

A Letter From Luke Howard

by Job Scott

Luke Howard's letter tests Job Scott's doctrine of regeneration and the new birth by Scripture, showing that it is not supported by the Bible.

Scripture: Isaiah 52:7, Isaiah 52:10, Matthew 7:16, John 1:29, 1 Corinthians 14:20, 2 Corinthians 3:6, 1 Peter 1:18, 1 John 3:9, 1 John 5:4

Topics: "Christian Doctrine", "Spiritual Humility"

Description

Luke Howard addresses a letter to a friend in America, critiquing a posthumous treatise by Job Scott on 'Salvation by Christ.' Howard expresses concerns about Scott's unconventional views on regeneration, suggesting that Scott's doctrines may lack proper grounding in Scripture and may lead to confusion and division within the religious community. Howard highlights the importance of humility, charity, and a deep understanding of the teachings of Christ to avoid falling into doctrinal errors and self-righteousness. He urges for a sincere and spiritually minded approach to faith, emphasizing the need for practical application of Christian principles rather than mere intellectual assent to doctrines.

Transcript

A LETTER FROM LUKE HOWARD

of Tottenham, near London,

TO A FRIEND IN AMERICA;

containing observations upon a treatise

written by

JOB SCOTT

entitled

SALVATION BY CHRIST, &c.

[1825]

Should the following sheets obtain circulation among the members of the Religious Society of Friends, (for whose use they are exclusively written,) the author entreats for his argument a patient and candid perusal. He believes that a hasty glance over the piece will by no means suffice, to put a reader in possession of what it contains: and that the same careful reference to the passages of Scripture quoted, and the same deliberate consideration of the whole, which he has found it his duty (in justice to the character, whose opinions are called in question) to bestow, will become every one who shall incline, on this occasion to enter again into the subject. The present letter, (he must also premise,) is not the result of any correspondence previously had with any friend in the United States: and the author alone, and not the Society in England, is responsible for its contents.

London, Second Month, 1825

My Dear Friend,

Among other publications by members of our society in the United States, which have lately issued from the press, and been transmitted to this country, I observe two or three of a posthumous character, purporting to be from the MSS. of the late Job Scott. I have perused one of these, entitled, "Salvation by Christ," attached to which, is a kind of second part, entitled "On the Nature of Salvation by Christ" -- the whole making about 88 pages, the matter of which is stated to have been penned more than thirty years ago, and left in the hands of his friends, when he embarked on his last voyage in the work of the ministry. Having heard him preach with much power and energy, when he was in England on that occasion, I was interested (I remember,) and affected by the circumstances of his death in Ireland, soon afterwards: and the regard which I have cherished for his memory, makes me a little concerned for his religious reputation. Had he lived to near the present time (as he might have done in the course of nature,) and left his MSS. revised for publication, I suppose no one could have complained that justice was not done to him, by the appearance of the present pamphlet: but my own decided opinion, after mature consideration is, that he never would have published it as it now appears, nor probably, at this time of day at all. The Yearly Meeting of New England therefore, or its committee, did certainly evince both a prudent care, and a due regard for his reputation, and that of our religious Society, in so long declining to sanction this piece. But it seems now to have made its appearance in opposition to their judgment.

We have extant, among us here, a small collection of "letters from Job Scott, written whilst in Europe to his relations and friends," &c. first published in America, and reprinted in England. In one of these dated 14th of 11th Month 1793, I find the following remarks. "There is scarce any thing that makes longer life desirable, [he was then within eight days of its termination,] but to finish the field of religious labour, which I had hitherto mostly thought was not yet done; especially with regard to digesting my Journal and some other writings. [Then follow allusions to the peculiar doctrine advanced in this Essay on Salvation, and which it appears he still regarded as true -- but he adds,] On the ocean, I wrote over about a quire of paper, which I believe is now in my trunk at -- -- , respecting which, I was ever a good deal doubtful, whether some parts of it, not particularly upon these points, were not more in a way of abstruse reasoning, than might be best for a Friend to publish. Be that as it may, I am very apprehensive that most of my writings are far from properly digested, and some of them I believe might be a good deal better guarded. Our views of things do not usually open all at once: it is so in the individual -- it is so in the world."

There was certainly in the character of this dear Friend, a perceptible excess on the side of the imagination and the feelings. This had been the case with many good and useful men before him: and such a temperament makes a minister faithful, or courageous and energetic in the discharge of duty -- but

in measure disqualifies him from being a competent judge of doctrine and controversies. It is nevertheless, sometimes corrected by experience, and by intercourse, in a spirit of charity, with others as zealous and knowing as himself. I remember an honest man's remark, who had been hired as a "help" from a distant county, and had had to follow his employer for the first time through our crowded metropolis. "I never saw such a place as London in my life: why nobody would get out of my master's way!" Just so it is with powerful, but secluded minds, when they emerge from their circle of assenting hearers and weak opponents, into a wider horizon, and have to compare the contents of their budget, with the variety of conflicting opinions around them. It is in vain that the man says to himself and others, "I am quite sure of this." For, if religion, for instance, be the subject, and there be not in the Scriptures of Truth, a preponderating mass of evidence in his favour, another may soon fall in his way who is quite as sure of the contrary -- and then who is to judge between them? If either of them refuse the test of the Scripture, in its plain and obvious meaning, he may indeed decide the matter for himself, and be quite sure in his own opinion still, but in vain will he expect to do it for the other. He may now, if he incline so to do, ascribe his own persuasion, which he calls his certainty, to the Testimony of the Spirit of Truth in himself. But then, the other may pretend to this likewise, and with as plausible appearances (it may be,) on his side, to support him in his pretensions. For this reason it is wisely proposed by Robert Barclay in his Apology, that both doctrine and practice shall be tried by the Test of Scripture. We are very willing, (he says, Prop. 3 Sect. 6) that all our doctrines and practices be tried by the Scriptures; which we never refused, nor ever shall, in all controversies with our adversaries as the Judge and Test. And if in controversies with adversaries, then much more in differences of opinion about doctrine, or differences of belief, between members of the same religious society. By this test therefore, I shall proceed to try some opinions of Job Scott -- he himself having admitted, at a time when men are not used to express themselves lightly, that he was very apprehensive, most of his writings were far from being properly digested: and that some of them (he believed) might be a good deal better guarded.

The subject of this pamphlet is regeneration, and the new birth: that doctrine which our Lord chose to propound but to one person, and that in privacy; as if on purpose to instruct us, that it should be learned in secret, and brought to the test of individual experience, not talked about in crowds, or discussed in religious assemblies -- a doctrine, moreover, which would bear to be treated, in those ancient times, with a freedom of terms which does not so well comport, now, with the due restraints of Christian conversation. A subject, which he, who is clothed with right authority, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, may at times profitably impress upon the minds of serious hearers, in the solemnity of public preaching, but which, when cast before the sensual and worldly minded, is as pearls among swine; and may serve to bring the great and precious truth which lies under it, into doubt if not into derision. I shall strive not to make this letter the vehicle of improper thoughts, by quoting expressions which could not be read, I think, in a mixed company of Friends of both sexes, without bringing confusion over some of their faces; but I must specify enough (and I may as well do it at once) to make myself intelligible.

The fundamental proposition then of the whole book, and which the author seems to have regarded as a special revelation to himself, is, that the human soul is in a spiritual sense, and in relation to its God and Saviour, a female; and that salvation by Christ consists in, or is effected by a real process of generation, conception and birth; by which it is made the mother of Christ, the only begotten Son of God! He insists again and again, that those things are real, which sober Christians have regarded only as lively and apposite metaphors, in the sayings of Christ and his Apostles on the subject of that change of heart and life, which all must experience, who become qualified for the kingdom of heaven. Before I proceed to show the bearings and consequences of this opinion of his, I will make some observations upon the text of

Scripture, on a misapplication of which, the most part of what is original in his views of the subject, will be found to rest.

It is related in Matt. xii.47-50, and in Mark iii.32-35, that on a certain occasion the mother, and brethren of Jesus were without, desiring to speak with him, while he was in the house, teaching the people: and that before he went out he took occasion, as his manner was, to spiritualize the occurrence; reminding those who were about him, that there was a spiritual union and relation to be experienced, by doing the will of God, in which they should be as near to him in the inward life, as were his brother and sister, and mother naturally. In this speech he puts his mother last, (in both places) I apprehend as being the least appropriate in the comparison, yet not to be slighted by the want of all mention of her, now that she was on the spot. But what does Job Scott make of it -- or rather what does he not make of it? Putting mother first (in one of his quotations) he insists that "Jesus meant as he said," and that "had he not carefully confined his words to a strict meaning, he might have called such his father too:" "but in the spiritual sense in which he was speaking, no man can possibly be his father, but God" [only] and that "man at most can be his mother!" He spake then in a spiritual sense -- and yet he made these, really and not metaphorically his different relations, as mother, sister, and brother! But in a spiritual sense what is the distinction among these? none at all: The apostle Paul says, Gal. iii.28. "In Christ, there is neither male nor female," alluding to the very kind of union that our Lord here pointed out. Though the meaning therefore was spiritual, and the thing spoken of, real in that sense, yet the form of speech was figurative, importing only a most near and intimate union in spirit: and he made no mention of his father; first, because it would have been an improper figure, or comparison, he having no natural father; secondly, because no mention was made of his reputed father to him. The expressions are encouraging when thus simply taken: but if they were really meant to convey this new doctrine, I would ask, is it likely, a thing so deep and so wonderful as this, the very mystery of Christ, (as this author deemed it,) should have been dropt by our Lord, in the act of rising from his seat to go out of the house, and at no other time further spoken of by him? I trust I need say no more here, for the satisfaction of any unprejudiced person, that the saying here was figurative not literal. I may just refer, however, to the expressions used in Mark x.30, as a proof of the freedom with which the like terms were used by our Lord on another occasion.

Of the various figures made use of in the New Testament, to represent the great and permanent change wrought, in every person, who comes to experience "salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth," 2 Thes. ii.13, there is not any thing which is more appropriate, or more insisted on, than that of being born again, or born from above: but this is by no means the sole or exclusive idea, that even Christ himself presents to us, in illustration of the subject. The word and power of God entering into minds, variously disposed as to its reception, is compared, very aptly to seed sown in various soils: Matt. xiii. One man forgets the instruction received, almost immediately, being careless and unwatchful: another gives out in the first season of difficulty, being impatient: another prefers gain or pleasure, and so stifles conviction: but of him that prospers in religion, it is simply said, that "he heareth the word and understandeth it and bringeth forth fruit," according to his capacity, watchfulness and diligence. How simple, natural and intelligible is all this; which is the exposition of Christ himself.

The small portion of secret help and guidance at first afforded to believers, is pointed out (that we might not despise or overlook it in the heart,) by the parable of the grain of Mustard seed, verse 31,32, and its efficacy in producing in time a total reformation of the man, by a comparison with the working of leaven, in the meal of which bread is made: and the necessity, in order to success in religion, of making this our primary concern, and letting all other things give place to duty, by the treasure hid in a field, and by the

pearl which would enrich the purchaser, by taking it into another country with him, (for such is probably the intent of the parable,) verse 44,46. In like manner, as the estates of individuals, differing in their talents and improvement, so is that of the Church at large, illustrated, by most apt comparisons in the New Testament. But in all these, there is nothing that tends to the thing so much insisted on by the author of this piece: nor is the subject, in his sense, so much as once mentioned or alluded to by our Saviour! In reply to a question of the apostle Peter, in Matt. xix.28, as to what they should acquire who followed him, as the reward of their adherence to him, he says indeed; "Ye who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, &c." But if the English were made to agree with the construction of the text, according to the punctuation that may (and probably should) be given in the Greek, it would be seen that the term regeneration or renovation, belongs to the latter part of the sentence; and points to the future state of the visible church in this new and spiritual dispensation, with Christ, its King and High Priest at its head. That he could not mean any such thing as our author has attached to the term elsewhere, nor even the individual conversion, or change from a carnal to a spiritual state of the disciples, is plain from hence, that in this respect, Christ who had never sinned, had not gone before them; nor could they as yet have been said to have followed. Matt. xviii.3. Luke xxii.32.

The only occasion of our Lord's treating "of the new birth" in strict terms, (so far as appears from the New Testament,) was upon that visit of Nicodemus to him: and he seems here to have followed his own rule, as laid down, Luke viii.10. of speaking to them that were "without," (or who had not shown their faith by following him) "in parables." This would humble an inquirer, if he were sincere; and put him upon the exercise of faith, instead of curiosity. Nicodemus stumbled at first upon the "stone of offence," when emphatically told this truth, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii.3. but our Saviour in compassion, probably to a sincere but prejudiced mind, condescended to add to his statement, the terms "of water and of the spirit," (by which we may understand, the being first washed, and then inspired, or in other words, first purified from sin, and then filled with holy dispositions and desires,) terms from which the Jewish teacher was able to gather something; assisted as he most probably was, by the further conversation of Christ at that time and by that "power of the Lord," Luke v.17, which, when many "Pharisees, and doctors of the law" were sitting on another occasion under his teaching "was present to heal them." These terms of being "born of water, and of the spirit," are quite inconsistent with the main proposition of the pamphlet, as already stated: they are delicate and appropriate metaphors, expressive of a thing which in itself, is to us incomprehensible, and to be known only by its effects. This also Christ teaches us, by that comparison of it to the wind, which blows on in its course, and we hear the sound of it, and see plainly its effects on the bodies around; yet in itself it is invisible; we cannot tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes, as we can of visible substances. "So is the way of every one that is born of the spirit." He gives the most evident proofs of having become a new man, of a thorough change of heart, effected by a divine power within him: of the manner, origin, progress and final accomplishment of which, however, God alone is in full possession -- and man (pretend what he will of spiritual discerning) can neither describe nor define it, in terms that shall apply alike to every case of conversion, under all the varieties of constitution, habits, character and circumstances of those who may be the subjects of it.

The metaphor thus employed, but not first introduced by Christ (for the Jews applied it in the case of a proselyte to their religion, whom they compared to a new born child) was taken up and applied by the apostles in a variety of apt illustrations; which so well suit the case, and become so natural by use, that they are ready at times to supersede the real sense, that lies underneath, unchangeable. Hence the great wisdom of the Teacher of all truth himself may be inferred, in having so set it forth under a variety of

similitudes, that it is impossible for any one of these, finally to usurp the place of the divine reality. But the author of the pamphlet has fallen into this mistake: and in trying to establish his own views of doctrine, he has in a variety of ways wrested the sense of Scripture; of which take the following instances: --

Matt. i.1. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." "Christ," says Job Scott, "is not only the son of David, and David the son of Abraham, but Christ himself is the son (strictly so in spirit) both of Abraham and of David." Is this the way to prove doctrine by reference to Scripture? The text relates, not to Christ as a "Spirit" or principle of holiness in men, but to the man Jesus Christ, whose outward descent from Abraham, by the mother's side, was in the first place to be set forth in this book. He confounds the outward person with the inward life; and then seeks the latter where it is not at all treated of.

The pamphlet says, page 19, "that babe of life, that true child of God that cries Abba, Father, is never brought forth but through a union of the two seeds, the human and divine." Now it happens that in the only two places in Scripture, in which this figure of the infantile cry to its parent is introduced, each passage exhibits the infant as an adopted child! Rom. viii.14,17. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. [We see here, why, and how, they are sons,] For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father." Who is it that is led by the spirit of God, but he that before went astray? 1 Peter ii.25. Who is it that receives the spirit of adoption, but he, that before was the servant of sin. Rom. vi.16,23. "And such were some of you (says Paul to the Corinthians, after enumerating different kinds of evil doers, 1 Cor. vi.9,11) but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Is there any thing here, other than, or beyond a change of heart and life, the same soul being saved that sinned before? Yet these are the "common notions" of sanctification held by the Christian Church at large, that is, by the sound members in all denominations: but to proceed to the other text, -- Gal. iv.1-7. It is clear from the context here, that the figure has relation to the two dispensations of the Law and the Gospel. Under the former, the Galatians "were in bondage under the rudiments of the world:" they were redeemed by Christ that they might "receive the adoption of sons," the effect and consequence of believing in Him. "And because ye are sons (continues the apostle) God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Thus he describes, in a figure, that happy change which was then proceeding in them, and concerning which he was jealous, lest it should be impeded by others who were leading them back and preaching to them "another Gospel." Now, let these texts be fairly taken along with the context, in the full and plain acceptation of both; and it will be seen at once, that the author derives no support to his hypothesis from either of them. For generation is not adoption; nor the Law, the old man, nor the Gospel, the new man.

The pamphlet says, page 54, "This is the great mystery of godliness. God manifest in the flesh, is not confined to the flesh of that one body." And then it proceeds to quote John xiv.21,23. as before, verses 16,21. also Rom. i.19. and Col. i.27. But take with the first cited text, the context also, 1 Tim. iii.16. "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Observe first, that all this is said in the past tense, God was manifest, not is: secondly, that the whole is connected together as the proper attributes of Jesus Christ, even of Him that was crucified. Are we to take these upon us -- are we preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory? Nay, says some advocate of this mystical doctrine, but Christ within is. But this, according to them, is the new birth itself, the heir of the promise, the believer himself: then one believer is preached to another, and believed

on by him as his Saviour. Let us for argument sake transfer the meaning in a figure, to Christ within, or the Life which is the light of men, &c. then, what becomes of the new opinion? For this Christ is not an individual "production," but a Divine principle, holy and unchangeable: a light shining in darkness, and giving power to as many as receive and follow it, to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name, John i. "No man (says J.S.) can receive any one that Jesus sendeth (observe the inaccuracy of the term, for Jesus is the man) and not as really receive him; I mean absolutely him, the only begotten Son of God: any more than we can receive Christ, and not receive the Father that sent him." I give this with the italics as I find them. It is a perversion of that speech of our Lord's, Matt. x.40. in which he confirms his disciples, then going forth as apostles, and encourages all to receive them as such, by this consideration, that the power and presence of the Father, and of the Son as the Divine Word, should go along with them. "It is not ye that speak, (he says, verse 20.) but the Spirit of our Father which speaketh in you:" the Omnipresent Spirit of God. It need scarcely to be added now, that the pamphlet supersedes the promised Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, John xiv. in his office of instructing and supporting believers, giving it all to the new birth; or God and man in "immediate" union, our own spirits being one of the component parts of this "production"!

Rom. vi.1-11. Out of this whole passage he selects the 10th verse: "For in that he died, he died unto sin, once and in that he liveth, he liveth unto God:" making it signify that Christ "died to the motions of sin in himself, (instantly, that is, "once,") and placing this mystical death of Christ by the side of the great atonement on the cross: in the same way it may be made to supersede all acknowledgment of the merit and efficacy of this sacrifice.

The pamphlet says, page 63,64. "Can a birth of real life [note, of the Divine and human conjoined!] be stifled and slain? It can. Was, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" -- was this said only of what should be afterwards, [note, it was written by John, of what had been before! Rev. xiii.8.] or was it really done from the very foundation? It was really done: it is done still in thousands. In the very day that Adam ate the forbidden fruit he died. Death took instant place in him, upon that which was before alive in him, only in the life of the Lamb. Here the Lamb was slain in him, here the branch was cast forth and withered."

Is not this to assert the death, not of a creature who had sinned, but of Him by whom all things were made? For how is the life of Christ to be separated from his proper divinity, but in a figure only. John the Baptist said, pointing out the man Jesus Christ, Behold the Lamb of God! John i.29.36. According to our author this was quite in vain. It was impossible for the "man" who was to be "made manifest" to Israel, thus to be shown to them: even he then is mystical, and not to be beheld outwardly! The "common notions" of the Christian world, which I believe to be quite right here (and the pamphlet quite wrong), make the Lamb of God to be the man Jesus Christ, who was foreshown by the lamb in the Jewish passover; and who came accordingly, and offered up for us his most precious life, "as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot" -- "foreordained before the foundation of the world," 1 Peter i.18-21.

Let us proceed. In page 58 we read thus: "The natural man, the mere creature, as the work of God is a created being: he never saw God, cannot know him, nor receive the testimony respecting the mystical union and sonship: but the babe, the begotten, that with a true and living knowledge of its sonship, cries Abba, Father, both sees and knows the Father, and receives the heavenly testimony. For Christ, speaking of this mystery, says, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 18.10.

There are in this short passage several perversions of scripture. In the first place, I suppose it will not be controverted, that Adam "the mere creature" (for such he was in strictness, though a noble and a perfect one) saw and knew God, in some sense, while in paradise. Secondly, I have already shown who it is that cries Abba, Father, in the sense of Paul, who wrote it; and that it is not the "babe" of this pamphlet. Thirdly, it does not appear that Christ was "speaking of this mystery" in that passage: it does appear, from the forepart of the chapter, that he was speaking of a converted state, a state also of great self-humiliation and docility: in which they who abide "as little children" shall experience, notwithstanding their outward weakness, the watchful care (implied by the ministration of angels) of their Father in heaven. It would be tedious, and it may not probably be necessary for me, to follow the author through at least as many more unwarrantable applications of scripture, by which he endeavours to make as much as possible appertain to his "babe." of that which is written concerning the Redeemer of mankind, in his own proper person. Taking the author now, therefore, upon his own hypothesis, let us see what follows from it.

First; that there is no such thing as redemption by Christ, properly speaking, and restoration of mankind from the fall; (a conclusion which he could scarcely have intended:) for, upon his system, Adam who fell, is not he who is restored: he is a mere creature, cannot see God, nor know him. Yet, strange to tell, he was redeemed, in and by the very transgression by which he fell, for in that very day that he sinned, the Lamb was slain in him, being a part of himself! It is difficult to get through the labyrinth of our author's doctrine on this subject; but the result of it plainly is, that one man sins, and another being, is born of him, who is saved instead of him!

Secondly. If the human soul be the mother of this babe, not by a "metaphorical expression," but by "as perfect a reality as any in nature," as he affirms -- and if the soul be immortal, and created for a future state of happiness or misery, which will not probably be controverted -- then, upon the supposition of the salvation of the son, what becomes of the mother? This is a part of the "mystery," which he has not explained to us; though as necessary to have been made clear as any. It should seem upon this hypothesis, either that the mortal part is the mother, which would make a very strange confusion in the matter, besides that we know that "what is born of the flesh is flesh;" or that all human souls are eternally lost and perish, some leaving offspring to inherit the realms of bliss, and others not! But no -- I go too fast:

For, thirdly, he says in another place, "If it be objected, that Christ is his [God's] only son, his only begotten, and that therefore none else can be his son in the same sense, I answer:

1. It is not pretended that any other visible person or human being was ever begotten in the same manner as was Jesus the son of Mary: so, in that respect, that was a singular and only instance of sonship.

2. But a second part of the answer to this objection is, that though the sonship as brought forth in a plurality of persons, is expressed in the plural number in relation to them; and so is called sons, children and heirs; yet in relation to God, with whom the union is immediately formed in all those persons wherein the sonship takes place, the whole is but one sonship. The seed of which they are begotten is one in all, that is, "the incorruptible seed and word of God," of which all that are, or ever was born again of God, are begotten." Pa. 80. If we now keep still to the real system, it appears that the many persons constituting the visible church, as to us, are in relation to God, but one person, or no person at all: contradicting our Lord's declaration that He is the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob -- not the God of the dead, but of the living. Matt. xxii.32, &c. Consequently now, instead of heaven being peopled at a double rate, as it would be on the supposition that men's souls were saved, and that our author's doctrine were also true, there will be gathered from the high and glorious mission of the Redeemer, instead of an innumerable multitude

before the throne, no increase of blessed spirits at all!

In order to escape from some such inference, our author here, towards the conclusion of his work, and perhaps upon a little further reflection, begins to slide out of his realities; making the son, a sonship, and admitting other scripture metaphors into his statements; out of which metaphors others have just as much right to constitute what is real, as he had to make this so. If conversion and sanctification be really a process of generation, then it is also really a dying and rising again inwardly, a being washed from our sins in water or in blood, a being leavened with leaven, purified by fire, &c. all of which are impossible in a real sense. In the use of metaphors, Holy Scripture will always be found, I believe, consistent with itself. He who is "converted" becomes at first "as a little child:" the direction of his will and desire is effectually changed: and he afterwards grows in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" until he arrives at "the measure of the stature of his fulness." 2 Peter iii.18. Eph. iv.13. Not so the "babe" of this pamphlet. For our author seems greatly perplexed in himself, to decide whether he be born at all, until sanctification is fully accomplished; that is, until he be arrived at manhood! "If any man in whom this birth has some real existence, finds himself still in a degree under the power of sin, he may be assured, that so far as he is so, he is not born of God." "No man is ever wholly born of God, who is not brought under his rule and government in all things." -- "That which sinneth, in any man, is not born of God; is not the new man, but the old man, which is corrupt, and in which sin yet dwelleth." Note this monosyllable yet, which at once refutes the real doctrine, for it would imply, in his sense, that there may be in us, really one man already saved, and another in a capacity of salvation!

The apostle John says, Whosoever is born of God doth not sin; for his seed [the principle of Truth and righteousness, the Eternal Word] remaineth in him." &c. 1 John iii.9. But he also says, "Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world," 1 John v.4, which is a great and self-evident truth, closely connected with the former, and, as it were, the root of it. For nothing can be "born of God" in us, but what shall be pure, holy and harmless; Light in the understanding and Love in the affections, the two great preservatives (as every child of God knows) from the act and power of sin. The apostle says also: "He that committeth sin is of the devil." [but as if to prevent the too literal acceptation (of his being born of him) he adds] for the devil sinneth from the beginning." Ch. iii.8. But our author has a person much nearer to ourselves to lay the blame upon. He imputes all the "babe's" sins, to the old man "which is corrupt [as if it were really the original principle of Evil in us] and in which sin yet dwelleth" [as if it could notwithstanding be yet purified and saved.]

Such are the consequences of affecting to be wise above that which is written -- of making that real which is metaphorical; that figurative or mystical which is literal -- of not being content to take the plain text along with the context, and draw from both in humility and faith the instruction they may thus well afford -- in short, of rejecting, from an apprehension of our own superior attainments and greater spirituality, the doctrines deduced from scripture, by Christians in all ages, concerning salvation by Christ.

It is greatly to be feared, that a spirit of self-righteousness may sometimes be lurking under these exalted pretensions. For how can a man be supposed to entertain and feed his mind upon such doctrine, without applying it to his own case and to his neighbours? He himself, forsooth, is regenerate and born again; he has in him, the only begotten, the son and heir of the promises, who ever beholds the kingdom, and dwells in it; nay, claims it as his rightful inheritance! He is the brother, and of late, it seems, also the mother of Christ! He needs no teaching of man -- the anointing is in him, by which he knows all things -- or if not as yet so, they will in due time be revealed to him, without research or inquiry on his part. He can do without the scriptures: he will be led and guided into all Truth without them: the letter kills [a text often perverted

thus] it is the spirit that giveth life: -- with much more of the like, that may be traced in what escapes from persons in this state of mind. As to the letter killing, let us here explain the text. 2 Cor. iii.3-6. "Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, [here is a strong figure!] written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, [the same thing with "the anointing," 1 John ii.27.] not in tables of stone, [as was the law of Moses] but in fleshly tables of the heart. And such trust have we, through Christ, to Godward. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, [to arrive at positive conclusions concerning your state] but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament, [or Covenant] not of the letter [to wit, the law of Moses] but of the spirit: for the letter [of that law] killeth [by denouncing death for the breach of the commandment, and yet providing no remedy or escape] but the Spirit [of the living God in the new covenant] giveth life." Now, let any candid person try for his own satisfaction, whether he can bring any thing from this, or any other part of the Scriptures of Truth, which implies that the doctrines contained in that book, which (after the subject it treats of) is called the New Testament, do kill, or in any way prejudice the believer in Christ, by being simply read and received into his understanding: It was plainly not the letter of this book to which the apostle applied the text -- but mark! his words will often be found so applied by those who think themselves highly spiritual. It is true, that "knowledge" without charity "puffeth up," and that charity edifieth, or buildeth up: but it buildeth, in part, with the very materials that inquiry and knowledge furnish. And the apostle in the very same Epistle had said, "Brethren be not children in understanding -- howbeit in [freedom from] malice be ye children, [here is the "babe" of the apostle Paul] but in understanding be men." 1 Cor. xiv.20. For which end he had written them so many instructive advices.

The letter, then, killeth, and the spirit giveth life: but to whom does it give life? To those exclusively who have in their minds this view of it? By no means. One man may have been taught, that he is saved by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and by this merely, without any respect to his works: another may have imbibed the sentiment, that what Christ did and suffered outwardly, (as he may inconsiderately term it,) effected nothing for his eternal good: I think them both wrong: but as I believe that men are not saved merely by a notion of religion, so neither that they are lost merely through it: though, when fondly cherished and uncharitably contended for, their notions may hurt them as Christians, and impede or endanger their sanctification.

Our author himself, I am sorry to have to remark, does not appear to have had his charity towards others extended, or his humility deepened, by these speculations. "No doubt (he says in his preface) professors will object, as they always have done, to every unfolding of truth: but what avails their cavils, or indeed what avails their quiet, with us, if it is in a way that allows them to live at ease in sin, under a mistaken notion that they are going to heaven by Christ?" -- "The Lord is on his way, gradually unveiling himself to his inquiring, seeking children; and wo, wo, from an all-righteous judge, to those who dare to lift a hand against the right-timed openings and revelations of his heavenly mysteries!"

This note of admiration, I conclude, is the editors -- but probably not in the sense in which I admire at the passage. For, let it be recollected, that not fire and faggot, personal restraint, or persecution, is here alluded to, but simply the objections (which he calls cavils) of professors of the same religion! But he proceeds, "I care not how soon their false rest is disturbed." -- "I would as soon trust my immortal state upon the profession of Deism, as upon the common notions of salvation by Christ."

These highly improper concessions to unbelieving spirits, are found in more than one or two places in the book. "I am as sure (says J. S.) there is no salvation out of Christ, as I am of any thing in the world: I am also as sure, that the common ideas of salvation are very greatly beside the true doctrine of salvation by

Christ." So much for the sweeping sentence, which the author is made, by this imprudent publication, to pass upon his fellow professors of the Christian religion, without distinction of name or sect.

Now, let us hear him speak of himself and his own experience -- which he does towards the conclusion, in the following terms: "The substance of what I have written, I have at least learned mostly of the Father. I learned the mystery of it, not of man; neither was I ever clearly and livingly taught it by man, as man; but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Are these the terms in which it becomes a poor finite being, endued with such limited powers, to speak of the Great Author and Finisher of our faith; and of those things, which, as the apostle himself says, we now know but in part, and see as through a glass, darkly?

Not one of the apostles of Christ any where mentions God the Father as his teacher, in this familiar manner. And surely he had forgotten, at the moment, that he had ever read the New Testament; from the "letter" of which, his memory at least furnished him with another man's words, in which to clothe his own thoughts of his own attainments. Let this source of magnificent expression (to which preachers and disputants so freely resort) be removed, and it would soon be seen into what, both the spirit of paradoxical inference from detached portions of the letter, and an exalted, mystical mode of expounding the hidden sense (where it is not,) would degenerate! But rather let it not be removed -- for it is greatly needed on these occasions, to serve as a touchstone for the false gold, and detect the fallacy.

Let it not be thought, that in thus meeting the author of this piece, or rather the piece itself, as unceremoniously as it comes, (though there is more that is exceptionable left unnoticed,) I am actuated by any degree of hostility towards the memory or character of this deceased Friend. Truth, and above all, "the very Truth of God," as he has expressed it, is too precious a thing to be deserted by its advocate, were it even certain that he would lose all his friends (in this world) by defending it: the author himself would have joined me in this conclusion. I believe him to have been a very sincere and spiritually minded man, a fervent, and in some respects, a useful and effectual preacher, and a good example in life and conversation. With the strong perception which he seems to have had of some doctrinal errors of others, (such as the Antinomians, who probably came frequently in his way,) I think it quite probable that with further humbling experience of the power of Truth, and further opportunities of conference with his equals, he might have come to see and correct his own. That with all these strange notions about the manner of salvation, he was enabled, through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and the sanctifying efficacy of the Holy Spirit, to experience (through faith) the thing itself, is what I entertain no doubt of. And here I trust I may safely leave him and conclude the subject.

Were I to be inquired of, whether there be at the present time any religious society or body of men on the face of the whole earth, who are entitled to draw between themselves and other "professors" a clear line of distinction, and say, "We know the rest are ignorant; we possess and enjoy; the rest are aliens: we are the church, they, the world that lieth in wickedness:" I must honestly reply, that I know of no such body or society. I believe that religious knowledge, accompanied by a heartfelt experience of the great work of sanctification, has of late years greatly spread and increased among mankind; and in quite as great a proportion without, as within, the pale of our own religious society, taken in its whole extent. In forming this conclusion, I have been guided by the rule which our Lord himself lays down concerning doctrines and teachers, By their fruits ye shall know them: for men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles. Matt. vii.6. And when, with unimpeachable integrity and unquestionable piety, I see joined, in many whom I know of other denominations, a lively concern and diligent endeavour to spread the knowledge of Christ; to promote (what I hope no sound member of our society will deny to be of great importance, and of great probable future utility to mankind) the reception and perusal of the Holy Scriptures: when I am obliged to

admit, on certain evidence, that these labours have been blessed, and have succeeded to the turning of many to righteousness, Dan. xii.3, who before were dark, ignorant of the true God and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, sensual and unprincipled -- when I behold these things in which we (as a body) have taken hitherto so little part, I own I feel for the Christian character and reputation of that part of the visible professing church on earth, to which I belong. We are, it may be said, a peculiar people, and have peculiar Testimonies, in some respects, to bear to the simplicity, peaceableness and purity of Christ's kingdom. Granted -- no one believes this, I trust, more firmly than I do: not many, perhaps, more sincerely desire that we may be faithful to our duty in these respects. The day will come, however, soon or late, when we must merge (if we remain so long a society) into the great assembly of the visible Church. For it is said, They shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Isa. lii.7-10. No squinting then upon each other, for differences of opinion among sound and faithful members of the true Church: but a universal charity at least -- if not a most perfect agreement in the Truth!

But, O that before that day come, we the Religious Society of Friends, who have sometimes called ourselves the Lord's people, and who believe that we have Testimonies committed unto us to bear for His name, may not, by departing from the true humility and fear of God; by letting in the wide-wasting love of this world and its treasure; and by following strange doctrines, which have no root in scripture, and which vary with the mental complexion of every teacher, be scattered and come to nought. But I am persuaded better things (though I write thus to provoke to Christian zeal and emulation) of the sincere in our own society. I trust that they will yet more and more become, and long continue, a sober yet spiritually minded, a consistent, self-denying company of believers; bearing testimony to the Truth of God; not in words alone, in which we may err from want of knowledge, but in practice, where the way is safe and plain; and where our Great Example has gone before us, leaving us his footsteps that we might follow Him. We acknowledge, that our own opinions of the Christian religion, received by others, merely as notions, will effect no more for them, than they could for us: will constitute but the "letter" of the New Covenant, until written with the finger of God on fleshly tables of the heart. How important is it, then, for all, that they thus come to feel and possess that which they hear and speak of! In order to which, let us in humility and faith, commune in private with the Blessed Saviour, in his inward appearance in our minds. Here we may learn of him, practically, what it is to be born again, and what is the nature of his salvation: and having received the Truth "as little children," grow therein from stature to stature, till being finally gathered from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, we may be permitted to sit down with the faithful and saved of all generations in the kingdom of God.

I am thy affectionate friend,

LUKE HOWARD

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