

dead men." Could words describe more truthfully, or explain more philosophically, that phenomenon of religious experience which we call the "hiding of God's countenance?"

It does not require what the world pronounces a great sin, to break up the serenity of the soul in its devotional hours. The experience of prayer has delicate complications. A little thing, secreted there, may dislocate its mechanism and arrest its movement. The spirit of prayer is to the soul what the eye is to the body,—the eye, so limpid in its nature, of such fine finish and such intricate convolution in its structure, and of so sensitive nerve, that the point of a needle may excruciate it, and make it weep itself away.

Even a doubtful principle of life, harboured in the heart, is perilous to the peacefulness of devotion. May not many of us find the cause of our joylessness in prayer, in the fact that we are living upon some unsettled principles of conduct? We are assuming the rectitude of courses of life with which we are not ourselves honestly satisfied. I apprehend that there is very much of suspense of conscience among Christians upon subjects of practical life, on which there is no suspense of action. Is there not a pretty large cloud-land covered by the usages of Christian society? And may not some of us find there the sin which infects our devotions with nauseous incense?

Possibly our hearts are shockingly deceitful in such iniquity. Are we strangers to an experience like this—that when we mourn over cold prayers as a misfortune, we evade a search of that disputed territory for the cause of them, through fear that we shall find it there, and we struggle to satisfy ourselves with an increase of spiritual duties which shall cost us no sacrifice? Are we never sensible of resisting the hints which the Holy Spirit gives us in parables, by refusing to look that way for the secret of our deadness—saying, "Not that! Oh no, not that! But let us pray more?"

Many a doubtful principle in a Christian mind, if once set in the focus of a conscience illumined by the Holy Spirit, would resolve itself into a sin, for which that Christian would turn and look up guiltily to the Master, and then go out and weep bitterly.—*Still Hour.*

#### AN EARNEST MINISTRY.

One element in John the Baptist's character was his earnestness. The phrase is familiar to us all;—it has passed into a proverbial saying,—*"an earnest ministry."* Here was a living exemplification of it; and its earnestness was the secret of its power. John (so far as we know) was neither polished, nor learned, nor eloquent. Judging from the brief recorded specimen of his preaching, he had nothing of the logical acumen and intellectual grasp of the great scholar of Gamaliel. His sentences, as we have already said, are strong—pointed—vigorous—epigrammatical;—the arrowy words of a bold, outspoken man,—no more.

But,—mightier than all eloquence, and than all the logic and learning of the schools,—his winged appeals went forth from his inmost heart. The words were those of one who deeply felt all he said,—whose every utterance came welling forth from the depths of an earnest soul.

After all, *this* is what the world, what the Church, wants,—a living earnestness. It is the earnest man who alone can stand the test, and shall alone be honoured in his work. Have we not manifold instances in proof of this in our own times? Look at those places where there has been manifested a deep and growing interest in divine things,—and where hundreds, before in a state of utter indifference and death, have been brought to a knowledge of the truth. What is the instrumentality that has been employed? Often the very weakest. Ministers of little intellectual energy;—devoid of all the arts of oratory,—who can clothe their utterance only in the simplest and rudest garb;—but they are men in earnest;—men who have their work at heart,—who go to it in the spirit of believing prayer—animated by one predominating motive,—love for souls and the glory of God. And where there is this earnestness and heart-work, it is pleasing to see those of cultivated minds, and who may even be called fastidious hearers and worshippers,—many among them far superior to their instructors in natural and acquired gifts and knowledge of life,—sitting and listening with docility to the "simplicity of the truth." It is the old scene witnessed in the Jordan wilderness,—those of strong and vigorous intellect—hard-headed men of the world,—polished Pharisees—subtle Sadducees—soldiers with Roman blood in their veins—officers trained in all court etiquette—wily, far-seeing tax-gatherers;—in one word, hundreds skilled in the world's logic,—shrewd, knowing men of business,—coming and sitting at the feet of this half-savage-looking hermit—a man all unschooled in worldly art and courtly manners and the business of life—and asking him, "*What shall we do?*"

And the same characteristic which gave him access to the hearts of the people, opened his way to the heart of the Tetrarch. When no other power could have reached the polluted soul of Herod Antipas, the earnest truth of the wilderness messenger enabled him to confront, face to face, the royal debauchee. He honoured his earnestness, though he hated his piety. "*Herod heard him gladly.*" Why? because he knew that he was a just man and a holy.

God grant us ever an earnest ministry! It will be the mighty lever for a revival in its noblest sense. Here is the grand theme for the prayers of our people, that among ministers and students there may be the infusion of "the earnest life." It is this alone which will confound the reasoning and surmises of a semi-infidel world. The world is keen in scanning motives;—the world is discerning (sovereignly so sometimes) in estimating character; and many draw the conclusion, (alas! too often with good reason!) "*These men, preach as they may, are not in earnest;—they are only skillful players on an instrument. These pulpit orations are shams, ideal pictures, not counter-signed by the life.*" Hundreds go away from the house of God with the smile on their face, and Ezekiel's words on their lips, "*Ah, Lord God, doth he not speak parables?*" Ezek. xx. 49.—*Macduff.*

SELF.—Do you want to know the man against whom you have most reason to guard yourself? Your looking-glass will give you a fair likeness of his face.—*Whately.*

#### THE FULLNESS OF JESUS.

I lay my sins on Jesus,  
The spotless Lamb of God;  
He bears them all, and frees us  
From the accursed load.  
I bring my guilt to Jesus,  
To wash my crimson stains  
White in his blood most precious,  
Till not a spot remains.

I lay my wants on Jesus;—  
All fulness dwells in him.  
He heals all my diseases,  
He doth my soul redeem.  
I lay my griefs on Jesus,  
My burdens and my cares—  
He from them all releases—  
He all my sorrows shares.

I rest my soul on Jesus—  
This weary soul of mine;  
His right hand me embraces,  
I on his breast recline.  
I love the name of Jesus,  
Immanuel, Christ, the Lord;  
Like fragrance on the breeze,  
His name abroad is poured.

I long to be like Jesus,  
Meek, lovely, lowly, mild;  
I long to be like Jesus,  
The Father's holy child.  
I long to be with Jesus  
Amid the heavenly throng,  
To sing with saints his praises,  
To learn the angel's song.

Rev. Dr. Bonney.

#### ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

Thou deep abyss of blessed Love,  
In Jesus Christ to us unscold,  
Fire, which no finite heart could probe,  
Depths, to no human thought reveal'd;  
Thou lovest sinners—lovest me,  
Thou lovest those who cursed Thee:  
O great, O kind, O loving Only  
What worthless creatures shilt'nt Thou out!

Thou King of Light! our deepest longing  
Is shallow to Thy depths of grace;  
Deep are the woes to us belonging,  
But deeper far Thy joy to bless.  
Teach us to trust the Father's love,  
Still looking to the Son above;  
Blest Spirit! through our spirits pour  
True prayers and praises evermore.

Jesus! Thine own with rich grace filling,  
Thy mighty blessing on us shed,  
New life through every member thrilling,  
Diffused from Thee, the living Head;  
Shew us how light Thy mild yoke is,  
And how from self's hard yoke it frees.  
If Thou wilt teach Thy household so,  
The works the Master's hand shall show.

—Count Zinzendorf.

TONGUE.—Give not thy tongue too great liberty, lest it take thee prisoner. A word unspoken, is like the sword in the scabbard, thine; if vented, thy sword is in another's hand. If thou desire to be held wise, be so wise as to hold thy tongue.—*Quarles.*