

words of Dr. John Owen on this point, are worthy of attention at a time when there is perhaps too much eagerness on the part of pastors and congregations to hurry into the church and to advance to sealing ordinances, persons who are certainly under conviction, but who have given no satisfactory evidence that they have "gladly received the word."

"The loss of an experience of the power of religion," says this far-seeing theologian, and sharp observer of the ways of men, "the loss of an experience of the power of religion has been the cause of the loss of the truth of religion; or it hath been the cause of rejecting its substance and setting up an image or shadow in the room of it. The transformation of all things in religion began and proceeded on these grounds. Thus was the truth of religion once almost totally lost in the world, neither will it ever be lost any other way, or by any other means. When churches or nations are possessed of the truth and the profession of it (*i.e.*, when the church is made up of converted people), it is not laws nor fines, nor imprisonment, nor gibbets, nor fires that will ever dispossess them or deprive them of it. Whilst an experience of the power of religion continued in the primitive times, all the bloody rage and cruelty of the world, all the craft of Satan, and the subtlety of seducers who abounded, did utterly fail in attempting to deprive Christians of the truth and the professions of it. But when this began to decay and be lost amongst them, they were quickly deceived and drawn off from the simplicity of the gospel." Another mark, therefore, of the Apostolic Church, was that its members were converted people in living union and communion with Christ, the head.

SERMONS IN SHOES.

3. These converted persons were

consistent in their lives. They had "*favoured with all the people.*" If the only function of the Christian was to secure his own salvation, then it mattered little with what judgment the world judged him. But it is an important part of the Christian's mission so to live, that through his life the world will be compelled to judge favorably of Christ. This business of commending our religion to others by the beauty and consistency of our lives, is what a popular preacher of our day calls "*sermons in shoes.*" It is a style of preaching that is level to the capacity of all men, that requires no college training, that can be practised every day of the week, and at the corner of the streets, and that can be exercised along with some lawful calling. The celebrated historian, Gibbon, specifies the morality of the early Christians as one of the five secondary causes that contributed to the remarkable progress of that religion in its early history. It is within the reach of every believer to seek after, and in some measure to attain to proficiency in the art of "*holy living.*" This is the most eloquent and convincing of all preaching. "Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles," says Peter, "that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your *good works*, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." Unless they who *preach* Christ in the pulpits of our land are sustained by their hearers, *living* Christ in the daily routine of life, the world will give little heed to the preachers. That is truly a model church of which it can be said that its members "*have favoured with all the people.*"

CHURCH GOERS.

4. These early Christians joined themselves to the church, and adhered to it in all its regulations and ordinances. They were (1) *baptized*; (2) they continued steadfastly in the