

**OBSERVATIONS ON THE
COMMENCEMENT AND PROGRESS OF
THE WORK OF VITAL RELIGION IN THE
SOUL: ON DIVINE WORSHIP; AND ON
THE PARTAKING OF THE FLESH AND
BLOOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

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Observations on the Commencement and Progress of the Work of Vital Religion in the Soul: On divine worship; and on the partaking of the flesh and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ by Samuel Rundell

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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN we look around us, and observe how many conflicting creeds and systems of religion are sedulously propagated in the present day, our reflections on the subject should lead us to appreciate duly the privileges with which, through divine love and mercy, we are favoured; the Light of Christ being given to illuminate our minds, and the Holy Scriptures being placed within our reach, to which we can refer for instruction. In the Sacred Record, the doctrine preached by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, on the subject of the Redemption and Salvation of Man, is clearly exhibited. As no other subject of equal interest and importance can be presented to us, may these few pages, designed to point out from this high authority the way by which all mankind may come to the knowledge of the Truth, and be saved, prove the means, under the divine blessing, not only of convincing the merely nominal Christian of

INTRODUCTION.

the imminent danger he is in ; but also of encouraging the weak yet sincere believer, to hold fast the " grain " of living faith ; (Matt. xvii. 20) that so, amid all the conflicts with which he may be proved, his confidence may be steadily fixed on Him, who is the " Wisdom of God, and the Power of God." (1 Cor. i. 24.) By submission to His command, " Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; " and, by the consequent fulfilment of his gracious promise, " ye shall find rest unto your souls," (Matt. xi. 29) the sincere believer will be enabled eventually to adopt the ancient language, " The Lord is my light, and my salvation ; whom shall I fear ? The Lord is the strength of my life ; of whom shall I be afraid ? " (Psalm xxvii. 1.)

OBSERVATIONS,

ETC.

CHAPTER I.

ON CONVERSION, AND REGENERATION.

WHEN our Lord JESUS CHRIST was transfigured on the mount, the voice from the excellent glory bore witness of him, saying, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; Hear ye Him,*" (2 Pet. i. 17. Matt. xvii. 5;) —HE, whose doctrine we are thus commanded to hear, and of course reverently to embrace, declared, (John iii. 16) "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. (17th) For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world; but that the world, through him, might be saved. (18th) He that believeth on him, is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (19th) And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. (20th) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. (21st) But

he that doeth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

By this highly important declaration of our holy Redeemer, it appears, that the salvation of God through him, is not limited to any particular class or portion of mankind; for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, "that the world, through him, might be saved." The Son of God "tasted death for every man;" (Heb. ii. 9) and his salvation is partaken of by

* In the 16th verse of the above quotation, faith in the Son of God is set forth as necessary to the obtaining everlasting life. In the 18th verse, condemnation is represented as the result of unbelief in his name. In the 19th and 20th verses, the cause of condemnation is more particularly described, being declared to consist in the not loving, but hating, which of course includes the not believing in, the light. Hence it appears, that in this very important passage of Scripture, *the light* should be regarded as the spiritual manifestation of the Son of God in the soul of man; "I, (said Christ) am the light of the world." (John, viii. 12.) The light may also be considered as one of the divine attributes, which are comprised in the name of the Son of God. In taking this view of the subject, there is no essential discordance in the several parts of this portion of the doctrine of our holy Redeemer, respecting the object of faith: Christ, the ever blessed Son of God, is the object of saving faith; and this faith, when first brought forth in the newly awakened soul, is very small, even comparable to "a grain of mustard-seed;" yet it is sufficient to enable the humble recipients, to believe in Christ revealed in their souls, under the manifestation of "the light." Through "the obedience of faith," they witness its gradual increase, and they become capable of believing in Christ, in respect of all his other gracious offices as set forth in the holy Scriptures, if they have access to that sacred record. The believing in "the light" is expressly enjoined by our Saviour in the text. (John xii. 36.)

Now here we behold an evident illustration, both of the love, and also of the justice of Almighty God, who does not condemn any of the children of men for their unbelief of a theological truth, of which no certain knowledge or conviction is impressed on their minds: for the spiritual manifestation of Christ, in which all mankind should believe, does enlighten all; and those only are condemned, who do not love, but on the contrary through unbelief hate the light, and reject its admonitions. The light, or Spirit of Christ, reproves them for sin, but they refuse to forsake it; and in order to escape from reproof, they reject the divine reprover; so that their condemnation is just, and they are left without excuse.

every one who truly and availingly *believes in his name*. Now the name of the Son of God, in this and in many other places of the New Testament, appears to signify, or have reference to, his divine attributes, viz. his power, life, light, &c. ;* and this light being "the life" of "the Word," or Son of God, is that "true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." (John i. 4—9.)

By this light, shining in the hearts of all the children of men, they are, at seasons, reprov'd and convicted of sin ; "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. iii. 23.) They who do not reject this light, are enabled to see the miserable state they are in while unregenerate, being in bondage under the power of sin, and defiled by its pollution. Deeply humbled by this view of their own real condition, their hearts are contrited, —they are brought to repentance ;—and the cry is raised, "God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke, xviii. 13.) Abiding in patient submission, under the operation of the divine power, they are prepared for the reception of an increased manifestation of the light of the Word, or Spirit of Christ, whereby faith, (which is its fruit, and which in some degree had been previously exercised,) is now more fully confirmed. Thus the work of conversion advances in those who do not reject the appearance of the light, which is the free gift or "grace" of God. (Titus, ii. 11.) By the operation of his power, the eyes of the mentally blind are in degree opened, and some true sensibility is imparted to their souls. They are brought to feel more deeply, the inestimable value of a Saviour ; and, coming to him in faith, through the attraction of the love of God,†

* See Cruden's Concordance under "Name," also Barclay's Apology, Take's Principles, Bates' Doctrines; the three last under the article "Baptism."

† "No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." (John vi. 44.)

they are favored to experience the baptism of his Spirit; witnessing the remission of their past sins through His blood, who is "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." (1 John, ii. 2.) They who thus walk in the light of Christ, in "the obedience of faith," are enabled, like the believers formerly, "to joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ;" by whom they receive "the atonement," or reconciliation with God. Rom. v. 11.) Abiding under the baptism of the Spirit, its cleansing operation progresses in their hearts; the motives—the secret springs to action—are purified from the alloy of sin, however specious the form under which it lurks. This process, in the figurative language of Scripture, is said to be "with fire." (Luke, iii. 16.)

The soul-satisfying peace and joy, which these have found to result from believing in, and obeying, the light or Spirit of Christ, engage them still to adhere to its manifestations; they submit not only their words and actions, but also the thoughts and desires of their hearts, to its righteous scrutiny and decision; so that every sinful thought and desire, every idle word, and every evil deed, are brought unto judgment. They see, in this light, that there is much more to be effected in their hearts, by the "refiner's fire," (Mal. iii. 2) than previously they had any conception of; and they are made sensible, that this purifying process must be endured, in order that the selfishness, pride and haughtiness, with all other evil affections and lusts, which the tempter strives to excite and foster in their hearts, may be fully subdued, and made to give place to the righteousness, the love, the purity, the meekness and the gentleness of Christ. Amidst their many besetments, by watching unto prayer, and by patiently waiting on the Lord in spirit, an increase of strength is received, and they are enabled to hold on their way.—Continuing to follow the light of Christ in the *path of*