

and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you."

The character exhibited in this country by those who have borne the Christian name has not always been such as to create a favourable impression of our holy faith; and although, the times are changed in this respect from what they once were, there is, after all, not very much about us that to a prejudiced eye will appear strikingly exalted above the common principles that sway men's minds everywhere—ambition, pride, selfishness, love of superiority and the eager striving after all the pleasure and gratification that this world can be made to yield. The English public press of Calcutta, which may be supposed to accommodate itself to the tastes of the majority of those by whom it is supported, if not deserving to be styled anti-religious, is certainly very far indeed from manifesting a profound reverence for Christianity. Without speaking evil of dignities, we may venture to suppose that to the minds of Hindoos there has not appeared any very remarkable and striking attachment to religion in those who have occupied the most conspicuous position in British society here. Moreover it is not to be forgotten that, while a vast portion of our English literature breathes a spirit drawn from the Bible, there is a considerable portion also whose tendency or whose avowed object is to undermine the authority of revealed religion. To the mind of a Hindoo, who may not be able to perceive the overwhelmingly greater importance of those truths in respect of which all Protestants agree than of those other matters that have occasioned so many divisions, the variety of distinguishing names by which Christians are called must be perplexing.

(To be continued.)

#### FELLOWSHIP OR SOCIAL PRAYER MEETINGS.

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." HEB. x. 24, 25.

The Christian stands in a threefold relation to the duty of prayer. First, as an individual, he is commanded to engage in secret prayer, to enter into his closet, and to lift up his voice to God. Private prayer is needed, because there are many things between a man and God, which should not meet the ear of other men. Secondly, as a member of a family. Family religion is a duty which belongs to all the members of the house. The faithful in every age have cultivated family devotion. As there are circumstances belonging to a family, which are not common to the world, mercies enjoyed and afflictions suffered, which affect every member of the family in common, so they are called upon to meet together "in unity" with thanksgiving and supplication. We read that, when David "had made an end of offering burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Hosts," and afterwards "returned to bless his household." Thirdly, as belonging to the same great family, the Head whereof is Christ, and here dwelling together for a season, feelings of sympathy, fellowship and brotherly love naturally spring up between those who are of the "household of faith," and hence arises the desire to join in social worship, or Prayer Meetings.

These duties are intimately connected with each other. He who does not fear God in the closet is not likely to be a man who will take delight in worshipping Him in the family circle, or take pleasure in the exercise of social worship. On the other hand the man, who delights to pour out his

were to exert himself in promoting and extending such unions, what a vast deal of soul before God in private, will most certainly be a man, like Cornelius, "fearing God with all his house," and taking every opportunity of joining others in the solemn service of public devotion. Once a man's heart has been touched, once he is made to feel his own depravity, his utter helplessness and the consequent need he has of a Saviour, he will then and not till then be able to exclaim with sincerity and truth, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O God, a day in Thy house is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness."

Among professing Christians the great fault of the present times seems to consist in the want of a living, vital, practical conviction of the majesty, authority and power of the Word of God. How often also in these days of wide-spread unbelief and infidelity do we hear the sceptic arguing against the efficacy of prayer, and attempting by crooked and perverted reasonings to undermine the whole fabric of revealed Religion! Among professing Christians the want of a living faith is nowhere more clearly manifested than in the too general neglect of meetings for social worship. A cold and benumbing scepticism seems to be stealing over us, and freezing the vitals of true religion. In such times as these Christians ought strongly to be reminded of the value and importance of Prayer Meetings. Prayer is a mighty instrument in the hands of a true believer. Ye who read your Bibles, and believe them to be the Word of God, what think you of such words as these; "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." These words, you know, were addressed by our Saviour to His first followers, and were they not well calculated to inspire hope and confidence in the bosoms of His disciples? They were spoken, however, not for their sake alone, but were intended for the benefit of believers in every age and under every variety of circumstances. This command then or rather this invitation has come down to our times,—it is addressed to us who profess to be Christ's followers now; and surely it is an invitation with which, if we believe in the Divine character of the Speaker, and of His power to make good His promises, we will not be slow in complying. But too many, we fear, are accustomed to read their Bibles as if the commands, promises, threatenings and exhortations, contained therein, had not the slightest relation to them personally, but were addressed entirely to some other individuals. Thus of those who read the passage containing the above promise, how many are there whose eyes will wander carelessly over it without considering for a moment how great is the encouragement held out to earnest, persevering and importunate prayer! The passage presents the Almighty in a light which it is impossible to contemplate without the deepest feelings of gratitude and veneration, bringing before us, as it were, the Great Jehovah looking down upon the Earth, not as an indifferent spectator of the concerns of men, not as an unfeeling observer of the miseries, the wants, the sighs and the sorrows of human-kind, but as one deeply interested in all that concerns their happiness and welfare, exclaiming: "Ask and ye shall receive, seek

Among a certain class there is much error and misconception as to the true nature and efficacy of prayer, and hence, as we have said, we often hear infidels denying its efficacy altogether, and attempting to bring into disrepute this most holy exercise of our faith. Infidelity and superstitious fanaticism are alike to be condemned. In Scripture there are certain *conditions* laid down, which we must fulfil before God will hear our prayers. Numerous passages of the Bible tell us that the grace and favour of God will be administered in *proportion to the exertions which we make in seeking for them*. The strivings of a man and the workings of God's Spirit within him are thus most closely and mysteriously connected. It is God that converts, and yet it is man that converts himself. While, then, we have the most implicit reliance upon the promises of God, *we must work as if everything depended upon ourselves*; for it is only by our own exertions and strivings that our minds and hearts become inclined for the reception of grace from above. This view is illustrated by such texts as these: "Unto him that hath will be given;" "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;" "Ask and ye shall receive," &c. There is therefore the strongest analogy between our seeking for the grace and favour of God and our seeking for anything else. We are so constituted that we can obtain nothing of any real value in this world without labour and perseverance, without asking, seeking, knocking. It is a great error therefore to suppose that all that the Christian requires is *faith alone*—that faith, namely, of which the Apostle James speaks,—and that the possession of it will supersede every exertion on our part. We must labour and wrestle to make our calling and election sure; for, although God is bountiful, neither in His moral nor spiritual administration is there any reward offered to indolence. The Christian life is a continued struggle, a perpetual warfare; and, as no one expects to acquire wealth or learning without diligence and steady perseverance, so neither can he hope to obtain eminence as a Christian without corresponding zeal and activity.

In this view, therefore, the wise man and true Christian will lose no opportunity of strengthening the growth of grace within him, but in his search after a holy life will joyfully lay hold of every opportunity of holding communion with God in the company of the brethren. Sympathy increases all our enjoyments, and lessens all our sorrows. Man is a social being, and the union of Christians for the purpose of prayer calls forth the holiest and loftiest feelings of their nature. In such intercourse all the graces of the Christian character shine out with increased lustre. Unity, brotherly love, faith, hope and charity, are thereby greatly strengthened and promoted. The people of God have always been accustomed to join together in the solemn exercises of devotion; and it is truly a very significant sign of the times when meetings for prayer are so little regarded as they are at present. Indeed there can be no better index of the low state of religion among us than the very general neglect of Fellowship Meetings for prayer. Prayer is the very life-blood of the Church; and prayerless times are dangerous times. Every Christian, every Minister of the Gospel more especially, should do all he can to promote them. If each pastor