

T H E

CHRISTIAN SUN.

"The Lord God is a Sun and Shield."

VOL. I.

HILLSBOROUGH, N. C. MAY, 1844.

NO. 5.

From the Western Recorder.

The Evils of a Sectarian Spirit.

No. 3.

BY ASA SHINN.

MR. EDITOR:—A fourth evil of the sectarian spirit, is its tendency to produce self-deception. The strong confidence which the sectarian has in the purity of his party, and in the soundness of its principles, has a secret and progressive influence, to lead his soul to rely upon his association with such a party, and upon his adherence to its principles, for acceptance with his Maker. Were he in the habit of deriving his theology from the word of God, he would feel the necessity of going to the Bible likewise, to learn the true conditions of eternal life; but as he receives the articles of his faith from the authority of the church, why cannot the church also save his soul, provided he shall punctually observe her rules and regulations? What proof can be given, that ecclesiastical councils have not as much authority to prescribe the conditions of salvation, as they have to decide what are, and what are not, the essential articles of the Christian faith? If they have a right to claim our faith in their infallibility, they have an equal right to demand obedience to their orders; and if our salvation be made to depend on the former, it must be alike dependent on the latter. Thus the members of a sect are, by this assumption, made to lean upon an arm of flesh; and in exact proportion as they do this, will their hearts be apt to depart from the Lord. The different members of the body commonly encourage one another in this delusion; for if a man be very zealous in support of the party, and in an unbending adherence to its dogmas, he is regarded as a "full-blooded" disciple; and the ecclesiastical powers will, directly or indirectly, encourage him to presume that his soul is safe, and that this

zeal for the church will be his passport to eternal happiness. Hence he concludes, perhaps almost unconsciously to himself, that he need not be over scrupulous in regard to deficiencies of moral character. Now so far as this influence extends, in any denomination, so far the sectarian spirit operates to prevent the salvation of human souls.

A fifth evil of this spirit, is its doing violence to truth, by an uncandid suppression or distortion of moral evidence. How entirely is all argument lost upon the bigoted sectarian! With what readiness and ease are Scripture demonstrations given to the winds! Mr. Wesley says, "He regards them no more than stubble or rotten wood." Now this is the very spirit and the principal cause of infidelity. The Deist feasts his soul with the writings of Hume, Voltaire and Paine; but as to defences of the Christian religion, such as those of Leeland, Paley, and Watson, he either will not read them, or will bar his mind against their evidence, with the most determined prejudice and contempt. Sectarian Christians do the same; and in the mean time they thunder their anathemas upon the poor Deist, for imbibing their spirit and following their example! Who does not see that infidelity is thus promoted, and even excused, by the shameful want of candor so extensively prevailing among those who profess to be the people of God, and to be on the way to his everlasting kingdom. The only way," says Dr. Wylie, "by which the growth of infidelity, in our country, can be checked, is by purging religion from the evils of sect. When the followers of Christ shall become one, then, and not before, may we expect infidelity to cease from among us, and the world to be converted." p. 88. Again he says, "I would entreat you to read over and over again the story of Jesus—his discourses—his parables—his