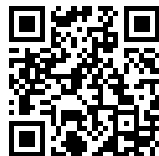


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A LETTER

TO A

JUNIOR METHODIST PREACHER,

CONCERNING

THE GENERAL COURSE AND PROSECUTION  
OF HIS STUDIES

IN

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.

BY JOHN HANNAH.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

It was the writer's intention to prepare a syllabus of all the principal studies on which a Junior Methodist Preacher may advantageously bestow his time and attention. Finding, however, that his materials multiplied far beyond the limits to which he had judged it proper to confine himself, and fearing that such an array of studies might present a formidable and discouraging aspect to some at least whom he wishes to serve, he resolved, at present, to publish only the following part of his plan. The candid reader will please to consider that it is solely designed for the use of our younger and less experienced Preachers. He will also, it is hoped, make every fair allowance for the difficulty of the attempt, and pardon the inadvertencies and defects which may be too observable in its execution.



# A LETTER

TO

## A JUNIOR METHODIST PREACHER.

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As you are now engaged in the most important of all human functions, it may reasonably be supposed that you covet every attainment which seems likely to assist you in the performance of your several duties. You cannot fail especially to seek a clear and extensive acquaintance with that system of Christian Theology which it is your avowed object to teach and promote. Though you may be excusably ignorant of many things which are not immediately connected with the offices of your high vocation, yet it would be painfully discreditable to you, if you did not aspire to the character of a "scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," and of a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

Your solicitude to acquire such a character can scarcely be carried to excess. If persons who are providentially destined to pursue the ordinary avocations, or the more honourable professions, of this mortal life, cheerfully submit to a laborious course of training, and cultivate a laudable wish to excel in every department of the province which may be allotted to them, surely a religious instructor, who is constrained by the most sacred motives, and devoted to the noblest occupation that can employ the faculties of man, ought to indulge an ardent and unquenchable desire to avail himself of every possible opportunity and advantage, that he may collect all the gifts of an enlightened and hallowed service, and offer them on the altar of the Christian sanctuary. To supply you with some small degree of aid in the progress of the inquiries to which such a disposition will prompt you, I beg leave to tender you a few familiar directions. Plain and unassuming

as they are in themselves, they may not, perhaps, prove entirely useless to you.

The general outline of study which appears to be the best adapted to your circumstances, is that which divides the whole course of your pursuits in Christian Theology into four parts, comprehending, respectively, the EVIDENCES, the DOCTRINES, the DUTIES, and the INSTITUTIONS of CHRISTIANITY. Such an outline will, I presume, commend itself to you by its simplicity and comprehensiveness; but it likewise merits your regard, because it is the plan which the late Mr. Watson has adopted in his excellent "Theological Institutes,"—a work to which I shall frequently have occasion to refer you,—and also because it has received the official approbation of the Wesleyan Conference.\* As I would not sacrifice anything to unseasonable novelty, but would rather follow the path which abler men have prescribed, I shall confine my suggestions within the limits of the scheme which has just been recited.

I. WHEN you turn your attention to the EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY, you will find it advantageous to obtain a complete and accurate summary of them all. Pursuant to this, you may not improperly reduce them to four classes:—PRESUMPTIVE EVIDENCES in favour of a divine revelation;—DIRECT EVIDENCES in authentication and support of that divine revelation which claims to have been actually given;—EVIDENCES which more particularly establish the GENUINENESS, AUTHENTICITY, INSPIRATION, and UNCORRUPTED PRESERVATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, viewed as the depositories of that revelation;—and COLLATERAL OR MISCELLANEOUS EVIDENCES, which do not strictly fall under any of the preceding divisions, but which furnish an astonishing mass of subsidiary and confirmatory proof. Copious as is the subject of the Christian evidences, I am not aware that it contains anything which may not be fairly brought within the compass of this classification.

\* See Minutes of Conference for 1834, Q. x., A. 1., and Outline of the Plan for the Improvement of the Junior Preachers, (v.) 2., pp. of the Minutes 95—97.

1. **PRESUMPTIVE EVIDENCES** in favour of a divine revelation additional and superior to the manifestations which God has granted us of himself in the works of his hands, arise from certain preliminary considerations, all tending to create a persuasion that such a revelation is *necessary, possible, and probable*. For a satisfactory examination of this branch of evidence, I would recommend the perusal of Horne's "Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures,"\* vol. i., chap. i., pp. 1—35; Watson's "Theological Institutes," part i., chap. i.—viii.; and Paley's "View of the Evidences of Christianity," "Preparatory Considerations," paragraph second. With these you may consult Doddridge's "Course of Lectures on the Principal Subjects in Pneumatology, Ethics, and Divinity," lectures cii.—civ., and the first eight sections of lecture cv.

2. **DIRECT EVIDENCES** in authentication and support of that divine revelation which claims to have been actually given, may be subdivided into three kinds:—*miracles*, which display the almighty power of God;—*prophecy*, which attests his omniscient wisdom;—and *internal character*, which bears the stamp and impress of his moral excellency or goodness. These evidences are, therefore, intimately associated with the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God,—those conspicuous perfections which instantly and forcibly strike every thoughtful observer of his works. A revelation which exhibits such evidences may be justly said to carry the indubitable seals of God himself.

*Miracles*, which are signal acts of Divine Omnipotence, form the primary direct evidence of revelation, and deserve a most sedulous investigation. They are treated with great ability in Horne's "Introduction," vol. i., chap. iv., sect. ii., pp. 204—271; Watson's "Institutes," part i., chapters ix., xv., xvi., to which you ought to annex his admirable sermon on "The Miracles of Christ," Works, vol. ii., pp. 221—233; and Campbell's "Dissertation on Miracles," the

\* Seventh Edition, 1834. A very useful analysis or abridgment of this important work has been published by its author, in one volume, entitled, "A Compendious Introduction to the Study of the Bible," fourth edition, 1833.



substance of which may indeed be embodied in the works already named, but which deserves a separate and careful perusal, as a fine specimen of acute dialectics, though his ingenious exposure of Hume's hypothesis is not, perhaps, without a flaw. I would farther recommend Paley's "Evidences," embracing the principles advanced in the latter part of his "Preparatory Considerations," with the application of them in part i., proposition i., chapters i.—viii., and proposition ii., chapters i., ii.; also Wesley's "Letter to the Rev. Dr. Conyers Middleton," Works,\* vol. x., pp. 1—66, with other passages scattered through his writings, and noted in the Index under the titles of "Miracles" and "Miraculous Gifts," and whatever you may discover in the "Christian Library"† suitable to your purpose, referred to in the Index under the head of "Miracles." It will also be useful to compare Doddridge's "Lectures," ci., cv., sections 9—22; cvi., cix., sect. 5; and cxxv. A judicious inspection of these works, with the exercise of your own meditations, and a close investigation of the miracles which are recorded in Scripture, and to which the publications above-cited constantly appeal, will be sufficient to put you into the possession of this prime argument in defence of our holy faith, guarded against the manifold objections which sceptical temerity, or metaphysical subtilty, has attempted to frame.

*Prophecy*, or the prediction of future events, comprehending such especially as are distinguished by their remoteness and apparent contingency, is the next direct evidence of revelation, and an evidence, too, which continually receives new accessions of strength by the lapse of time. Prophecy affords the most sublime testimony to the omniscient and infallible wisdom of God, who alone "declareth the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done," and who, in vindication of his own unshared prerogative, and to the confusion of all the deities of paganism, says, "Produce your cause;—bring forth your strong reasons.—Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen:

\* Third edition, with the last corrections of the Author, 1829—1831.

† Second edition, in thirty volumes, 8vo., 1819—1827.

let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods." To stimulate and help you in this part of your inquiries, I would counsel you to read Paley's "Evidences," part ii., chap. i.; Watson's "Institutes," part i., chapters xvii., xviii.; Home's "Introduction," vol. i., chap. iv., sect. iii., pp. 272—332, with his "Table of the Chief Prophecies relative to the Messiah," inserted in the Appendix, No. vi., pp. 492—517; Newton's "Dissertations on the Prophecies;" and Keith's elegant and popular work on the same subject. To these you may profitably add Smith's learned and elaborate "Discourse concerning Prophecy,"\* a copious extract of which is comprised in the "Christian Library," vol. xi., pp. 221—265, with other passages in that valuable collection of theology, to which the Index will guide you under the head of "Prophecy;" and Fletcher's "Letter on the Prophecies," Works,† vol. iv., pp. 529—550. I should have mentioned Doddridge's "Lectures," cxxviii.—cxxxii., but that they now appear to be, in a great measure, superseded by some of the other and later works which I have cited. They may, however, be consulted and compared with real advantage.

*Internal character*, which reflects the image of God's moral excellency or goodness, and which must rise in our estimation in proportion as it is studied and known, constitutes the last direct evidence which I have named. The best method of acquiring a full apprehension of its perspicuity and force, is an habitual and devout examination of the Scriptures themselves. There divine truth shines in its native light, and commands our assent by its own appropriate manifestations. "Search the Scriptures," then, with a design to treat this kind of evidence with impartiality and justice, and to understand

\* This piece was first published in "Select Discourses, by John Smith," Cambridge, 1659, second edition, 1673. Bishop Watson has inserted it at length in the fourth volume of his "Theological Tracts." Mr. Wesley has introduced all Smith's "Discourses" into the "Christian Library," with comparatively little abridgment, and with a strong note of approbation.

† Eighth edition, in seven volumes, 1826.

its due import. Read also Doddridge's "Lectures," cvii., sections 2—9, where he proposes to inquire "what kind of internal evidence we may probably expect to find in a divine revelation;" Wesley's "Letter to the Rev. Dr. Middleton," Works, vol. x., pp. 75—79, where the value of the internal evidence which accompanies Christianity is represented in the most cogent manner; Paley's "Evidences," part ii., chapters ii.—v.; Watson's "Institutes," parti., chap. xix.; and Horne's "Introduction," vol. i., chap. v., pp. 333—442. Your course of reading in practical divinity will also abundantly assist you in this branch of study.

3. EVIDENCES which more particularly establish the GENUINENESS, AUTHENTICITY, INSPIRATION, and UNCORRUPTED PRESERVATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, viewed as the depositories of a revelation thus authenticated and supported, will have been already, in some degree, anticipated. It is proper, however, to pursue them more fully. See, for this purpose, Wesley's "Clear and Concise Demonstration of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures," Works, vol. xi., pp. 473, 479; Fletcher's "Appeal to Matter of Fact and Common Sense," part iv., at the beginning, Works, vol. i., pp. 106—113; Doddridge's "Ten Sermons on the Power and Grace of Christ, and on the Evidences of his Glorious Gospel," sermons viii.—x.,\* which also throw much light on several other topics now under your consideration, and with which you may compare his "Lectures," cxi.—cxxvii., cxxxvii.—cliii.; Paley's "Evidences," part i., proposition I., chapters vii.—ix., (to which, if time and opportunity allow, you may add Lardner's "Credibility of the Gospel History," from which the chief materials of Paley, in that part of his work, are professedly drawn,) part ii., chapters vi.—viii., with the "Horæ Paulinæ" of the same author; Jones's "New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament;" Watson's "Institutes," parti., chapters xii.—xiv.; Horne's "Introduction," vol. i., throughout, especially chapters ii., iii., and iv., section i., with the appendix, No. ii.; and

\* A copy of these three sermons, with "A Dissertation on the Inspiration of the New Testament," may sometimes be procured in one small volume, 18mo.

the passages in the "Christian Library" noted in the Index under the head of "Scriptures." In this stage of your proceedings, you will also weigh the objections which have been alleged against the Scriptures; and will find great assistance in this employment, (not again to mention several other works which have been already cited,) from Horne's "Introduction," vol. i.; from Watson's "Institutes," part i., throughout, particularly chapter xx.; and from Paley's "Evidences," part iii.

4. COLLATERAL OR MISCELLANEOUS EVIDENCES, which do not properly fall under any of the preceding divisions, though many of them will have occurred to you in the course of your investigations, are exceedingly numerous and valuable. As a specimen of what I should, perhaps, choose to arrange under this head, I would mention the *conversion of Saul of Tarsus to the Christian faith*, on which Lord Lyttleton's "Observations" deserve to be carefully read, with Watson's brief but clear and impressive view of the same argument, in his posthumous sermon on "The Conversion of Saul," first part, Works, vol. iii., pp., 38—41;—the *success of the first publishers of the Gospel*, on which Campbell has an admirable sermon, in the second volume of his sermons and tracts, and which Paley also has considered, with his usual perspicuity and acuteness, in the second part of his "Evidences," chapter ix.; to whom may be added Watson, "Institutes," part i., chap. xix.; and Horne, "Introduction," vol. i., chap. iii., section iv., pp. 137—139;—the *actual benefit produced by Christianity upon mankind*, for a summary of which argument you may consult Watson, *ibid.*; and Horne, "Introduction," vol. i., chap. v., sect. iv., pp. 404—427;—the *institutions and monuments of Christianity*, which cannot fail to awaken, in the mind of the candid observer, an inquiry concerning their origin and perpetual continuation, and for a notice of which you may turn to Horne, "Introduction," vol. i., chap. iii., sect. iii., pp. 135—137;—and the *testimonies of natural and civil history, of profane writers, and of coins, medals, and ancient marbles*, on which it may also be sufficient to examine Horne's excellent collections and remarks, "Introduction," vol. i., chap. iii., sect. ii., pp. 141—200.

No person who is competently acquainted with the nature of the subject will deny that it is a difficult task to sketch such a general outline of the evidences of Christianity as shall labour neither under defect nor excess. The one which I have adopted appears, to my own judgment, to be, upon the whole, the most simple, natural, and comprehensive. If you should be of opinion that a different method, especially in some of the minor arrangements, is preferable, you will, of course, use your own discretion, and proceed accordingly; and if, on any topic, you should fancy that my references are too numerous, you may, in that case, consult those only which are sufficient, with your own mental researches, to give you a complete mastery of the subject. I must, however, be allowed to say, that if, from an impatience of close application, you affect an expeditious path to knowledge, you will, in all probability, be miserably disappointed; and that, if you have access to the books which I have named,—and most of them are, in one way or another, tolerably easy of access to persons in your situation,—you will not find it impracticable or very tedious to obtain a proper view of their contents in the way which I have ventured to recommend, provided, always, that you employ diligence and industry, without which, eminent acquisitions in wisdom may be imagined, but can never be enjoyed. On this branch of study I confess that my perplexity lies in selection. I have reluctantly passed over many works for which I have the highest esteem; and, at the risk of increasing the apparent burden of your reading, I cannot but express my hope that, besides the books to which I have particularly referred, you will take the opportunity of studying such productions as Grotius “On the Truth of the Christian Religion;” Butler’s “Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature,” part ii.; Leslie’s “Short and Easy Method with the Deists;”<sup>\*</sup> Chalmers’s

\* An extract from this most able little work, with several other valuable tracts, was published by Mr. Wesley in a short compilation, entitled, “A Preservative against unsettled Notions in Religion,” which merits a diligent and frequent perusal. The other pieces which it contains are, “A Treatise concerning the Godhead of Jesus Christ, translated from the French;” “The Advantage of the Members of the Church of England over those of the Church of Rome;”

invaluable treatise on the "Evidences of the Christian Revelation," now in the course of re-publication with his other works; and Gerard's "Dissertations on Subjects relative to the Genius and Evidences of Christianity."

But is it necessary or even profitable that, fully persuaded as you already are concerning the truth of Christianity, you should occupy your time in the examination of its evidences? I think it is. Such an examination will serve, by the blessing of God, to supply your own mind with a large accession of light on the subject which is most dear to your best affections, and will thus establish and guard your confidence in "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints:" it will also prepare you, in this age of fearless scepticism and innovation, to detect and expose the manifold artifices which the oppugners of Christianity may contrive; to seize the Proteus of infidelity in all its tortuous shiftings and transformations, and fix it in its proper shape, while you approve yourself "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and reverence," showing, by arguments the most convincing and unanswerable, that you have not followed "cunningly-devised fables:" finally, it will guide you to a more intimate and exact acquaintance with the contents of that revelation which you thus learn to substantiate by appropriate and satisfactory proof. Rightly to study the evidences of Christianity is, in an eminent degree, to study Christianity itself, and to gain a view, at once more distinct and more comprehensive, of its rich and saving discoveries.

Let it never be forgotten, however, that this study is of a  
 "An Extract of a Letter to the Rev. Mr. Law, occasioned by some of his late Writings;" "A Letter to a Person lately joined with the People called Quakers, in Answer to a Letter written by him;" "A Treatise on Baptism;" "A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Towgood, of Exeter, occasioned by his 'Dissent from the Church of England fully justified;'" "Serious Thoughts concerning Godfathers and Godmothers;" "The Scripture Doctrine of Predestination, Election, and Reprobation;" "An Extract from a Short View of the Difference between the Moravian Brethren, so called, and the Rev. Messrs. John and Charles Wesley;" "An Extract from a Dialogue between an Antinomian and his Friend;" "A Letter to the Rev. Mr. —," on Hervey's "Theron and Aspasio;" and "Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England." Its price is not more than one or two shillings.

strictly subordinate and introductory character. You are not to rest in it as an end, but to use it, and to teach others also to use it, as a means. Do we receive Christianity as a revelation truly divine? Can we lay our hand upon the sacred volume, and, with triumphant assurance, say, "THIS IS THE BOOK OF GOD?" And are we filled with a secret satisfaction and joy, when we find that all the assaults of its enemies serve only to prove its impregnable stability and strength? Why do we not, then, faithfully apply it to its own spiritual and practical purposes? It is delightful to "walk about Zion," and "tell the towers thereof," to "mark well her bulwarks," and "consider her palaces;" but how much more delightful is it to enter the venerable precincts, to pass through the interposing veil, to approach "the mercy-seat and cherubim" in the sanctuary of interior and holy worship, and, with the full confidence of faith and hope, to cry, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple."—"Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth."

II. THE DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY, which I exhort you to study with religious care and diligence, are to be drawn from the pure fountains of inspiration. Although I shall, therefore, direct your attention to many works of human composition, it is not that they may in any degree supersede, but in every way assist, your studies in the Scriptures, to which your first and last appeal ought to be made. You will find it useful, if not necessary, in the course of your inquiries, to consult Commentators. Without any disparagement of others, whose valuable labours in this province I gratefully esteem, I would, with especial reference to your present object, earnestly recommend the constant use of Wesley's "Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament," with which, as a Methodist Preacher, you are bound to cultivate a familiar acquaintance, and Benson's "Commentary

on the Old and New Testaments." No person, who has not closely examined these important publications, can have any just conception of the amazing body of scriptural exposition which they have condensed in a comparatively small compass. When you read Mr. Wesley, you will find it of singular benefit to observe the contents to each book, which he has generally translated from Bengelius,—the division of the whole into proper sections, which he has also adopted from Bengelius,—and the unostentatious but often significant and striking alterations which he has made in the common version.

As it appears to be desirable that you should derive all the help from a regular subdivision of topics, which such a subdivision may be able to afford you, I think it will not be amiss for you to distribute the doctrinal subjects on which your meditations will be chiefly employed, into three parts:—those which relate to the **DIVINE NATURE**;—those which relate to **MAN IN HIS PROBATIONARY CONDITION**;—and those which relate to the various particulars concerning his **FUTURE DESTINATION**. A more copious and complex distribution might easily be suggested. It is presumed, however, that this will be quite sufficient for your immediate purpose.

1. When you humbly and reverently study the doctrines which relate to the **DIVINE NATURE**, you will most probably begin with such as concern the *existence*, the *unity*, and the other *attributes of God*, both natural and moral. These topics fall within the range of natural as well as of revealed theology. In your case, natural theology may, in this connexion, properly engage your inquiries. As text-books on this subject, I would recommend Butler's "Analogy," part i.; Paley's "Natural Theology," unaccompanied, however, with modern additions and improvements; and, especially, Chalmers's "Natural Theology." To these I would strongly counsel you to add Grotius "On the Truth of the Christian Religion," book i.; Pearson's "Exposition of the Creed," article i., part ii.; Doddridge's "Lectures," cliv.; Watson's "Institutes," part ii., chapters i.—viii.; Wesley's sermons, "On the Omnipresence of God," and on "The Unity of the Divine Being," Works, vol. vii., pp. 238—244, 264—



273,—with other passages noted in the Indexes to his Works, the Works of Fletcher, and the “Christian Library,” under the title of “God,” or of any Divine perfection concerning which your mind may be employed. I must also mention Wardlaw’s excellent remarks “On the Unity of God,” in the former part of the second of his “Discourses on the Principal Points of the Socinian Controversy.”\*

Concerning the doctrine of the *Trinity* of persons or subsistences in the *Unity* of the Godhead, as it stands at an equal distance from the Sabellian and Tritheistic errors, and as it may be viewed apart from the separate proofs which establish the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, though these also must be comprehended within the limits of the entire argument, you will receive great assistance from Jones’s “Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity,” chap. iii., iv.; Wesley’s sermon “On the Trinity,” Works, vol. vi., pp. 199—206, with other passages noted in the Index under the head of “Trinity;” Fletcher and Benson’s “Rational Vindication of the Catholic Faith,” chap. i., ii., Fletcher’s Works, vol. vi., pp. 325—340, with a paper in the same volume, pp. 556—563, entitled, “Remarks on the Trinity;” the passages marked in the Index to the “Christian Library” under the title of “Trinity;” Doddridge’s “Lectures,” clxi.—clxiii.; Wardlaw’s “Discourses on the Socinian Controversy,” discourse ii., latter part; and Watson’s “Institutes,” part ii., chap. viii., ix. If you have access to Waterland’s Works, as edited by the late Bishop Van Mildert, you will derive no small degree of instruction, on this and on other kindred subjects, from that powerful champion of the Athanasian faith.

On the *pre-existence of Christ*, you will find a beautiful series of arguments in Pearson’s “Exposition of the Creed,” article ii., part iii., subdivision i.; and in Watson’s “Institutes,” part ii., chap. x.; with which you may also consult Doddridge’s

\* It may be proper to observe, that, whenever the writer refers to this able production, his reference is made to the “fourth” and “much enlarged” edition, printed in 1828. The author has not only added an entirely new discourse, increasing the number from twelve to thirteen, but he has altered and improved the general arrangement, while he has also greatly augmented both the text and the notes.

“Lectures,” clv., clvi. :—on *Jesus Christ as the Angel-Jehovah* of the Old Testament, you may profitably read Watson’s “Institutes,” chap. xi. ; Doddridge’s “Lectures,” clvii. ; with Fletcher and Benson’s “Rational Vindication of the Catholic Faith,” chap. vi., Fletcher’s Works, vol. vi., pp. 366—381 ; “Socinianism Unscriptural,” part i., letters ii., iii., same Works, vol. vii., pp. 11—23 ; prosecuting for yourself the meditations which are thus opened before you :—and on the *supreme divinity of Christ*, as it is proved by the absolute and unqualified ascription to him of the names and titles, the attributes, the works, and the worship of the most high God, with a vast accumulation of incidental but most convincing proofs, you may select Pearson’s “Exposition of the Creed,” article ii., part iii., subdivision 2 ; Jones’s “Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity,” chap. i. ; Fletcher and Benson’s “Rational Vindication of the Catholic Faith,” chap. iii.—xiv. ; and “Socinianism Unscriptural,” part i., letters vi.—ix., with part 2, throughout ; Doddridge’s “Lectures,” clviii., clix. ; Wardlaw’s “Discourses on the Socinian Controversy,” Discourses iii.—vi. ; Watson’s “Institutes,” part ii., chap. xii.—xv. ; the passages marked in the Index to Wesley’s Works under the head of “Christ, Godhead of, asserted,” and in the Index to the “Christian Library,” under the head of “Essential Divinity of Christ ;” and, above all, Dr. John Pye Smith’s “Scriptural Testimony concerning the Person of the Messiah,” a new edition of which, it is hoped, will speedily be published.—While you are pursuing these investigations, your attention will be repeatedly turned to the doctrine of our Lord’s *eternal Sonship*, on which it is particularly desirable that you should acquire clear and scriptural views. In addition to what you will find on this subject in the discourses already noted, I would strongly recommend Watson’s “Remarks on the Eternal Sonship of Christ ; and the use of Reason in Matters of Revelation,” Works, vol. vii., pp. 1—86 ; the passages referred to in the Index to the “Christian Library,” under the head of “Divine and Eternal Sonship of Christ ;” not omitting Pearson’s elaborate disquisitions in his “Exposition of the Creed,” article i., part 3, and article ii., part 3, subdivi-

sions 3—5; nor forgetting the several pamphlets and papers to which, besides the one of Mr. Watson's, this sublime and important doctrine has given birth in our own Connexion within the last twenty years, and some of which are distinguished by no small degree of judgment and logical acuteness.\*

Proceeding in this course of inquiry, you will next contemplate the doctrines which relate to the *personality, divinity, and offices, of the Holy Spirit*. On these weighty subjects, you will do well to examine Pearson's "Exposition of the Creed," article viii.; Jones's "Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity," chap. ii.; Wardlaw's "Discourses on the Socinian Controversy," Discourses x.—xii.; Watson's "Institutes," part, ii., chap. xvii.; Doddridge's "Lectures," clx.; with the numerous and important passages which are scattered through the Works of Wesley, Fletcher, and the "Christian Library," and to which you may readily turn by consulting the several Indexes, under the heads of "Holy Ghost," "Spirit of God," "Spirit, Holy," "Grace," and "Manifestations spiritual." Nor would I overlook the rich and edifying sermons of the incomparable John Howe, on "The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit," which you may easily obtain in a separate form.

While you are thus searching for the scriptural doctrines concerning the Divine Nature, it will be very proper to take a survey of the great works of *creation* and *providence*. On the subject of *creation*, read Pearson's "Exposition of the Creed," article i., part 5; Wesley's sermon on "God's Approbation of his Works," vol. vi., pp. 206—215; and the passages mentioned in the Index to the "Christian Library," under the head of "Creation." On the subject of *providence*, I would recommend, as first helps to the studies which you will doubtless often employ on this pleasing theme, Pearson's "Exposition of the Creed," article i., part 4, and article vi., part 2, at the end; Wesley's sermon "On Divine Provi-

\* A republication of the Rev. Abraham Scott's well-argued pamphlet on this subject, would be a very acceptable present to young Divines.

dence," Works, vol. vi., pp. 313—325, with other passages noted in the Index under the head of "Providence;" the passages marked in the Index to the "Christian Library" under the same head, and many of which are of very great value; as also those which are distinguished by the same title in the Index to Fletcher's Works; and Watson's sermon on "God with us," Works, vol. ii., pp. 197—220.

But allow me to put you in mind of the reverential awe with which all subjects relating to the Divine Nature ought habitually to be treated. They are transcendently holy and venerable. I warn you against the indulgence of *philosophical pride*. Shall a poor worm of dust and death, "separated but yesterday from his mother earth, and to-day sinking again into her bosom,"—confined alike in the number and capacity of his faculties,—placed in an obscure corner of that magnificent temple of the universe, which spreads its courts far beyond the utmost reach of his vision, and shines with lamps of perpetual and undecaying brightness on which he cannot fix his gaze,—unacquainted indeed with the proper nature of objects the most common, and with the real causes of effects the most frequent and familiar,—shall such a creature as this presume that he can explore the hidden recesses of that august sanctuary in which the awful majesty of the Triune Deity resides,—that he can grasp the infinite, tell the mode of God's mysterious existence, measure his arm, estimate his wisdom, and dictate to his counsels? "Canst thou," then, "by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."—I caution you also against a *cold, heartless, speculative examination* of such themes. "My meditation of him," says the Psalmist, in one of his most sublime contemplations of the Divine glory, "shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord." Imitate this pattern. Let the loftiest conceptions which you may form of God be faithfully subordinated to the cultivation of holy reverence, humble love, and grateful communion. When your mind seeks

to apprehend Him, and perceives that all human limitations and restrictions pass away on every side,—when your trembling thought wanders through the immeasurable realms of space and duration,—when you feel that the glorious Being whom you strive to know, fills all immensity and all eternity, incomprehensible in his essence, and inscrutable in his ways, consign yourself to the care of his immense and eternal goodness, and, while encircled by the arms of his mercy, rejoice that you are at once lost and found in Him.

2. Of the scriptural doctrines which relate to MAN IN HIS PROBATIONARY CONDITION, I shall first mention the *image of God* in which he was originally created. This was undoubtedly seated in his spiritual nature, though it would be accompanied with those external ornaments and advantages which corresponded to its excellency. As God is emphatically said to be “Light” and “Love,” it may be asserted that his image in man consisted especially of enlightened and holy love; nor is this definition at variance, in the smallest degree, with the testimony of St. Paul, who in one place represents “knowledge,” and in another, “righteousness and true holiness,” as the peculiar characters of the Divine image. On this topic, read Wesley’s sermon on “The New Birth,” part i., Works, vol. vi., pp. 66, 67, with his sermon on “The End of Christ’s Coming,” part i., same volume, pp. 269—271, and his “Doctrine of Original Sin,” vol. ix., pp. 291—293; the passages marked in the Index to the “Christian Library,” under the head of “Image of God;” and Watson’s “Institutes,” part ii., chap. xviii., towards the beginning.

The *fall of man* as it is narrated in the Scriptures, and the consequent doctrine of *original sin*, or the transmission of hereditary guilt and depravity to all the natural progeny of the first sinning pair, are admirably explained, applied, and defended in Wesley’s great work, entitled, “The Doctrine of Original Sin, according to Scripture, Reason, and Experience,” Works, vol. ix., pp. 191—465,—a book which you ought closely to study as our standard publication on this subject; and in Fletcher’s “Appeal to Matter of Fact and

Common Sense," Works, vol. i., pp. 1—213, where the argument, though perhaps somewhat more confined in its range, is conducted with the strictest logical accuracy, as well as with the most zealous fidelity, and is wound up with uncommon force and energy. These venerated men deeply felt the importance of this mournful doctrine in connexion with the whole scheme of scriptural truth. You will not, I hope, neglect a careful inspection of the other parts of their writings, which are pointed out in the Indexes, under the titles of "Fall of Man," and "Original Sin," or "Corruption," in Wesley's Works, and of "Sin" in Fletcher's. See also the passages mentioned in the Index to the "Christian Library," under the heads of "Fall of Man," and "Sin;" Watson's "Institutes," part ii., chap. xviii.; and Doddridge's "Lectures," clxiv.—clxviii.

You are led by the subjects last-named to examine the doctrine concerning the *necessity of redemption*, or of that remedial provision by which man may be recovered from his ruined state: and the more you consider the folly of separating the mercy from the holiness and justice of God; the utter inefficacy of mere repentance, even if it were possible, as experience proves that it is not, for fallen man to soften the marble of his own heart into penitential tenderness; the inutility of all the services which he can perform, all the gifts which he can offer, and all the self-inflicted pains which he can endure, the more will you feel the necessity of such a redemption as God only can provide. On this point, you may profitably consult Watson's "Institutes," part ii., chap. xix., with Magee's "Discourses on the Scriptural Doctrines of Atonement and Sacrifice," and such parts of his "Illustrations and Explanatory Dissertations" as relate particularly to this subject.

But when you proceed to investigate the *nature of that redemption* which God has actually provided for our apostate race, by the gracious interposition of our Lord Jesus Christ, you enter at once upon the copious and ever-important theme of the Christian atonement, prefigured in ancient sacrifices, disclosed in typical events, constantly declared in prophecy,

and finally accomplished in the sacrificial death of Jesus. It will be right, in this stage of your investigations, to take a general survey of the *incarnation, sufferings, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus*, with his *session* at the right hand of the Father in mediatorial power and glory; and on these topics you will reap much fruit from an attentive perusal of that model for Christian theologians, Bishop Pearson, in his admirable "Exposition of the Creed," so often cited in the course of these observations, articles ii.—vi. When you endeavour more particularly to weigh the doctrine of atonement, and guard it against all the misrepresentations and objections to which it has been exposed, you will be greatly aided by Watson's "Institutes," part ii., chap. xx.—xxii.; Wardlaw's "Discourses on the Socinian Controversy," Discourses vii.—ix.; Dr. J. P. Smith's "Four Discourses on the Sacrifice, Priesthood, Atonement, and Redemption of Christ," now on the point of being republished; Doddridge's "Lectures," clxix., clxx.; and Magee's "Discourses and Dissertations on Atonement and Sacrifice," to the particular parts of which, so far as they would be more immediately applicable to your purpose, I should find it rather difficult and tedious to refer you, in consequence of the peculiar form and miscellaneous contents of that valuable work. By reading the two "Discourses," however, and reviewing the titles of the several "Illustrations and Explanatory Dissertations," as they occur in the table of contents, you will easily select what may be most suitable on this and on several other topics which now occupy your attention.—I deem it almost unnecessary to request that, on this vital point, you will diligently compare what may be interspersed through the Works of Wesley, Fletcher, and the "Christian Library," more particularly designated in the several Indexes under the title of "Redemption."

Several of these passages will conduct you to another branch of this subject,—the *extent of redemption*, as reaching in its merciful contrivances and purposes to all mankind. In support of this view concerning redemption, you may collect a large body of *presumptive arguments*, drawn, for example, from the universal ruin of the human race by sin,—the

Impartiality of God,—and the mighty efficacy of our Saviour's meritorious death;—of *direct arguments*, founded on the many declarations of Scripture in which every form of universality is employed to show that Christ "gave himself a ransom for *all*," that "he by the grace of God tasted death for *every man*," and that he is the "propitiation for the sins of the *whole world*;"—and of *incidental and auxiliary arguments*, such as may be deduced, for instance, from the benefits which are actually conferred, for the sake of Christ's "obedience unto death," on many who unhappily reject the offers of his saving mercy,—from the possibility, as St. Paul repeatedly and strongly intimates, of their "perishing for whom Christ died,"—and perhaps also from the final resurrection of all the dead, which is, in itself, an indubitable result of the provisions of redemption. But this doctrine is ably supported throughout the Works of Wesley and Fletcher. I particularly name Wesley's sermon on "Free Grace," vol. vii., pp. 373—386; "Predestination Calmly Considered," vol. x., pp. 204—259, with the other tracts on the same subject contained in that volume; and Fletcher's "Reply to the Principal Arguments by which the Calvinists and the Fatalists support the Doctrine of Absolute Necessity, being Remarks on the Rev. Mr. Toplady's 'Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity,'" vol. iv., pp. 1—74; with his "Answer to the Rev. Mr. Toplady's 'Vindication of the Decrees,'" same volume, pp. 75—188. To these you must add Watson's "Institutes," part ii., chap. xxv.—xxviii.; and Sellon's "Arguments against General Redemption considered."

*Repentance*, as it denotes "conviction of sin," with such effects as that conviction produces, claims your particular attention. I exhort you to collect and compare all the passages which occur in the Works of Mr. Wesley on this subject, as they are marked in the Index under the head of "Repentance." For a single specimen of the earnest and powerful manner in which that eminent man was accustomed to describe this indispensable duty, according to the brief definition above given, I would select the second part of his sermon on "The Way to the Kingdom," Works, vol. v., pp.



82—85; and, for a view of the relation which repentance bears, first to our justification, and afterwards to our sanctification, I trust that you will carefully study the clear and well-guarded distinctions which he introduces in the third part of his sermon on “The Scripture Way of Salvation,” vol. vi., pp. 48—52. You will also receive much instruction and profit from a diligent perusal of the passages which are interspersed, on this topic, through the Works of Fletcher, and the “Christian Library,” as they, also, are named in the Indexes under the head of “Repentance.” But allow me to advise you, in the first place, to examine the sentiments of Mr. Wesley himself,—an advice which I would be understood to repeat concerning the other subjects now immediately succeeding in the order of your inquiries.

You are thus led to study the vital doctrine of *faith* in our Lord Jesus Christ, that faith through which we obtain the personal and present enjoyment of the Christian salvation, and which is, “not only an assent to the whole Gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as *given for us*, and *living in us*; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as our ‘wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,’ or, in one word, our salvation.” As a pattern of the manner in which our revered Founder explained this great principle, I refer to the first part of his sermon on “Salvation by Faith,” from which the preceding definition is extracted, Works, vol. v., pp. 8, 9; but I also entreat you to weigh the several discourses and passages which are noted in the Index under the head of “Faith.” Consult, also, the passages marked by the same title in the Indexes to the Works of Fletcher and the “Christian Library.” And if you should occasionally discover any verbal or real discrepancies,—such as you would not easily detect in the genuine writings of Mr. Wesley,—compare these with candour and impartiality, submitting every thing to the test and authority of the Scriptures. I would also recommend a close examination of Watson’s remarks on this subject, “Institutes,” part ii., chap. xxiii.,

towards the end; and especially of Dr. Bunting's, in his sermon on "Justification by Faith," part iii., subdivision iii., pp. 16—18.\*—While you are employed in the consultation of these several references, and in your own meditations upon them, you will collect abundant proof that, while faith is the act of man, it is, in the power and grace which create its being and energy, pre-eminently and exclusively the "*gift of God.*" Generally, indeed, they who deny this misapprehend what we conceive to be the proper nature of saving faith. They appear to regard it simply as the assent or persuasion of the mind, yielded on satisfactory evidence, in the natural exercise of our own faculties; whereas the Scriptures constantly teach us, that its peculiar character lies in that trust of the heart which the Holy Spirit alone can produce within us, and which is accompanied with a vivid "evidence of things not seen."

Faith, as above defined, is immediately followed by its proper result,—*acceptance with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ; a subject to which you will turn your best attention. It is often termed *pardon*, or the *forgiveness of our sins*; an expression which directly leads our thoughts to that act of God, viewed as our gracious Sovereign, by which he remits all our past transgressions, removes our penal forfeiture, and receives us into his favour. More commonly, and especially in the writings of St. Paul, it is called *justification*, or that act of God, viewed as our righteous, and yet merciful, Judge, by which, for the sake of the satisfaction and merits of Christ, embraced and applied to the heart by faith, he discharges the criminal at his bar, and treats him as a just person, in full accordance with the untarnished holiness of his own nature, and the inviolable rectitude of his administrations. Sometimes it is denominated *adoption*, or that act of God, viewed as our compassionate Father, by which he accepts the returning prodigal, admits him to filial communion, and re-instates him in the possession of all the privileges of his house and family. For a succinct and clear exposition of this momentous subject, I would name Wesley's sermon on "Justification by Faith," Works, vol. v., pp. 53—64; "Minutes of the Methodist

\* Fourth edition, 1830.

Conferences," vol. i., pp. 4—7, or Wesley's Works, vol. viii., pp. 275—278, in which, also, the definition which is given of faith merits your particular regard ; Dr. Bunting's most lucid and able sermon on the same subject ; and Watson's "Institutes," part ii., chap. xxiii. Examine, also, whatever else you may find on this topic in Wesley's Works, particularly referred to in the Index under the head of "Justification ;" and likewise in the Works of Fletcher and the "Christian Library," noted in the Indexes under the same head. I would strongly advise you, farther, to consult the best writings of the Reformers concerning this point, so far as you can obtain access to them.

The *witness of the Holy Spirit*, which directly ascertains to us the blessing of our acceptance with God, and which, impressing on our hearts a sense of his paternal love towards us in Christ Jesus, creates within us that great element and principle of the new nature,—love to him in return,—is a topic on which you will assiduously employ your thoughts. To aid your meditations, I would especially urge a diligent and reiterated perusal of Mr. Wesley's two sermons on "The Witness of the Spirit," Works, vol. v., pp. 111—134, with the other passages marked in the Index under the title "Witness of the Spirit ;" to which you will find it very useful to add the passages referred to in the Index to the "Christian Library," under the head of "Spirit, Witness of the, in Believers ;" Watson's remarks and correspondence on the same subject, Works, vol. viii., pp. 240—285, first inserted in the Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine for January, March, May, and September, 1823 ; and his "Institutes," part ii., chap. xxiv. I once hoped that it would be in my power, in connexion with the subject now under consideration, to introduce the mention of another work, on which Mr. M'Nicoll had been occupied for several years, and which was expected to contain, not only a luminous exposition and able defence of this important doctrine, but also a host of testimonies in its support, gathered, with uncommon industry and perseverance, from the voluminous writings of Christian Divines in all ages, and especially of such as have flourished since the earliest

dawn of the Reformation from Popery. But, alas! the sudden and lamented death of that amiable and excellent man has prevented the accomplishment of his purpose. It is exceedingly desirable, however, that his valuable collections, though they may not be prepared and arranged exactly according to his own matured plan, should be presented, in some form, to the public.

*Regeneration*, or the *new birth*, constitutes that spiritual change which is wrought in the penitent believer by the agency of the Holy Ghost, while he graciously attests our acceptance with God. It is, therefore, received through the same act of faith that leads to our acceptance; but, in what we may humbly term the order of divine operation, it immediately follows the witness of the Spirit, and comprehends that inward "renewing" which, by means of his witness or testimony, he accomplishes in us, as the commencement of our Christian holiness. This doctrine is clearly explained, and strongly enforced, in Wesley's sermons, entitled, "The Marks of the New Birth," Works, vol. v., pp. 212—223, "The Great Privilege of those that are born of God," same vol., pp. 223—233, "The New Birth," vol. vi., pp. 65—77, and in the other parts of his writings, noted in the Index under the heads of "New Birth," and "Regeneration;" also in Fletcher's sermons on 1 Cor. v. 17, and John iii. 3, Works, vol. vii., pp. 231—254, with which you will compare his more copious discourse on the latter text in vol. v., pp. 271—308, and the other passages marked in the Index under the head of "Regeneration;" likewise in the discourses referred to in the Index to the "Christian Library," under the heads of "New Birth," and "Regeneration;" to which you may add, Watson's "Institutes," part ii., chap. xxiv., at the beginning, though that excellent writer has certainly fallen into an inadvertency, when, in his general arrangement of topics, he places regeneration before adoption, and, therefore, before the witness of the Spirit. I can attribute this inadvertency only to very excusable haste, because it is inconsistent with the views which that eminent theologian habitually entertained, and which he has ably advocated in other portions of his writings.

Associated with regeneration is what has been termed,

“*the witness of our own spirit*,” or that rational inference which, proceeding from a careful examination of the scriptural marks of the children of God, and a satisfactory persuasion that these marks are produced in us by the presence and agency of the Holy Spirit, confirms us in the grateful conclusion, that we are the children of God. On this subject, consult Wesley’s first discourse on “The Witness of the Spirit,” Works, vol. v., pp. 112—115, and his sermon on “The Witness of our own Spirit,” same vol., pp. 134—144. To these you may add all the practical works which describe the general spirit and character of Christian believers. See, for example, Mr. Wesley’s beautiful portraiture of a Christian, in his “Letter to the Rev. Dr. Middleton,” Works, vol. x., pp. 67—72; and the passages pointed out in the Index to the “Christian Library,” under the title of “Christians, real, described.” For a specimen of the way in which a newly-regenerate man may, by self-examination, pursue this testimony or conclusion of his own spirit, see Wesley’s “Journal,” Works, vol. i., pp. 161—163.

*Entire sanctification*, to which several passages in the works just mentioned will lead your attention, is understood to denote the extirpation of our remaining sin, and the mature growth of the regenerate life; or, in other words, that pure and perfect love of God, and of all others for his sake, which is now attainable through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and which is strictly consistent with the acknowledged infirmities of our present mortal condition. On this momentous topic, which has given rise to so many publications in the Methodist body, I must entreat that you will closely study our standard authorities. I particularly mention the “Minutes of the Methodist Conferences,” vol. i., pp. 7, 8, 25, 35—39, 80, 81, or Wesley’s Works, vol. viii., pp. 279, 285, 286, 293—298; Wesley’s sermon on “Christian Perfection,” Works, vol. vi., pp. 1—22; his “Plain Account of Christian Perfection,” with the four short tracts which immediately follow it, Works, vol. xi., pp. 366—454, and the other passages which are interspersed through his writings on this subject, and to which you will readily turn, by the aid of the Index, under the heads, “Perfect,” and “Perfection;” Fletcher’s “Last Check to

Antinomianism;" Works, vol. iv., pp. 198—495; with the remarks in vol. ii., pp. 69—74, 252—254, 586, 587; to all which you should add Benson's two sermons on "The Nature and Extent of Sanctification," and on "The Way of attaining Sanctification;" as also Watson's "Institutes," part ii., chap. xxix., at the beginning.

Passing on to an examination of the scriptural doctrine concerning the *final perseverance of the saints*, which, in opposition to many of our Calvinistic brethren, we hold to be strictly conditional, you will find ample materials for meditation in Wesley's "Predestination Calmly Considered," Works, vol. x., pp. 242—254; in his "Serious Thoughts upon the Perseverance of the Saints," same vol., pp. 284—298; with which you may also compare what occurs in volumes i., p. 427, iii., p. 211, and xiii., pp. 93, 94; for though these passages are extremely brief, they serve to cast some light on the views which Mr. Wesley entertained in connexion with this doctrine. You will also receive considerable assistance from Fletcher's "Equal Check," part iii., sections i.—iii., Works, vol. iii., pp. 209—245; with which you may read his pleasant rencontre with Mr. Berridge on this point, in his "Fifth Check," sect. v., vol. ii., pp. 263—267. To a person, indeed, who impartially weighs the solemn injunctions of the Scriptures to a faithful perseverance in the ways of God,—their impressive warnings against apostasy,—with the affecting descriptions and examples which they present to us as monitory signs and beacons, it must be apparent that, while a Christian may joyfully "endure to the end," he may also deeply and even finally fall. It is, therefore, an important duty, that, while you strive to promote in your Christian brethren the "furtherance and joy of faith," you should also exhort them to "take heed, lest there be in any of them an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

Most of the subjects which have just been mentioned are such as will occupy a conspicuous place in your regular pulpit-ministrations, while, as "servants of the most high God," you faithfully "shew unto" men "the way of salvation." I should be under some apprehension that the general terms in which I

have attempted to define them might exhibit them to you in too cold and naked a form, but that I draw relief and encouragement from the character of the works to which I have chiefly referred you. On this point, allow me earnestly to recommend, as models of clear, scriptural, and fervent preaching, the first series of Mr. Wesley's Sermons, published in four volumes, in the year 1771, but now contained in the fifth and part of the sixth volumes of his collected works, "and to which reference is made in the Trust-Deeds of the Methodist chapels, as constituting, with his Notes on the New Testament, the standard doctrines of the Methodist Connexion." There you have the instructions of a man who had obtained the knowledge of the truth after a long and painful search,—who, though he may sometimes waive the formality of exact definitions, and substitute vivid descriptions in their place, yet always supplies you with the most perspicuous and well-guarded views,—and who conveys the whole with such a warmth and energy, such an adaptation of each part to the peculiar cases of his readers, and with applications so pointed and urgent, as have justly merited for him the title which he has sometimes received, as "the great Divine of religious experience." Depend upon it that they who disparage him have not diligently perused his excellent writings, and that they who have most frequently and diligently studied them, relish them best. I exhort you to cultivate an intimate acquaintance with them, as a duty; I invite you to do it, as an inestimable privilege.

3. You now proceed to an investigation of the scriptural doctrines which relate to the various particulars concerning our FUTURE DESTINATION. The first of these has respect to the *separate state* of conscious existence into which the soul immediately passes on its departure from the body, and in which it remains until the final resurrection of the dead. On this topic, you may advantageously consult Doddridge's "Lectures," ccix., and Campbell's "Preliminary Dissertations" to his Translation of the Gospels, dissertation vi., part ii.; or Watson's "Institutes," part ii., chap. xxix., in which you have the substance of Campbell's arguments and remarks.

I counsel you also to read and compare the beautiful and forcible passages on this branch of your inquiries, which you will find in Wesley's sermons on "The Good Steward," Works, vol. vi., pp. 140—143; on "Human Life a Dream," vol. vii., pp. 318—325; "On Faith," same vol., pp. 326—335; and on "The Trouble and Rest of Good Men," same vol., pp. 371, 372; to which you may add the brief but important observations which occur in vol. xiii., pp. 24, 25, 112. You will likewise be able to glean several useful sentiments from some of the passages which are pointed out in the Index to the "Christian Library," under the title of "Soul." In conjunction with the whole series of your present meditations, I particularly name the Extract from Bonnet's "Conjectures concerning the Nature of Future Happiness," inserted in the same excellent compilation, vol. xxx., pp. 69—88. I should also deem it inexcusable if I did not recommend a judicious and careful perusal of Watts's beautiful treatise on "Death and Heaven," discourse ii., on "Separate Spirits made Perfect, with an Account of the Rich Variety of their Employments and Pleasures." As this topic is often occasionally introduced, where it is not largely pursued, I farther advise you to note the incidental allusions to it which may arise in your general course of reading.

The doctrine which follows next, in the proper order of your inquiries, has relation to the future "*resurrection of the dead*, both of the just and unjust;" a doctrine which teaches us that the inanimate and wasted body shall be raised by the almighty and miraculous power of God; so that, retaining all that constitutes its real identity, and obtaining a re-union with the unbodied spirit, it shall become eternally capable of unknown happiness or misery. In my references on this topic, I must proceed on the principle of strict selection. See, then, Pearson's "Exposition of the Creed," article xi.; Doddridge's "Lectures," ccxvi., ccxvii.; Wesley's sermon on "The Resurrection of the Dead," chiefly abridged from Calamy, Works, vol. vii., pp. 474—485, with which you may compare the very short but comprehensive description which occurs in his sermon on "the Great Assize," vol. v.,



p. 173; the passages noted in the Index to the "Christian Library," under the head, "Resurrection of the Body;" Watts's "Death and Heaven," discourse i., on "the Conquest over Death;" Watson's "Institutes," part ii., chap. xxix., at the end, in which what has been termed the "germ-system" is concisely but, as I think, very clearly refuted; and his sermon on "The Resurrection of the Human Body," Works, vol. ii., pp. 383—397.

And thus you are conducted to an examination of the solemn doctrine concerning the *general judgment*: for, when we are raised from the dead, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Study, on this subject, Pearson's "Exposition of the Creed," article vii.; Wesley's incomparable sermon on "The Great Assize," Works, vol. v., pp. 171—185; that part of his sermon on "The Good Steward," which relates to this topic, vol. vi., pp. 143—147; his sermon on "The Discoveries of Faith," vol. vii., pp. 234, 235; the passages referred to in the "Christian Library," under the head of "Judgment, Final;" Benson's sermons "On the Second Coming of Christ," and "The Character of those who shall be condemned by Christ at his Coming;" with Fletcher's "Answer to the Rev. Mr. Toplady's 'Vindication of the Decrees,'" sect. vii., Works, vol. iv., pp. 137—154; and his, or rather Benson's, discourse on the proposition, "That Christ is the Universal Judge," chap. x., in the "Rational Vindication of the Catholic Faith," vol. vi., pp. 420—443.

Finally, you will employ your researches on the doctrine which relates to the *nature and duration of future rewards and punishments*. Here you will particularly attend to the duration of future punishments, and will undoubtedly advert, in your own thoughts, to the claims of God's righteous government; to the utter impossibility that they who have suffered the privation of all good,—plunged themselves into the abyss of all evil,—and, by their final impenitence and unbelief, precluded the ample provisions of redemption, should

ever acquire the forfeited attainments of pardon, holiness, and happiness; and to the identity of terms expressive of uninterrupted perpetuity, in which the Scriptures declare the illimitable duration of future happiness, which is not disputed, and the equally illimitable duration of future misery, which, therefore, ought not to be disputed. On this branch of the subject, I refer you to Horbery on "Future Punishment;" Benson's powerful sermons on "The Future Misery of the Wicked;" Isaac's "Universal Restoration Refuted;" Wesley's sermon, "Of Hell," Works, vol. vi., pp. 389, 390; and Doddridge's "Lectures," ccxxi.—ccxxiii., with the first two sections of ccxxiv. On the subject generally, I would recommend Pearson's "Exposition of the Creed," article xii.; Wesley's sermon, "On Eternity," Works, vol. vi., pp. 193, 194, the whole of his sermon, "Of Hell," already mentioned, with other passages in his writings, noted in the Index, under the titles of "Heaven," and "Hell;" discourses in the "Christian Library," distinguished in the Index by the same titles; and such parts of the works above-cited as admit of a comprehensive application to the nature as well as the duration of future joy and torment.

I am very sensible that the references, under each of the preceding topics of Christian doctrine, might be greatly multiplied and enlarged. The few which I have given may, however, be sufficient to assist your meditations in the earlier stage of your theological studies. Afterwards, you can carry out your reading to any extent which you will judge proper. If, on casting your eye over these pages, you should wonder that I have not more frequently produced the honoured names of our older Divines, you will please to consider how large a portion of their writings is embodied in Mr. Wesley's "Christian Library," the value of which does not appear to be even yet duly estimated. When I refer you to that admirable collection of old divinity, I refer you to them; and I cannot but take this opportunity of exhorting you to cultivate a growing acquaintance with such authors, that your mind may be fraught with a truly scriptural and manly theology. Allow me farther to advise you to procure as many of the genuine

works of our British Reformers as you conveniently can ; and if the time should arrive when some well-qualified person shall furnish us with a uniform and uncurtailed edition of them, strive, if possible, to obtain a copy of that edition. Read the Homilies, Articles, and Liturgy of the Church of England, which our fathers so constantly cited, and to which we believe that our doctrines are, in the main, strictly conformable. To the excellent works on different branches of theology which have lately been published by the Ministers of our own body, I have referred but sparingly. They are generally employed in the confirmation, defence, and practical application of our long-tryed principles, rather than in the communication of what is professedly new ; and they will profitably occupy a share of your attention at a future period of your studies. Nor have I distinctly and prominently named the valuable Magazine, which is the official periodical of our Connexion ; for I was apprehensive that, if I attempted to cull all that might be suitable to my purpose from the miscellaneous contents of its several volumes, and to mark them by clear and intelligible references, I should stray far beyond the limits to which I think it necessary to confine this epistolary pamphlet. Yet I trust that, by the help of the Indexes, which, of late years especially, are very copious and complete, you will embrace every favourable opportunity of inspecting that rich repository of evangelical truth. I scarcely need add that I would also recommend a similar use of Dr. Adam Clarke's " Commentary," and of Mr. Watson's unfinished but beautiful " Exposition," both of which are accompanied with excellent Indexes, and which, while they deserve to be read in order, will also abundantly repay a frequent consultation for the illustration and support of particular Christian doctrines.

One object which I have sincerely contemplated in the choice of my references is, to encourage an intimacy with such writers as most directly and honestly guide us to the unpolluted sources of inspired wisdom. I cannot too often or too earnestly remind you, that you must draw your system of Christian theology from the Scriptures, and from the Scrip-

tures only. Leave others to admire those metaphysical Divines, who, even on the great and acknowledged themes of revelation, would first explore the vain resources of human reason, and then appeal to Scripture, if indeed they appeal to it at all, for the support of their own pre-conceived theories; and let your continual application be "to the law and to the testimony." Believing, on the most satisfactory evidence, that the Bible is the word of God, searching the depths of its meaning with all the diligence and impartiality in your power, and gratefully using the helps which your able predecessors in this study have so plentifully provided, learn to receive the instructions of the Most High with meekness, docility, and faith. Like our venerable Founder, be eminently "a man of one book." Ponder, and pray that you may exemplify, the weighty declaration of St. James, "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

III. PREPARATORY to a survey of the DUTIES OF CHRISTIANITY, it may not be amiss for you to study a few select works on the elements of moral philosophy. I would more particularly name Paley's "Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy," which, though it advances some points of a doubtful character and tendency, contains, as you might expect in the production of such a writer, a large mass of useful information, clearly propounded and judiciously arranged. But with Paley I advise you to read Gisborne's work on the same subject, in which you will find the unwary suggestions of the former ably examined and corrected. To these you will do well to add Wardlaw's valuable publication, entitled "Christian Ethics," Groves's "System of Moral Philosophy," and Doddridge's "Lectures," lx.—c.

Your particular inquiry, however, is concerning the duties of Christianity as they are taught in the holy Scriptures. It is, therefore, necessary that you fix the great rule of moral obligation accordingly. That simple and authoritative rule is, the will of God as he has himself discovered it to us in his own inspired

word. When I say, then, that we ought to trace the comprehensive system of practical duty as it is forcibly and fully presented to us in the sacred pages, without the stiffness of laboured definitions and formal arrangements, and that we ought to connect the whole with the inward principle from which it springs, it may be presumed that I suggest a suitable general direction, capable of a very extensive application. It appears desirable, however, that if the Scriptures themselves furnish us with a directory somewhat briefer and more definite, we should avail ourselves of its assistance, and use it as a large scheme or outline, to which we may refer the manifold lessons discoverable in every part of their sacred records.

In pursuance of this object, I would first direct your attention to that grand scheme which has received the solemn sanction of our Lord, and which resolves all scriptural morality into two great principles,—the LOVE OF GOD, and the LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR. “Master,” said one of the Scribes, “which is the first commandment of all?” or, as it is elsewhere expressed, “which is the great commandment in the law?” and Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. There is none other commandment greater than these.” All, then, that is inconsistent with these spiritual and sublime precepts, is at variance with the morality of God’s holy word; and all that is consonant with them ought to be cultivated and pursued as the will of God concerning us. To this test let every one, who applauds his exemplary observance of moral duty, bring his own heart and life. Can he endure the trial? Is there no deviation? no utter failure?

Next, you may select the ten commandments, in which these two cardinal precepts are successively displayed in an enumeration of the DUTIES WHICH WE OWE TO GOD AND TO MAN. They are justly regarded as an admirable compendium of

moral duties, applicable to the Christian, as fully as to the Mosaic, dispensation. Carefully weigh them along with our Lord's exposition of their spirituality and extent, in his sermon on the mount: read, also, the extract from Bishop Hopkins's "Exposition of the Ten Commandments," in the "Christian Library," vol. xxix., pp. 367—457; Bishop Ken's discourse on the same, in his "Exposition of the Church Catechism," also inserted in the "Christian Library," vol. xiii., pp. 361—387; and Mr. Wesley's discourses on the sermon on the mount, Works, vol. v., pp. 247—433. I refer to these works in the present connexion, because it is possible that you may choose the ten commandments as the outline of your whole moral system. You will derive many advantages from this plan, especially as you will find that it is adopted in the most approved Protestant catechisms, and in the best practical writings of our older Divines. It is, also, in perfect accordance with the comprehensive principles mentioned in the preceding paragraph, and with the general scheme which I have yet to introduce. You will please to observe this circumstance, and trace the wonderful harmony which pervades the instructions of Scripture, in duty as well as in doctrine.

The question now is, whether the writings of the Apostles, which contain the last and fullest disclosure of God's will to man, supply us with a general sketch of our Christian duties, entirely agreeable to those above mentioned, but somewhat more systematically and distinctly arranged. Undoubtedly they do. I select, for this purpose, a passage from St. Paul's Epistle to Titus, which, by the way, occurs in a letter of directions addressed to a young evangelist, and which, according to the almost unanimous consent of interpreters, exhibits to us precisely such a sketch as that which we are seeking. If you examine it in its connexion, you will also perceive that it is intended as a summary of the several obligations on which the Apostle there expatiates, and as a resolution of them all into the principles of one grand scheme:—"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live SOBERLY,"—observing the DUTIES WHICH WE OWE TO OUR-

SELVES,—“**RIGHTEOUSLY,**”—performing the **DUTIES WHICH WE OWE TO ALL MANKIND,**—“and **GODLY,**”—discharging the **DUTIES WHICH WE OWE TO GOD,**—“in this present world; looking,”—amidst all these Christian offices,—“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.” I would recommend you to adopt this classification of evangelical duties, and also to follow the order in which the Apostle has arranged them.

1. Christian morality comprehends **SOBRIETY**, in the largest acceptance of that term, or the **DUTIES WHICH WE OWE TO OURSELVES**:—such as the careful *preservation of life*, in opposition to the direct means of self-destruction, and the indirect means by which life may be injured and shortened, with the constant remembrance, however, that when God, the great Proprietor of all, requires us to resign health or life for his sake, we are cheerfully to obey;—the proper *regulation of our bodily appetites, or temperance*, in the most extensive application of the word, as it stands opposed, especially, to intemperance, incontinence, and sloth;—the rigorous *control of our spiritual desires, passions, and affections*, usually designated *moderation*, and particularly embracing *humility*, in opposition to pride, *meekness*, in opposition to anger, *contentment with our lot*, in opposition to avarice, and *fortitude*, in opposition to the inordinate love of ease and life; to which you may add *patience* under all the afflictions, privations, and painful duties which may be allotted to us;—with a faithful *consecration of life to its right objects*, the duties of our calling, the maintenance of holy principle, and a constant preparation for immortality. See the “Christian Library,” vol. xii., pp. 81—107.

2. But Christian morality also comprehends “**RIGHTEOUSNESS,**” or, the **DUTIES WHICH WE OWE TO ALL MANKIND**, summed up in our Saviour’s golden rule, “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.” It is customary

to reduce this class of duties to three particulars,—*justice*, *benignity*, and *truth*. *Justice* is subdivided into *ethical*, which “considers all mankind as on a level,” and renders every thing that is due to the persons, the property, the virtue, and the reputation of others;—*economical*, which regards human beings “as associated into families,” and comprises the several duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, with other domestic relations more distant and remote;—and *political*, which views men “as united into public states,” or communities, and teaches the peculiar duties of magistrates, (including sovereigns, and the several degrees of subordinate functionaries,) and subjects. *Benignity*, or *love*, may be contemplated under the several aspects of *universal benevolence*, the *fraternal charity of Christians*, *patriotism*, *natural affection*, *friendship*, *hospitality*, *humanity*, *gratitude*, *clemency*, *mercy*, and a *prompt disposition to forgive*. *Truth*, as opposed to every species of falsehood, may be viewed as attendant on our *words*, which ought to be simple and sincere;—on our *actions*, which ought never, by design, to convey wrong impressions, or create delusive expectations;—and on our *purposes*, which ought to be habitually formed under a deep conviction of that solemn truth, “Thou God seest me!” Consult, on these topics, the “Christian Library,” vol. xii., pp. 107—177; and Watson’s “Institutes,” part iii., chap. iv.

3. To crown the whole, Christian morality comprehends “GODLINESS,” or the DUTIES WHICH WE OWE TO GOD. I may say, in one word, that these require the entire and uninterrupted consecration of all that we have and are to his glory; but I would more particularly name the habitual *reverence* which is due to him in our thoughts, words, and deeds;—uncomplaining *submission to his will*, amidst the various labours, privations, and sufferings which we may be called to endure;—supreme and constant *love to him*, displaying itself in every appropriate exercise;—unshaken *trust* in his providence and grace;—*devotional service*, employed in every form of prayer and praise;—*practical obedience*, attending to a careful observance of the institutions which God



has been pleased to appoint, a cautious abstinence from the evils which he has prohibited, and a cheerful performance of the works which he has enjoined;—with an ardent *hope* of our personal share in the joys of his heavenly presence, when “that which is perfect” shall “come,” and “that which is in part shall be done away.” On these points, read the “Christian Library,” vol. xii., pp. 41—81; and Watson’s “Institutes,” part iii., chapters ii., iii., though the latter will fall more properly under your consideration when you separately examine the divine institution of the Lord’s day.\*

While you thus draw the general outline of your studies in Christian morality from the Holy Scriptures, allow me to remind you that it is also of the highest consequence for you to seek the exposition and illustration of each particular part in the same sacred source. There the whole system shines in its native glory, and lives through all the depths of its own peculiar discoveries and instructions. The principles, the precepts, the striking representations and descriptions, with the examples which are interspersed through the several divisions of that holy book, possess a clearness, an authority, and a force, to which nothing human can possibly be compared. Guided by its lessons, you see that Christian duty is not the cold and formal result of certain external prescriptions and restraints, but that it is the genuine and spontaneous growth of a “Divine nature” planted within us,—the practical exhibition of “faith, hope, and charity,”—the energy of God in man. For this reason, it must always be viewed in its inseparable union with that inward “transformation” which is accomplished by “the renewing of our mind,” and by which alone we can “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” If we would “walk in the Spirit,” pursuing a course of circumspect obedience, by his assistance, and according to his inspired direc-

\* In this very brief sketch of Christian morals, the writer gratefully acknowledges his obligations to the hints which are suggested in Dr. Campbell’s posthumous “Lectures on Systematic Theology,” lecture iv. For a more copious detail of all our practical duties, he would particularly recommend Baxter’s “Christian Directory.”

tions, we must first “live in the Spirit,” by the infusion of that new and heavenly life which He only can bestow. Habitually, then, connect principle with practice; examine Christian duty as it is presented to you in Scripture; and receive it in all its compass, particularity, and strength.

I have inserted but few references under this head of Christian duty, because I did not wish to perplex or bewilder you in the first formation of your moral scheme. Permit me, however, to add that the study of practical divinity ought to form a regular and considerable portion of your daily employment. For this purpose, as well as for the attainment of right apprehensions concerning doctrinal truth, read the Scriptures, and with them such authors as most faithfully explain and apply their infallible rules of action. I have often mentioned the “Christian Library” in conjunction with the topics which have already passed under our review; but I also exhort you to peruse its contents, in due order, as a help to the Christian life. It professes to consist of “Extracts from, and Abridgments of, the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity which” had then “been published in the English Tongue;” nor is its profession vain. Generally, extracts and abridgments are unsatisfactory; but not when they are made by a person of Mr. Wesley’s judgment and ability. He knew the value of the work which he had compiled; and, in the early Minutes, while he directed his Preachers to read the whole collection, he particularly recommended its “closely practical parts” as a select portion of their morning and evening exercises.\* To this you may add other productions of former Divines,† which are not contained in it,—the practical Works of Wesley and Fletcher,—and such publications of more modern times as appear to be the best fitted to promote piety, devotion, and exemplary obedience.

But suffer me farther to importune that, by a vigilant

\* See “Minutes of the Methodist Conference,” vol. i., p. 16.

† If the writer might select two from such a host of worthies, he would name the justly celebrated Richard Baxter, together with that masterly theologian and truly practical author, John Howe.

attention to your own spirit and conduct, you will be a pattern of that practical religion which it is your business to learn and to teach. "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation," or behaviour, "in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Often bring yourself to the test of close self-scrutiny, and inquire whether you "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things,"—whether, amidst your peculiar helps and advantages, you are making proficiency in the several virtues of a holy and consistent deportment. Happy is it, when a Preacher of Christianity expounds his doctrine in his conduct,—and when, if his hearers should be at a loss concerning any part of the truth which his lips deliver, they can inspect his tempers and life, where they may see that truth rising into its just proportions, and feel it impressing itself upon the heart by its own living authority. Then, if they refuse to embrace it, they are indeed "without excuse."

Forgive me if, at the risk of tedious, and perhaps misplaced exhortation, I subjoin another counsel: Be a practical Preacher. Declare the way of salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, with all possible plainness and simplicity; but remember that "this is a faithful saying, and these things," as St. Paul expresses himself to Titus, "I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Is not this an age in which the leaven of Antinomianism spreads much farther than we are sometimes apt to imagine, and in which it is eminently needful to enforce the duties of the Gospel, as combined with its faith and privileges? Will you seek some portion of the spirit of St. James? Can you "cry aloud and spare not," even though you should have to show God's "people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins?" This may not be the way to popularity. Popularity! what is that to you? Do you "seek to please men,"—except it be for their "good to edification?" Be assured that if you do,—if you make this your motive and aim,—you are not "the servant of Christ." Man may applaud; but He will disclaim you. No; the fidelity which I have recommended will probably be the way to trial and reproach, even

among professed Christians: but it is the way which Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists have trod. Look around you. See how often ostentatious claims to extraordinary piety are deemed compatible with the absence of justice, mercy, and an humble walk with God. Is it not, then, indispensably necessary that every Christian teacher should enforce our practical obligations, with all the tenderness of charity, and all the urgency of fearless zeal? Yes; or he awfully fails in the discharge of his duty. Shun not, therefore, to vindicate all the claims of God, and to testify, without any timid apprehension of consequences, that they in vain profess to receive Christ as their Saviour, who do not obey him as their Lord.

IV. THE INSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY, which you now proceed to review, may be advantageously contemplated in association with its liberal and diffusive character. Paganism confined its small portion of light,—if indeed that very light was not darkness,—to the initiated few. Judaism was also extremely partial in its range. Impeded by its peculiar restrictions, and chilled by the repulsive spirit which Pharisaical pride had infused into its system, it formed no regular plans for an aggressive movement on the world,—sent forth no devoted Missionaries,—and, in a word, employed no mighty effort to recover man's revolted and rebellious race to God. But Christianity possesses a far different character. Its rich provisions are intended for the whole human family, and it hastens to spread its healing light over the wide hemisphere of man. Breathing a spirit of pure and unrestrained charity, it goes forth into the wilderness, "seeking" that it may "save the lost,"—following that it may find every stray sheep of Adam's flock, and restore it to the fold of God. Accordingly, it has impressed its own benign image on its various institutions.

Of these, I first select the *Church*. When Christianity pursues its proper objects, and achieves its wonted triumphs, it gives rise to peculiar societies or communities, which profess to receive its doctrines, embrace its privileges, and submit to its laws. Whether these are regarded as subsisting in particular

places, or as scattered through the earth, and forming collectively the universal fraternity of Christians ; whether they are members of that fraternity by an outward profession only, or by a vital union with Christ, the living Head of his true people, they are usually designated by the common name of “the Church,” though, alas ! it may too often be said, “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” To obtain a comprehensive view of what strictly relates to the Church, it will be necessary to bestow a separate consideration on its *officers*, extraordinary and ordinary, with their several powers, functions, and duties ;—on its *members*, as admitted to its communion, protected in the enjoyment of their scriptural immunities and rights, and sometimes excluded in the maintenance of righteous discipline ; and on its *ordinances*, appointed for the defence and advancement of its peculiar objects. Some things, which might perhaps be classed under the last subdivision, are of so much consequence that they will merit a distinct examination. Concerning the institution of the Church generally, I refer you to Wesley’s sermon, “Of the Church,” Works, vol. vi., pp. 392—401 ; his sermon, “On Schism,” same vol., pp. 401—410, with which you will find it useful to compare the other passages marked in the Index under the title of “Church ;” and Watson’s “Institutes,” part. iv., chap. i. You will also obtain many valuable hints from Doddridge’s “Lectures,” excv.—excvii. ; and from the passages pointed out in the Index to the “Christian Library,” under the head of “Church.”

From this view of the Church, you will be naturally led to consider the number, nature, and intention of the *Christian Sacraments*. They are reduced by all Protestant Churches to two,—Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, the one initiatory, the other restoring and confirmatory ; and they are regarded as *signs* of the grace of God, and *seals* of its promised communication. On this subject, you will collect what is suitable to your purpose from the Works of Mr. Wesley and the “Christian Library,” as you are directed to the proper passages in the respective Indexes, under the word “Sacrament.” But I recommend you also attentively to read Watson’s

“Institutes,” part iv., chap. ii. My reference now is more especially to the number of the Sacraments, two only, in opposition to the Romanists’ doctrine of seven, and to their general force and efficacy. But it is necessary to examine them particularly and separately, and to guard their scriptural institution against human abuses.

*Baptism* is the initiatory sacrament, by which we enter into visible communion with the church of Christ, and into covenant with God. Endless disputes have arisen concerning its *nature*, its *subjects*, and its *mode of administration*, all of which demand a careful and impartial examination. You will be amply repaid, in your inquiries on this subject, by a diligent perusal of Mr. Wesley’s “Treatise on Baptism,” Works, vol. x., pp. 188—201, compared with the other passages which are marked in the Index, under the term “Baptism;” Doddridge’s “Lectures,” cc.—ccv.; and Watson’s “Institutes,” part iv., chap. iii., where this sacrament is considered, according to the particulars above suggested, in its nature, its subjects, and its mode, and is treated with equal perspicuity and force of argument. Consult also the passages noted in the Index to the “Christian Library,” under the head of “Baptism,” with two short but valuable paragraphs in Fletcher’s “Appal,” part v., Works, vol. i., pp. 143, 144. The above works will supply you with clear general views of this Christian institution, and will prepare you to pursue those views more minutely and extensively, as circumstances may afterwards require.

You are now led to an examination of the second Christian sacrament,—the *Lord’s Supper*, that all-important ordinance, which was instituted with so much affecting solemnity by our Saviour, and which is designed to “show his death till he come.” It is a gracious means, by which the penitent believer is restored, comforted, and confirmed; and it ought to be studied, as well as attended, with devout and grateful sentiments. I particularly recommend to you the Extract from Bishop Patrick’s “Christian Sacrifice,” inserted in the “Christian Library,” vol. xvii., pp. 265—425, with which I advise you to read and compare the other passages which are marked

in the Index, under the title of "Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," as also the remarks which are scattered, on this subject, through the Works of Mr. Wesley, and noted in the Index under the head of "Lord's Supper." To these you will find it very useful to join Dr. Adam Clarke's elaborate and learned tract on the "Eucharist;" Watson's "Institutes," part iv., chap. iv.; and Doddridge's "Lectures," ccvi.—ccviii. In your devotional and practical reading you will often meet with "Sacramental Meditations and Exercises." Some of these are extremely valuable,—calculated at once to enlighten the mind with truth, and to embue the heart with the richest tincture of holy affections.

It may not be necessary, in this place, to introduce a separate mention of more than one other Institution,—the *Christian Sabbath*. Two things will especially occupy your attention on this topic,—the *perpetual obligation* of the Sabbath, as originally appointed, and afterwards confirmed in successive injunctions by Almighty God,—and the *transfer of its observance*, under the Christian dispensation, from the seventh to the first day of the week. On these, and on all other subjects relating to this sacred and benign institution, you will receive very satisfactory information from the discourses pointed out in the Index to the "Christian Library," under the word "Sabbath;" from Watson's "Institutes," part iii., chap. iii.; from Holden "On the Sabbath," whom Mr. Watson largely cites; from Doddridge's "Lectures," ccviii., ccix.; and from Bishop Daniel Wilson's "Lectures on the Sabbath." As a specimen of the manner in which Mr. Wesley enforced the sanctity of the Sabbath, see his "Word to a Sabbath-Breaker," Works, vol. xi., 164—166, with a letter in vol. xiii., p. 125.—On the subject of religious ordinances generally, read his perspicuous and well-argued sermon on "The Means of Grace," vol. v., pp. 185—201.—Consult also Baxter's "Christian Directory," part iii., entitled, "Christian Ecclesiastics, or Church Duties."

While you are thus engaged in surveying the Institutions of Christianity, you will feel it to be particularly desirable that you should form an intimate acquaintance with the

*History and Constitution of Methodism*, trying its entire system by the light of the Scriptures and of Christian antiquity. For a review of the *History of Methodism*, it may be proper to fix your attention, in regular order and succession, on its *rise*, its *progress*, and its *present state*. As an excellent introduction to this study, I would recommend Watson's "Life of Wesley." You will then proceed, with some degree of preparation, to a diligent perusal of Mr. Wesley's own Journals; of his "Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion;" his "Plain Account of the People called Methodists," with several of his controversial tracts, which I need not here enumerate; and of his extensive correspondence, which appears to have been but little consulted by his different biographers, but which certainly supplies many important facts and hints in connexion with his personal history, and the most authentic records of Methodism. To these you will add, as opportunity serves, such other memorials of our venerable Founder, of his coadjutors and successors, and of the several operations and aspects by which the great work itself has been distinguished in the different periods of its existence, as may give you a comprehensive and accurate knowledge of this extraordinary chapter in ecclesiastical history. By these means you will be properly qualified to investigate the peculiar *constitution of Methodism*. It may be truly said that this has nothing to fear from the most rigorous scrutiny. Weigh it in all its parts. Mark the reason and design of each appointment which has received its sanction. Lose not sight of its mild, charitable, and catholic spirit; and form an impartial estimate of the whole. "Many," says Hooker, "talk of the truth, which never sounded the depth from whence it springeth; and therefore when they are led thereunto, they are soon weary, as men drawn from those beaten paths wherewith they have been inured."\* Expose not yourself to this just censure. Study the "Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies," and search for yourself through the volumes of the Conference-

\* "Ecclesiastical Polity," book i., section 1. The writer cannot but express his hope that this inimitable work will, at a proper period, engage a due share of the student's attention.



Minutes, which may be regarded as our "Statutes at Large." "But might you not satisfy yourself with certain 'Digests' which have been published?" Yes; if you wish to be a sciolist in these matters. "Had you not better wait, however, for an authorized system of codification?" Speaking in my private capacity, as I wish you to understand that I do throughout this letter, I would say, Gratefully use every help which may be provided for you; but wait for nothing, while the purest sources of information are already placed within your reach. My own judgment is, that if all the particulars relating to our constitution were faithfully extracted from the volumes of Minutes,—arranged according to the order of the years in which they were severally enacted, just indeed as they occur in the Minutes themselves,—and accompanied with short notes and an analytical index, carefully prepared under the direction of the Conference, all of which might be brought within the compass of two octavo volumes,—it would be a valuable present, especially to our younger Preachers. Future explanations and improvements, which might be officially introduced in the course of circumstances and events, by the authority of the Conference, could easily be subjoined on the same plan in an additional volume. It is with the most unaffected deference to the opinions of others that I venture to throw out this suggestion. A junior Preacher, who does not shrink from a trifling amount of labour, and who is not an idolater of clean and undisfigured books, may, in the mean time, mark the suitable passages in his own volumes of Minutes, connect such as relate to the same subjects by appropriate references and notes, frame a brief but well-arranged manuscript index, and thus prepare a useful abstract for himself. I only add, on this subject, that for a defence of the old constitution of Methodism against the attacks by which it has more recently been assailed, you will derive no small amount of instruction and assistance from the able pamphlets which have issued from the pens of Messrs. Beecham,\* Vevers, and others, within the last few years.

\* The title of Mr. Beecham's pamphlet is, "An Essay on the Constitution of Wesleyan Methodism." At present, it is out of print. But it is earnestly

Many appear to regard the institutions of the Christian church with comparative indifference, as if they supplied materials for a dry and unprofitable study only, and might be pretermitted with advantage rather than with loss. How little are such persons acquainted with their true origin, character, and use ! Receiving their appointment from “the only wise God our Saviour,” they bear the impress of his sanctity and love, and largely contribute to the accomplishment of his most merciful designs. No society on earth is comparable to a well-regulated Christian community, supplied with its proper officers, governed by its wholesome laws and ordinances, adorned with the spiritual glory of the Lord, and replenished with his peace. It is the kingdom of God visibly displayed. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. The Lord hath chosen Zion ; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever : here will I dwell ; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision : I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation : and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.” “Peace,” then, “be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces.” Enter into these sentiments, as they forcibly apply to the Christian sanctuary with its manifold institutions ; and never suppose that your time is wasted or misemployed while you are surveying the several parts of that goodly fabric which the hands of God have raised, and which they shall also defend.—Allow me to suggest one practical hint, on which, if this were the right place, I would gladly enlarge. When you are called to perform the ordinary services of your station, according to the general institutions of the Christian church, and especially when you may hereafter have occasion to administer the solemn ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper, be solicitous to maintain a spirit of circumspection, gravity, and decorum. If these were merely the contrivances of man, it would be better to omit them entirely than to perform them with slovenly unconcern ;

hoped that its esteemed author will be induced to prepare another edition, for the sake, especially, of our younger Preachers.

but if they are indeed, as you acknowledge that they are, the sacred appointments of the most high God, how can you “do the work of the Lord negligently?” Pause and reflect. Consider what you owe to God,—what you owe to his church,—what you owe to the world. When I see Christian ministers despatching some of the most weighty duties of their office with intemperate haste, or destroying all their effect by drowsy indifference, as if they inwardly thought, “What a weariness is it!”—I would not pronounce a rash sentence upon them, for to their own Master they stand or fall; but I would say, “O my soul, come not thou into their secret!”

SATISFIED as I am that the plan which I have adopted in the preceding pages is well fitted to give you an orderly and consecutive view of your several theological studies, I would by no means say that you ought, in all cases, rigidly to follow its successive details. While it supplies you with a useful synthetic arrangement of your maturer acquisitions, it may not prescribe the exact method by which, in your peculiar circumstances, you should always regulate the commencement of your inquiries. The evidences of Christianity, which may be contemplated apart from the sacred science of theology, strictly so called, might form a separate division of your course, and might be prosecuted at large in such a manner as is most consistent with your other duties, though their most natural place is undoubtedly at the beginning. Your studies in the doctrines of Christianity, might be classed as follows:—The existence and attributes of God generally considered, with the doctrines which relate to man in his probationary condition; the doctrines which more fully exhibit to us the holy mystery of the Trinity in Unity, with its associate verities; and the doctrines which embrace the various particulars concerning man’s future destination. The duties of Christianity, and its various institutions, seem to succeed in proper order. I confess that, when I reflect on the way in which you have been trained, on the mode in which the lessons of inspired theology are conveyed throughout the free and unconfined forms of the Scripture revelation, and especially on the order which St. Paul has

employed in that most copious exegesis of the true Christian theology, his Epistle to the Romans, I cannot but think that the outline of doctrinal study which I have presumed to suggest in this paragraph, merits at least your careful examination.\*

Permit me to subjoin a few observations on the method which I would advise you to pursue in the investigation of each particular topic. I will suppose, for example, that you are now directing your meditations to the image of God in which man was originally created. Take, first, the brief definition which is inserted in this pamphlet; and, with nothing but your marginal Bible in your hand, inquire how much you already know on this subject. Be not in haste. Wisdom has a far more intimate alliance with calm and studious thought than with voracious and often ill-digested reading. Search out all that you possess, and ascertain how far you have already acquired clear, scriptural, and well-trying views. Turn, next, to the passages which are named in the references under this head, or at least to as many of them as are within your reach. Read, compare, ponder. Perhaps you will discover that where you deemed your views wonderfully clear, they are comparatively obscure; where you were ready to pronounce them purely scriptural, they are not quite free from the discolorations of human fancy; and where you regarded them as sufficiently tried by frequent examination and exercise, they are yet crude and immature. As you proceed in this way, especially on some of the themes which may come under your review, your discoveries will perhaps be startling and painful; but be not discouraged, for they will prove salutary. Let me speak freely. I think I know a cure for young and self-conceited aspirants in theology. Bring them to the test. Probe them by discreet and well-propounded interrogations. Draw forth the entire stock of their vaunted attainments; and then quietly place it in comparison with the ripe productions of those mighty minds whom they sometimes affect to despise. If they possess common piety and common sense,—qualities, however, not always found, but for the absence of which my prescription has no

\* See the note at the end of this pamphlet.

remedy,—I dare almost hold myself answerable for the result. They who, awhile ago, ranked themselves with the eldest sons of intelligence, will perceive that they “know nothing yet as they ought to know ;” and they who hastened, with intemperate zeal, to occupy the first pulpits, will feel themselves unequal to the meanest desk. Finally, digest your collections in your own mind ; and, if the expression may be allowed me, transmute them into a part of your intellectual and spiritual substance. I would also strongly recommend you to commit your last thoughts on each subject to writing, and preserve them in this form for your future use.

But, while I offer you these directions, suffer me, with all possible earnestness, to enforce this cardinal principle,—that Christian theology is not to be treated as a speculative science,—that it essentially differs from all sciences merely human,—and that it ought, therefore, to be cultivated in a manner corresponding to its peculiar and surpassing character. “Were I to define Divinity,” says one of the excellent authors\* to whom I have referred in the course of these pages, “I should rather call it a Divine Life than a Divine Science ; it being something rather to be understood by a spiritual sensation than by any verbal description, as all things of sense and life are best known by sentient and vital faculties.” Remember that the Christian system is concerned with the heart of man ; and that, while it instructs his mind, it especially seeks to restore him to the favour, the image, and the communion of his God. If it is compared to light, it is to the light of the sun, which shines by its unrivalled splendour ; but which, at the same time, penetrates, warms, animates,—kindles all into life, and crowns all with joy. Assure yourself, then, that an improvement in personal piety ought to be associated, nay, identified, with your progress in theological studies. Never think it enough to say, that you have read many books, solved many difficult problems in divinity, and acquired many new and rare sentiments. All this may be true. But allow me to ask, with all the affectionate solicitude which I would use

\* Smith, “Select Discourses,” pp. 1, 2, Edition, 1673.

towards an own friend or brother, Have you also gained a larger measure of the meek, holy, loving spirit of Jesus, your great Teacher? Have you "grown in the grace," as well as "in the knowledge," and indeed by means of growing in the knowledge, "of our Lord and Saviour?" If you have not, "be not deceived." You have miserably failed in the attainment of your object. Boast not of your skill in theology. It is a perfect illusion. Too much light you cannot receive; but O! let it be "the light of life." You desire to engage in the offices of Christian instruction. And why? that you may fill the minds of men with ingenious but unprofitable notions? If that be your aim, I beseech you not to cumber the soil of Methodism with your barren presence. Hear me! Whoever you are, Methodism can spare you. You are an offence to her pure spirit. You thwart and impede her holy enterprizes. Forbear!—But, no! Your object is to guide men, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, to the love and service of God. In all your pursuits, then, cultivate that love yourself, and abound in that service. Pray that, like John the Baptist, you may be "a burning and a shining light," and that, during the short and uncertain "season" of your ministrations, many may be "willing to rejoice in your light."

One word more, "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?" Where are the venerable men who connected the present race of our Preachers with the apostolic Founder of Methodism? Passed, or, amidst growing infirmities, swiftly passing, away. Where are the exemplary Evangelists who have guarded the sanctuary of our doctrines, maintained our discipline in the face of bitter obloquy and scorn, and extended our beneficent institutions to the most distant regions of the earth? Many of them, alas! sunk into premature graves, yet bedewed with the tears of those who loved them while living, and who still piously cherish their memories. Long may the honoured survivors of their class remain! But to whom, under God, shall our societies and congregations now look? To the rising race of Preachers. You are one of them! O catch the mantle of our ascended or ascending

Elijahs ! Be equally pure in doctrine, in discipline, and in life ; seek the same power, and aim at the same objects ; let the people see that “ the Lord God of Elijah ” is with you ; and, while the smitten waves of opposition retire before you also, let them joyfully exclaim, “ The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha ! ” “ Hitherto hath the Lord helped us ; ” and he will, doubtless, be “ with us,” while we are “ with him.” This sustains our confidence :—“ Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children.” It is my prayer, that you may “ obtain mercy of the Lord ” to approve yourself as worthy of this character ; and that, combining humble declarations of fidelity with fervent supplications for the constant supplies of divine grace, you may always be able to say, “ I have preached righteousness in the great congregation : lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart ; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation : I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord ; let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.”

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NOTE TO PAGE 51.

As far as the writer's observation extends, this method is conformable to the course of examination which is usually pursued in the District Meetings and Conferences of the Methodist body. It appears also to be in general accordance with the following judicious and sensible remarks of Dr. Chalmers, in the preface to his treatise “ On Natural Theology,” Works, vol. i., pp. v.—x. “ The science of theology,” says that able writer, “ in its most general meaning, as comprehensive both of the natural and the revealed, might, in respect to the order of its topics and propositions, be presented to the disciple in two different ways, so as, if not to affect the substance of its various arguments, at least to affect the succession of them. According to the first way, a commencement is made, as if at the fountain-head of the whole theme, with the being, and the constitution, and the character of God ; and then, from this point of departure, a demonstration is carried forward in the footsteps of the history of the divine administration, from the first purposes of the uncreated mind to the final issues of his government in eternity. This most frequently is the course of those Christian writers, who attempt the construction of an entire system of theology. They descend from the heights of the eternity that is past ; and, often, it is not till they have

bestowed their treatment on such antemundane topics as the mysteries of the divine essence and the high pre-ordinations of God, that they enter on the development of these in the creation of a universe, and its moral history onward to the consummation of all things. One cannot peruse the successive titles of the chapters in the systematic works of our best and greatest authors, without observing how much the arrangement proceeds in the chronological order of the history of the divine government; so that, after the establishment of the initial lessons which we have now specified, we are very generally conducted along some such series of doctrines as the following: The formation of man; his original state of innocence; the introduction of moral evil at the fall, and the consequent guilt and depravation of our species; the remedy for this universal disease in the appointment of a Mediator; the atonement made by him, so as to release his followers from the penalty of sin; the doctrine of a regenerating Spirit to deliver them from its power; the free overtures of this reconciliation and recovery to the world; the great moral change experienced by all who accept them; their duties in the present life, and their blissful prospects of another: on the other hand, the fearful doom of all who reject the Christian message; the judgment to which both the obedient and the rebellious will be summoned at the end of the world; and the destinies which respectively await them, in that everlasting economy which is to succeed after the present economy of things shall have passed away.

“Now, such an arrangement, proceeding as it does in the chronological order of the divine administration, and which quadrates too with the great successions that take place in the collective history of the species, has peculiar advantages of its own. But there is another arrangement, having a distinct principle, attended too with its own distinct benefits, but of another sort. Instead of treating theology in the order of the procedure of the divine government, and with general respect therefore to the whole universe of created intelligences, or at least to the whole of the human family, it may be treated in the order of those inquiries which are natural to the exercised spirit of an individual man, from the outset of his religious earnestness when the felt supremacy of conscience within him tells him of a law and tells him of a Lawgiver—when his own sense of innumerable deficiencies from a higher and holier standard of rectitude than he has ever reached, first visits him with the conviction of guilt and the dread anticipation of a coming vengeance. This would give rise to an arrangement differing from the former, having a different starting-post or point of departure; and, though coinciding in some places, yet reversing the order of certain of the topics, and, more especially, transferring to a far ulterior part of its course, some of those initial matters in the first arrangement, which, when discussed at so early a stage, give an obscure and transcendental character to the very commencement of the science. By the first arrangement, we are made to descend synthetically, from principles which have their residence in the constitution and character of the Godhead, and which transport us back to past eternity—as in those systems of Christian theology, where the doctrines of the Trinity and Predestination take the priority of all those themes which are within the reach of human conception, or bear with immediate application on the desires and the doings of man. By the second arrangement, we are made to ascend in the order of man’s fears



and of his efforts to be relieved from them—beginning, therefore, with that sense of God which is so promptly and powerfully suggested to every man by his own moral nature; and proceeding, under the impulse of apprehensive and conscious guilt, to the consideration of what must be done to escape from its consequences, and what is the remedy, if any, for the sore disease under which humanity labours. It is obvious that with such a commencement as this for our system of theology, the depravity of man, along with the moral character and government of God, and the requisitions and sanctions of his law, would find an early place in it; and, whereas in the atonement made known by a professed revelation there is a remedy proposed, it were most natural to pass onward to the claims and credentials of this professed embassy from heaven—thence, under the promptings of a desire for relief, from the consideration of our danger to the consideration of the refuge opened up for us in the Gospel—thence to the new life required of all its disciples—thence to the promised aids of a strength and grace from on high, for the fulfilment of our due obedience—thence to the issues of our repentance and faith in a deathless eternity—thence, finally, and after the settlement of all that was practical and pressing, to the solution of difficulties which are grappled with at the outset of the former scheme of theology; but which in the latter scheme would be postponed for their more scientific treatment to that stage when, leaving the first principles of their discipleship, the aspirants after larger views and more recondite mysteries go on unto perfection.

“By the former method, theology is capable of being presented more in the form or aspect of a regular science, with the orderly descent and derivation of its propositions from the highest principles to which we can ascend; but when the departure is made from the primeval designs of the Godhead, or the profound mysteries of his nature, this gives more of a transcendental, but more at the same time of a presumptuous and *a priori* character, to the whole contemplation. The second method, by which departure is made from the suggestions and the fears of human conscience, has the recommendation of being more practical; and, if not in the order of exposition, is more at least in the order of discovery.”

THE END.

**THOUGHTS.**

*[Faint, illegible handwritten text]*

J. AND G. SEELY, THAMES DITTON, SURREY.