

THE CHRISTIAN LUMINARY.

FABEZ CHADWICK, Editor.

"BEHOLD I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY."

J. McMILLAN, Printer.

VOL. I.

Oshawa, Canada West, December 15, 1845.

NO. 21.

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

ORIGINAL.

There are many things needful; but there is one thing which is needful above all others, or needful in a peculiar and emphatic sense. Some things which are needful can, nevertheless, be dispensed with. We can make some shift to do without them. But there is one thing which we cannot do without. It is indispensable to our happiness. Without it we cannot enjoy substantial good in this world, and cannot enter into peace when we die. Hence, our Lord said to Martha who was careful and troubled about many things—who was inordinately concerned about making a splendid entertainment for him of temporal good, "one thing is needful;" and from his commendation of Mary who had "chosen that good part which should not be taken away from her," we learn that this "one thing" is true religion; which consists in knowing, believing, and practising the truth as it is in Jesus. The Apostle James says that "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, 'to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.'" "Visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction," to console with them; to aid them according to their necessities; and to afford them protection from the oppressions of the covetous, and from other evils, is particularly specified, because it is a prominent part of that disinterested good will and active benevolence required in the Divine law; and not because it is the only way to do good. Religion teaches us to "do good to all men, as we have opportunity, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." Our Lord enjoined that we should "do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again." And "the work of faith and labor of love" are spoken of as inseparably connected. And the Master says of all, according to the means possessed, "occupy till I come."

"Pure religion" also teaches us "to keep ourselves unspotted from the world;" i. e. from its errors, vices, carnal pursuits, vain recreations, filthy communications, unbalanced customs, contentions, proud and lofty carriage, worldly lusts, passions, envyings, and inordinate indulgences; and to be holy to the Lord in body and spirit.

Religion is a comprehensive term, embracing the whole system of faith in God, Jesus Christ, the truth of the Christian system, and the recompences of eternity, together with the entire subject of obedience to the precepts of the Gospel—"whatsoever Christ hath commanded us."

This is the *one thing needful*, in the sense above stated, because it is the very thing which corresponds with our moral obligations. It is what we are caparitated to believe and practise as rational and accountable beings. It prescribes the proper scope for our moral and intellectual faculties.

It is that, also, which makes us like God, the copy of all perfection. Hence, those who have become truly religious are said to "put on the new man which after God is erected in righteousness and true holiness."

It is, moreover, necessary to our present happiness. For "the wicked are like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." "There is no peace" saith my God, "to the wicked." But the inspired Psalmist affirms, "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." Likewise, the Apostle says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And the Lord Jesus addressed his Disciples thus, "These things I have said unto you that in me ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

else fails; and it is the only thing which can be transported across the Jordan of death. It is the only sure passport to a world of bliss. Our all for eternity depends upon our having it.

How, then, should our minds be affected with the solemn reality! Instead of inquiring first, "what shall we eat? and what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" we should inquire, how shall we possess and maintain true religion? We should "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Let the impressions of deep and lasting upon every mind, that religion is the *one thing* which we all need—that every other thing, however needful in some certain respects, is comparatively worthless—that riches, honors and pleasures—yea, all our earthly treasures will perish with the using—that every course which is not subservient to the true interests of religion, is not worthy of man—a course of folly—and that it is only by hearkening to the dictates of religion that the gloom of death can be dispelled, and the cheering prospect of immortal blessedness be enjoyed. O then, search for this pure gem—this incorruptible treasure. Resign, promptly and cheerfully, whatever may be wrested from you in the course of Providence; but hold fast the *one thing* above described. "Let it not go, keep it; for it is thy life."

and are continually enjoying the bestowment of his mercies. This is a plain subject. That we are dependent on an overruling Power, no reasonable man can, for a moment, question. Then we ought, surely, to be subject to this Power—to obey that "God in whom we live, and move, and have our being." Especially, when he is continually doing us good, giving us both temporal and spiritual mercies in abundance. The benevolence and grace of God are strikingly manifested in his common providence; but more especially in the gift of his Son, the provisions of the Gospel, the day of grace, and the hope of eternal life. Hereby we are laid under high and indispensable obligations to be obedient.

4. Our happiness is inseparably connected with the obedience required. This is a prominent fact taught in the Holy Scriptures, and realized by every true Christian. It is that any sacrifice for the honor of such a Father and Benefactor is too great to be made; especially when a rich recompense awaits the self-denying and persecuted saint. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. If we deny him, he also will deny us."

love are overlooked or forgotten. No sense of obligation is felt. No disposition to appreciate our kindness is manifested. But, on the contrary, those who have been laid under the strongest obligations to gratitude and friendship, become our strongest opposers—yea, most bitter enemies. This is true of the minister, the parent, and the friend. And this requital of the labors of love by ingratitude often produces an appalling effect—it sickens, tries, and afflicts those that do so, and sadly disheartens and wears their minds, and causes many utterly to faint. To persevere in doing well, under such circumstances, strong efforts, a firm purpose, and a full reliance on the grace and covenant faithfulness of God are indispensable. A man must have much of the spirit of his Lord and Master to continue to render "good for evil," and "blessing for cursing," and to pray for those who trample our favors under their feet.

5. Another cause, or occasion of weariness in well doing is direct and open persecution. It is a Scripture motto, that they "that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." It is the will of God that man should "suffer for well doing." "He that is persecuted for righteousness sake, shall not lose his people 'in the furnace of affliction.'" Hereby they are tried as by fire. And many fail to persevere, and do not cease to do well. In such a situation, they become weary, and their minds to a greater or less extent, can doubt that persecution will be a cause which frequently produces weariness in well doing.

Hence, in view of these several causes, whereby we are so liable to be turned aside from the path of duty; how important it is that we should be exhorted to consistency and unremitting vigilance! How important that the motives to continued faithfulness should be rightly stated and solemnly pressed! "Let us not be weary in well doing," said the Apostle Paul; "for in doing so, we shall reap, if we faint not." "We shall not reap, as we expect, but we shall reap, at once, as bountifully, and the same way, that we anticipated; but we shall surely reap. 'Our labor will not be in vain in the Lord.'"

And, moreover, we shall reap "in due season"—at the most appropriate time, all things considered. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise," though he may be "long-suffering to us-ward." He will remember our "work of faith, and labor of love" in the most proper season; and he knows, infinitely well, when that will come.

It requires time for seed to germinate, and grow, and ripen into fruit; and the husbandman must have "long patience until he receive the early and the later rain; but, at length, the harvest comes, and his labor is requited." So there is a season of preparation for the spiritual harvest, and we have need of patience—"of patient continuance in well doing." But when the proper season for harvesting comes, we shall reap. The harvest, in that case, will not fail! Though we may "have sown in tears," we shall "bring forth our sheaves with rejoicing." Having "sown in righteousness, we shall reap in mercy"—reap abundantly—"some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold"—yea, we shall reap "eternal life."

God forbid, then, that we should be weary in well doing. Let none of the before-mentioned causes dishearten us; but, let us "gird up the loins of our minds;" "be strong;" and "quit ourselves like men." Let the goodness of the cause, the faithfulness of the Rewarder, and the sure prospect of a rich and everlasting harvest, urge us forward with increased ardor and resolution, till we obtain a full and final victory over every discouragement, temptation and adversary, and realize, by joyful experience, that he is faithful who hath promised.

LIVING TO GOD A REASONABLE SERVICE.

ORIGINAL.

When we say a thing is *reasonable*, we mean that it is in accordance with the principles of reason, justice and equity, and what the understanding of man, whereby he is distinguished from the lower orders of creation, approves. The obedience, then, of the Gospel, is of this character—reasonable, right, just, consistent, every way answerable to the dictates of an enlightened conscience, and a correct moral principle.

Accordingly, Paul thus exhorted, "If ye love, therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Rom. xii: 1. God's claim to our entire persons, our active service, the yielding of our members as instruments of righteousness, the employment of our heads, hearts, eyes, ears, tongues, hands and feet—yea, every member and every faculty, with all our time and means, for his glory, is unquestionably reasonable. It accords with the purest principles of rectitude. He neither stretches beyond, nor comes short of the exact measure of duty which is prescribed and sanctioned by the nature and fitness of things. The inspired Psalmist emphatically observes, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." Ps. xix: 7, 8, 9.

BE NOT WEARY IN WELL DOING.

ORIGINAL.

A course of well doing is so reasonable, excellent and heavenly, that it would seem that no one could become weary in it. Yet it is found that this is not unfrequently the case. The following are some of the causes which produce this weariness.

1. The *delay* with which the anticipated effect is attended. Men like to see the fruits of their labor immediately, or in a short time. But it often happens that the effect looked for is not immediate. The mature of the benevolent enterprise may be such, or there may be such obstacles and engagements in the way of accomplishing it, that considerable time must elapse before the result, to any considerable extent, can be realized. This is the case in spiritual, as well as in temporal enterprises. Hence, many become discouraged and weary. They lack that patient and firm resolution which the nature of the case requires.

2. The *self-denial* which well doing implies is one of the principal causes of becoming weary therein. "Deny thyself and take thy cross," is one of the first laws of the kingdom of Heaven. But it is so contrary to our natural principles, that it requires a mind deeply imbued with grace to practise it. Very imperfect views are, at first, often entertained respecting the nature and degree of self-denial required of the true followers of Christ. Hence, when sacrifices of ease, reputation, privilege, property, honor and protection, become necessary in yielding unreserved obedience to Christ; and these sacrifices are to be made, not merely once or twice, but continually; and often become more and more severe—yea, when it is found that a man "must forsake all that he hath" to be acknowledged a genuine disciple; there is great danger of giving back and of becoming weary and discouraged.

3. The *arduousness* of the labor is another cause of weariness. Religion puts in requisition all the powers of man. Every talent is to be improved. God claims that we should "love him with all the heart, soul, strength and mind, and our neighbour as ourselves." And while his requirements measure, *arbitrarily*, with our capacities, there are many callings, relations and circumstances, which *eminently* call for effort. Powerful efforts of the mind, hard study, painful watchings and deep concern, attended with vigorous bodily labor, fatigue and exposure, become necessary to fill, with acceptance and success, the stations allotted us. And as in *temporal* concerns, hard and unremitting labor is wont to produce weariness, so in *spiritual* there is a liability, through the weakness and inconstancy of human nature, to the same result.

4. The *ingratitude*, with which our best labors are often attended, is another of the causes of weariness in well doing. It often turns out that those for whom we feel the most disinterested regard, and for whom we have endured the greatest privations, and performed the most generous services, utterly fail to requite us with their thankful feelings and acknowledgments. Our labors of

BE NOT WEARY IN WELL DOING.

ORIGINAL.

love are overlooked or forgotten. No sense of obligation is felt. No disposition to appreciate our kindness is manifested. But, on the contrary, those who have been laid under the strongest obligations to gratitude and friendship, become our strongest opposers—yea, most bitter enemies. This is true of the minister, the parent, and the friend. And this requital of the labors of love by ingratitude often produces an appalling effect—it sickens, tries, and afflicts those that do so, and sadly disheartens and wears their minds, and causes many utterly to faint. To persevere in doing well, under such circumstances, strong efforts, a firm purpose, and a full reliance on the grace and covenant faithfulness of God are indispensable. A man must have much of the spirit of his Lord and Master to continue to render "good for evil," and "blessing for cursing," and to pray for those who trample our favors under their feet.

5. Another cause, or occasion of weariness in well doing is direct and open persecution. It is a Scripture motto, that they "that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." It is the will of God that man should "suffer for well doing." "He that is persecuted for righteousness sake, shall not lose his people 'in the furnace of affliction.'" Hereby they are tried as by fire. And many fail to persevere, and do not cease to do well. In such a situation, they become weary, and their minds to a greater or less extent, can doubt that persecution will be a cause which frequently produces weariness in well doing.

Hence, in view of these several causes, whereby we are so liable to be turned aside from the path of duty; how important it is that we should be exhorted to consistency and unremitting vigilance! How important that the motives to continued faithfulness should be rightly stated and solemnly pressed! "Let us not be weary in well doing," said the Apostle Paul; "for in doing so, we shall reap, if we faint not." "We shall not reap, as we expect, but we shall reap, at once, as bountifully, and the same way, that we anticipated; but we shall surely reap. 'Our labor will not be in vain in the Lord.'"

And, moreover, we shall reap "in due season"—at the most appropriate time, all things considered. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise," though he may be "long-suffering to us-ward." He will remember our "work of faith, and labor of love" in the most proper season; and he knows, infinitely well, when that will come.

It requires time for seed to germinate, and grow, and ripen into fruit; and the husbandman must have "long patience until he receive the early and the later rain; but, at length, the harvest comes, and his labor is requited." So there is a season of preparation for the spiritual harvest, and we have need of patience—"of patient continuance in well doing." But when the proper season for harvesting comes, we shall reap. The harvest, in that case, will not fail! Though we may "have sown in tears," we shall "bring forth our sheaves with rejoicing." Having "sown in righteousness, we shall reap in mercy"—reap abundantly—"some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold"—yea, we shall reap "eternal life."

God forbid, then, that we should be weary in well doing. Let none of the before-mentioned causes dishearten us; but, let us "gird up the loins of our minds;" "be strong;" and "quit ourselves like men." Let the goodness of the cause, the faithfulness of the Rewarder, and the sure prospect of a rich and everlasting harvest, urge us forward with increased ardor and resolution, till we obtain a full and final victory over every discouragement, temptation and adversary, and realize, by joyful experience, that he is faithful who hath promised.

CURIOUS DISCOVERY OF AN ANCIENT BIBLE.

A copy of the first complete edition of the English Bible, printed by Miles Coverdale, bearing the date of 1535, was accidentally discovered a few weeks since in the bottom of an old oak chest, at Holkham Hall, Norfolk, the seat of the Earl of Leicester. There are numerous imperfect copies of this edition of the Holy Scriptures in existence, two being deposited in the library of the British Museum and one in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, one in the Cambridge University Library, and in fact most of our great libraries and public institutions, as well as many private individuals possess the volume. The copy now