

THE

MONTHLY RECORD

OF THE



Church of Scotland in Nova Scotia and the adjoining Provinces.

"IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM! LET MY RIGHT HAND FORGET HER CUNNING."—PSALM 137, v. 5.

Vol. IV.....No. 3.

HALIFAX, MARCH, 1858.

2s. 6d. per ann. in advance.

RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

Address by Committee of Synod to Parents and Heads of Families of the U. P. Church on the Subject of Family Worship.

DEARLY BELOVED BROTHERS,—Amid the varied business which occupied the attention of the Synod at its last meeting—a meeting felt by many "to be a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord"—the importance of practical religion, as affecting the general interests of the body, was not overlooked. As on former occasions, "prayers, supplications, and intercessions" were offered up on behalf of our ministers and missionaries, our elders and people, that they all might be imbued more than ever with the Spirit of Christ, and that the work of God might prosper among us. The church, no one can doubt, occupies her true position when she feels that, for all success, she is dependent on God. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." What thus holds good of the ministers and rulers of the church, holds equally true of those who are her members. Religion cannot prosper among the private members or families of a church, where God is not acknowledged. Wherever the spiritual life in any degree exists, it manifests itself in prayer to God; and where prayer abounds, it brings down, in copious measure, the blessings of divine grace. Such is the order of means which God has seen meet to appoint. When God, accordingly, has any gracious designs towards a church, either as it respects the increase of her attainments, or the accomplishment of important objects, by her instrumentality, he pours out upon her extensively "the spirit of grace and of supplications." Religion, when animated by this spirit, becomes at once the source of the church's strength, and the spring of her activities. It is when men's hearts are filled with love to God, a love burning with an ever-increasing fervour in the contempla-

tion of what he has done for their souls in the redemption by Christ, that they are "ready for every good work" to which they are called, and count it their privilege, as a "willing people," to carry out God's merciful designs in regard to a perishing world.

As a means of promoting that practical godliness which it is so desirable should pervade every part of our church, the Synod agreed that you, dear brethren, who are parents and heads of families, should have your attention specially called, in the present address, to the importance of family religion. That family religion has an intimate bearing on personal piety, as well as the spiritual well-being of the church, there can be no doubt. God has so ordered matters, in the moral arrangements which he has made for our benefit, that religion prospers best when its varied duties are equally attended to; whereas neglect, in the case of one duty, if it argues not want of spiritual life, has an injurious effect on the whole spirit of religion. How far the worship of God is daily observed in the families belonging to our Church, it might be hazardous to affirm, on the ground of any information that can safely be relied upon. That God is daily worshipped by very many of the families throughout our church there can be no doubt. We have to bless God for the grace which inclines so many of the heads of families "to call on the name of the Lord." But is there no reason to fear that this duty is less observed now than it once was among us; and that, in this respect, we have declined from "the good old ways" of our fathers? Is there not ground to fear that, by many who have assumed the solemn responsibilities which attach to the head of a household, this duty is only partially performed, and that by others it is not performed at all? And, should this state of things exist with regard to any considerable number of the families of our church, does it not furnish cause for deep concern to all who love the good of Zion, and especially to these heads of families

themselves, who, in their family capacity, are thus "living without God in the world?" Does this unwillingness to bow the knee to God at the family altar proceed from alienation of heart from God? Does it proceed from coldness and deadness of affection in religion? Or, does it arise from the spirit of the world asserting its claims to the entire time, and energies, and regards of professors of the gospel, to the exclusion of all serious thoughts of God and the things of eternity? Whatever the cause may be from which such a state of things proceeds, the evil superinduced is one deeply to be deplored. Suffer, then, dear brethren, you who are parents living in the condition now described, the word of exhortation, while we bring under your notice the claims of the duty you are forgetting or neglecting. As ministers are directed to call the attention of their respective congregations to the subject, it will be enough at present to indicate briefly one or two considerations which ought to weigh with you, as professing Christians, in leading you to commence, without delay, the performance of a duty so important in itself, and one fraught, to those engaging in it, with so many advantages.

1. The worship of God in the family is a matter of divine obligation. He who established the family institution, appointed religion to be the governing influence by which its ends were to be secured. These ends cannot be secured, according to the divine arrangement, if God is not acknowledged. He is "the God of the families of the whole earth," and, as such, he must be worshipped and obeyed. God establishes his covenant with believers, and their seed after them, in their family capacity. "I am your God," is his language, "and the God of your seed." The "household" of the believer, under the gospel, is recognised as a constituent part of the Church of Christ, which, in its expanded form, assumes the character of "the household of faith." Is there not good reason, then, why the believer should say, as did the King