

EXHORTATIONS

FOUNDED ON THE SECOND AND THIRD CHAPTERS OF THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE APOSTLE JOHN.

THE LANGUAGE OF COMMENDATION.

1. *For their labors* (ii. 2, 3, 9, 13, &c.) All are reminded that their works are known—taken cognizance of. The gift of a cup of cold water only, to one to whom it would be the most welcome gift, is noticed and repaid. It is not unimportant what doctrines we hold, but it is remarkable how much more importance is here attached to our actions. What service we are rendering for Christ? In what way have we served him during the past week? (Matt. xxv. 37-42.) Here are some whose labors increased (ii. 19.) Let us emulate them. Let us have a high standard at which to aim, even that of him who made it his meat to do the will of God (John iv. 34.)

2. *For their patience* (ii. 3, 19, &c.) Does our Lord and Master notice this, and is it pleasing to him? Surely this is enough to keep it in exercise. It is important by way of example, and eminently so on account of the happy and Christ-like influence it exerts upon us individually. "Let patience have its perfect work," &c.

3. *For their liberality in the midst of poverty* (ii. 9, 19.) We hear much of those who give "of their abundance," but little or nothing of such as give although in poverty. Who would have taken notice of the widow who cast one farthing into the Jewish treasury, had he not done so whose eyes are as a flame of fire? That penetrating glance discovered that of the vast amount cast in that day, this was the largest sum—comparatively so. We are reminded, too, of the disciples in Macedonia, (2, Cor. viii. 1, &c.) and of the great gift bestowed by them when in the depths of poverty and affliction: contributing willingly, and that, too, "beyond their power," for the necessities of their fellow-saints afar off. Brethren, let us remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that he himself said. It is more blessed to give than to receive!

4. *For not enduring such among them as were evil, and hating that which Christ hates* (ii. 2-6.) A Christian indeed, is one who does as Christ did, and who hates and opposes that which he hates. As a Christian congregation, let us give special heed to the lesson here afforded us, *not to endure such as are evil!* Brethren, do your duty, each one of you, to maintain the purity of the body. When Cain said, Am I my brother's keeper? he virtually denied that he ought to be so regarded. We profess to be each other's keepers. We bind ourselves together under the Chief Shepherd for the very purpose of keeping each other from error in doctrine and in practice. Brethren, if any one among you be seduced from the truth, and one of you turn him back, let him who converts the sinner (his Christian brother) from the error of his way, know that he thus saves a soul from death, and covers a multitude of sins. If any one of us wander, (and which of us are not liable!) such an one is to be restored in the spirit of meekness. But let us guard against evil—against the first symptoms of it, and all the exciting causes to it. One may be in circumstances which shall require that he be placed on his guard, even before he betrays any signs of danger. Let not such a one think a brother unnecessarily officious in expressing a caution; but let him be thankful for it, as also for reproof, when that is required. Let us study the purity and the unity of the church. But if all the means fail, we must, in fidelity and obedience to the Chief Shepherd, expel such as will not be converted from evil. Let him who walks in our midst have to say of us, I know your works, that you cannot endure them that are evil!

5. *For not denying, but holding fast His name, even when one of their brethren was put to death* (ii. 13.) Our Lord and Master was himself a martyr to the bigotry and religious intolerance of those for whose good he had labored so ardently and disinterestedly. Stephen, Antipas, and the glorious army of martyrs, have followed the Lord in a way which few of us can, if we would. It is not likely that we shall have such honor. The martyr-spirit we are required to cultivate. Jesus died for us; and we, as his disciples, are required to lay down our lives for one another; i.e. to be ready to do so if required. Are we so? Are we doing what we can to promote each other's temporal good? Are we, each of us, devoted to the edification, the peace, the unity, and the increase of the church—the body of Christ? Is the language of commendation applicable to us individually?

Pre-eminent importance of the Study of the Scriptures.

How important that Christians should study the scriptures, that they may be wise unto salvation; and ministers, that they may be able to instruct others in the truth of God! Our labors cannot be acceptable to God, except as they conform to the directions of his word; if we handle the word of God deceitfully or ignorantly, under the influence of prejudice or passion, he will not hold us guiltless.

But if the Bible addresses itself to man's common-sense, how can it require much patient, persevering, and laborious thought, to become intimately acquainted with it? Various causes have operated to produce this necessity. The following may be regarded as some of them:

I. Causes arising from the character of the book itself. Of this class, the principal are these:

1. The scriptures were written in languages foreign to us; those of the Old Testament are now dead languages; the language of the New Testament is unlike the classic, and equally if not more, unlike the modern Greek. We have to do principally with translations, and too many of us must depend entirely upon them. All works suffer to some extent in passing from one language to another; but especially, when verbal translations are attempted do we lose the beauty and force of many passages. In our commonly received and authorized version of the scriptures, the words of the original text have been almost superstitiously regarded, and the sense has been weakened, or obscured, by an endeavor to express it in a verbal and literal translation. The languages of the scriptures admitted more frequent elapses than ours, therefore the translators inserted words in italics, to make up the sense; they were men of like passions with us, and too often, by the use of these words, expressed their own views instead of the instructions of the Holy spirit, and frequently marred the sense. It will scarcely be believed, that the italicized words have been made the vehicle for the introduction of men's opinions into the word of God; it is, however, true, nor would it be difficult to refer to examples in proof. He who negotiates between God and man, will do well to attend to the instructions God has given, and to be careful, lest instead of the mind of the spirit, he disseminate the opinions of men, surreptitiously introduced into the scriptures, and by this means lay himself open to the rebuke of Jesus, "In vain do ye worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

2. The languages of scripture are remarkable for admitting the boldest imagery; and the habits of the people by whom they were spoken, admitted and even sanctioned the frequent use of striking figures, and hyperbole: which if used in our matter-of-fact language, would be called wild extravagancies. These peculiarities call for calm and energetic thought, that we may retain the real force of the expressions, without being hurried into error by the fervid imagination and vigorous language of the writer. These flights of fancy and hyperbolic strains, are most frequently found in the originally poetic parts of scripture, as the Psalms, the Prophets and the book of Job. They may be studied with benefit, as they are calculated to guide the judgment, while they excite the imagination, and affect and warm the heart; but such passages will accomplish none of these objects, if judged of by the literal sense of the terms used, or according to the ordinary rules of prose composition.

3. Another cause of the first class, arises from the customs and manners of the people to whom the various books were addressed, or concerning which they treat. These were widely different from our own. Reference also is often made to facts well known at the time, of which we are almost entirely ignorant; and to objects with which they were familiar, but which are unknown to, or only partially understood by us. Though the scriptures are for the most part a revelation, yet they bear the impress of the times in which they were written; and though intended for the human family, they were especially adapted to the circumstances of those to whom they were addressed. Hence a knowledge of those times is to be obtained by all who would understand the allusions and illustrations with which they abound.

4. The last cause arising from the character of the Bible, which I present, is the subjects of which it treats. These are various, embracing history, general, national and individual; poetry, prophecy; morality and reli-

gion. The writers, too, were numerous, and in many respects unlike each other; and though all were inspired, the inspiration of history differs as much from the inspiration of prophecy, as this does from the inspiration of moral precepts and religious duty.

Early impressions respecting the inspiration of the scriptures—impressions received before the mind could discriminate in relation to the nature and character of inspiration, hang round, and often mislead us. It is only subjects of pure revelation that we can ascribe the highest kind of inspiration. The inspiration of history merely preserved the writers from error in the relation of facts and their causes; it was the same in historic and commemorative poetry, especially in the book of Job; in which the opinions and expressions of men are related.

In the scriptures we often meet with the language of men, and even of devils; these are not said to be the words of God, nor are they of any authority in morals or religion, except as they correspond with God's own instructions. Yet many doctrines have been built upon these, which find no support in other parts of scripture. A frequent use, therefore, of such passages as proofs of doctrine, or as texts, is improper, and may be injurious. Still all these have their use, and are fraught with instruction; but it would be folly to establish a doctrine on what wicked men are represented to have said; or on what Eliphaz, and Zophar, Job's friends, addressed to him; for God told them, they had not spoken of him so properly as Job had. Scripture history exhibits the government of God, not systematically, but by facts, from which we are to learn what it is; his directions and commands point out our duty to himself and to our fellow men; his promises present before us the rewards of piety; and his threatenings, the awful doom of the disobedient and impious. These causes alone call for vigorous and independent thought in the study of the scriptures.

[To be Continued.]

Correspondence.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

St. Elenors, P. E. I., Nov. 24, 1852.

Dear Brethren,—I arrived here this morning, intending to cross in the packet to Shediac, but the wind and weather being unfavorable, I shall be detained until to-morrow.

It is three weeks to-day since I landed here; during that time I have visited almost every Baptist Church on the Island, and have raised in subscription, towards the Endowment fund, £466. The following are the places visited, with the amounts subscribed in each:—Charlotte Town, £125—including £25, the subscription of J. Weatherby, Esq., which he engages to make £100, should he continue to reside in the Provinces. Lot 49, £50. Three Rivers and East Point, £100, constituting a John Shaw scholarship. Cavendish, £31. Tryon, £75; £25 to be added to constitute an Alexander Crauford scholarship. Bedeque, £66; this will probably be made £100.

From several causes money is extremely scarce in this Province: it has consequently required a most faithful effort to secure the above amount. The brethren generally possess a spirit of liberality, and feel disposed to support the College as far as their means will allow.

I promised to make a few general remarks respecting the state of religion on the Island. These of course will refer to the Baptist denomination. There are five ministers and eight churches standing connected with the N. S. Eastern Baptist Association. There is but little religious prosperity existing amongst any of these eight churches, except that at Charlotte Town, which is now in a healthy state, and those at North River and East Point, which are trying to live. The want of regular and well-directed ministerial labour is, I think, the principal cause of this depression, though there are other causes, which it would be too painful to state, that have contributed to scatter and weaken the influence of the brethren. Several churches are in a most languid condition, having only "a name to live."

Elder John Knox, a Baptist minister, though not immediately connected with our Associations, preaches to large congregations at Lot 48, Three Rivers, and East Point. He is the Pastor of the church at the former place.

The Island presents an important field for missionary labour. There are multitudes of souls perishing for lack of knowledge. Many

localities do not hear the sound of the gospel during the interval of months. The people are very kind and hospitable, and delight to extend to the stranger every comfort in their power, especially to him who comes to proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ.

I was much interested in my visit to East Point (a distance of 120 miles from this). Elder Shaw, the Pastor of the church there, being absent the greater part of his time, the meetings are sustained by the Deacons and others. Deacon Fraser addresses the people, and invokes the throne of grace in the Gaelic language. It is good to hear him dwell with animation and fervour upon the love of Christ. I think he "exercises the duties of his office well." Brother Scott, a young member of the church, is exerting a most salutary influence among the young people. He teaches a large Bible class, and labours devotedly to promote the spiritual welfare of his pupils. He is endeavouring, as every converted individual should, to "abound in the work of the Lord."

The weather has been stormy and unpleasant during my tour on the Island, and the roads in many places almost impassable. This has militated considerably against my enjoyment; still, I leave with a desire to visit Prince Edward's again at no very distant period.

A meeting has been appointed for me this evening, in the St. Elenors Court House, so as to improve my present delay.

I am, dear brethren,  
Yours, in the hope of Eternal Life,  
ISAIAH WALLACE.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

*Religion in its reality, beauty and growth.* This is unfolded, in its heavenly and practical nature, in our Lord's inimitable sermon on the Mount. In this he lays open its deep and living beauty, and shows that, to the world of mankind, it is a spring of the same vital and productive power, as the sun in the heavens is to the material universe.

Here he keeps before the mind the end of Christian discipleship.—Is not this purity of heart? Humbleness of mind? A meek and merciful spirit? Is it not a peace-loving and a peace-making spirit? Is it not that their righteousness may exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees? That the light of holiness may beam in beauty upon the path of every day life? And that their "good works," springing from a principle of faith, which purifies the heart, asserts its dominion over the life, and gives to the visible character the beauties of holiness, may constrain men to glorify their Father who is in Heaven? Do not these utterances, so instinct with Divine wisdom and power, and which fall with so much solemnity and searching energy upon the heart, point to activities put forth to bring back the wanderer, to lift up the fallen, to teach the ignorant, and to advance the Church of Jesus Christ in strength, sanctity and usefulness? In all this we see the moral dignity and the divine loveliness of New Testament Christianity. Let it appear in real practical embodiment in the lives and doings of professors of religion, and the world would be awed, and changed, and saved. It would feel the awful and mystic power of so Divine a reality.

How may Christians be assisted in this high attainment?

By the daily habit of bringing their motives, words, and actions, under the inspection and control of an enlightened and tender conscience. A moral element mingles with the whole current of life. Responsibility is not suspended for a single moment. How necessary then, that this moral element should predominate in the spirit and conduct! Let it be daily used in the work of self-inspection; and though, in its most judicial exercise, it will fall short of the extent and spirituality of God's law, yet it will aid spiritual growth, and revive the fading lustre of holiness. "Now the end of the Commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." 1 Tim. i. 5. "And herein do I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man." Acts xxiv. 16. In this way sin is schooled away from the heart and the life.

We may mention as another aid—Oft repeated and devout meditations upon the Life of Christ. This is the grand, central and glorious object from which to derive power and impulse. It rises up before us, from the simple record of the Gospels, calm, pure, gan-

(Continued on page 366.)