

The Berean.

THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.—Acts xvii. 11.

No. 29.]

QUEBEC, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1844.

[Vol. I.]

MY SAVIOUR.

When I by sin had lost all claim
To blessings through Immanuel's name,
Who was it bid me hope again?
My Saviour!

Who put into my trembling hands
The Book where firm His promise stands,
And bid me read what He commands?
My Saviour!

Oh when perplex'd by doubt and fear,
I pour'd forth many a bitter tear,
Who whisper'd peace into my ear?
My Saviour!

And now that thou hast caus'd to shine
Into my heart Thy grace Divine,
Thou praise, the glory, all be Thine—
My Saviour!

Then whilst on earth I sojourn here,
Oh! never let me doubt or fear
That Thou wilt not be always near—
My Saviour!

FROM A MS. BOOK.

A BISHOP'S OPINION ON PRAYER-MEETINGS AND REVIVALS.

From "Remarks on Prayer Meetings," by the late Bishop Griswold.

It is indeed affirmed that experience has shown that the meetings in question have an evil tendency; but it must be general experience which can prove anything to this purpose. A few instances, though found both in England and America, would only prove that good things may be abused and discredited. By such reasoning we can prove that Christ "came not to bring peace on earth, but a sword;"—that his Gospel is of evil tendency. After the experience of many years, the Churchmen of Rhode Island have not found the practice in question of evil tendency. Their members have not gone from them, nor have they become preachers among other sects: the effect has been very much the contrary. Many from other denominations have united with us, and have become firmly attached to the Episcopal Church. Of these, several are now among the most useful ministers in our Church, and are labouring in various parts of the United States. The meetings have been of no little use in removing the prejudices against this Church, which, throughout New England, so much and unhappily prevail; in convincing many that our religion does not consist wholly of forms and ceremonies; that we, no less than other Christians, have a serious concern for the salvation of ourselves and others.

The most candid of those who are opposed to Prayer Meetings, admit that this subject is "a question of expediency." That God's word forbids such meetings, no one probably will venture to affirm. That the Church forbids them, no one has been able to show. And should she disapprove, nothing hinders that she should forbid them. And if it be, as certainly it is, a question of expediency, what judges can be more fit or competent to decide the question than our parochial clergy, each one in his own parish? Any clergyman who is incapable of judging in this case, cannot be qualified for the pastoral charge. Supposing that they are so qualified, and their being continued in that office is a proof that they are so esteemed, to their decision we may safely leave the question. They best know, each one in his own parish, what the people need, and what means and efforts it pleases God to bless among them. No one can be ignorant that what is profitable in one place, and among one people, may in another place be worse than useless. Some things our Saviour has commanded, and others he has forbidden, and others still he has left to the discretion of his ministers, and other Christians, to be done or not, as prudence dictates, or circumstances require. In his own example too, has he taught that "all things which are lawful are not expedient." In some places he found the people so hardened and indisposed to profit by his ministry, that he could not with wisdom and fitness, work many miracles among them; and his practice was to teach the people as they were able to hear. His Apostles followed his example, feeding with milk those who are unable to receive the stronger meat of the word. As far as truth would admit, and circumstances required, their ministry was accommodated to the ignorance and state, and prejudices of the people; they became all things to all men, that by all means they might save some. St. Paul, especially, who excelled in spiritual gifts, and laboured more abundantly than the other Apostles, while, with unshaken fidelity, he adhered to the true foundation of Christ, and in whatever is sinful, was rigid and unaccommodating; in other things, extended the conciliating system farther than any of us now would deem expedient. Let us be permitted, at an humble distance, to follow the steps of this "blessed Apostle," and we shall no longer hear the pious members of our communion condemned or censured for meeting together to talk of the Lord's mercies; to pray for themselves and others, and to exhort each other to steadfastness and perseverance.

There is reason to fear that some will write and speak against these meetings more from prejudice than knowledge. They who have not attended them can be no better qualified to judge of their use, than they who have not attended our public worship, to judge of our Liturgy. By the latter we are told; and they endeavour to prove, that our printed prayers produce, of course, a lifeless formality; by the former, that Prayer Meetings are productive of spiritual pride and many evils. They both can urge very plausible reasons; but we who judge from long and decided experience, are convinced that both are mistaken. In either case those evils may be, and in too many instances no doubt, they have been produced; but they are not more the necessary consequence in the one case than in the other. If

they who frequent our solemn assemblies, and devoutly use our service, find it lifeless and unsatisfying to a pious mind, they may with better reason condemn its use. And they who attend the Prayer Meetings, and find in them no religious improvement, may well forsake them. And if it be a known fact, and generally true, that they who frequent these meetings, are less pious, and less humble than other Christians; if they are more worldly and vain, and wicked; if they are not so constant, nor so devout at Church; if they are less given to prayer, and often absent from the Lord's table; if they are less regardful of the lawful government, and "godly admonitions" of their spiritual rulers; if they are not so constant in family prayer, and generally not so good Christians, this certainly is some good proof that the meetings are of evil tendency; and till this be proved, with what truth or justice is it affirmed that experience has shown them to be of evil tendency? If meetings of the like nature in other parts have produced bad effects, we are not answerable. After long experience we have not, to the Lord's praise be it said, discovered any of those bad effects, which some of our brethren apprehend. A regard for the Prayer Book has not, in any degree, been diminished, but the contrary: it is the full belief of the present writer that in no one of the United States are the Rubrics and Canons of our Church better observed than in Rhode Island. If others make an ill use of the ordinance of preaching, or of the celebration of Christmas, or of conference meetings, let those who are disposed and accustomed to make a good use of the same things, enjoy these privileges quietly and without reproach. A large part of our communicants in this state do not attend the meetings; and for this I have never heard them blamed. If they spend their evenings better, we rejoice and bless God. Happy would it be did all observe the most excellent rule of charity given in the fourteenth chapter to the Romans. Then "he that regardeth the day, would regard it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord, he would not regard it;—he would neither presume nor desire to judge another man's servant, but to his own Master let him stand or fall." The evil most to be feared, and most prevalent among us, is lukewarmness. With shame must we acknowledge that we incline to be cold rather than hot. Enthusiasm is as rare in our churches as a scorching sun is in a northern winter: the mercury of our zeal is constantly below the degree of temperate.

It is the intention of the present writer, if he can rightly judge of his own motives, to treat this subject of awakenings or revivals with candour and impartiality. It is not intended to dictate or to judge, but to take facts as they are, and reason from them. This is certainly a subject which not a little concerns our Church. In some instances, people are drawn from our communion by these awakenings: in others members have in consequence been added unto us; and the results, it is believed, have generally been very much influenced by the conduct of our people, either in opposing and censuring the works (as it is called) or in availing ourselves of the excitement. It is very desirable, to say the least, that we on this, as on other subjects, should be of one mind. It is indispensably our duty to God, to his Church, and to ourselves, that we consider seriously of the subject, and when we see our fellow-sinners with agonizing solicitude and concern, calling on God for mercy, and inquiring what they shall do to be saved, so to judge of them, and conduct ourselves, that we can answer with confidence to our own heart, and to God, who "is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." After devout prayer to God to enlighten our minds, and direct our ways, perhaps nothing will be more likely to unite us in opinion, and in practice, than frankly and candidly stating our feelings and views on this subject. It is with the humble hope that such in some small degree may be the effect, that mine are now offered.

And they are now offered in connexion with the subject of Prayer Meetings because it is in seasons of great religious excitement that such meetings are most frequent, and are believed to be most necessary, or most useful, and because, generally speaking, and almost perhaps without exception, they who disapprove of one, disapprove of the other, and consider them as kindred evils. There can be no doubt but the meetings are often instrumental in exciting religious awakenings; and the awakenings multiply the meetings. Whether such awakenings are the Lord's work, caused by some extraordinary operation of the Divine Spirit, or his ordinary blessing and spiritual aid bestowed upon the awakened attention, and more earnest prayers of his people; or whether, as others think, it is a natural effect from a natural cause, or an artifice and work of the adversary to disgrace religion, and frustrate its salutary effect, are points on which the opinion of men, even of pious Christians, differ. And they are points, on which it would be well if some were less forward to judge and to decide. That the same thing should by some Christians be extolled as the glorious work of God and the power of his grace; and by others be denounced as the artifice of Satan to frustrate the salvation of men, is a fact of awful consideration, and should, we might reasonably conceive, cause those who are truly pious to pause and reflect. This extreme difference of opinion should remind us all how fallible is human judgment respecting the ways of God. It might be well for some of us to hearken to the advice of Gamaliel: "Refrain from these men and let them alone, lest help be found to fight against God." For are we sure that it is not the Lord's work?

Should the work be his, to oppose it would be to fight against God; to sin against the Holy Ghost. When it is considered that these awakenings have seldom if ever appeared but in modern times, and are now very limited in their extent: that the Lord has in times past governed, and still does in most parts of the world govern his Church and save the souls of men without producing these extraordinary excitements:—when it is further considered what vain confidence of boasting;—what spiritual pride;—what uncharitable judgment; what extravagant enthusiasm, and gross irregularities, have in some instances unhappily attended these revivals: when also are brought into view the numbers converted who fall away, or disgrace their religious profession; and the coldness, or low state of religious feeling which usually succeeds these extraordinary excitements, it is natural, and certainly seems reasonable to hesitate and to doubt how far they are the work of God. And though it is certainly true that vast numbers, at such seasons, are converted from infidelity, and reformed from various vices, and become zealous, steadfast, and pious Christians; yet it may well be questioned whether there are more such Christians in consequence of the awakenings. Generally during the intervals between such awakenings, coldness prevails, and few if any are converted or added to the Church. And perhaps had the Lord's word gone forward in its steady, uniform, and usual course, a still greater number would have been added to his fold. Suppose in a large parish, during the course of fifty years, there are six of these extraordinary awakenings, and at each season (besides all who after fall away) one hundred of such as should be saved are added to the Lord. Yet it is possible, and perhaps much more than possible that, had no such excitement occurred, as many or still more might, in the same period of fifty years, have been added to the Church. Another evil resulting from these revivals is, that very many people imbibe erroneous notions of conversion and of their own duty. They are led to suppose that feelings and raptures, and assurance, are the chief evidence of true religion; and (which is still worse) that little or nothing on their part is necessary to a change of heart, and acceptance with God, but to wait till such a work, by the power of his grace, is wrought upon them. Hence the use of means is much neglected, and in many instances despised. And this is one of the two principal causes of the coldness which usually follows these seasons of refreshment. The other cause is easily found in that principle of reaction which is natural to the human passions.

(To be continued.)

CHURCH POLITY.

Judaism is fifteen hundred years older than Christianity; and if the ordinary rule of the inverse amount of historic light, as we recede from our own times, held good in this instance, much less obscurity would attach to the circumstances of the later, than to those of the more ancient institution. But the contrary is found to be the fact; nor can we be surprised that it is so, when we remember that the one was a system of circumstances, to each and all of which religious importance was attached: the other not so; for Christianity challenges the serious regards of men in those things only which conscience and reason confess to be momentous.

For the most part it is easy to ascertain the usages of the tabernacle and temple worship, and the Jewish methods of ecclesiastical management. But nothing has been found more difficult than to determine satisfactorily what were the practices of the apostolic Churches, even in some of the main articles of discipline, government, or worship. This striking difference between the Jewish and the Christian economies speaks plainly enough, one might think, to common sense, and should have superseded many an interminable controversy. In relation to certain points of ritual or government, sound reason does not ask any thing more to be said than this—namely, "That the primitive practice in such particulars, clearly is not clear; therefore our modern consciences may be relieved of all solicitude on the subject. Christianity is not a religion of immovable exterior constitutions; but of universal and unchangeable truths. Because universal in its essential principles, and universal too in its aspect, therefore plastic in its forms: variable in its exterior, because invariable in its substance.

Whatever, in the New Testament, relates to modes of worship, and to ecclesiastical constitutions, is couched in general terms. Moreover, those allusions to matters of fact, whence the apostolic practice might be gathered, are slight and indistinct, and not seldom ambiguous. Our inference is plain.—Facts so obscurely conveyed must not be taken as if propounded to us authoritatively. It is not in any such form that Law has ever been promulgated; no legislator has so tortured the ingenuity of a people. It is true that, in the lapse of ages, the phraseology of law may become first obsolete, and then questionable; but still there was a time when no obscurity attached to it. But that which never was formally and dogmatically expressed, and which, apart from the aid of traditionary knowledge, could not, even in an early age, have been precisely determined, we may boldly say was not intended as Law, and can never be so employed without hurtfully entangling consciences, and confounding what is really important in morals with what is indifferent. To insist upon some supposed primitive usage, known to us only through a process of ambiguous inferences; and in so doing to trample upon the unchangeable and always intelligible rules of Christian charity, is to subvert reason and piety, and to leave no vital force in either.—*Spiritual Despotism.*

LORD'S DAY OBSERVANCE.

The duties of public worship may all be outwardly attended, and yet the Sabbath remain entirely un sanctified. To these, therefore, must be added the duties of private religion. These consist in serious and habitual preparation for the public exercises of the day; strict self-examination; acts of deep self-abasement over discovered sin; close watchfulness against known infirmities, and against the intrusion of the world into the mind; secret prayer and devout meditation on the character and works of God, on the high things of eternity, and especially on the rich mercies of redemption; careful study of the divine oracles, particularly of those portions which have been explained in the public exercises of the day; an endeavour thoroughly to understand what is revealed, and practically to incorporate what is understood with the moral affections and principles of the soul; in short, all those secret exercises of the mind, which are calculated to give effect to the duties of public worship, to bring the soul to a knowledge of the way of salvation, to break the power of its unholy affections, to form and fortify it in gracious habits, and to set it forwards towards that perfect stature in holiness, which constitutes a perfect preparation for heaven.

These duties of private religion are of the utmost importance to a thorough sanctification of the sacred rest. If they were uniformly and devoutly performed by every member of the church, how soon would this season be changed from a day of listless, heavy stupidity, to a day of sweet and refreshing delights! And how quickly would the interests of religion be raised from their ordinarily low, motionless and dispiriting condition, to a state of high and heart-cheering prosperity! But, so long as these duties are neglected, too much, it is to be feared, by Christians themselves, and altogether by those who are yet out of Christ, what more can be expected than that the duties of public worship, even though attended with the utmost constancy, will be robbed of their appropriate blessings and delights; the remaining intervals of time be passed in idle vacancy, in worldly moods of thought, or in sinful courses of action; and the souls of multitudes be lulled and locked in those fatal slumbers, which will convey them, amidst the dreams and the hurried flight of time, into a seriously waking, but sadly unblest, eternity!

Let, then, the private duties of religion occupy you much, whenever this season of spiritual harvest, as well as of spiritual rest, returns. Engage in them with fervency of mind. Be as much as possible "in the Spirit on this, the Lord's Day." And, while it passes by, set the whole current of your thoughts, affections and wills, with all practicable steadfastness, towards God and heaven.

In the right performance of these public and private duties consists the chief part of the positive sanctification of the Sabbath; and to the godly man, such performance brings the chief part both of the profit and the pleasure of this delightful season. Bear in mind, then, that, if you have no real, heartfelt delight in these duties; if you esteem the performance of them a kind of tax on your freedom, and feel pleasure when they have once more passed by, or if, while engaged in them, you are habitually spiritless and formal, and when the routine is finished, can contentedly forget the whole; your hearts are assuredly not right with God; you have never yet kept a Sabbath holy; but are under the guilt of as many of its profanations as you have spent weeks of accountability!—*Lectures on the Institution of the Sabbath, by Rev. John S. Stone, D. D.*

THE JESUITS.

An important movement has recently been made in Switzerland, having for its object the suppression of the society of Jesuits. By a letter dated June 3d, the co-representatives are notified of the origination of the movement, by the great council of the canton of Argau. This council, composed for the most part of Romanists, adopted the motion of Augustine Celler, director of a Romish Seminary, (who on a previous occasion had promised the suppression of the monasteries,) by a vote of 135 to 42.

In the peculiar circumstances of the country, this measure has caused much surprise, on account of its boldness. The proposition, however, has called forth the enthusiastic favour of the people. The indignation and disgust produced by the infamous practices of the society, we may hope, will in time be powerful enough to produce its downfall. For the present, the result is doubtful, and will continue so, as a German periodical remarks, until the conviction has taken deep root among the rulers as well as the people, that where the Jesuits are, it is useless to hope for peace.

This dangerous society was suppressed in Persia by an order of March 23, by which the Jesuits are unconditionally expelled from that country. Their atrocious persecution of the Eastern Christians had become so intolerable, that an application was made to the government for protection against them by the Nestorian Bishops, through the Russian ambassador.

The manner of their operations in Switzerland affords a fair specimen of their dealings everywhere. By means of suspicious systematically set afoot against the seminaries under the immediate care of the government, the Jesuits have succeeded in drawing away half the young men of Catholic Switzerland, who are striving for learning and a more liberal education. These endeavours are diligently supported by other sacred orders, namely, in Valais, Freiburg, Swyz, and Lucerne, among the females, called the *Ladies of the Sacred Heart*; among the clergy in the country; and among the people of the order of the Legionaries and the Brothers of the Christian Faith.

They still retain all that wisdom of the serpent which has rendered them so justly infamous in the history of Europe, and of the world. Where the public mind is not prepared to welcome them, their operations are carried on with extreme caution and secrecy. The train is laid in darkness until the hour of action shall come. By the combined influence of the school and the Church, they are operating surely, although silently, until by these they shall have erected the bridge that will safely carry them over into the affairs of state politics. To all the efforts in which the ultra-reaction is at present engaged in Switzerland, the Jesuits furnish only the powder, for fear of burning their fingers should their efforts ultimately prove abortive.

It is, perhaps, known to the most of our readers that the most strenuous efforts are now made by the Jesuits in England, and in our own country, to reduce the Protestants to the obedience of the Pope. The members of this society have rightly been called the Pope's militia. They know no law but the will of their general, no mode of worship but the Pope's dictate; no church but themselves. The order is a naked sword whose hilt is at Home, but its blade is everywhere, invisible until its stroke is felt.

Education is chiefly the instrument by which they propose to regain England, and to win Protestant America to the bosom of the papal Church. Their maxim is—"Give us the education of the children of this day, and the next generation will be ours,—ours in maxims, in morals and religion." Their schools and colleges are rapidly multiplied. Our own broad and promising west is already thickly studded with institutions under their control, by which they confidently hope to win the youth of the country. The female societies attached to the order, or under their control, are no less assiduous; active and energetic. By their schools, they are labouring, and generally with too great success, to make converts from the young and tender sex placed under their care. Under the affectionate care of the most accommodating liberality, these all are, like the establishment at Stonyhurst in England, *Missionary Seminaries, established by the Holy See for a special purpose.* The solidities of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the most remarkable devotional association under the control and obeying the laws of the Jesuits at the present day, were restored from a state of suspended animation in 1803, by a breve of Pope Pius VII., about the same time that he was labouring to restore the Jesuits in Russia and in Sicily. This order has been but recently introduced into this country, and the public is, perhaps, little aware of its true nature and objects.—*Protestant Churchman.*

A SEARCHING QUESTION.

Maria was, at sixteen, possessed of most of the accomplishments which are acquired from masters. Her father had been pleased with the progress which she had made in the acquisition of music, of drawing, and of the modern languages, and he had himself delighted to lead her beyond that mechanical knowledge of history, which her governess gave with much judgment and regularity, into the first principles of politics and political economy. She was thus prepared to give a sound opinion on the different forms of government which exist in the world, and of the advantages possessed by each. She was in fact much better educated than most young women of her age are. She had been accustomed to attend with regularity on the public service of the Church, but her parents were not religious; she never heard of religion except in the service of the Church, which, in reality, she did not understand; she had never been taught anything about it, and she had never thought on the subject. If you had asked her what Christianity is, she would have told you, perhaps, that it was the religion of Christians, and that with no more real knowledge of the subject, than if she had said, that Hindooism is the religion of the Hindoos.

If the reader will here pause, for one moment, and look into his own case, and see how much he himself is able to answer this question; he will perhaps more fully understand the real state of this young person's knowledge. Pause for a few minutes. Write down for yourself what Christianity is, and keep the definition, which you yourself would give of it, till you have read through these few pages; and then see how far your own knowledge of Christianity exceeds that which is here described.—*The Lord Bishop of Sodor and Man, T. V. Short, D. D.*

SELF EXAMINATION.

At night, at the close of the day which you have passed, and which has added to the term of your existence on earth: when its hours have fled to the judgment seat, and reported all your doings, all your words and thoughts, which must inevitably have more or less effect in shaping your destiny for ever: this is the season when you ought to review, most faithfully and most strictly, all your conduct. You may not at once see the advantages of doing so; but they are really greater than language can describe. You will find duties omitted during the day; will not the examination lead you to repent of what was wrong, and to avoid it to-morrow? You will find time wasted, an hour here, and half an hour there; will not the examination do you good? You will find that you have spoken unadvisedly with your lips; and ought you not to know of these instances? You will find that you have sinned with the thoughts; will it not do