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CASTOREAN TRACTS. 3.

No. 2.

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THE  
TOWER OF BABEL.

GENESIS, XI. 4.



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\* “**And** the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, **Go to**, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar. And they said, **Go to**, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the **LORD** came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the **LORD** said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. **Go to**, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So the **LORD** scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: *and they left off* to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the **LORD** did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the **LORD** scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.”

## TOWER OF BABEL.

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“And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.”—(Genesis, xi. 4.)

I HAVE chosen this verse as the most conspicuous in the narrative, but it will be requisite to bear in mind all that the historian has related on the subject of the tower-building from the first to the end of the ninth verse.\* Viewing the subject as historical, little need be said on such an occasion as the present; but if we would draw evangelical deductions from the history, it would be no short discourse that would contain the pregnant thoughts which the Spirit might extract from this page of Scripture: and with a view to such deductions, we will farther take the matter into consideration, not without invoking the help of that Spirit whose office it is to search into God’s deep things, and to lead into all truth.

Note then, first of all, the unanimity of the workmen, “the whole earth was of one language and one speech:” they all understood one another in the business, and they were so full of zeal, that they set off in a grand march from the East to “make themselves a name;” they forgot their schisms, and wars, and divisions, and laying aside all old animosities, joined in a union to run after the *ignis fatuus*, “a name,” and did not stop till they came to the great river Euphrates, where they set to in earnest to build a tower that should reach unto heaven. It was, therefore, a holy undertaking, and had the name of heaven to hallow it. The *foundation* was their vanity; the *pretence*—heaven: but even with heaven self-seeking was mixed up, and confidence in their own powers,—“lest we be scattered abroad on the face of the whole earth;” when we have done this, we shall not be scattered, but shall gather—there will be a flowing to us of the nations; our holiness, our great steeple, and our great name will make us respected.

Then note the catastrophe. The Lord said, “let us go

down, and confound their language—and they left off to build the city;” it began in perfect union, it ended in confusion and discord; it was a fine plan, with a foul ending; they had set about to build the tower, “but had not first calculated the cost.” They thought to build up to heaven, and yet the doves and the swallows left it far beneath them, though *they* never fly so high as the clouds; it had as little of heaven in the execution, as it had in reality heaven in the design.

Now, as I notice five things in this famous undertaking: antiquity—unanimity of purpose—fear—boasting—and confusion, we shall do well to apply the moral to that other great building which presumptuous man is ever labouring at, to get to heaven without God’s help, and to labour at a temple and a religion which he doth not build. It is an ancient heresy; the oldest superstitions we know of, or ever read of, all agree that man must merit heaven by good works, and atone for his bad deeds by his virtuous actions; there is great unanimity in this doctrine, the Brahmens, the followers of Plato, the stoics, the worshippers of all gods and goddesses, the Roman Catholic popes, monks, and great doctors; the Chinese bonze, and the Christian heretic, are all of one opinion on the covenant of works: there is not the slightest difference amongst them on the subject; keep them to generalities, and forbid them to give any name to the god by whose authority they seek to hallow their heresies, and you will find that their creed is precisely the same; and it would be a very easy matter to draw up a symbol of divinity which would be received with shouts of acclamation from the shores of the Yellow Sea to the shores of the German Ocean. But there is fear in the work, “lest we be scattered abroad;” they know that when the Lord comes, “he will not keep silence, a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him;” (Ps. 1. 3.) they wish for a hiding-place from the tempest, and for a shield against the fire, so they labour at a building of their own; they know that sin has made them amenable to justice; they hear at a distance the trumpet-call of the day of judgment ushering in the Judge of all in his solemn march through time to eternity, and therefore they make haste to face him with a great work of their own that may buy up his

justice, and justify themselves against the charge of sin: so there is fear;—then there is boasting, *let us make us a name*, the very process which fear drove them to, leads them into presumption also; they feared the scattering, and having got over that peril, according to their ignorant conceit, they begin to be confident, they thank God they are not as other men, “extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as that sinful publican, they fast twice in the week, they give tithes of all they possess;” (Luke, xviii. 12.) they look upon themselves and their activity in holiness with wonderful complacency, and having escaped from the shipwreck, they hang up their garments in the temple to shew what hardships they have surmounted; this is the constant result of the slavery under good works, it brings in boasting, and makes the slave of slaves think himself the freest man in the world: you will constantly hear the unconverted world talking of the excellencies of their chief Pharisees, “what an excellent man is such a one,” they say, and this excellent man himself quite agrees in the opinion, as is evident from all his demeanour, for being justified in his own fancy by works, he laughs at God’s word, and is as much at ease as the sleeping Indian whose canoe is hurrying down the rapids with its dreaming master towards the fall of Niagara. Therefore, Paul in his glorious confutation of the religion of the merit-mongers, shews not only that they are the blind men who boast, but that nothing but justification by faith and the gift of God excludes this sin,—“where is boasting then,” says he, “it is excluded—by what law? of works? nay, but by the law of faith.” (Rom. iii. 27.) They, however, who are workmen in the spiritual Babel, seek to make “themselves a name;” their virtues are for a shew to men while they live, and for a shew to God when they die; they seek to make themselves a name upon earth, and to build up to heaven an edifice from whose top they may walk into the presence of God. Jacob saw a vision of a ladder fixed upon earth and reaching to heaven, up and down which the angels of God were ascending and descending; (Gen. xxviii. 12.) this ladder they endeavour to realize, only they would have men, not angels, climbing up the steps—steps which are made for sinless feet—and which the Psalmist dared not to touch, for he cried out “if thou, Lord, shouldst

mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" (Ps. cxxx. 3.) he had not the courage to stand on the ladder, because Jehovah was looking at him, and he knew that a sight of his sins and the consciousness of the presence of God in his soul, would make him giddy and give him a dismal fall: neither dared Job, for he also declared in this business, "if I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life;" (ix. 20.) but the justiciaries and merit-mongers know neither their souls nor the imperfections of their souls,—they know not God nor his law,—they know not Jesus nor his Gospel,—they are strangers to the righteousness of faith, both as a doctrine and a grace, and therefore being full of the darkest ignorance, are full also of the most dangerous presumption.

The fifth particular we noticed was *the confusion* of the work, and this confusion, from which the spiritual Babel takes its name, is of two sorts, *national* and *private*. I have said that in the main essentials all religions are the same, for the essence of every false and imperfect religion is the covenant of works, as the text says, "the whole earth is of one language and one speech," and with this language they can talk of holiness in a manner that would perfectly astonish an ignorant person. If this were the time or place, I could quote large passages from the Pythagoreans, Platonists, the Stoics, the Divines of Hindostan, and the Theologues of Egypt, that would sound spiritual to a high degree, and would appear so extraordinary that some would be apt to think I must be coining the passages, and that Heathens never could have uttered sentiments of so pure a strain; but in truth, the natural man who has meditated on the Almighty, his awful attributes, and the wickedness of the human race, can say all that may be said *short of free grace, justification by faith, and the imputed righteousness of Christ crucified*. These, my friends, some of you will say are awful omissions, and so they are to those who are in the adoption of sons, and who, by the Holy Ghost, have learned "the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself;" (Eph. i. 9.) because Christ's righteousness is

the sweet music of the church, the key-note from which every anthem of praise and psalm of thanksgiving, are set to harmony and arranged into comeliness; but to those who are not the Lord's people, the absence of these fundamental doctrines is no loss; nay, they can with great satisfaction hear sermons and read religious books from which every grain of the Gospel is banished, and yet think them very holy sermons and very edifying volumes. I know books in high repute in a false christian world which teach pure Paganism, and are, in no single respect, different from the refined theology of Plato, Pythagoras, or Bramah, excepting that they are not written with half the talent, or half the eloquence of the ancient Philosophers. Of this Paul was well aware, he had a horror of his converts being spoiled by philosophy, and therefore was determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified; and he begins all his epistles with the doctrine of grace, and talks of grace continually, and righteousness imputed to the elect, and of faith justifying without works, in language which too many preachers think it prudent in these days to keep in the back ground, as if sinners were to be saved in some different way from that which Paul teaches, and as if the church were to be built after some new plan, better suited to this age of great instruction and little knowledge. But how comes it that when there is such a unanimity in fundamentals, there is confusion amongst the builders? The Scriptures teach us the reason, "the Lord said, behold the people is one, and they have all one language, and this they begin to do; now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do, Go to, let us go down and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." God has put this confusion amongst them so that they do not understand one another, they do not study the matter calmly to see how they have all in reality one religion, but being deceived by names of the different gods that they worship, they are mad about their idols and fight for names, when in *realities* they perfectly agree.\* Hence the furious persecutions of the Heathen by the Roman Catholics in various countries, hence the murderous hatred of neighbours about names and sounds, when the essence of their

\* See Luther on Galatians, p. 361.



religion is precisely the same: this is the *natural* confusion which I noticed, proceeding out of a judicial ignorance and a spirit of error that is poured into their hearts for punishment, and to make all false doctrine carry with it its own sting; nevertheless, there are some writers who have seen through this mist of passion, and have plainly taught that every religion in the world is the same if rightly understood; this was the opinion of Pope, the famous poet, who in his celebrated hymn called “the Universal Prayer,” has thus explained the truth in very beautiful verse:—

“ Father of all in every age  
 In every clime adored,  
 By saint, by savage, or by sage,  
 Jehovah, Jove, or Lord.  
 To thee whose temple is all space,  
 Whose altar, earth, seas, skies;  
 One chorus let all beings raise  
 All nature’s incense rise.”

And as from the whole of this sweet-sounding hymn the righteousness of the Son of God and the merit of his blood are carefully excluded, it may be called a psalm of the natural man, which might be sung in the Pagodas of China, St. Peter’s Church at Rome, and for aught I know to the contrary, at St. Paul’s in London. Nevertheless, though all nations, tongues, and languages, are in their hearts, of one speech and one language, the Lord hath confounded their speech; there is a sad uproar and discord among them, and rivers of blood have been shed to convert men from one class of superstition to another, when no such conversion was wanted. There is but one religion that giveth peace to individuals, and might and will some day give peace to nations: which is the religion of forgiveness, and the experience of forgiveness, and of adoption through the righteousness and sacrifice of Christ by teaching of the Holy Ghost and gifts of grace; *this religion* gives peace and unanimity to the individuals who have been schooled into it in the regeneration, but such a thing as a Christian nation has never yet been known,—that is, a nation in which the majority, or any thing at all approaching to the majority, are Christians praising Jesus from their hearts as their only hope of salvation: for though the ark of the new covenant is in

this realm, yet it is amongst the Philistines, and no man can presume to say that any but a very small minority of our countrymen are the Lord's people, and are faithful followers of the Lamb.

But there is also a *private* as well as a national confusion amongst the builders of the spiritual Babel: that is, there is a confusion of individuals, whereby a sinner who is seeking to justify himself is, after immense pains and mighty labour given to the work, convinced in his conscience that something is wanting still; that God is not yet appeased; that sin, in spite of the most rigorous rules, will get the head; and that prayers, fasting, penances, and alms do not keep down the corruption of the soul, nor dry up the ever-teeming fountain of vice which bubbles up every day in the heart of man. Besides this, there is left still in a secret corner of the heart a dread of the debt against old sins not yet being discharged; and the merit-monger is perplexed and driven to great straits how to cancel this debt: he hath not been taught by the Spirit "to go into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus with boldness:" (Heb. x. 19.) nor can he "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith:" (22.) for having undertaken to redeem himself, and to make out his own atonement, and having altogether closed his heart against the righteousness of faith, he is in a miserable state of despair, and groans under the toil of removing sin which cannot be removed. Here the Gospel comes with a smiling countenance of peace to those who receive it in a humbled heart, for she teaches that Christ in an especial manner died for past sins, "whom God," as Paul says, "hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins *that are passed*, through the forbearance of God." (Rom. iii. 25.) The righteousness of Christ is declared to be the remission of past sins, not the righteousness of men, and this faith receives, and when this is received, then come joy and peace in believing: then do the chains fall off: then does Christ begin to be precious: then is the book unsealed, the Lamb breaks all the seven seals, and removes the veil between God and the sinner: then is Christ first understood; then a man begins to shew a visible change in his conduct, he has a taste for heaven, an eye that can peep through the barrier of the

flesh and catch glimpses of distant glory, an ear that can hear the song of the just men made perfect, feet that can run in the way of the commandments, and a tongue that can exalt the Lord and not conceal imputed righteousness from the great congregation. There is no hiding a true Christian, a city placed on a hill cannot be hid, one that is rooted and grounded in love on the rock of ages cannot be kept in the back ground; a light of the world must shine; a saved sinner, who knows experimentally that Christ has saved him, will not keep silence, he dare not keep silence, he *does* not keep silence. Whatever comes to him he will still be all gospel; like a bell, that turn it which way you will, always gives a sound, so does he in all states sound forth Jesus Christ and him crucified,—he sounds him in life, through life, and through all the hard blows and buffets of life, and louder than ever when life is coming to an end. They cannot tie up his tongue, death cannot muffle him, hell cannot silence him,—priests, persecutors, friends, foes, hunger, poverty, dungeons and chains cannot stop his mouth: when his release comes he throws Christ's righteousness in the face of death, and cries out "O Grave where is thy victory, O Death where is thy sting,"—and when death has smitten him, it is his crowning day, he is taken into the safe keeping of Him that has the keys of hell and of death, and goes to happier regions to sing a sweeter, nobler song, in purer strains, where no one has any other wish than to ascribe the whole glory to God's free, undeserved, electing, sovereign grace, where no one endeavours to dethrone the Saviour, but where he receives, without grudging, the whole glory, honour, praise, and merit of saving by his own righteousness all the blood-bought children of God.

But few have this faith, and the poor, ignorant, miserable merit-monger, not only has it not, but hates it: a confidence in his own power, a pride in the efforts of human nature, has wedded him to works and hardened his heart; "the way of peace they know not," says the Prophet, "there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths, whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace;" (Isaiah, xlix. 8.) and hence arises the dissatisfaction, ill-temper, sourness, pride, and arrogance of many persons, chiefly in the higher classes of society,

who looking beyond the grave see a just Judge whom they in vain are endeavouring to pacify with their good works. It is the fruitful cause of much domestic misery, as I have often witnessed, for the spiritual Babel makes all her workmen discontented, gloomy, superstitious, and ignorant bigots, as unhappy as they are wicked, and as inconsolable as they are unamiable. Luther often tells us how unhappy he was in his cloysters, trying by a most strict and rigorous holiness of monkish rules to calm his conscience, and never able to lay hold of the least comfort, so that looking back on his monastic life he styles himself "a proud, presumptuous hypocrite," and he declares that the very best of the monks were unhappy men, who, with all their saint-like austerities and extreme penances, could never rest satisfied that they had got rid of sin. And this must be so, for he that has worked the hardest in the mines to get the most precious righteousness that earth can give, and shall weigh what he has got by the balances of the sanctuary, will find that the paltry dross kicks the beam when set against the standard of God's house,—the rafters of the old temple were indeed covered with plates of pure gold, because the covenant of works required the work to be of men's hands; but the beams of the temple which the Lord hath pitched and not man, require a purer gold than the spiritual Babel can produce, a finer substance than earth, with all her glory, can afford, "seeing that we are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as with a lamb without blemish and without spot." (I. Peter i. 19.)

This, therefore, is the *private* confusion of the workmen of Babel, that when a man has been building with all his might and all his abilities to make the tower reach to heaven, when he has suffered much sorrow, and shed many tears in burning his bricks throughly, in making his good works very good, then behold some burst of human nature, some irruption from the flesh, some whirlwind of a temptation undoes all, and the work must be begun again from the foundation; but he, though grieved, is not disheartened, and says "in the pride and stoutness of his heart, the works are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are indeed cut down, but we will change them into cedars;"

(Isaiah, ix. 9.) so again he begins with fresh vows, fresh penances, severer rules, and a sterner canon of holiness, till the tempest of sin being again let loose from its bondage, where nothing but grace can keep it in confinement, again and again destroys his fabric and leaves him without hope.

But it is time to turn to the true building, it is time to consider the operation of the hands of the Lord, to meditate on the beauties of the temple which he has prepared for the praise of the glory of his grace.

The work is perfect. First, in its antiquity,—it is so ancient that it is from everlasting, that is, the plan was devised, the pattern agreed on, and every stone selected before the creation of the visible universe, “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world,” said the Apostle James to the church at Antioch; (Acts, xv. 18.) before the ear of man was created to hear the sound of law or gospel, all the fabric of the church was constructed in the council of peace, every soul to be saved was given to the Son as the reward of the travel of *his* soul; and “according as he has chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world,” says Paul, (Eph. i. 4.) and this antiquity of the work is attested by no less than five of the Apostles and most of the Prophets; they, none of them, look upon it as a production of circumstances, or the result of man’s wisdom or calculation, but all was built of old, before ever the mountains or hills were brought forth, in the long day of eternity, and in the silence of the pavilion of God; and as when Solomon’s temple was building, “it was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, so that there was neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was building;” (I. Kings, vi. 7.) so in the building of the church, the labour has all been performed by an omnipotent workman, far distant from the visible edifice, the Lord hath chosen the materials, the Saviour purchased them with his blood and won them, the Holy Ghost undertook to hew them out of the quarries of nature, and decorate them according to the pattern of grace—“and God saw that it was good.” When, therefore, he brings in a sinner by repentance and faith to be made perfect in the righteousness of Christ, he develops and setteth in the broad face of day the secret of an

ancient purpose. "Be not afraid," said the Lord to Paul in a vision at Corinth, "but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I have much people in this city;" (Acts, xviii. 9.) quit not this place, for there are here many stones selected for my temple; this is a good quarry, and I have chosen thee as an instrument, and thy sermons as a means of grace to convert them to the Gospel, by the word of power which I will give thee. We, therefore, look on every fresh limb of the church with awe, reverence, and amazement; we are sure that this has been God's work; we are confident that the Creator Spirit has been near us, and that he whom God, with his right hand, exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins to his Israel, has been calling his sheep out of the wilderness of the world, and that they have heard his voice—that they have come to him with all their heavy burdens, and have found rest to their souls. And it is the church, a body of saved sinners made beautiful in the righteousness of their Saviour, which has ever been an object of love in heaven. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it," says Paul, (Eph. v. 25.) and yet the church was not visible when he poured out his blood for her sake, therefore she *was* from everlasting, and as truly existing invisible in eternity, as she is now existing visible in time. And here it seems to me that the Hindoo Theologians, by a marvellous stretch of sublime thought, have, in their ignorance, imitated the truth, in declaring that the Almighty had from everlasting, pondered on the frame of the visible universe, of which he produced an exemplar or pattern on his own mind, gradually adding to its glories by fresh ideas of wisdom—that ravished with the splendour of the unfolding sights of future beauty as they emanated from his own mind, he fell into a trance for many million of ages, contemplating the divine work, till at last he awoke, and with one word made visible and material what before had only an intellectual existence. If the Heathen can think so grandly of their creator of the material universe which shall perish, what must we think of our God who has built a fairer structure of spiritual glory which never shall fade away, but which shall be as permanent as his power, as fair as his grace, and as perfect as his righteousness can make it, "thy righteousness is an everlasting righ-

teousness," says the Psalmist, (cxix. 142.) and this has been, is, and will be for ever and ever, the grandeur and perfection of the church; with this it began, and into this it will return in a circle of excellence, of which Christ is the beginning, and Christ the ending.

But God himself begins the work,—“Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation;” (Isaiah, xxviii. 18.) and of this promised foundation the Scripture speaks in mysteries. The Prophet Zechariah says, that the Lord himself had engraved seven eyes upon it, (iii. 9.) which probably were emblems of the seven spirits before the throne of God, described by John in the Apocalypse; and Peter calls it “a living stone,” prophetic sayings which refer to the spiritual temple of God, Immanuel, God with us, who himself is considered the corner and head-stone of the building, and whose spirit pervades the whole edifice, making all the structure quick with the life and the spirit of the foundation.

But duly to apprehend one allusion contained in these mysteries, we should remember that it was ever a custom amongst the Heathen, (and is still) when they were building a new temple, to fix the principal foundation-stones on the dead body of a human victim purposely offered up to the gods for that occasion. In allusion, therefore, to a custom familiar to all who were living in the neighbourhood of Heathen idolaters, Scripture speaks of the foundation-stone of the church as *a sacrifice*, the tried corner-stone is Christ crucified, as Paul says, “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (I. Cor. iii. 11.) And here too we again perceive the antiquity of the church, this victim whose death is the foundation-stone, though killed in time, is declared to have been slaughtered in eternity,—“the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world,” says St. John—not to be reckoned from the government of Pontius Pilate, because though Peter says, “he was made manifest in these last times for the Lord’s people,” yet he was “foreordained before the foundation of the world:” the work was all known to be finished by the Spirit of God, and therefore the Prophets having seen the plan by a revelation, (or a withdrawing of the veil) speak of it as already done,—“He was cut off out of

the land of the living:" says Isaiah, "for the transgression of my people *was* he stricken," (liii. 8.) seven hundred years before the victim was visibly slaughtered to form the corner-stone of the church.

But the first stone, which the builders of Babel rejected, being thus laid by the hands of the Almighty, (for he was delivered to his murderers by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Acts, ii. 23.) All the rest of the church rests on it, and becomes one with it; and as he, though laid in the grave dead, is now alive, and is therefore "a living stone," so all the saints who rest on him are said to be "lively stones, built up as "a spiritual house." (I. Pet. ii. 5.) And this mystery takes place by an absolute union, "He that hath the Son hath life:" and yet out of the building they are dead,—“we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God:" men can neither see Christ nor the whole body of his church; neither can they see nor understand, unless they be one with him, the life of a Christian—all is invisible to their eyes, confusion to their ears, and unintelligible to their understandings; but though they know neither Christ nor his members, yet his members have, nevertheless, a hidden life, it is hid in the foundation-stone, and all its beauty consists in the righteousness of him who giveth life to the whole—"the fulness of Him that filleth all in all:" it filleth the church, it filleth every saved child of God, and is such a complement of perfection, that nothing else can be poured in.

There remains, then, nothing more in the construction to the end of time, than for the living stones of the church to rest wholly and absolutely on the foundation; to be filled with the righteousness of Him on whom the church resteth, and to live and be alive with his Spirit. And therefore it is the duty of the member of a Christian church to inquire,—Do I rest wholly on the Saviour? am I satisfied with his righteousness? do I live a new life in union with him, knowing him of a truth to be my life?

To rest on Christ, is to feel and be assured, through an inward immoveable peace, that his death and sacrifice is a full and sufficient atonement for all sin committed, so as not to have any anxiety to plead any thing else under the heavens before the judgment-seat of God, or to wish



to possess any thing else in the way of salvation. All the force of sin consists in condemnation: that is, sin accuses, and the law finds guilty and passes a sentence of death,—trying, judging, and condemning a sinner for all that he has done, and all that he has left undone, with a most accurate inquisitiveness. God's justice being infinite, the violation thereof in sin must needs contract an infinite demerit and debt, because in sinning we rob God of his glory, which we must repay him again; and therefore we have to make up a debt of such huge proportions as a whole world full of saints, and a whole age of good works can never supply. All the united twinklings of the stars of human virtues can never make up one beam of the glory of God. And here is an inward proof and evidence of the truth of the Christian faith, of more value than all that Paley has written on it, that an awakened sinner can never by the most exact and punctual obedience, the most holy and rigorous life, find peace to his conscience as long as he is in the covenant of works; but when he has been led by the Spirit to understand and know the full merits of the Redeemer, then his conscience will find full, perfect, and entire relief, and by experimental knowledge attest from his heart, and not with his lips only, this evangelical truth, "that being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. v. 1.) And indeed the whole Gospel consists in justification by faith, giving peace to believers; when the angels sung their well known anthem to the shepherds keeping watch over the flocks at night, (Luke, ii. 14.) the burden of their song was "Peace on earth," and this was the peace they meant; assuredly not the peace which is an absence of strife and bloodshed, for Christ himself testified that he came to unsheath a sword, to kindle a fire, to set houses and families at variance, to make parents hate their children, and children dread their parents as cruel persecutors; to throw his followers into jail, to expel them from the synagogues, to bring them as felons before princes and governors, and to make men think they were doing God a duty by slaying them: and yet in all this peril and misery, justification by faith would give them peace which the world can neither give nor take away, because it unites the Christian to the foundation-stone,

which being sure and tried, the gates of hell can prevail neither against it nor any part of the structure.

And now what hath proud presumptuous Babel to compare to God's work, in all her perplexed labour of confusion? Where is the peace and the salvation of her discomfited craftsmen? Where is the sure foundation for all her monks and nuns, her hermits, her holy men, her merit-mongers, her lovers of the law, her Pharisees, her superstitious bigots, and arrogant justiciaries: hearken how the Spirit of the Lord comes forth like a whirlwind from his sanctuary, the Scriptures, to overturn and confound and scatter these "makers of a name;" and by a wrathful confutation compel them to leave off building their tower. See in the 28th chapter of Isaiah, how the Almighty displays himself, not only as a builder of his own work, but a destroyer of his enemies' structure. He tells us first that he will lay in Zion "a sure, tried, and precious corner-stone—a sure foundation;" and then he forthwith adds that "he will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place." O you then, if there be any such here present, who have shrouded your evil heads in the refuge of lies, who know nothing experimentally of the remission of sins through the blood of Jesus, to which all the Prophets did bear witness, (Acts, x. 43.) which the angels desired to look into, and which now fills heaven with hallelujahs of victory: see that you be not swept away by the hail-stones of Jehovah's anger: see that you have a garment of salvation wherewith to face that storm,—a rock that is higher than you—a strong tower—a fortress—a shield—a green pasture—a shady walk near the still waters—a place of refuge, so that when the earth is moved and the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, you may retreat into this kingdom which cannot be moved, to which your soul is already accustomed, and to which it has received admission by the Spirit of adoption and grace. It is an awful sight to behold the Almighty advancing with his line and plummet to measure thy righteousness, O sinner, and give it its due proportion of judgment: pride, sin, sloth, or ignorance may draw a veil before this horrid sight, but the dying sinner often catches a frightful glimpse of the

scene, awakening to a sense of his danger when it is too late, and stretching out his dying hands to lay hold of any passing straw. Oh, for time! has groaned out many a dying man;—it is this fear which has founded many a monastery, many a nunnery, many a college, many an alm's-house. “Know all men,” says an English King in his deed of gift, “that *for the redemption of my soul*, I have given these lands to the monastery of Ramsay;” but it cost more to redeem their souls, so that he must let that alone for ever—£500 to the County Hospital can not give peace. Babel, with all her nostrums of idolatry, is found to be a cheat—the glass is run down—death is knocking at the door, the hail is sweeping away the refuge of lies, and the Almighty is coming with his measuring-instruments, his balance, his rod, his standard of Sinai, and his rule of the Law.

MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting.—Where are good works now?—what? have all the slime and the bricks tumbled down?—what? cannot the whole earth, which helped thee at the building, find a ransom? Has the unanimous teaching of so many wise doctors, so many learned scribes, so many renowned scholars, all ended in confusion? “to which of the saints wilt thou turn?” (Job, v. 1.) Oh Babel! Babel! what murders dost thou commit! How do all the nations of the earth rejoice in thy lie! How is hell peopled with thy witchcraft! But Jesus *shall* reign; he came down to confound thee as Jehovah at first, again he came as God manifest in the flesh, to lay himself in the grave as the corner-stone of his church, and again shall he come at last with his city, the new Jerusalem, perfect and all glorious from heaven.

In that day it shall be seen that the whole work has been his, that he chose the materials, (II. Thess. ii. 13.) that he built the city, (Heb. iii. 4.—Zech. vi. 12.) and having built it, is that faithful watchman (Psalm, cxxvii. 1.) who has kept it from the foundation of the world to the day of judgment, having engraven the name of its walls on the palms of his hands, that they might be continually before him, (Isaiah, xlix. 16.) that he has never slumbered nor slept in his charge, (Psalm, cxxi. 3.) that he has ever been labouring, striving, and working with

his spirit, (Gen. vi. 3.—John, v. 17.) saving that which was lost, (Luke, xix. 10.) breaking hearts of stone with the hammer of his word, (Jer. xxiii. 29.) piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and the joints and marrow, (Heb. iv. 12.) opening blind eyes, unstopping deaf ears, unlocking prison doors, giving the slaves of sin liberty, (Isaiah, lxi. 1.—xxxv. 5.) and making all the souls of the chosen rejoice in an evangelical jubilee, by softening down the trumpets of Sinai into the song “of peace on earth, good will towards men;”—in fine, that every stone has been brought from sin into grace with joy amongst the angels of heaven; (Luke, xv. 7.) and that the head-stone, which finishes the work, hath been brought forth with shoutings, crying “grace! grace!” unto it. (Zech. iv. 7.) This heavenly Jerusalem is builded, as a city that is compact together. (Psalm, cxxii. 3.) Peace is within its walls, and prosperity within its palaces; (7.) for Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, in him all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple of the Lord. (Eph. ii. 20.) Therefore it is a strong city, Jehovah hath made salvation to be its walls and bulwarks, (Isaiah, xxvi. 1.) and the Lord himself hath shielded her round about with a wall of fire, and his glory is in the midst of her: (Zech. ii. 5.) all other cities are laid low and brought down into the dust; (Isaiah, lxv. 5.) but this city, which is the church, Christ hath built with his own hands on a rock which will be found to have been an impregnable fortress against all the rampant powers of darkness, proceeding out of the gates of hell; (Matt. xvi. 18.) for her munition has been on the high hills of heaven, and she, being above all the glory of this world, hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it, but the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. (Rev. xxi. 23.)

To set forth all her other magnificence is superfluous—because, though we read of her foundation garnished with jewels, and of her twelve gates of pearl, and her streets of pure gold; these are but ideas suited to carnal notions, for since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him; (Isaiah, lxiv. 4.) but this we do know, that whatever pious Christians have felt of joy and peace

in believing; whatever sense of God's glory has passed over their souls; whatever melting love and tenderness they have experienced in prayer; whatever, by answers to those prayers, they can testify of the power, fulness, riches, and gifts of the Lord Jesus; whatever tears of holy gratitude have streamed from religious eyes on the aspect of the mercies of God; whatever unutterable sighs have responded to the groanings of the interceding Spirit—groanings which cannot be uttered; (Rom. viii. 26.) whatever light and hope have beamed into the dreary and disconsolate soul;—all these have streamed forth from the throne of Jehovah Jesus, (Rev. xxi. 23.) in the midst of the holy city: and though we can find neither words to express these things, nor faithful images wherewith to represent them; though they pass knowledge, (Eph. iii. 19.) and can only be talked of in mysteries, and sketched forth in dark sayings; and though the heart hath no language wherewith to express her feelings, and though the tongue forgets her cunning in attempting the theme,—yet all the saints of God know, through the Spirit, that these things are true,—and knowing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, waiting for the restitution of all things, (Acts, iii. 21.) when the Lord “shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.” (II. Thessalonians, i. 10.)—Amen and Amen.

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