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*Letter from a Father to his Son on  
the perfections of God.*

DEAR SON,

**I**N my former letter I attempted to establish you in the belief of a first cause of all things, of the being of an uncreated God, without which belief it is unnecessary to say or even think of what I shall now write you. The principal ideas in this letter flow from the substance of the other.

All things being made by God, we are enabled to learn from them his true character. They exhibit perfections which can belong to none but the Creator, and which place him before us in an infinitely exalted and amiable view.

But what benefit shall we receive, my son, if we search into and describe the character of the great Creator of the world and our hearts be opposed to him? We have, by nature, opposition of heart to God. Though you may now think you feel tolerably well pleased with him, yet if ever you are awakened to a sense of your state, you will find the most inveterate opposition, waked up in your heart against every exhibition God has made of himself in his works.

These effects will arise even from my present endeavors if your heart be opposed to God. If you attend, your understanding will be enlightened and you will be prepared to exercise love to the character of God should he ever renew your heart. And should it never be renewed, these endeavors will be means of vindicating the divine conduct toward you in that solemn and important day, when, my own and your state will be unalterably fixed. The justice of God in your condemnation will be evident when it appears you have continued in stupid opposition, notwithstanding your mind had been enlightened by these kind exertions. And the way will be prepared for every holy being to say amen; and to sing "Just and true are thy ways, thou king of saints," when your sentence shall be pronounced by the judge of all the world.

If we admit the idea that God is the Creator of all things we must believe he has infinite power. No power short of this could have created man, the earth on which he lives, and the vast bodies in the heavens above. We know that

of the scene. The following communications are the first that have been received. They are given to the public, leaving all to judge for themselves. Many will applaud, many will condemn—let him that judgeth do it in the fear of God.

*The following is an extract of a letter from the Rev. Archibald Alexander, President of Hampden Sidney College in Virginia, to the Rev. Nathan Strong, Hartford. Mr. Alexander is a gentleman of eminent science and judicious piety, and by his late tour through New-England, became known and beloved by many of our Christian Readers.*

Prince Edward, Jan. 25, 1802.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I HAVE deferred writing until this time, that I might have it in my power to communicate some authentic intelligence of the extraordinary revival of religion which has lately taken place in Kentucky. The inclosed letter was written to me, by the President of Washington Academy, in this state; who visited Kentucky for the very purpose of examining into the nature of the remarkable religious appearances which existed there. In this inquiry he obtained complete satisfaction, and now entertains no doubt of its being a glorious work of God, as you will see by the contents of his letter. I scarcely know a man on whose judgment, in a matter of this kind, I could more confidently rely than upon his. Possessing a clear, discriminating mind, and rational piety, he was in as little danger of being deceived by delusive appearances as any other person with whom I am acquainted. You will however judge of the narrative for yourself, and may

make what use of it, you think proper. I have sent it with a view to its publication in the Evangelical Magazine, if the Editors think it would be useful to the public.

In N. Carolina a revival attended with similar appearances, has lately taken place, chiefly amongst the presbyterians. I am not able to furnish you with the names of the counties or congregations, but I am informed it has extended over a tract of country about twenty miles square. The congregations are nearly as large, and instances of falling down as common as in Kentucky.

In this state, religious appearances are something better, than when I left it. At Christmas a number of ministers of different denominations, met together in the county of Bedford, to consult upon the best measures for uniting their efforts, in defence of Christianity against the torrent of vice and infidelity which threatened to overflow the land. Their meeting was remarkably harmonious,—prejudice and party-spirit seemed to have no place amongst them, but with one accord they consented to a scheme of friendly intercourse, and general union. Whilst they were together many sermons were delivered, and the effect was great—An uncommon awakening has taken place amongst the people in that neighborhood—and it is hoped a revival of true religion has commenced.

*Washington Academy, Jan. 1,  
1802.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I NOW sit down, agreeably to my promise, to give you some account of the late revival of religion in the state of Kentucky. You have no doubt been informed

already respecting the Green-River and Cumberland revivals. I will just observe, that the last is the fourth summer since the revival commenced in those places, and that it has been more remarkable than any of the preceding, not only for lively and fervent devotion among Christians, but also for awakenings and conversions among the careless. And it is worthy of notice, that very few instances of apostacy have hitherto appeared. As I was not in the Cumberland country myself, all I can say about it depends on the testimony of others; but I was uniformly told, by those who had been there, that their religious assemblies were more solemn, and the appearance of the work much greater, than what had been in Kentucky. Any enthusiastic symptoms, which might at first have attended the revival, were greatly subsided, whilst the serious concern and engagedness of the people were visibly increased.

In the older settlement of Kentucky, the revival made its first appearance among the presbyterians last spring. The whole of that country about a year before was remarkable for vice and dissipation; and I have been credibly informed, that a decided majority of the people were professed infidels. During the last winter appearances were favorable among the baptists, and great numbers were added to their churches.— Early in the spring, the ministrations of the presbyterian clergy began to be better attended than they had been for many years before. Their worshipping assemblies became more solemn, and the people after they were dismissed shewed a strange reluctance about leaving the place. They generally continued some time in the meeting-houses, and employed them-

selves in singing or religious conversation. Perhaps about the last of May or the first of June, the awakenings became general in some congregations, and spread through the country in every direction with amazing rapidity. I left that country about the first of November, at which time, this revival in connection with the one on Cumberland had covered the whole state of Kentucky, excepting a small settlement which borders on the waters of Green-River, in which no presbyterian ministers are settled, and I believe very few of any denomination.

The power with which this revival has spread, and its influence in moralizing the people, are difficult for you to conceive, and more so for me to describe. I had heard many accounts, and seen many letters respecting it before I went to that country; but my expectations, though greatly raised, were much below the reality of the work. Their congregations, when engaged in worship, presented scenes of solemnity superior to what I had ever seen before. And in private houses it was no uncommon thing to hear parents relate to strangers, the wonderful things which God had done in their neighborhoods, while a large family of young people collected round them would be in tears. On my way to Kentucky, I was informed by settlers on the road, that the character of Kentucky travellers was entirely changed; and that they were now as remarkable for sobriety as they had formerly been for dissoluteness and immorality. And indeed I found Kentucky, to appearance, the most moral place I had ever seen. A profane expression was hardly ever heard. A religious awe seemed to pervade the country; and some ecclesiastical char-

acters had confessed, that from whatever cause the revival might proceed, it made the people better.

Its influence was not less visible in promoting a friendly temper among the people. Nothing could appear more amicable, than that undissembled benevolence which governs the subjects of this work. I have often wished, that the mere politician or the deist could observe with impartiality their peaceful and amicable spirit. He would certainly see, that nothing could equal the religion of Jesus for promoting even the temporal happiness of society. Some neighborhoods visited by the revival, were formerly notorious for private animosities and contentions; and many petty lawsuits had commenced on that ground. When the parties in these quarrels were impressed with religion, the first thing was to send for their antagonists, and it was often very affecting to see their meeting. They had both seen their faults, and both contended they ought to make the acknowledgments, till at last they were obliged to request one another, to forbear all mention of the past, and to receive each other as friends and brothers for the future. Now, sir, let modern philosophists talk of reforming the world by banishing Christianity, and introducing their licentious systems; the blessed gospel of our God and Saviour is shewing what it can do.

Some circumstances have concurred to distinguish the revival in Kentucky from almost any other of which we have had any account. I mean the largeness of their assemblies on sacramental occasions—the length of time they continued on the ground, in the exercise of public or private devotion—and the great numbers who have fallen down under religious impressions.

On each of these particulars I shall give you some remarks.

With respect to the largeness of their assemblies. It is generally supposed that at many places, there were not less than eight, ten, or twelve thousand people. At one place called Cane Ridge meeting-house, many are of opinion there were not less than twenty thousand. There were an hundred and forty waggons which came loaded with people, besides other wheel-carriages: and some persons attended who had come the distance of two hundred miles. The largeness of these congregations was a considerable inconvenience. They were too numerous to be addressed by any one speaker. Different ministers were obliged to officiate at the same time at different stands. This afforded an opportunity to those who were but slightly impressed with religion, to wander backwards and forwards between the different places of worship, which created an appearance of confusion and gave ground to such as were unfriendly to the work, to charge it with disorder. There was also another cause which conduced to the same effect. About this time the people began to fall down in great numbers under serious impressions. This was a new thing among Presbyterians. It excited universal astonishment, and created a degree of curiosity which could not be restrained. When people fell down even in the most solemn parts of divine service, those who stood near were so extremely anxious to see how they were affected, that they frequently crowded about them in such a manner as to disturb the worship. But these causes of disorder were soon removed. Different sacraments were appointed on the same sabbath which divided the people; and the falling down

soon became so familiar as to excite no disturbance. I was in that country during the month of October. I attended three sacraments. The number of people at each was supposed to be about four or five thousand; and every thing was conducted with strict propriety. When persons fell down, those who happened to be near took care of them, and every thing continued quiet till the worship was concluded.

The length of time the people continued on the ground was another important circumstance of the Kentucky revival. At Cane-Ridge the people met on Friday morning, and continued till Wednesday evening, night and day without intermission, either in the public or private exercises of devotion; and with such a degree of earnestness, that heavy showers of rain were not sufficient to disperse them. On other sacramental occasions, they generally continued on the ground till Monday or Tuesday evening. And had not the ministers been exhausted and obliged to retire, or had they chosen to prolong the worship, they might have kept the people any length of time they pleased. And all this was or might have been done in a country, where, not a twelve-month before, the clergy found it a difficult matter to detain the people during the common exercises of the sabbath. The practice of camping on the ground was introduced, partly by necessity, and partly by inclination. The assemblies were generally too large to be received by any common neighborhood. Every thing indeed was done which hospitality and brotherly kindness could do, to accommodate the people. Public and private houses were both opened, and free invitations given to all

persons who wished to retire. Farmers gave up their meadows before they were mown to supply the horses. But notwithstanding all this liberality, it would in many cases have been impossible to have accommodated the whole assembly with private lodgings. But besides, the people were unwilling to suffer any interruption in their devotion, and they formed an attachment for the place, where they were continually seeing so many careless sinners receiving their first impressions, and so many deists constrained to call on the formerly despised name of Jesus. They conceived a sentiment like what Jacob felt at Bethel, when he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place—this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

The number of persons who have fallen down under serious impressions in this revival, is another matter worthy of attention. And on this I shall be the more particular, as it seems to be the principal cause, why this work should be more suspected of enthusiasm, than some other revivals. At Cane-Ridge sacrament (the place mentioned above) it is generally supposed, that not less than one thousand persons fell prostrate to the ground, and among them were many infidels. At one sacrament which I attended in that country, the number that fell was thought to be upwards of three hundred. Persons who fall are generally such as have manifested symptoms of the deepest impressions for some time previous to that event. It is common to see them shed tears plentifully for about an hour. Immediately before they become totally powerless, they are seized with a general tremor; and sometimes though not frequently, in the moment of falling they utter one or two piercing

shrieks. Persons in this state are affected in many different degrees. Sometimes when unable to stand or sit, they have the use of their hands and can converse with perfect composure. In other cases they are unable to speak, their pulse grows weak, and they draw a hard breath about once a minute. And in some instances their hands and feet become cold, and their pulse, and breath, and all the symptoms of life forsake them for nearly an hour. Persons who have been in this situation have uniformly avowed, that they suffered no bodily pain, and that they had the entire command of their reason and reflection; and when recovered they could relate every thing which was said or done, near them, or which could possibly fall within their observation. From this it appears that their falling is neither the common fainting nor the nervous affection. Indeed this strange phenomenon appears to have taken every turn it possibly could to baffle the conjectures of those who are not willing to consider it a supernatural work. Persons have sometimes fallen on their way home from public worship, and sometimes after their arrival. In some cases, they have fallen when pursuing their common business on their farms, or when they had retired for private devotion. I observed above, that persons generally are seriously affected for some time previous to falling. In many cases however it is otherwise. Numbers of careless persons have fallen as suddenly as if struck with a flash of lightning. Many professed infidels, and other vicious characters have been arrested in this way; and sometimes at the very moment, when they were uttering their blasphemies against the work.

At the beginning of the revival in Shelby county, the appearances, as related to me by eye witnesses, were very surprising indeed. The revival had previously spread with irresistible power through the adjacent counties; and many of the religious people had attended distant sacraments, and were greatly benefitted. They were much engaged, and felt unusual freedom in their addresses at the Throne of Grace; for the outpouring of the divine Spirit, at the approaching sacrament in Shelby. The sacrament came on in September. The people as usual met on Friday, but they were all languid, and the exercises went on heavily. On Saturday and Sunday morning it was no better. At length the communion service commenced, and every thing was still lifeless. The minister of the place was speaking at one of the tables without any unusual liberty. All at once there were several shrieks from different parts of the assembly. Persons fell instantly in every direction. The feelings of the pious were suddenly revived; and the work went on with extraordinary power from that time till the conclusion of the solemnity.

These phenomena of falling are common to all ages and sexes, and to all sorts of characters; and when they fall they are differently exercised. Some pious people have fallen under a sense of ingratitude and hardness of heart; and others under affecting manifestations of the love and goodness of God. Many careless persons have fallen under legal convictions, and obtained comfort before they arose. But perhaps the most numerous class of all, are those who fall under distressing views of their guilt, who arise with the same fearful apprehensions, and continue in that state for some days, perhaps weeks,

before they obtain comfort. I have conversed with many who fell under the influence of comfortable feelings, and the account which they gave of their exercises, while they lay entranced, was very surprising. I know not how to give you a better idea of them, than by saying, that they appeared in many cases to surpass the dying exercises of Doctor Finley. Their minds appeared wholly swallowed up in contemplating the perfections of Deity as illustrated in the plan of salvation. And while they lay in all appearance senseless, and almost destitute of life, their minds were more vigorous and active, and their memories more retentive and accurate, than they had ever been before. I have heard respectable characters assert, that their manifestations of gospel truth were so clear, as to require some caution when they began to speak, lest they should use language, which might induce their hearers to suppose they had seen those things with their natural eyes. But at the same time, they had seen no image or sensible representation, nor indeed any thing, besides the old truths contained in the bible. Among those whose minds were filled with the most delightful communications of divine love, I but seldom observed any thing ecstatic. Their expressions were just and rational; they conversed with calmness and composure; and on first recovering the use of speech, they appeared like persons just recovering from a violent sickness, which had left them on the borders of the grave.

I have sometimes been present when persons who fell under the influence of convictions, obtained relief before they rose. On these occasions it was impossible not to observe how strongly the change of their minds was depicted in

their countenances. From a face of horror and despair, they assumed one which was open, luminous, and serene, and expressive of all the comfortable feelings of religion. As to those who fall down under legal convictions and continue in that state, they are not different from those who receive convictions in other revivals; excepting, that their distress is more severe. Indeed, extraordinary power is the leading characteristic of this revival. Both saints and sinners have more striking discoveries of the realities of another world, than I have ever known on any other occasion.

I trust I have said enough on this subject, to enable you to judge how far the charge of enthusiasm is applicable to it. Lord Littleton in his letter on the conversion of St. Paul observes (and I think very justly) that "Enthusiasm is a vain, self-righteous spirit, swelled with self-sufficiency, and disposed to glory in its religious attainments." If this definition be a good one, there is perhaps as little enthusiasm in Kentucky as in any other revival. Never in my life have I seen more genuine marks of that humility, which disclaims the merit of its own duties, and looks to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only way of acceptance with God. I was indeed highly pleased to find that Christ was all and in all in their religion, as well as in the religion of the gospel. Christians in their highest attainments were most sensible of their entire dependence on divine grace; and it was truly affecting to hear with what agonizing anxiety awakened sinners inquired for Christ, as the only physician who could give them any help. Those who call these things enthusiasm, ought to tell us what they understand by the Spirit

of Christianity. In fact, Sir, this revival operates, as our Saviour promised the Holy Spirit should when sent into the world. It convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; a strong confirmation to my mind, both that the promise is divine, and that this is a remarkable fulfilment of it.

It would be of little avail to object to all this, that perhaps the professions of many of the people were counterfeited. Such an objection would rather establish what it meant to destroy. For where there is no reality there can be no counterfeit; and besides, when the general tenor of a work is such, as to dispose the more insincere professors to counterfeit what is right, the work itself must be genuine. But as an eye-witness in the case, I may be permitted to declare, that the professions of those under religious convictions, were generally marked with such a degree of engagedness and feeling, as wilful hypocrisy could hardly assume. The language of the heart when deeply impressed is easily distinguished from the language of affectation.

Upon the whole, Sir, I think the revival in Kentucky among the most extraordinary that have ever visited the church of Christ. And all things considered it was peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of the country into which it came. Infidelity was triumphant, and religion at the point of expiring. Something of an extraordinary nature appeared necessary to arrest the attention of a giddy people, who were ready to conclude that Christianity was a fable and futurity a dream. This revival has done it. It has confounded infidelity, awed vice into silence, and brought numbers beyond calculation under serious impressions.

Whilst the blessed Saviour was calling home his people and building up his church in this remarkable way, opposition could not be silent. At this I have hinted above. But it is proper I should observe here, that the clamorous opposition which assailed the work at its first appearance has been in a great measure borne down before it. A large proportion of those who have fallen, were at first opposers; and their example has taught others to be cautious, if it has not taught them to be wise.

I have written on this subject to a greater length than I first intended. But if this account should give you any satisfaction, and be of any benefit to the common cause, I shall be fully gratified.

Yours with the highest esteem.

GEO. A. BAXTER.

Rev. Archibald Alexander.

*Extract of a letter from a gentleman in Philadelphia to his friend in Hartford.*

"I was last Sunday evening to hear Mr. — speak at the old College—it is fitted up so as to accommodate at least 1500 persons and it was so crowded the greater part of the audience were obliged to stand the whole time.— His subject was, the great condescension of the Almighty in reasoning with his creatures to persuade them to come to the truth; whereby their happiness would be increased here and hereafter.— Great attention and solemnity appeared in the people the whole time, and a more than common concern has taken place here on the subject of religion, and many enquiring what they shall do to be saved."

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