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TERMS.

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From the Christian Advocate.

TO THE REV. RICHARD FULLER D. D.

LETTER V.

My DEAR BROTHER,—In my last letter I attempted an examination of the argument derived from the Old Testament in favor of slavery. It becomes me next to consider the manner in which this institution is treated in the New Testament. Before, however, I do this, it will be proper to offer a few suggestions on the subject of expediency. This topic, as I am aware, is introduced only incidentally into the discussion. Nevertheless as it is liable to embarrass our judgments, in the further prosecution of this inquiry, I propose briefly to consider it in this place.

It gives me great pleasure to declare that I cheerfully and heartily coincide with you in the spirit and intention of your remarks on this subject. I admire the indignation with which you repel the suspicion that the Saviour or his apostles would, for the sake of escaping persecution, shun to declare the whole counsel of God. I sympathize in the scorn with which you contemplate that craven spirit, which, while it speaks great swelling words, yet has men's persons in admiration because of advantage. I know of nothing more utterly contemptible. Disgraceful however as it is every where, it is especially so in the Christian church, and more than all in the Christian ministry. We have all seen the evils of this sort of expediency. It has too frequently brought the ministry of the gospel into contempt in the eyes of all honorable and high-minded men. Holding their views I should be thoroughly ashamed if any thing that I have ever said or written, has justly led any one to suppose that I consider our Lord or his apostles capable of so unmanly a wickedness. I am therefore gratified, with your allusion to the subject, as it will enable me to explain my views more explicitly. I hope that I may be able so to illustrate them, that on this point at least there may be no difference of opinion between us.

The word expediency means fitness or suitability to effect some end, or purpose intended. In this sense it is morally neutral, being in itself neither good nor bad, but deriving its moral quality from some circumstance extraneous to itself. I have said that it is morally neutral. This however expresses not the whole truth. Expediency, that is, the use of means suitable or fitted to accomplish an end, is the simple and universal dictate of intelligence. A man would scarce be deemed of sound mind unless he obeyed the dictates of such an expediency. Nay, if he failed to avail himself of such means, he might be morally delinquent. For instance if a man were charged with the accomplishment of some good design, and neglected to use the means suited to effect it, or still more if he used the means of a directly opposite tendency, we should all declare him culpable. His conduct would show that his interest in the good work was not sufficient to prompt him to the use of the proper means to ensure his success.

We see then clearly, that simple expediency, that is, the use of the means suitable to accomplish an end, is in itself innocent, that it may be commendable, and that the want of it may justly expose us to censure. On the other hand, it is equally evident that expediency may be mean, contemptible, cowardly and wicked. In what manner, then, may these two cases be distinguished from each other?

The end which we desire to accomplish may be either bad or good. As however no means which we use to accomplish a bad end can be innocent, we may at once dismiss this class of cases from our consideration. The question then will be reduced to the following: Under what circumstances is expediency in the accomplishment of a good end wicked, and under what circumstances is it innocent?

Let us now illustrate this distinction by a reference to some of the cases in which expediency clearly partakes of one or the other of these characters.

I may for instance desire to promulgate the knowledge of the gospel among the heathen; and in order to convince them of its truth, I perform before them pious frauds, and work false miracles. I may suppose that by so doing I shall convert men's souls. But I have done wickedly. I have lied; and more than this, I have lied in the name of the Most High God. Again, suppose I wish to increase the interest of the public at home in the cause of missions, or any other scheme of benevolence, and I utter exaggerated statements, I tell stories which I know to be false, or which I have no reason to believe to be true, and do this for the sake of advancing the cause; this also is wicked. It is a sheer lie just as much when uttered to support a good cause, as a bad one. The cause makes it no better, and my hypocrisy makes it worse.

Again, suppose that I understand the Scriptures to reveal a particular system of truth to the human race, and I profess to be moved by the Holy Ghost to enforce this truth upon my fellow-men. I however think that I can make it more acceptable to them by withholding a part of it, or by adding to it, or by modifying the whole or any part of it. In so doing I am guilty of a great wickedness. God has throned me to preach the preaching that he bids me, and no other; to preach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I am guilty of telling a lie in his name, of usurping the prerogative of the Most High God, and for the consequence of my sin I am responsible in his sight.

Or again, suppose that I understand the revelation which he has given, but I fear that to deliver it just as he has revealed it, will expose me to persecution, or will endanger my property, my influence, my reputation, or my life; and I, from the fear of consequences to myself, abridge, or alter, or modify the message which God has given me; in this case again I do wickedly. I violate the commandment of my Maker, and I prefer my temporal happiness to the will of God, and the eternal salvation of the souls of my fellow-men.

Or again, suppose that while I myself hold firmly to the doctrines of the gospel, I, from the fear of popular clamor, adopt means for advancing what I believe to be truth, of which my conscience and reason disapprove. In this case also I do wickedly. I obey man rather than God. I ruin my fellow-men's souls rather than incur their displeasure. I do, as by the command of God, what I do not believe that he has commanded, and do this because my fellow-men desire it. I am guilty, and to God I must answer it.

In these instances, and in all such as these, it is in vain to plead that I desire to do good, that I wish to advance the cause of truth, or that I wish to preserve my influence for the sake of using it on some other occasion. God does not choose to be served by abandoning his service, and serving man in his place. He has not commanded us to serve him by doing wickedness. Our influence is not more valuable than truth and righteousness. When we can only preserve it by doing wrong, it is clear that God does not intend us to hold it any longer; and we cannot hold it longer, except on the peril of our souls.

Again, expediency may become wicked, not only by doing an act in itself wrong, but by doing an act in itself innocent from an imperfect motive. We have a striking illustration of this in the case of the apostles Peter and Paul. In the first commencement of the gospel dispensation, when Judaism was fading, but had not yet entirely vanished away, there was a considerable mingling of the Jewish rites with Christianity. Many of the sincere believers in Jesus, from the force of old association, adhered to the rites of Judaism; looking upon them as by no means obligatory, but yet pleasant and perhaps profitable. And yet more, as the Jews would much more readily hear the truth from one who respected their law than from a Gentile, a concession to their prejudices, for their own good, was in many cases innocent. The innocence, however depended wholly on the motive. Peter, from the fear of man, was led into sin. He conformed to the Mosaic ritual, to avoid the offence of the cross; and so acted as to lead men to believe that he considered its rites and ceremonies as yet binding obligations. For this cause Paul rebuked him to the face, in the presence of them all, because he was to be blamed.—Yet Paul himself, circumcised Timothy, kept the feast of Pentecost, and in many other cases yielded obedience to the law. What then was the difference in the moral character of the actions?—Simply this, Paul yielded this obedience for the good of others, every where, and at all times, stating the grounds on which he acted, and, in the face of all opposition, and in spite of the bitterest persecution, contending that Christ having fulfilled the law, it was no longer of binding efficacy upon the Jews, or upon any other men. Peter, on the contrary, for the sake of avoiding persecution, kept the law, and urged the Gentiles to keep it, as though it were still an ordinance of God, and as if our salvation depended on the keeping of it. No man ever in a mistaken this distinction better than the apostle Paul, and no man ever acted upon it with more promptness or precision. He circumcised Timothy in order to render him more acceptable as a preacher of the gospel to the Jews. But, when the performance of this rite upon Titus was pressed upon the apostle as a matter of moral duty, he utterly refused to do it, and that because of these brethren, who desired to bring the disciples into bondage; to whom, says he indignantly, we gave place by submission, not for that

hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Such are some of the cases in which the notion from expediency involves moral guilt, and frequently guilt of no ordinary turpitude. Let us now examine some of the cases in which expediency may be employed innocently. I suppose they may all be comprehended under the following rule. We may innocently employ any means for the accomplishing of our purposes, which are innocent in themselves, and which we employ with a virtuous intention.

Let us examine a few cases which come under this rule.

Supposing that I am communicating to another a system of truth, or of duty. I think that he will be most likely to be influenced by my teaching, if I unfold my views gradually, allowing one portion to work its part of the change which I hope to effect, before I introduce another. In this is there the violation of any moral law? I am obliged to present the truth in such a manner as will be most likely to ensure its entire rejection. Am I not bound, in such a case, to content the dictates of my own reason, and the best good of him whom it is my duty to benefit? The Bible is filled with cases of just such expediency as this. The gradual development of the truths of revelation under the several dispensations, illustrate it on the widest possible scale, and show that the Deity frequently allows ages to intervene between the discovery of one truth and the discovery of the next which is intimately associated with it. Our Saviour discloses his doctrines to his disciples, as their minds expanded to receive them. Even at the close of his ministry he affirmed, I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. John 16: 12. To precisely the same effect is the saying of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 3: 1, 2. And I, brethren, could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, nor now are ye able. Here the apostle distinctly recognizes the principle that he delivered divine truth to the Corinthians, not in its totality, but in such portions, and in such manner, as the weakened understandings and beguiled consciences of his hearers would enable them to receive it. This, then, is, undoubtedly, a proper and innocent use of expediency.

But again, there may be a choice not only in respect to the substance of the several parts, but also in respect to the manner in which the whole or any part of the truth shall be presented. Thus, for instance, suppose that in the discussion of the subject of slavery there were no wrong in applying approbrious epithets to fellow-citizens, and to Christian brethren; inasmuch as the use of these epithets would disincline men to receive what we believe to be the truth, would not both wisdom as well as Christian charity suggest the expediency of laying them aside?

Again, it is frequently the case that we wish to inculcate a duty upon another, to which he is particularly averse, and of which the obligation depends upon principles with which he is not familiar. In such a case, while he will not hear us for a moment to the point, he is willing attentively to consider the principles on which it is founded. In such a case, I see no reason why I may not inculcate the principle, and leave it to work out its result, instead of directly inculcating the precept. For instance, I find a man violently engaged, and burning with vindictiveness towards another who has injured him. It is his duty to forgive the offender. But the suggestion of this duty might only enrage him the more. May I not then, instead of inculcating the duty directly, unfold to him our relations to God, how much we have sinned against him, how much we all need his forgiveness, and how much and how often we have all offended our brethren and needed their forgiveness? I well know, that if these sentiments once gain possession of his mind, his wrath will be quelled, and he will not dare to ask forgiveness of God until he has exercised forgiveness to his brother. This is almost precisely what our Lord himself has done, when he taught charity to the Pharisee with whom he was dining, Luke: 39—49. So when he was called upon to interfere in the case of the brother who was defrauded of his inheritance, Luke 12: 13—20. Thus also he inculcates the duty of forgiveness, Matt. 18: 23—35. Here he gives a very general precept, and explains the principle at length. A beautiful instance of this kind of expediency is also seen in 2 Cor. 8th chapter. St. Paul is desirous of inculcating upon the Corinthians the duty of liberality. He does not, however, as he had a right to do, make use of his apostolical authority; he does not demand this or that portion of their income; but he merely tells them what other churches had done, and adds, ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich. Indeed, if we were disposed to generalize this idea, we might easily show that the gospel of Christ is rather a system of principles than of precepts. It is a treasure house of elementary and all controlling moral truth. This truth it presents to the understanding, and presses upon the conscience, leaving it to every individual to carry it into practice, according to the peculiarities of his individual situation, provided only he do it honestly, earnestly, with pure love to God and ardent charity to man.

This form of expediency, the inculcating of a fundamental truth, rather than the duty which springs immediately out of it, seems to me innocent. I go farther. In some cases it may be really demanded. Thus, suppose a particular wrong to have become a social evil, to have become interwoven with the whole framework of society, and to be established by positive enactment and immemorial usage. Suppose that all departments of society have become adjusted to it, and that much instruction was necessary before any party could avail themselves of the advantages of a righteous change. Suppose also that the whole community was ignorant of the moral principles by which both the wrong was condemned, and the right established. In such a case the wrong could only be abolished by changing the sentiments and enlightening the consciences of the whole community. Here it seems to me that it would be not only allowable, but a matter of imperative duty, to inculcate the principles on which the duty rested, rather than the duty itself. The one being fixed in the mind, would necessarily produce the other; and thus the end would in the most certain manner be accomplished.

It is in this manner that the New Testament has generally dealt with the various forms of social evil. Take for instance civil government.—At the time of Christ and his apostles, the only form of government known in the civilized world, was a most abominable and oppressive tyranny. Yet the New Testament utters no precept in regard to forms of government, or the special duties of rulers. It goes farther. It commands men every where to obey the powers that be, so far as this could be done with a good conscience towards God. But it at the same time inculcated those truths concerning the character, rights, responsibilities, and obligations of man, which have been ever since working out the freedom of the human race; and which have received, as I believe, their fullest development in the principles of the American Declaration of Independence. Indeed, in no other manner could the New Testament have become a system of religion for the whole human race, adapted to meet the varying aspects of human depravity. If it had merely taught precepts, whatever was not forbidden must have been taken as permitted. Hence, unnoticed wickedness would soon have abounded, and the revelation of God must have become a nullity. But by teaching principles of universal application, it is prepared to meet every rising form of moral deviation, and its authority is now as all pervading as at the moment when it was first delivered.—Our Saviour, as it appears to me, carries out this principle to the utmost, when, setting aside as it were all other precepts, he declares that our whole duty is summed in these two commandments, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself; for this is the law and the prophets; that is, I suppose him to mean the cherishing these principles in our hearts, and carrying them out into all our actions, we shall do the whole will of God without any other precept.

I have thus, my dear brother, endeavored in as distinct a manner as I am able to develop my views on the subject of expediency. I have done it with great diffidence, because I know it is one from a misconception of which great misunderstanding is likely to arise. It seemed however to be required by the nature of our discussion, and I hope that what I have suggested may throw some little light upon the subject. I know of but few points in casuistry which at the present moment require a more thorough examination. It is in a misconception here that Jesuitism has arisen on the one hand, and fanaticism on the other. The Jesuit, whether Protestant or Catholic, believes himself at liberty to use any devices whatever, to accomplish a good design; or in other words, that the end sanctifies the means. The fanatic, provided his end be good, considers himself at liberty to deride the dictates of reason, and use the means which have the least possible tendency to accomplish the end which he has in view. He declares that he has no regard for consequences. He seems however to forget that the end which he has in view is a consequence, and that it must be a consequent, that is an effect of certain causes, which, in the providence of God, are ordained to produce it. If therefore he has no regard to consequences, and sets in action causes without regard to their effects, he is as likely to produce any other end as that which he intends. I think, besides, it may sometimes be observed that while men are so entirely reckless of the consequences of their conduct upon the cause which they espouse, they are not at all unmindful of the consequences to themselves, and not unfrequently pursue the same courses which are wrong, selfish and intriguing men adopt, to advance by means of the cause their own personal interests.

But I am wandering from the subject immediately before us, and will therefore close by assuring you that I am, with the greatest personal esteem and Christian affection, yours very truly,

THE AUTHOR OF THE MORAL SCIENCE.

BUILDING OF NINEVEH.

An interesting account of the researches and excavations now in progress, under the superintendance of the French consul, among the ruins of Nineveh, or the mounds of ancient Nineveh, is given in a letter from the Rev. M. Laurie, dated August 8, 1844, published in the Missionary Herald for February. The mound of Khorsabad, at present in process of excavation, stands in the corner of an enclosed area about one mile square, the walls of which are similar to those near Mosul. They are more elongated than usual, with remains of towers at various distances, and originally faced externally with large square stones. The top of the mound is flat, and has been six and seven hundred paces in circumference. Eleven rooms have been excavated, the largest of which is one hundred feet in length by thirty in width. The walls are very thick, and are formed of two surfaces of stone interlaid with masses of earth. Each block of stone is ten feet high, and one foot thick. They vary in breadth. On their surfaces are figures executed in bas relief. Some occupy the whole height of the wall; others are in double rows, with a broad inscription between.

Mr. Laurie writes—The sculptures represent a variety of objects. In one place is a royal feast, with chairs and tables in European style. In another they prosecute a siege; and while some use the battering ram, or advance under the testudo, others fire the gates, while the devoted defenders fall pierced, from the walls. In one instance, a row of figures in front of the fortress, are impaled by the breast. In another dead bodies and headless trunks are seen floating down the river that flows in front of the beleaguered fortress.—The names of most of these castles are inscribed upon them. Elsewhere, captives loaded with chains approach the conqueror on bended knee; and the executioner, standing by a pile of heads, waits, with uplifted sword, the nod that is to decide the fate of each one as he passes by. One room is entirely occupied with a royal hunt. The king's chariot is driven through the fortress; birds perch on the trees; deer run beneath them, and the hind bears fly at their approach. Slaughtered game bears testimony to the success of the hunters, some of whom are seen carrying it in their hands.

The most remarkable sculptures, however, are those at the gates. These are executed on each side by a five-foot monster, of gigantic proportions. To the body of a bull, fitted for high and vigorous length, is attached an immense human head. The side of the bull is concealed by wings, which spring from his shoulder; and the fifth foot was made by the artist, that two might appear in front as well as in the side view. But what is still more strange, the huge monster is sculptured on a single stone, four feet in thickness. How they managed to transport it, or set it up on the mound, is a question to which as yet has remained no answer. Fifteen of these monsters, more or less perfect, have been found already. In connection with these generally, stands the figure of a man with a bird's head, like the image of Osiris in Egypt.

There is a great variety of dress and armour in the several groups. In some cases a large umbrella is borne over the king. Some dresses claim remote antiquity, while resemblances to a more modern style may be traced to others. But these are things better understood from the painting than description. As to features, among other diversities, there is one head that is decidedly African.—The sculptures are admirably executed. The muscles are distinctly and correctly delineated, and every countenance wears an expression corresponding to the situation of the individual.

The result of these researches will be published by the French Government. The resident consul, M. Botta, has copied the inscriptions, and M. Flandin, the artist engaged on the work, has made a great number of very accurate and spirited drawings.

WHY SHOULD I ATTEND TO FAMILY PRAYER?

I will consider this question addressed to myself, and will endeavor to answer it.

Because, if not expressly commanded in the word of God, yet I infer from it, it is a duty. We have the example of Noah, Abraham, David, Job, Joshua and Daniel. I have reason to believe, that he requires it of me, and that the performance will be well pleasing to him.

God is honored by his worship in the family. We express our dependence, our submission, our accountability, our reverence and our obedience. If every family on earth would truly worship him, how would he be honored! Thy earth then, that is full of his glory, would be filled with his praise.

The worship of God in the family might encourage other families to do the same. Many families professing to be Christians, neglect this duty. My example may encourage others.

I will worship God in my family, so hopes that it may be the means of perpetuating religion from generation to generation.

I will have family prayer, because the season affords me an opportunity of instructing my family; and of impressing the truths of the Bible on their minds.

If I do not call them together, and read the Bible, probably some of them will not. And the truths of the Bible, and sense of divine things should act on them daily.

I will worship God in my family, for the benefit of my own personal religion. It will serve as a restraint upon my departments before my family. It is to be feared that some parents neglect to pray to their families for shame—their conduct at other times being inconsistent with the practice.

I cannot worship God with comfort, unless the Christian graces are in exercise. And this will serve to make me more watchful and prayerful at other times, so as to be in a more suitable frame of mind to pray in my family.

I will worship God in the family, because I value it as a privilege, as a duty, and because I love the service. Is there any scene on earth so delightful as a family assembled for His worship? It is like a little heaven below.

I will have family prayer, because God is the beaver of prayer, and he will be inquired of to do good to the family. I must look to him in every hour, and to bestow favor. None but he can defend—none but he can help. And if he be not our God, who can be against us? Ask for family blessings, and they shall be given. I ask myself. Seek for family blessings, and they shall be found, if I seek in a right manner. It is so important that I should ask right, seek aright, worship God acceptably in my family, so that his blessing might come down on every member. His favor in life. His favor is death.—*Cong. Jour.*