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Communications.

Revelation accordant with Reason.

Paganism in ancient and modern times, is equally calculated to enhance the guilt, and multiply the miseries of men. Mahometanism, though grafted upon revelation, is a monstrous corruption, evidently aiming at political subjugation, and the debasement of the human mind. The philosophy of Zeno had little influence upon the world; and that of Epicurus rendered its votaries addicted to the vilest practices. The schemes of modern infidelity have derived their lustre from light purloined from the gospel; they are, in all their forms, the offspring of prejudice and pride, and exist by excluding the truth.

Having the idea of God, our reason can establish the truth of his existence, ascertain many of his perfections, natural and moral, discern our dependance on and obligations to him, and discover outlines of his law, or rules of moral conduct, which we ought to pursue. Those, who are not able to think, or speak clearly of the nature of virtue, and the origin of vice, can nevertheless distinguish right from wrong, and feel a sense or consciousness of guilt, as well as infer from their miseries, a state of opposition to the Creator. In apostasy, it is fit we should be separated from holy and happy beings, and deprived of the sensible presence of the perfectly pure and holy God.

The degradation of an innocent creature implies losses which are immense. Immured in the dark prison of the body, we are excluded from intercourse with separate spirits, and justly treated as convicts, banished from the presence of the Judge. Repentance and faith are at best an imperfect righteousness, and accompanied by propensities to sin, which deserve misery and death.

Against death, the probable evidence of immortality affords, to mere human reason, very slight grounds of comfort. Without a hereafter, man is indeed a mystery; justice has failed; the idea of a future life a tantalizing evil; the faculties of the human mind are misplaced and useless. Yet immortality admitted, a future state, without a revelation, must fill the mind with fearful apprehensions. For although justice requires a distinction to be made between characters, yet the universality of guilt, and the strictness of the claims of justice, seem to exclude hope.

Reason admits, that he who formed the mind, can reveal himself to it; and that he may, if he chooses, remove our uncertainties and fears. The goodness of the Creator, evinced by our present comforts, and even the miseries of man warrant some expectation, that he would do this. The books, which claim the character of a revelation, receive the fullest support from the history of past ages, the manners and languages of the nations. The simplicity of their unadorned narratives, their impar-

could suffer, the divinity being impassible, could have made no more atonement for our sins, than the blood of a bullock or a goat smoking on the worldly sanctuary. The value of our Lord's sacrifice on the cross, therefore, must have arisen from something else—his deity. To this is to be referred the very *essence* of the worth of the sacrifice he offered. Give up his divinity, and the notion of an atonement is a mere chimera. Were Jesus the most exalted creature God ever made, or *could* make, (reverence!) he would have been as utterly incompetent to make an atonement for our sins, as would have been the offering of the meanest reptile on the divine altar. If, therefore, the *whole virtue, value and worth* of Jesus' passion, arises from the deity of his person; whence his blood is called the blood of God; how shall we form an estimate of the value of that divinity! Who will dare to bring his scale and graduate by any numerical admeasurement, or compound ratio of time and intensity, the value of the sufferings of Jesus; *i. e.* the value of his divine person, without which his sufferings could have had no worth?

4. The expiation of this infinite guilt, admits of no compromise. The debtor must continue in duress, until the last farthing of the debt shall have been liquidated. It is true, some have objected to the propriety of considering sin as a debt; but while we find in that perfect model of prayer, prescribed by our Lord, to his disciples, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," we need feel no reluctance in viewing sin as a debt due to divine justice. Now, I have already observed, that in the liquidation of this debt, any thing like compromise, is utterly inadmissible. Any partial payment of an infinite debt, would be equivalent to nothing. Infinity is an incommensurable *prime*, measurable only by itself; *i. e.* by infinity. Any thing less, therefore,

than infinity, taken from infinity, will leave an infinite remainder. And consequently in the

5th place—The punishment of sin, upon the footing of *personal* expiation, must be eternal. The finite resources of the culprit can never meet the infinite demands which the inexorable justice of God has filed against him. No payment he can make, can, ever, in the smallest degree, diminish the principal. This would be to suppose an exhaustion of infinity by finite deductions, which is absurd. The want, therefore, of infinite intensity in the suffering, must be balanced by an eternity of duration. Here we find, as usual, reason and scripture leading us to the same conclusion. Their worm shall never die; their fire shall never be quenched; depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. No limits, therefore, can be set to punishment, upon the foundation of *personal* expiation.

S. B. W.

Thoughts on Revivals of Religion.

This is certainly a subject of some importance. The avidity with which pious people receive narratives of religious revivals clearly evinces, that, in their judgment, "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" are devoutly to be wished. Christians may differ in their views, concerning the *nature* of a genuine revival; but the thing itself all will readily acknowledge to be desirable. The diversity of opinion which obtains, on this subject, among the friends of Christianity, is, perhaps, rather apparent than real. In our apprehension, it arises partly from a want of agreement, in regard to the meaning of certain terms and phrases, commonly used on topics of this kind, and partly from a neglect to distinguish the effects of a divine influence on the heart, from those excesses of passion, or extravagances

of conduct, which sometimes attend a real work of grace, and which ought to be ascribed to the ignorance and depravity of the human heart.

Every denomination of Christians have a set of phrases, or forms of expression, against which other denominations are very apt to entertain some prejudice: Hence a mere strife of words is often mistaken for a doctrinal difference, where none exists in fact. If you choose to distinguish what I call a revival of religion, by another name, be it so; I will not contend with you about the name, provided you concede that the work intended to be designated thereby, is of God. Call it, if you please, an awakening, an outpouring of the spirit, a display of redeeming mercy, a shower of gracious influence, an ingathering of souls to the Saviour, or an extension of the power of godliness; any of these phrases would be sufficiently intelligible, and might be used interchangeably, without detriment, so far as we can perceive, to the cause of vital piety. If Christians would take a little more pains to understand one another, and agree to construe each other's language and conduct fairly and charitably, might they not offer to God their joint supplications for the revival of religion, with as much consistency and cordiality, as they do for the coming of the Redeemer's kingdom?

We should be careful also, to distinguish the genuine effects of a divine influence on the minds of men, from those wild excesses of feeling, and extravagances of conduct, which often attend strong religious excitement. Considering what human nature is, we should expect some departures from Christian decorum, where large numbers of careless persons, many of them very ignorant of divine things, are roused to a deep and awful concern about the salvation of their souls. To prevent or correct evils of this

sort, should be the constant aim of ministers and other experienced Christians. No intelligent friend to revivals approves, or countenances fanaticism, or the violation of church order; nor should he be rashly charged with such a design. On the other hand, we should not suppose that a temperate remonstrance against those disorders that sometimes appear in extensive revivals, implies hostility to a work of grace, or a cold indifference to the saving power of true religion.

While we would resist confusion and all infringement of that wise and wholesome order, which Christ has appointed in his church, we deprecate a languid monotony of feeling, on the momentous concerns of the soul. "Let all things be done decently and in order;" but "let us not sleep, as do others." The day of grace is a short term; and the bliss of heaven is suspended on its religious improvement. It is our seed time for eternity: "He that soweth to his flesh shall, of the flesh, reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall, of the spirit, reap life everlasting."

The writer of these thoughts is far from thinking that no souls are converted to the Lord, or that nothing is done towards the edifying of the body of Christ, where there are no special revivals of religion. He firmly believes that, wherever the pure gospel of the grace of God is preached, it proves, to some of the people, "a savour of life unto life." A portion of the seed, wherever it is faithfully dispensed, falls into good ground, and bears fruit. He is well aware, too, that a large proportion of real believers have been brought to the knowledge and love of the truth, not, indeed, without deep conviction of sin, and a feeling sense of their lost and helpless condition by nature, but in circumstances which have excited no great degree of attention, even in the church to which they belong. God's methods in turning sinners

from the error of their ways, are various; and it were arrogance in us to say, that he is limited in his gracious influence, to any particular set of means, appearances, or instruments. We rejoice, as do the angels, at the repentance of *one* sinner, whoever or whatsoever may have been the means of his recovery from a state of condemnation and spiritual death. While one here, and another there, are brought home to God, under the gentle droppings of the sanctuary, we charge our souls not to "despise the day of small things;" yet, we do long, and will pray to see sinners flying to Jesus, "as clouds, and as doves to their windows."

However gently and silently some may be reduced to the obedience of faith, and enfolded in the arms of redeeming love; ordinarily, the translation of souls, from darkness to light, and from the bondage of iniquity to the glorious liberty of the sons of God, is attended with an awakening sense of sin, and with a change of temper and conduct, which cannot be easily concealed: And where considerable numbers become subjects of this change, at the same time, and in the same congregation, or neighbourhood, there is what we call a revival of religion. There we behold the stately steppings of Zion's king, the conquests of his grace—the trophies of his power—and the precious fruits of his travail of soul, when he sweat in Gethsemane, and died on Calvary, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

Let revivals be tested by their fruits; and we doubt not that real Christians of every name will be constrained to hail them, as blessings from the Lord. Visit those favoured congregations, where the special outpouring of the spirit, as we believe, is experienced, and you will find the happy subjects of hope in Christ, abounding in every good word and work,—earnest in

prayer for a blessing on the ordinances of the gospel, and on all charitable exertions to diffuse the light and consolations of evangelical truth: There you will see some of the most irreligious persons reclaimed from their evil courses, and licentious habits: There you will see whole households, in some instances, devoted to God in Christian baptism, their dwellings converted into Bethels, and consecrated by daily prayer and praise: There you will hear the people say, one to another, "Come, let us go up to the house of God, and he will teach us of his way, and we will walk in his paths:" There you will find many Andrews and Philips endeavouring, by friendly entreaties, by letters, by religious books and tracts, to bring other Peters and Nathaniels to the knowledge of *Him* who is "the way, the truth, and the life:" There you will see animosities among kindred and neighbours buried at the foot of the cross,—pride, envy, and evil surmisings giving place to concord and brotherly kindness: In a word, you will find more additions made to the communion of the church, of hopeful subjects of saving grace, in a few months, than had been made, in the same congregations, enjoying the same means of religious improvement, for many years.

It is a painful truth, indeed, which experience and observation oblige us to admit, that some persons, who are awakened, on such occasions, are not converted in heart unto God; and, therefore, after appearing to run well, for a little season, they relapse into their old habits of negligence and sin. These are they whose "goodness is as the morning cloud, and the early dew, which passeth away:" they seem to begin in the spirit, but end in the flesh: These are the characters designated by the stony ground, in the parable of the sower: "But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth

the word, and, anon, with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by, he is offended."

But such unhappy instances, while they admonish him that thinketh he standeth, to take heed lest he fall, furnish no solid objection to the work, as being, upon the whole, a work of God, for which he is greatly to be praised, in the assemblies of his saints.

If these observations be just, then a revival of religion ought to be regarded by every Christian congregation, as one of the richest of heaven's blessings. The power of the Holy Ghost should be sought, by prayer and supplication, as the only effectual agency, in the resuscitation of souls that are dead in trespasses and sins. "Come from the four winds, O breath of the Lord, and breathe upon the slain, that they may live!"

"Thy ministers are sent in vain
To prophesy upon the slain;
In vain they call, in vain they cry,
Till thine Almighty aid is nigh.

"But if thy Spirit deign to breathe,
Life spreads through all the realms of
death:

Dry bones obey thy powerful voice;
They move, they waken, they rejoice."

W. N.

BRIEF DISCOURSES. NO. I.

BY E. S. ELY.

Christian Liberty.

"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds."—2 John, 10, 11.

In the present day, there is a strong disposition, in many professing Christians, to abandon the faith once delivered to the saints, and adopt a universal fellowship in all theological systems; under the plea, that every man believes his own theory to be correct; and that it is

uncharitable, and presumptuous, to claim the title of *the gospel of Jesus Christ* exclusively for any one of them. It must, however, be evident to every candid inquirer, that many of these schemes of doctrine are diametrically opposed to each other; and if one is right, the opposite to it is wrong. If one is the gospel plan of salvation, any other, which is fundamentally repugnant to it, cannot be the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

It would give us pleasure to be deemed candid and liberal; but we advocate *Christian* liberality alone; and that we may have a conscience void of offence towards God and man, we must clearly state, what we apprehend to be the fundamental doctrines of the only evangelical system; and what course of conduct ought to be pursued in relation to all persons who publicly preach any other gospel, in the name of Christ.

In conformity with this arrangement, we shall, in the first place, show what the apostle John, speaking by divine authority, intended by *this doctrine*. He was a servant of Jesus Christ, an apostle by his commission, and a public minister of his religion. By *this doctrine*, in the words quoted, he evidently intended, the system of theology which he preached, in conjunction with all his holy brethren in the ministerial office. *If there come unto you, the elect lady and her children, any preacher, professing to be a minister of the religion of Jesus, and bring not this doctrine, which I write, and which I have preached, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, receive him not.*

1. It is an essential doctrine of the gospel which John proclaimed, that there exists one God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."