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ARTICLE I.—*Idea of the Church.*

[Concluded from the April number.]

The doctrinal argument.—The relation between theology and ecclesiology is so intimate, that the one of necessity determines the other. The Protestant scheme of the doctrines of Christianity unavoidably leads to the Protestant theory of the Church; and the Romish system of doctrine, with a like necessity, leads to the Romish view of the nature of the Church. This being the case, all the arguments, which sustain the true doctrine concerning the plan of salvation, are conclusive in favour of the true theory of the Church. This is the real strength of the Protestant cause. The doctrines of Christianity are not only revealed with far more distinctness than the nature of the Church, but they enter so deeply into the experience of Christians that they cannot be renounced. Every evangelical believer, therefore, feels, when called upon to embrace the Ritual doctrine concerning the Church, that he is called upon to renounce his entire faith, so far, at least, as the method of salvation is concerned.

If we leave mysticism out of view, there are three radical forms of doctrine, with which are connected corresponding views of the nature of the Church. The first of these forms is

faith in Christ, will the Bible exert its sacred prerogative in their Counting-Houses, and their current secularities effloresce with the graces which cement and embellish the social state. Herein too consists the panoply they require for an exchange of worlds—that preparation for ‘retiring’ ultimately and for ever from business, and all that pertains to it, which every man should make, who shrinks from going portionless into eternity. There is nothing in eternity—nothing in the dark and chill passage which leads to it—to intimidate the soul that is united to Christ. It is all one empire; its several provinces acknowledge the same Sovereign; that Sovereign is ‘the Lord our Righteousness,’ who has all power in heaven and on earth; and the pillars of his throne must fall, before he will suffer a soul that has trusted in him to perish. How well his people are fortified against all possible want or suffering for the future, can be known only to those who have considered the resources of Omnipotence. In receiving them into a vital union with himself, Christ endowed them with his own inexhaustible wealth: they became ‘heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ’—language which overpasses our comprehension, and makes one exclaim, in thinking of the believer’s heritage,

‘My soul, with all the powers I boast,
Is in the boundless prospect lost.’”

ART. III.—*Journal and Letters of the Rev. Henry Martyn, B. D.*, Fellow of St. John’s College, Cambridge, and Chaplain to the Honorable East India Company. Edited by the Rev. S. Wilberforce, M. A., rector of Brightstone. First American edition, abridged. New York: published by M. W. Dodd, Brick Church Chapel, 1851.

HISTORY has no nobler lesson to teach than the heights which human nature may attain in “glory and virtue,” when purified by the grace of God; and history furnishes scarcely any example of the moral sublime more impressive and pleasing than that which this book exhibits. Henry Martyn, crowned

with the highest academical honours, with the broad road to scientific eminence, professional distinction, and ecclesiastical preferment open before him—urged by valued friends to tread this tempting path, deliberately departing from it and from his native land for ever, and sundering a tie still more select, more tender, and more powerful—making the high sacrifice of a pure and a reciprocated affection—that he might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ in distant and burning India, presents a spectacle of the truest sublimity. How mean are all other conquests compared with the conquest of self! How despicable all earthly glory compared with that to which God in the gospel of his Son calls the very humblest of his faithful servants! How pale the lustre of the most honoured of the sons of men compared with that of the righteous, when they shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father! The successful general, returning in triumph to the metropolis of his country and the mistress of the world, with royal captives chained to his chariot wheels; Homer, with seven cities contending for the honour of having given him birth; Petrarch, receiving the envied poetic crown at the hands of his enthusiastic countrymen—these are all vulgar spectacles beside that of the lovely Martyn going forth to live and die for the spiritual interests of unknown heathen men! To be of the first is to be of the earth, earthy; to be the last, is to be like the Lord from heaven, who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be rich.

We think the editor has done a good work in giving this volume to the public, and we are surprised that it has not excited a more decided interest. There is in it the presence of a delicate and delicious aroma, as of a field which the Lord hath blessed. A more truly spiritual and searching volume we have rarely, if ever, read. It might well be entitled a practical treatise on keeping the heart in the fear and love of God. It is the record of the spiritual life of one who was a burning and a shining light, and it informs us whence that precious oil was gotten, which caused his holy lamp to burn so brightly. The special value of the volume does not lie in any positive contribution to the stock of our missionary intelligence, but in the spirit of the book; in the faithful portraiture of a

highly accomplished, ardent, sensitive, and thoroughly conscientious young man, in his daily walk with God; in his minute and even microscopic self-inspection; in his anatomical dissection of his own heart, under the guiding light of the written word and the Holy Spirit. It is especially valuable as a practical illustration of the recognized marks and means of growth in grace. It is the Pilgrim's Progress, not in allegory, but in action. We therefore anticipate good, and only good, from its extensive circulation, and would especially recommend the prayerful perusal of it to ministers of the gospel and students of theology. Conversing with this truly humble and holy man, they will find many of their conflicts anticipated, many of their difficulties mastered, and many of the mysteries which have perplexed them satisfactorily solved.

Mortification of spirit, humility, tenderness, habitual self-recollection, and a holy fear of offending God, seem to have been his most conspicuous graces. There is, perhaps, less frequent mention of religious joy, especially in the earlier pages of the volume, than in most other biographical records of eminent believers. But Martyn, it should seem, was not naturally of a sanguine temperament, and he was too judicious and wise to confound joy in self with joy in God; he scrutinized his joys, and when he found that they were not pure, they were at once exchanged for godly sorrow. There cannot be much pure religious rejoicing without strict watchfulness preceding it. The heart is prepared, by careful cultivation, for the production or the access of that joy, which is not the growth of nature, but the fruit of the Spirit.

We know few books from which more deep and just observations on the working of the religious affections may be gathered, than from this. We are, therefore, not surprised to find Martyn frequently referring to Jonathan Edwards as a favourite author. This journal abounds with that subtle spiritual casuistry which is so characteristic not of Edwards alone, but of the great divines of the seventeenth century, and is unhappily so rare now; which imparts so peculiar a tone, and confers so high a value on the practical theological treatises of Baxter, of Bunyan, of Owen, and of Flavel. That every Christian should carefully keep his own heart, out of which are

the issues of life; that he should exercise a vigorous watch over his secret thoughts, feelings, and affections; that he should habitually refer them to the spiritual standard of the divine word, and learn thus to detect and discriminate what is evil, is evident from the word of God, and from the experience of all believers. In most modern preachers, hardly any quality is more conspicuously wanting, than that of a skilful and sagacious evolution of what is going on in the dark places of the human soul. There is assuredly no species of preaching more certain to interest, to impress, and to instruct the hearer.

In reading the journal and letters of Henry Martyn, we have been repeatedly reminded of Blaise Pascal. Both young men of extraordinary powers and fervent piety; both seemingly destitute of vulgar ambition, or rather raised above it by heaven-directed aspirations; both capable of attaining scientific or literary eminence, and if not positively disdainful of it, at least indifferent to it; both possessed of a natural temperament tinged with gloom, which, envenomed and darkened by superstition, led the one to self-inflicted austerities fatal to his life; but which was happily counteracted and relieved in the other, by clear views of the freeness and fulness of gospel grace; both not only perfectly honest, but painfully pathetic in the bitterness of their self-upbraidings. The early death and lasting reputation of each will complete the parallel. We cannot but regard these two men, of whom Pascal was incomparably the superior in the gifts of eloquence and genius, as illustrations of the practical tendencies of Popery and Protestantism. With great native benevolence, with extraordinary natural love of truth, with a comprehensiveness, fertility, and elegance of mind almost if not altogether unparalleled among his countrymen—embodied in a style of such clearness, vivacity, facility, force, and beauty, as to place him in the front rank of the many powerful and brilliant writers which France has produced—a style, which for grave irony, for piercing wit, for caustic sarcasm, and relentless ridicule, surpasses that of Voltaire—which as the vehicle of triumphant logic, of keen invective, of sublime fervour, and of learned demonstration, might have excited the envy of Bossuet—with a genius for mathematical science, scarcely if at all inferior to that of Leibnitz or

Newton—with an aptitude for universal knowledge more resembling intuitive apprehension than progressive attainment—with a mind not only impatient but apparently incapable of repose, and unconscious of weariness, what, after all, has Pascal accomplished? What has he left us? A few scattered thoughts of great originality, suggestiveness, depth, and beauty; a small polemical work of wonderful acuteness and eloquence, and of unanswerable truth. But what is this, from a man who was capable of extending the bounds of science, of making important contributions to the permanent stock of human knowledge—who, when quite a boy, actually *invented* Geometry, and proceeded as far as the thirty-second proposition of Euclid without a teacher and without a diagram—who was capable of making inestimable additions to the intellectual and spiritual treasures of mankind? Why did he accomplish so much and no more? Why was the man so much greater than his work? Because a contracted and benumbing superstition held those gigantic powers under a malignant spell—because the gospel was seen in dim eclipse “shorn of half its glory”—because, while powerfully attracted toward religion by nature and by grace, there was much in the religion in which he had been bred, and to which, “with all its faults,” he was still attached, to revolt his reason, to corrupt his conscience, and to repel his affections; because as his body was wasted away by fanatical austerities, so his spirit was darkened by horrible superstitions and habitual idolatry; because, in one word, he was a *Papist*.

We are of course perfectly aware that many of the Papists do not make much of their religion, as one of themselves was so communicative and candid as to tell us; that in general, they bear the burden very lightly; that the transition from the fast to the feast is as habitual and easy as from the chapel to the tavern or the theatre; and that to confess and compound for “a sin they are inclined to,” is hardly more troublesome than to commit it. But with the earnest and conscientious among them it is not so. The yoke under which they groan, is felt to be one which neither they nor their fathers have been able to bear; an enormous and intolerable system of spiritual servitude. Such Pascal found it. Strictly conscientious, even in his errors,

an erroneous conscience proved fatal to the highest exercise of his marvellous genius; to the enjoyment of his health; to peace of mind, and ultimately to life itself. Conscientious and consistent Papists are invariably unhappy. To us they have an air of peculiar and indescribable sadness; and the depth of their gloom is always in proportion to the depth of their piety. It is just the reverse with pious Protestants. The most cheerful persons we have ever known, have been aged and devout believers, with little in this life to make them happy, but sustained by an unfaltering trust in the righteousness of God; encompassed by clouds of natural evil, but those clouds burnished and bright with a glory streaming on them from the Sun of Righteousness; and as the lights of this life were going out one by one, a hope full of immortality has risen up to sustain and cheer them. Confiding only in the obedience and death of the Lord Jesus, looking back on a life unprofitable and unworthy indeed, but of upright and conscientious service, and looking forward to an inheritance "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away," they have been able humbly and thankfully to unite in the testimony of the Apostle—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

In the native cast of Martyn's mind, we think we discern a tendency to gloom, which manifested itself not only in a disparaging estimate of his Christian attainments, but in an undue depreciation of his natural abilities. Had he been in Pascal's circumstances he would probably have been as wretched a man, and instead of ending his life as a missionary in India, he might have ended it as a monk in a monastery. But a full knowledge of divine truth, the free air of Protestant teaching, untrammelled and unbiassed access to the word of life, saved his soul from the pain and the peril, and the Church from the calamity of such a misdirected conscientiousness, with its depressing effect on one of the most sublime and sensitive of human spirits.

Of all books the Bible, which is the only repository, the

divine charter, and the infallible rule, of the Protestant faith, is the most uniformly cheerful; it is a glorious manuscript, illuminated not by art and man's device, but by the bright beams of heaven's grace. It is a revelation of love, a proclamation of pardon, a word of life. What pictures of peace and pure delight adorn its pages, "apples of gold in pictures of silver!" It throws over the soul of man made naked by transgression, the white raiment of the Redeemer's righteousness; for the atonement is a covering; the Hebrew word *to atone for*, is *to cover*; and it pours into sorrowing hearts the golden oil of heavenly grace, the healing balm of holy gladness. Light from the word of God, shining on the tears of godly sorrow, makes them fragrant and bright, like the clear shining of the sun after rain! It is the gracious aspect, the cheerful spirit of the Bible, which renders it so incomparably grateful, so unspeakably precious, to the wounded heart. Even the penitential psalms breathe the spirit of hope, and trust, and pious joy; while the psalms of thanksgiving and praise rise to God with the buoyancy and gladness "of the bird that singing towards heaven's gate ascends." Everywhere removed from levity, the Bible is everywhere removed from gloom or moroseness. While it bears the impress of the individual character, the particular associations, and the natural genius of the human instruments employed to indite it—it is divinely guarded from all alloy of human error, and all taint of human corruption.

In the perusal of this work, we have been impressed anew with the value of human life, when dedicated to the good of men and the glory of God. It is indeed a grand and a fearful thing to live; to have a period of time on which our eternal well-being depends; to have a place and an agency, among other beings, redeemed, responsible and immortal, like ourselves. In the successive acts of Providence, and dispensations of religion, in this world, God is carrying on to its consummation and close, a drama, obscure it may be, and often ill-understood, but majestic and harmonious. To be one of the conscious, intelligent, accountable, and immortal actors, in this divine drama, is ennobling, but awful. We recognize the gift of life and immortality as the gift of God's grace, and we rejoice, but we rejoice with trembling. Because, for ourselves,

and for all men, the conclusion is everlasting; the catastrophe irreparable, immutable, infinite; an eternity of glory or shame ineffable; of joy or agony inconceivable.

The lessons of such a life as that of Henry Martyn can never be untimely, can never be obsolete. The permanence of the relations which men sustain to God, renders us capable of receiving instruction and comfort from the record of his dealings with others. We proceed with instinctive confidence upon the truth of God as exhibited in the uniformity of nature's processes, and in the stability of nature's laws. Universal confusion and endless embarrassment would ensue, if men were liable to disappointment in these familiar reckonings. Indeed, the continued existence of man upon the earth would be a simple impossibility, if he were perpetually exposed to delusion, in regard to the phenomena and laws of the planet on which he is appointed to live. Now, it is just so, in relation to the permanence and identity of the traits of human nature. Were it not essentially the same in its great outlines and tendencies, notwithstanding occasional anomalies and individual idiosyncrasies, each generation would stand insulated and apart; such a thing as history could have no existence; the lessons of one age could in no way be transmitted to another; there could be no permanence, no universality, in the practical conclusions of the race. As it is, however, the doctrines of religion, the precepts of morality, the demonstrations of science, and the truths of history, admit of permanent and universal application, simply because the nature of man is essentially the same, always and everywhere, and the relations he sustains are uniform and abiding. The word of God is therefore endowed with an inexhaustible fulness and fertility of application; and the exhortation to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is as proper and pertinent when addressed to us, as when urged upon the primitive disciples.

In Henry Martyn, the missionary and the man were entirely identified. His travels, his studies, his controversies, his prayers, and manifold labours for the benefit and behoof of others, were directly the fruit of the living Spirit, the reigning habit of his own soul. His public and official life was pre-eminently the exponent of his hidden spiritual experience. The whole

tenor of his life, indeed, after his conversion, was an uninterrupted struggle after holiness of heart and conduct—after absolute conformity to the law of God in all its spirituality and extent. He strove diligently to have every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. His heart's desire and prayer was, that he might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Like the apostle, he counted not himself to have apprehended, but this one thing he did, forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forth unto those things which were before, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Growth in grace is a mark of grace, since it is an invariable characteristic of the true believer. The native tendency of grace, when it exists even in the smallest measure, and operates even in the feeblest manner, is expansion. In Scripture it is likened to light; to leaven; to the grain of mustard seed which became a great tree, so that the fowls of heaven lodged in the branches of it. In the heart of the individual believer it tends to expel every unholy affection, and reduce every rebellious thought to subjection to the authority of God.

In the organized forms of human society it seeks to penetrate their institutions, their objects, their operations, and their agents, with its own pure and holy spirit. The genius of Christianity is not less aggressive than salutary, and it is salutary because it is aggressive. I came, said our Lord himself, not to send peace on the earth, but a sword. The kingdom of Christ meets with separate and united opposition from corrupt nature, from an evil world, and from the snares and assaults of the devil. In such circumstances, its existence is a struggle; its increase, a triumph; its success, a miracle. Every man is, by nature, the enemy of the gospel. The power of God in subduing his enemies unto himself, and in keeping his people through faith unto salvation, is equal to that which made and upholds the world. And he will so order the events of his Providence, and so administer the helps of his good Spirit, that the faithful Christian shall be confirmed in holiness as he advances in life. He shall strive against sin with greater diligence. He shall strive after holiness with more abundant success. The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that

hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The self-deceiver may commence his course with more apparent vigour, animation, and zeal, than the true disciple, but having no root in himself, when temptation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. The hypocrite may pray, to be seen of men, or under a strong and sudden pang of conscience, or when he fancies that he is about to die, but will he always call upon God? will he abound in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving? When his heart, oppressed by sluggishness and unbelief, is indisposed to this sweet work, will he regard this as a new call to confession of sin and supplication for grace? The true believer will endeavour to become a better man in every respect, day by day; and will make each new discovery of defect or transgression, the occasion, not only of humiliation, but of amendment. Nothing is more characteristic of Martyn's piety than the impartiality of his obedience. That golden psalm, the 119th, which seems to have been with him a favourite portion of the word of God, is happily expressive of the habitual frame of his spirit. The testimonies of God were his delight; he had taken them as his heritage for ever. He esteemed the divine precepts concerning all things to be right. It is an excellent mark of growth in grace, when we strive to discharge every duty and to mortify every corruption; and all who are really growing in grace, are growing thus harmoniously. The principle of piety works at all times and in respect to all subjects. The heart of the true believer has been graciously enlarged to run the way of the divine commandments. Some professed disciples are quite exemplary in the discharge of particular duties, but conspicuously defective in other graces and in other virtues, equally essential and obligatory. It becomes such partial observers of the law, to remember that excellence in certain departments of duty may be merely constitutional, as certain sins are constitutional. There is, therefore, no one evidence of growth in grace so discriminating and decisive as a general and harmonious excellence, an impartial obedience to the revealed will of God.

In the healthy growth of the body, there is a proportioned

development of all the parts. That growth which consists in an undue and enormous enlargement of one or more members, while the rest remain stunted and stationary, is diseased and abnormal. Now we conceive that the analogy between the bodily and spiritual growth is perfect. That soul cannot be said to be in spiritual health which is advancing in some of the appropriate graces of the Christian character, but declining with respect to others equally vital and valuable. The truth is, that a general development of all the parts of Christian character, is essential to the integrity of any one part. The exercise of one virtue is limited by the operation of another, in the absence of which it runs out into a wild and noxious excess, which is only less offensive to the eye, and injurious to the cause of Christ, than open vice. We may easily illustrate what is meant by reference to those virtues which most obviously demand the operation, one of another, to confine and correct the action of each respectively—as zeal and charity. Each of these has its proper province and its proper boundary. Unless each be kept in view, the exercise of one is apt to trench upon ground sacred to the other. A virtue, in itself considered excellent and noble, may yet be so ill-timed as to the occasion, and so unfortunate with reference to the object of its exercise, as to be productive of all the disastrous consequences of abject or abominable vice. A misdirected benevolence may be more hurtful to the object than malignity itself; and incautious and indiscriminating zeal may be more injurious to the cause it would serve, than active opposition.

Frequently meditating on the third and the thirty-third chapter of the prophesy of Ezekiel, and deeply impressed with the responsibilities of an ambassador for Christ, we find Martyn, like the apostle Paul, stirring up his soul to faithfulness, by the terrible reflection, that after having preached to others, he himself might be a cast-away. Men who are not striving to grow in grace can be considered neither safe nor happy. There is indeed no such thing as remaining stationary in the divine life. If we are not growing in spiritual strength and in spiritual stature, in favour and fellowship with God, in the graces which adorn and the virtues which exalt the Christian character; then are we declining in them all, becoming dwarfish and

deformed, departing from God, and, together with his favour, losing his likeness. Such persons must of necessity be insensible to the prevailing and peculiar charm of this book; they can have little sympathy with the spiritual life whose springs and streams it is the design of this publication to disclose. Conformed in temper to this world's maxims, and wearing the livery of the Prince of life, there is a wide difference between their religious calling and their real character; their profession as Christians, and their practice as men. At church and market, on the Sabbath and in the week, they are not the same persons. They have one set of principles as nominal Christians, and another as living, practical, business men. They recognize one code of morality as taught in the Bible, and act upon another in their common and commercial transactions; so that the inevitable conclusion is, the practical system inculcated in the Bible is not Christianity, or these men are not Christians. Christianity contemplates nothing less than the sanctification of the whole life, the invisible spirit within, and the outward conduct. Its office and purpose are disclosed in the apostolic injunction—"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."

It is the province of Christian principle to sway the whole man. It never suspends its functions. It never vacates its office. It never abates its demands. It is never dormant. It is never idle, but operates at all seasons, whether of business or diversion. It is present alike in the sphere of retired devotion and of active duty; it pervades and consecrates all our intercourse with God and with man. It imports the sanctities of heaven into the moralities of earth. Born of God and nourished up in faith and in sound doctrine, consisting ultimately and essentially in supreme love to God, and in the same love to our brother man which we bear to ourselves, and according to the testimony of an inspired apostle, ascending from the sweet consciousness of this heaven-born love to man, to the conclusion of a foregoing and far more exceeding love to God, ascertaining the sincerity and strength of our love to God by the tenderness and tenacity of our love to man, it places morality, philanthropy, all the serviceable and all the splendid social

virtues, not on the feeble basis of instinctive sentiment, but upon the strong foundation of religious principle, and blends in colours as inseparable and beautiful as those of the rainbow, the distinct but associated affections of love to God and of love to man; of faith and obedience; of devotional piety, and practical duty. Of this happy union we shall rarely find a more consistent, harmonious and exalted example than in the "Journal and Letters of Henry Martyn."

In the elevated character of the leading modern missionaries, in respect to intelligence, piety, and usefulness—of Brainard, of Eliot, and of the Mayhews in America; of Buchanan, of Swartz, of Carey, and of Martyn in India; of our own honoured, our martyred Lowrie, and a multitude of others in the east, we discern the good hand of our God affording thus an encouraging presage of ultimate success in the spiritual conquest of the world. It is delightful to see how good influences are propagated from man to man and from age to age; how the mantle of an Elijah falls upon an Elisha, how the light spreads in ever-widening circles, and how the promise is fulfilled, "there shall be a handful of corn in the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." Psalm lxxii. 16. We believe that a more holy, self-denying, and faithful body of men than the missionaries, foreign and domestic, of evangelical churches, are not to be found on the earth; and we have no language to express our disapprobation of the spirit which would restrict them to the barest necessities of life.

The grand prototype and pattern of the Christian missionary is Christ himself. There is indeed no more comprehensive and precious passage in all the Scripture than the simple statement, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. With this motive and for this purpose he left the bosom of the Father, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Its completeness and its freeness distinguish the gospel not only from every system of false religion, but from every previous dispensation of the true. Still, it is to be acknowledged that frequent and significant intimations of a more liberal economy were given before the advent. Extraordinary messengers were

occasionally employed to warn the world of impending judgments. Noah was a preacher of righteousness to the men of his generation. Standing on that mount which was afterwards consecrated as the seat of Jehovah's temple, the father of the faithful received the joyful assurance that his spiritual seed should be more numerous than the stars of heaven or the sand on the sea-shore. Commissioned messengers from God solemnly rebuked his chosen people for their apostasies and oft-repeated idolatries. Priests served at the altar and prefigured the great sacrifice. Prophets foretold a more glorious dispensation under a universal king. But the God whom their priests sought to propitiate, was the peculiar God of their country. It is probable that their prophets did not themselves apprehend the full significance of their own predictions. It is certain that the apostles were amazed, perplexed, and offended, when it was obscurely intimated that those peculiar privileges which had for so many generations distinguished the children of the covenant, were to become the common heritage of all nations; and it was not until after the descent of the Holy Ghost that their proud anticipations as Jews were exchanged for the ampler charities of Christians, and the contracted sympathies of the patriot were merged in the more comprehensive affections of apostles to mankind.

We shall cease to manifest surprise at the prevalence of this feeling when we remember that their nation had been the elected and avowed favourites of heaven. To them were committed the oracles of God. To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law and the service of God, and the promises: whose were the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh, Christ came. But by a continued course of infatuated wickedness they had alienated their God, and rendered themselves unworthy longer to occupy this high eminence. Instead of possessing a land flowing with milk and honey they were to be homeless wanderers; subject alike to the criminal oppressions of men and the righteous judgments of God. All their splendid distinctions were now to be abolished. The gorgeous solemnities of their temple service were to be succeeded by the simple rites of the gospel; and as if at once to consummate and proclaim their degradation

the glorious temple in which they had worshipped was destined at no distant period to be polluted by the presence of robbers, and profaned by the voice of blasphemy. The whole train of events, with reference to themselves and others, had been designed to prepare mankind for the last command of the risen Redeemer: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

The gospel literally signifies good news. Such it was declared to be when announced by the voice of angels to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem. Taken in its widest sense, it comprehends the whole counsel of God; all that ministers must preach; all that men generally must believe and practise. But more strictly and properly it denotes the doctrine of gratuitous salvation, on account of the righteousness of Christ, imputed to the believer and received by faith. To feel the full force of our Lord's command, to preach the gospel to every creature, it is necessary to consider the nature and design of the gospel. It is a revelation; a special communication from on high; an extraordinary intimation of the divine will, an articulate expression of the mind of God. Is it not evident that the design of such a communication would be defeated, if it were not delivered to those whom it contemplates and addresses? Who shall dare to intercept a message from God? Who would not rather press forward with strenuous energy and sacred zeal, to be the instrument and the channel of such a communication? But not only is it a revelation, it is a revelation of a most extraordinary kind; a revelation of mercy and grace—of mercy for the miserable, of grace for the undeserving. This we could not have anticipated without presumption, and cannot suppress without guilt. This could not have occurred to man in the highest and wildest excursions of his imagination. Angels are represented as bending from their heavenly thrones and gazing with insatiate wonder and ardent joy into this incomprehensible mystery. When the gospel was first proclaimed, it was with a symphony of heavenly voices, ascribing "glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men." Time serves only to increase their wonder, and knowledge to exalt their song.

But since the law is holy and of perpetual obligation, it should seem that the more just and logical the reasonings of a sinner destitute of a revelation of grace, the more deplorable and hopeless must be his conclusion. Let us imagine an honest and intelligent heathen, feeling in his soul "the ineradicable taint of sin;" conscious that it has penetrated his whole nature; that he can no more escape from it than he can escape from himself. Whither, oh! whither shall he turn for help? What mortal voice can speak peace to his troubled conscience? A view of external nature, or the more marvellous constitution of his own mind and body, could not fail to afford him sure and varied evidence of God's goodness. But the same survey would show with equal clearness that sin is followed by suffering, and this not by an occasional coincidence, but with the uniformity of established law. Every argument out of the Bible that indicates the immortality of the soul, indicates an immortality of wretchedness. There is nothing in the article of death to change the relation of the soul to God; if the tree fall toward the south or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth there it shall lie. Accordingly, so far as the heathen have hope, it springs from false and degrading conceptions of the Divine Being, or from an equally delusive and exaggerated estimate of their own merit.

It is not the province of reason to anticipate God's method of salvation; but to admire, and extol, and embrace it. Reason has nothing to do with a plan of grace previous to its publication; reason has to do only with the essential attributes of God. The essential attributes of God are those which belong to him as God, which he must have possessed and exercised had no creature been formed and no sin committed; among these attributes, holiness, justice, and truth shine with conspicuous and severe lustre.

While, therefore, such reflections show the utter incompetency of reason to discover or devise a plan of salvation for sinners, they illustrate the incomparable grace of God which could make the estate of sin and death, into which we had fallen, the occasion of developing a new trait in Deity. For, from eternity, this most amiable attribute of grace had reposed in the inmost recesses of the divine mind with calm and conscious

energy; not revealed for the rescue of the fallen angels, but in the fulness of time made manifest for the redemption of the world by the gift of his only Son. If the human mind had been capable of contriving a scheme by which a holy God could be reconciled to sinful men, why was it not produced for four thousand years? Why was it not proposed by some of those ancient and illustrious sages, whose business and glory it was to speculate on the nature of God and the destinies of men? Why do we see the wisest of their number oppressed with conscious want, and impelled by a vague and sublime desire of true knowledge, indulging the hope that some future Teacher would arise to declare the truth with infallible certainty, and enforce it with a divine sanction? Reason and revelation reply with united voice, that when the "world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."

We should then preach the gospel, because if not preached, it will not be known, and we should send it to the uttermost ends of the earth, because it is the only and appointed means of salvation. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them out of all their distresses." From these and many similar passages, we conclude that divine truth is the instrument which God employs in renewing and saving men. There cannot, therefore, be a more melancholy token of a corrupt and declining church, than a disposition to underrate the preaching of the gospel, and to exalt any Christian institution however sacred in disparagement of it. The gospel is indeed invested with an excellent glory, but only spiritual eyes can discern it. It is vocal with sweet and celestial melodies, but they are audible to those only whose ears have been "unstopped." God might now make known the gospel by the ministry of angels. He might dazzle and subdue the nations in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, by an overwhelming display of his terrible majesty and invincible grace. But it has pleased him to employ the agency of men, and the instrumentality of revealed and recorded truth. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

If, therefore, we would inherit eternal life, we must not only receive the gospel ourselves, but communicate it to others. We must not only possess and obey, but defend and propagate the truth. For this purpose was the Church organized. For this has she been sustained, notwithstanding the malice of her enemies and the unfaithfulness of her friends. This is the character by which she is known. It is a mark by which God denotes her, and which can never deceive us. The Church is the pillar and ground of the truth. To what higher destiny; to what more congenial work could she be called? By what more august and magnificent title could she be known? What ultimate end so worthy as the glory of God? What immediate object so important as the salvation of men? If all the praises with which the enamoured votaries of profane philosophy have adorned her were concentrated in one splendid panegyric, how would they fail to express the excellence of divine philosophy, the supreme and celestial wisdom of the gospel! How does this doctrine, which brings life and immortality to light; which reveals the only way of salvation, deserve to be magnified and published! These doctrines are to be maintained and inculcated mainly through the preaching of the gospel. Pastors are the appointed stewards of these spiritual treasures; and it is with particular reference to her office as the repository of that truth which is the image of the divine glory, the light of the world, the salvation of men, that the apostle designates the Church by a title so splendid. It is hers to preserve this truth pure and sincere in her teaching; to send it to all the world by her ministers; and hand it down from age to age, in solemn sacramental symbols.

In strictest accordance with these views, the whole history of the Church, from the first hour of her organization to the present, shows that when she has been pure, she has been progressive; and that her real prosperity has been in exact proportion to her real extension. We have not time to trace her history minutely through each intervening period; much of it would excite feelings of mingled shame and sadness. But in less than thirty years after the ascension of its divine Author, the gospel had been spread over the greater part of Europe and Asia. It had been preached in all the more important cities of the Roman

empire, at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Philippi, at Thessalonica, at Athens, and at Rome. No dangers could dismay the apostles and primitive preachers. They suffered no impediments to stop the progress of the truth. In their work of mercy, they stooped to the meanest, and stood unabashed before the greatest of the sons of men. The same individual who could intercede for the slave Onesimus, trembled not when brought before the Jewish Sanhedrim, or the Roman judgment-seat; and dared to denounce idolatry amid the most imposing monuments of Athenian superstition. The apostles possessed the spirit of their crucified Lord, and they did not count their lives dear unto themselves. They had made their election freely, and they knew what it involved. Their time, their talents, their treasure, their blood, all were ready to be offered up for the furtherance of the gospel. They walked by faith, not by sight, as seeing Him who is invisible. They believed the promises of God. They anticipated the retributions of eternity. They had confidence in their cause, and their cause triumphed, not by the achievements or the sufferings of men, but by the power and blessing of God. Barbarous tribes were refined and subdued by this gospel. Polished and corrupt cities were reformed and purified. The Corinthian laid aside his licentiousness, and the Roman his ferocious pride. Much of this astonishing success is doubtless to be attributed to the miraculous gifts conferred on the apostles, and the irresistible evidence of their divine mission, which the exercise of them afforded. But in general they had to encounter the same enemies and employ the same weapons with which their successors have had to contend. Opposition to the truth was as bitter then as it is now. False brethren deserted and betrayed them. Pagan priests calumniated, and Pagan princes oppressed them. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. But persecution served only to exalt their courage; to purify their zeal to disseminate their doctrines, and multiply their conquests.

Upon the missionary element incorporated in the constitution of the Church, and in the apostolic commission, we may construct a conclusive argument for the divine origin of the

gospel system. When we remember the notorious character of the Jews, their inveterate prejudices, their narrow nationality, it is impossible to believe that they could have originated a system so grand, so universal. Such an event would be contrary to all analogy, and to all experience. The religion of their fathers was peculiar and exclusive. It discountenanced all foreign commerce. It expressly forbade all foreign alliances. They esteemed the very soil of Israel so sacred, that when they returned from heathen countries they were accustomed to wipe the dust from their feet. It is, perhaps, difficult for us to appreciate the feelings of a Jew of that period. They regarded the men of other countries not as foreigners whose society was degrading, but as sinners whose touch was pollution. Their national and religious bigotry was a fruitful subject of reproach and ridicule to the profane wits of classic antiquity. Nor were the apostles exceptions to the general character of the nation. They were not philosophers, whose minds had been expanded, and enriched and adorned by elegant studies and generous pursuits. They were not gentile princes, but Jewish fishermen; not accomplished Greeks, but illiterate Galileans; and Christ himself, though by lineage the son of David, and by nature the Son of God, was yet the reputed son of a carpenter; the scene of his birth a manger, the instrument of his death a cross! But if the bare conception of such a pure, elevated, and universal system proves it divine, how is that proof augmented and brightened by its successful propagation in a period of general intelligence, and among people with whose cherished opinions it conflicted, and whose familiar practice it condemned!

Since the gospel is the appointed means of salvation, intended for all and adapted to all, our estimate of the gospel, and our love to God may be measured by our zeal to impart it. Unlike earthly treasures, it is not lessened by participation. Send it to every creature, and you will yourself possess it in richer abundance and purer exercise. Its native tendency is expansion. Like the light of heaven—like the air we breathe, it is free, general, vigorous, diffusive. Seek to appropriate it exclusively, and you lose it entirely. Confine or contract it, and you change its nature. It is no longer the gospel, and

you are no longer a Christian Church. You may have all the ordinances of Christ's appointment, but you have not the spirit of Christ. The body may remain; but the life-blood has ceased to circulate; the preserving, pervading, animating soul is gone. The temple may be still standing, but it is forsaken of its God; the altar has no sanctifying gift; the precious incense has escaped; the sacred lights are extinguished, and the mystic response is heard no more. In one aspect of the subject we have everything to depress and alarm us. To the eye of man, the gospel triumph is, perhaps, not less distant now than it was sixteen hundred years ago. There remaineth much land to be possessed. Had the Church continued to exercise apostolic faith and zeal, the world would have been converted long since. These are facts which we cannot deny, and should not conceal. Let the humiliating retrospect incite us to greater diligence. In another point of view we have everything to animate and cheer. For the space of more than half a century the attention of the Christian Church has been particularly directed to this enterprise; and her success has been such as to invite and reward her efforts. Extensive and populous countries have recently received the gospel; and others are now accessible which a few years ago were barred to missionary approach. What we now need, what we now pray for, is an influence from on high, at home and abroad. A divine power is indispensable to produce a permanent and salutary impression. Let but the fire from heaven descend upon the churches, and consecrated wealth will flow out from a thousand unsuspected sources. Effectual, fervent prayer, rising from a thousand devout and grateful hearts, will draw down a blessing that maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow with it. Let the Spirit of the Lord descend in plenitude and power on our theological seminaries, on our ministry, and on our people, and multitudes of soldiers of the cross, single-hearted as Martyn, self-devoted as Lowrie, will gladly dedicate themselves to this arduous but exalted service.