

his doctrine will be exposed through you to reproach, gainers will be confirmed in their opposition to the Gospel, souls will be turned out of the way, and through your fault you may destroy them for whom Christ died. We beseech you to be careful to maintain good works. "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." Exhibit in your character the completeness, the value, and the beauty of the religion and morals of the Gospel. You are, indeed, only accepted of God for the sake of our Lord Jesus; and it is therefore your duty, by the maintenance of a genuine faith, to walk humbly with God, but it is likewise your duty to show your faith by your works, and thus, so to cause your light to shine before men, that they may glorify your Father which is in heaven.

While we exhort you to seek and preserve that experience of the pardoning mercy of God which constitutes so essential a part of the power of godliness; we would at the same time remind you, that there is a form of godliness, which, proceeding from the inward power, and directed and sustained by it, is not only a sacred duty as to the individual professor, but is designed and calculated to secure the most important results in relation both to the church and the world. There have, indeed, been periods when the forms of religion have been valued for their own sake, and the power of godliness has been denuded by being stigmatized as enthusiasm. And there have, likewise, been periods when such views of the spirituality of religion have been propounded, as have represented even the most sacred institutions of the church of Christ as vain formalities, causing them either to be altogether neglected, or to be performed with a carelessness which, though not designed to be irreverent, has too often appeared to be so. Against this tendency to extremes, we beseech you continually to guard. Cultivate the inward life of religion, in all its holy power; but carefully observe, likewise, all its instituted forms. Diligently attend to all the means of grace; and attend to them in such a manner as shall show the world the sense which you entertain of their importance and value. Avoid all late attendance on public worship, all omission of sacramental services; and let your behaviour, in respect to all that is connected with the services of the house of prayer, show how deeply you are impressed with the solemn declaration of Scripture, "Holiness becometh thine house, O God, for ever." Show that it is possible to combine this experience of the blessings of religion which constitutes its inward power, with a serious and exemplary observance of the external duties which constitute its visible form.

And we would the rather urge upon you a careful attention to this subject, because we cannot conceal from ourselves that there is, in certain quarters of the professing church, a strong wish to revive that religion of external form in which Popery itself originated, and to the principles of which, Methodism, as a revival of spiritual religion, is directly opposed. If the abettors of these dangerous and destructive errors behold, among the professors of more correct views of religion, any carelessness as to the observance of the outward duties of religion, whether manifested by irregular attendance, or by a negligent manner of performing them, they will avail themselves of such conduct to promote the interests of their own system; arguing from it, that a high profession of the power of godliness is inconsistent with the due observance of its proper forms. Let none of you, beloved brethren, ever give such advantage to those whose religious views we cannot but regard as being in direct opposition to the Gospel, as a system of redeeming grace. Attend, with regularity and devout reverence, to all the ordinances of religion, seeking in them for a closer communion with God, and by this devotion of your time and personal services, confess Christ before men, accustom your families to this performance of sacred duties, and call, by your pious example, the multitudes of your countrymen, who now habitually break the Sabbaths, and neglect the ordinances of God, to come and worship with you before the Lord your Maker.

And we particularly call you most seriously to consider the especial obligation which appears now to rest upon all members of Christian churches, to pay a more than ordinary attention to the sanctity of

the Sabbath, arising not only from those gross violations of the law of God on the subject which are so alarmingly prevalent, but from the still more alarming prevalence of such modes of justifying them as not only take away all real sanctity from the Sabbath, but, if pushed to their legitimate extent, would sap the very foundations of divine revelation. Never forget that the law of the Sabbath is a part of what has always been considered as that sacred summary of religious and moral duty, given to us in the Ten Commandments, written with the finger of God himself. Have no fellowship, therefore, with those who teach men to break this commandment, by denying its moral obligation. And be careful yourselves to obey the commandment in the terms in which it is given. "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." Where Sabbath-violations prevail, the blessing of God cannot rest; and be assured of this, that where the providential blessing of God rests not, there is no security for either personal, domestic, or national prosperity. Let your conduct show that you desire this blessing for yourselves and your families; and let it bear a faithful and explicit testimony, not only against the various ways by which the Sabbath is now so extensively desecrated, but also against those dangerous pleas by which it is sought to justify them.

We have been calling you, dearly beloved brethren, to take to yourselves the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left. An important reason for this is found in those revived expectations and efforts of Popery which constitute a painfully-remarkable feature among the undeniable signs of the times. To this dangerous system Mr. Wesley was always, and very decidedly, opposed, because he regarded it as being directly, unchangeably, and actively hostile to that great work of saving men for which evangelical truth was revealed, the Christian ministry instituted, and the Holy Spirit sent forth to dwell perpetually in the church of Christ. To this system, therefore, were we not ourselves steadily and visibly opposed, we should be unfaithful, not only to the cherished memory of the venerable Wesley, and to the relations in which we all stand to the religious societies which he was the great instrument of founding, but likewise, and chiefly, to those great principles which he has transmitted to us, and which we believe embody the saving truths of the Gospel. Popery cannot stand, if Methodism be true, supposing its principles to be carried out with fidelity. It, therefore, Popery be rejoicing in the anticipation of approaching triumphs, let all who love the name of Wesley, and the truths which he spent his life in proclaiming and which surrounded his dying bed with sacred glory, faithfully labour to counteract the influence which it may seek to acquire, and oppose to it the mightier influence of the truth which sends men for salvation directly to the mercy-seat, by the new and living way consecrated by the blood of the one oblation once offered. For this, as well as for other reasons, co-operate with us in seeking to promote by all proper means, the healthy extension of Methodism; and, whenever the providential opportunity is presented, to check the boasts, and to impede the progress, of what we consider to be antichristian, and, therefore, most dangerous error.

### Biblical Department.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE PRIVATE AND DOMESTIC READING OF THE SCRIPTURES.

(By the Rev. Dr. Leitch.)

As a knowledge of the meaning and scope of the sacred records should be the first object of pursuit, let them be first resolutely explored for this purpose, and let a habit be formed of interrogating ourselves upon the import of what we read, till some definitive or precise idea be obtained of most of the passages and paragraphs that come before us. For want of this habit, many texts lie in the mind like ears of wheat, from which the grains have never been beaten out and used for nourishment. It is incredible how much the mind may learn of the Scriptures by the exercise of its own powers of reflection and meditation, and what is so learnt, has the double advantage of increasing the ability of the mind for future acquisition, and of remaining more firmly fixed in the memory, than it could be by any other process of less mental exertion. In those instances where satisfaction cannot be

obtained by the mind's own inquiries, the very exercise will lead probably to the discovery of other truths; and will fix the place in question so deeply in the mind, as to make it promptly avail itself of any incidental elucidation.

Next in importance to the act of obtaining the meaning, is the disposition to rely upon what is obtained, as clearly and satisfactorily authoritative. By the same rules that we judge of other language we must judge of that of Scripture. Words must be taken in their conventional sense, metaphorical truth must be believed as well as what is literal, and care must be taken to preserve the analogy of faith—that is, things must be interpreted in their due proportion, order, and connexion. The truth thus elicited should be relied upon with implicit confidence, all questions upon its propriety or reasonableness being superseded by the character of its Author. To receive what He states, upon no other ground than our perception of its propriety, would be no honour to him, since on the same ground we should receive the testimony of the most worthless of human beings. He must be believed for his own sake. He claims the submission of the whole man; of our understanding to his understanding, in the affair of doctrines, as well as of our will to his will in the affair of precepts.

"The master saith it," was an end of all dispute among the disciples of Pythagoras; and surely "God hath said it," ought to be a sufficient ground for implicit faith and confidence.

Let the meaning of what is stated be branched out by us, in the exercise of our reasoning faculty, into all the forms of truth to which it fairly, obviously, and evidently leads. Many things are in the Bible, that are not there in so many words or letters, but necessarily arising out of what is stated by a just process of reasoning; and as God, who gave the first truths, perfectly saw all that were inevitably contained in them, he is equally accountable for the latter as the former; and they demand our regard and reception on the very same authority. Not to exercise our reason here, would be to overlook its legitimate province, and greatly to narrow the sphere of revealed truth. It would be to prevent the general principles of Scripture from being applied to our particular cases with authority, and to set aside the belief of the Trinity, the observance of the Christian sabbath, and the reception of the Lord's Supper by females, as well as many other things of a like nature, which, on the ground above mentioned, are not only justifiable, but imperative and obligatory. Yet the perversion and prurency of human reason must be still more narrowly watched, since its misuse, whether in the line of addition to the Scriptures or subtraction from them, must be accompanied with the most disastrous results to the immortal soul.

It would be well for every man who can afford it, to have a Bible of his own, with as large a margin as possible, to which should be transferred the observations that are met with on certain texts, or references to the books that contain them, when such books are likely to continue in our own possession: where this is not the case, a few spare leaves at the end may receive the extracts at length, with corresponding figures to the texts elucidated. The memory will thus be refreshed at the distance of years, and numerous hints be retained and treasured up for further use, which would otherwise have entirely escaped the recollection, or remained in a very indistinct and unsatisfactory state of impression.

It has been found an admirable expedient for enriching the mind with an exact, and copious knowledge of Scripture, to maintain the habit of regularly committing some portions of it to memory. On this point the language of the late Rev. R. Robinson, of Cambridge, in a posthumous volume of excellent sermons, is very appropriate. "We suppose that a good man's memory ought to be well furnished with Scripture, and for this purpose we have often advised young people to get by heart every night, the last thing they do before they go to rest, one verse, to think of it till they drop asleep, and in the morning, when they wake, that verse will probably be the first thought. This will always afford a subject for a morning meditation, and the practice continued for seven years will fill and enrich the mind with the word of God. A great advantage, through life, and double, when along with old age, dimness of sight or blindness comes, so that

however desirous, we cannot then read the holy book."

"I have already experienced," says the editor of these Sermons, "the happy effects of this plan, first, on my two daughters, the one 7, the other 9 years old, who, after following the practice a few weeks, naturally ask me for a text every evening on retiring to rest, and as naturally repeat it to me on their first salutation every morning; and secondly, on myself, who find this method an additional support in what I have felt to be, in the most forcible sense, since the loss of the ornament of her sex, the most amiable, excellent, and best of wives,—'the house of my pilgrimage.'"

Let the ends we have in view in reading the Scriptures be rigidly scrutinized. Some ends are absolutely sinful, and others injurious, by their influence in relation to more important ones. We may read them to justify ourselves in some favourite error either of faith or practice, in which case we are not to wonder if we should be punished by meeting with that which will appear to give the desire countenance or sanction, and thus rivet the error on our heart. We may read to gratify the mere desire of knowing, and thus contract a habit of withholding the heart, and affections, and sensibilities of our nature, from what is read, which will at length prove fatal to the power of receiving any impression at all. Or we may read for purposes of criticism and controversy, to a neglect of our own personal interest in what is revealed, and any practical use to be made of it. Too many read the Scriptures only *afficiatly*, when the mind is made a mere repository to contain the knowledge of them for others, without deriving from it any benefit for themselves. All this is wrong and needs to be corrected, by a due regard to the proper and highest end for which the Scriptures should be perused. Next to our conversion, the great end of reading the Scriptures should be, the furtherance of our sanctification, or conformity in sentiment and conduct to the Divine Being. We shall then cultivate a habit of *applying* to ourselves what we read, and of appropriating the various parts of Scripture to our own use. Its texts, like well painted portraits, will be made, while we are in the act of admiring their beauty, to turn their eye directly upon ourselves. Like the industrious and instinctive bee, we shall retire from the garden of the Scriptures laden with products for our own hive, from various and very different herbs and flowers.

Study the prophetic parts of Scripture; not only those which have been fulfilled, or are fulfilling, for the strengthening of your faith, but those which yet point to the future, for the exhilaration of your hope. It is true, their chief use is suspended on their accomplishment; but to suppose that they are of no use till then, is to overlook their avowed design, and to be inattentive to the blessing promised to the diligent student of them at the time in which they were given. They are a light shining into the darkness of futurity, and shewing us objects there, which, though not to be discerned now in the exactitude of their forms or places, are of such a character as to animate our breasts and to direct and stimulate our exertions. Let the general objects thus revealed be set before our minds, and their certain arrival will be anticipated. The times in which we live call particularly for this study; they are times that have given birth to some extraordinary events, and such as have excited the expectations of others, and awoken the mind of the world. It is clear, that some new and great era is about to be introduced, from the wearing out of the old systems, and the unusual stir and bustle upon intellectual subjects among all classes. To be ignorant at this day of the class of events to which unfulfilled prophecy points, at least as to their general character, would be doubly criminal. Nor need we, while our inquiries are soberly limited and restrained, be under any anxiety about the results of this investigation. The very abuses of it tend to correct themselves.

The method of reading the Scriptures in private should be regulated by the end more immediately had in view. Selections from them seem most suitable for devotional purposes; and these of a greater or shorter length, according to the frame of the mind, taking care never to read more than the mind can relish and digest. But for the purposes of information and extensive acquaintance, they should be read in course, after some such order as that marked in these pages; and that not by single