

We proposed to consider the Church in another aspect, as a body of workers. Let us now turn our attention in this direction. In the Church constructed according to the New Testament standard, there is no such thing as being religious by proxy; there are no honorary members, relieved from the performance of personal religious duty, public as well as private. Every member is a working member; every member recognizes himself as put in possession of a "talent," or of "talents," "according to his several ability," not to be kept safely in a napkin, or hidden securely in the earth, but to be employed in personal services, both for his own and the common good, and the consequent advancement of his Master's work.

The Buddhists have a custom which admirably relieves them from the necessity of personal religious effort, and opens an easy way to the acquisition of a reputation for great purity. They have what they call a "khorben," what we may call a praying-machine. It is a cylinder, generally made of brass, covered with leather, around which is wrapped a cloth or paper, containing a number of prayers, the whole being turned on its axis by a handle. When a Buddhist wishes to atone, by works of supererogation, for a course of disobedience, or to gain a reputation of unusual sanctity, or to go on a journey and have his religion "done" for him at home, he buys a "khorben" and hires a man to turn it, or procures a donkey to do the work, or if a stream of running water is convenient, he makes it turn the cylinder by the aid of a system of wheels. And every revolution is equivalent to the utterance by the owner of all the prayers which are upon it. No matter, then, where the Buddhist is, or what he is doing, he is pious by proxy.

This custom seems to us grossly absurd, but it is not uncharitable to say that more than one modern Church establishment seems to be conducted on the same plan. To satisfy the demands of conscience, and to obtain the Divine favour, a number of persons unite to build a magnificent "praying-machine." It is not exactly of the cylinder shape, but that makes little difference. Its stained windows are filled with images of the saints, and quotations from the Bible. In its lofty spire a chime of bells is ready to sound the hour of prayer. A minister is engaged to