

which he can derive principles, invigorating at once to his understanding and to his pious affections.

Viewed in its general bearings, then, the worship of God and an attention to what he has caused to be written for our instruction, are, of all duties, the most obviously binding upon rational creatures. The more of the devotional spirit any man possesses, provided it be pure, untainted by superstition, the man is raised in that which constitutes his finest characteristic, and the more solid and broad is the foundation rendered on which his happiness is placed.

But in making these observations upon the duty of worshipping God, and of giving due heed to the dictates of His spirit, as these are found recorded in the Bible, we have only stated generally what may be adduced in favour of St. Paul's precept, not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is.

From the concluding member of the text, it would appear that, at a very early period of the Christian dispensation, the practice had been gone into which has, unfortunately for the world at large, and still more for the individuals themselves, been too closely copied by great numbers—we mean the forgetting to assemble themselves in a public manner, for the improving exercises of religion. It is not improbable that, in ancient times, several might be induced, out of what they deemed principle, to refrain from coming to the place consecrated to the public service of God. They might plead, as some still do, that, in private they could worship their Maker as fervently and as acceptably as they could do it in public, and that therefore they were not to be condemned merely because they dispensed with compliance to what, at least, is but a matter of form. God is not confined, they would argue, to temples made with hands, but can be found of the pure and solitary worshipper as readily as by him who engages in his service with a multitude of his fellow creatures.

That God is not beyond the reach of the holy mind, whatever be its external situation, and that solitary devotion is often distinguished for its purity and intensity, and its beneficial effects, cannot bear dispute. But that for this reason a man may, in all circumstances, desert the public ordinances of religion, is a fallacy which a very little reflection will enable us to detect.

For the purpose of illustrating what is our duty, or what is inconsistent with our duty, it is necessary that we should enquire not merely into the consequences which would result to this or that particular individual, from an attention to cer-

tain observances, or from the desertion of them; but if we would judge truly, we must take into consideration the consequences which would ensue from these observances or the discontinuance of them, were they attended to or laid aside by all men. Upon the principles of human nature, is it or is it not of advantage that public worship and public religious instruction should be encouraged by persons of all descriptions, of all ranks and orders of society? This we conceive is the right way of stating the question; and upon this mode of stating it, let its merits be tried.

Let us suppose, then, that the wishes of some daring spirits were completely realized, and that every edifice reared to the honour of God, and for the promotion of piety within the land, were shut up, or what would still more correspond with their temper, were raised from its foundations, and that every person were left, in the literal meaning of the phrase, to worship God according to his convenience or his whim; suppose that, for the sake of experiment upon the species, that bold project were carried into execution, and that not a single vestige of public worship were left to shew whether the men of our land knew or served God or not; and what, it may be asked, would be the proper results?

The first result, we think, would be the declension of piety, and finally its utter extinction, among all who are more than ordinarily engaged in the transactions of life.

Objects of sense have so much more power over the mind than those of an invisible and spiritual kind, that, in no long time, not an instant would be devoted to the solemnities of devotion. The soul would be wholly engrossed with pursuits whose profits are confined to, and enjoyed within, the short period of the present existence. In a word, such persons as, at present, are in danger of sinking into the merest worldlings, notwithstanding that a call is loudly made to them every returning week, to rise above the world, and to aspire to what is of infinitely higher moment, would, when this call no longer sounded in their ears, become totally devoted to the things which perish in the using.

But this is not all: the result of such a project as the one of which we speak, would not be limited to the destruction of piety. The impiety which would be thus let in, like a flood, would itself act again as a cause the most destructive and ruinous that can be thought of. Morality and piety are intimately connected, so intimately that it is difficult to conceive how the one could exist without the existence and active operation of the other. What is piety but the love and reverence of all