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# DIACONIA







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# DIACONIA:

OR,

## THOUGHTS ON MINISTRY.

COMPILED FROM THE WRITINGS OF GODLY MEN.

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"Only He that made the world can make a Minister."—JOHN NEWTON.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE following pages contain a selection from the writings (chiefly letters) of Archbishop Leighton, E. Payson, T. Hardy, J. Bunyan, H. Venn, and a few others,—men with life in their souls, and truth in their consciences, whose remarks the Compiler has found profitable to himself, and would, therefore, commend to the reading of others.

While the extracts will themselves exhibit,



in some degree, not only the object of the Editor, but the nature of ministry itself ; still, as they are of an experimental, rather than didactic character, it may be well to say a few words in explanation of what Christian ministry really is.

Although the popular view which limits ministry to the office of a preacher, or at least of one who has been commissioned to preach, is too narrow to square with the Scripture standard ; we may, nevertheless, contemplate the ministry of the Word under the two following heads :—

1. The Ministry of Reconciliation.
2. The Ministry of Edification.

The two are easily distinguished, according to the different character and position of the parties addressed : viz.,

1. The sinner, who is entreated to be *reconciled* to God.

2. The saint, who is to be *built up* in his most holy faith.

In the first case, a sinner, having been himself reconciled and made a saint, is formed into a vessel of ministry, and is rendered wise to win souls to Christ. This is the peculiar office of the *evangelist*, as such.

In the second, the office of the *pastor* is exhibited, who is commissioned to feed the sheep and lambs in the flock of God.

The above description is general, and may answer well enough for general purposes, but we must not forget that the statement of what an evangelist is, on the one hand, and of what a pastor is, on the other, by no means exhausts the subject of ministry.

Nay, not only does the wide extent of Scripture ministry include the gift of the cup of cold water, the feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked ; but even *spiritual* ministry goes beyond the mere preaching or audible exposition of the Word. "The Lord turned and *looked* upon Peter." Here was *ministry* ; the Lord supplying the necessities of His poor servant's soul. There was "neither speech nor language," yet was there a voice heard in the depth of Peter's conscience, a reproof entering more into the wise man, than a hundred stripes (or a hundred sermons) into a fool.

Again, clearly to understand the Gospel, we must know something of ministry ; just as, clearly to understand ministry, we must know something of dispensation.

The grace of God was always the same in its nature, but it was not, and could not be the same as to the divine expression of it, or the ministration of it in the world. Jesus had a baptism to be baptized with, and how was He straitened till it was accomplished! The Holy Ghost was not yet given (or arrived), because Jesus was not yet glorified. Abel was saved by Christ, through faith, as much as ever Paul was; but Abel neither lived under the dispensation of the Spirit, nor heard the glad tidings in the same full measure that we have, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

To illustrate the difference between grace acting before, and grace acting after the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, let any one compare (or rather contrast) Luke xv., with

2 Cor. v. 18—20. The grace in both cases was exceeding abundant, but what *ministry* is there in the case of the poor restored prodigal? He came to himself, surely, by the good hand of God upon him, or rather, God's grace working in him ; but no evangelist carried him the glad tidings,—no one *besought* him to be reconciled. As far as human ministry was concerned, he seems to have been alone.

But according to Paul's account of himself, a vessel prepared unto service, as well as unto honour, how is the scene changed ! How is it, may we not rather say, illuminated with the richness of that grace, which, not waiting till the poor prodigals "come to themselves," sends forth to find them, and prays them to be reconciled to God ! God *beseeking* ! God sending back the poor prodigal, all changed as

he is, with the robe on his shoulders, the ring on his hand, and his feet beautiful with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, to *scour the swine-field*, and tell other poor prodigals that “yet there is room,” and not only room, but plenty and a welcome in the Father’s house !

Such is the ministry of *reconciliation*. And the ministry of *edification*, though different as regards the special object of address, is not unlike it. We see the two clearly characterized and distinguished in Col. i. 23—25, “The *gospel* which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven, whereof I Paul am made a *minister*. Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body’s sake, which is the *Church*, whereof I am made a

*minister."* Each ministry is the work of God in His appointed servants. While it is right to distinguish between the two, we must take care that we do not make the difference wider than God has made it. It is well to distinguish saints from sinners, and rightly to divide the word of truth ;\* but *for that very reason*, we must take care that we do not, from an excessive love of system and order, sacrifice the substance of a truth to its shadow.

There is a holy *irregularity* in being "instant in season, and out of season," which brings far more glory to God than a cold systematic precision.

The servant of Christ, whose special gift and calling it is to preach the Gospel to sinners, can-

\* And that whether "*ὀρθοτομοῦντα*" is rightly rendered in our version or not.

not, and would not if he could, so systematize his thoughts and feelings, as to take no interest in the souls of the converted ; nor will he in the presence of a mixed congregation, overlook the saints for the sake of a nominal adherence to a "principle." He has no time to trifle, and while he has opportunity, he must comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.\*

Paul acted the part of an evangelist when he stood in the midst of Mars' Hill, at Athens ; that of a pastor at Thessalonica, when he was gentle among them, as a nurse cherisheth her children ; when being affectionately desirous of them, he was willing to have imparted unto them, not the Gospel of God only, but also his

\* Or "teaching."



own soul, because they were dear to him. And that which beyond every other consideration shows us how closely the two ministries are connected, is, that Christ, and Christ *only*, is the subject of BOTH.

# DIACONIA.

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FROM ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

THE great principle of fidelity, and diligence, and good success in that great work (of the ministry), is love; and the great spring of love to souls, is love to Him that bought them. He knew it well Himself, and gave us to know it, when He said, "Simon, lovest thou me? Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs." A deep impression of His blessed name upon our hearts, will not fail to produce a lively expression of it not only in our words and discourses, in private and public, but will make the whole track of our lives to be a true copy

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and transcript of His holy life ; and if there be within us any sparks of that divine love, you know the best way not only to preserve them, but to excite them, and blow them up into a flame, is by the breath of prayer.

Oh prayer ! the converse of the soul with God ; the breath of God in man returning to its Original ; frequent, and fervent prayer, the better half of our whole work, and that which makes the other half lively and effectual ; as that holy company tells us, when appointing deacons to serve the tables, they add, "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And is it not, brethren, our unspeakable advantage, beyond all the gainful and honorable employments of the world, that the whole work of our particular calling, is a kind of living in heaven ; and besides its tendency to the saving of the souls of others, is all along so proper and adapted to the purifying and saving of our own ? But you will possibly say, what does he himself do that speaks these things to us ? Alas ! I am ashamed to tell you. All I dare say is this ; I

think I see the beauty of holiness, and am enamoured with it, though I attain it not; and how little soever I attain, would rather live and die in the pursuit of it, than in the pursuit, yea, or in the possession or enjoyment, though unpursued, of all the advantages that this world affords.

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EXTRACT FROM ANOTHER LETTER BY THE SAME.

“I can assure you, I am present with you in my most affectionate wishes, of the gracious presence of that Holy Spirit, amongst you and within you all, who alone can make this and all your meetings, and the whole work of your ministry, happy and successful to the good of souls, and His glory who bought them with His own blood. And I doubt not that your own great desire, each for himself, and all for one another, is the same; and that your daily and great employment is, by incessant and fervent prayer, to draw down from above large supplies and increases of that blessed

Spirit, which our Lord and Master hath assured us that our heavenly Father will not fail to give to them that ask it. And how extreme negligence and folly were it to want so rich a gift, for want of asking; especially in those devoted to so high and holy a service, that requires such great degrees of that spirit of holiness and divine love to purify their minds, and to raise them above their senses, and this present world! Oh! my dear brethren, what are we doing, who suffer our souls to creep and grovel on this earth, and do so little aspire to the heavenly life of christians, and more eminently of the messengers and ministers of God, as stars, yea, as angels, which He hath made spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.

O where are souls to be found amongst us that represent their own original; that are possessed with pure and sublime apprehensions of God the Father of spirits, and are often raised to the astonishing contemplation of His eternal and blessed being, and His infinite holiness, and greatness, and goodness, and are accordingly burnt up with ardent love? And

where that holy fire is wanting, there can be no sacrifice, whatsoever our invention, or utterance, or gifts may be, and how blameless soever the externals of our life may be, and even our hearts free from gross pollutions ; for it is scarcely to be suspected that any of us will suffer any of those strange, yea, infernal fires of ambition, or avarice, or malice, or impure lusts and sensualities to burn within us, which would render us priests of idols, of airy nothings, and of dunghill gods—yea, of the very god of this world, the prince of darkness. Let men judge and revile us as they please, that imports nothing at all ; but God forbid anything should possess our hearts, but He that loved us and gave Himself for us, for we know we cannot be vessels of honour, meet for the Master's use, unless we purge ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and empty our hearts of all things beside Him, and even of ourselves and of our own will, and have no more any desires, nor delights, but His will alone, and His glory, who is our peace, and our life, and our all. And, truly, I think it

were our best and wisest reflection upon the many difficulties and discouragements without us, to be driven by them to live more within, as they observe of the bees, that when it is foul weather abroad, they are busy in their hives.

If the powers of external discipline be enervated in our hands, yet who can hinder us to try, and judge, and censure ourselves, and to purge the inner temples, our own hearts, with the more severity and exactness? And if we be dashed and bespattered with reproaches abroad, to study to be the cleaner at home; and the less we find of meekness and charity in the world about us, to preserve so much the more of that sweet temper within our own hearts, blessing them that curse us, and praying for them that persecute us; so shall we most effectually prove ourselves to be the children of our heavenly Father, even to their conviction who will scarcely allow us in any sense to be called His servants.

As for the confusions and contentions that still abound and increase in the church, and threaten to undo it, I think our wisdom will

be to cease from man, and look for no help till we look more upwards, and dispute and discourse less, and fast and pray more, and so draw down our relief from the God of order and peace, who made the heavens and the earth.

Concerning myself I have nothing to say, but humbly to entreat you to pass by the many failings and weaknesses you may have perceived in me, during my abode amongst you ; and if in anything I have offended you, or any of you, in the management of my public charge, or in private converse, I do sincerely beg your pardon ; though I cannot make any requital in that kind, for I do not know of anything towards me, from any of you, that needs a pardon in the least, you having generally paid me more kindness and respect than a much better or wiser man could either have expected or deserved. Nor am I only a suitor for your pardon, but for the addition of a further charity, and that so great a one, that I have nothing to plead for it, but that I need it much,—your prayers. And I am



hopeful, as to that, to make you some little, though very disproportionate, return; for whatever becomes of me (through the help of God), while I live you shall be no one day of my life forgotten by

Your most unworthy, but

Most affectionate Brother and Servant,

R. LEIGHTON.

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FROM THE SAME.

Oh! what a weariness is it, to live amongst men, and find so few men; and among christians, and find so few christians—so much talk and so little action—religion turned almost to a tune and air of words—and amidst all our pretty discourses, pusillanimous and base, and so easily dragged into the mire, self, and flesh, and pride, and passion domineering, while we speak of being in Christ, and clothed with Him, and believe it because we speak of it so often and so confidently! Well, I know you are not willing to be thus

gulled, and having some glances of the beauty of holiness, aim no lower than perfection, which, in the end we hope to attain, and in the meanwhile the smallest advances towards it are more worth than crowns and sceptres.

I believe you often think on those words of the blessed champion Paul.\* There is a noble Guest within us. Oh! let all our business be to entertain Him honourably, and to live in celestial love within; *that* will make all things without be very contemptible in our eyes.

Your weary fellow-pilgrim,

R. L.

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TO ANOTHER PERSON HE WRITES,

Thorns grow everywhere, and from all things below, and to a soul transplanted out of itself, into the root of Jesse, peace grows everywhere too, from Him who is called our Peace, and whom we still find the more to be so, the more entirely we live in Him, being

\* 1 Cor. ix. 24, &c.

dead to this world, and self, and all things beside Him. O when shall it be? Well, let all the world go as it will, let this be our only pursuit and ambition, and to all other things, "*Fiat voluntas tua, Domine*," "Lord, Thy will be done!"

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FROM EDWARD PAYSON,  
(OF AMERICA).

SOME time since, I took up a little work, purporting to be the lives of sundry characters, as related by themselves. Two of those characters agreed in remarking, that "They were never happy, until they ceased striving to be great men." This remark struck me, as you know the most simple remarks will strike us, when heaven pleases. It occurred to me at once, that most of my sins and sufferings were occasioned by an unwillingness to be the nothing which I am, and by consequent struggles to be something. I saw that if I would but cease struggling, and consent to be anything or nothing, just as God pleases, I might

be happy. You will think it strange, that I mention this as a new discovery. In one sense it was not new, I had known it for years. But I now saw it in a new light. My heart saw it, and consented to it; and I am comparatively happy; my dear brother, if you can give up all desire to be great, and feel heartily willing to be nothing, you will be happy too. You must not even wish to be a great Christian, that is, you must not wish to make great attainments in religion, for the sake of knowing that you have made, or for the sake of having others think that you have made them.

Very true, and very good, you will say, though somewhat trite; but how am I to bring myself to such a state? Let me ask, in reply, why you are not troubled, when you see one man receive military, and another masonic honours? Why are you not unhappy, because you cannot be a colonel, a general, or a most worshipful grand high priest? Because, you answer, I have no desire for these titles, or distinctions. And why do you not desire

them ? Simply because you are not running a race in competition with those who obtain them. You stand aside, and say, Let those who wish for these things have them. Now if you can, in a similar manner, give up all competition with respect to other objects—if you can stand aside from the race, which too many ministers are running, and say from your heart, Let those who choose to engage in such a race, divide the prize ; let one minister run away with the money, another with the esteem, and a third with the applause, &c., &c. I have something else to do, a different race to run ; be God's approbation the only prize for which I run ; let me obtain that and it is enough. I say, if you can, from the heart, adopt this language, you will find most of your difficulties and sufferings vanish.

But it is hard to say this. It is almost impossible to persuade any man to renounce the race, without cutting off his feet, or, at least, fettering him. This God has done for me—this He has been doing for you. And you will one day, if you do not now, bless Him for all

your sufferings, as I do for mine. I have not suffered one pang too much, God was never more kind, than when I thought Him most unkind; never more faithful, than when I was ready to say, His faithfulness has failed.

Let Him fetter you then, if He pleases; consent that He should cut off your feet, if He pleases. Anything is a blessing which prevents us from running the fatal race, which we are so prone to run; which first convinces us that we are nothing, and then makes us willing to be so.

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FROM THE SAME.

My time is so much engrossed by parochial affairs, that till this moment I have had no leisure to write, and must now steal time from other things which require my attention. You can have no conception, unless you were present, how my time is taken up. Every moment is mortgaged before it arrives, and,

notwithstanding all my exertions, the business seems to grow upon my hands, so that I am ready to sit down in despair and do nothing. If every day was as long as ten, there would be ample employment for every hour. I find scarcely any time to read or study, and am constrained to go into the pulpit with discourses so undigested, that my pride is continually mortified; and though it lies groaning and bleeding under continual wounds, it will not be persuaded to give up the ghost. However, so long as God is pleased to carry on His work with such discourses, I have no right to complain or be discouraged; since the feebleness of the means, the more He is glorified. And I hope that some time or other, I shall be willing to be counted a fool, that all the glory may redound to His wisdom. But this is a hard lesson to learn. To be willing to be nothing, to rejoice to be nothing, that God may be all in all; to glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me,—this is the temper which I pine and hunger after; but alas! it appears at a distance so great,

that I despair of reaching anywhere near it in this world. If we could put God entirely in the place of self, consider His will as our will—His honour as our honour—His happiness as our happiness—His interest as our interest, and pursue it accordingly, how happy should we be! And how happy shall we be in that world where this will be the case, and where the very stump of the Dagon, self, will not be permitted to remain in our hearts, as a rival of our blessed Redeemer!

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## FROM THE SAME.

It has been a time of trial with me, as well as with you, since we parted. I have been reduced lower in point of health than on any former occasion. For four weeks I was unable to preach, and doubted whether I should ever preach more. But this was all my trial, and I was kept very quiet. My sermon on "Be still," &c., followed me, and God in mercy



inclined me to be still. My people urged me very strongly to make a voyage to Europe, and offered to supply the pulpit and pay all my expenses. But though I should like well enough to see Europe, I could not feel any freedom to go—I did not like to have so much expense lavished upon me, nor did I know how to lose so much time as such a voyage would require. I am now better and have been able to preach the last three sabbaths.

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FROM THE SAME.

I would not part with the privilege of preaching Christ crucified to perishing sinners, and of administering to the consolation of God's afflicted people, to be made monarch of the world. But oh, the agonies, the unutterable, inconceivable agonies, which must be endured by those who attempt with such a heart as mine, to perform this work. I shudder with horror, to think of the scenes through which I have been obliged to pass ; and shrink back

from those through which I must yet pass, before I reach the rest prepared for the people of God. It is, however, some comfort, that the time when I shall quit this scene of trial cannot be far distant. Nature cannot long hold out under what I endure; and I trust that, ere many years, I shall be safe in the grave, where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. If, meanwhile, I may be preserved from insanity, and from wounding the cause of Christ, by falling into open wickedness, it is all I ask for; and, perhaps, more than I have any reason to expect. It is a dreadful thought, that no christian on earth, however holy, humble, and watchful he may at present be, has any human security against falling into open sin before he dies; for as to resolving that we will not thus fall, it avails nothing. As well might a stone resolve not to fall, when the power that upheld it is removed. You will perhaps say, We may hope that God will uphold us, for the sake of His cause. So David might have hoped. It seemed very important that he should be preserved, and

yet how he fell! And if I should, it would injure the cause of religion, infinitely more than all my labours can ever advance it.

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FROM THE SAME.

My dear Brother,

I am very sorry to learn that your health is not better, but rather worse, than when I was at R——. Should it not have improved before you receive this, I beg you will attend to it without delay, attend to it as your first and chief duty, for such, be assured, it is. “A merciful man is merciful to his beast,” and you must be merciful to your beast; or, as Mr. M—— would say, to your “animal.” Remember that it is your Master’s property, and that he will no more thank you for driving it to death, than an earthly master would thank a servant for riding a valuable horse to death, under pretence of zeal for his interest.

Satan has temptations for the conscience, as

Mr. Newton well observes : and when other temptations fail, he makes great use of them. Many a poor creature has he ridden to death by using his conscience as a spur ; and you must not be ignorant, nor act as if you were ignorant, of his devices. I now feel that I am never serving our Master more acceptably, than when for His sake I am using means to preserve my health and lengthen my life ; and you must feel in a similar manner, if you mean to do Him service in the world.

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FROM THOMAS HARDY.

Under this intolerable burden (indwelling sin), the believer must groan ; with these treacherous inmates, a world in alliance with them, and the inconceivable power, malice, and subtlety of Satan, working upon them by an endless variety of artifices, he must wage an unceasing war to the end of his mortal existence. Times without number will he be foiled, and again and again be seduced to

iniquity; anon, puffed up to presumption, and then plunged to the verge of despair.

Every day shall truly bring its temptations and its troubles, and present still stronger evidences of the total depravity, and total inability of the creature to help himself. But though he fall, and though his hope be daily brought to its last gasp, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord of hosts, even the Lord, mighty in battle, upholdeth him with His hand; hath engaged His eternal truth, His almighty everlasting strength, and infinite wisdom, to bear and deliver him, and bring him to glory.

O how such exercises endear the person of the Lord Jesus Christ! How precious that blood which can cleanse such aggravated guilt! How invaluable that righteousness which can constitute so grievous a sinner perfectly just, before a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity! How dear that electing love, which chose such a wretch, and which only intends the mortification of the sinner's pride, and to render and prove itself more conspicuous and

glorious, more sure and immutable to the soul, by all these trials ! The sinner is sure that if God will not save in a way thus cross to human reason,—will not have mercy because he will have mercy, without a single motive from the creature for so doing, but only for the glory of His own grace—there is no hope for him. By these trials he finds his faith to be real, the gift of God ; and thus he is taught to stay on His promise in times of darkness ; thus is sin exceedingly embittered to him, and the necessity of unceasing watchfulness and prayer effectually enforced.

Except the Spirit of his God do incessantly keep him, and perpetually work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure, he can only live to multiply transgressions ; such at least are my feelings, and I have not borrowed this rough sketch from another, for it is a transcript of my own experience.

You talk of a heart full of fretfulness and unbelief ; mine, I assure you, frequently runs over. But I commonly find, after the sharpest temptations, and sorest conflicts with unbelief,

the richest consolations, and the fullest assurances of my acceptance in the Beloved. The testimony of the Spirit alone, coming how [as] and when it listeth, sets the matter beyond a doubt ; then I triumphantly sing with one of old,

“ I will complain, yet praise ;  
While I bewail, approve ;  
And all my dark bright days,  
I will lament and love.”

But the Author of our faith is the sovereign Lord of all its actings ; as well can we stop the sun in its course, as command these refreshings at our pleasure. Luther says, “ Prayer, meditation, and temptation, make a minister.” Sure I am, they mightily confirm and strengthen a believer.

The blessed Spirit enable us to meditate and pray without ceasing ; the word of God is the sword of the Spirit, and prayer is a most effectual weapon in our conflicts with Satan, the world, and the flesh. The Lord enable us, without ceasing, to bow at his mercy

seat, fully assured that our compassionate High Priest, Jehovah Jesus, hath fully obtained our eternal redemption, and that all the attributes of the Most High are most deeply engaged to supply all our wants, and safely instate us in glory.

Should this be the last time you hear from me, this is my most confident persuasion, that the single possession of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith, is an unsearchable and infinite treasure of the highest good ; and that every other good of which man may be possessed, or admire, without Him, is but vexatious vanity, and a disguised curse. Where His grace falls not, the heavy wrath of God against the dreadful fall of man must light to all eternity. What praises are due to that distinguishing love, which translated us out of the kingdom of Satan into that of His dear Son ! May He, even our Father, who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, establish our hearts in every good word and work, and enable us to walk in all godliness, righteousness, and soberness,



in all things, worthy of the vocation whereunto we are called.

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you,

T. H.

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Nov. 2, 1824.

My beloved Brethren,

I know not what to say to you, for who is sufficient for the care and charge of souls? So said Paul, who did and suffered most for the Church. It is plain therefore, that, though he makes such woful complaints of his emptiness and weakness, he had some source of sufficiency from whence he drew the astonishing ability for his exceeding labours and sufferings. He thus explains the mystery: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me;" and, "When I am weak, then am I strong." To be living and acting in and upon Christ, is truly a great mystery, but no more strange than true; it is the only way of being to which God gives the name of life—all other living is in death. "I am the life," says Christ; the only life, the bread

of life ; whosoever eateth Him, shall live by Him, shall live for ever ; and we act in the strength of our life. “We cannot act before we live, and life proceeds from grace,” from the grace of Christ, for His grace is the grace of life ; we live by it, and shall reign in life by it, so says the Holy Ghost, the Witness for Jesus ; and this grace, says Christ, is sufficient for us against all sin, every enemy, every want, every trouble. The great art lies in knowing how to look for it, and this art Christ teaches by bitter and sweet experience.

In all the battles, trials, and cross-bearing to which He calls us, we are ever learning that there is neither righteousness nor strength in us ; that all we have of our own are but clogs, and weights, and drawbacks, and sins that easily beset us, which do but sink, and bow, and bend us down, so that all we can do is to sink in fear and court despair, though we hate it, or run back again towards Egypt for melons and garlic, and think it better to be quietly roosted in a little worldly good and sinful pleasures, than to make the desperate venture

of getting to heaven by faith. These things teach us powerfully, we cannot totally forget them, though our hearts are like riddles at retaining what is good to be learned, and I find a need that my great Prophet should teach me these things afresh, and every day.

Christ has other lessons besides these, or it could not be said, that "His mouth is most sweet." These trials show us our misery, emptiness, poverty, and death. Under the law, the bitterness of sin, the enmity and strength of the devil, and the vexatious vanity of all beneath the sun, bitter temptations, and hard trials, make the rest in Christ truly sweet. O for faith most stedfastly to believe ; and may I—so wicked, so worthless, so constantly in rebellion, that with my flesh I serve always the law of sin, and am nothing but a burden, and to my thoughts a scandal and disgrace to Christ—venture to conclude that I am thus blessed in Christ, thus the object of His most loving care, and all watchful attention ! Yea, surely, Christ hath spoken to me so, and Himself hath done all this to me.

FROM THE SAME.

“Though our trials in general are such as are common to faithful men, in some age or state of the church or other ; yet how apt are we to think, “Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow ? Were ever vexations, and losses, and crosses like mine ? Was ever any soul, accepted in Christ, so deserted and in the dark as I am ? Could any beloved of God be so cold, hard-hearted, prayerless, and unthankful as I am ? Was ever any child of God tempted with such sins as I am ?” Such are common complaints with God’s children ; such often are my thoughts, and perhaps they are often yours.

I learn, hereby, that the Lord will make a special cross for every one of His, and one which nothing will enable him to bear but His own strength. The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy. I hope your heart is acquainted and favoured with these personal and peculiar comforts, amidst your much tribulation. I trust

you are still carried on—often cast down, but never destroyed—helped with a little help, then sorely perplexed—lifted out of one difficulty to be plunged in a greater—not knowing what the Lord would do with you, and yet enabled to trust in Him—still supported by Him, and yet seem more and more unworthy of the least of His favours. Such is the path in which I have been in some measure exercised for almost ten years, and yet I am not utterly forsaken. No ; rather, my brother, these sharp exercises prove that God is ever with us, very mindful of us, and round about all our ways. Any afflictions are truly blessed that discover to us more and more the vileness, vanity, emptiness, deceit, helplessness, and rebellion of our own flesh. *Self* cannot be laid too low on this side hell, the Lord alone is to be exalted in our salvation. O, I wish that you and I may be enabled to account that we have nothing out of Christ, not a single trouble, temptation, loss, or disappointment, but is under His hand, weighed out to us in the scales of His wisdom and His grace.

What little things are burdensome families, infirm bodies, or legions of devils, yea, the loss of all things, and life itself, compared with the eternal life, redeeming blood, all-glorious righteousness, the unalterable comforts, and unchanging love of the all-precious Emmanuel ! and the whole of *Him* is *ours*.

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FROM THE SAME.

Oh ! what an emptying, humbling thing, is the grace that saveth ! and so it must be, for no flesh is to glory before Him, who gives it. When is it that there is not some humbling circumstance or other to look at ? and how sweet it is to be thrown down to make way for the Lord's raising us up again. If ever we are raised without being bowed down—we are *all that raising too high*—we are puffed up, not raised up. It is the Lord's good way to cast down first, to chasten, humble, abash, and confound us ; then, when the monster self is disgraced, and beat back, that he may lay no

claim to the honour of God's gifts, graces, or works, then the Lord will work, and none shall let Him; [we are] never too low for His hand to reach us; nor too sad for His comforts to fill us with joy; nor too helpless for the display of the greatness of His power; nor has He given us one promise, which our goodness is to oblige Him to keep; "for ever His word is settled in heaven, and His testimonies are very sure;" and "blessed is the man that trusteth in Him at all times, and waits on Him continually, and casts every care upon Him, for He careth always for us"—unchangeable for ever, and concerning all things.

I remember your kindness; tender you my hearty affection in Christ, and wish His grace on your heart. My love in truth to the brethren that are with you.

T. H.

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## FROM JOHN BUNYAN.

(LATTER PART OF "GRACE ABOUNDING.")

I could not be content unless I was found in the exercise of my gift, unto which also I was greatly animated, not only by the continual desires of the godly, but also by that saying of Paul to the Corinthians, "I beseech you, brethren (ye know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints), that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us and laboureth." (1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16.) By this text I was made to see that the Holy Ghost never intended that men who have gifts and abilities should bury them in the earth, but rather did command and stir up such to the exercise of their gift, and also did commend those that were apt and ready so to do. "They have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." This scripture in those days did continually run in my mind,



to encourage me and strengthen me in this my work for God. I have also been encouraged from several other scriptures, and examples of the godly, both specified in the word and other ancient histories (Acts viii. 4 ; xviii. 24, 25 ; 1 Pet. iv. 10 ; Rom. xii. 6 ; Fox's Acts and Monuments). Wherefore, though of myself of all the saints the most unworthy, yet did I, but with great fear and trembling at the sight of my own weakness, set upon the work, and did, according to my gift and the proportion of my faith, preach that blessed gospel that God has showed me in the holy word of truth. Which when the country understood, they came in to hear the word by hundreds, and that from all parts, though upon divers and sundry accounts. And I thank God He gave unto me some measure of bowels and pity for their souls ; which also did put me forward to labour with great diligence and earnestness, to find out such a word as might, if God would bless it, lay hold of and awaken the conscience. In which also the good Lord had respect to the desire of His servant ; for I had not preached

long before some began to be touched, and be greatly afflicted in their minds at the apprehension of the greatness of their sins, and of their need of Jesus Christ. But at first I could not believe that God should speak by me to the heart of any man, still counting myself unworthy. Yet those who thus were touched would love me, and have a particular respect for me ; and though I did put it from me, that they should be awakened by me, still they would confess it, and affirm it before the saints of God ; they would also bless me, unworthy wretch that I am ! and count me God's instrument, that showed to them the way of salvation. Wherefore, seeing them in both their words and deeds to be so constant, and also in their hearts so earnestly pressing after the knowledge of Jesus Christ, rejoicing that ever God did send me where they were, then I began to conclude it might be so, that God had owned in His work such a foolish one as I ; and then came that word of God to my heart with much sweet refreshment, "The blessing of them that were ready to perish is come upon

me ; yea, I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." (Job xxix. 13.) At this therefore I rejoiced ; yea, the tears of those whom God did awaken by my preaching, would be both solace and encouragement to me ; for I thought on these sayings, " Who is he that maketh me glad, but the same that is made sorry by me ?" (2 Cor. ii.) And again, " Though I be not an apostle to others, yet, doubtless, I am to you ; for the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord." (1 Cor. ix. 2.) These things, therefore, were as another argument unto me, that God had called me to, and stood by me in this work. In my preaching of the word I took special notice of this one thing, namely, that the Lord did lead me to begin where His word begins, with sinners ; that is, to condemn all flesh, and to open and allege that the curse of God by the law, doth belong to, and lay hold on all men, as they come into the world, because of sin. Now this part of my work I fulfilled with great sense ; for the terrors of the law and guilt for my transgressions, lay heavy on my conscience. I preached what I felt,

what I smartingly did feel, even that under which my poor soul did groan and tremble to astonishment. Indeed, I have been as one sent to them from the dead. I went myself in chains to preach to them in chains ; and carried that fire in my own conscience that I persuaded them to beware of. I can truly say, and that without dissembling, that when I have been to preach, I have gone full of guilt and terror even to the pulpit door, and there it hath been taken off, and I have been at liberty in my mind until I have done my work ; and then immediately, even before I could get down the pulpit stairs, I have been as bad as I was before ; yet God carried me on, but surely with a strong hand, for neither guilt nor hell could take me off my work.

Thus I went on for the space of two years, crying out against men's sins, and their fearful state because of them. After which, the Lord came in upon my own soul with some sure peace and comfort through Christ ; for He did give me many sweet discoveries of His blessed grace through Him. Wherefore now

I altered in my preaching (but still I preached what I saw and felt), now therefore I did much labour to hold forth Jesus Christ in all His offices, relations, and benefits unto the world ; and did strive also to discover, to condemn, and remove those false supports and props on which the world doth both lean, and by them fall and perish. On these things also I stayed as long as on the other.

After this God led me into something of the mystery of the union of Christ ; wherefore that I discovered and showed to them also. And when I had travelled through these three chief points of the Word of God, about the space of five years and more, I was caught in my present practice and cast into prison, where I have lain above as long again, to confirm the truth by way of suffering, as I was before in testifying of it according to the Scriptures, in the way of preaching.

When I have been preaching, I thank God my heart hath often, all the time of this and the other exercise, with great earnestness cried to God that he would make the Word effectual

to the salvation of the soul ; still being grieved lest the enemy should take the Word away from the conscience, and so it should become unfruitful ; wherefore I did labour so to speak the Word, as that whereby, if possible, the sin and person guilty might be particularized by it. Also when I had done the exercise, it hath gone to my heart to think the Word should now fall as rain on stony places ; still wishing from my heart, O, that they who have heard me speak this day did but see as I do, what sin, death, hell, and the curse of God is ; and also what the grace, and love, and mercy of God is, through Christ, to men in such a case as they are, who are yet estranged from Him. And, indeed, I did often say in my heart before the Lord, that if to be hanged up presently before their eyes could be a means to awaken them, and confirm them in the truth, I gladly should be contented. For I have been in my preaching, especially when I have been engaged in the doctrine of life by Christ without works, as if an angel of God had stood by at my back to encourage me. Oh ! it hath been with such

power and heavenly evidence upon my own soul, while I have been labouring to unfold it, to demonstrate it, and to fasten it upon the consciences of others, that I could not be contented with saying, "I believe and am sure;" for methought I was more than sure (if it be lawful so to express myself), that those things which I then asserted were true. When I went first to preach the Word abroad, the doctors and priests of the country did open wide against me; but I was persuaded of this, not to render railing for railing, but to see how many of their carnal professors I could convince of their miserable state by the law, and of the want and worth of Christ; for, thought I, this shall answer for me in time to come, when they shall be for my hire before their face. (Gen. xxx. 33.)

I never cared to meddle with things that were controverted and in dispute among the saints, and especially things of the lowest nature; yet it pleased me much to contend with great earnestness for the word of faith, and the remission of sins by the death and

sufferings of Jesus ; but, I say, as to other things, I should let them alone, because I saw they engendered strife, and because that they neither in doing, nor in leaving undone, did commend us to God to be His. Besides, I saw my work before me did run into another channel, even to carry an awakening word ; to that, therefore, I did stick and adhere.

I never endeavoured to, nor durst make use of other men's lines (Rom. xv. 18), (though I condemn not all that do) ; for I verily thought, and found by experience, that what was taught me by the word and Spirit of Christ, could be spoken, maintained, and stood to, by the soundest and best established conscience ; and though I will not now speak all I know in this matter, yet my experience hath more interest in that text of Scripture (Gal. i. 11, 12), than many amongst men are aware. If any of those who were awakened by my ministry, did after that fall back (as sometimes too many did), I can truly say, their loss hath been more to me than if my own child, begotten of my own body, had been going to its grave. I think



verily I may speak it without any offence to the Lord, nothing has gone so near me as that, unless it was the fear of the loss of the salvation of my own soul. I have counted as if I had goodly buildings and lordships in those places where my children were born. My heart hath been so wrapped up in the glory of this excellent work, that I counted myself more blessed and honoured of God by this, than if he had made me emperor of the christian world, or the lord of all the glory of the earth without it! O these words! "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, doth save a soul from death." (James v. 20.) "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." (Prov. xi. 30.) "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." (Dan. xii. 3.) "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? for ye are our glory and joy." (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20.)

These, I say, with many others of a like nature, have been great refreshments to me. I have observed, that where I have had a work to do for God, I have had first, as it were, the going of God upon my spirit to desire I might preach there. I have also observed, that such and such souls, in particular, have been strongly set upon my heart, and I stirred up to wish for their salvation; and that these very souls have after this been given in as the fruits of my ministry. I have observed that a word, cast in by-the-bye, hath done more execution in a sermon, than all that was spoken besides. Sometimes also, when I have thought I did no good, then I did the most of all, and at other times, when I have thought I should catch them, I have fished for nothing. I have also observed, that where there has been a work to do upon sinners, there the devil hath begun to roar in the hearts, and by the mouths of his servants; yea, oftentimes when the wicked world hath raged most, there hath been souls awakened by the word.

I could instance particulars, but I forbear. My great desire, in my fulfilling my ministry, was to get into the darkest parts of the country, even amongst those people that were farthest off of profession; yet not because I could not endure the light (for I feared not to show my gospel to any), but because I found my spirit leaned most after awakening and converting work, and the word that I carried did lean itself most that way also; "Yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation." (Rom. xv. 20.)

In my preaching I have really been in pain, and have, as it were, travailed to bring forth children to God; neither could I be satisfied unless some fruits did appear in my work. If I were fruitless, it mattered not who commended me; but if I were fruitful, I cared not who did condemn. I have thought of that, "Lo! children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are

children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath filled his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." (Ps. cxxvii. 3, 4, 5.) It pleased me nothing to see people drink in opinions, if they seemed ignorant of Jesus Christ, and the worth of their own salvation; sound conviction for sin, especially for unbelief, and a heart set on fire to be saved by Christ, with strong breathings after a truly sanctified soul, was that which delighted me; those were the souls I counted blessed.

But in this work, as in all other, I had my temptations attending me, and those of divers kinds; as sometimes I should be assaulted with great discouragement therein, fearing that I should not be able to speak a word at all to edification; nay, that I should not be able to speak sense unto the people, at which times I should have such a strange faintness and strengthlessness seize upon my body, that my legs have scarce been able to carry me to the place of exercise. Sometimes again, when I have been preaching, I have been violently

assaulted with thoughts of blasphemy, and strongly tempted to speak the words with my mouth before the congregation. I have also sometimes, even when I have begun to speak the word with much clearness, evidence, and liberty of speech, yet been, before the ending of that opportunity, so blinded and so estranged from the things I have been speaking, and have been also so straitened in my speech, as to utterance before the people, that I have been as if I had not known or remembered what I had been about, or, as if my head had been in a bag all the time of my exercise. Again, when as sometimes I have been about to preach upon some smart and searching portion of the word, I have found the tempter suggest, "What? will you preach this? This condemns yourself. Of this your own soul is guilty, wherefore preach not of it at all; or, if you do, yet so mince it as to make way for your own escape, lest, instead of awakening others, you bring that guilt upon your own soul which you will never get from under." But I thank the Lord, I have been

kept from consenting to these so horrid suggestions, and have rather, as Samson, bowed myself with all my might to condemn sin and transgression, wherever I found it; yea, though therein also I did bring guilt upon mine own conscience. Let me die, thought I, with the Philistines (Judges xvi. 29, 30), rather than deal corruptly with the blessed Word of God. "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" It is far better for thee to judge thyself, even by preaching plainly to others, than that, to save thyself, thou imprison the truth in unrighteousness. Blessed be God for His help also in this.

I have also, when found in this blessed work of Christ, been often tempted to pride and liftings up of heart; and though I dare not say, I have not been affected with this, yet truly the Lord of His precious mercy, hath so carried it towards me, that for the most part I have had but small joy to give way to such a thing; for it hath been my every day's portion, to be let into the evil of my own heart, and still made to see such a multitude of cor-

ruptions and infirmities therein, that it hath caused hanging down of the head under all my gifts and attainments.

I have felt this thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9), the very mercy of God to me. I have also, together with this, had some notable place or other of the Word presented before me, which word hath contained in it some sharp and piercing sentence concerning the perishing of the soul, notwithstanding gifts and parts ; as, for instance (this hath been of great use to me), "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." (1 Cor. xiii. 1.) A tinkling cymbal is an instrument of music, with which a skilful player can make such melodious and heart-inflaming sounds, that all who hear him play can scarcely refrain from dancing ; and yet, behold, the cymbal hath not life, neither comes the music from it, but because of the art of him that plays therewith ; so then the instrument at last may come to nought and perish, though in times past such music hath been made upon it.

Just thus I saw it was, and will be, with them that have gifts, but want saving grace ; they are in the hand of Christ, as the cymbal in the hand of David ; and as David could with the cymbal make such mirth in the service of God as to elevate the hearts of the worshippers, Christ can so use these gifted men, as with them to affect the souls of his people in the church, yet, when He hath done all, hang them by as lifeless, though sounding cymbals. This consideration, therefore, together with some others, were for the most part as a maul on the head of pride and desire of vain-glory. What, thought I, shall I be proud because I am a sounding brass ? Is it so much to be a fiddle ? Hath not the least creature that hath life more of God in it than these ? Besides, I knew it was love should never die, but these must cease and vanish. So I concluded, a little grace, a little love, a little of the true fear of God, is better than all gifts ; yea, and I am fully convinced of it, that it is possible for souls that can scarce give a man an answer but with great confusion as to method—I say,



it is possible for them to have a thousand times more grace, and so to be more in the love and favour of the Lord, than some, who, by virtue of the gift of knowledge, can deliver themselves like angels. Thus, therefore, I came to perceive, that, though gifts in themselves were good to the thing for which they were designed, to wit, the edification of others, yet empty and without power to save the soul of him that hath them, if they be alone ; neither are they, if so, any sign of a man's state to be happy, being only a dispensation of God to some, of whose improvement, or non-improvement, they must, when a little more love is over, give an account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. This showed me too that gifts being alone were dangerous, not in themselves, but because of those evils that attend them that have them, to wit, pride, desire of vain-glory, self-conceit, &c., all which were easily blown up at the applause and commendation of every unadvised christian, to the endangering of a poor creature to fall into the condemnation of the devil.

I saw, therefore, that he that hath gifts had need be let into a sight of the nature of them, to wit, that they come short of making him to be in a truly saved condition, lest he rest in them, and so fall short of the grace of God.

He hath also cause to walk humbly with God and be little in his own eyes, and to remember withal that his gifts are not his own but the Church's, and that by them he is made a servant to the Church ; and he must give at last an account of his stewardship unto the Lord Jesus ; and to give a good account will be a blessed thing. Let all men, therefore, prize a little with the fear of the Lord. Gifts indeed are desirable, but yet, great grace and small gifts are better than great gifts and no grace. It doth not say, the Lord gives gift and glory, but, the Lord gives grace and glory ; and blessed is such an one to whom the Lord gives grace, true grace, for that is a certain fore-runner of glory.

## FROM THE LETTERS OF HENRY VENN.

I HAVE been long kept back from practising what I did for seven years with much profit,—*fasting*. My wife and daughter have exclaimed I should ruin my health, &c. I have at last come to a composition, which is, that on Fridays I shall not breakfast, nor be with them till dinner. By this means I have some time for solemn recollection, and more attention to the things of God. And the advantage even of this little sequestration is evident; I find more of a spiritual mind,—am more sensible of the Divine presence,—more watchful that no foolish conversation proceedeth out of my mouth,—and I am more helped in preaching. Indeed, ministers of Christ must be a good deal in retirement, to gird up the loins of the mind, or we shall be in a great strait at last.

Yours &c.,

H. VENN.

THE remaining extracts will be found to refer, more or less, to two common temptations, incident to those engaged in the ministry of the word—the love of study, and the love of change.

These, though in some respects incompatible with each other (for the itinerant can hardly be a man of *much* study), nevertheless, can entice the same person at different times; and even supposing it impossible that the same individual should suffer from both, most are exposed to the allurements of one or the other.

It is hardly too much to say, that the studious pastor or evangelist is solicited by the threefold temptation of the lust of the

flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. From the lust of the flesh, indeed, he *seems* peculiarly and nobly exempt; Παχῆς γαστῆρ λεπτὸν οὐ τίκτει νόον. But when on the one hand, he has before him the bright fire, the warm and carpeted study, the well-filled and inviting bookshelves—on the other, the cold and miry, perhaps, rainy walk, the distant cottage or dark garret, and perhaps, to any but a spiritual mind, uninteresting household to visit: let not the presumed lover of excessive mental enjoyment be too sure that he is not also consulting his bodily ease.\*

From the lust of the eye he may also seem exempt. But a heart not walking by faith must walk by sight, and generally will delight in something that can be felt and handled—if not in gold sovereigns, in an accumulation of

\* Those who know much of the literary world, may recall to mind instances of men of first rate talents and acquirements, who have been sadly addicted to sensual pleasure. We are apt to forget, that, what it cost the boy or the youth, laborious diligence to *acquire*, indolence and self-indulgence may tempt the man to *enjoy*.

*books*, and, with the poor members of Christ (or, rather, Christ in them), claiming bodily relief at his hands, while he has numerous, and expensive, perhaps handsomely bound, books in his library, can we say, there has been *no* indulgence of the lust of the eye?

Still less can we absolve the too eager student, from the charge of a fault *analogous* to the gratification of the lust of the eye; *i.e.*, the accumulation of intellectual treasures, and that which is a real, though refined idolatry. What matters it, as far as the *principle* of false worship is concerned, whether the stronghold to which the heart of the professor continually resorts is the cellar of the Bank of England, or a chamber of imagery in his own brain? The *possession* of money in the one case, and the *possession* of knowledge in the other, has been the object of undue and idolatrous attachment.

And this is intimately connected with the third form of worldliness—the “pride of life.” Here, the literary minister is often and grievously in fault. The love of fame—the

hope of shining as an intellectual preacher, as a learned author—of gaining credit as a philosopher, or metaphysician ; these are temptations by which the faithful are tormented, the unfaithful ensnared and overcome. Are we, then, it may be asked, to advocate ministerial ignorance, neglect study, burn our libraries, and commence a crusade against science and literature? Nay, but let us *watch*, as well as pray. Even the most legitimate subjects of ministerial study, the original scriptures, church history, or modern languages with a view to missionary operations, need to be attended to with jealous watchfulness over the student's heart, lest the fact of their being in a measure lawful, should render the temptation to excess more dangerous.

The remaining temptation, the love of change, may be traced, in many cases, to a carnal distaste for the pastoral work,

“The future pleases, why? The present pains.”

Substitute ‘distant,’ for ‘future,’ and what was true of *time*, becomes true also of *place*.

Real love to the Lord, and in Him to His members, would reconcile a pastor to the monotony of constant service in one place. What fond mother ever complained of the *monotony* of nursery occupations? Of course, the writer is far from insinuating that there are *never* any good reasons for a pastor or evangelist travelling, or otherwise changing his place. Itinerant service is what some are called to, but it is often more exciting, and therefore more tempting, than stationary work.

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#### FROM JOHN NEWTON'S LETTERS.

I TRULY pity those who rise early and late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness, with no higher prize and prospect in view, than the obtaining of academical honours. Such pursuits will ere long appear (as they really are), vain as the sports of children.

May the Lord impress them with a noble ambition of living to and for Him. If these



adventurers, who are labouring for pebbles, under the semblance of goodly pearls, had a discovery of the pearl of great price, how quickly and gladly would they lay down their admired attainments, and become fools that they might be truly wise! What a snare have you escaped! You would have been poorly content with the name of a mathematician, or a poet, and looked no farther, had He not visited your heart, and enlightened you by His grace. Now, I trust you account your former gain but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ the Lord. What you have attained in a way of literature, will be useful to you, if sanctified, and chiefly so, by the knowledge you have of its insufficiency to any valuable purpose, in the great concerns of walking with God and winning souls.

Let me beg you to deliberate well and pray earnestly, before you take this step. Be afraid of acting in your own spirit, or under a wrong impression; however honestly you mean, you may be mistaken. The Lord has given you a little charge: be faithful in it,

and in His good time, He will advance you to a greater; but let His providence evidently open the door for you, and be afraid of moving one step before the cloud and pillar. I have had my warm fits and desires of this sort in my time; but I have reason to be thankful that I was held in with a strong hand.

I wish there were more itinerant preachers. If a man has grace, and zeal, and but little fund, let him go and diffuse the substance of a dozen sermons over as many counties; but you have natural and acquired abilities, which qualify you for the more difficult, and, in my judgment, not less important, station of a parochial minister. I wish you to be a burning, shining, steady light. You may, perhaps, have less popularity, that is, you will be less exposed to the workings of self and the snares of Satan, if you stay with us; but I think you may live in the full exercise of your gifts and graces, be more consistent with your voluntary engagements, and have more peace of mind and humble intercourse with God, in watching over a

flock which He has committed to you, than, by forsaking them, to wander up and down the earth without a determined scope.

If you have not actually passed the Rubicon, if there be yet room for deliberation, I once more entreat you to pause and consider. In many respects I ought to be willing to learn from you, but in one point I have a little advantage of you; I am some years older, both in life and in profession; and in this difference of time, perhaps, I have learned something more of the heart, the world, and the devices of Satan, than you have had opportunity for. I hope I would not damp your zeal, but I will pray the Lord to direct it into the best channel for permanent usefulness; I say permanent—I doubt not that you would be useful in the itinerant way; but I more and more observe great inconveniences follow in that way. Where you make a gathering of people, others will follow you, and if they all possessed your spirit, and had your disinterested views, it might be well.

But generally an able [itinerant] preacher,

only so far awakens people to a desire to hear, as exposes them to the incursions of various winds of doctrine, and the attempts of injudicious pretenders, who will resemble you in nothing but your eagerness to post from place to place.

From such measures in time proceed errors, parties, contentions, offences, enthusiasms, spiritual pride, and a noisy, ostentatious form of godliness, but little of that power and life of faith which shows itself by humility, meekness, and love. A parochial minister, who lives among his people, who sees and converses with them frequently, and exemplifies his doctrine in their view, by his practice, having knowledge of their states, trials, growth, and dangers, suits himself to their various occasions, and, by the blessing of God, builds them up, and brings them forward in faith and holiness. He is instrumental in forming their experience; he leads them to a solid, orderly, scriptural knowledge of divine things. If his name is not in so many mouths as that of the itinerant, it is upon the hearts of the people of his charge.

## FROM THE SAME TO ANOTHER CORRESPONDENT.

I AM not well pleased with the account you give of so many dry bones. It increases my wonder, that you could so readily exchange so much plump flesh and blood as you had about you, for a parcel of dry bones. I wish they may not haunt you, and disturb your peace. I wish these same dry bones do not prove thorns in your sides and in your eyes. You say, you have now to pray, and prophesy, and wait for the four winds to come, and put life into these bones. God grant that your prayers may be answered; but if I knew a man who possessed a field in a tolerable soil, which had afforded him some increase every year, and if this man, after having bestowed seven years' labour in cultivating, weeding, manuring, fencing, &c., just when he has brought his ground (in his neighbour's judgment) into good order, and might reasonably hope for larger crops than he had ever yet seen, should suddenly forego all his advantages, leave his good seed for the birds to eat, pull up the

young fences which cost him so much pains to plant, and all this for the sake of making a new experiment upon the top of a mountain ; though I might heartily wish him great success, I could not honestly give him great encouragement. You have parted with that for a trifle, which in my eyes seems an inestimable jewel ; I mean the hearts and affections of an enlightened people. This appears to me one of the greatest honours and greatest pleasures a faithful minister can possess, and which many faithful and eminent ministers have never been able to obtain.

This gave you a vast advantage ; your gift was more acceptable there than that of any other person, and more than you will probably find elsewhere. For I cannot make a comparison between the hasty approbation of a few, whose eyes are but beginning to open, and their affections and passions warm, so that they must, if possible, have the man that first catches their attention ; I say, I cannot think this worthy to be compared to the regard of a people who understood the gospel, were able

to judge of men and doctrines, and had trial of you for so many years.

It is, indeed, much to your honour (it proves that you were faithful, diligent, and exemplary), that the people proved so attached to you; but that you should force yourself from them, when they so dearly loved you and so much needed you; this has made all your friends in these parts to wonder, and your enemies to rejoice; and I, alas! know not what to answer in your behalf to either. Say not, "I hate this Micaiah, for He prophesies not good of me, but evil." But allow me the privilege of a friend. My heart is full when I think of what has happened, and what will, probably, be the consequence. In few words, I am strongly persuaded you have taken an unadvised step, and would, therefore, prepare you for the inconvenience and uneasiness you may meet with; and if I am (as I desire I may prove) mistaken, my advice will do no harm; you will want something to balance the caresses and success you meet with.

[The Compiler must remark on the foregoing extracts from John Newton, that, while there is in them much that is truly practical and instructive, the importance of itinerant service is somewhat overlooked, notwithstanding a few concessions in its favour.

The safe rule would seem to be, Let no one undertake this kind of labour, without a clear conscience, and a full conviction that he is seeking the good of souls and the glory of God, instead of the excitement of travelling, or the celebrity of a widely-known preacher.

It should also be added, that the extracts have been made, because of their generally profitable *import*—peculiar views of church government are not noticed, nor are the words that express them altered.]

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EXTRACT FROM A LETTER OF JOHN  
BROWN, (OF HADDINGTON.)

*Supposed to be the last he wrote.*

“IF I never write to you more, be these my last words: There is none like Christ, none like Christ, none like Christ. Nothing like redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. There is no learning nor knowledge like the knowledge of Christ. No life like Christ, living in the heart by faith. No work like the service, the spiritual service of Christ. No reward like the free-grace wages of Christ. No riches nor wealth like the unsearchable riches of Christ. No rest, no comfort, like the rest, the consolations of Christ. No pleasure like the pleasure of fellowship with Christ. Little as I know of Christ, and it is my dreadful sin and shame that I know so little of Him, I would not exchange the learning of one hour’s fellowship with Christ, for all the liberal learning in ten thousand uni-

versities, during ten thousand ages, even though angels were to be my teachers. Nor would I exchange the pleasure my soul has found, in a word or two about Christ, as *thy* God, *my* God, for all the cried-up pleasures of creation since the world began. For what, then, would I exchange the being for ever with Christ, to behold His glory, see God in Him as He is, and enter into the joy of my Lord?

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#### FROM THE LETTERS OF HENRY VENN.

YOUR zealous endeavour, my dear friend, to make me entertain the same idea of the great use of Hebrew learning, which now so fully possesses your own mind, is owing to the real regard you bear for me. But as this subject draws us into debate, and diverts us from better things, I now send you my reasons at large, which compel me totally to differ from you in this matter.

First, I must premise, that I readily allow

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great masters in the Oriental tongues are well employed in their study ; because, in *general*, they are men evidently strangers to the life of God in the soul, whilst they possess fine abilities for verbal criticism.

Their works, therefore, I read diligently ; and when they bring satisfactory evidence for a reading different from the Authorized Translation, I adopt their corrections, just as classical men do those of Dacier, Francis, and Hurd, in Horace, without the drudgery of searching all the volumes they have done. Some places in the Psalms I have corrected by Dr. S. Chandler ; some in Job, by Mr. Peters ; some in Isaiah, I have done by Bishop Lowth, &c., &c. Yet, before such eminent critics in the Hebrew tongue corrected our Translation respecting several unintelligible sentences, the Sacred Books were, in their substance, no less profitable (saving in these few places) to every reader. And upon the most exact inquiry, I cannot say that I have received from their labours one new spiritual idea, or any instruction in religious doctrines, I possessed not

before I adopted their emendations of the text.

These amount to no more, in my judgment, than taking away a few blemishes on the fingers or toes of the noblest statue the world ever saw ; which, though it be a pleasing and desirable work, adds nothing to the grand idea the statue itself impresses.

I observe further ; that even those excellent emendations made by these celebrated critics, are still *a translation*,—not, what you seem to lay such mighty stress upon, the original Hebrew ; so that when I adopt their corrections, in one place I receive Chandler's, in another Lowth's version, instead of our established one. And the utmost the ablest scholar can attain to, is no more than to prefer *his own interpretation* of the original text, as better than that of a number of scholars more deeply learned in the same tongue than himself.

For what a prodigy of parts, and application too, must he be, and what a high conceit of his own intellect must he possess, who can think himself more able to *translate* the *Hebrew*

than forty-seven men skilled in that tongue ; and therefore selected for the work out of all the divines then in the kingdom,—men who did not lean to their own understanding, but looked up to the Father of lights for direction and teaching ; some of them confessors for the truth—men who studied more hours in a week than modern scholars in a month—men who lived so truly the life of children of God and members of Christ, that none of us can keep pace with them ! These forty-seven men were diligently employed near three whole years about this great work, and conducted it by the best rules one can conceive. Now is there the least degree of probability, that any individual Hebrew scholar should have acuteness, learning, and judgment, so superior to these forty-seven truly venerable scholars, as to be justified in calling their version “*lies*,” but his own version the word of God ?

[*Here follows an extract from Fuller's Church History, of the rules observed by the Translators in their work.*]

Now, let any scholar, free from prejudice,

consider all the learning and piety, the industry, judgment, and care, used by this assembly (who had also the help of the whole fund of learning in Hebrew at that time in the kingdom) ; and then say whether there is reason to think any private person is likely, by his own pains, to translate the text better than they have done ? Strange, if even Vitringa, Lowth, or Kennicott, should be able to translate—I will not say the whole Hebrew Bible, but even a considerable part of it, with so few mistakes as the most venerable assembly, probably, that ever sat in the world, have made ! The experiment, in many instances, has been tried, and confirms my conclusion : for Lowth corrects Kennicott, Kennicott Lowth ; a third great critic corrects them both. So much did I observe of this, early in life, to my great grief, as to make me pay little deference ever after to critics, or their corrections in general.

The conclusion, therefore, is plain :—I must either hold every Hebrew scholar is more to be trusted as a faithful interpreter of the text, on the force of his own learning and abilities,

than all our translators ; or I must allow their version, *upon the whole*, is much more likely to be the meaning of the text ; which, in general, is the conclusion I hold.

When you call our translation “lies,” and not the Word of God, you bring no proof of your very crude assertion. Our Bible relates the Creation of the world in six days—the Fall and its consequences—the Universal Flood—the Promise of Christ—the call of Abraham—the history of his posterity—the character, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and offices of Christ—the exceeding great and precious promises of life through Him, and universal Resurrection and Judgment to come. Now, our souls need nothing more for doctrine \* than these great things taught by the Holy Ghost ; on these are founded our knowledge, faith, love, hope, peace, and our salvation is secured ; and all these great things are *entirely independent* of every obscure passage which it

\* The worthy writer ought rather to have said “for salvation.” We need for *doctrine*, whatever God has condescended to reveal. (See 2 Tim. iii. 16.)—*Editor.*

is the work and joy of the verbal critic to set right. You should, therefore, my friend, either prove to me that these great things in God's Law, are not every way of themselves, when taught by the Holy Ghost, sufficient for all spiritual life and godliness ; or prove that our translation gives a very deficient account of these matters, far different from the original. Till this is done (which I never heard was attempted), I must conclude we have the substance of the Word of God as truly in a translation as in the Hebrew Bible ; and that every real Christian, who now devoutly ponders on his English Bible, has before his eyes the Oracles of God, and no less hears His voice, than if he could read the Hebrew and understand it as well as Isaiah himself.

Further, when you contemptuously reproach the English Bible, and call it "*lies*," because there are in it many faults, you seem to forget the Hebrew text itself is very far from being absolutely pure or intelligible. The Arabic, the Syriac, the Chaldee versions are often ransacked in vain, to explain a word or sentence



in the text. How often, in one single book of the Prophets, does Bishop Lowth interpret the Hebrew and correct it by the Septuagint ! whilst Bishop Warburton goes so far as to say, the Hebrew without the Septuagint, would be as unintelligible as a cypher without its key. Again ; how many words are left out ! How many are put in ! How does Bishop Lowth lament the imperfect state (*N.B.* in the superlative degree), of the Hebrew text—"Never," (says he) "to be recovered !" Notwithstanding all this, you call the Hebrew Scriptures the Word of God, and justly ; because all these errata and interpolations, taken together, and made the most of which an enemy can, bear no proportion to what is pure, nor at all affect either the grand and marvellous facts, or the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. What bigoted partiality then, and how cruel to English readers of their Bible, to call it "lies," because it has many faults,—more perhaps than the Hebrew ! The only lawful conclusion from hence, as it appears to me, is that the providence of the all-wise God has permitted these

things, in order to humble men who would exalt themselves on account of their Hebrew learning, as if they had those superior advantages over common Christians, which they are so ready to claim. These things being permitted, prove that the great end for which "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," is fully attainable in every translation, no less than by the knowledge of the original; and that both learned and unlearned equally need the Spirit of truth, without which neither the original nor a version will do the soul good.

This leads to another remark; that our God never prescribes a critical study of the Hebrew text; but a very different way, which every contrite spirit always chooses. He commands—He repeatedly commands,—and urges us, to seek, with vehement prayer, as a matter of life, and to *cry unto Him*, for knowledge in divine things. Whilst His oracles are before us, assuring us that this divine knowledge of peerless excellence is not the mere fruit of study and learning, but His gift. (Prov. ii. 1—9.) Should I therefore search indefatigably for a correct

Hebrew text, if I did not, at the same time, with importunity implore God to teach me, I should indeed be guilty of a sinful neglect, and God would say of all the pains I took to get Hebrew learning, "What is this to *me* ; even to me ? saith the Lord." From Him I never can find the least intimation that His adorable\* Word would be sadly perverted by a bad translation : though Christ and His apostles knew perfectly well, that the Scriptures could not possibly be read by the Gentiles (one in a thousand excepted), unless read in a version. They give not a single hint of any evil which was to arise to the Church from this ; though Christ very plainly told the Pharisees that they by their traditions made the commandment of God of none effect. And this remark is much to my purpose, as there is good reason to believe the Hebrew text in His time had faults. St. Paul in his directions to Timothy and Titus to choose pastors, never bids them be careful

\* This word "adorable," ought rather to have been omitted. *God*, not *Scripture*, is the true object of adoration.—*Editor*.

not to lay hands on any Christian who had sinfully neglected to read the Hebrew Bible.

If the time and thoughts of those who are ministers of Christ are principally employed to become masters in Oriental learning (and such they certainly should be, who take upon them to vilify the translation), their application to this business will leave but a fragment of time for secret prayer, devout meditation, or preparation to carry on family worship with any life, or benefit, or pleasure ; and still less will it leave of that frame of mind which is essential to true worship. For, after investigating a Hebrew root, or endeavouring to elucidate a dark passage by the aid of Buxtorf, Pagninus, Gussetius, Cocceius, &c., &c. (a critic always consults these famous lexicographers), after this business, which has no relation to the devout exercises of the heart, the mind will still be running upon the reasons each different author offered for his sense of the passage, or derivation of the root, or aiming at some happier conjecture. Smitten with the lust of correcting an established version, and imperceptibly to

themselves, filled with the flattering idea of their own great ingenuity, such scholars will be indefatigable in searching for evidence to support their own interpretation—be exceedingly partial, through self-love, to their own important discoveries,—very violent and obstinate in defence of them,—and, narrow as is the human mind, and not made to pass by a quick transition from things so foreign from all communion with God, to a profitable use of the means of grace, such pastors will grow cool to all exercises of the mind which are truly spiritual, and cease to do good to the flock of Christ—the Church He has purchased with His own blood. Now, for my own part, I do not see how any pastor in the Church of Christ can justify himself, if this be the effect of studying Hebrew learning intensely [in so studying it], and that no other effect is generally experienced, there are too many melancholy proofs.

Our Saviour tells us, doctrines are to be tried by their fruits. We may safely apply this to our studies, and to scholars of greatest

note. Consequently, if we saw strenuous pleaders for the necessity and vast benefit of Hebrew learning go far beyond all others, in compassion for perishing sinners—in zeal for enlarging the kingdom of Messiah—and in imitating His example, so that not a relation, friend, or acquaintance, could be with them without receiving good to their souls ; we should then, without hesitation, allow they did well, and could never too highly exalt the usefulness of that knowledge which brought forth such good fruits. But where are these excellent effects found to proceed from an indefatigable application to Hebrew learning? On the contrary, I know several Hebrew scholars, who no sooner came to the knowledge of themselves and of Christ, and were fired with an apostolic desire to save sinners, than they relinquished their pursuit of Hebrew learning. Mr Clarke, of Chesham Boyce ; Mr. Stillingfleet of Worcester ; Mr. Berridge, and others, I have authority to say, did so. The same was my own case ; and all for the same reason ; we found, that in reading the Hebrew, our

attention was called off to consult the Lexicographers, and very much of our time taken up, in inquiring whether the text was rendered best by such and such a derivation of the Root. Without, therefore, consulting at all together, we all gave up ourselves to our ministerial work;—and I believe not one of us has ever repented.

The case of the illiterate deserves our consideration. They immediately (I have known many instances), conclude, that if the translation is materially wrong in some places, it may be so in many more, and especially in what strikes directly at their favourite lusts. A gentleman of my acquaintance had a servant who had heard the English Bible not over respectfully treated; and upon being admonished by his master, that servants were commanded not to answer again, when reproved—“O sir,” says he, “*that*, I am told, is a wrong translation.”

I am grieved beyond measure to see the children of God startled and confounded, and distressed to the last degree, from numberless

and most peremptory accusations against the English Bible as false ;—yet is it all they have.

I wish you to be jealous over yourself, and, as in the presence of God, ask yourself what real good you have received to your immortal soul from so much study and such violent pursuit of Hebrew learning? How different was your judgment when we were first acquainted!—when your whole soul was so engaged with the work you undertook—when dear Mr. Grimshaw, Mr. Hervey, and others, whose whole talk was of the power, and glory, and mightiness of God's kingdom, were so pleasing and profitable as you then confessed! Their discourse was all to the purpose; it was the substance we were then all concerned about. O may we be more and more so, the nearer the hour of our departure approaches! I have been lately ill, and found, as Dr. Watts says of himself, I had no comfort then, but from the plain promises—just as every common man, who can hear the Bible, has for his support.

From your affectionate Friend,

H. VENN.



Of this extract we may also say that it contains much truth, but the opposition to the study of Hebrew is carried too far. The writer of it himself in a letter to his son (p. 397) expresses a wish that he would learn to read the Hebrew Bible. Romaine, too, one perhaps not a whit behind H. Venn in love to the Lord Jesus, constantly read the Old Testament in the original. His Hebrew Psalter was the companion of his breakfast-table and of his dying bed. Yet Romaine was not one of those in whom the love of study has swallowed up the love of God. "I am sitting," he writes, "abashed at my ignorance at my Master's feet. He has made me willing to hear His words, and I find His lips so full of grace, that I cannot spare a moment for my Homer or Virgil, my favourite Tully or Demosthenes. Adieu for ever to all the classics. I see a heavenly life, as well as a matchless beauty in my Lord's words, and though I am a dull scholar, yet He is a blessed Master."

We give one more extract from Romaine. "O sir, what are you doing ; that other books

are so much read, and the Bible so neglected ! Will you learn from a poor penitent ? Indeed I repent, and God forgive my misspent time in sciences and classics. I saw my folly two and twenty years ago, and have since studied nothing but the Bible ; and I assure you, sir, I am got but a little way. I see such things before me which I know but in part, that I am pressing on, and I wish for some of my lost time to spend in this blessed study."

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FROM H. VENN.

*"He went about doing good :"*—this is the pattern for every Christian. He is a counterfeit one who does not strive to imitate it. The strength, the alacrity, the joy of the soul, is connected with this imitation. Religious people are heavy, and moping, and cast down, principally because they are idle and selfish. The active benevolent spirit of watching for opportunities to do essential service to our fellow-creatures, they often feel no more than the

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profane. What then avail notions and doctrines believed to no good purpose? More especially I look upon it as the great sin and reproach of *scholars*, that they almost universally neglect their fellow-creatures. They are lamentably selfish, they make no use of their learning, and the influence it gives them, and their ability to teach, as they should do every day, in setting forth the great things of God's law, and pleading the glorious cause of God against the world, and all the deluded votaries of pleasure.

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## FROM ARCHBISHOP LEIGHTON.

### ON CONTROVERSY.

UNA lis est seu controversia, bellum unum nobilissimum et homine Christiano dignissimum adversus hostes non longè quærendos in visceribus nostris ingenitos; hos πολέμῳ ἀσπίνδῳ ad necem usque persequi æquissimum. O Pueri, Juvenes, Senes, in hâc militiâ strenuè pugnemus omnes !

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I DON'T want to get *things* right ; I want to  
get *souls* right.—ANON.

THE END.

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TO THE CLERGY, AUTHORS, ETC.

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*Extracted from the Protestant World, July, 1849.*

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