

THE
PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE.

APRIL, 1855.

Miscellaneous Articles.

“FRIEND OF GOD,” OR, THE EXCELLENCY OF FAITH
AND A HOLY LIFE. No. IV.

(Continued from page 109.)

IN our previous discussion, we have seen that Abraham became the friend of God by faith in Christ, and that his friendship was maintained and strengthened by a life of faith and obedience. As examples of the latter, we noticed those illustrious acts, which were only occasional and extraordinary, and those graces and virtues, which were daily and habitual, and which were manifested by the faithful performance of every social duty, and more especially his duty as the head of a family. It remains for us to consider two other fruits of his faith, not less interesting or important than the preceding, viz., the habit of devout and earnest prayer, and his spiritual and heavenly frame of mind. These two things are closely related, and yet sufficiently distinct to require a separate consideration.

THE DEVOTIONAL CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM'S FAITH.

That Abraham was a devout man, is evident, from the most cursory perusal of the Holy Scriptures. And, it is no less manifest, that his devotions were not the offspring of ignorance and superstition, like the senseless worship of idolaters; but of a rational and genuine faith in God. His understanding was enlightened and convinced. Yet we must look farther than this for the source of his devotional feelings. The faith he possessed, though agreeable to reason and founded partly upon it, consisted essentially in the communication to his soul of that divine life, which, proceeding from God, carried back his affections towards

Consecrate to thee our days,
Live as records of thy praise.

Oh, how many children bands,
Still in distant, foreign lands,
In the darkest night remain ;
Love their darkness—hug their chain ;
Gracious Lord ! wilt thou in love,
Send thy message from above,
Till the language of the skies,
From earth's farthest regions rise.

Father ! Son ! and Spirit ! three !
Undivided Trinity !
Hear our fervent prayers, and praise,
Seal us thine through endless days.

MELANCTHON.

DR. GREEN'S BIBLE CLASS AT NASSAU HALL.

WE have obtained, through the kindness of JAMES S. GREEN, Esq., of Princeton, N. J., the following statements of his father on a very interesting topic. Mr. Green writes to us :—

"I enclose a copy of a letter written by my father to the Rev. Dr. CARNAHAN in answer to one, inquiring as to *the study of the Scriptures in the College of New Jersey*. It has occurred to me, that it would be acceptable to some of the readers of the Presbyterian Magazine.

"Very respectfully and truly yours,
"JAMES S. GREEN."

We are much indebted to Mr. Green for this, and other favours, conferred on the Presbyterian Magazine. ED.

DR. GREEN'S BIBLE CLASS IN NASSAU HALL.

PHILADELPHIA, October 18th, 1830.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR :—

Your communication of the 16th inst. was received this morning ; and I believe that I can most readily and fully comply with your request, by writing a short narrative.

It was the usage in my father's family, as long as I was a member of it, that a part of the duty of the elder branches, on the Sabbath, should consist of preparing for an examination in the evening by my father, of five chapters of the Bible. To this usage I was subject for a number of years. I became a tutor in the college at Princeton in the fall of 1783, immediately after taking my first degree ; and in the month of December of that year, Dr. Witherspoon sailed for Britain, to solicit donations for the College, leaving the institution under the government and instruction of Dr. Smith, and two tutors,—a Mr. Beach and myself. Dr. Smith immediately organized a system of religious instruction for the College on the Lord's day ; or rather, he took the senior class to

himself, and gave the other classes to the tutors, to instruct as they should think best, after consulting with him. My allotment was the charge of the two lower classes,—the Sophomore and Freshmen. I immediately determined that I would subject them to the domestic usage with which I had been familiar; and of which I then felt, as I feel to this hour, the beneficial effects. This I accordingly did:—I required every member of my classes to commit accurately to memory a catechism; leaving it to them, or their parents, to select their own, as they pleased: and the exercises of every Sabbath, after attending public worship in the morning, consisted of repeating the catechisms, and being examined on five chapters of the Bible, which were assigned a week before. This system I commenced in the winter of 1784, and continued it while I remained connected with the College, as tutor and professor.

When I was called to the presidency of the College, in the autumn of 1812, one of my first cares was to devise a system of religious instruction for the whole Institution; and I determined that a part of it should consist of the very course which I had pursued with the two lower classes, when I was a tutor,—other additional exercises being required of the two higher classes. I took the senior class to myself, assigned the junior to Mr. Slack, the Sophomore to Mr. Lindsly, and the Freshman to Mr. Clark. But it was soon rumoured that I added at the Bible recitations which I heard, expositions and illustrations by maps and drawings of which the classes inferior to the senior were deprived. It was Mr. Lindsly, I recollect, who first stated to me (what really had not occurred to me before), that there would be no more labour in hearing the whole College than in hearing a single class; and that the students generally and the officers also, might be gratified or benefited, by hearing the expositions, illustrations, and applications, which had hitherto been confined to the seniors: I yielded without hesitation to his suggestions, and before the end of the year 1812, the whole College was examined by myself and addressed afterwards on the topics which were presented by the portion of the Sacred Scriptures previously recited. This system was continued till I left the Institution in the autumn of 1822. My plan for the study of the Bible was as follows: 1. History. 2. Doctrine. 3. Prophecy. 4. Devotion and morals. And it took four years to go over the whole, and in that space the whole was gone over. I took the entire historical part of the Bible, both of the Old and New Testaments, because this was easiest to remember and recite. For doctrine, I took only the Epistle to the Galatians; for prophecy, only the book of Daniel; and for devotion and morals, a part of the Psalms and Proverbs. In the ten years of my presidency, I went twice over this ground entirely, and about half over it in a third course. I made laborious preparation for the service; but it was a delightful one, and one from which I reaped benefit to myself, as well as imparted it to others.

In the close of the year 1814, and beginning of 1815, we were favoured with a very remarkable and general revival of religion in the College. For some months, there was not, I believe, a prayerless room or study in the whole college edifice. An account of this revival was drawn up by myself, and laid before the Board of Trustees, at their spring meeting in 1815. Contrary to my expectation and wishes, they ordered it to be printed. It was accordingly printed; and by some means, I know not how, it found its way to Britain, and was reprinted in the *Christian Observer*, for the month of October, 1815. The editors of that work commended the measures which led to the revival, and even recommended them for imitation in the English Universities; and yet, they pretty severely condemned the publication, as likely to be injurious to the young converts. In this they entirely accorded with my opinion. In my narrative of the revival, I assigned the apparent *instrumental causes*, from which I extract the following sentences:

“Its more immediate causes appear to have been these. First and chiefly, the study of the Holy Scriptures, accompanied with comments on the portion read, and a practical application of the leading truths contained in it. God has remarkably honoured and blessed his own word. Strange as it may seem, this study of the Bible has always been a favourite one among the youth of the College, not excepting the most gay and dissipated. Pains indeed have been taken to render it interesting; but the degree in which it has been so, has been truly surprising,”—and in a note it is said, “For more than two years the Holy Scriptures had been made the subject of as regular study and examination as the classics, the mathematics, or philosophy. The afternoon of the Lord’s day was appropriated uniformly to the recitation of a certain number of students, taken promiscuously (for all were required to be prepared) on five chapters, assigned to them the preceding week. The recitation was always accompanied with expositions, critical remarks, and a practical application. The exercise was concluded with prayer and singing, and was considered as the afternoon religious exercise of College. In the morning, public worship in usual form was celebrated.”

I would have saved myself the trouble of making these extracts from the *Christian Observer*, by sending you a copy of the narrative as printed in this city, but I have lately lost the only copy I had. In my volume of printed Baccalaureate sermons, which my son James can let you have, at page 88, there is a short statement in regard to this subject, and reference to a long note at the end of the volume, in which I have discussed its importance. After all this publicity, I confess I was not a little surprised to find, in the *Boston Recorder*, about three years ago, if I rightly remember, a great puff in praise of some New England college, as having taken the lead in introducing the regular study of the Bible,—a thing never done before, but which it was hoped would be universally

imitated. I immediately wrote to the editors, and gave them the substance of the narrative which I have now given you, and requested that it might be published. It was accordingly published, with my name. A feeble attempt was afterwards made, to show that the New England plan was more systematic than mine. But nothing on the subject has appeared in the Recorder since, although communications relative to it were solicited by the editor. But some folks have a talent of "remembering to forget;" and I suppose from what your letter states, that my last publication in the Recorder, like all that had preceded it, has been forgotten. New England must be the radiating point of all that is excellent, both in religion and in science. If I had foreseen that my narrative would have extended to a third folio page, I would not have called it, at setting out, a *short one*. It is at your service, written, as it has truly been, *currente calamo*.

Very respectfully yours,
A. GREEN.

P. S. I never heard a candidate for licensure before a presbytery, who could answer questions on the Bible with as much readiness and propriety, as was done by the majority of my senior classes at all their examinations. I verily believe that the whole system of Bible class instruction, now so prevalent, may be traced to my father's family. I not only practised it while a tutor, but afterwards as a pastor; and as far as I know, it was not practised beyond the College till some time after I introduced it there in 1812. I believe it spread from Nassau Hall as its central point. I suppose, however, that New England will claim this among other good things.

The Reverend Doctor JAMES CARNAHAN,
Princeton, New Jersey.

BRIEF ANALYSIS OF CALVINISM.

THE peculiar doctrines of the cross have ever been a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek. This fact is attested, not only by God himself, but by the actual history of mankind. Its radical cause is to be sought in that unholy opposition of heart against God, which cleaves to fallen man, and that spiritual blindness, which renders him insensible to the excellence and glory of holiness. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." That is, so long as man continues under the governing influence of his fallen nature, he can have no perception of the beauty, fitness, and excellency, in all its parts and relations, of the plan of salvation by Jesus Christ; nor will he ever have till enlightened by the Holy