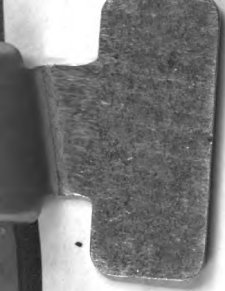

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>





THE RISE AND PROGRESS

OF

THE HERESY

OF

THE REV. H. J. PRINCE.

BY

ARTHUR AUGUSTUS REES,

MINISTER OF BETHESDA FREE CHAPEL, SUNDERLAND.

“ Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel : ”
2 SAM. iii. 34.

“ Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. ”—1 COR. x. 12.

“ If thou beest he ; but Oh, how fall'n ! how chang'd
From him who in the happy realms of light,
Cloth'd in transcendent brightness, didst outshine
Myriads, though bright ! ”

MILTON.

WEYMOUTH :

PUBLISHED BY BENSON AND BARLING.

SOLD BY

SIMPKIN AND MARSHALL, LONDON.

Price One Penny.



46
2 26
 10

P R E F A C E.

My sole object in writing the following narrative is, *First*,—To alleviate, as much as possible, the grief of those of the Lord's people who are personally acquainted with Mr. Prince, and who cannot but feel deeply afflicted at the fall of one they formerly so justly loved and admired. *Secondly*,—To check the taunts of those who, retaining the form but denying the power of godliness, are ever on the look out to defend themselves in their carnal security behind the lapses of the poor and erring children of God. Thus they are likely to argue with respect to Mr. Prince. Here is one notorious for his pretensions to eminent holiness; but see the result! To aim after superior sanctity, and to set up a peculiarly high standard of piety is a dangerous thing; therefore, in order to be safe, we will abide where we are, and henceforth frown on all who are singular and conspicuous in religion. *Thirdly*,—To repress the triumphs of the profane, who will not fail to be elated, and strengthened in their impenitence, when they hear of the extravagancies of one so devoted as Mr. Prince, and witness the emptiness of his terrible denunciations. Instead, however, of triumphing in his fall, they should tremble at the reflection that, "if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

My heart is ready to bleed when I think of the lapse of this dear brother; and often have I secretly applied to him the doleful words of Isaiah, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!"
" *O quam mutatus ab illo!* "

Sunderland,

Jan. 31st, 1846.

NARRATIVE.

MR. PRINCE entered St. David's College, Lampeter, in March, 1836, and from that time till May, 1843, we were bosom friends; nor did I ever see or hear of an individual more thoroughly devoted to God than he was during that period. From the day of his matriculation to that on which he quitted College, he was the glory of the Institution, both in scholarship and piety; from first to last he exhibited such a steady, consistent, and well-regulated course of conduct, as commanded the approbation of his tutors, and the respect of his fellow-students. His private life, of which I was a perpetual eye-witness, was in harmony with what he appeared to be in public. The forenoon was given to study, and the rest of the day to prayer, the Bible, and meditation. His conversation was invariably edifying; "alway with grace, seasoned with salt, and ministered grace to the hearers." His heart burned within him to be more and more devoted to God; and what would have been tremendous difficulties to others, in pursuing the same course, were mere mole-hills to him. I never knew one who was so independent of the censure and praise of his fellow creatures; he walked straight on, without being either checked or impelled in his path by the good or bad opinions of those who knew him. He was unusually blessed, both in the edification of saints, and in the conversion

of sinners, long before he entered the public ministry; and all who knew him previously to his sad defection from the truth can testify, that he seldom, if ever, spoke without effect. He was eminently a man of prayer and self-denial; and few were more deeply acquainted with the Scriptures.

But now comes the painful enquiry; where was the point of his departure from the truth? and when was that pernicious seed sown which has since produced such baneful fruit? I have reason to believe, that even so far back as the year 1837 or 1838, Mr. P. began to adopt false principles; and, if I mistake not, the occasion of this evil was as follows. About the time above-mentioned, "The life and writings of Gerhard Tersteegen" fell into his hands, and he was enraptured with it.* In his pursuit of holiness, a new path seemed to open up before him, and a new light to shine upon his way. I then noticed a change in him, and one which seemed to me to be for the better. Henceforward, he was much more desirous to perform the will of God, even in the minutest affairs of life; this desire increased apace, until at length he was determined to say or do nothing without a previous intimation of the Divine mind. He also became more *abstracted* in his devotions; so that, provided he could preserve his soul in a state of inward quiet and resignation, he did not deem it important to engage in external prayer. The Bible too became less his study, and by degrees it was regarded rather as a crutch or a sign-post to the ignorant

* There is much that is singularly excellent in this work, but it must be confessed that, in some parts, it is deeply tinged with mysticism, and to ardent and imaginative minds likely to prove injurious.

and weak, than as an indispensable support and guide to every Christian in this life. Whilst the Scriptures were thus practically depreciated, the Holy Spirit, as the teacher and sanctifier of God's people, was peculiarly magnified and exalted, and his immediate direction was sought, even in those cases in which the judgment was a sufficient guide. For example,—if Mr. P. were about to take a walk, and there were every appearance of rain: he would not carry out his umbrella without first seeking the will of God; and when he had completed his studies at College, he would not quit the village until he was divinely directed. Other Christians would have taken it for granted, that in such cases, the will of God accorded with their own judgment, but Mr. P. now began to abandon his judgment altogether, and in doing so, he doubtless believed that he was taking a long step in the way of holiness. On this principle he acted, during the remainder of his stay at College, but as yet he was permitted to do nothing which made his admirers suspect that he was in error. At length his theory of Divine guidance took another turn; and, from believing that in seeking to do God's will he ought to renounce his judgment, he came to the dangerous point of believing that he might be led to act *contrary* to it. The most bitter fruit of this, was his second marriage, so unusually soon after the death of his first wife. Undoubtedly this was diametrically opposed to his judgment; and it is equally certain that in taking this step, he believed, not only that he was doing God's will, but also that he was bringing Him the very greatest glory.* On this principle

* I need hardly say, that, in this remark, I make no reflection on the present Mrs. Prince, but simply on the indecorous haste of his second marriage.

Mr. P. might have perpetrated the most atrocious crimes in the name, and under the sanction of God; yet all this, in his view, was nothing more than absolute obedience and devotedness to God. Having pursued this course for several years, he was now induced to believe that he was under complete and conscious subjection to the Holy Ghost within him, and that he said or did nothing without His immediate direction. This naturally led him to speak dictatorially to other Christians, and it was on beholding this result, that I first began to lose my confidence in his teaching. In June, 1842, there was a meeting of the Lampeter brethren, at Swansea, for the purpose of considering the best means of increasing their usefulness in the ministry. At this meeting, Mr. P. took the lead, and minutes of the consultation were taken down. A few weeks after, each of the brethren received a *printed* copy of the minutes, drawn up in Mr. Prince's own language, without their sanction, and published without their consent. One of the articles of agreement was, that we should unite in fasting once a week, with as many of the Lord's people as would join us. I did so; but I admitted to the meeting an individual, who, from ill health, was unable to abstain from food. To this Mr. P. objected; I replied, that I did not feel myself bound to exclude her; he rejoined, that God had already made known his mind on the subject, and that to admit her was disobedience to His express will. Hence I learned, that the printed minutes, drawn up and published by Mr. P. on his own sole authority, were regarded by him as the revealed mind of God towards the brethren, although they had no voice in compiling them, and that the least deviation from these rules was looked upon as

disobedience to God. I now perceived that Mr. P. assumed a new character, and I resisted it for a time ; but I was so overpowered with the painful thought of being dissevered from him, that I soon gave way, and yielded to his requirement. My confidence however was shaken from that hour, though I did not allow myself to think so ; but a few months after, when I met him at Bath, what was already shaken, was ere long completely subverted, for there I heard, for the first time, the awful heresy which has so recently been made public.* Still, it was not till I had endured several weeks of mental agony, that I could bring myself to believe, that so holy and devoted a saint should be permitted to adopt such an enormous error ; and yet it was only a further developement of the principle which had long been actuating him. The stage before was this,—that the Holy Ghost had absolute dominion over his soul : the stage now was,—that the Blessed Spirit was personally united to him ; or, to use his own words, that he was “ THE HOLY GHOST PERSONIFIED ! ”

Thus, the false principle of 1837 gradually conducted him to the awful heresy of 1843 ; and it is easy to perceive the hand of the great deceiver in all this. That arch enemy knew, that if Mr. P.'s ardent desire of holiness should be accomplished, he would be likely to prove a mighty instrument of God in the conversion of souls ; he therefore resolved to try his cunning in marring so bright a prospect ; and he succeeded in seducing Mr. P. to pant after devotedness *in the wrong path*. This began when he renounced his judg-

* I allude to Mr. Deck's pamphlet, to the entire truth of which I here solemnly bear witness ; and if the facts therein made known fail to undeceive Mr. Prince's adherents, their wilful blindness is without excuse.

ment in seeking the divine direction ; and yet it appeared to be an important step in the way of holiness—then followed, an undervaluing of the *outward* means of grace, such as the Bible and *external* prayer—then came a neglect of them altogether ; next the dictates of the Spirit were obeyed in *contradiction* to the judgment—then came the absolute control of the Holy Ghost, and lastly, His assumption of Mr. P. in personal union with Himself. As soon as the judgment and the Word of God were given up, a wide door was opened for the entrance of the devil ; nor did that wicked spirit lose the opportunity thus presented to him, but at once walked in, took charge, and assumed the character of the Holy Ghost. Having thus obtained the complete control of Mr. P., he led him on step by step, in mockery of the blessed Spirit, to do and say the most outrageous things, in the awful name of God ; and left him without any means of detecting the delusion by having first persuaded him to abandon the only test by which he could discover it.

Thus fell that dear child of God, Henry James Prince, and thus he will remain fallen till Jesus signally interposes to deliver him. Alas ! “the beauty of Israel is slain upon the high places ; how is the mighty fallen !” “tell it not in Gath : publish it not in the streets of Ascalon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.” “*I am distressed for thee, my brother ; very pleasant hast thou been unto me : thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.*”

And now let me address a few practical remarks to three classes of persons.

FIRST.—*Those of the children of God who are personally acquainted with Mr. Prince, and are deeply afflicted at his fall.*

Beloved Brethren,—This doleful event has, in all probability, been the occasion of much perplexity and suffering to your minds. Having known Mr. P. in his better days, and being ignorant of the false principle which was secretly working within him, you have been amazed at this outburst of egregious error both in principle and practice, and perhaps you have been utterly unable to account for it. This narrative however, will, I trust, afford you a clue to the discovery of the hidden evil, and, in some measure, restore comfort to your hearts. It was not simply the pursuit of superior holiness, which caused the defection of our brother,—but the pursuit of it *in a wrong path*; had his ardour been rightly directed it would have led to far different results. His fundamental error consisted in separating the Spirit from the Word, and consequently in neglecting to test the supposed dictates of the former by the latter. This opened a door for *any spirit* to direct him, and the devil embraced the opening. Be not, then, discouraged in your desires after higher attainments in religion; only seek them in the *right way*; neither permit yourselves to undervalue the guidance of the Holy Spirit; only connect that guidance with the Word and Providence of God. Finally, may you and I, dear brethren, take warning by this sad occurrence, to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling,” and to “walk humbly with our God.” *Why* God allowed Mr. P. to be seduced, is a question I do not pretend to solve; *how* he allowed it I have briefly endeavoured to explain. “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”

SECOND.—*Those who, “having a form of godli-*

ness, but denying the power thereof," are strengthened in their hollow profession by the error of Mr. Prince, as if his fall were any proof that they are not either self-deceivers or hypocrites.

My unhappy friends! Are you right because Mr. Prince is wrong? What if he failed to attain the height of holiness to which he aspired, does that prove that all aspirations after extraordinary sanctity are vain? Will you frown on those who seek to be "perfect even as their Father which is in heaven is perfect?" Will you throw Mr. Prince's fall in the teeth of those who desire to "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Will you cast the stumbling block of their poor brother's error in the way of those who pray and expect to be "sanctified wholly, and have their whole spirit and soul and body preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Is it not written,—“Woe to them who are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph,” and does not God say that—“ye should not have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction, neither should ye have spoken proudly in the day of distress.” Wherefore, “glory not; and lie not against the truth”—but lament with the people of God and say—“How is the gold become dim? how is the most fine gold changed?” and follow *ye* after holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.”

THIRD.—*Those who make no profession of religion, and are strengthened in their ungodliness by the extravagancies in practice, and the errors in doctrine, of which Mr. Prince has been guilty, under the pretended sanction of God.*

My deluded friends! Mr. Prince is not your example, but Mr. Prince's Master, the Lord Jesus

Christ. What if Mr. P. has spoken falsely, and acted presumptuously in the name of his sovereign Lord; is that an excuse for your refusing to believe and to perform the plain doctrines and precepts of the Bible? Is it not written there, "except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish," and "he that believeth not shall be damned?" Rather tremble at the thought that so talented and devoted a man should fall into such error; for if the great enemy of souls has such power over one, who is unquestionably a child of God, what can he not do with you who are still in "the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity?" It is true Mr. P. is awfully deluded, but are not you so too? What can be a greater or more ruinous delusion than to live at ease, without suspicion and without alarm, whilst you are under the dreadful wrath of God? Is it not written—"Woe to them who are at ease?" And does not God say—"Be troubled ye careless ones, and gird sackcloth upon your loins?" Oh, be not so foolish as to make the fall of Mr. P. a stumbling block in your path, over which you will break your necks, and plunge into the pit of hell. Wherefore, "repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, (and) that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." Amen.



BENSON AND EARLING, PRINTERS, WEYMOUTH.



1993
CUBA

