

## THE RELIGION OF JESUS CHRIST CANNOT BE MODERNIZED.

I have often heard it said, as an excuse for not regarding the opinions and advice of the aged, "They are superannuated; they have not kept pace with the times; or, 'We can't expect them to fall in with all the great improvements of the age, both as it regards science and religion.'"

Now, I happen to be both an old man and an aged minister of the gospel of Christ. I have marked, with admiration and delight, the progress of science, and the amazing effects and results of human skill and industry, by which the present times are distinguished; but I have not been so well pleased with the changes which our theology seems to have undergone, and which, I think, is not for the better, but for the worse. We must, I think, have a modern New Testament, before we can modernize Christianity; and our rising ministry should be on their guard, "lest any man spoil them through philosophy vainly so called," a pure, luminous flame, should only exhibit a few sparks flying through smoke.

That we have better means for understanding the Bible I readily and thankfully admit. The more sound learning the better, nor do I object to a little railroad speed in working the well-constructed machinery, by which, I trust, the gospel is to be disseminated through the world; under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit. Still there are some things which I regard with trembling anxiety and pain.

I have listened with deep interest to the preaching of Romaine, Newton, Berridge, Cecil, Foster, and others, belonging to the establishment; and, certainly, not with less interest to many of their contemporaries amongst Dissenters. They were, in fact, of the same school, and on the whole, knew and loved one another. But, alas! the scene is changed, and the "gold is become dim." A semi-Arminianism seems to possess the minds of many of the young men who have left our colleges, and in many of our churches the consequences are of a distressing character. I fear that every step taken in that direction is a departure from the doctrines of the Reformation, and a step "towards Rome."

When I hear it said, "that parents can convert their children; that ministers might add to their churches an hundred members where they only add half a dozen or ten; and that man has power to convert himself," I am grieved, and ask, "Who converted Saul of Tarsus? and what good man can stand forward, and say, 'I converted myself?'" Paul thanked that God "who separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace."

Great allowances must be made for young men just finishing their academical studies.—With some knowledge of moral science, and the philosophy of the mind, they must needs introduce it into their sermons, but they are almost always sure to fail in the attempt.—Not making a clear distinction between natural and moral power, they sometimes tell us that men have power to convert themselves, and sometimes that it is the office of the Holy Spirit to regenerate and transform the soul of man. This often happens in the same discourse, and the preacher becomes involved in self-contradictions. The attentive hearer sees this, and is grieved and mortified. The preacher himself sometimes feels his difficulty and is often embarrassed: perspicuity is at an end, and the whole becomes mystified and uninteresting.

I feel a particular interest in young ministers. I love them for their work's sake. If they be truly pious and sincerely devoted to their work, they will come right in time.—But how important is it that all preaching should be at once and always scriptural and judicious. For the want of this there is oftentimes great difficulty in a young man's being settled over an intelligent people, who adopt the voluntary system. They have no relish for modern divinity, and metaphysics they do not understand. Unless young men preach the gospel clearly and fully there are hundreds of churches where they cannot expect to be acceptable.

There are thousands of pious and judicious persons in our churches, who, like myself, can't go with the times so rapidly as to leave behind the Saviour and his apostles, with the Reformers and Puritans, including our Owens and Charnocks, and Flavel, &c. When these persons are called to listen to "another gospel," or the gospel legalized, not having any relish for it, they either mourn in secret, or seek for clearer statements elsewhere.—

Thus division is created, and our churches suffer loss. The facts are many, but they cannot now be adduced.

If young men of piety, fair talent, good address, and great prudence and zeal, when they enter the Christian ministry, would carefully avoid all that is pedantic; if they would select plain and important passages from the Word of Life, and treat them evangelically and practically; if they would show clearly and plainly man's utter ruin by the fall, his redemption by Jesus Christ, without money and without price; if they would preach justification through the imputed righteousness of our Redeemer, and regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Spirit; if they would thus preach the gospel to every creature, and be themselves men of much prayer, and be filled with compassion for souls, God will bless them; they will neither be Arminians nor Antinomians, and from Puseyism and Popery they have nothing to fear.

This is a subject which demands the attention of theological professors and preceptors, and calls for the prayers of all pious men in our churches. Hoping that some able person, more in the prime of life, will enter more fully into it,

I remain, yours truly,

AN AGED MINISTER.

### Afraid to Think.

This describes the character of the largest proportion of those, who, under the light of the gospel, refuse to yield to its claims. There is such evidence of the divine origin of the gospel—such consciousness of the reasonableness of its claims—such conviction of the actual existence of the fearful and glorious realities it reveals, that, if this gospel and its demands are fairly taken into consideration, there will be an inward remonstrance against neglecting them.

Light is shining from all quarters, confirming the great truths of the Bible. Reflection gathers these rays as with a vocal glass, and pours them on the mind. They reveal to it the dreadful work it is doing, by its disregard of the claims of God. Truth shines but feebly, and with but little practical benefit, when little or no serious thought is given to it.—But by reflection, it becomes like the sharpened iron that entereth into the soul.—Thought on religious themes repulses those worldly influences which have prevented self-acquaintance, by diverting the mind from its own moral condition. To think on God is to show the guilty neglect with which he has been treated. To think of Christ, reveals the ingratitude shown that infinite Friend. Reflection on heaven awakens the conviction of the soul's unfitness for it, and danger of losing it. Thought about the retribution of a righteous moral government, must reveal the soul's own exposure to it.

Hence, no sooner does serious reflection begin in a sinful mind, than its peace is broken up. Such thoughts lead it through paths of thorns. Such thoughts give clearness of mental vision, correctness of moral judgment, vivid apprehensions of the claims of God. But these are nothing but sources of misery to a mind opposed to holiness of heart and life.—To see the right path and be unwilling to walk in it—to understand duty, and refuse to do it, rouses conscience, and arms it against the transgressor. The moral constitution of the mind forbids us peace under the circumstances. Every sinful mind has known what it is to be in this position. Reflection on God and his claims, which it has sometimes been impossible to escape, has placed it there.

Hence many are afraid to think on God and eternal realities. In the present state of their minds, this cannot but be painful.—The eye is diseased, and cannot bear the light.

But this traveller to eternity cannot always as now, have the choice of his subjects of thought. By skill and care he can now avoid this train of thought and that; can divert his mind, when he finds it verging towards undesired themes.

He may summon the thousand worldly objects around him, and bid them engross his thought. Or he can seek the society of those as thoughtless as himself or lose all regard for eternal things in the cares and excitement of business. But he will soon be where there will be no such diversions of the mind; where the grand, all-engrossing objects of thought, can be only those he is now avoiding. He can think of nothing else in eternity, but things he is afraid to think of now. Every holy theme, rejected now, will call for thought then, and

have it. There is no retreat. The world has vanished, and all its formerly engrossing objects.

Awful Eternity! offended queen!  
And her resentment to mankind how just!  
With kind intent, soliciting access,  
How often has she knocked at human hearts,  
Rich to repay their hospitality,  
How often called! and with the voice of God!  
Yet bore repulse, excluded as a cheat. [there!]  
A dream! while foulest foes found welcome  
A dream, a cheat, now all things but her smile!

N. Y. Evangelist.

### The Aged Sinner.

There is nothing more grievous to a benevolent man, than to see an aged person tottering over the grave, and yet unmindful of eternity. O! he will say, it is a dreadful sight to see old persons making more provision for life than preparation for death! What awful folly and madness, to prepare for that which they cannot enjoy, and to neglect that which they cannot avoid. The steel being spent, the knife cannot cut; the sun being set, the day cannot tarry; and old age being come, life cannot long endure. It is the eleventh hour, and almost the last minute of that hour. The lamp is just flickering in the socket, and there is the whole work of a life to do, or the soul must be undone for ever.

I once heard the following conversation between an old man and a Mr. Wilson:—"Well, my friend," said Mr. W., "you have a long walk; pray how old are you?" Seventy-three last birthday." "And are you still permitted to enjoy a comfortable degree of health and vigor?" "O, yes, as well as ever I was in my life, as likely to live fifty years as any body." "O, my friend, do not deceive yourself with so very improbable an idea. It is very unlikely you should live fifty months; you have already been permitted to advance far beyond the ordinary boundaries of the life of man; and you ought to live in daily expectation of death, and in constant preparation for it. What is your hope for another world, if to-day should finish your existence in this?" "Time enough to think about that, sir, when death is a little nearer. I hope I shan't be cut off so quickly but that I shall have time to say, 'Lord have mercy upon me!'" Alas! alas! and can you venture your immortal soul on such a vain, precarious foundation.—If you really think you shall need mercy then, why do you not cry for mercy now while the opportunity is afforded you?" "My soul trembles to think of your awful condition."—"Don't disturb yourself about me," said the insensible old man, "you know every tub must stand upon its own bottom; and I dare say I shall do very well at last. Good day to you, sir."

Mr. Wilson then turned to some young persons who happened to be present, and charged us to remember our Creator in the days of our youth, and not deceive ourselves with the thought that old age must needs bring piety with it.

A very few weeks after this, I saw the man's son with a crape hat-band, and learned that his father was dead; and there was every reason to fear that he died as he had lived, without God and without hope!—Abbott.

### Self-Condensation and Remorse.

There is a self-condemnation very different from that of the sincere penitent. Witness the despairing confession and suicide of Judas. Witness the death-beds of Newport and Paine and others of like character. Such instances sometimes occur, though rarely till a dying hour. While in the vigor of health and the bustle of employment, very few, comparatively, stop to estimate the nature and guilt of sin. Consequently they are left to the influence of erroneous views with regard to every thing spiritual. They see objects through a false and distorted medium. Not unfrequently, instead of the unequivocal language of self-abasement, you will hear them use that of self-complacency.

In eternity the case will be reversed. There, the clear and certain light of God's character, will preclude any farther doubt with regard to the real nature of sin. With ten thousand acts of bold rebellion crowding upon his mind, the sinner's mouth is stopped. His guilt stands out too boldly to be excused. So faithful is memory to her trust, that not a word of palliation is heard. He is "convinced of all his ungodly deeds." He passes sentence upon himself. With a life of aggravated sin in view, he feels that misery is his desert. The severest strokes of justice he himself approves.

When denied the small favor of one drop of water, he feels that it is just.

But there will be something more than self-condemnation.

Memory will awaken in the sinner's bosom remorse.

Remorse is the severe mental pain excited by a sense of guilt. Literally, it signifies a repeated or continual gnawing. In other words, it is the compunction of conscience, when roused by the recollections of the past.

In this life the voice of conscience is so far hushed that cases of deep and settled remorse are rare. Some, such as those to which allusion has been made, do occur on a dying bed,—enough to teach us the nature of future misery. But though conscience is silenced here, in eternity she will rouse herself in all her fearful power, and speak her own language. She can be silenced no longer. She tells the whole tale of the sinner's career of impenitence, and every word falls like thunder on the ear of woe. Opportunities neglected, a Saviour slighted, and a thousand provoking and heaven-daring sins come rushing upon his memory with an overwhelming power. How will he accuse and reproach himself as he gazes on the distant glories of heaven! Once, he too might have secured an interest in the blood of the Lamb. Salvation, full and free, was urged upon him.—Had he accepted, he might even now, be mingling his voice in those sweetest songs—he might be bathing his spirit in the cool and crystal waters of life. But it is too late.—Conviction, deep, despairing, has fastened upon him. Like the murderer, who is constantly affrighted by the spectre of his bleeding victim, he starts and shrinks at the creatures of his own imagination. Every object he sees—every sound he hears, reminds him of his rejection of a crucified Redeemer.—And then, O then, what stings of conscience! What gnawings of remorse! "A wounded spirit who can bear!"

### Let your Requests be made known unto God.

Oh! how often have you refused this advice; you have permitted the worm to feed upon the bud; perhaps you have thought, I can do nothing else. The wife has said, oh! if I had a religious husband, how would I blend my soul with his; but, alas for me, he has no religious sympathy; or the husband says, oh! if my wife were a help meet, what solace should I have! while the child exclaims, oh! if my parents were but godly! But if you have not found sympathy in the domestic circle, probably you have unbosomed yourself to a friend; it may be he was a worldly friend, and he suffered you to show him his bleeding heart, and yet refused you any sympathizing balm! You leaned on earth, but the spear pierced you more and more, making a deeper and yet deeper wound. But suppose your friend be sincere, yet he cannot go with you far enough; he may walk part of the gloomy path, but as the clouds gather he leaves you. There is a point at which all human friendships terminate; "I can go no further with my friend." There is none you can get to enter into your soul; the workings of secret anxiety, and its sorrowful forebodings are too big for utterance; you have apprehensions which you cannot explain.

But, thank God, "there is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother," and he allows you to come to him when all human joys have fled. There is a wonderful effect produced by human sympathies; and shall not a greater effect be produced by Divine? He can be "touched!" the God-man, your brother!—"His bowels melt with love." He sees the whole soul naked and open; he hears the inexplicable groan, and enters into all your feelings, for he knows whereof you are made. I fear we do not sufficiently value a throne of grace; we had rather tell our sorrows to any one than Him! and yet see His love! "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee," and see how great the condemnation; He stoops to ask your friendship! and it is the very nature of divine friendships to have no reserves.—Summerfield.

You may glean knowledge by reading but you must separate the chaff from the wheat by thinking.

The greater the difficulty the more merit there is in surmounting it; skilful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests. Envy is a mean man's homage.