

# SERMONS AND ESSAYS

BY THE

## TENNENTS

AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES,

COMPILED FOR THE BOARD.

*by S. D. Alexander.*

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## SERMON IV.

### THE WISDOM OF GOD IN REDEMPTION.

BY THE REV. GILBERT TENNENT.

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“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”—  
1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

THE apostle observes in the preceding verses, with great beauty and propriety, that, “in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God.” The gentile sages, by the mere dint of reason and philosophy, could not form consistent notions of the Supreme Being, or how to obtain his favour. A deluge of the most absurd polytheism and gross profaneness overspread the greatest part of the infidel tribes, before the light of the gospel shone among them; no object was so despicable, as not to be thought worthy of divine honours; no vice so detestable, as not only to obtain in common conversation, but even to be admitted into their religious rites, and most solemn acts of worship; yea, to give sanction to the most brutish and crimson iniquities, they ascribed them to the gods

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they adored, as the learned Arnobius observes, with equal justice and elegance.

It is true, the corruption was not so universal, but that some noble souls raised themselves above the common level; they bewailed, and contemned the stupidity and credulity of the multitude, yet their number was small, and the efficacy of their singular sentiments even upon themselves but little; the effect of their discernment was but a state of perpetual scepticism, a floating in doubtful uncertainty between all opinions, discarding what was manifestly wrong, but not fixing their minds in what was good and right. Yea, in matters of moral good and evil, though some of the rules they have left us are truly excellent, yet in many important things they are very deficient; there is a deep silence in their writings of the nature and obliquity of several vices, such as pride, revenge, and self-murder; they are likewise silent about the right principle of action, love to God; the right end of action, the glory of God; the right mode of action, humility and dependence upon God, for light, strength and acceptance.

They were also at a loss respecting the gaining the friendship of the Almighty when offended, the certainty of a future state, and the strict account they must render of all their actions, to the sovereign Lord and Judge of the universe. Are not these things of inexpressible importance, the very governing principles of a Christian's conduct? This melancholy ignorance of the pagan masters was, doubtless, the source of that uncertainty they bewray in their discourses, and such inconsistency in their

lives, concerning which, one of the greatest and best judges among them, viz: Tully, speaks thus, "Do you think," says he, "that these things [meaning the precepts of morality] had any influence upon those men, (except only a very few,) that thought, and wrote, and disputed about them? no; who is there of all the philosophers, whose mind and manners were conformable to right reason? who ever made his philosophy the law and rule of his life, and not a mere boast and show of his wit and parts? who observed his own instructions, and lived in obedience to his own precepts? On the contrary, many of them were slaves to filthy lusts."

Nay, even the things which they themselves knew, they had not authority enough to inculcate upon men's minds with such impression as to influence and govern their conduct; the truths they proved by a train of speculative reasonings were destitute of more sensible authority to enforce them with energy in practice; the precepts they proposed wanted weight, and evidently appeared to be no more than the precepts of men. This was, doubtless, the reason that none of the philosophers were ever able to work any remarkable change in the minds and lives of their hearers; nor does it appear in history that any of the followers of Socrates were ever so convinced by his instructions of the excellency of virtue, and the certainty and value of its final reward, as to be willing to lay down their lives for its sake, as innumerable disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ have done, with the greatest gladness and heroic fortitude. The truth is, the philosophers them-

selves were sensible of the defect of their own rules in this particular, and, therefore, confess that human nature was strangely corrupted, and that this corruption was a disease whose cause they knew not, and for which they could not find a sufficient remedy. So that the great duties of religion and virtue were proposed by them as matters of speculation, rather than rules of practice: not so much urged upon men's hearts and lives, as proposed to their admiration.

This was, apparently, the condition of mankind without a revelation; to recover them out of which degeneracy, into a state suitable to the original excellency of their nature, a supernatural discovery of their duty was plainly necessary; for if, as has been observed, the generality of the world were so ignorant and corrupt, so overrun with idolatry and licentiousness; if the best of the philosophers were not exempt from the general infection, and free from uncertainty respecting the doctrines they pretended to advance; if the points wherein they were certain, they were not able to prove clearly to vulgar understandings, and those they were able to prove, they had not sufficient authority to enforce; in a word, if there was so much inconsistency in themselves as to give scandal to others, and so much depravity in others as to make them despair of reforming them, there was, then, plainly a want of some revelation to supply these defects, and to discover in what manner, and with what kind of external service, the blessed God might be acceptably worshipped; a revelation to discover what expiation he would be pleased to accept of for

sin, by which his honour is affronted and his authority opposed; a revelation to give intelligent beings an assurance of the great motives of religion, the rewards and punishments of a future state. In fine, some particular revelation was necessary to make the whole system of Christian doctrine clear and obvious to all capacities, to add weight and authority to the plainest precepts, and to furnish men with extraordinary assistance to enable them to overcome the corruptions of their nature; and, indeed, without the assistance of such a revelation, the wisest of men were always of opinion that the world could never be reformed. "Ye may even give over," says Socrates, "all hopes of amending men's manners for the future, unless God be pleased to send some other person to instruct you; for whatsoever is set right, says Plato, in the present ill state of the world, can only be done by the interposition of God."

This condescending and gracious interposure appears evidently in the Christian system, the plan of salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ, which, though it be despised by the ignorant, inconsiderate and prejudiced, is, by those that are awakened out of their security and divinely illuminated, experienced to be, indeed and in truth, a glorious display of the power of God, and the wisdom of God; the latter of which, let us for a little space fix our attention upon at present.

The blessed God, my brethren, foreseeing man's fall, and the misery consequent upon it, determined his recovery in a way worthy of himself, and suited to the

circumstances of the apostate creature, in which his wisdom is eminently conspicuous. This will appear by considering the end that God proposed, and the means he concerted to compass it. All intelligent agents first propose an end, and then choose the means that tend to obtain it; now the more perfect the understanding is, the more noble is the end it designs, and the more apt the means it prescribes to acquire it. The end proposed by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is most excellent, viz: the glory of God, and the happiness of mankind, or their restoration to his image and favour.

The glory of God, or the manifestation of his attributes, by their exercise, to the moral world, was his supreme scope; as God is the best of beings, of consequence his glory must be the best end, and therefore it is but reasonable he should aim at it in all his works; and hence he is said to have made all things for himself, and that of him, and through him, and to him are all things: seeing he is the Creator and Lord of all, it is but just and right that he should be the end of all; nothing can be more natural than that what was borrowed from him, should be directed to him or his honour; "the heavens" are, therefore, said to "declare the glory of God, and the firmament to show forth his handy-work:" on this account, the revelation of the way to future happiness, by the dear, dear Lord Jesus Christ, is called "the glorious gospel of the blessed God;" because it is the clearest manifestation, the richest display of the transcendent excellency of his adorable attributes, which was ever given to the children of men: and hence



Jehovah is said to "magnify his word (that is, the word of his grace) above all his name." The apostle Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, assures us, that the "ministration of righteousness exceeds in glory;" and that under this dispensation, "we all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." In the gospel we behold the Lord Jesus Christ, and the harmonious manifestation of the divine attributes in the scheme of salvation through him, not under the dark veil of types, shadows and prophecies, as the Jewish church, but with open face as in a glass, and are thereby gradually transformed into his image, through the Holy Spirit's concurring influence.

To the aforesaid manifestation of the divine attributes, which the Almighty proposed as his supreme end, we must add the praise and thanksgiving of reasonable creatures on account thereof. When intelligent beings acknowledge the displays of God's excellencies with adoring reverence and ardent affection, they glorify him; "he that offereth praise, glorifieth me," saith the Almighty by the Psalmist; and this, undoubtedly, the blessed God had likewise in view as his supreme end.

But the subordinate end in redemption is the restoration of man; and this, indeed, is inseparably connected with the former, as appears from the angels' anthem, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." Sin had broken the sacred alliance between God and man, and exposed man to the divine displeasure, an

inexpressible and incomprehensible misery. Now, what is more becoming the Father of mercies, the God of love, than to compassionate and relieve the miserable—than to raise from the depths of ruin many monuments, in which his kindness and benignity might for ever triumph? To compass these truly valuable ends, divine wisdom projected the aptest means possible, which appears in the following easy light.

The misery of apostate man consists in the depravation of his whole nature by sin, and in his exposedness to the divine displeasure on account of it, which was a just and natural consequent of his crimson apostasy; and his happiness consisted in his restoring him to his original purity and fellowship with God, and to the full enjoyment of him. But the way to effect this, in consistency with the divine justice, law and government, was a depth which no human understanding could fathom. That God whose being is love, should show kindness to the angels, who never swerved from his statutes, is easy to imagine; for though they cannot merit his favour, yet they never incurred his displeasure by malconduct: and it must needs be natural to Jehovah to love the image of his purity wherever it appears.

Nor is it hard to conceive that the Almighty would be inclined to succour an innocent creature in misery; for in this case, there would be nothing to obstruct the free effluxes of his unexhausted goodness; but how to save a creature that is as guilty as miserable, by its own criminal choice, is a difficulty too hard to be solved by the wisdom

of men or of angels. Heaven itself seemed to be divided on this occasion; mercy inclined to save, but justice interposed for satisfaction. Mercy regarded man with respect to his misery, and its pleas were such as these: Shall the most excellent creature in the lower world perish, the fault not being entirely his—perish for ever without any favour? Shall no compassion be shown to miserable mankind, who in their original state were the beauty and crown of all the numerous ranks of beings in this inferior system? Shall the malignant enemy forever triumph in the fatal success of his perfidy, and reduce the whole human race to the most deplorable and remediless ruin? On the other hand, justice, the nature of which is to give to every one his due, considered man as guilty of a most ungrateful, murderous and pregnant iniquity, the wages of which, agreeable to the dictates of reason and the law of God, is death: this divine attribute remonstrates against showing favour to the unhappy delinquents, and queries, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” All the other attributes seemed to be attendants on justice.

The wisdom of God enforced its plea; it being most indecent, that sin, which demerits the execution, should procure the abrogation, of the law, which would encourage the commission of it without fear. The majesty of God was likewise concerned; for it was not becoming excellent greatness and absolute sovereignty, to treat in this humble manner with inferiors and delinquents, and to offer pardon to presumptuous, ungrateful rebels, before they bow at his footstool, and make supplication to their judge.

The holiness of God confirms and corroborates incensed, lesed majesty, and urges justice to execute the threatening annexed to the violation of the law; for "Jehovah is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." As purity is the essential object of his complacential will, which he loves immutably wherever it is, so, by the law of contraries, sin is the eternal object of his hatred, and consequently such as are (with their full consent) under its habitual rule and government. Because of their connection with it, he will not, saith Job, take the wicked by the hand, or at all acquit them, as the prophet Nahum expresses it. Purity and pollution, by reason of their contrary natures, cannot mix or coalesce, but must maintain a perpetual jar and discord, till one or other is destroyed. Further,

The truth of God, being plighted in the covenant of works, stands engaged to see to the execution of the penalty denounced in case of trespass; and if it is not, the matter so requiring, divine truth fails; but that is impossible, and the attribute joins issue in the contest with divine justice, wisdom, majesty and purity, and requires the execution of the threatened punishment upon the offender himself; or, if extraordinarily dispensed with (in this respect), it must be on such terms as the honour of God's truth may be preserved inviolate.

This seeming conflict among the divine attributes, no created understanding could adjust, and find out a way to reconcile infinite mercy with inflexible justice; a way to satisfy the demands of the one, and grant the requests of the other. In this exigency divine wisdom interposed, and

in its unsearchable depths cherished an expedient, to save man without any prejudice to the perfections of the Deity, without any injury to his government over the moral world, by constituting a mediator between the guilty creature and himself, that, by transferring the punishment on the surety, sin might be punished, and the sinner saved. Here mercy and justice salute each other, and shine with equal glory and lustre. The latter is fully satisfied, and the former exceedingly magnified. These amiable attributes, in this mediatorial plan, join in friendly harmony, to promote and secure the penitent and believing sinner's perpetual happiness. Nor is it unbecoming the majesty of God, to accept a returning sinner, when a mediator of infinite dignity intercedes for him.

The purity of God is not in the least degree disparaged by his clemency to transgressors, seeing the blessed Mediator is a principle and pattern of holiness to all that believe in him, and the truth of God, engaged to issue the threatenings of the broken law, is, by the sufferings of the sinner's surety, preserved inviolate. So that all the divine perfections concur herein, and express, to the eternal astonishment and delight of men and angels, inexpressible charms, beauty and magnificence. Here we may see the glory of the blessed God shining in the face of the venerable and dear Lord Jesus Christ. Who can fathom the unsearchable depths of this amazing wisdom? Who can unfold the boundless riches and treasures of this mysterious prodigy and miracle of mercy—this inexpressible, transcendent, incomprehensible and glorious grace and love?

Surely, no understanding, either human or angelical, is equal to this province; it is only the same infinite mind that concerted this illustrious scheme of salvation by a Redeemer, that can comprehend it.

The angels, those great ministers that attend the throne of God, stoop down with the deepest attention, the strongest desire, and noblest pleasure, to behold the rich and unsearchable variety of manifold wisdom and glorious grace that is herein contained. But though we cannot comprehend the depths of redeeming goodness, yet we may apprehend so much as to be thereby powerfully influenced to admiration, love and obedience; so much as to be thereby excited to cry out in the apostle's language, "O the depths of the riches, both of the knowledge and wisdom of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Surely, the "love of Christ passeth knowledge." But, more particularly,

The wisdom of God appears eminently in taking occasion from the sin of our progenitor, to bring a greater tribute of honour to God, and greater benefit to man, than if he had never transgressed. Sin naturally tends to God's dishonour and to the creature's ruin; but, contrary to its natural tendency, it is overruled by a wise providence to be the occasion of the greatest glory to God and good to man; so that "out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong, sweetness;" as a medicine is extracted out of a poison by the alembic; or as the black ground in a picture, though in itself it contaminates, yet when fixed, with judgment, in its proper place as a shade, heightens

the lustre of the brightest colours, and adds to the beauty of the whole piece.

Dear sirs, the glory of God is more illustriously apparent, in the recovery of fallen man, than if he had never sinned. Had Adam persevered inviolably in his duty and allegiance to his great Creator and Sovereign, he could only have been the subject of divine goodness, but not in its highest and most endearing acts, which are to pity and succour the guilty and miserable. Had he transgressed, and redemption not have taken place, justice, it is true, would have been honoured with a solemn sacrifice, a solemn triumph; but mercy, that amiable, benign, and indulgent attribute, would have been veiled with a total eclipse. But now the wisdom of Jehovah in the redemption of man appears, by according these attributes, and making them shine with rival charms. The honour of Jehovah appears as much in preserving the authority of his law, by punishing our surety in our room and place, as by the exercise of his mercy in pardoning the transgressor.

Nor is it less honourable, my brethren, to the divine wisdom, to restore fallen man with infinite advantage: though innocent man was holy, yet sad experience verifies, that he was mutably so; but holiness in the redeemed shall be perpetual, eternal. Adam's stock was in his own hand, and hence he became a bankrupt; but ours is in the hands of an almighty surety, who has undertaken for us, and will be faithful to his trust. Justice itself being satisfied becomes our friend, and ascertains our possession

of paradise. I might add, that there are graces to be acted by us in our fallen state, for which there were no objects or occasions in innocence: such as compassion to the miserable, forgiveness of injuries, and patience; all which, being emblems of the divine perfections, must, of consequence, be ornamental to, and perfective of, our immortal souls, in conforming them to the great pattern and original of beauty and excellency.

Again, the wisdom of God appears in appointing such a mediator as is suitably qualified to reconcile God to man, and man to God; a mediator, that is God and man in one person, and therefore capable of the affections and sentiments of both the parties to be reconciled. The wisdom of the divine constitution in appointing a person to mediate, who is possessed of the divine and human natures, appears more particularly from the three offices he exercises in that character, viz: Prophetical, Priestly, and Kingly.

Considered as a Prophet, it was necessary that the mediator should be God, that he might deliver instructions with more authority and efficacy; it is God alone that can enlighten the mind, convince the conscience, teach, and change the heart. And it was likewise necessary, that he should be man, that he might converse with us, and convey his instructions to us, in such a familiar way, as we could receive. Such is the weakness of our present frame, that the majesty of God's appearance occasions a distressing panic, and, hence, when Israel had seen some glimpses of God's glory and majesty, at the giving of the



law, they besought the Lord to speak no more to them, in such a manner, lest they died. And no doubt guilt increases our dread at the approach of God, and therefore renders us unfit to attend with due calmness to his immediate instructions. An instance of this we have in the prophet, who, when he heard the seraphs shout, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the heavens and earth are full of the majesty of his glory," lamented in this mournful language, "Woe is me, I am undone, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Infinite purity, attended with awful majesty, so alarms our fears, as to render us unfit for instruction; but the Son of God appearing in our nature to make atonement for transgressors, the brightness of his divine majesty being veiled with the mantle of his humanity is thereby allayed, and so more accommodated to our present state of weakness. Hereby we are encouraged to draw near to him, and to hear with composure his gentle instructions, which drop as the rain, and distil as the dew upon the tender herb.

Nor was the union of the divine and human natures in the person of the Mediator less necessary, my brethren, in respect of his Priestly office. He must be man, that the sinning nature might suffer, and thereby acquire a right to the satisfaction made; for our title to the benefits of Christ's sufferings depends upon our union to him, which is not only spiritual by faith, but natural also; for, as the apostle observes, "He who sanctifies, and they who are sanctified, are all one;" *i. e.*, they have communion in the same nature. Inasmuch as suffering, according to the

divine declaration, was necessary to atone for sin, of which the Deity is incapable, it behoved our High Priest to be man, that he might have a capacity for it; and that those sufferings might be of sufficient dignity and value, and the human nature supported under them, it was as necessary he should be God.

Nor was it less needful that the Mediator should partake of both natures, in order to intercede for us as a Priest; that so he might have a sufficient interest in his Father's affection to prevail in his suit for us, and, at the same time, be possessed of tender affections towards us. Being the Son of God, him the Father always hears, and being the Son of man, he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities; we have, therefore, encouragement to come with boldness to the throne of his grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

And is it not also requisite that the Mediator should be God and man, in regard to his Kingly office? For unless he be God, how can he apply the fruits of his death to us, dispossess the strong man armed, and subdue us to the obedience of faith? And if he had not been man, how could he have led us into the way of universal holiness, by the influence of his own example, which is, doubtless, an excellent method to reform mankind? It is not only necessary to enact rules of virtue by a kingly authority, but likewise, by example, to make precepts practicable and honourable. When brave generals, though of the noblest lineage, design to animate their armies to heroic achievements, they voluntarily submit their persons to all the

humble offices and hardships of a state of war, courageously lead their troops into the high places of the field of battle, and expose their lives to the greatest perils. This our Lord has done for us; the Captain of our salvation, the King of the church, and Lord of the universe, has been made perfect through sufferings.

Another instance of divine wisdom in the redemption of man, by the Lord Jesus Christ, is in making the remedy to have some analogy and proportion to the cause of our ruin; *i. e.*, as we fell in the first Adam, considered as our representative, so we are raised by the second, considered in the same character: "as by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one, many are made righteous." As guilt and death came by the first, through imputation to all his natural offspring, that are united to him naturally by existence, so righteousness and life came by the second Adam, through imputation to all his spiritual offspring, that are united to him spiritually by faith.

Moreover, my brethren, divine wisdom is conspicuous in the manner whereby our redemption is accomplished, *viz*: by the humiliation of the Son of God; by this, Jehovah, as it were, counterworks the sin of angels and men. Pride is the malignity of every sin, for, by it, the sinner sets up his will against God. Now that our dear Redeemer might cure the disease we labour under, in its original source, by the nature of the remedy, he applied to our arrogance, humility. Man, who is but a worm and crushed before the moth, was vainly and wickedly guilty

of high treason, in affecting to be like God; and thus he fell from the state of happiness in which he was at first created. And the eternal Son of God, who was in the form of God, and counted it not robbery to be equal with God, stooped to assume the humble form of a servant, that by his sufferings he might restore fallen man to his primitive purity and bliss; and by his example correct that arrogance, which was the fountain of his fatal apostasy, and all its unhappy consequences. "The word was made flesh," to banish the distance between God and it. O stupendous abasement! the condescension of divine majesty herein is equal to the contrivance of divine wisdom. Both are indeed incomprehensible, both inexpressible. So dreadful was the malignity of our native arrogance, that such unparalleled, astonishing abasement, even of God himself, was necessary to its cure. By this, our Lord destroyed the first work of our grand enemy.

Further, the wisdom of God (in connection with almightiness) appears in appointing such contemptible, and, to appearance, contrary means, to accomplish such great and glorious effects. The way is as wonderful as the work: that Christ, by dying on the cross, a reputed malefactor, should be made our eternal righteousness; that by death, he should destroy him that had the power of death and purchase our life; that, by descending into the grave, he should purchase our resurrection from it, and immortal blessedness,—is truly amazing, and plainly shows that the thoughts and ways of God are far above ours, as the heavens are above the earth. Strange that immortal

life should spring from death, honour from ignominy, healing from stripes, blessedness from a curse! This is so contrary to the usual course of things, that to render it credible, it was typified by many symbols, and foretold by many prophets before it came to pass, that, when it came, it might be esteemed an effect of God's eternal counsel, almighty power, and unsearchable wisdom. Though Christ crucified be to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, yet to those that are called, he is the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Surely great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh; whatever our modern exalters of carnal reason, and monopolizers of wisdom, mutter to the contrary notwithstanding. These men say they are Christians, and yet with a show of wisdom, and pretext of friendship to Jesus Christ, they presume to confront the express testimony of his inspired apostles; they labour with art and address to rob his religion of its grand peculiars, and to substitute polished paganism in its place, and would have us to believe the jest, the juggle, that there is no material difference between them. But God forbid! we have not so learned Christ; while they profess themselves to be wise, they commence fools, they become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts are darkened; "for in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God; it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe;" *i. e.*, the great Sovereign and Lord of all, who has a right to do with his own as he pleases, has, of his mere motion, so ordered the matter, that by the

humble preaching of the cross of Christ, or, in other words, the mediatorial plan of salvation, by the sufferings and death of the Son of God (which some stumble at, and reckon inconsistent and foolish), those that believe shall obtain eternal happiness. Such who reckon the grand peculiars of the religion of Jesus foolish and absurd, would act a more candid and consistent part, if they renounced the name of Christianity altogether, (for what signifies the name without the thing?) and openly declared that they reject the Bible, as a sure and sufficient guide to heaven, and betake themselves to their Dagon, viz: their carnal reason, and graceless virtue,—to a dependence on the former as their supreme and sufficient guide in the matters of religion, and on the latter as their only Saviour. “My soul, come not into their secret; to their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united.” Let Jewish, Grecian, and British infidels or pagans, (the most inexcusable of all the rest, who in the midst of light and day grope in Egyptian darkness,) in the pride and stoutness of their hearts deride and burlesque the mysterious and humble doctrines of Christ crucified, as a nonsensical scheme; yet they never will be able, by all their art, their eloquence, and sovereign contempt, to drive those that have experienced a gracious change (a divine birth) from the foundation of their hope. No, such have an inward witness, that “Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, and the power of God;” and in every successive period, till time concludes its drama, there will be such, who shall not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, but glory in his cross, as a badge of honour; for “the

foundation of God stands sure." Jehovah has graciously promised, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his church, and that no weapon formed against her shall prosper. But to proceed :

The divine wisdom, my brethren, appears gloriously in forming the plan of the gospel, in such a manner, as at once to provide for the comfort of men's souls, and promote the purity of their manners. And this, indeed, is an inseparable character of divine doctrines, that they equally tend to promote God's glory and our benefit. Thus, as the way to blessedness by a mediator, effectually secures God's honour, so it powerfully incites the sinner's hope, love and joy, by representing the blessed God as amiable, benign, and gracious, by providing a complete satisfaction to injured justice, that thus a way might be opened for a liberal, consistent and honourable effusion of divine goodness, in all its innumerable instances, in all its various and valuable effects, adapted to every changing scene of life, adapted to every circumstance of the indigent and distressed; and sufficient to support, relieve, yea, refresh and content them, in the midst of miseries and woes; and under a train and complication of the greatest calamities, which this Bochim, this state of exile, affords. These primitive and faithful servants of Christ, the apostles, though they were by many reckoned deceivers, yet they were true; though they had nothing, yet they possessed all things; though they were sorrowful, yet they were always rejoicing. The mediatorial plan shows us how "God may be just, and yet the justifier of him that

believeth in Jesus," because of his propitiation. This opens to our view the unspeakable gift of the Son of God, and assures us of the gift of all things with him, in case we believe; in particular, this fixes our final perseverance in goodness, a crowning mercy, upon the impregnable basis of the immutable purpose, the almighty power, and faithful promise of God; upon the sacred suretyship, the complete satisfaction, and perpetual intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ; and therefore this gospel scheme of grace and salvation opens an unfailing spring of joy, and lays a firm foundation for our hope and trust; this calms the guilty, restless mind, and makes it "rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

And as the gospel of Christ provides for our solace, so it incites to universal purity. Do not the sufferings of the Son of God for sin give us a dreadful representation of its malignity and danger, seeing nothing less could make a satisfaction for it, and, therefore, serve to deter us from it? We may judge of the danger of a disease by the difficulty of its cure; nothing less could heal our mortal malady than the blood of God; and seeing Christ has expressed such amazing love to us, does not this tend to beget love in us to him, and to constrain us to a voluntary, sincere and uniform obedience, from that truly noble principle?

Now, if the gospel of Christ be such as has been described, with what ardour should we celebrate the divine praises for this revelation, so worthy of God, so suited to the case of fallen man? The apostasy of our first parents was so



fatal to us, that nothing less than infinite wisdom could find out a sufficient remedy. There is no discovery of this in the works of creation. The heavens and the earth do, indeed, prove the existence of a Supreme Being, by pointing to some of his adorable attributes; but cannot represent the design of redemption, which has no connection with the existence of creatures, but hangs altogether upon the sovereign pleasure of God. The doctrine of the Trinity, which is the foundation of the mediatorial plan of salvation, cannot be known by the frame of the universe.

Nor can natural reason, by its utmost force, attain to the knowledge of redeeming grace and love. It is true, there are some remains of the law of nature in the heart of man, some common notices (*rudera, vestigia*) of the differences between moral good and evil, otherwise the world would soon disband and turn into the wildest anarchy, the rudest chaos, and become an *Aceldama*. Though misery when felt, excites to look out for a remedy, yet, here reason is at a loss, at a plunge, and quite non-plussed. How could the Israelites imagine, that by looking to the brazen serpent, those that were stung should be healed? And how can a poor creature discover, by the mere dint of his own genius, or light within, the satisfaction of divine justice by Jesus Christ? No, they cannot, and hence it is called a "mystery, hid from ages and generations;" nay, though the human mind had never been corrupted, it could not, by the force of its reasonings, find it out; for this the very angels could not discover, till it was made known to them by the church. By the first coming

of Christ, and the conversion of many to him, the depths of divine wisdom were unveiled.

The apostle informs us, that the case of the Gentiles was extremely dangerous: "their understandings were darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." The apostle Paul declares, that the Ephesians were formerly darkness, *i. e.* while pagans; and elsewhere assures us that "the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God;" that they are foolishness to him, and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned; and this was not only the case with the ruder sort, but of the more polite and learned; for, as has been before observed, "the world by wisdom knew not God." Natural reason cannot inform us whether God will pardon any transgressors at all, or not, or upon what terms. It is true, the modern Deists do now trump up a plausible scheme of natural religion, with design to overset revealed, but are not so candid as to inform us that they borrowed their lessons from the Bible; without the assistance of which, notwithstanding their pride and pretence to penetration (or superior acumen), they would speak as darkly, doubtfully, and confusedly, as their more ingenious and ingenuous forefathers, the pagan philosophers, long since.

What a horrid confusion of sentiments, what a rude, wild, and dark chaos, overwhelmed the pagan world before Christ's coming, in respect of the most important points of religion! Varro declares, that there were, among them, no less than three hundred different opinions about the

chief good ; nor did they inculcate internal purity, and the necessity of forgiving injuries ; and the best of them offered but uncertain conjectures about the immortality of the soul. A view of their miseries may justly heighten our value for the mercies we enjoy. While many nations dwell in darkness, and in the shadow of death, the day-spring from on high has visited us, and the Sun of righteousness arisen with healing under his wings upon us. This distinguishing, important, and unmerited benefit should fire our souls with love and gratitude, and stir us up to the most affectionate thanksgiving. It is the prerogative of God to reveal the secrets of his kingdom to whom he pleases ; how, then, can we reflect upon the divine goodness towards us, without the warmest emotion, the most admiring, grateful sentiments ? Surely, by nature we are as blind, corrupt, and perverse as any other nation ; what are we, then, that God should be so gracious to us ? If the publication of the law to the people of Israel was justly reckoned their peculiar treasure, what, then, is the revelation of the gospel by the Son of God, which alone discovers our remedy, and of which there is no innate notice in human nature, nor any given otherwise universally.

Can this principle be easily justified, that there is something in mankind, which, if attended to, is sufficient to direct man to salvation without the Scriptures ? It is no matter what this something be called, whether reason, conscience, or the light within, seeing the substance intended is the same. Do not the Scriptures positively declare

that there is no name given under heaven, by which salvation can be obtained, but the name of Jesus ; that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God ; that we cannot hear without a preacher ; that the heathen are darkness, without the covenants of promise, without God ; that they perish for lack of vision, and that all the unregenerate before conviction are blind, dead, possessed with Satan ; that the light in some is darkness, and that all men have not faith ? Now, how can the aforesaid principles agree with those declarations ?

And do not millions of facts (which are stubborn things) in the pagan world, in the present and past ages, and in various nations, confirm the aforesaid testimony of Scripture, that the pagans, whatever pains they take in their different ways of religion (unless they obtain some information from the sacred Scriptures), remain ignorant of the way of salvation by Christ ? If the pagans had this knowledge, is it reasonable to think that they would be brought to the profession of what they believe with great difficulty, in places where this profession is not attended with any danger ? And yet this has often been the case, and is so still ; and why have so many opposed, with great vehemence, and without any sense of guilt, the profession of Christianity, (with Saul before his conversion,) if it be so universally known as is supposed ? And why do none, among such vast multitudes, and during so many ages, give any account of this matter ?

Further, is not one design of the sacred scriptures for "doctrine and instruction," "to make the man of God

perfect and thoroughly furnished to every good work ;” now what need is there of this, if there be sufficient light in every man to direct him without it? Is it not absurd to say, we need more than what is sufficient, or that we need more than we need? Is not the Bible, therefore, needless and superfluous, according to this principle? And is this principle safe, that, in its consequences, deprives us of our Bible? Pray is not the business of pastors after God’s heart, to feed the people with knowledge and understanding? And is it not the design of their office to turn sinners from darkness to light? But what need is there of this institution at all, what need of any labours to instruct mankind, if men have sufficient light without it in themselves? Is not preaching at any time or place, on this plan, an absurdity, a mere farce? And why did the apostles take so much pains in travelling and preaching? Why did they run such risks and endure such hardships? Was it to do a superfluous business, to teach people what they knew already, or might know without their assistance? If so, was this prudent in them (seeing they carried on no business of merchandize, or traffic in their travels to enrich themselves), or a good argument that they had the full exercise of their reason? Pray did they suffer stripes, imprisonment, or death, like wise men or fools, for doing what was needless? Judge ye.

Upon this hypothesis, is it probable that we shall be duly sensible of the value of our religious privileges, sincerely thankful for them, tenderly concerned for those that want them, and use diligence to proselyte them to Christianity, when we judge that they are unnecessary?

But to proceed, is not the incomprehensible mystery of redeeming wisdom and grace, well worthy of our serious thoughts and study; seeing it excels all other sciences in the sublimity of its object, the certainty of its principle, the efficacy of its influence, and the value of its end? It is a doctrine that affects the soul with the highest admiration of the divine wisdom, love, and grace, and makes us speak in the Psalmist's language, "How wonderful are thy thoughts to us-ward!" When the Almighty hereby turns our captivity, we are as those that dream. This opens before us the grandest theme, that was ever exposed to mortal eye or ear; a complication of wonders, the chief of all the ways of God; strange that He who fills heaven and earth, should be confined in a virgin's womb—that life should die and, being dead, revive—that mercy should triumph, without infringing on the rights of justice!

The principle of this mysterious doctrine is immutable, like God, the author and object of it; whereas, philosophical sciences are frequently shifting; almost every one, through pride and excessive self-love, is disposed to despise and pull down what another, with much labour, builds up.

And how precious and powerful is the influence of this doctrine upon those that believingly receive it! While they behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are transformed into the same image from glory to glory—this is eternal life, to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. O! let us cry earnestly to God, that Christ crucified may be more and more the wisdom of God, and the power of God to us! Amen, amen. Dear Lord Jesus Christ, say Amen.

## SAMUEL BLAIR.

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THE REV. SAMUEL BLAIR was a native of Ireland, but came early to this country, and received his education in the Log College, under Mr. William Tennent, Sen. He must have been among the first pupils of this institution. After finishing his classical and theological studies, Mr. Blair put himself under the care of the New Castle Presbytery, by which body he was in due time licensed to preach the gospel. Soon after his licensure, he was settled in the Presbyterian Congregation at Shrewsbury, in New Jersey, in 1734. He laboured in this field for five or six years, when he received an earnest call to settle in New Londonderry, otherwise called Faggs Manor, in the State of Pennsylvania. Here he instituted a classical school, similar in its purpose to that of Mr. Tennent, in Nesha-miny, in which some of the ablest ministers of the Presbyterian Church received either the whole, or the more substantial parts of their education.

There are no records extant, from which we can learn any particulars respecting the fruits of Mr. Blair's labours, at Shrewsbury. Here he commenced his ministerial work; and, as he was a faithful, able and zealous preacher of the truth as it is in Jesus, we entertain no doubt that some of the good seed which he sowed, fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit.

Under his ministry at New Londonderry, there occurred a very remarkable revival of religion, of which he wrote a particular narrative.

The congregation at Faggs Manor consisted almost entirely of emigrants from the north of Ireland; and had been formed a num-

ber of years, but had never enjoyed the ministry of a stated pastor. His settlement among them took place in November, 1739; although he was not installed as their pastor until the month of April, 1740.

Mr. Blair was one of the most learned and profound, as well as pious, excellent, and venerable men of his day. His deep and clear views as a theologian, are sufficiently evident from his treatise on "Predestination," where this awful and mysterious doctrine is treated with the hand of a master. As a preacher, Mr. Blair was very eminent. There was a solemnity in his very appearance, which struck his hearers with awe, before he opened his mouth. And his manner of preaching, while it was truly evangelical and instructive, was exceedingly impressive—he spoke as in the view of eternity, as in the immediate presence of God.

He contracted the disease of which he died, by exposure in attending upon a meeting of the Trustees of the College of New Jersey. His last words, a minute or two before his departure, were, "The Bridegroom is come, and we shall now have all things." And thus, under a gleam of heaven, he breathed out his last. Though his life was protracted beyond the age attained by Davies and Brainerd, yet he may be said to have died young; for, from the inscription on his tomb, it appears that he was only thirty-nine years and twenty one days old, when he was taken away.