

EPITOME OF THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND.*

By Rev. Dr. Jacob, Fredericton, N. B.

One benefit however there was, far surpassing all other advantages, for the communication of which to Britain the arms, the arts and science of Rome were God's providential preparation; I mean, the introduction of *The Christian Religion*. For while Britain continued subject to Rome, Christianity prevailed even in the Roman camp. And, whatever authority might belong to the British Lles or Lucius, by his countrymen called *Lleufer Mawr*, or *the Great Light*, whom ancient chronicles represent to have first given a national establishment to that divine religion, which his ancestor, Bran, the father of Caractacus had brought with him from Rome:—certain it is that Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, was in Britain invested with the imperial purple. Under him the British Church naturally enjoyed peculiar protection and favor, and Christianity appears to have been propagated throughout all the Roman Provinces in Britain. Hence we find three British Prelates, Ivor of York, Restitutus of London, and Adelphius of Caerleon, attending the Synod of Arles, which Constantine convened in the year of our Lord 314. The great Council of Nice, in the year 325, was also attended by Bishops from Britain; as again was the Council of Rimini in the year 359.

Nor were the Christians of Britain undistinguished amidst the newly converted world. They discovered on several occasions a commendable regard for the truth and purity of their faith, and much of the genuine spirit of the Gospel. In a letter to Athanasius and the Alexandrian Bishops they declared their approbation of the Nicene creed, and afterwards made vigilant exertions to preserve their Church from the novel doctrine of Pelagius. We may justly admire their superiority to worldly lucre, when they refused a maintenance which Constantius had offered their Bishops, desiring to support their independence of any foreign power. The ancient *Trials* pronounce "Dewi Padrao and Teilo *the Blessed Guests of Britain*, because they visited the houses of rich and poor, native and foreign, accepting neither money, meat, nor drink, but teaching the Christian faith without fee or reward;—on the contrary, distributing money, food and clothing to the poor." The same venerable memorials reckon Cadwalader the last of "*the Three Blessed Kings*, because he granted the privilege of his land, and all his property, to the faithful, who fled from the unbelieving Saxons, and from the unbrotherly ones, who sought to slay them."

Civilization however does not maintain the standard of morals; and the religion of the Holy Jesus, although generally embraced by the Britons under the auspices of the Roman eagles, was not sufficiently established to preserve them from the vices which ruined Rome itself. Debilitated by luxury and sloth, and lacerated by civil discord, Britain, when abandoned by the Roman legions, felt itself incapable of defence against barbarous invaders. However bitterly therefore we may deplore the miseries and desolation spread over the land at the first introduction of the Saxons; we cannot but acknowledge that the lively, active, resolute and undaunted spirit of such a people was required to raise to high pre-eminence the future character of England. The testimony of Gildas, the authentic British historian, who lived at Bath in the middle of the sixth century, and describes the scenes which had immediately surrounded him, leaves no doubt of the too general corruption of the Britons. The memorable remark of the Great Gregory, that the youthful Angli, whom he saw at Rome, would be most fit to join the hallelujahs of the Angelic choir, affords a good idea of the personal superiority of the Anglo-Saxons; and the form of Christianity, which in consequence of that observation they received from the ancient capital of Christendom, must be acknowledged to have possessed advantages over the pure, but comparatively unsystematic principles previously disseminated in the land. The mode of their conversion as represented by the venerable Bede and other most ancient writers, is truly worthy of recital; showing, as it does, the candid and honest disposition of our English forefathers even in their heathen days, and illustrating the wisdom and goodness of God in establishing the Church of England on solid and durable foundations.

* Continued from our last.

From the Protestant Episcopalian.

WANDERING OF THE MIND IN PRAYER.

Of all the frailties which sincere Christians lament, and of which they frequently complain, perhaps there is no one so prominent, as that of the wandering of the mind in prayer. Accordingly, a few remarks, to be expressed with brevity, may not only be matter of profitable recollection, but proper with useful hints to be presented on the occurrence of the subject in confidential conversation.

Whatever may be the degree of laxity in this matter it has begun in the personal and private exercise of devotion. Therefore, the remedy of the evil requires the taking of it at this its source. The correcting of it there, cannot fail to be felt in the public services of the Church. They shall therefore be put out of view in the present exercise, the sense of which may generally be applied to the latter subject no less than to the other.

The first suggestion is the fixing of the mind on the sense of the prayer; not only the general use of it but that of each clause in its proper place. Even in this kind of prayer, there will be use in being governed by forms prescribed to ourselves, written or printed, or conceived and committed to memory. It cannot but be a help to the praying with the understanding.

Next, let there be a desire of the heart resting on the things to be prayed for. By this is meant not an affection of the mind, excited by some occasional event, which, however suitable at the time, or to the then present state of the party, may be temporary, like the cause of it; but habitual desire, descriptive of the inward character. Such preparation can only be the fruit of frequent meditations on the subjects which it is fit to bring steadily before the great Being "to whom all hearts are open, all desires known."

While the said two particulars are faithfully acted on, it may be well to disregard all endeavours for the excitement of those animal feelings which depend on the ebbing and flowing of the spirits—in some measure on the state of the atmosphere—and much on the variety of organization in the bodies of different persons. It is the cause of much sin, that some judge of their religious states, by their feelings of this sort, which may eventuate, either in unwarrantable comfort and even extacy, or in a depth of sorrow, excluding the consolations of the gospel. The said feelings are no tests of spiritual character; and how little they are dependant on human will, may be sometimes seen in occurrences having no connexion with religion, in which there are sufficient motives for the desiring of such emotions, while all endeavours for the excitement of them are in vain. That without preceding intention they will occasionally be presented there can be no doubt. What is objected to, is the making of them the test of a religious state. This is evident in cases of persons unquestionably in deep distress, but complaining that they cannot possess the feelings which issue in tears.

It will be a help in prayer, before entry on it, to make a pause, for the fixing of the mind on the character of the great Being to be addressed, especially on his having vouchsafed to reveal himself to us as the "hearer of prayer." In several branches of it also, as far as possible without an unseasonable suspension of the train of thought, there should be a direction of the mind to the particular attributes on which the request is to be bottomed, especially in invoking the name of God. In the use of the prayers of our liturgy, we are aided in this, by the circumstance, that they generally begin with the matter which has been recommended. It clothes the service with one of the most conspicuous of its excellencies, and is well worthy of being imitated in the conducting of personal prayer.

Let no morning be begun, and no evening concluded, without a self-dedication to Him who "holdeth our feet in life." It would be an error to dispense with this, where family prayer is a part of domestic arrangement, as it ought to be always. There will be calls for personal applications, suited to the consciousness of the party. And in regard to all, since on any committing of themselves to sleep, they know not whether they shall see the light of another day, nor, in the event of this, what dangers, temporal or spiritual are to assail them,—there will always

be special calls for prayer suited to the periods of time referred to.

In the course of every day, on the occurrence of any incident interesting to the feelings, it will very much cherish a devout spirit, and of course be a check to the wandering of thought, to be in the habit of elevating the heart to the great ordainer of what happens.—There have been some pious persons, who have accustomed themselves to certain hours during the day, when they have retired for the keeping up of communion with their God. This may be commendable in those so situated as that it will not interfere with duties lying on them as imperious as that of prayer; but it cannot be enjoined on the greater number of professors, who must either suspend those duties, or discharge the other in a way liable to ostentation.

Let there be submission to the divine will, as to the granting or withholding of things prayed for, although not to the lessening of confidence in the promise—"if ye being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" It has exclusively a reference to the aids of the Holy Spirit, which are never withheld for the furtherance in all goodness, to the effect being dependant on our improvement of them. But in respect to temporal mercies, the submission cannot be too unreserved, especially as we know not how far the denial of them may be for our greater good; and whether, under the appearances of "bread or of a fish," we may not be asking for a "stone or a serpent." This act of submission will help to the erecting of a barrier against intrusive thoughts.

Far from us be the unauthorized expectation entertained by some, of an emotion of the mind, construed to be the evidence of the granting of the prayer. The looking out for this has a tendency to the wandering, for which the present exercise is intended to be a corrective. Such supposed evidence has been an incitement to crimes of the deepest dye. Independently of this, if it be looked to in any concern, subjected rather to discretion, governing itself by existing circumstances, it may lead to much error in conduct. It has also the danger attendant on it, that the petitioner can never know in what degree his wishes may have insensibly caused the results, for which he believes himself to have looked for a divine determination. So far as regards those sacred influences, which maintain the mind in a frame the most favourable to the operations of the reasoning faculty, there will always be a call for prayer, and always a benefit derivable from it.

It will be no small help, sometimes to bring the delinquency in question before God in prayer, with penitence especially directed to the object. The being aware of the penalty will be a check to the incurring of it.

In aid of all these expedients, desirable fruit will result from them, if we should be thereby led to humble ourselves in our own eyes, there being thus manifested to us the heavy drawback from our attainments, whatever they may be; and even if these be not overrated, the impressing on us of the counsel—"when ye have done all say we are unprofitable servants."

Gracious Father, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed, enable us always to address Thee under the influence of these cautions, however imperfectly displayed; and from my mouth may they be profitable to others as occasions may occur for the presenting of them. W. W.

We notice in a single paper an account of the drowning of five young men while violating the Sabbath; two in New-York, one in Amherst, two in Bangor. A statement of the number who perish in a single year, while committing this sin, would present us with melancholy and alarming statistics.—*Epis. Rec.*

In the county of Derby, (England) a petition had been signed by 200 Post-masters, praying they might be relieved from work on the Sabbath day. In Liverpool, a petition had been signed by 2,500 persons, praying that merchants and sailors might not be permitted to sail their ships from port on Sundays.—*Epis. Rec.*

At the recent commencement of the Episcopal Theological Seminary, New-York, twenty-seven young men finished their course of study preparatory to entering the ministry.—*Ibid.*