perceptions, you frequently indicate, are not principles, nor impressions dispositions. Let this be granted, and then how absurd, and how detrimental to religion, are your *conversion* and your *salvation* meetings. If impressions were principles, and excitements redemption,—if the commotions of nature were the emotions of grace,—or if moral convictions were spiritual dispositions, your course would be clear, and your case strong; but experience shows, that by these means you collect a mass of unhomogenous materials, which can be kept together only by artificial means; as these decline the parties fall off, return to the world, and occasion great scandal to religion. How many of these conversions are the results of temporary stimulants, and nothing more? The parties join your churches, become members of your societies; and by marriage, residence, benefactions, office, station, and other incidents, are sometimes preserved after the excitement has subsided; at the same time, it is evident, that the very influences which preserve the form of their religion, would at the same time destroy it, did they operate in a contrary direction.

“God forbid that we should libel a whole community through the medium of a section, or a section through the medium of certain individuals; we know you are of different grades and different shades; nevertheless, as far as our perceptions go, professors of religion, taken in the bulk, are to all appearance thoroughly penetrated by a worldly influence. They look upon the world as a place, whereas it is a *nature*—a frame of mind—a tone of feeling—a disposition—a state of the heart. It is a worldly spirit which depraves the whole body—which tinges and taints every action, pervades the whole system, and pollutes the whole fountain of life.

“As Dissenters, you profess great attachment to your principles, and clamour loudly and loftily about them. But what sacrifices do you make for them, what interest do you take in them, and to what extent have

you disseminated them? Many of you are ignorant of them, and are dissenters just as other people are churchmen—from custom, accident, interest, or prejudice. We know some of you grumble when you pay church taxes, and some of you refuse to pay them at all; but whether this unwillingness arises from an intelligent affection to your principles, or is referable to other causes, is a separate question, and one upon which we shall not decide. Thus much we observe—and observe to your discredit—that you do not *combine* for the purpose of giving your principles to the world. Masters do not give them to their servants, Sunday school teachers to their scholars, parents to their families, pastors to their churches, nor preachers to their congregations. You are too worldly, too indolent and unconcerned about the welfare of mankind, to do justice to the principles you profess. During the Government Education Bill, you ran riot upon principle, and concerning conscience you spoke loftily; but no sooner had the government withdrawn its proposed measure, and the British Anti-State Church Association became organized, than your zeal cooled down into most criminal apathy, and vast numbers of you, not altogether satisfied with the do-nothing policy, turned your arms against that very association which contemplates the extension and the triumph of your principles! We do not despise moral feelings even in their tenderest forms; but when a popular clergyman occupies a parish pulpit—when church glebes and college farms are to let—when legacies are to be obtained, or family alliances effected—when wealth is to be acquired, or secular competitions promoted—when vital interests are poised, and your electoral suffrages called for—when these things occur, with many others, what then are we to think of the noisy thin-skinned consciences of not a few dissenters? Do you suppose we take no notice of these transactions—draw no inferences on these occasions? You are mistaken. We know what you think of churchmen, and what you think of infidels; but what must churchmen and infidels think of you? What must you think of one another?

“As if for the climax of ridicule, you gravely tell us the religion of Jesus Christ is not a religion of *ingenuity*, but of simplicity and of godly sincerity! If this be true, whose religion is it that *you* profess? Religion, you say, needs no apology—it offers none, it accepts of none. But what are your whole lives save apologies—not *for* religion, but *to* it? You apologize, not to the world for religion, but to religion for the world. Your principles and your practice are perfectly contrarious, and can never be reconciled. To harmonize your contradictions of religion, with the religion contradicted, is no *small* work, and requires no *little* invention. Not a religion of *ingenuity*! Why, *ingenuity*, one would think, is its great charm—the doctrine it imparts and the service it commands. Such is your conduct, that you are called to invent new excuses, new apologies, and new reasonings, both to the world and to yourselves! What shiftings, what trimmings, what tergiversations, do we daily witness among you! Not a religion of *invention*! Why, does it require no invention to reconcile your consciences to your crimes, salvation to sin, religion to the world, and God to mammon? *Ingenuity* not christianity! Why what ingenious *creeds*—what ingenious *comments*—what ingenious *excuses*, (and excuses sometimes not ingenious)—what ingenious *devices*, and what ingenious falsehoods too, have you originated! By one means or other, you are always attempting to cheat either God or the devil. Your profession is as full of contradictions as the rubric, as mottled as the Bishop of London, and as jesuitical as Henry of Exeter. By reasonings the most ingenious, you excuse yourselves from charges of serious magnitude; like the Irish witness, who evaded the crime of perjury by saying he did not kiss the *book*, he kissed only his *thumb*. Like the differential duties upon sugar, your moral distinctions are illusory and impracticable. Where no differences exist in point of principle, there your conduct requires nice distinctions, like those between slave-labour sugars, and slave-labour cottons. The truth is, you will

have religion as the farmer's sons would have the estate, without being *singular*; and you will have the world, as people will have monopoly,*—without the odium if you can, with it if you cannot.

* When the human mind is strongly determined upon the attainment or preservation of an object, averse to the system of morals, and odious to popular sentiment, it is surprising what subterfuges are framed, what farces are played. Monopoly is the bane of society, and our dear West Indies have been the *causa belli* of many a battle upon the floors of both houses of parliament. First of all, it was pretended that if slavery *was* an evil, it was a *necessary* evil, and must therefore be endured. It was asserted that slavery was only a harsh name for *servitude*—it was more frightful in name than in nature—the slaves were well off—far better off than English labourers—they were well *fed*, well *clad*, well *protected*, and well content to remain as they were; they did not even *want* to be free, and it would be a thousand pities to bless them with what they did not want! At length came the era of emancipation; and then they were too embruted to be emancipated—they would be intoxicated by the luscious draught of freedom, and, consequently, ungovernable—they must be educated, apprenticed, trained for a free state, and above all, the proprietors of these human cattle must have a compensation of twenty millions sterling. Slavery became abolished, but the colonists must realize protection to the amount of two millions per annum. This calls for differential duties on the produce; and this renders slavery, all at once, so horrible a thing, that it must be put down all over the world. The right of search must be enforced, the coast of Africa blockaded, existing treatises modified, new ones determined by the slave question, and a hypocritical distinction kept up between free-labour and slave-labour produce. Sugar is a monopoly, therefore sugar must be protected; and as slavery is so horrible a curse, slave manufactured sugar must not be imported at the same duties as must the free-labour produce. The produce of slavery is an abominable article, and these humanity-mongers declare, upon their consciences—for our sakes—that we shall not touch the unclean thing without paying dearly for it. Coffee, cotton, and other articles, the produce of slave-labour, do not affect the West Indian monopoly, therefore there is no curse in them—no distinction made between the produce of slave-labour and free-labour. *Tobacco*, though grown by slaves, and where slavery exists in forms the most revolting and horrifying, is not *sugar*, therefore we may have it. It yields a duty of from six to twelve hundred per cent., and although it could be cultivated in this country, by *free-labour*, yet these *saccharine* moralists—these tender hearted

“But this cunning policy requires two sets of principles, two standards of right and wrong, two measures, and two contraries of everything. It makes religion go

sympathetic legislators, passed an act to prevent the cultivation of it at *home*, and the statute remains unrepealed to this day. The truth is, the love of money is so strong, that monopolists will retain their monopolies to the last hour; by specious reasonings if they can, by *odious* if they cannot. *Inclusion* and *exclusion*, are the omnipotent elements of human depravity. ‘Include all my interests, and exclude all my neighbours’—shut me up in the ark of monopoly, and shut out all besides—fence in my prerogatives, and fence out theirs—set a premium upon all that belong to me, and levy a tax upon all that belong to other people—give me privileges and give them penalties,’ is the spirit of monopoly and the import of all its sophistical pleadings. Men who have estates, or properties of one kind or another, prevail upon the legislature—if they can—to enhance the value of their properties at the expense of the public. ‘Raise the value of my estate, that I may raise the rent—increase the price of my produce, by making the market my own—give me a patent for growing cabbages, or the whole of the market for selling them—let me always buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest markets, but make all my neighbours sell in the cheapest and buy in the dearest—enrich me, and impoverish them—put them down, and lift me up—indulge me, and coerce them—give me proscriptive rights, them proscriptive statutes.’ Such is the web of human selfishness.

The same heterogeneous network is thrown around ecclesiastical properties, and prescriptive claims. Apostolical succession, the divine right of tithes, the consecration of church property, subscription to articles in a *non-natural* sense, a sacramental priesthood, and other clerical pretensions, are all interwoven with sophistries and delusion. *Inclusion* and *exclusion*—*restriction* and *coercion*, are the two main elements of all state religions.

The “high and dry” church party—the surpliced sect of Genuflections—the apostles of Candelabra—young Englanders in politics, and Laudites in theology—tender-conscioned, single-eyed souls, holding Roman Catholic doctrines in one hand, and Protestant benefices in the other—men of religious ideality—Roman Catholics in protestant pulpits—educated, consecrated gentlemen, who teach protestantism because they are paid for it, and believe catholicism because they love it, are especially addicted to this party-coloured, up-and-down, in-and-out, jesuitical logic. They are Roman Catholics, though *sworn* Protestants; but what is that to any body? So long as they do but conform to a protestant rubric, *that* is sufficient. Besides, it is not to be proved that they *preach* Romanism, they only *think* it, and the world is come

in *pairs*; and every pair is a pair of *contraries*. It requires two moral laws; and, consequently, two moral dispensations. It is a species of spiritual thimble-rigging; or a game at hide-and-go-seek; for one never knows where to find the pea, the person, or the principle. People practising this double system, must blow hot and cold at one breath; they must strain out knats, and swallow camels. Their whole lives must resemble the premier's budget, which is often a mass of inconsistency and absurdity; or a course of fiscal legislation, which is a complicated web of mystery, delusion, and wickedness. If religion is simple, sincere, and above the aid of human ingenuity, why do you not abandon the double principle—the twofold system of life and death—of heaven and hell—of God and mammon? Why do you attempt to go two ways at once; to reconcile contradictions, or to achieve impossibilities?

“Perfect consistency, we know, is a rare thing, and a matter which should not be too critically scanned. But then something like respect for it, something like an *approach* to it, something like that feeling in human conduct, which is called *decency*, ought to be vouchsafed. Yet such are the quibblings, such the sophisms, such the special pleadings, and such the false refinements of your morality, that we are strikingly reminded of the man

to a pretty pass, if they may not *think* what they please! Thus we have mediæval usages for the last times,—priestly iconoclasts habited in French millinary—architecture substituted for christianity, vestments for dispositions, utensils for principles, superstitions for doctrines, the rubric for the bible, and the sacraments for Jesus Christ! We have the controversy of the Port-Royal with the Sorbonne, the struggle of Jansenist with Jesuit, of Greek with Greek. We have Noel against Pusey, and Bickersteth against Ward. We have Norwich against London, Dublin against Canterbury, Geneva against Oxford, and the Queen against the Pope. Strange proceedings; wicked perversions of religious simplicities. What can they all mean? In what can they all originate? In *monopoly*. DESTROY THE MONOPOLY, and you dry up the bitter fountains of strife—you heal the king's evil; and you save human nature from ridiculing and blaspheming itself.

with the dates and almonds; and more strikingly still of the religious silversmith of Saville.* You pretend to great strictness in religion, while you habitually defame common sense, and abuse common justice. 'When thou sawest a thief then thou consentedst with him.' You will not steal, but you will melt down the stolen articles, provided you are well paid for it. You will not manufacture, for the world, a viscious article; but what you could not manufacture without horror, you can vend with great pleasure. You will not—some of you—take an oath; but you will take 'God's name in vain,' and

* "*The religious Silversmith of Saville,*" is an episode in an old Spanish novel. A wandering boy—something after the fashion of Gil Blas—is taken into the family of a pious silversmith, who teaches him religion, while he instructs him in his handicraft. Many are the moral lessons he teaches, great his skill in teaching, and greater still his assiduity. In unfolding his ethical code, "honesty," he says, is the greatest virtue; dishonesty the worst of all social sins, and the worst of all dishonesties is that of *sacrilege*. The boy is becoming strongly fortified in virtue, when there walks into the shop a young man with a large bag, containing a quantity of gold, a number of silver pixes, crosses, and other sacred things—all stolen, of course. "Will you *buy* these," asks the man? "*I buy them! not for the world!*" "Will you *melt* them?" "Certainly," replies the silversmith; "that's quite another thing." Tender in conscience, and dreading contamination, he takes up the articles, one by one, with a pair of silver tongs, puts them into a crucible, fuses them, delivers the glittering mass to the sacriligious thief, and receives five pistoles for his trouble, the boy looking on with amazement. When the thief is gone, the lad suggests an opinion upon the transaction; and inquires if it was not a bad one. "A very bad one indeed," replies the man of morals: "Oh, *he's* a sad rogue. *He'll* come to be *hanged*, depend upon it. Observe how different *he* is to *me*! *I* would not *buy* the things, not for the *world*! No, no, my child; always act like *me*, and when you *can*, turn an *honest* penny in the *fear of God*!" God forbid that we should ridicule people who are sincere; but how many Spanish Silversmiths, how many Simon Pures, and how many long-robed pharisees are there in the present day? Men of corrupt minds making broad their phylacteries, and scouring the outside of the cup and platter,—white-washed sepulchrists, who paint, and daub, and play a thousand tricks to cheat mankind—men who begin with cheating everybody, and end in deceiving nobody but themselves!

have no qualms of conscience on that account. You shudder at *bad* language, forgetting that no language can be worse than *false* language. Imprecations are horrifying; but lying for *useful* purposes is a virtue. You will not indeed attempt to justify lying—though some of you will do this; but you freely practice what you unsparingly condemn. For the sake of avoiding censure, acquiring property, or promoting party purposes, you have access to unlawful means—like Saul to the Witch of Endor.

“True, you do not hold *Romish tenets* with *Protestant benefices*; you do not sign theological articles in a *non-natural* sense, nor do you (we mean dissenters) subscribe to a *rubric*, the contents of which—according to the Bishop of Norwich—are so contradictory, that no man can obey only a part,—you are not chargeable with this wickedness, nor with these inconsistencies; but you *are* chargeable with a mass of evil contradictions, which deprives you of honour, robs you of usefulness, enfeebles your pretensions, and renders your testimony all but valueless.

“We do not say there are no excellent persons among you, for what class is without them? Neither would we slander a whole community through the medium of a section; nor a section for the faults of a few individuals. But looking at professors of religion in a broad comprehensive manner, we are unable to discern in them great, vital, separating principles. They are as fond of the world as we are, and as unscrupulous in the means of acquiring it. They have as many bad passions, and more bad ways than we have, at least, than what many of us have. And, at all events, the religion which they espouse is a religion which does them no good. If it changes them, it is only for a short time, and the counter change is frequently greater than the original. It may sound very well, and be not a little flattering, for you to call us *worldlings*, &c. &c. But may we not say to you this proverb, ‘Physician, heal thyself?’ Examine yourselves, and then examine us. Clear your own judgments, and then refine ours. Reform yourselves, and then you shall reform us.”

Such are the objections and charges, frequently preferred against professors of religion ; and although the tone may appear harsh, the utterances be unpalatable, and the picture, upon the whole, somewhat unkindly overcharged, we cannot say there is *no* truth in them ; we cannot say there is only a *little* truth in them, for we must confess there is *more* than a little. It would indeed be easy to show that in some of the charges there is excess, and in others a want of fairness ; but after this was done there would then remain a mass of truth no argument could touch, no logic could displace. Instead, therefore, of dealing with the matter argumentatively, we shall, if we are wise, deal with it *practically* ; for the whole business is one not of *logic* but of *conduct*. Instead of dealing loosely and leniently, let us deal closely and severely with ourselves ; instead of labouring to discover how many things are mentioned which do *not* apply to us, let us labour to see how many there are which *do* ; instead of feeling secure, because *all* the charges do not belong to us, let us be humbled and alarmed that *any* of them do ; and instead of blaming the world for saying so much that is *not* true, let us think how much more might be said that *is* true. Perhaps the writer will be blamed ; but he is a real friend to true religion, and faithful are the wounds of a friend. Did he hope the evils would not be cured, they should not have been collected. They are exposed in order that they may be removed.

CHAPTER IV

ECCLESIASTICAL AND SPECIAL DISTINCTIONS.

FROM a theme of melancholy interest, we turn to a subject of cheering import—to reflections of a pleasing character. We leave the inconsistencies of professing christians—alleged and real—at the bottom of the hill, and, ascending the rising summit of calm reflection, survey the adjoining plains as they stretch away from the base and undulate before our eyes.

As in ancient, so in modern times, God has his “hidden ones.”¹ Seven thousand chosen men constituted a reserved number in the idolatrous times of Elijah;² secret mourners attested the degenerate period in which Ezekiel lived;³ and a book of remembrance—bespeaking volumes of benignant friendship—registered the secluded thinkers of a later date.⁴ When the main body of the Jews “stumbled at that stumbling stone,” there was a “remnant according to the election of grace;”⁵ and when the Asiatic defection had reached its limits, the foundation of God was firm, the Lord know-

¹ Psalm lxxxiii. 3.

² Chap. ix. 4.

³ 1 Kings xix. 18.

⁴ Mal. iii. 16.

⁵ Rom. xi. 5.

ing them that were his. "But in a great house,"—and such is the economy of religion—"there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour. If a man, therefore, purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."⁶

Midst all the ecclesiastical corruptions and apostacies which have hitherto happened, God has wonderfully preserved his church. He has never left himself without witnesses, though they have often prophesied in sackcloth; nor has he ever been without a seed to serve him—a people who have been accounted unto him for a generation. Notwithstanding the disfigurements of the "seven churches," there were some redeeming features, all of which were kindly noticed; while the most corrupt of all the seven, numbered a "few names" with unpolluted garments.⁷ In the worst of times there have always existed the best of saints; and God's seed has always had a root in the earth. That seed is still existing, and still will exist. Hidden it may be—extinct it never can be. Believers are a high-born race, and however they may mix, and corrupt, and lose their distinctive character by degrading fellowships with the world, there are, notwithstanding, secret individuals and obscure localities where the contamination reacheth not, and where the debasement is unknown. As God has always had his "seed"—his "reserved number"—his "inheritance"—his "peculiar treasure;" "even so at this present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

From the defections and vices, which have unhappily been connected with a profession of religion, we are not hurriedly to infer that there is no such thing *as* religion. Because chaff may hide the wheat, or ashes conceal the fire, shall we say neither wheat nor fire exists? Hidden indeed they may be, but there is nothing hidden that shall not be uncovered, nor mixed that shall not be winnowed;

⁶ 2 Tim. ii. 20, 21.

⁷ Rev. iii. 4.

you have only to lay the heaps in the field, and the first breeze that springs up will discover the concealed substances. Did there exist no brilliants, there would be no counterfeits; and was nothing genuine, nothing could be adulterated. Where nothing exists, nothing can be imitated; and were there no believers, there could be no hypocrites. Apes would never try to resemble men, were there no men to resemble; and were not religion supposed to be an excellent thing, nobody would covet the reputation religion is supposed to give. "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire."⁸

Human nature is not christian being, neither is the world the church; yet each has certain distinguishing attributes, and therefore each supplies certain analogies, a clear perception of which may facilitate our enquiries after religious truth, and be of service to our conclusions.

1. For instance; as there is one nature common to all the individuals of mankind; so is there one nature common to all the individuals of real christians.

2. Human nature partakes of the mere animal nature; and the christian nature partakes of the mere human nature.

3. The broad separating line between human nature and mere animal nature, consists in a *moral* principle; and the broad separating line between christian nature and mere human nature, consists in a *spiritual* principle.

4. Whatever approximations certain animals may make to the human species, it is certain they can never feel and act like them; and whatever approaches mere professors of religion may make to true believers, it is certain they can never feel and act like them.

5. As there can be no *morality* where there is no moral principle; so neither can there be any *spirituality* where there is no spiritual principle.

⁸ Heb. xii. 28. 29.

6. By no human agency can the brute nature be identified with the *human*; and by no human agency can the human nature be identified with the *divine*.

7. As animal sagacity is not *moral* sentiment; so neither is moral sentiment *spiritual* life.

8. Without a moral principle, a mere animal, however gifted and taught, cannot become a man; and without a spiritual principle, a mere man, however gifted and taught, cannot become a christian.

Such are the analogies relating to this part of the subject; and if we contemplate religion as a social organic principle, we shall be supplied with another class of analogies, the recognition and application of which may subserve a beneficial end.

1. For example; human nature *contains* the social principle, for he who formed it pronounced solitude to be uncongenial with its best tendencies; religion also *implies* the social principle, for he who established the christian economy provided a social prayer and gave a social pledge.

2. *Owing* to the social principle in man, we find political economies with their various institutions; and *owing* to the social principle in the christian, we observe a spiritual economy with its appropriate institutions.

3. When kingdoms are founded, all political authorities, in each kingdom, are subject to *one head*; and when churches are founded, all ecclesiastical authorities are subject to *one head*.

4. In a political state, that one head is the *sovereign* in a spiritual state, that one head is *Christ*.

5. In a political state, the sovereign has exclusive jurisdiction; and in an ecclesiastical state, the spiritual sovereign—Christ Jesus—has exclusive jurisdiction.

6. In a temporal kingdom, the erection of a tribunal, the giving of laws, or the issuing of mandates by a foreign prince, would be political usurpation; and in the kingdom of Christ, the erection of a tribunal, the giving

of laws, or the issuing of mandates by a foreign power, is spiritual usurpation.

7. In a civil economy, usurpation implies union or annexation, if not absorption; and in a spiritual economy, usurpation implies union or annexation, if not absorption.

8. Were civil rulers to sell their country to a foreign prince, they would be denounced as traitors to their sovereign, and the transaction reckoned infamous; and if ecclesiastics have bartered the crown of Christ for temporal advantages, must they not be traitors to their Sovereign Lord the King, and was not the transaction infamous?

9. It is true the rightful sovereign might be recognized, and the government carried on in his name, but if it was carried on by foreign princes, for the sake of foreign interests, and in subjection to them, the sovereignty would be merely *nominal*, and nominal sovereignty is virtual dethronement; it is also true, that in a national hierarchy the rightful sovereignty of Jesus Christ is acknowledged, but then as its government is in the hands of political legislators, is carried on for political interests, and in subjection to them, the sovereignty of Jesus Christ is merely nominal, and as nominal sovereignty is virtual dethronement, it will follow that a state religion implies the dethronement of Christ, and is founded upon it.

When political economies spring out of military conquests, political distinctions ensue; and when the captain of our salvation founded the economy of his grace, he conferred ecclesiastical distinctions upon the soldiers of the cross. "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."⁹ *

⁹ Eph. iv. 8.

* In Psalm lxxviii. 18, the author celebrating a splendid victory, appears to have transferred his thoughts to that memorable victory obtained over the Egyptians, with the spoils of which, that tabernacle was principally built which furnished a dwelling place for God in the midst of the rebellious Israelites. This florid

These gifts were called "*spiritual*," and being of an extraordinary character they conferred notable honours upon the favoured recipients, who were called "spiritual men," and who, by the ecclesiastical gradations they sustained had the appearance of an hierarchy, the orders standing thus: "First apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues;"¹⁰ to which may be added, distributors and shewers of mercy.¹¹

"First *apostles*"—from *apostello*, to send forth as an agent clothed with authority to act for another.¹² They were therefore, missionaries, messengers, or envoys;¹³ or as Dr. Hammond expresses the idea, "Christ's special commissioners," for they were divinely elected, appointed, qualified, and commissioned by Christ to proclaim his will, found his empire, publish his laws, and regulate the affairs of his kingdom. They were furnished with supernatural powers, by virtue of

¹⁰ 1 Cor. xii. 29.

¹² Ency. of Reli. Knowledge.

¹¹ Rom. xii. 8.

¹³ Calmet's Dict.

description the apostle very beautifully accommodates to the triumphs of Christ, when he "ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things;" for having spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, he triumphed over them at his death, and was accompanied by the angelic hierarchy to the heavenly world, where he received the acclamations of "just men made perfect." Leading "captivity captive," is a poetic form of expression, used first by Deborah and Barak, (Jud. v. 12,) signifying to lead on a train, or multitude of captives. More emphatically still it denotes that sudden reverse which happens when conquerors are themselves conquered, when spoilers are themselves spoiled, and when those who disgraced and oppressed others are in their turn disgraced and oppressed also. When Christ conquered those who had conquered others, and disgraced and bound those who had disgraced and bound so many millions of the human race, and for so many ages of the world, he led captivity captive. Those powers which had led others captive were now led captive by the Captain of salvation, who fought in the interests of his enslaved and oppressed people, and who, by leading these captivators captive, has made them "free indeed."

which they could preach in foreign languages, explain the Old Testament, write a new one, work miracles of various kinds, and, to crown all, could enable others to do what they did themselves. Altogether they were extraordinary men, living in extraordinary times, possessed of extraordinary powers, filling extraordinary offices, and performing extraordinary functions. Their calling was sacred, their commission most solemn; they gave laws to the church, and lessons to the world.

"*Prophets*" held the second rank; and were divided into two classes—superior and inferior. The superior prophets had an inspiration called the "word of knowledge," which differed from the "word of wisdom" possessed by the apostles exclusively, and which enabled them to give a new revelation to the world. It was in the exercise of this inspiration that they spoke "wisdom among them that were perfect;"¹⁴ and that they taught every member of the church in all wisdom, that they might exhibit every member of the body in a state of individual development.¹⁵ The word of "knowledge" was an inspiration for perceiving clearly the ceremonial, prophetic, ecclesiastical, and historical import of the Old Testament, by virtue of which an agreement between the two dispensations was established. Hence the apocalyptic musicians sung the song of Moses and the Lamb;¹⁶ and the church is said to be "built upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."¹⁷ This was called the "revelation of the mystery," which had been kept secret since the world began, but which was then made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.¹⁸ This economy was denominated "the dispensation of the grace of God;" the gift was termed a revelation in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons

¹⁴ 1 Cor. xi. 6.

¹⁵ Col. i. 28.

¹⁶ Rev. xv. 3.

¹⁷ Eph. xi. 20.

¹⁸ Rom. xvi. 25, 26.

of men, as it was then revealed unto the holy apostles and *prophets* by the Spirit. This revelation disclosed particularly the important secret, "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." By these supernatural qualifications, possessed by the apostles* and New Testament prophets, all men were led to see what was the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world had been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: "to the intent," said an apostle, "that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."¹⁹

Next in order were "*teachers*;" not preachers called pastors, but a class of men styled "evangelists;" of whom were Philip, Silas, Timothy, and perhaps Luke, Mark, Erastus, Aristarchus, and others who accompanied the apostles and received their appointments from them. These probably had no revelation of doctrines from God, but received them orally from the apostles, which doctrines as delivered to them were called "the form of sound words,"²⁰ and which they were instructed to commit to "faithful men," who should teach them to others.²¹ The inspiration therefore, of this class, must

¹⁹ Eph. i. 10. 11.

²⁰ 2 Tim. i. 13.

²¹ 2 Tim. ii. 2.

* The apostles undoubtedly possessed this gift, for *they* "reasoned out of the scriptures," and prior to the ascension of Christ, their understandings had been opened that they might understand the *scriptures*, and thus comprehend the old as well as the new dispensations, both of which had been discoursed upon by Christ, whose sayings were to be brought to their remembrance. The exercise of this gift was called *prophecy*, 1 Cor. xiii. 12; and of what service it was to the chief preachers may be seen in their discourses and epistles; especially the epistles to the Romans and the Hebrews. The prophets who came to Antioch, the deacon Stephen, and particularly Barnabas and Saul, belonged to this class.

have acted particularly upon the memory—an inspiration which Christ had promised to his disciples, and by virtue of which, Luke wrote his history of the acts of the apostles. This inspiration they were capable of exercising as often as they had occasion to teach; in consequence of which, the brethren were effectually protected from error, in doctrine and in practice. To this was added that faith which consisted of an invincible courage, by which they were enabled to preach the gospel in the presence of magistrates, kings, and enraged multitudes; and to work miracles, whenever they felt an inward impulse to do so. This faith is described by the evangelist Matthew,²² and by the apostle Paul.²³ It particularly implied the expulsion of demons, and a resistive energy which counteracted the poison of drugs and the bites of deadly serpents. Besides this, some of them were enabled to foretell future events, as may be observed in Agabus, in the four daughters of Philip the evangelist,²⁴ and in some others.

“After that *miracles*”—Gr. *dunamis*, powers. In the tenth verse, it is *energēmata dūmaneōn*, rendered by Macknight the “inworking of powers,” *i. e.* an ability to communicate these spiritual powers to others—to transfuse, or work them into the minds of others. Thus Paul imparted them to certain disciples, whom he met with at Ephesus;²⁵ and when the apostles heard that Samaria had received the word, they deputed Peter and John to visit the Samaritan converts, and to invest them with supernatural gifts.²⁶ The exercise of this gift was frequently accompanied by imposition of hands; and must have produced lasting impressions upon the minds of spectators.* The illapse itself was

²² Matt. xvii. 20.

²⁴ Acts xxi. 9, 10.

²³ 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

²⁵ Acts xix. 6.

²⁶ Acts viii. 14.

* I cannot deny myself the pleasure of a quotation from Saurin's sermon on the resurrection of Christ: “Imagine these venerable men addressing their adversaries on the day of the

called the pouring out of the gift, or grace of the Holy Ghost.²⁷

"Then *gifts of healings*," which must have given to religion a most beneficent aspect, enabling its propagandists to confirm the truth of what they taught, and to conciliate the esteem of considerate heathens. Prayer, the imposition of hands,²⁸ and anointing the sick with oil,²⁹ were frequently the outward signs of the inward spiritual power. The shadow of Peter,³⁰ and handkerchiefs and aprons having touched the body of Paul, cured great numbers of people in Jerusalem and Ephesus.³¹ Jesus Christ is said to have taken our sicknesses, and to have borne our infirmities. He was full of grace and truth, approved of God, and went about doing good. How much his disciples resembled him,

²⁷ Acts x. 45. Titus iii. 6.

²⁹ James v. 14.

²⁸ Acts xxviii. 29.

³⁰ Acts v. 15, 16.

³¹ Acts xix. 12.

christian pentecost. 'Ye refuse to believe us on our depositions; five hundred of us, ye think, are enthusiasts, all infected by the same malady, that we have seen a man, whom we have not seen; eaten with a man, with whom we have not eaten; conversed with a man, with whom we have not conversed: or perhaps ye think us impostors, or take us for mad men, who intend to suffer ourselves to be imprisoned, and tortured, and crucified, for the sake of enjoying the pleasure of deceiving mankind, by prevailing upon them to believe a fanciful resurrection: ye think we are so stupid as to act a part so extravagant. But bring out your sick; present your demoniacs; fetch hither your dead. Confront us with Medes, Parthians, and Elamites; let Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Egypt, Phrygia, Pamphylia, let all nations send us some of their inhabitants, we will restore hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind, we will make the lame walk, we will cast out devils, and raise the dead. We, we publicans, we illiterate men, we tent-makers, we fishermen, we will discourse with all the people of the world in their own languages. We will explain prophecies, elucidate the most obscure predictions, develop the most sublime mysteries, teach you notions of God, precepts for the conduct of life, plans of morality and religion, more extensive, more sublime, and more advantageous, than those of your priests and philosophers, yea, than those of Moses himself. We will do more still. *We will communicate these gifts to you!*'"

may be seen from their history. And so great was the resemblance, that he was not ashamed to call them *brethren*. How could he refuse a relation which was an embodiment of himself? How deny a recognition of parties, for whom he had bled and died, to whom he stood related, and in whom he saw a vivid reflection of his own image?

"*Helps*," were the next class of men found in the primitive church. They were usually called *prophets*, but formed a subordinate class, possessed of an inspiration which enabled them, at particular times, to utter unpremeditated prayers, psalms, songs, doctrines, or exhortations. Their psalms were called "*spiritual*," and seem to have been not metrical—but elevated compositions, prompted by a divine inspiration. Their prayers were called "*inwrought*," and were effectual in saving the sick, except in cases where the patients were bound by an irremissible bond, called the sin unto death.* These

* The sin unto death here mentioned, cannot mean what is commonly called the sin against the Holy Ghost, be that sin what it may. Because (1) the death was evidently *corporeal*. (2) The life not to be prayed for, was *temporal*. (3) The case was one of mortal *sickness*. (4) The persons called in to aid the sick, were persons who had the *gift of healing*. (5) The anointing of persons with oil upon whom the miracle was to be wrought, where the sin was not unto death, shows the malady to have been physical and not moral. (6) The *salvation*, consisted evidently of a restoration to health; the *destruction*, of the dissolution of the body. (7) There is no reason for apprehending that the sin against the Holy Ghost, meant a sin followed by some mortal disease, which was the case in this instance. (8) Nor is eternal life ever communicated by the prayers or ceremonies of either laics or priests. I cannot therefore agree in opinion with most commentators upon this point. It appears indisputably plain, that in the first age of christianity the open miscarriages of professing christians were punished by *temporal judgments*. This remark applies particularly to the irregular members of the church at Corinth, many of whom were *sick*, and some of whom were dead, at the time the apostle wrote: 1 Cor. xi. 30. To encourage repentance under those circumstances, a class of persons were endued with the gifts of healing. These persons were called in to the assistance of repentant patients, the genuineness of which repentance