

A CHARIMETER OR A SCRIPTURAL METHOD OF TRYING THE SPIRITS AND KNOWING THE PROPORTION OF OUR FAITH

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Try the Spirits: 2 John iv.1.

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the Faith: 2 Cor. xiii.5.

The Righteousness of God is revealed from Faith to Faith: Rom. 1.17

Having gifts differing according to the grace given us, if we have the gift of prophesy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith: Rightly dividing the word of Truth. Rom. xii.6. 2 Tim. ii.15.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD CHARIMETER

The Reader probably knows that a Thermometer is an instrument to measure the degrees of heat or cold, and that a Barometer is an instrument to measure the weight of the atmosphere, in order to know the future changes of the weather. Alluding to the meaning and etymology of these two words, we may give the name of Charimeter¹ to a scriptural treatise describing the different dispensations of God's grace, and fixing their boundaries in so plain a manner, as to enable any man to measure exactly the degrees of grace which he has attain'd, and to see clearly those which the gospel calls him to attain.

If many people will have both a Thermometer and a Barometer, it is probable that (unconcern'd as men generally are about their souls) some will be glad to see a Charimeter¹: for it concerns us as much to know whether we shall go to heaven or to hell as it does to know if we shall have fair or foul weather; and we should be more careful to enquire into the degree of glory we may scripturally hope for, than to know what degree of heat will ripen grapes or pine-apples.

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CHAPTER II THE USEFULNESS OF A CHARIMETER

What puts an end to confusion, tends to remove error and sin; for sin is the work of confusion and darkness; and to convert sinners is to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan, the Prince of darkness, to God, the Father of lights, and the God of order. Therefore, if this Tract promotes moral and spiritual order, it is calculated for usefulness.

Pilots cannot steer their course aright, until they know whereabouts they are; and this knowledge is so important to them, that the Parliament has given a great reward to the Inventor of the Time-keeper, an instrument by which mariners can find how far east or west they have sailed. Christians like pilots cannot steer their spiritual course properly, if they do not know where they are: And it is hoped they will see with pleasure an attempt to shew them scriptural lights and landmarks by how far they have advanced in the ways of God, and in the career of truth and holiness.

A Charimeter will also rectify our judgment both with regard to ourselves and to others: (1) With regard to ourselves: How many people, who have a degree of true faith in God, fall into despair or dejection, because, measuring themselves according to false rules, they suppose that they are void of all true and living faith? And how many Professors of faith, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, fancy they are giants, when they are mere dwarfs, in spiritual Christianity. A Charimeter may preserve us from these two opposite but equally dangerous errors.

(2) It will be useful with regard to others, by preventing the wrong judgment we frequently pass upon them. The prejudic'd worshippers of the Father, for example, look upon pious worshippers of the Son and of the Holy Ghost as rank idolaters; whilst the rash worshippers of the Son and of the Spirit, consider the pious worshippers of the Father as a mere Infidels. And, carried away by a similar mistake, the car-nal Believer [See I Cor. iii. 1] looks upon the spiritual man as an enthusiast or is a perfectionist: whilst he who has a degree of spirituality, is apt to suppose, that the people who only fear God, are poor creatures, utterly void of saving grace. To prevent these rash conclusions, and to engage those antagonists to look upon each other as servants and children of the same God, is also the design of his Tract.

It is likewise offer'd to the Public as a clue proper to guide bewildered lovers of truth into some truths darkened by school-divines, or destroy'd by party-men: In fine, it is recommended as pointing out the scriptural ground of that forbearance and union, which are so much wanted in the Christian world.

CHAPTER III OF THE GREAT CHARIMETER

The Bible, when it is read in the light of the Spirit of truth, is the grand Charimeter; but as few people have leisure enough constantly to read, and attention, I had almost said candor enough, carefully to compare, all the parts of that large Book; the light it contains is, in many respects for prejudic'd, or busy Christians; and to collect that precious light in the focus of a Tract containing the marrow of the Bible, would be doing the Christian world a service.

A good Charimeter must then be an Extract of the whole Bible: This Extract must

be so plain as to lead, by easy steps, any candid reader into the way of gospel-truth: And this way must be so clearly described, that the way-faring man, tho' a fool, may know if he walks in it or not; and that those who walk in it may at once see how many stages they have gone, and how many they have yet to go, before they enter into the full rest which remains for the people of God.

CHAPTER IV

The ground of this Charimeter: namely, the three capital articles of the Christian faith, according to which true worshippers are divided into three general classes.

Whoever has read the Bible, knows that Christians are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: And whoever has perused the Nicene Creed, that of Athanasius, and that we call the Apostles' Creed, must own (with the catechism of the Church of England) that in the Articles of our faith, and consequently in the Holy Scriptures, we learn three things:

- (1) To Believe in the Father, who made us and all the world:
- (2) To believe in his Son, Jesus Christ, who redeemed us and all mankind: And,
- (3) To believe in the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth us, and all the elect people of God.

From this fundamental distinction in the Articles of the Christian faith, flows three-fold distinction, in what is generally called a state of grace or of salvation: For, as according to the British constitution, the legislative Power is enjoy'd by three Orders of man, the Commons, the Lords, and the King; so according to the constitution of the Church militant, three classes of worshippers enjoy different degrees of salvation; and various privileges are respectively granted them from the Throne of grace.

In the First Class of sincere worshippers are the men under the law, the economy of the Old Testament: Such were formerly the godly Patriarchs, pious Jews, and the Gentile theists mentioned with honour in the Scripture, as Abimeleck, Melchisedec, Job and his friends, Jethro, and the wise men, who came from the East to worship our Lord in Bethlehem; And such are yet all those Jews, Mahometans, Heathens, who fear God and work righteousness; but like Cornelius, have no explicit knowledge of Christ and the Spirit.

In the Second Class are the men passing from the Law, and the shadows of the Old Testament to the gospel and the marvelous light of the New Testament: Such were Simeon, Anna, Zacharias, John the Baptist with his disciples, and even all the disciples of our Lord, before he, being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost, had open'd, on the day of Pentecost, that kingdom of God, or that dispensation of power from on high, which the Scripture calls Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost:—Such are yet all those imperfect believers, who, falling short of the glorious liberty described in Rom.viii, are contented to complain and to hope as the carnal believer does in Rom. vii.14, 25; and hardly rising to the stage of preparatory faith, ardent prayer, and joyful expectation, in which our Lord's Disciples were from the time of his ascension, 'til they were fill'd with the Holy Ghost: See Luk. xxiv.52,53.

The Third and highest class of sincere worshippers is composed of those who fully deserve the name of New Testament-Believers, as having seen, and entered into, that

kingdom of God, that high state of holiness and happiness, where our Lord's disciples entered on the day of Pentecost, when being baptized with the Holy Ghost, yea filled with the Spirit of love and power, great grace was upon them all, and when, walking in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, they were all of one heart and of one soul.

(1) According to this distinction, virtually allowed by Christians of all denominations, let us call the Believers of the First class Old-Testament-Believers, or Sincere Worshippers of the Father.

(2) With respect to the Believers of the Second class, who from the shadows and bondage of the Old Testament, are advancing towards the marvellous light and glorious liberty of the New Testament, let us call them Disciples of John, or amalg disciples of Christ, or imperfect Christians, or (if you please) sincere worshippers of the Father and of the Son, who are not yet full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.

(3) But such Believers as have attained to the glory of the New Testament; such Believers, on whom rests the Spirit of glory and of God; such Believers as live actually under the Father's economy improved by that of the Son, and perfected by that of the Holy Ghost, may with propriety be called Spiritual men, or sincere worshippers of the Father, the Son and the Spirit; or if you please! complete Christians—Christians, spiritually and powerfully baptized into the sacred names and holy nature of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER V

The general grounds of the distinction of true worshippers into three classes.

This distinction rests upon the most solid foundation: For, not to mention again the three Creeds, which evidently lead us from faith to faith (as says St. Paul) or from one stage of saving faith to another, this important distinction rests: (2) Upon what the Scriptures say of the Devout men, who feared God, eschewed evil, and wrought righteousness before John the Baptist and Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light thro' the gospel: (3) Upon the distinction which John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the four Evangelists and St. Peter make, between the Believers baptized with water, and those who are also baptized with the Holy Ghost: (4) Upon the manner in which the Christian church was founded on the day of Pentecost; when 3000 devout men, or sincere worshippers of the Father, were, thro' faith in the Son, brought into the perfective dispensation of the Spirit, and made complete Worshippers of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: And (5) Upon the three grand editions of the divine Laws, and the three capital Promises of the everlasting gospel, as will appear by the following chapters.

CHAPTER VI

Five Rules to which we must attend in measuring a state of grace: Or, the grounds of a charimeter farther considered.

If all true worshippers can be scripturally ranged under three classes;—if they are either Worshippers of the Father alone, as pious Jews or Worshippers of the Father by his Son Jesus Christ, as John's and Christ's disciples, before they were baptized with the Holy Ghost;—or if, like spiritual men and perfect Christians, they worship the Father, thro' the Son, by the Holy Ghost given to them according to the fullness of the

gospel; we may reasonably and scripturally draw the following inferences, which can be considered as the ground of this Treatise:

I. If a man be a true worshipper, according to any one of the three above-described dispensations of divine grace, he is accepted of God, or justified according to that dispensation, and therefore he is in a state of grace, in a state of salvation.

II. On the other hand, if a man be not a true worshipper according to any one of the three above-described dispensations, he is still a worldlyling, a child of wrath, and an inheritor of the kingdom of darkness.

III. To know if man is in a state of grace, we must then enquire, first, whether he is a true worshipper under any one of those three dispensations of grace.

IV. To know in general, what degree of grace a sincere worshipper has attained, we must apply to him the scripture-marks, which show to what dispensation of grace a worshipper belongs: And,

V. To fix more particularly still the degree of his faith or of his grace (when we have found out the dispensation he is under) we must next enquire whether he is a Child, a young Man, or a Father in that dispensation.

The Scriptures furnish us with abundance of materials and helps, to form a right judgment of things and persons according to these five heads: Let us collect and consider those materials.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Various Preachers under the three grand dispensations of divine grace: and first of the Preachers under the dispensation of the Father.

To know if a man is a true worshipper under the dispensation of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost, we must have clear ideas of those dispensations: And to have such ideas, we must first know who are the Preachers peculiar to those three dispensations. Let us begin by taking a view of those who preach the Father's Dispensation, or the being, the fear, and the love of God, as an almighty Creator, a kind Preserver, a righteous Governour, and a gracious Rewarder of mankind. Those Preachers are of seven sorts.

(1) The Work of Creation, which demonstrate the existence, power and wisdom of our Creator, as clearly as a piece of exquisite workmanship argues both the existence and skill of the workman: The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. One day telleth another, and one night certifieth another: There is neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them. Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the end of the world: Ps. xix. 1-4.—That which may be known of God is manifest in men; for the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead, so that they (atheists and ungodly men) are without excuse: Rom. I. 19, 20.

(2) The Works of Providence, speaking to us the language of mercy or justice: First of mercy, declaring in all ages, that God does not leave himself without witness, in that he does good, and gives us rain from heaven, and fruitful season; filling our hearts with good and gladness: Act. xiv. 17. Those men join therefore stupidity to ungodli-

ness, who say not in their hearts, Let us now fear the Lord our God, who giveth rain, both the former and the latter in his season, and reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest: Jer. v.24. Secondly, The works of Providence, speaking to us the language of stern Justice. The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, Hear ye the Lord, and who hath appointed it: Mich. vi.9. By this speaking Rod we must understand all the scourges, with which a righteous God chastises or threatens guilty nations. Thunder, Lightning, and Earthquakes, strike awe into sinners, and bid them tremble before the Lord God, who is a consuming fire, and who, by shaking the foundation of the earth, can destroy his adversaries in a moment. Even poor Ovid acknowledges Humanas matura tonitrua mentes. Thunder, that voice of the Almighty, which shakes the souls and awakens the consciences of sinners.

(3) The Logos, the eternal Word, or the Word of the Lord, so often mentioned in the Old Testament; that Word, which spake to Adam in paradise, and by which the Lord bid Noah preach repentance to the old world, and commanded Jonas to threaten the Ninivites into a speedy reformation.

(4) Right Reason, which is an emanation of the eternal Logos and a beam of the true light which enlightens every man that comes into the world: John I.9. This is the Preacher reviled by some rash Christians, who, confounding right Reason with carnal Reason, indiscriminately say of both all manner of evil for Christ's sake. It is nevertheless the Umpire, to whom God himself appeal'd, when he said, O House of Israel, are not my ways equal, and your ways unequal? Ex. xviii.29. It is the Instructor, whom our Lord had in view, when he ask'd, Why, even of yourselves, judge ye not what is right? (what is your reasonable service?) Luke xii.57. Rom. xii.1. It is the Judge who, in the great day will oblige the worldly-wise men to condemn themselves, and to clear the righteous, whom they now despise: We fools (will they say) accounted their life madness, and their end without honour, but how are they now numbered among the wise!

(5) Conscience, or the last remain of God's moral image in our souls—Conscience, that inward witness, who says to the Just, There is a reward for the righteous, and whispers to the Wicked, Doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth. This internal Preacher is thus described by St. Paul: When the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, they, being a law to themselves, shew that the work of the law is written in their hearts, their Conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts, the meanwhile, accusing or else excusing one another: Rom. ii.14.

(6) All the Patriarchs before and after the flood, and all pious people who from the beginning of the world, recommended the fear of God, or transmitted to posterity the Promise of a Saviour, Prophet, or Deliverer, by whom the nations should be blessed and instructed. But the chief Preachers under the dispensation, were formerly the Priests and Prophets among the Jews; and among the Heathen the pious Poets and the true² Philosophers.

(7) In our days, the Preachers, under that economy are of two sorts: (1) The pious Moralists among the Jews, the Mahometans, and the Heathens; I mean those moral men, who, trading in the steps of Melchisedec in Canaan, of Confucius in China, and of Zaleucus in Grece, join humanity to the fear of God, and recommend both to

mankind under the general name of Virtue: And (2) All the Preachers in Christendom, who, losing sight of the Son's and of the Spirit's economy, relapse into gentiilism, and instead of Christian Sermons, preach moral Essays better calculated for the schools of heathen Philosophers than for the churches of Christian Divines.

CHAPTER VII

Of the Preachers under the Dispensation of the Son

The Heralds of gospel-truth under the Son's dispensation are diverse and numerous: (1) The priest Zacharias, who declared that God had visited and redeemed his people, in performing the promise he made to the Fathers, concerning the great Prophet, who should be an horn of salvation for us. Luke 1.68, (2) the Angel, who as the head of an heavenly host, preached to the shepherds the glad tidings of Christ's birth, (3) The heavenly Voice, declaring on the banks of Jordan, and on the holy mount, that Jesus was the Son of God and the Beloved of the Father, (4) John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus Christ, by awakening sinners, by preaching the baptism of repentance, and giving to the penitent the knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins: Luk. ii.77, (5) Christ himself before his death and resurrection, (6) The twelve Apostles, and the seventy disciples before the day of Pentecost was fully come, And (7) All the Preachers, who (like young Apollos) do not go farther in their sermons, than that faith which the Apostles had before they were endured with sanctifying Power from on high.

To this class belong also (1) The Gospel-ministers, who preach all the offices of Christ, except that which John the Baptist did principally set forth, I mean the office of a spiritual Baptist;(2) The Gospel-Preachers who declare the whole gospel, except that glorious part of it, which St. Paul calls the kingdom of God, righteousness, peace and joy in (the dispensation of) the Holy Ghost; And (4) all those Evangelists, who, being content to know Christ according to the letter of the four gospels, overlook, or explain away, the grand Promise of the New Testament, the Promise of the Father;—In a word, all those Doctors in Israel, who call mysticism, enthusiasm, or unattainable perfection, that Christianity which is perfected by the glorious coming and the constant indwelling of the Spirit.

All such Preachers are only ministers of the dispensations of the Father and of the Son: For, tho' they preach repentance towards God, and a kind of saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and tho' they sometimes speak of the Spirit and of his inferior operations, such as his convincing the world of sin, by the divine law, and of righteousness by the merits of Christ; yet they explain away his convincing the world of judgment; nor do they declare to believers, that the Prince of this world is cast out, and his works destroy'd in the kingdom of the Holy Ghost. And it is evident to spiritual men, that the gospel preached by such Evangelists, in only that imperfect and comparatively car-nal dispensation of a weak believer crying out, Who shall deliver me from the body of sin? and that they are strangers to the full dispensation of the Spirit, under which every believer can declare, to the glory of God, and to the Redeemer's honour, that the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, hath made him free from the law of sin and death.

CHAPTER VIII

Unfinished essay.

NOTES

1. The word Charimeter is compounded of two Greek words, Charis and Metron, which signify a Grace-Measure.
2. No candid Reader will find fault with me for placing the sacred Poets among Preachers, since St. Paul himself, in the Sermon he preached at Athens, quoted the pious doctrine of Aerates, one of the heathen Poets: Act. xvii.28. Pious Philosophers deserve undoubtedly to rank among the Preachers of the Gentiles, if we admit the following description left upon record by Epictetus: 'A cynic Philosopher (says he in his Manual) is a man sent of God to reform mankind, and to teach them by his example, that poor, naked, without any bed but the bare ground, without any covering but the canopy of heaven, we may be happy: He is a man, who treats the wicked, how great soever they are, like slaves; who being abused and beaten, loves and blesses his persecutors: A man, who looks upon all men as his children; who keeps watch for them, who kindly warns them as a father, as a brother, or as the minister of God himself, the common Father of all: In a word, he is a man, whom, notwithstanding his mean appearance, Kings themselves cannot see without being struck with awe.'