

**A SCRIPTURAL EXAMINATION OF
SOME OF THE DOCTRINES: OF
THOSE WHO HAVE RECENTLY
SECEDED FROM THE SOCIETY OF
FRIENDS**

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WILLIAM RICHARDSON

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"Then if any man shall say unto you, lo! here is Christ, or there; believe it not."

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PREFACE.

IN presenting these remarks on the unsound opinions of the recent seceders, from the Society of Friends, it may be suitable to apprise the reader, that it did not come within the design of the author, to devote much attention to the many calumnies that they have thrown on the community which they have left; this appeared the less needful, as most, if not all their charges against that body, at least those of a doctrinal tendency, have been long since refuted, by the writers of the early times of the Society, in their replies to opposers of their day. The charge of Deism, in particular, with the hackneyed allusion to Lord Herbert, of Cherbury, has long since had all the attention due to so stale an article; but for a particular refutation of these charges, the reader is referred to an excellent work by Alexander Arscott, entitled "Some Considerations relating to the present state of the Christian Religion."

With respect to the charge of Semi-Pelagianism brought in this essay, against the seceders, it must be left to the reader to consider, whether it be well sustained from the premises adduced.

It may be objected by some, that there is a redundancy of Scriptural references in the work now presented to the reader, but it should be recollected that the object was to produce a Scriptural exposure of error, rather than to assume the possession of great intellectual endowments, or of powers

that might be judged needful for "untrammelled" research. Besides, the author having observed the manner in which some of the writers on the opposite side of the question, have "twisted" certain passages of scripture to suit their purpose, considered it, therefore, better in many instances to give the context with the text relied upon, for confirmation of the view taken, in order that the reader might the more readily perceive, whether the inferences were fairly, and it may be said honestly, drawn. Not that the writer would be understood to assume that no mistakes have been made, with respect to the genuine import and signification, of every passage referred to, though he hopes that there are not any which will affect any important point of doctrine.

With these observations, he would submit his labour of love, for such he dares assume that it has been, to the candid perusal of his readers.

North Shields, 3d Month, 1839.

SCRIPTURAL EXAMINATION, &c.

THAT the natural man "at his best estate, is altogether vanity,"* will be readily conceded by most of those who profess the Christian name. "There is none righteous, no not one."† The enquiry, therefore, becomes highly important, how is he to be recovered from his sinful condition, cleansed from the pollutions of his fallen nature, and restored to "the image of Him, who created him?"‡

The cry of the Psalmist from a true sense of his condition, was,—“And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in Thee.”§

According to the doctrine of the Apostle Peter, the baptism,—the cleansing operation that doth now save us, is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That this baptism must be felt and experienced in the soul, or inner man, is evident from the testimony of the Apostle Paul,—“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.”¶

The epistles of the two Apostles just quoted, appear to have been addressed to experienced Christians; that of Peter, “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus,” &c., whom he salutes, “Elect according to the fore-knowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”¶ That of Paul, to his “own son after the common faith:” it was, therefore, hardly to be expected that they should describe

* Psalm xxxix., 5.
† Rom. iii., 10.

‡ Coll. iii., 10.
§ Ps. xxxix., 7.

¶ Titus, iii., 5, 6, 7.
¶ 1st Peter i., 2.

very minutely, the first steps or beginnings of a holy life; yet Paul declares to Titus, asserting the general principle that the grace of God that *bringeth* salvation hath appeared to *all* men, *teaching* us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,* but it is remarkable with what agreement, they both press the necessity of a spiritual influence, throughout the Christian progress.

We have, preserved to us, in the commission given by the Lord Jesus, to "his chosen vessel," Paul, an epitome of the doctrines, which the Apostle was directed to teach, and which shews, in few words, the beginning,—the order of the progress,—and the consummation of the Christian faith and warfare, with the final triumph and victory of the Saints.

"At mid day, O, King," saith Paul, in his speech before Agrippa,—*"I saw in the way, a light from Heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them which journeyed with me; and when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice, speaking unto me, and saying, in the Hebrew tongue,—Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, 'Who art thou, Lord?' And he said, 'I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest; but rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister, and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee: delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan, unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."*†

Here, it appears, the commencement of the work of redemption in the creature, must be to have the eyes opened, and to be turned from darkness to light: and how, otherwise, can any one obtain a true sense of his lost condition? The Apostle says that it is Christ, as foretold by Moses and the Prophets, who "should shew light unto the people, and the Gentiles;"‡ and, certainly, He only, can do this, by whom "God will judge the world."

Having obtained a true sight and sense of its condition, in

* Titus II., 11, 14.

† Acts xxvi., 13, 19.

‡ Ib. xxvi., 23.

that light which will neither flatter nor mislead, and which needs no human expositor, to explain its teachings, for its shinings are above the brightness of the sun at mid-day, or any other created light, the mind thus led to feel the necessity of help, is oftentimes driven to cry out, in all the bitterness and anguish of unmitigated grief, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" It is then, that the mind, having been mercifully turned from darkness to light, becomes sensible of the extreme value of the invitation to *turn also* from the power of Satan unto God;—to that power which alone, can discover, and redeem from all the insidious snares, and wicked influences of the enemy of man's happiness.

But if these invitations of Divine mercy be slighted or neglected, whether immediately communicated by the "Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father," and which Christ declared should testify of him;—or mediately through those of his ministers, who are qualified, as were the early disciples, *experimentally* to bear witness of him,*—that which Christ said unto the Jews who rejected his testimony, will become applicable to such an erring soul,—"The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."†—But if, happily, the gracious invitation be accepted, and a willingness be wrought in the mind, to receive the proffered aid of Divine mercy, the shortest ejaculation from the humbled soul,—"God, be merciful!" will meet with acceptance before the throne of grace; and strength sufficient for the day will be afforded, to resist the power of Satan, through Him who is declared to be the "power of God, and the wisdom of God."‡ The soul, thus resisting, "through Christ strengthening" it, in the spiritual warfare against all its enemies, both of flesh and spirit, victory will be obtained, and a comforting evidence will be experienced, of "being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;"§ and finally, of an inheritance among them which are sanctified through faith that is in Christ.

This is indeed the faith, which is the saints' victory; and these, are the only means, by which the poor lost soul of man can be recovered out of the fall, and restored to a state of acceptance with God the Father, even through *the power* and mediation of the Son; who gave himself for us, to be a propitiation for our sins, that being baptised through the power of his cross, into the likeness of his death, we also, through the love and power of the Father, may be raised in the likeness of his resurrection, to walk in newness of life: and thus,

* John xv., 26, 27.
† 1st John xii., 48.

‡ 1st Cor. i., 24.
§ Rom. iii., 24.

having the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and being justified by his grace (although on our part, an entirely unmerited favour) we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life in Him.

While thus passing through the laver of regeneration, the records of Holy Scripture, become of inestimable value to the *seeking soul*; for there, are to be found related, the experiences and declarations of many, who have before trod the path to glory, and to the eternal inheritance of the saints in light; and having been "given by the inspiration of God, [they], are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* As these answer to the experiences of the mind engaged in the like Christian warfare, they afford to it much encouragement. But above all price, are the accounts of the sufferings and conflicts of Him, "who trod the wine-press alone,"—the Captain of our salvation, who was made perfect through suffering, which He endured for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world; who died, that we might live, and be reconciled to God, through Him, and being reconciled, *saved by His life*, and being saved, made to rejoice in the hope of eternal life through faith that is in Him; for thus to know the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent, is life eternal. Therefore, the record of these things which has been handed down to us of the present day, through the good providence of God, in Holy Scripture, is indeed of inestimable value, and will continue to be so to every seeking soul, to the end of time.

It was in strict conformity with the evangelical commission, given to the great Apostle of the Gentiles, that the early preachers of the Society of Friends (having themselves first received their call and qualification for the work, from the same Divine power and authority inwardly revealed), laboured "to open the eyes" of the people to whom they were sent, and to invite them to turn from the darkness of their fallen condition by nature, to the light of Christ, within them; and thus, their preaching was made manifest according to the experience of the blessed Apostle, "to every man's conscience;" and it was by the effectual "working" of the same precious influence, that they were enabled to turn the bent and inclinations of their hearts, from the power of Satan unto God.

William Penn, in his account of the rise and progress of the Society, describes what he considers to be their funda-

* 2d Tim. III., 16, 17.