

arts of the inventive mercy of God, but the end of the occurrence of such cases is better fulfilled when we receive them with adoring admiration, than when we make them the reason for our expectation of them. Our expectations of success are to be regulated entirely by the degree of our conformity with the prescribed rules. They who absent themselves from the public worship of God, who have no respect for the ordinances and institutions of Christ, are justly thought to be more remote from the blessings that accompany salvation, than they who, though they have never realized them in any spiritual degree, or in any sense that can betoken their connection with the ransomed of God, are neither sparing in their offerings nor infrequent in their attendance; and therefore, are in circumstances in which they are more *likely* to become the subjects of his kingdom. They are within the limits of an appointed system of means. They are waiting the time of God's merciful visitation, when some spark of divine truth may light with efficacy upon their souls, and fulfil the gracious purposes of their Redeemer. But they, on the contrary, who, alleging that since God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, that *therefore* it is no duty nor concern of theirs to present themselves in assemblies for divine worship, not considering that the command of God for public worship, has made it a positive ordinance of that description, which forbids all questioning of its obligation; they who believe, or who pretend to believe, that public devotion is useless, and give a practical exemplification of their belief by neglecting it, are manifestly both from the reason of the thing, and from actual experience, in a less hopeful condition, and in circumstances that bespeak a more probable reprobation, than they, who wait for the

moving of the waters, and approach as near to the gates of Heaven as is signified by their attendance upon an institution which God has commanded them to observe. Again, they who conform to the letter, though not to the spirit of the divine commandment in offering up unto God prayers that proceed only from the surface of the heart, and with the smallest possible measure of spiritual vitality, are certainly in a state less desperate than they who make the name of God only the ornament of their curses. Now in the same manner, those persons who, influenced by the lessons of a happy education, have been taught from their earliest days to reverence the name of their Creator and Redeemer, who have been habituated to attend the administrations of God's ordinances, who have been taught to discriminate, from their earliest morn of life, between good and evil, and to feel with repulsiveness and recoil the first approaches of what is base and dishonourable, unworthy and sinful, are they whom God, according to the usual method of his procedure, more commonly blesses with the graces of his spirit and the joys of his salvation; and although the moment of their transition from the natural to the spiritual should neither be remembered afterwards nor known with certainty at the time, though the divine spirit should have wrought unseen, and produced its effects by imperceptible degrees, like the gradual dawning of the beams of light in the east, the fact of a conversion may be not the less certain, nor the evidence of it less conclusive, than in those cases where the demonstration of divine power has been sudden and overwhelming; and the agonized spirit, travelling in darkness and in conflict with despair, has reached at last the quiet rest of God, and the peace which passeth all understanding.