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UNION AND FRIENDLY INTERCOURSE

RECOMMENDED AMONG SUCH OF THE VARIOUS

DENOMINATIONS OF CALVINISTS,

AND THE MEMBERS OF THE LATE

MR. WESLEY'S SOCIETIES,

AS AGREE IN THE

ESSENTIAL TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL:

In a DISCOURSE delivered at the late MR. WESLEY'S CHAPEL in the CITY ROAD, LONDON, on Sunday the 25th of March, 1798; for the Benefit of the PROTESTANT DISSIDENTING CHARITY SCHOOL, in WOOD-STREET, SPITALFIELDS.

By the REV. JOHN EYRE, M. A.

N.B. *The Profits will be applied towards spreading the Gospel.*

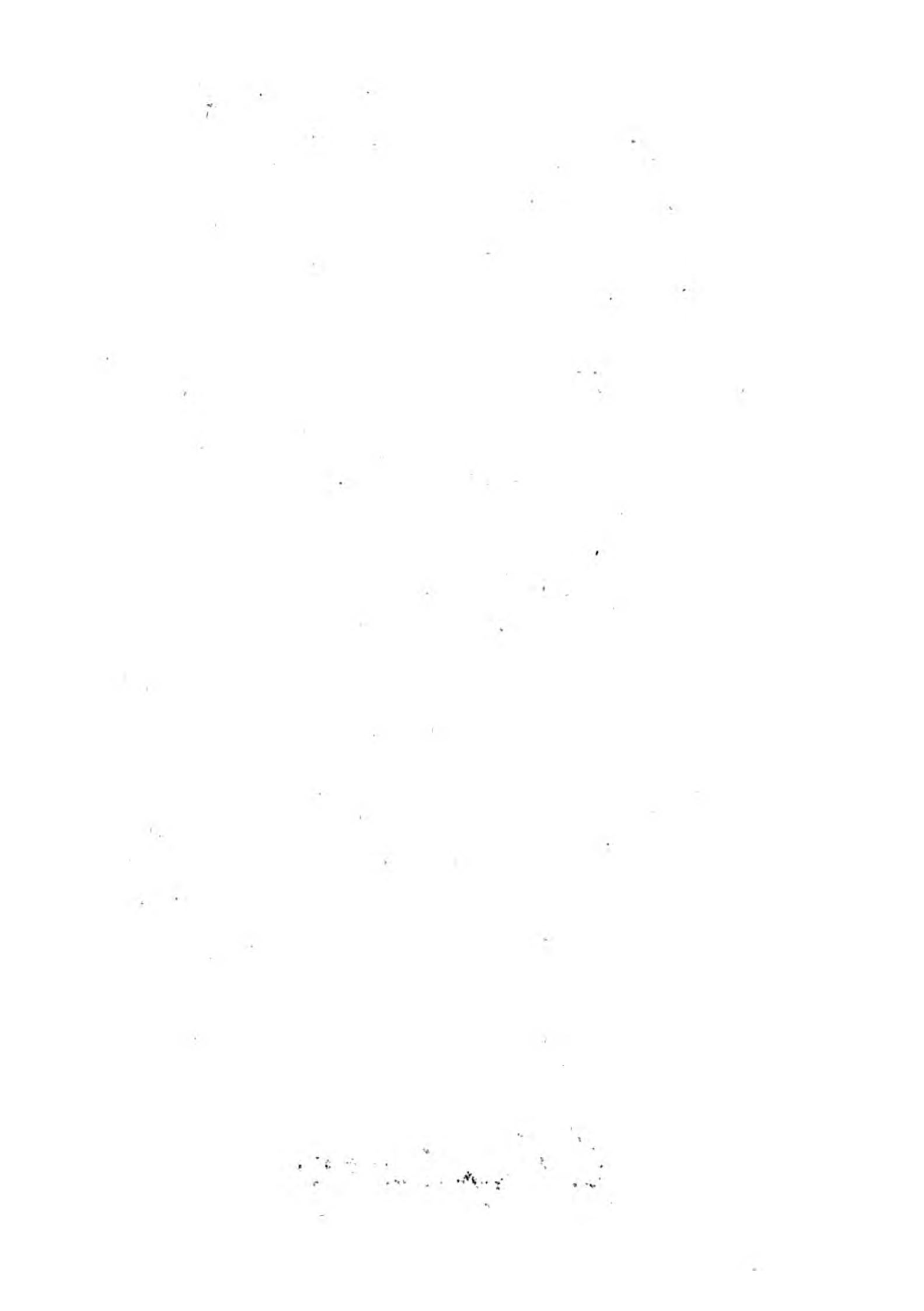
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PREFACE.

WHEN the enemy of souls is uniting myriads under the banners of infidelity, for the purpose of destroying every principle religious and moral, a discourse, recommending brotherly love and union to all who are truly alive to God, in the different denominations, needs no apology. Such an union has been long desired by many, both for the credit of religion, and the more effectual spreading of the important truths of the Gospel. That it is practicable, upon the principles mentioned by the author, can scarcely be doubted. It has, in a great degree, been effected by the cordial co-operation of persons of various denominations in promoting the objects of the Missionary Societies, and several subsequent institutions. The scale may yet be extended; and the circumstances in which the following discourse originated, and the favourable manner in which it was received, induce a hope that the period for accomplishing it is not far distant.

The steps which lead to most events are generally gradual and unobserved, the connexion between causes and events being seldom perceived till the eye of reflection is too far distant to view them distinctly. It will, therefore, be sufficient to say, on the present occasion, that Mr. Greatheed, in consequence of a friendly general invitation from several Christian Brethren of the late Mr. Wesley's connexion, preached at their chapel in the City Road, on Sunday the 18th instant, and Mr. Hill and the author, being as affectionately desired to do the same, preached there the Sunday

following, for the benefit of a Protestant Dissenting Charity School.

The invitation to Mr. Greatheed and his reply are here subjoined, as a specimen of that Christian love and candour the uniting parties wish to strengthen and promote.

What influence this example may have on others time will declare. The friends of peace and union, however, may hope to succeed, sooner or later, if they relax not in their endeavours. Obstacles are fast removing. Calvinists and Wesleyans have ceased to irritate each other. Their fierce disputants have laid their weapons aside, and controversy slumbers in the graves of the departed. From the Wesleyan brethren proceeded the first overtures of reconciliation. The name of their Magazine, which, in point of sentiment, may now be considered as the standard of the connexion, has been lately changed from *Arminian* to *Methodist*; because, as one of their ministers observed, they could with no more propriety be called Arminians than Mahometans. The three sermons of their Calvinistic brethren they highly approved, and declared their firm belief of all the doctrines advanced in them. One of these sermons it has been thought proper to print, that it might be known to others what the doctrines are in which they are mutually agreed, and upon what ground they plead for love, peace, and union among all sincere believers in Jesus.

HOMERTON, *March 31st, 1798*;

LETTER

LETTER TO MR. GREATHEED.

REV. SIR,

MR. REYNER has been so kind as to inform us, that you soon intend to spend a few weeks in Town, and that you would have no objection to preach in any of our Chapels. We therefore, Sir, take the liberty of informing you, that we shall think ourselves and our People both favoured and honoured by your preaching in any or all our Chapels. If Mr. Reyner will be so kind as to settle this point with Mr. Pawson in the course of next week, or with Dr. Coke in the week following, we shall think ourselves obliged. We most sincerely wish by all means to strengthen the union between all Christian Brethren.

We are,

Dear Rev. SIR,

Your truly affectionate Brethren,

T. COKE,
 J. PAWSON,
 THO. RANKIN,
 ADAM CLARKE,
 GEO. STORY,
 GEO. MARSDEN,
 JAMES HAMELTON,
 JOHN ASHALL,
 GEO. WHITFIELD.

CITY ROAD,
 March 10, 1798.

LETTER

LETTER FROM MR. GREATHEED.

DEAR AND HONOURED BRETHREN,

I CANNOT satisfy myself with returning merely a verbal Message to your very kind Address, which has given me, and others whom I have informed of it, abundant cause for thankfulness. The unrestrained exchange of friendly offices among all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, appears to me a matter of much importance. I gladly avail myself of your cordial invitation on this account, although not without reluctance to stand in the stead of a brother or a father, whose labours would be probably much more useful. My worthy friend, Mr. Reyner, will consult with you on the place and season that may be expedient for me to attempt a Word of Exhortation to my Christian Brethren in your department of the Lord's Vineyard. With warmest thanks for your alacrity in strengthening general Union among Christ's People.

I am,

REVEREND AND DEAR BRETHREN,

Your unworthy Servant in the Lord,

SAMUEL GREATHEED.

SHACKLEWELL,

13th March, 1798.

A SERMON.

GALATIANS, CHAP. I. VER. 8, 9.

Though we, or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

THE service I am this day called to perform presses on my mind with more than usual solemnity. At the commencement of Methodism, our venerable Fathers, now with God, united their successful efforts in the cause of their common Lord and Master. The most friendly intercourse long subsisted throughout their vast societies, till

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controversy,

controversy, intemperately conducted, arose and interrupted it by exciting mutual prejudice. Though children of the same God and Father, we lived, almost twenty years, in sight of each other, like hostile bands, whose motions were to be watched, whose influence was to be dreaded. But, through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath lately remarkably visited us; a spirit of love and zeal has been copiously poured out upon all the churches of Christ in the land, and angry passions have greatly subsided. The various denominations of Calvinists, rising superior to the asperity of educational prejudices, have embraced each other in purest affection, and united their exertions in spreading the Gospel at home and abroad. Influenced by the same spirit, some of your friends mingled with us in our assemblies, assisted us in our deliberations, adopted our plans, and co-operated in accomplishing them with the utmost vigour. Admiring their zeal, and perceiving that God was with you, even as with us, we were turning towards you an affectionate eye, and some of us were suggesting whether a conciliatory address would not be adviseable, when, to our great astonishment and joy, while we paused, you first broke silence and extended the olive branch of peace, hailing us as brethren, and inviting us to come among you again, and cultivate a spirit of mutual love and forbearance. This invitation, for my own part, I cordially accept, led on by a dearly beloved

beloved Brother and friend, whose sermon you highly approved, and followed in the evening by another, whose praise is in all the churches, and whose discourse, I trust, will be attended with happy consequences.

An event so sudden has filled thousands with surprize; and many, probably, of this congregation, are assembled with ardent desire to hear on what principle an occasional friendly intercourse can be re-established, and for what purpose, or to what advantage. Is truth, say they, to be sacrificed on the altar of peace? Or is each party to detail his peculiar sentiments, freely, in whatever pulpit they may be invited? My brethren, dismiss your fears; from no quarter is danger to be apprehended. The only sacrifice required is that of prejudice; that we may not continue to view each other's conduct and opinions through a discoloured medium. While we cherish love and candour, we will not be unfaithful to God, nor to our own consciences; time serving and men pleasing being as hateful in our eyes as bigotry and rancour. Though we professedly differ in many points, yet, if we agree in the grand essential truths of the Gospel, this agreement is certainly a sufficient basis for brotherly love; nor can the real followers of Christ co-operate with any persons on another foundation. Without unanimity there can be no cordial

communion; neither, as it respects God nor man, can two walk together except they are agreed.

No man upon earth exemplified greater love, or greater candour, than the Apostle Paul. He preached the word, in season and out of season, both to the Jews and Gentiles, and endured all things for the elect's sake, that they might be saved. Accommodating himself to the circumstances of mankind, he went privately and from house to house to those of reputation, that he might not run in vain nor labour in vain. When reproof was necessary, he withstood even Peter to the face, but circumcised Timothy and shaved his head, being at charges, when the glory of God required such compliance. So tender was he of another man's conscience, that he declared, though he knew it was lawful for him to eat all things, he would rather never eat meat while the world stood than offend a weak brother. He literally became all things unto all men, that he might win some; yet no man was more zealous for the grand discriminating truths of the Gospel. He knew too well their value to be indifferent about them. He was fully persuaded that it was of the utmost importance to the best interest of mankind, that redemption by the blood of Christ, and that alone, should be every where proclaimed. Whilst, therefore, he lamented the improper motives which actuated
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some

Some preachers, he approved their subject, because it was calculated to do good to others, should they themselves derive from it no benefit. "Some, indeed," says he, "preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds; but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice*." Ministers of this description, he considered as the scaffold to the building, useful for a while though afterwards to be destroyed; or as mercenary worthless messengers delivering a glorious important message. But, the moment he perceived any doctrine diffused contrary to the spirit and tendency of the Gospel, his zeal was kindled, and he sounded an alarm, that the churches of Christ might beware of its contagious influence; and also denounced the wrath of God on the party who dared to propagate it, however specious their pretended motives, or however respectable their appearance. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed:" And, as if this were not expressive enough of his indignation, he repeats it with equal vehemence, and in almost the same words, "If any man preach

* Phil i. 15—18.

any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

The Apostle Paul, therefore, shall be our model. We will take him for our example. We will neither sacrifice truth, nor be indifferent to its interests. Yea, zeal for truth, and love to each other for the truth's sake, shall form the only basis of our union; and surely a union, between good men of all denominations, upon such a basis, must be pleasing to God, honourable to themselves, and profitable to the souls of many. And what is there to prevent it? Nothing, I humbly conceive, but ignorance and bigotry; and to the weak and credulous, in the dark, every object is alarming. Of this description many, perhaps, may be found on each side, though, blessed be God, their numbers are daily decreasing. The light of truth is the only method to undeceive them; and this can hardly fail of breaking in upon their minds, if they would but attentively consider the words of the Apostle in reference to those to whom they were addressed, and then impartially apply them to the present occasion.

Galatia was a province of lesser Asia, taking its name from the ancient Gauls, or Galatæ, who, leaving France, either through distress or the love of plunder, went thither and settled. It was converted from Heathenism to Christianity, as is generally

rally supposed, by the labours of the Apostle Paul. Having formed the numerous converts into several churches, he clearly instructed and established them in the way of salvation by grace; like a wise master builder laying a good foundation, and showing them that there was no possibility of any sinner being justified by the works of the law, or by any method that could be devised, except by faith in Christ alone. While he continued with them, they ran well, and expressed the strongest affection both for his person and ministry. But no sooner had he left them than a swarm of Judaizing teachers, who had been watching the opportunity, made their appearance; ever ready, like too many in our day, to enter upon another man's labours, and to intrude themselves among flourishing churches, zealous to pervert from the simplicity of the Gospel those whom another had been the instrument of converting.

Under a mask of external piety and will-worship, they expressed great concern for a life of holiness; whilst by artful insinuations they endeavoured to weaken their attachment to the Apostle and his doctrine; representing him as inferior to Peter, James, and John, and probably to themselves, by pretending to more familiar intercourse with God than the Apostle was indulged with, and affirming that an "angel from Heaven" had been sent to reveal to them the doctrines they delivered. The very
design

design of the law, which was intended as a school-master to lead us to Christ, they grossly perverted, by asserting the necessity of joining circumcision and the observation of the law of Moses with faith in Christ in order to justification. Nor is it unlikely that they pleaded the example of the Apostles and churches at Jerusalem, and confidently boasted of their sanction and authority.

Several, of whom the Apostle once entertained great hope, were staggered by these subtle devices. To counteract the effect of these pernicious errors, he wrote to them this beautiful Epistle. Though a wise man, deeply skilled in the knowledge of the human heart, is seldom amazed at any changes, yet he could not suppress his astonishment at what had taken place. "I marvel," says he, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel, which is not another." And well, indeed, might he wonder, for the Gospel he had preached differed essentially from their false one. *His* Gospel consisted of glad tidings from an offended God to a guilty world. It was neither more nor less than a gracious declaration of God's method of saving sinners by Jesus Christ. It is true, it represented them as utterly depraved and helpless, having, by their fall in their first parent, lost communion with God, being under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself,
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and to the pains of hell for ever. But then it pointed these very sinners to the Son of God as their all-sufficient surety, substituting himself in their place, obeying for them every precept of the law in his life, and enduring all the penalty due to their transgressions in his death, that, by the merit of his obedience and sufferings, those who believe on him may be justified from all things, but from which not one of them could ever have been justified by the law of Moses. To the truth of this Gospel, God the Holy Ghost bare indubitable witness, confirming it by miracles, and accompanying it by his gracious influence to such a degree that the eyes of the blind were opened, the ears of the deaf were unstopped, the feeble knees were strengthened, the polluted heart was cleansed, yea, the dead in trespasses and sins were raised up, conformed to the image of Christ, in whom they believed, and enabled to live to his praise. But *their* Gospel had no glad tidings in its nature, and no divine influence for its seal. It might feed pride, but it could never afford the wounded conscience peace, nor could it promote holiness. It was not, therefore, properly, another Gospel, but a fatal delusion. It put sinners upon an impossible task. Neither could they keep the law, nor, if they could, would God accept an offering from them while their persons were not accepted. Besides, God had declared his unalterable intention that no one should be justified in his sight, either wholly or

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partly, in any other way than by faith in Christ Jesus. The Apostle admonished them of the folly of recurring to circumcision and the works of the law, and testified, in the most solemn manner, that whoever advised them to the direful expedient was the common enemy of God and man, and the marked object of divine displeasure. This no language can express so forcibly as his own: "Though we, the Apostles, after all our labour and success, or an angel from Heaven, were it possible, as is pretended, or any creature else of whatever description, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached, and you have received, let him be accursed: let him be rejected with abhorrence from the churches of Christ and the society of the faithful, and considered by them all as one whom God will devote to destruction."

In the words thus briefly explained, according to their true scope and meaning, there are three things which furnish us with very important instruction; the character of the offenders, the nature of their offence, and the severity of their punishment.

Their characters suggest the necessity of caution, that we may not be deceived by outward appearances. Immoral teachers seldom or never do an injury to serious minds, since, preach what they please, they cannot obtain a patient hearing. Indeed,

deed, Satan is too wise to employ such agents for such people. He knows better how to fit his instruments to his work. His wolves must appear in sheep's clothing, and first deceive before they can destroy. We therefore see the propriety of attending to the advice given us in the Scripture, "Not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they be of God." Happy for us, these false apostles have appropriate marks by which they may certainly be detected. "By their fruit," says Christ, "ye shall know them." Carnal men will ever be actuated by carnal motives. Pride, avarice, or inordinate self-love necessarily influence their conduct. The wolf retains his ferocious nature, though the skin of the meek and harmless sheep be his cloathing. Satan, the liar and murderer from the beginning, continues to be the same foul fiend, when he "transforms himself into an angel of light:" And the children of that wicked one cease not to do the works of their father, when they "are transformed as the ministers of righteousness." Concealment for a long time is consequently impossible, since they, who act a character, cannot always be uniformly consistent. Whoever speaks like a dragon, is a dragon, though he may strive to hide what he is by looking like a lamb*. The disagreement between his looks and his voice is the infallible mark God has set on his evil design,

* Rev. xiii. 11.

that he may be known and avoided. Had the Galatians been wise and cautious they could not have been much deceived ; for they would have immediately suspected those who endeavoured to lessen the reputation of the apostle, and magnify themselves for wisdom and piety ; and when they perceived them beginning to sap the foundation of christian hope, it would have been no longer doubtful in their minds who they were, or what they intended. Let us, however, from their character learn wisdom.

Nor is their offence less instructive ; but, like the censers of Korah and his company, stands as a memorial before the eyes of all men, that none may venture to corrupt the word of God by laying any " other foundation than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus*." Different opinions there have been, and will probably continue to be, among the people of God in all ages, upon many scriptural subjects, partly owing to the difficulty of the subjects themselves, and partly to the limitedness of the human understanding, and the prejudices of education ; but all, who are partakers of his grace, unite in making Christ, living and dying, the just for the unjust, the sole foundation of their hope. Even great absurdities may be embraced without prejudice to our salvation ; but provided we fall not into the fundamental error of trusting in any thing, but the merits of Christ, or making him, as the Antino-

* 1. Cor. 3. 11.

mians do, the minister of sin, we must love as brethren, and exercise mutual candour and forbearance. The Corinthians differed from each other. One said, I am of Paul, another I am of Apollos, and a third I am of Cephas. Their divisions proved a peculiarity of sentiment, supported, as some of them falsely thought, by apostolical authority. They agreed, however, in the foundation the apostle laid; some, indeed, built on it "gold, silver, precious stones," others, "wood, hay, stubble;" yet still they *built* on that only, and therefore, though "they suffered loss, themselves were saved, yet so as by fire*."

But the error our text condemns is of the most dangerous tendency. It subverts the soul. Not by questioning the authenticity of the scriptures; not by openly encouraging sin; not by denying the divinity of Christ, or making a direct attack on his atonement, but by a virtual renunciation of the infinite merit of his obedience and sufferings, in teaching the brethren that, except they were circumcised and kept the law, they could not be saved†.

This was the offence which brought upon them swift destruction; and a heinous offence it was in every point of view. It reflected on every person in the Godhead. It reflected on the wisdom of the Father who contrived for us this expensive plan of salvation, if it could have been obtained in any

* 1. Cor. 3. 12. 15. † See Acts 15. 1. 24. * Gal. 5. 2. &c.
other

other way, and upon his justice and compassion too in bruising his son, and putting him to grief, and making his soul an offering for sin, if less than that could have made expiation. It reflected on the glory and majesty of the Son, by associating the acts of a polluted worm with his merit as necessary to salvation, thereby making them of almost equal importance, and basely derogating from his praise. It reflected also on the veracity of the Holy Ghost, who had attested, by signs and wonders, and gracious influence on the hearts of thousands at a time, the gospel preached by the apostles, which uniformly declared that there was salvation in no other name given under heaven, and that whoever believed on him should not perish, but have eternal life. It robbed the conscience of those whose faith was shaken by it of its wonted comfort; obscured the bright beams of the sun of righteousness, and tossed the tranquil mind into agitation and confusion, by introducing ten thousand doubts and fears. It tended likewise to injure holiness, while it pretended to be its advocate. The sacrifice for sin is the bread of life. Except we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man we have no life in us*. Sanctification without Christ is as impossible as justification. A soul that does not abide in Christ can no more bring forth fruit unto God, than a branch can be fruitful without the vine†. Holiness is inseparable from the faith of the gospel. "I live," may every believer say, "yet not I, but

* John 6. 53. † John 15. 4.

Christ liveth in me, and the life I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*." This is saving faith. This is true experience. All other teaching, or preaching, leaves sinners as it found them, guilty and polluted, slaves to sin and under the curse of the law, and is as injurious to the happiness of mankind and vital holiness, as it is derogatory to the glory of the Redeemer and Sanctifier.

We are therefore constrained to acknowledge that the punishment denounced is righteous, though severe, and designed to operate as a terror and a caution; that we may neither propagate fundamental errors, nor countenance those who do so; but that we may be friends of those only who are friends of Christ, strengthening each others hands, covering each others infirmities with a mantle of love, and uniting our efforts against the encroachments of the common enemy.

Upon *these principles*, and for *these purposes*, my dear brethren, we can unite with you and you with us; since, on a fair investigation, we shall be found to accord in all the leading truths, which the apostle evidently intended in the text, to comprehend in the term GOSPEL. Upon this subject, blessed be God, I can speak with some degree of confidence. At my entrance on the ministry the controversy between us had begun, and I soon imbibed the spirit of party. But a circumstance shortly occurred which effectually re-

* Gal. 2. 20.

moved my prejudice. Wanting a successor for a curacy in the country, good Mr. Perronet, of Shoreham, consented to part with his curate immediately, provided I would serve his church till he could engage another. There I continued in his family four months, conversed with the preachers who came weekly to the house, and frequently visited the serious part of the congregation. I found that the object of our trust was exactly the same, and so was our experience. In short, I perceived they were *practical* Calvinists. They had no reliance but on Christ; they could do nothing of themselves; they ascribed the difference between themselves and others to the grace of God alone, and they confessed themselves bound by every tie of love and gratitude to serve the author of their mercies. I could say and do no more. I therefore loved them in the Lord, and having faithfully preached to them every truth I myself believed, but without using the terms to which I knew they had attached ideas different from mine, we parted with mutual reluctance. They would have done much to have detained me among them, but the path of duty led to another situation. Since that, I have been confirmed in the opinion I entertained, by conversing with many individuals: and so far as I could observe from the discourses of those few ministers, who have occasionally preached for me, our views of the grand essential truths are not only alike, but I never heard them utter a sentence to which I could not subscribe.

Mistake

Mistake me not: I do not wish to see, on either side, candour stretched beyond the limits the gospel prescribes. Some there are, calling themselves Calvinists, whom we would not recommend to your pulpits, nor admit on any consideration into our own; because they are, *bona fide*, Antinomians, who, under pretence of magnifying grace, not only deny the moral law to be a rule of life, but, by the whole tenor of their spirit, conduct, and preaching, encourage pride, envy, malice, wrath, revenge, and every other evil: And probably there are some, who would shelter themselves under the sanction of your denomination, whom you would by no means countenance, because they aim to turn the soul away from Christ, or to divide with him the glory, pretending, indeed, a concern for holiness, but ignorant of its true source and principle. Alas! their opposite schemes are equally fatal. He that builds in the clouds, and he that builds on the sand, are distant enough from each other; but what advantage is that to either, since both are alike remote from the true foundation.

There are two infallible criterions for ascertaining whether a man's preaching be apostolical or not; its tendency, and the influence of the Holy Ghost rendering it efficacious. If on trial it has both in its favour it has enough to recommend it to our encouragement and esteem.

The Apostles always endeavoured to humble the sinner, to exalt the Saviour, and to promote holiness of heart and life, by preaching the fall of man in Adam, his recovery by Christ alone, and the necessity of regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Ghost; and that Gospel which *we* have preached, and which *ye* have received, doth the same.

We each believe the apostacy of our first parent and representative, and the subsequent ruin and depravity of the whole human race. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all men for that all have sinned*." We do not think man is first corrupted by example, as the Pelagians and Socinians teach, but that he is "born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and goes astray from the womb, speaking lies." We are not likely, therefore, to feed his pride by drawing a flattering likeness. "Earthly, sensual, devilish," are the prominent features in his character. "His whole head is sick, and his whole heart faint: From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in him; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores †." The understanding is blinded, the will rebellious, and the affections vile. He is God's enemy, and the Devil's child; and the lusts of his father he will do ‡. He frameth

* Romans, v. 12. † Isaiah i. 5, 6. ‡ John, viii. 44.

mischief by a law. Every thought of the imagination of his heart is only evil, and that continually. " His throat is an open sepulchre ; with his tongue he hath used deceit ; the poison of asps is under his lips ; his mouth is full of cursing and bitterness ; his feet are swift to shed blood ; destruction and misery are in his ways ; and the way of peace hath he not known ; there is no fear of God before his eyes *." Worse than this he cannot be, and better we dare not represent him. If such a guilty creature be ever saved it must be by grace alone ; if such a polluted creature be made meet for heaven, it must be by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.

This view of the fall of man is of the utmost importance. It demonstrates the necessity of the work of Christ for us, and the work of the Holy Ghost in us ; and by humbling the sinner in the dust, disposes him to embrace cordially the salvation revealed in the Gospel, and to seek earnestly after renewing and sanctifying grace. I never knew a man, who properly believed the fall, that spoke lightly of Christ or the work of the Holy Ghost, or was drawn away into a fundamental error. Indeed, it seems almost impossible that any one should admit man's total apostacy and depravity, and the infinite evil of sin, who could deny

* Romans, iii. 13, &c.

the justice of God in inflicting, if he pleases, an endless punishment, or his boundless love and mercy in providing a Saviour, or the necessity of being born again and made holy. Nor could he deny the proper divinity of the Redeemer or Sanctifier, or suppose that any person less than divine was equal to either undertaking.

Believing, therefore, the doctrine of the fall, we shall not disagree in exalting the Saviour. Blessed be God, we need not watch each other with a jealous eye, nor be afraid lest we should exceed on this subject. If we say that he hath loved us and given himself for us; that he was bruised for our sins, and wounded for our transgressions; that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree; that he became obedient unto death for us, even the death of the cross; that he redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; yea, that he was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; we say nothing more than the prophets and apostles affirmed. If we ascribe to him, in consequence of his meritorious death and righteousness, as our surety, substitute, and representative, deliverance from the guilt of sin and the wrath to come, reconciliation to God, pardon, justification, sanctification, adoption, and eternal life, we ascribe no more to him than the Holy Ghost has taught us to do in the Scriptures. If we attribute to him all divine perfections and operations,

rations, and honour him, in every respect, even as we honour the Father, we shall not offend the God of Truth. In short, exalt him how we will, we shall never exalt him higher than the Father did when he exalted him at his own right hand in glory, and “gave him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD to the glory of God the Father*.”

The Godhead of Christ is “the rock of ages.” What Dr. Owen somewhere observes, if my recollection serves me, is certainly true: That, however obscure the views which the people of God had, in some periods of time, of many important subjects, there never was any difference of opinion among them, from the beginning of the world, respecting the person of the Redeemer: they all believed that he was God over all, blessed for ever: And this truth will ever be admitted in equal degree by all his disciples. For when Peter, in answer to his interrogation, who he was, had confessed him to be Christ, the Son of the living God, he replied, “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it †.” This is the sure foundation God has laid in Zion.

* Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11.

† Matthew, xvi. 18.

On the atonement of a Divine Person the vilest sinner may safely build his hope; since, however numerous his crimes, or whatever vengeance they deserve, the blood of him who is Jehovah's equal, dying in his stead, can cleanse him from all sin.

Gratitude to this adorable Jesus for thus loving us and washing us from our sins in his own blood, would urge us to enforce holiness; and were we not so depraved it would of itself be sufficient to produce all the fruits of righteousness. But our views of the fall constrain us to acknowledge the necessity of a Divine Sanctifier as well as a Divine Redeemer; and to declare to every creature, young or old, that except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Christ and his Spirit cannot be divided in a sinner's salvation. The blessings procured must be applied. It is as necessary that the Holy Ghost should make us meet for Heaven by his efficacious grace, as that Christ, by his meritorious obedience and sufferings, should redeem us and prepare a place for us.

The general tendency of our ministrations, therefore, pleads for zealous concurrence. As we aim at accomplishing what the apostles did, by inculcating the same fundamental doctrines, we are bound to wish each other success, and unite our efforts as often as we have opportunity, and the great objects we have in view require them. This will

will be acting agreeably to our principles; and, what is of far greater consequence, agreeably to the will of Him who hath said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another *."

But knowing the power of prejudice, and the device of the enemy, to foment and keep alive what may prevent an union so ornamental and interesting to the cause of Christ, and so formidable to his own kingdom, I have reserved an appeal to Him, to whose judgment every creature ought to bow with the most unfeigned submission. On both sides we experience the presence of God in our assemblies. His blessings evidently accompany our ministrations. The Spirit is given because Christ is glorified. Sinners are converted, faints are comforted, and, to a certain degree, we have the same proofs of divine influence and approbation as accompanied the preaching of the Apostles.

Upon these *facts* I lay the greatest stress. They clearly demonstrate that we each have light enough in our systems to lead sinners to Christ, and, through him, to everlasting felicity. Fundamental error has no such testimony in its favour. They are therefore conclusive. We may err in our reasonings, mistake in our deductions, or the arguments which convince one may fail to convince another:

* John, xiii. 35.

but

but, when the mind of God is thus clearly expressed, the matter is fully decided.

• Go on, then, my dear brethren. Break forth on the right hand and on the left, and overspread the land; and the God of Peace be with you. Henceforth let anger cease. If we ever strive, let us strive together for the hope of the Gospel. Let our only emulation be, who shall love our Saviour most and serve him best. May we, and all our brethren, drink into the same spirit of love which prevailed in the early ages of Christianity. May our union, so happily begun, be firmly cemented, and let these poor children be partakers of the first fruits of our cordial agreement.

The religious instruction of the children of the poor is acknowledged by us all to be a matter of the greatest utility; and the institution to which these belong has a particular claim on our encouragement, for the numbers it admits, for the attention paid to their education, and for the liberal principles upon which it is founded; no preference being given to sects or parties. It is chiefly supported by annual subscriptions; but, as its funds are very low, your assistance at this time is earnestly requested; and, as there are so many followers of Christ of various denominations present on this occasion, I trust I shall not plead in vain.

I shall

I shall urge but one motive to excite liberality, but that is a powerful one indeed ; it is the love of Jesus Christ. This actuated the Apostle Paul and his fellow labourers in all their undertakings, and exemplified the holy tendency of that important truth we also profess to believe. " The love of Christ," says he, " constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again*." This is the reasoning of a gracious soul, whose heart rejoices in the dictates of the understanding. Christ died for us ; this is the foundation of our hope. His love is manifested to us, and shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost ; this is the foundation of our comfort. What, then, shall we render to the Lord for all his goodness ? We will live, not unto ourselves but to his glory. So the feelings of our heart incline us to do ; and, what our affections prompt us to, our understanding fully confirms.

Give scope, then, ye Christians, to your generous feelings ; and benefit these helpless children for your Redeemer's sake. You, my brethren of the Calvinistic persuasion, who think you have clearer light, see that you do more and better work : And you, my brethren, who think your principles lead

* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

to greater love, manifest it this morning by greater liberality and kindness. Thus may we beat our swords into plow-shares, and our spears into pruning-hooks; and begin to improve our different views, which have often been the occasion of anger and strife, to the credit of our profession, to the advantage of the poor, and to the glory of God!

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