

grace of God as a protection, whilst they themselves were deep in that grace which has been promised to us in the way of duty, but never promised to us whilst placing ourselves in the way of temptation. When a disposition to obey the command of Christ, and preach the gospel to every creature, and a willingness to fulfil the purpose of God in this respect has been manifested, God has furnished his people with the means of carrying out this disposition. Thus has wealth been given, but that wealth has been expended in ruining the souls and bodies of those to whom it has been given, instead of being applied to the purpose for which it was intended. Such has been the expenditure in this way, that our own nation expends in the cost of drunkenness, which cannot possibly have benefitted any person in the slightest degree, and must have injured and ruined many, as much wealth as would support a sufficient number of missionaries to supply the whole heathen world.—(700,000.) The bounties of God's providence have been liberally supplied to us. These we have turned into poisons, which we have called good creatures of God; and thus we have deliberately charged God with the evils which our own wickedness and perversity have produced.

What can we expect in such a state of things as this? Is it not (Micah ii. 2.) "They covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away;" and (iii. 10, 11.) "They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money; yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say: Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us." Even while they have been enriching themselves with the ungodly gains which they have wrung from the helpless poor, the widow, and the fatherless—those who live by selling, souls to Satan, for far less than Judas sold Christ, yet profess to lean upon the Lord. May we not therefore expect that the heaven over our head should be brass, the earth be iron, and the rain of the land powder and dust, that the influences of the spirit should be restrained, and spiritual barrenness should overspread the church of God. Now, why is this, is it because God is unwilling to grant his spirit, or that he does not delight in blessing his people? Observe what he says in the seventh verse. "Is the spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these his doings?" This state of things comes not from him, but from ourselves. This state of things is polluted, and the professing people of God must arise and depart from it, lest it destroy them.—Part of the church have seen the evil, and are arising to put it away. It has been shewn that the common drinking usages of society have been causing all the evil; that these are injurious to health, and unfit the mind of man for all duties, but especially for the duties of religion. It has also been shewn that these customs are contrary to christian charity, the foundation of all our mutual duties, and that the keeping up of these customs is injuring the cause of Christ in the world. Exertions have therefore been put forth by those who have seen the greatness of this crying evil. We might at first sight suppose that these exertions would be vigorously supported, but in practice, we find that so far from this, they are strongly opposed. This leads us to consider:

II. The character of the prophets mentioned in the text. 'If a man,' &c., in the margin, 'If a man walk with the wind and lie falsely,' &c. Such is the class who maintain the practices which we have been considering. Many, after all the light which has shone upon this matter, still attempt to defend the propriety of christians conforming to the world in this particular.—Some have attempted to do so from the Bible, and have endeavoured so to distort its pure and holy precepts, as to make them speak favorably of their revels; but this has been a vain attempt,

and such prophets as these have shewn, that they were of the class described in the text. To such a degree are these customs interwoven in society, that those who attempt to defend them, are listened to and delighted in, as prophets whose views of peace are very acceptable to such christians as have no moral courage and principle sufficient to lead them to break through customs which have been shown to be immoral, because these customs have been long in use, are interwoven into all the concerns of life, and are very dear to those who have long practiced them. But is this like cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye when these become causes of stumbling or offence? Yet many will attempt to keep up these customs, and prophesy of wine and strong drink, walking with the wind. Such may expect when they thus sow the wind, that they shall reap the whirlwind. When all attempts to maintain these customs by argument have failed, recourse has been had to reviling those who oppose these customs, but still in vain for preventing the progress of truth. All these attempts in the way in which they are made, are proofs of the false foundation upon which these objections rest, and which cannot stand the test of the light.

III. Inquire why those who support the drinking usages meet with so much favor and encouragement. Such persons do receive much support even from professing christians themselves. This arises from the desire of having smooth things spoken, and those persons who will not oppose vice, but will cry peace, peace, will meet with most favor. Christians, and especially christian ministers, are set up like the prophet of old as watchmen, God says to them, "I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." This warning must be delivered even when disagreeable to those to whom it is addressed. Although men may be angry with the servants of God for telling them the truth, they must not on that account hesitate to declare the whole counsel of God. Those prophets will be the most acceptable who speak smooth things, and thus act like those in ancient times, of whom God says, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace." Many build themselves up in this conformity to the world, crying peace to themselves, a peace which the word of God does not sanction.

While the light of the word of God and of reason has been brought to bear upon these practices, and they have been shown to be inconsistent with the christian character, the consequent duty of christians both to abstain from them and to testify against them, has been becoming constantly clearer, hence the reason why those who attempt to keep up these practices, so much dislike the discussion of the subject. They are too dear to be given up, and therefore they will not question them.—This is a proof that they cannot stand the test of the light of argument and the word of God. The attempts of the church in our days to free herself from this evil and to put it down, are charged as heresy. So has every attempt at reformation been charged, because every such attempt must interfere with darling practices which men are unwilling to give up. When the apostles themselves were going about proclaiming the gospel of peace, they were spoken of as disturbers of the peace; as turbulent and seditious persons, ringleaders of factions, and turning the world upside down. In the same manner are those treated ever since, who have exerted themselves in promoting reformation. But this need not deter us from urging on the work of reformation, and freeing the church of God from this enormous evil which presses upon her. We may say in this matter as the apostle Paul said, when charged with heresy, "This I confess, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers."