

## Calvinistic Magazine.

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“Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

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NO. 7.

JULY, 1831.

VOL. V.

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From the Western Luminary.

The following essay was written shortly after a careful perusal of an extract from “Polhill on the Divine will.” This is stated because some of the leading ideas are taken from that treatise. It is believed, however, that they are taught clearly in holy Writ; and consequently are the common property of Christians, and worthy of all acceptance. We add for the information of the curious, that the celebrated Dr. John Owen wrote a recommendatory preface to the work of Polhill, in which he thus speaks of it: “The argumentative part of this book is generally suited unto the genius of the past age, wherein accuracy and strictness of reason bear sway.”

### ON THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

There has been much controversy among christians in times past, with respect to the extent of the atonement. Some have used such wild and indefinite language when speaking of this subject, as to lead virtually to the denial of a new and vicarious sacrifice for sin, while others have expressed themselves in terms so limited and contracted, that it would be evidently inconsistent with their scheme to offer the gospel to every creature. The truth, we think, lies between these extremes; and an impartial examination of the Bible will certainly lead to the belief, that the atonement is in one sense *general*; while it is in another sense *particular*.

#### I. *The Atonement is general.*

By this we mean, that it is sufficient in its nature for the salvation of every child of Adam, had God seen fit to make the application of it to *all*. In other words, that no more sufferings on the part of our Saviour would have been requisite, if God had intended actually to save every creature of our race; while on the other hand, this ample atonement was absolutely necessary, in order that God might be just in the salvation of any of the fallen human family.

The Scriptures assert, that “Christ died for *all*.”—“He gave himself a ransom for *all*”—“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the *whole world*.” Those who deny the doctrine of general atonement, say that these texts mean—*all the elect—some of all sorts—the world of believers, &c.* But will any unsophisticated mind be contented with this gloss? We suspect not. It is granted, indeed, that the same ex-

Luther, Calvin, Archbishop Usher, and many of the earliest English Reformers and Puritans, together with numerous others who held firmly the Calvinistic doctrines, agree precisely on this point. These names are mentioned because some persons attach considerable importance to the opinions of men who were so justly eminent for piety and force of intellect.

For our own parts, while we would differ from such men with great caution, nevertheless, as Presbyterians we believe, that the Word of God is the only infallible rule of faith and practice; and having delivered our sentiments as we think, in strict accordance with this Word, they are left to make such impressions on the minds of others, as the Lord in his wisdom may direct. S. S.

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## THE MINISTRY OF ANGELS,

### A SERMON,

By JAMES GALLAHER,

HEB. i. 14.—“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation?”

To unfold his glory in the redemption of man, is the grand object Jehovah had in view, when he formed the Earth and stretched out the heavens. The Spirit of inspiration, speaking of the Redeemer, declares, that “By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.” And in Eph. iii. 10, it is affirmed, that God “created all things by Jesus Christ, to the intent that now unto principalities and powers, in heavenly places, might be made known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God.” The same truth is taught in Prov. xvii. 4, “The Lord hath made all things for himself:”—and Rev. iv. 11, “Thou hast created all things; and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

Moreover the scriptures teach not only that such was God's design at the first creation, but that he is *now* using all things that he has made for this worthy and exalted purpose. From age to age the Omniscient eye neither “slumbers nor sleeps,” while energy divine moves forward all the affairs of his vast empire. The great, are not above his management; the small, do not escape his notice. While at his bidding the sun and the moon rise and set, the seasons roll, and the stars of heaven hold on their courses, he feeds the young ravens, clothes the lillies, attends to the sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our head. Let us notice for a moment what God himself has said of his employing all things that he has made for

the accomplishing of his holy purposes respecting his Church.

1. He tells us that the unconscious elements, "fire, hail, snow, and stormy wind, fulfil his word." At his command the flood drowned the old world; the flames destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah; thunder, lightning, and hail, afflicted Egypt; and the Earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the company of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

2 He employs the heavenly bodies. "The sun stood still, and the moon was stayed," until the enemies of Israel were overthrown. And it appears from the song of Deborah and Barak, that when Jabin, king of Canaan, sent that renowned warrior, Sisera, with nine hundred chariots of iron to destroy Israel, that there was an extraordinary influence from on high against him. "They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera." Judges v. 20.

3. God employs insects and creeping things of the humblest name to fulfil his counsels. You see the proud Pharaoh, and the mightiest of nobles, retreating before hosts of frogs, and swarms of flies. You see the Hittite, the Amorite, and the confederate nations of Canaan, driven from their country by hornets. And when the presumptuous Herod wished to be considered a god, Jehovah commanded the worms, and they devoured him.

4. God rules the fowls of heaven, and the cattle upon a thousand hills are his. He commanded the ravens to feed Elijah. Bears executed his vengeance on those who mocked Elisha. When the king of Assyria settled idolaters in the land of Israel, Jehovah sent lions among them. And many ages after, he caused a fish to furnish Peter with tribute money.

5. The Lord uses his own people, in carrying on the interests of his kingdom. He sent Noah to preach to the inhabitants of the earth before the flood. He directed Moses to lead Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. He commissioned Isaiah to preach in Jerusalem, and Daniel in Babylon. And he authorized the Apostles and their successors to carry the Gospel to all nations.

6. The Lord causes wicked men to promote his glory, though, they "mean not so, neither doth their heart think so." David exclaims, in view of God's perfect government, "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of the wrath shalt thou restrain!" The Lord calls Nebuchadnezzar his *servant*. He sent Sennacherib to chastise Israel. He employed the Medes and Persians to overthrow Babylon: the Greeks, to overthrow the Persian empire: the Goths and Vandals, to scourge Rome.—In every age he rules the armies of heaven, and the armies of the earth.

7. Fallen angels are under his control. "He sent evil angels among the Egyptians." Ps. lxxviii 49. Sacred history shows us, that Satan could not touch Job's property, or his person, until the Most High suffered him. And in the days of Jesus Christ's dwelling among us, we learn that the devils could not even enter into swine, till he gave them permission.

8. The holy angels are all employed for the glory of God, and the advancement of his cause in the world. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation?" Is any one ready to say that it is incredible that God should employ such exalted orders of holy beings in ministering to the saints on earth? I reply: God has done greater things than this for his church on earth. He has given his Son, his only Son, not merely to minister to the saints, but to die for sinners, even the very chief. And the Apostle's argument is irresistible: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

That the holy angels are employed in offices of kindness and love to the Church of God, is taught abundantly in the Sacred Book. David says: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Ps. xxxiv. 7. It is not an occasional visit only that the saints receive from their heavenly guardians, but they *encamp* round about them. Again: "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Ps. xci. 11. 12.

Of the nature and employment of angels we know nothing but what we are taught in the Word of God. The following things are there set forth:

I. They are spirits; not embodied, as the souls of men are, but capable of passing from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven, on the errands of the Almighty. They possess great power. We read of strong angels; mighty angels; angels that *excel* in strength. It was by an angel's arm that the great stone was rolled from the door of the sepulchre, on the morning that the Saviour rose. In one night an angel slew 185,000 of the hardy warriors of Assyria.

They are holy. They kept their first estate, when Satan and his companions fell. Their love and obedience to God has been perfect and without interruption from the morning of their existence.

They are possessed of immortal youth. The angels that appeared to the women at the Saviour's sepulchre, were as *young men*, had all the bloom, activity, and sprightliness of early youth, yet they were at least 4000 years old. Their youth is unfading and im-

mortal. Their glory is wonderful. The angel that gave to John the book of Revelation, was possessed of such heavenly lustre, that the beloved disciple was repeatedly on the verge of paying him divine honors.

Their benevolent affection for the human family is remarkable. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

II. These angels are all servants to the Church of Jesus Christ.

Christ, the Redeemer of men, is seated on the right hand of the throne in heaven, far above all principalities, and powers, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named; and he is "head over all things to the Church." Eph. i. 20. The angels are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation.

In Jacob's vision there is a beautiful representation of angelic ministry. "Behold a ladder set on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it; and behold the Lord stood above it." From this service there is no exemption: the brightest and most exalted are thus employed, they are *all* ministering spirits.

Toward the close of the Jewish dispensation, when the priest Zacharias had entered into the sanctuary to burn incense, a stranger of unusual appearance came into the sanctuary, and stood on the right side of the altar. Zacharias was filled with amazement at the approach of this extraordinary visitant. The stranger spoke: "Fear not, Zacharias; I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee." How benignant! how condescending is God! to send the bright spirits that stand in his presence, down to our guilty world on errands of love!

O christian! it hath never yet entered your heart to conceive how precious in the sight of the Lord, are those he hath redeemed by the blood of his Son! The very dust of their bodies he regards with care; he causes his angels to watch over it, and he will clothe it in immortal beauty in the resurrection morning. After journeying in the wilderness for forty years; the thousands of Israel assemble on the plains of Moab, to lament the loss of their leader. Often did the mourning tribes cast their weeping eyes up the steeps of the mountain of Nebo, whither their prophet had gone. He never returned. In the mount he was met by him that rideth on the pale horse, whose name is Death. But no sooner had the emancipated soul ascended to its lasting home, than, commissioned from on high, a celestial form, in robes of light, glides through the gates of the heavenly paradise, trailing a long bright path through

the heavens,—folded his plumes, and stood on the top of Pisgah. *It is Michael, the Archangel,* come to take care of the *body* of Moses.

III. Angels perform their ministry under the special direction of the Lord of glory. He doeth according to his pleasure in the army of heaven. They go not according to their judgment or pleasure, but go when and where he sends them. They are “sent forth.” “These are they,” says the prophet Zechariah, “whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.” Zech. i. 10.

IV. The grand object of angelic ministry is to promote the spiritual and eternal welfare of those whom Christ will bring to glory. “They are sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation.” “We know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” “All things are yours,” says the spirit of inspiration to the christian church: “All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” I. Cor. iii. 21—23.

Sacred history abounds with instances in which are recorded the immense importance of angelic ministry to the Church of God.

After the first apostacy, when there was danger lest man should put forth his hand and take of the tree of Life, (which was not forbidden by the law) and dare to eat of that tree, and so profane a divine sacrament, and think to defy a divine sentence, vainly flattering himself that by this means he should ‘live forever;’ therefore, when the Lord sent him forth from the garden of Eden, “he placed at the east of the garden Cherubims, (ministring angels, so called) and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of Life.”

By the ministry of angels, Lot and his two daughters were led from Sodom on the morning of its overthrow. By the appearance of these ‘Hosts of God,’ Jacob, on his return to his father’s house, was assured of protection from the wrath of Esau. The Law was given at Mount Sinai, and the pillar of cloud and of fire was conducted in front of the armies of Israel by the agency of the angels of God. When Elijah fled from Jezebel, he was fed and refreshed by an angel, that he might go on his journey. Elisha was surrounded by multitudes of these heavenly guardians, when the kings of Syria sent a great army to Dothan to take him. The Lord sent his angel and shut the mouths of the lions, when Daniel was thrown into their den. By the ministry of angels, the shepherds of Bethlehem were first told of the Saviour’s birth. By their

was Joseph warned to flee into Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod. They came and ministered to Christ after his temptation in the wilderness: they attended him during his agony in the garden: they were the first to assure the disciples of his resurrection:— And when he ascended on high,

“Cherubic legions guard him home,  
And shout him welcome to the skies.”

By the ministry of an angel Peter was delivered from prison, on the night before Herod designed his death: and Paul was assured of safety when the dangers of shipwreck threatened him and all who were with him in the ship. And while the beloved disciple was in the Isle of Patmos, “for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ,” he was again and again cheered and comforted by interviews with these celestial visitants.

And even now, though the prophets are all dead, and the Lord Jesus Christ has ascended to heaven, and the Church on earth sees his face no more; and though the apostles, those burning and shining lights, are removed from their candlesticks, and the ministry of the Word is committed to frail, uninspired men, yet, O Zion! city of our God! thou art not forsaken. Still thy Redeemer sends forth his angelic armies to watch over thy welfare, and advance thy cause. These mighty spirits, unwearied with the labor of six thousand years, are still abroad in the earth, as fresh now in immortal vigor, as when at Earth's creation “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Full of the benevolence of the upper world, they are “all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation.” They attend the disciple of Jesus in his private walks, and in his secret devotions; they warn him of danger; they present truth to his mind, and have an agency in guarding him against the snares of the world, the flesh and the devil. They rejoice in the morning and evening devotions of the family that call on the name of God. They meet with the congregations that worship in the sanctuary, and assist in their devotions; and on all occasions, they employ their mightiest efforts to roll forward the chariot of Salvation: these efforts will be continued till the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

But thousands of the kind offices they perform will only be known to the christian when he ascends to that world where they dwell. To that world they will be his guides. Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. And at this day, they encircle the bed of each departing saint, and bear, on triumphant wing, the emancipated spirit to the celestial city.

When Jesus has finished his work on the earth, and comes in all the majesty of God to the judgment of the world, the unnumbered millions of holy angels will attend him. And when the graves shall open, and the dead arise, he will send forth these swift messengers and they will gather all his children of every age and nation, into one bright and joyful assembly at his right hand. "Bless the Lord ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word."

#### REFLECTIONS.

1. In view of this subject, we cannot but admire the amazing grandeur of the plan of Redemption. Behold its foundation laid deep in the counsels of eternity, while its wider compass encircles all the works of God. Here the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost unfold the wonderful perfections of Divinity! Here is that marvellous act of God—his unspeakable gift. Here is that strange sight,—Jesus dying for a guilty world. Here is that powerful agency of the Divine Spirit reclaiming the revolted nations to their rightful Lord. Here is that noble cause, in which all the angelic armies have their hearts engaged, and their hands employed:—a cause so glorious, so god-like, that *against it*, that fallen spirit, the Prince of darkness, and his ruined associates, put forth their most fierce and furious efforts: but it goes forward conquering and to conquer; for it is borne along by the energies of the Almighty. And is there among the frail sons of earth, one traveller to the grave so infatuated—so perversely blind—as to imagine that this glorious Gospel of the blessed God, is a subject unworthy of *his* attention? a subject too low for a mind like *his*? One who says in his heart: "To court the applause of the multitude; to secure the laurel wreath of Fame; to manage the political affairs of a county or a State; these are matters worthy to engross an enlarged mind;—these are concerns suited to an exalted intellect: but let others of feeble powers and inferior attainments, embark in that cause which fills the heart of Jehovah, and enlists the activity of all the hosts of heaven." Ah! my friends, it is not strange, that when the sinner's life has passed away as a dream, and the spell which Satan has now thrown around him is dissolved, and the folly of trifling with the message of the Son of God, stands out before him in the light of eternity, it is not strange, that before God, the sinner will stand aghast—covered with confusion unutterable:—and that proud in spirit, who had affected to look down on the Gospel with contempt, will look around in vain for help, and stretch imploring hands to the rocks and to the mountains,—"Mountains, fall on us! hills, cover us! hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!



for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand!"

2. In view of this subject, how great is the christian's debt of gratitude to the Redeemer! He guards his people as the apple of his eye. He numbers the hairs of our head. He employs all his angels in watching over those who are on their way to glory! And is it for us, blessed Lord! thou dost this? *For us!* Be astonished, O my soul! "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved of the Lord! The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!"

3. This subject should rouse us to activity in the cause of God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are employed in this great work. All the angels in heaven are actively engaged. Truly it is a *high calling* God has given to his people, when he invites them to be workers together with God and his holy angels, in building up the kingdom of his dear Son. How infinitely glorious will be the result! Awake, Christian! awake! The Lord is on his way! Why stand ye here all the day idle?

4. What affecting interviews await the christian when he arises to the dwelling-place of angels! and Oh! what intimate & lasting friendships will he form there! If when you were sinking in the waves you were rescued by the hand of a stranger, and he departed before you learned his name—If, in your absence, the house in which your children slept were on fire, and one unknown to you rushed in and rescued them from death; should you, in after years, meet with this benefactor, what an ardent, abiding friendship would be kindled at once.

After the American Revolution, when Gen. La Fayette returned to Europe, he was seized by the hand of Oppression and thrown into the prison of Olmutz, where he was kept in long and close confinement. Two persons whom he had never seen, one of them a young American traveller, undertook to effect his liberation. The enterprise was exceedingly hazardous, but they continued their efforts, till they procured his escape. He was, however, soon retaken, and thrust back into the prison. But the interest which these strangers had taken in his welfare, made a deep impression on the heart of the captive hero. Many years after this, the General crossed the Atlantic, to visit once more the new world, where in early life he had fought for a nation's freedom. He landed at New-York: and judge of his emotions, when an interesting stranger came up and took him by the hand: "I am that young American, who attempted your release from the prison of Olmutz!"

But, Christian, when you cross that narrow sea that now separates you from the abode of angels, interviews of deeper interest—

emotions of a nobler order await you! Those benevolent spirits who, unseen by you, have been ministering to your welfare through many years of your pilgrimage, will gather around you, and the history of their labors of love will thrill your soul with ineffable delight. What now is dark, shall then be plain. You will know as you are known, and be blessed in the society of those happy servants of the great God.

These delightful interviews, between the redeemed of the earth and the servants of God on high, are now going on, and have been continued ever since the spirit of Abel entered the world of glory. See the souls of the followers of Jesus, from age to age, ascending in a column of light to their eternal home, how are they greeted and welcomed by the worshippers of the Almighty, who dwell above! A form, clothed in celestial loveliness, approaches the venerable Lot: "Hail servant of the living God! welcome to these blest abodes! On earth I knew you well, and often did I visit you.—It was I who warned you of Sodom's approaching destruction;—It was I who led you from the devoted city, on the morning that the storm of wrath came down."

To Elijah; another holy spirit speaks: "Do you remember the day when you fled into the wilderness from the wrath of Jezebel, and lay down under the Juniper tree exhausted, and expecting to die? I am the angel that touched you and fed you there."

Peter meets the heavenly guide who struck off his chains, and led him forth from Herod's prison. And John again holds sweet communion with that bright angel who visited him when banished to the Isle of Patmos. Holy, happy community! Blessed Jesus! may we also be thine, in the day when thou shalt make up thy jewels!

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## ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE OMNIPOTENCE OF THE DEITY.

Omnipotence is that attribute of the Divine Being, by which he can accomplish every thing that does not imply a contradiction—however far it may transcend the comprehension of finite minds. By his power the vast system of Universal Nature was called from nothing into existence, and is continually supported, in all its movements, from age to age.—In elucidating this perfection of God, we might derive some striking illustrations from the record of his dispensations towards man, in the early ages of the world—when he overwhelmed the earth with the deluge which covered the tops of the highest mountains, and swept the crowded population of the ancient world into a watery grave—when he demolished Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them, with fire from heaven—when

he slew all the first-born of Egypt, and turned their rivers into blood—when he divided the Red Sea, and the waters of Jordan before the tribes of Israel—when he made the earth to open its jaws, and swallow up Korah and all his company—and when he caused Mount Sinai to smoke and tremble at his presence. But, these and similar events, however awful, astonishing, and worthy of remembrance, were only *transitory* exertions of Divine Power, and are not calculated, and were never intended, to impress the mind in so powerful a manner as those displays of Omnipotence which are exhibited in the ordinary movements of the material universe. We have no hesitation in asserting, that, with regard to this attribute of the Divinity, there is a more grand and impressive display in the Works of Nature, than in all the events recorded in the Sacred History. Nor ought this remark to be considered as throwing the least reflection on the fulness and sufficiency of the Scripture revelation; for that revelation, as having a special reference to a *moral* economy, has for its object, to give a more particular display of the *moral*, than of the *natural* perfections of God. The miracles to which we have now referred, and every other supernatural fact recorded in the Bible, were not intended so much to display the *plenitude* of the power of Deity, as to bear testimony to the Divine mission of particular messengers, and to confirm the truths they declared. It was not, for example, merely to display the energies of Almighty power, that the waters of the Red Sea were dried up before the thousands of Israel, but to give a solemn and striking attestation to all concerned, that the Most High God had taken this people under his peculiar protection—that he had appointed Moses as their leader and legislator—and that they were bound to receive and obey the statutes he delivered. The most appropriate and impressive illustrations of Omnipotence, are those which are taken from the *permanent* operations of Deity, which are visible every moment in the universe around us; or, in other words, those which are derived from a detail of the facts which have been observed in the material world, respecting *magnitude* and *motion*.

In the first place, *the immense quantity of matter* contained in the universe, presents a most striking display of Almighty power.

In endeavoring to form a definite notion on this subject, the mind is bewildered in its conceptions, and is at a loss where to begin or to end its excursions. In order to form something approximating to a well-defined idea, we must pursue a train of thought commencing with those magnitudes which the mind can easily grasp, proceeding through all the intermediate gradations of magnitude, and fixing the attention on every portion of the chain, till we arrive at the object or magnitude of which we wish to form a conception. We must endeavor, in the first place, to form a conception of the bulk of the world in which we dwell, which, though only a point in comparison of the whole material universe, is, in reality, of most astonishing magnitude, which the mind cannot grasp, without a laborious effort. We can form some definite idea of those protuberant masses we denominate *hills*, which rise above the surface of our plains; but were we transported to the mountainous scenery of Switzerland, to the stupendous range of the Andes in South Amer-

ica, or to the Himmalayan mountains in India, where masses of earth and rocks, in every variety of shape, extend several hundreds of miles in different directions, and rear their projecting summits beyond the regions of the clouds—we should find some difficulty in forming an adequate conception of the objects of our contemplation. For, (to use the words of one who had been a spectator of such scenes) “Amidst those trackless regions of intense silence and solitude, we cannot contemplate, but with feelings of awe and admiration, the enormous masses of variegated matter which lie around, beneath, and above us. The mind labors, as it were, to form a definite idea of those objects of oppressive grandeur, and feels unable to grasp the august objects which compose the surrounding scene.” But what are all these mountainous masses, however variegated and sublime, when compared with the bulk of the whole earth? Were they hurled from their bases, and precipitated into the vast Pacific Ocean, they would all disappear in a moment, except perhaps a few projecting tops, which, like a number of small islands, might be seen rising a few fathoms above the surface of the waters.

The earth is a globe, whose diameter is nearly 8,000 miles, and its circumference about 25,000; and, consequently, its surface contains nearly two hundred millions of square miles—a magnitude too great for the mind to take in at *one* conception. In order to form a tolerable conception of the whole, we must endeavor to take a leisurely survey of its different parts. Were we to take our station on the top of a mountain, of a moderate size, and survey the surrounding landscape, we should perceive an extent of view stretching 40 miles in every direction, forming a circle 80 miles in diameter, and 250 in circumference, and comprehending an area of 5,000 square miles. In such a situation, the terrestrial scene around and beneath us, consisting of hills and plains, towns and villages, rivers and lakes—would form one of the largest objects which the eye, or even the imagination, can steadily grasp at one time. But such an object, grand and extensive as it is, forms no more than the *forty thousandth part* of the terraqueous globe; so that before we can acquire an adequate conception of the magnitude of our own world, we must conceive 40,000 landscapes, of a similar extent to pass in review before us: and, were a scene, of the magnitude now stated, to pass before us every hour, till all the diversified scenery of the earth were brought under our view, and were 12 hours a day allotted for the observation, it would require 9 years and 48 days before the whole surface of the globe could be contemplated, even in this *general* and *rapid* manner. But, such a variety of successive landscapes passing before the eye, even although it were possible to be realized, would convey only a very *vague* and *imperfect* conception of the scenery of our world; for objects at the distance of forty miles cannot be distinctly perceived; the only view which would be satisfactory would be, that which is comprehended within the range of three or four miles from the spectator.

In estimating the size and extent of the earth, we ought to take into consideration, the vast variety of objects with which it is

diversified, and the numerous animated beings with which it is stored:—the great divisions of land and water, the continents, seas, and islands, into which it is distributed; the lofty ranges of mountains which rear their heads to the clouds; the unfathomable abysses of the ocean; its vast subterraneous caverns and burning mountains; and the lakes, rivers, and stately forests with which it is so magnificently adorned; the many millions of animals, of every size and form, from the elephant to the mite, which traverse its surface; the numerous tribes of fishes, from the enormous whale to the diminutive shrimp, which “play” in the mighty ocean; the aerial tribes which sport in the regions above us, and the vast mass of the surrounding atmosphere, which encloses the earth and all its inhabitants as “with a swaddling band.” The immense variety of beings with which our terrestrial habitation is furnished, conspires, with every other consideration, to exalt our conceptions of that Power by which our globe, and all that it contains, were brought into existence.

The preceding illustrations, however, exhibit the vast extent of the earth, considered only as a mere superficies. But we know that the earth is a solid globe, whose specific gravity is nearly five times denser than water, or about twice as dense as the mass of earth and rocks which compose its surface. Though we cannot dig into its bowels beyond a mile in perpendicular depth, to explore its hidden wonders, yet we may easily conceive what a vast and indescribable mass of matter must be contained between the two opposite portions of its external circumference, reaching 8,000 miles in every direction. The solid contents of this ponderous ball is no less than 263,858,149,120 cubical miles—a mass of material substance of which we can form but a very faint and imperfect conception—in proportion to which, all the lofty mountains which rise above its surface, are less than a few grains of sand, when compared with the largest artificial globe. Were the earth a hollow sphere, surrounded merely with an external shell of earth and water, 10 miles thick, its internal cavity would be sufficient to contain a quantity of materials *one hundred and thirty three times* greater than the whole mass of continents, islands and oceans, on its surface, and the foundations on which they are supported. We have the strongest reasons, however, to conclude, that the earth, in its general structure, is one solid mass, from the surface to the centre, excepting, perhaps, a few caverns scattered here and there, amidst its subterraneous recesses; and that its density gradually increases from its surface to its central regions. What an enormous mass of materials, then, is comprehended within the limits of that globe on which we tread! The mind labours, as it were, to comprehend the mighty idea, and, after all its exertions, feels itself unable to take in such an astonishing magnitude at *one* comprehensive grasp. How great must be the power of that Being who commanded it to spring from nothing into existence; who “measures the ocean in the hollow of his hand; who weigheth the mountains in scales, and hangeth the earth upon nothing!”

It is essentially requisite, before proceeding to the survey of objects and magnitudes of a superior order, that we should endeavour, by such a train of thought as the preceding, to form some tot-

erable and clear conception of the bulk of the globe we inhabit; for it is the only body we can use as a standard of comparison to guide the mind in its conceptions, when it roams abroad to other regions of material existence. And, from what has been now stated, it appears, that we have no *adequate* conception of a magnitude of so vast an extent; or, at least, that the mind cannot, in any one instant, form to itself a distinct and comprehensive idea of it, in any measure corresponding to the reality.

Hitherto, then, we have fixed only on a determinate magnitude, —on a scale of a few inches, as it were, in order to assist us in our measurement and conception of magnitudes still more august and astonishing. When we contemplate, by the light of science, those magnificent globes which float around us, in the concave of the sky, the earth, with all its sublime scenery, stupendous as it is, dwindles into an inconceivable ball. If we pass from our globe to some of the other bodies of the planetary system, we shall find that one of these stupendous orbs is more than 900 times the size of our world, and encircled with a ring 200,000 miles in diameter, which would nearly reach from the earth to the moon, and would enclose within its vast circumference, several hundreds of worlds as large as ours. Another of these planetary bodies, which appears to the vulgar eye only as a brilliant speck on the vault of heaven, is found to be of such a size, that it would require 1,400 globes of the bulk of the earth to form one equal to it in dimensions. The whole of the bodies which compose the solar system (without taking the sun and the comets into account) contains a mass of matter 2,500 times greater than that of the earth. The sun himself is 520 times larger than all the planetary globes taken together; and one million, three hundred thousand times larger than the terraqueous globe. This is one of the most glorious and magnificent visible objects, which either the eye, or the imagination can contemplate; especially when we consider, what perpetual, and incomprehensible, and powerful influence he exerts—what warmth, and beauty, and activity he diffuses, not only on the globe we inhabit, but over the more extensive regions of surrounding worlds. His energy extends to the utmost limits of the planetary system—to the planet Herschel, which revolves at the distance of 1,800,000,000 of miles from his surface, and there, he dispenses light, and colour, and comfort, to all the beings connected with that far distant orb, and to all the moons that roll around it.

Here the imagination begins to be overpowered and bewildered in its conceptions of magnitude, when it has advanced scarcely a single step in its excursions through the material world: for, it is highly probable, that all the matter contained within the limits of the Solar System, incomprehensible as its magnitude appears, bears a smaller proportion to the whole mass of the material universe, than a single grain of sand to all the particles of matter contained in the body of the sun and his attending planets.

If we extend our views from the solar system to the starry heavens, we have to penetrate, in our imagination, a space which the swiftest ball that was ever projected, though in perpetual motion, would not traverse in ten hundred thousand years. In those track-

less regions of immensity, we behold an assemblage of resplendent globes, similar to the sun in size, and in glory, and doubtless, accompanied with a retinue of worlds, revolving, like our own, around their attractive influence. The immense distance at which the nearest stars are known to be placed, proves, that they are bodies of a prodigious size, not inferior to our own sun, and that they shine, not by reflected rays, but by their own native light. But bodies encircled with such refulgent splendor, would be of little use in the economy of Jehovah's empire, unless surrounding worlds were cheered by their benign influence, and enlightened by their beams. Every star is, therefore, with good reason, concluded to be a sun, no less spacious than ours, surrounded by a host of planetary globes, which revolve around it, as a centre, and derive from it, light, and heat, and comfort. Nearly a thousand of these luminaries may be seen in a clear winter night, by the naked eye; so that a mass of matter equal to a thousand solar systems, or to *thirteen hundred and twenty millions of globes of the size of the earth*, may be perceived, by every common observer, in the canopy of heaven. But all the celestial orbs which are perceived by the unassisted sight, do not form the eighty thousandth part of those which may be descried by the help of optical instruments. The telescope has enabled us to descry, in certain spaces of the heavens, thousands of stars where the naked eye could scarcely discern twenty. The late celebrated astronomer, Dr. Herschel, has informed us, that, in the most crowded parts of the Milky-way, when exploring that region with his best glasses, he has had fields of view which contained no less than 588 stars, and these were continued for many minutes; so that "in one quarter of an hour's time there passed no less than *one hundred and sixteen thousand stars* through the field of view of his telescope."

It has been computed that nearly *one hundred millions* of stars might be perceived by the most perfect instruments, were all the regions of the sky thoroughly explored. And yet, all this vast assemblage of suns and worlds, when compared with what lies beyond the utmost boundaries of human vision, in the immeasurable spaces of creation, may be no more than as the smallest particle of vapour to the immense ocean. Immeasurable regions of space lie beyond the utmost limits of mortal view, into which even imagination itself can scarcely penetrate, and which are, doubtless, replenished with the operations of Divine Wisdom and Omnipotence. For, it cannot be supposed, that a being so diminutive as man, whose stature scarcely exceeds six feet—who vanishes from the sight at the distance of a league—whose whole habitation is invisible from the nearest star—whose powers of vision are so imperfect, and whose mental faculties are so limited—it cannot be supposed that man, who "dwells in tabernacles of clay, who is crushed before the moth,"<sup>2</sup> and chained down, by the force of gravitation, to the surface of a small planet—should be able to descry the utmost boundaries of the empire of Him who fills immensity, and dwells in "light unapproachable." That portion of his dominions, however, which lies within the range of our view, presents such a scene of magnificence and grandeur, as must fill the mind of every reflecting person with astonishment and reverence, and constrain him to exclaim, "Great is

our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite!"—  
"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained—what is man, that thou art mindful of him!" "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear;" I have listened to subtle disquisitions on thy character and perfections, and have been but little affected, "but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I humble myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

In order to feel the full force of the impression made by such contemplations, the mind must pause at every step, in its excursions through the boundless regions of material existence: for it is not by a mere attention to the figures and numbers by which the magnitudes of the great bodies of the universe are expressed, that we arrive at the most distinct and ample conceptions of objects so grand and overwhelming. The mind, in its intellectual range, must dwell on every individual scene it contemplates, and on the various objects of which it is composed: It must add scene to scene, magnitude to magnitude, and compare smaller objects with greater—a range of mountains with the whole earth, the earth with the planet Jupiter, Jupiter with the sun, the sun with a thousand stars, a thousand stars with 80 millions, and 80 millions with all the boundless extent which lies beyond the limits of mortal vision—and, at every step of this mental process, sufficient time must be allowed for the imagination to expatiate on the objects before it, till the ideas approximate, as near as possible, to the reality. In order to form a comprehensive conception of the extent of the terraqueous globe, the mind must dwell on an extensive landscape, and the objects with which it is adorned; it must endeavour to survey the many thousands of diversified landscapes which the earth exhibits—the hills and plains, the lakes and rivers, and mountains, which stretch in endless variety over its surface—it must dive into the vast caverns of the ocean—penetrate into the subterraneous regions of the globe, and wing its way, amidst clouds and tempests, through the surrounding atmosphere. It must next extend its flight through the more expansive regions of the solar system, realizing, in imagination, those magnificent scenes which can be described neither by the naked eye, nor by the telescope; and comparing the extent of our sublunary world, with the more magnificent globes that roll around us. Leaving the sun and all his attendant planets behind, till they have diminished to the size of a small twinkling star, it must next wing its way to the starry regions, and pass from one system of worlds to another, from one Nebula to another, from one region of Nebulæ to another, till it arrive at the utmost boundaries of creation which human genius has explored. It must also endeavor to extend its flight beyond all that is visible by the best telescopes, and expatiate at large in that boundless expanse into which no human eye has yet penetrated, and which is, doubtless, replenished with other worlds, and systems, and firmaments, where the operations of infinite Power and Beneficence are displayed, in endless variety, throughout the illimitable regions of space.

Here, then, with reverence, let us pause, and wonder! Over all this vast assemblage of material existence, God presides. Amidst the diversified objects and intelligences it contains, he is eternally



and essentially present. By his unerring wisdom, all its complicated movements are directed. By his Almighty fiat, it emerged from nothing into existence, and is continually supported from age to age "HE SPAKE, AND IT WAS DONE; HE COMMANDED, AND IT STOOD FAST." "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the spirit of his mouth." What an astonishing display of Divine power is here exhibited to our view! How far transcending all finite comprehension must be the energies of Him who only "spake, and it was done;" who only gave the command, and this mighty system of the universe, with all its magnificence, started into being! The infinite ease with which this vast fabric was reared, leads us irresistibly to conclude, that there are powers and energies in the Divine mind which have never yet been exerted, and which may unfold themselves to intelligent beings, in the production of still more astonishing and magnificent effects, during an endless succession of existence. *That man who is not impressed with a venerable and overwhelming sense of the power and majesty of Jehovah, by such contemplations, must have a mind incapable of ardent religious emotions, and unqualified for appreciating the grandeur of that Being "whose kingdom ruleth over all."* And shall such ensouling views be completely withheld from the Christian audience? Shall it be considered as a matter of mere indifference, whether their views of the Creator's works be limited to the sphere of a few miles around them, or extended to ten thousand worlds?—whether they shall be left to view the operations of the Almighty throughout eternity past, and to come, as confined to a small globe, placed in the immensity of space, with a number of brilliant studs fixed in the arch of heaven, at a few miles distance,—or, as extending through the boundless dimensions of space?—whether they shall be left to entertain no higher idea of the Divine Majesty than what may be due to one of the superior orders of the Seraphim or Cherubim,—or, whether they shall be directed to form the most august conceptions of the King eternal, immortal and invisible, corresponding to the displays he has given of his glory in his visible works? If it be not, both reason and piety require, that such illustrations of the Divine perfections should occasionally be exhibited to their view.

*Christian Philosopher.*

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## NARRATIVE

OF THE STATE OF RELIGION,

*Within the bounds of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and of Corresponding Churches, May 1831.*

If the Churches in this land are not unfaithful to God and to themselves, the prospects of our nation are brighter far than even our past history.

What wonders will open to the view of the philanthropist and the Christian, who surveys this western world from the eminence of some fifty or sixty years hence! Already is our mountain of Zion