

ment to the boughs that groan with golden fruit. Hidden springs are struck in the bosom of the earth, which overflow on its surface. Plowing in the closet prepares for the harvest in the life. We therefore desire that amid zeal for the welfare of others, due attention be given to individual prosperity, lest it be said, "Mine own vineyard have I not kept."

Fasting has doubtless been abused, especially in vain distinctions of meats, and in the superstitious observance of days, while it may have often ministered to the self-righteousness of the unsubdued sinner. That it may be seen, however, to rest, when properly observed, on scriptural authority, the following passages may be consulted:—Lev. xxiii. 27-29; Joel, ii. 12; 1 Samuel, vii. 3-13; Pal. cix. 24, lxix. 10; 2 Chron. xx. 1-30; Jonah, iii. 4-10; Daniel, ix. 1-3; Esther, iv. 3; Ezra, viii. 21; Neh. i. 1-11, ix. 1-3; Luke, ii. 36 & 37; Acts, x. 30; Matt. vi. 16-18, ix. 15; Acts, xiii. 2 & 3, xiv. 23; 1 Cor. vii. 5; 2 Cor. vi. 4 & 5. The comment of Andrew Fuller, on Matt. vi. 16, is as follows:—"Fasting is supposed to be the ordinary practice of the godly. Christ does not make light of it, but merely cautions them against its abuses. There has doubtless been much formality and hypocrisy in some who have attended to it; but it does not follow that the thing itself should be neglected. It is an appendage to prayer, and designed to aid its importunity. It is humbling and in a manner chastising ourselves before God. The spirit of it is expressed in the following passages: 'So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or aught else, till the sun be down.' 'Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eye-lids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.' No mention is made of the time, or how often the duty should be attended to. It seems proper on various occasions, especially when, as the scripture phrase is, we 'set ourselves to seek the Lord.' It is only a *means*, however: if rested in as an *end*, it will be an abomination in the sight of God. In the direction of our Lord concerning it, respect is had to the *principle* of things, rather than to the things themselves. A *sad countenance*, if it be expressive of a sad heart, and in our secret approaches to God, has nothing in it improper; the evil consists in counterfeit sadness and ostentatious grief. Whatever be your concern of mind, make no show of it before men, but rather appear, when in company, as at other times. Let all be between thyself and thy Father, 'who seeth in secret.'" Neander, remarking on the practice, as observed by the primitive Christians, says: "Although Christians did not by any means retire from the business of life, yet they were accustomed to devote many separate days entirely to examining their own hearts, and pouring them out before God, while they dedicated their life anew to him with uninterrupted prayers, in order that they might again return to their ordinary occupations with a renovated spirit of zeal and seriousness, and with renewed powers of sanctification. These days of holy devotion, days of prayer and penitence, which individual Christians appointed for themselves, according to their individual necessities, were often a kind of fast days. In order that their sensual feelings might less distract and impede the occupation of their hearts with its holy contemplations, they were accustomed on these days to limit their corporeal wants more than usual, or to fast entirely. In the consideration of this, we must overlook the peculiar nature of that hot climate in which Chris-