

## ON THE NECESSITY OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT.

Nothing can be matter of greater regret to the Christian observer, than the lack of spiritual mindedness in the hearts of many professors of the faith of Jesus. In our Christian community at large, there is to be seen more of the form than of the power of religion; nay, in many who would sensitively reject a doubt of their Christianity, in the form itself there is much wanting. Such as an absence of family worship, or a neglect of the strict observance of the Sabbath. This matter of regret is, however, easily accounted for, from the want of the influence of the Spirit operating on the hearts and the consciences of professors, without whom, actuating man in all his movements, biasing his inclinations, and instructing him by his light and grace, the most showy and expensive works of an outward righteousness, are before God as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. It appears to us that by the members of our Christian Churches in general, the necessity of the divine agency of the Spirit of God is not sufficiently viewed and acted upon; perhaps ministers themselves may be found wanting in fully insisting on this life giving doctrine of the gospel, for, if even when it is faithfully declared, it is disregarded by too many, as humbling to the pride of the human heart, how much more must it be disregarded if set aside to give room to what are called simpler and easier truths.

The flesh profiteth nothing; it is the Spirit that quickeneth. All human endeavours, though backed by the highest intellectual attainments, will avail nothing in bettering our own hearts, or those of others without the Spirit. As easily can our snow clad fields yield of themselves how and when they please the fruits of the earth. The icy stiffness of their clods must first be broken, the soil must be softened and warmed by the genial influences of heat and rain from Heaven, ere it will receive and vivify the seed cast in by the hand of the husbandman; so must the heart of man be quickened by the Spirit of God, and warmed by the heat giving influences of piety ere the precious seeds of God's word can take root and produce the fruit bearing stem. To be spiritually minded, to be born of the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, consist not in the assumption of a name, in the mere knowledge of Christian principles, but in the possession of a hidden man of the heart, and a living under the influence of another law than that of self interest in the world. But what is the religion of many found to consist in? Simply the maintaining a character for sobriety and honesty, and attending on the ordinances of the sanctuary—being able to converse about persons better than things, the historical facts of scripture better than doctrines, the doctrinal parts again better than the practical, and the practical again better than the experimental. Worldly mindedness,

a restless anxiety after the increase of property, speculation in buying and selling, in a word, the love and the service of Mammon seem to influence the hearts of too many who, by naming the name of Christ, profess to have become so alive to eternal interests, as to have their hearts in Heaven, their treasures there, and their conversation there also! While the heart is choked with the cares of the world, filled with self sufficiency and vain conceit, the door must be closed against the entrance of the Holy One, to enlighten, to kindle and to gladden the soul. Much of the speedy growing principles and wishes of the world require to be subdued, ere the peaceable fruits of righteousness can be yielded abundantly.

In the revival of vital religion amongst a people, two things, so far as man is concerned, are indispensably required: First, ministers being more spiritually minded in their preaching, fully and frequently holding up to the view of their hearers the necessity of the power as well as the form of religion, of their being born of the Spirit as well as of water; and secondly, Christians generally engaging more earnestly in prayer for the outpouring influences of the Holy Ghost upon themselves and the Church at large.

It was the complaint of the celebrated Howe, of pious memory, "That the Spirit was in a great measure gone, retired even from Christian assemblies."—If, in the Christian assemblies of the Puritans, distinguished for zeal, fidelity, learning and piety on the part of their Divines, such a complaint was made, might it not also be made in the present day. The want of the success of ministers in reforming the hearts of their hearers, the failure of their most zealous and unremitting endeavours in the cause of conversion, though backed and supported by the high commands of God and the promises of Heaven and the threatening of Hell, cannot be otherwise accounted for. The pleasing a people by eloquence, by zeal, by enthusiasm or philanthropy is one thing, to profit them is another. A name for popularity may be gained so as to secure crowds to follow a preacher wherever he goes, but this will be no guaranty in itself of his success in elevating the tone of spiritual mindedness. However mortifying to the pride of talent and the consciousness of superior gifts, nothing can be achieved in begetting true religion in the heart without the influence of the spirit of holiness, for he it is who taketh of the things of Christ and sheweth them to the soul; nor can he be expected to be largely given, unless fully acknowledged and confessed—acknowledged in the high places of the sanctuary and confessed in the prayers of privacy. How goodly that custom observed by some of the old Divines in acknowledging the need of the aid and blessing of the spirit prior to the elucidation of the particulars of discourse! How aweing to our feelings, in reading their private histories, to find them so much given to prayer for a blessing on their labors. They knew what it was to water, as well as to plant!