

VERMONT TELEGRAPH.

TWO DOLLARS PER ANNUM.]

BY ORSON S. MURRAY.

"I AM SET FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL."

BRANDON, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 1840.

[PAYABLE WITHIN FOUR MONTHS]

VOL. XII. NO. 25

VERMONT TELEGRAPH.

BRANDON, SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 1840.

For the Vermont Telegraph. CHURCH DISCIPLINE.—No. III.

In my last, I promised to present some reasons for lax discipline in churches;—together with objections against proper order and punctuality in the exercise of disciplinary power.

And first,—ministers, or pastors, are supposed to have certain authority given them by Christ, in matters of church order and discipline; and to have an extensive influence over the people of their solemn charge. And in order to keep all in their proper place, should be extensively acquainted with their flock—that it out of the way they may be able to apply successfully the proper remedy. Also they should be thorough disciplinarians—that is, acquainted with rules which Jesus Christ has given for the purity and peace, the harmony and efficiency of the church. But few however are thoroughly acquainted with the proper rules of church government; and fewer still have moral courage to apply, or have applied what they do know is right.

Again,—If ministers neglect to instruct the church into gospel discipline, they of course will have but few in their churches who will supply their deficiencies. Hence ignorance in churches is one cause of deficiency in discipline. Ministers must take hold of this subject, as they do of others, and teach it to their respective churches, until they will come up to Bible rules, and act as cheerfully in dealing with or excluding a member, as in receiving into the church. And brethren in churches should turn their minds especially to this subject, and enquire what is their duty to God and his cause upon this subject,—for if through ignorance, indolence, fear, or any other cause, the religion of Christ suffers, an awful responsibility must rest upon the church. It is evident that a reformation is necessary on this subject in all our churches; and to effect it ministers must preach more upon it, and it will be done.

I might say that there are many reasons which cannot now be treated at length, which hinder the full and healthy exercise of church discipline. Let me name them in short. Neglect of ministers—ignorance in churches—a false delicacy—a pretended affection for individuals—a disregard of the ultimate and best good of the church of Christ.

Further, I will name a few objections. And first,—“We are all sinners and liable to err.” Now suppose a physician was to act upon the same principle, I ask what must become of his patient? The physician says, when called to amputate a limb, I am lame, and cannot do it because I am so. But carry the same objection over to preaching to men, because ministers are themselves sinners. “Physician heal thyself.” Hence we must wait until we are glorified, and then we will call men to repentance.

Second,—“If we deal with, or exclude, for heresy, we shall offend against the liberty of conscience.” Now which is worst in point of expediency or regard to conscience, to have the feelings of the whole church outraged and the truth slandered, or to injure the feelings of an individual or a disaffected member?

Third,—“We shall lose the friendship and wealth of the rich, and those who do much for the church.” Now let me ask, what kind of religion is that which teaches us to halve the matter between God and the devil,—or in hope of gain to sacrifice the peace and purity of Zion? It is not ours to calculate upon consequences, but to do our duty and leave the event in the hands of Him who hath all hearts in his power. If God's cause must sink under a faithful, fearless and prayerful discharge of duty, let it go down, and let me go with it! Like Gideon's army the church may be reduced low—a small number only to sustain the burden and take the field—yet God will honor those who honor him, and make them mighty amidst all their weakness.

Fourth,—“We shall make enemies of our friends.” Now all admit it to be duty to receive persons into the church, when they give evidence of piety and are baptized; and on the same principle it is duty to exclude or deal with them when they do wrong. If we act right in either case, it will be to glorify God; and his glory will be as much advanced by the latter as by the former. And again, God will take care of his own cause and children, if they only serve him. “Fear not little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

Yours, &c., A PASTOR.

Religious Miscellany.

MISSIONARY GLEANINGS.

The Queen of Madagascar

Continues to oppose all efforts to introduce the Christian religion. Those who embrace it are liable to death.

The Colored people in the Mauritius.

These neglected people are deriving some benefit from the expulsion of missionaries from Madagascar, as they are now receiving their special attention.

The Mongolian Scriptures

Are now printed in regular order, to the second book of Samuel. The missions in Siberia are prospering, although as yet but few converts are numbered.

Services in Benares.

Six or seven services are generally held, weekly, in the hot seasons, and more in the cooler. Four more missionaries, with assistants, are required immediately.

Pilgrim's progress.

This sublime evangelical poem, has been translated in Telogoo. The power of idolatry in the region of Madras is thought to be greatly on the decline.

The work in Polynesia.

In the Navigators' Islands, 23,000 natives are under Christian instruction. In the Society Islands, congregations are very large. In the Georgian Islands, a gracious revival has been enjoyed, and many added to the communion. The entire scriptures have been published in the language of the natives.

Gospel Propagation Society.

The expenditures of this Society, for the support of the gospel in the British North American colonies, during the year 1838, amounted to 60,000 dollars. It is conducted by British Episcopalians. About \$25,000 are annually expended in the West Indies.

Under the Scotch Mission.

At Bombay, considerable excitement was created by the conversion and baptism of two Parsee youths, in connection with the labors of Dr. Wilson.

The Indian Territory.

600 miles long, 200 broad. It is fertile, and had 90,000 red men for its inhabitants last May. The Kansas tribe number 1588, are situated on the Kansas river, in three villages, and have a prosperous Methodist mission, within 80 miles, viz: Kickapoo, Delawares, Shawnees. The population has increased within a few months more than thirty thousand: now they are, therefore, more than a hundred thousand, settled for their permanent home.

All the history of the past shows the difficulty of applying the means of improvement to wandering tribes. But, induce them to become fixed and permanent, and more than all, let them be dependent on the produce of the ground for subsistence; then they are within our reach, and from that moment they have a special interest in the country in which they live. Industry then becomes necessary to prolong life, and private property is invested with an interest, which the hunter knows nothing of. With industry, and the desire of protection in individual property, are connected some of the most important moral virtues, and there is felt, too, the necessity of some law for protection. In such a condition war ceases to be desirable; and then men begin to see the importance of at least some education as may be needed in the work of legislative and administrative justice. At this stage, the work of civil improvement may be safely left, in ordinary circumstances, to take care of itself. But as surely as there is in human nature an instinctive desire to improve our condition, so surely may we, as a general rule, expect a people to improve when once brought into a condition that admits of improvement. The work may, nay, it must be slow; or it may be hindered and interrupted by war, by local circumstances, or by the conduct of wicked and designing men; but, contingencies aside, our expectations of improvement are founded upon principles interwoven with every feeling of the human heart. Greatly therefore, do they err who assume that Indians cannot be civilized. And it is believed that they also do err as much who assume that civilization must necessarily go before Christianity. The Christian religion is adapted to human nature under all circumstances, and in every possible condition; and at the same time that it may be allowed that some conditions have more temptations than others to do wrong, or to neglect holy duties, yet what in the nature of things should prevent the Indian hunter, who is clothed in skins, and dwells in a wigwam, from knowing his Redeemer and discharging piously the duties of his station? Does Christianity consist in living in goodly houses? Is piety necessarily connected with European cloth or the wearing of a hat? Surely there is no valid reason why the gospel should not be made known to the Indian tribes in every stage of their improvement, or even while they are yet farthest removed from civilization. And if, as is sometimes the case, the holy truths of God's word gain an entrance into the hearts of savages, they will hardly be thereby disqualified from improving their physical condition.

Missionary Herald.

TO THE PROSPEROUS.

Never forget that it is not by your might, or wisdom, or prudence, that you are successful. “God is Judge.”

Beware of contemning others less successful than yourself. Be not reluctant to look kindly in a poor man's face. He may in the end appear to be your superior.

Diligently inquire why you have prosperity. Is it granted in covenant love as to Job, a part of his days? Or is it sent in wrath? “The prosperity of fools shall destroy them.” “When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed forever.”

If outward prosperity is the strongest evidence you possess of the divine favor, you are on the road to hell. See Luke

vi. 24, 25, and xii. 16—20, and xvi. 19—31.

Very few truly pious men have had a large share of what the world regards as prosperity.

Present success may, even in this life soon be followed by dreadful trials. Remember Job. Are you ready for the days of darkness?

Now, when you have the means of self-denying usefulness, is your time to lay a good foundation against the time to come. Beware of crying—“I shall never be moved.” It is folly.

Guard against the indulgence of carnal appetite and carnal propensities, especially pride, luxury, idleness, boasting and wantonness.

The more prosperity you have in life, the more grace will you need to enable you to die happily.

Beware of flattery, for men will praise you when you do well to yourself.

Be not ashamed of your humble origin, nor of your poor but virtuous kindred.

As you have received much, prepare for a very solemn account at the bar of God, for of you much will be required. *Southern Watchman.*

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.—Though the unity of the same spirit is to be seen throughout the whole body of the Holy Scriptures, it must yet be acknowledged, there is in the book of Psalms an individual grace, and a character which belongs to it in particular. No one can study it, without finding in it all the divers passions with which he may be agitated, all the varying inclinations, and also the means of calming the one, and appeasing the other. The other books of the Old Testament show us, in some, the good that is to be imitated and the evil that is to be avoided; in others, the prophecies concerning the coming of the Savior; in others the lives and actions of kings and holy personages. But the Psalms, whilst they at the same time do not omit these things, teach us moreover to become acquainted with ourselves, and to find a remedy for the spiritual maladies, with which we may be afflicted. Other books tell us that we must be penitent, subject to afflictions, and render thanks to God. This teaches us how to humble ourselves,—how to conduct ourselves under calamity, and how to express our gratitude. Elsewhere, it is the example of others that is proposed for our imitation; here we identify ourselves with the sacred author, and study our own history. This single volume is sufficient for all the necessities of the human heart; there is no situation in life in which we may not draw from it the most precious advantages. Whether we are tried by temptation or by adversity, exposed to danger, or saved from peril, in sorrow or in joy, the Psalms still furnish wherewith to console and fortify us.—They supply us abundantly with the language of prayer, praise, blessing, and thanksgiving—and all the virtues, graces, and duties of which Jesus Christ gave us the example, when he came on earth, are taught us in this book, with which he vouchsafed to enlighten us before his coming.—*Albanian.*

THE EXERCISE OF GRACIOUS AFFECTIONS.—As sin is increased in the soul by the frequent actings of it, so grace is nourished and strengthened in the soul by its frequent actions. The exercise of grace is always attended with the increase of grace. Prov. x. 4: “The diligent hand maketh rich; or, the nimble hand, the hand that is active and agile, that will see nothing lost for looking after—that hand maketh rich. Ruth ii. How did Boaz follow the business himself? His eyes were in every corner, on the servants, and on the reapers, yes, on the gleaners too.”

It is recorded of Severus, that his care was not to look what men said of him, or how they censured him, but to look what was to be done by him. He will rise in judgment against those professors that look more at what this man and the other man said of them, than what is to be done by them. The heart of a Christian is to be taken up with what is to be done by him, and not with what this man thinks or the other judges of him.

Pacuvius hath an elegant saying: “I hate,” said he, “the men that are idle in deed, and philosophical in word.” God loves, said Luther, “curistas, not queristas”—the runner, not the questioner.—Grace grows by exercise, and decays by disuse. Though both arms grow, yet that which a man most useth is the stronger and the bigger; so it is both in gifts and graces. In birds, their wings which have been used most, are swiftest; the application is easy. Such men as are contented with so much grace as will bring them to glory—with so much grace as will keep hell and their souls asunder, will never be rich in grace, nor high in comfort and assurance: such souls usually go to heaven in a storm. Oh! how weather-beaten are they, before they can reach the heavenly harbor!—*Zion's Banner.*

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.
Chapter VIII.
ON THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE, AND THE OBJECTIONS OF DEISTICAL INFIDELS.

On entering into any department of inquiry, the best preparation is that docility of mind which is founded on a sense of our total ignorance of the subject: and nothing is looked upon as more unphilosophical than the temerity of that a pri-

ori spirit, which disposes many to presume before they investigate. But if we admit the total ignorance of man antecedent to observation, even in those sciences where the objects of inquiry are the nearest and the most familiar, we will be more ready to admit his total ignorance of those subjects which are more remote and more inaccessible. If caution and modesty be esteemed so philosophical, even when employed in that little field of investigation which comes within the range of our senses; why should they not be esteemed philosophical when employed on a subject so vast, so awful, so remote from direct and personal observation, as the government of God? There can be nothing so completely above us, and beyond us, as the plans of the Infinite Mind, which extend to all time, and embrace all worlds. There is no subject to which the cautious and humble spirit of Lord Bacon's philosophy is more applicable; nor can we conceive a more glaring rebellion against the authority of his maxims, than for the beings of a day to sit in judgment upon the Eternal, and apply their paltry experience to the counsels of his high and unfathomable wisdom.—We do not speak of it as impious; we speak of it as unphilosophical. We are not bringing the decrees of the orthodox to bear against it; we are bringing the principles of our modern and enlightened schools. We are applying the very same principles to a system of theism, that we would do to a system of geology. Both may receive embellishment from the genius and imagination of their inventors;—both may carry us along with the powers of a captivating eloquence. But all this is not enough to satisfy the severe and scrupulous spirit of the modern philosophy. Give us facts. Give us appearances. Show us how, from the experience of a life or a century, you can draw a legitimate conclusion so boundless in its extent, and by which you propose to fix down both the processes of a remote antiquity, and the endless progressions either of nature or of providence in future ages. Are there any historical documents? Any memorials of the experience of past times? On a question of such magnitude, we would esteem the recorded observations of some remote age to be peculiarly valuable, and worth all the ingenuity and eloquence which a philosopher could bestow on the limited experience of one or two generations. A process of geology may take millions of years before it reaches its accomplishment. It is impossible that we can collect the law or the character of this process from the experience of a single century, which does not furnish us one single step of this vast and immeasurable progression. We look as far as we can into a distant antiquity, and take hold with avidity of any authentic document, by which we can ascertain a single fact to guide and so enlighten us in this interesting speculation. The same caution is necessary in the subject before us. The administration of the Supreme Being is coeval with the first purposes of his uncreated mind, and it points to eternity.—“The life of man is but a point in that progress, to which we see no end, and can assign no beginning. We are not able to collect the law or the character of this administration from an experience so momentary. We therefore cast an eye on the history of past times.—We examine every document which comes before us. We compare all the moral phenomena which can be collected from the narratives of antiquity. We seize with avidity every record of the manifestations of Providence, every fact which can enlighten the ways of God to man; and we would esteem it a deviation from the right spirit and temper of philosophical investigation, were we to suffer the crude or fanciful speculations of our limited experience to take a precedence over the authentic informations of history.

But this is not all. Our experience is not only limited in point of time; it is also limited in point of extent. To assign the character of the divine administration from the little that offers itself to the notice of our own personal experience, would be far more absurd than to infer the history and character of the kingdom from the history and character of our own family. Vain is the attempt to convey in language what the most powerful imagination sinks under; how small the globe, and “all which it inherits,” is in the immensity of creation!—How humble a corner in the immeasurable fields of nature and of providence!—If the whole visible creation were to be swept away, we think of the dark and awful solitude which it would leave behind it in the unpeopled regions of space. But to a mind that could take in the whole, and throw a wide survey over the innumerable worlds which roll beyond the ken of the human eye, there would be no blank, and the universe of God would appear a scene as goodly and majestic as ever. Now it is the administration of this God that we sit in judgment upon; the counsels of Him, whose wisdom and energy are of a kind so inexplicable; whom no littleness can escape, whom no variety can bewilder; who gives vegetation to every blade of grass, and moves every particle of blood which circulates through the veins of the minutest animal; and all this by the same omnipotent arm that is abroad upon the universe, and presides in high authority over the destiny of all worlds.

It is impossible not to mingle the moral impressions of piety with such a contemplation. But suppose these impressions to be excluded, that the whole may be reduced to a matter of abstract and unfeeling intelligence. The question under consideration is, How far the experience of man can lead him to any certain conclusions, as to the character of the divine administration: if it does lead him to some certain conclusions, then in the spirit of the Baconian philosophy, he will apply these conclusions to the information derived from other sources; and they will of course affect, or destroy, or confirm the credibility of that information. If, on the other hand, it appears that experience gives no light, no direction on the subject, then, in the very same spirit, he will submit his mind as a blank surface to all the positive information which comes to it from any other quarter. We take our lesson as it comes to us, provided we are satisfied beforehand, that it comes from a source which is authentic. We set up no presumptions of our own against the authority of the unquestionable evidence that we have met with, and reject all the suggestions which our defective experience can furnish, as the follies of a rash and fanciful speculation.

Now, let it be observed, that the great strength of the Christian argument lies in the historical evidence for the truth of the Gospel narrative. In discussing the light of this evidence, we walk by the light of experience. We assign the degree of weight that is due to the testimony of the first Christians upon the observed principles of human nature. We do not step beyond the cautious procedure of Lord Bacon's philosophy. We keep within the safe and certain limits of experimental truth. We believe the testimony of the apostles, because, from what we know of the human character, it is impossible that men in their circumstances could have persevered as they did in the assertion of a falsehood; it is impossible that they could have imposed this falsehood upon such a multitude of followers; it is impossible that they could have escaped detection, surrounded as they were by a host of enemies, so eager and determined in their resentments. On this kind of argument we are quite at home. There is no theory, no assumption. We feel every inch of the ground we are treading upon. The degree of credit that should be annexed to the testimony of the apostles, is altogether a question of experience. Every principle which we apply towards the decision of this question is founded upon materials which lie before us, and are every day within the reach of observation. Our belief in the testimony of the apostles, is founded upon our experience of human nature and human affairs. In the whole process of the inquiry, we never wander from that sure, though humble path, which has been pointed out to us by the great master of philosophising. We never cast off the authority of those maxims which have been found in every other department of knowledge to be sound and infallible. We never suffer assumption to take the precedence of observation, or abandon that safe and certain mode of investigation, which is the only one suited to the real mediocrity of our powers.

It appears to us, that the disciples of the infidel philosophy have reversed this process. They take a loftier flight. You seldom find them upon the ground of the historical evidence. It is not in general, upon the weight, or the nature of human testimony, that they venture to pronounce on the credibility of the Christian revelation itself. It is on what they conceive to be the absurdity of its doctrines. It is because they see something in the nature or dispensation of Christianity, which they think disparaging to the attributes of God, and not agreeable to that line of proceeding which the Almighty should observe in the government of his creatures.—Rousseau expresses his astonishment at the strength of the historical testimony; so strong, that the inventor of the narrative appeared to him to be more miraculous than the hero. But the absurdities of this said revelation are sufficient in his mind to bear down the whole weight of its direct and external evidences. There was something in the doctrines of the New Testament repulsive to the taste and the imagination, and perhaps even to the convictions of this interesting enthusiast. He could not reconcile them with his pre-established conceptions of the divine character and mode of operation. To submit to these doctrines, he behoved to surrender that atheism, which the powers of his ardent mind had wrought up into a most beautiful and delicious speculation. Such a sacrifice was not to be made. It was too painful. It would have taken away from him, what every mind of genius and sensibility esteems to be the highest of all luxuries. It would destroy a system, which had all that is fair and magnificent to recommend it, and mar the gracefulness of that fine intellectual picture, on which this wonderful man had bestowed all the embellishments of feeling, and fancy, and eloquence.

In as far, then, as we can judge of the conduct of man in given circumstances, we would pass a favorable sentence upon the testimony of the apostles. But, says the Deist, I judge of the conduct of God; and what the apostles tell me of him is so opposite to that judgment, that I discredit their testimony. The question at issue between us is, shall we admit the testimony of the apostles, upon the application of principles founded on observation, and

as certain as is our experience of human affairs? Or, shall we reject that testimony upon the application of principles that are altogether beyond the range of observation, and as doubtful and imperfect in their nature, as is our experience of the counsels of heaven? In the first argument there is no assumption. We are competent to judge of the behavior of man in given circumstances. This is a subject completely accessible to observation. The second argument is founded upon assumption entirely. We are not competent to judge of the conduct of the Almighty in given circumstances. Here we are precluded, by the nature of the subject, from the benefit of observation.—There is no antecedent experience to guide or to enlighten us. It is not right, for man to assume what is right, or proper, or natural for the Almighty to do. It is not in the mere spirit of piety that we say so; it is in the spirit of the soundest experimental philosophy. The argument of the Christian is precisely what the maxims of Lord Bacon would dispose us to acquiesce in. The argument of the infidel is precisely that argument which the same maxims would dispose us to reject; and when put by the side of the Christian argument, it appears as crude and as unphilosophical as do the ingenious speculations of the schoolmen, when set in opposition to the rigor, and evidence, and precision, which reign in every department of modern science.

The application of Lord Bacon's philosophy to the study of external nature was a happy epoch in the history of physical science. It is not long since this application has been extended to the study of moral and intellectual phenomena. All that we contend for is, that our subject should have the benefit of the same application; add we count it hard white, in every other department of inquiry, a respect for truth is found sufficient to repress the appetite for system-building, that theology, the loftiest and most inaccessible of all the sciences, should still remain infected with a spirit so exploded, and so unphilosophical; and that the fancy, and theory, and unsupported speculation, so current among the Deists and demi-infidels of the day, should be held paramount to the authority of facts, which have come down to us with a weight of evidence and testimony, that is quite unexampled in the history of ancient times.

What is science, but a record of observed phenomena, grouped together according to certain points of resemblance, which have been suggested by an actual attention to the phenomena themselves? We never think of questioning the existence of the phenomena, after we have demonstrated the genuineness and authenticity of the record. After this is demonstrated, the singular or unexpected nature of the phenomena is not suffered to weaken their credibility,—a credibility which can only be destroyed by the authority of our own personal observation, or some other record possessed of equal or superior pretensions. But in none of the inductive sciences is it in the power of a student to verify every thing by his own personal observation.—He must put up with the observations of others, brought home to the convictions of his own mind by credible testimony. In the science of geology, this is eminently the case. In a science of such extent, our principles must be in part founded upon the observations of others, transmitted to us from a distant country. And in a science, the processes of which are so lengthened in point of time, our principles should also in part be founded on the observations of others, transmitted to us from a remote antiquity. Any observations of our own are so limited, both in point of space and of time, that we never think of opposing their authority to the evidence which is laid before us.—Our whole attention is directed to the validity of the record; and the moment that this validity is established, we hold it incumbent upon us to submit our minds to the entire and unmodified impression of the testimony contained in it. Now, all that we ask is, that the same process of investigation be observed in theology, which is held to be so sound and so legitimate in other sciences. In a science of such extent, as to embrace the wide domain of moral and intellectual nature, we feel the littleness of that range to which our own personal observations are confined. We should be glad, not merely of the information transmitted to us from a distant country, but of the authentic information transmitted to us by any other order of beings, in some distant and unknown part of the creation. In a science, too, which has for its object the lengthened processes of the divine administration, we should like, if any record of past times could enable us to extend our observations beyond the limits of our own ephemeral existence; and if there are any events of a former age possessed of such a peculiar and decisive character, as would help us to some satisfactory conclusion in this greatest and most interesting of the sciences.

On a subject so much above us and beyond us, we would never think of opposing any preconceptions to the evidence of history. We would maintain the humility of the inductive spirit. We would cast about for facts, and events and appearances. We would offer our minds as a blank surface to every thing that came to them, supported by unexceptionable evidence. It is not upon the nature of the facts themselves, that we would pronounce upon their credibility, but upon the nature of that testimony by which they were supported. Our whole attention would