

Selected for the Colonial Churchman.

THE POWER OF GODLINESS.

It has often been observed, that "Profession is not Principle;" and never was the truth of the observation more awfully exemplified, than it is in the present day. Never was there a time, when greater professions of attachment to religion or greater exertions for its propagation through the world, were made: yet it is to be feared that many of those who profess attachment to the Christian cause, are still strangers to the power of godliness. While the flames of persecution raged, and the church was tried in the furnace of affliction, the gold was in a great measure separated from the dross; but, since the purifying fire has been extinguished, they continue mixed in one undistinguishable mass. Religion, in our happy country, no longer exposes men to imprisonment and death. Its outward form, at least, is respected, and hence many are induced to assume its external garb, who know nothing of its internal power. Even worldly men cannot but see and admire the beauty of that holiness, which shines in the conduct of the consistent christian. They respect his character, and wish to be considered as influenced by the same generous principles, though the world still maintains its place in their hearts. Hence the line of demarcation, which separates the Church of Christ from the world, has now become so small, that it is very difficult to distinguish it: yet it is of no less importance now, than it was in the days of the Apostles, that we should be able, on just grounds, to determine on what side of this line we stand,—whether we belong to Christ, or are still of the world,—whether we possess the power of godliness, or are resting satisfied with the form. Born in a christian country, receiving a christian education, possessing a Bible, and sitting under the instruction of christian ministers, a man may, by the exercise of his natural powers, obtain a complete acquaintance with the doctrines of religion. He may be acquainted with the depravity of human nature; he may have deep sense of the purity and justice of that God with whom we have to do; he may dwell with rapture on the love of a Saviour, and even be able to describe the nature of that change which the heart of man must undergo before it is fitted for the enjoyment of God; while all the time he is destitute of any saving influence on his heart. Possessing a Bible and hearing these things constantly explained in the great congregation, he is capable of acquiring a knowledge of them, as a blind man may learn to talk of shapes and colours, though his eyes were never opened to the light.—But a man may not only learn the theory of religion—he may, in part learn its practice also. The natural mind is capable of seeing the deformity of vice, and the beauty of virtue. It can detest the one, and revere the other. Hence, though ignorant of the power of godliness, a man may have so much of its form, that it may be impossible for the human eye to discover the difference which exists between him and the real Christian. He may be just and honest in his dealings with others, regular in the observance of religious duties, and kind and charitable to the distressed. He may find pleasure in the conversation of the godly, and avoid the company of the openly profane; he may even renounce many pleasures and gratifications, which his rank or wealth would procure him, and lend his influence and exertions to promote religious and benevolent institutions, while he is destitute of that power of godliness, which purifies the heart, and fits the individual for the enjoyment of Heaven. In the present day, it is too common to regard those as enthusiasts, who mention the power of godliness, or its influence upon the heart, or who think that any thing more is necessary than a bare assent to its doctrines, and an external conformity to its precepts. But let the formalist pity, and the infidel ridicule; there is nevertheless, a power in real, vital godliness,—a power which every really converted soul must have felt.

This power displays itself, not merely in producing conviction of the truth of the word of God, and an external practice conformable to its requirements, (for thus far he may go, who has only the form,) but influencing the heart, so as to bring the thoughts and affections into subjection to the law of God. It humbles the sinner, by opening his eyes,

that he may obtain a clear view of his own sinful condition, and of his lost state, as under the wrath of an offended God. It teaches him the worthlessness of his own good deeds, and leads him to seek for salvation only through the righteousness of a Redeemer. It shows him that there is no other name given under Heaven whereby he can be saved, but the name of Jesus; and while it teaches him the love which the Redeemer has manifested to a guilty world, it sheds a broad within his heart a love to that Saviour who first loved him. He, who before saw no beauty in the Saviour that he should desire him, now, that the power of godliness is felt in his heart, regards him as the chief among ten thousand,—as altogether lovely. The Saviour is now all his salvation, and all his desire—

"He feels a love, by love inspired,
Returning whence it came;"

and this love has a constraining influence upon the believer, leading him to devote himself to the service of his Redeemer. He can now no longer continue the servant of sin, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, but, having obtained a clear view of the fatefulness of sin in the sight of a holy God, he is led to abhor it, and avoid it. Beholding the sufferings, which the Son of God endured in atoning for sin, he hates it with perfect hatred. He longs after holiness of heart and life. It is his desire to be conformed in all things to the example of Christ. He observes a beauty and loveliness in the Divine law, to which he was before a stranger, and not only confesses, but feels, that it is holy, and just, and good; and though he regards himself as freed from the law as a rule of justification, he desires in all things to be subject to it as a rule of conduct. Though he seeks not to be saved by the works of the law, he still desires, through the assistance of the spirit, of which all the children of God are partakers, to yield a perfect and unceasing obedience to all its requirements.

The power of godliness also weans the heart from earthly things, and fixes it on heavenly. Teaching the believer that he is an heir of a heavenly inheritance, it leads him to disregard the pressing things of time, and to account them as nothing in comparison with that incorruptible inheritance, which is reserved for him in heaven. Regarding God as his Father, Jesus as his elder brother, the holy angels as his companions, and the redeemed Church of God above as children of the same family, he considers himself as a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, while he is looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Intercourse with his God and Saviour in prayer is now his chief delight. Having boldness of access to the throne of God, through the merits and mediation of a Redeemer, he regards it as his inestimable privilege to draw near to him in holy reverence, thanking him for mercies bestowed, and humbly imploring a continual supply of all necessary blessings. In thus drawing near to his God, he finds consolation under all the outward distress to which he may be exposed; he is enabled to bear up under temptations, and frequently enjoys, even on earth, delightful foretastes of the pleasures, which shall be fully enjoyed in Heaven.

Thus Godliness possesses a real power, which is displayed in humbling, sanctifying, and comforting the sinner,—in withdrawing his affections from earth, and preparing him for the enjoyment of Heaven: and it is of unspeakable importance to every individual to ascertain whether he possesses this power. It is possible for a man to have so much of the form, as to deceive those among whom he lives; but let him remember, that there is an eye, from whom neither the deepest shades of darkness, nor the thickest veils of hypocrisy, can hide the falseness of his profession. Ah! what will it avail him, when the darkness of the tomb gathers around him, and the bridegroom comes to receive his ransomed church, that, during the day of life, he has carried in his hand the gilded lamp of external profession. While life continues, the lamp of the foolish virgin may appear as beautiful as that of the wise; but it is when light is required, that those lamps which are supplied with the oil of grace are infallibly distinguished from those which are empty. Then will the awful separation be affected. Then those who have possessed only the form of godliness, will find, when too late, their woeful mistake—when God, in righteous judgment, will separate them from

his people, and shut them out forever from his precious presence. But those who have, through grace, been made partakers of the power of godliness, will be received by their Redeemer into the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Then shall they participate in the pleasures which are at God's right hand. Then shall they sit down in the kingdom of their Father with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. Then delivered from all their cares and sorrows—from all their trials and conflicts—and crowned with victory—they shall be recognized as heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Such honour have all his saints.

THE CLERGYMAN'S PRAYER.

Compiled from Scripture by a Lady.

I beseech thee, O Lord, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who sent his Apostles to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, to instruct me and to teach me in the way that I should go, by the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy, not neglecting the gift which is in me, which was given me with the laying on of hands. Grant that I may hold fast the form of sound words, meditate upon these things, take heed unto the Doctrine, continue in it, that I may save myself and those that hear me, according to the grace of God which is given unto me, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ, ministering the Gospel of God, that the offering might be acceptable, full of goodness, filled with all knowledge—able to admonish because of the grace that is given to me of God! being zealous of spiritual gifts that I may excel to the edifying of the Church, giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving myself as the minister of God.—In patience, in afflictions, in distresses, by pureness, by long-suffering, by knowledge, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness,—through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, (let no man despise my youth) let me be an example of the believer in word, in conversation, in spirit, in charity, in faith, in purity, being vigilant, when of good behaviour given to hospitality, apt to teach, not covetous but patient (ruling well my own house, having my children in good subjection with all gravity) having a good report of those that be without, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. O Lord! who hast set apart the priest to give knowledge of Salvation to thy people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the ways of peace, to give the bread of Life—Who is sufficient for these things? Thanks be to God, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. I am not eloquent, yet the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to realize the brokenhearted, therefore will I preach righteousness in the great congregation and will declare thy faithfulness and thy salvation, and will not conceal thy loving-kindness and thy truth. I will teach transgressors thy ways, that sinners may be converted unto thee. My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. My speech and preaching shall not be with enticing words of mens wisdom, but the wisdom of God, which God ordained before the world, I will not teach the commandments of men, but I will teach all things whatsoever thou hast commanded us.

O Lord! open thou my lips and my mouth shall strew forth my praise. I will publish the name of the Lord and be a guide of the blind.—a light of them that sit in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes.

I have planted, may God give the increase, that when the great Shepherd shall appear, I may receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away through the blood of the everlasting Covenant. Amen.—*New York Churchman.*

"Such is the power of the Holy Ghost to regenerate men, and as it were, to bring them forth anew, so that they shall be nothing like the men they were before." *Hon. for Whitsunday.*