

THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL

VOLUME III, No. 12

ST. JOHN, N. B., JUNE 25, 1901.

WHOLE No. 62

An Honest Look at Ourselves.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER, D. D.

AT the beginning of each year, merchants are accustomed to take an account of their stock of goods on hand; and all prudent men of business make an examination of their affairs, asking, "Am I a richer or a poorer man?" If it is wise for the tradesman to face his own financial condition, how much more is it the duty of every one of us to make an honest searching inlook of our own hearts, and the condition of our immortal souls? "Examine yourselves," is the plain, yet kind commandment in God's Word.

One might suppose that the person we live with every day, and who inhabits our own body, would be thoroughly known to us. Yet how pitifully ignorant we often prove to be, and how many chambers in our own heart-house are seldom explored at all! Happy is the man who meets the Columbus to his own soul! Our greatest spiritual danger lies in the direction of unsuspected or undeveloped qualities. No one knows what is in him until he is tried. This truth cuts both ways; it applies to the good qualities as well as to latent weaknesses or vices. For example, Abraham could not have known how much faith he had in God until he flashed the sword blade over the bosom of his beloved son, Isaac. Daniel may not have fairly measured his own courage until the threat of the den of lions stared him in the face. One of the purposes of God's dealings and discipline of his people is not only to put his grace into them, but to bring his grace out of them.

On the other hand, David had seen the cover lifted off of a very horrible pit in his own character when he wrote, with a pen dipped in tears, that penitential Fifty-first Psalm. Judas may have passed for an average specimen of honesty till the bag was intrusted to him, and the chief priests held up the shekels before his greedy eyes. Peter boasted of his own constancy until his Master let him know what a flaw there was in his iron; just there the iron snapped. It is the undetected flaw that lets the axle break when the locomotive is spinning over the track at forty miles an hour—with frightful wreck of cars and passengers! Christians are never in greater spiritual peril than when dashing along at a high speed of prosperity amid the envy of many beholders. At such time look out for the axle! Secret traits of character often lie dormant and unsuspected in the hidden recesses of the heart. "Search me, oh, God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." We cannot utter this prayer too often or too fervently.

Sometimes we hear of the commercial failure of men who have stood high in the business community. They were not rogues or swindlers. But they were lamentably ignorant of the true state of their own affairs. They either overestimated their own assets, or were afraid to probe their own losses to the bottom. Surely we ought to "take heed to ourselves" and to know just how we stand toward God. Not only our peace of mind, but our character and our eternal welfare are at stake. We ought to search ourselves honestly—dig down under professions of religion and transient emotions to the very roots of things.

We might well prove ourselves with such questions as these: Do I hate sin—even the sins I used to love, and do I fight against them, and pray to be delivered from them? Do I submit my will to Christ, and let him rule me and guide me? Do I give to my Master the key to my purse, my time and my influence? Do I feel a solid satisfaction in doing right, and a great joy in laboring for the welfare of my fellow men? Am I striving honestly to live every day as I pray? If we can find in our daily experience and conduct a satisfactory answer to such questions, we may believe that we are sincere follow-

ers of Christ.

While careful and prayerful self-examination is a vital duty, yet it is sometimes so conducted as to be hurtful. Some good people overdo it. They become too self-conscious, and think too much about themselves. They are perpetually feeling their own pulses, and worrying about their spiritual health until they grow morbid and wretched. Bunyan describes such unhappy Christians in his "Mr. Fearing," who lay out in the cold all night because he was afraid to knock at the wicket gate, and went all the way to the Celestial City with his head bowed down like a bulrush. Weak nerves and dyspepsia often add to the sufferings of despondent Christians.

The way to be healthy and happy is to take both the *In-look* and the *Up-look*. We should look into ourselves to discover our own weaknesses and wants. We should look up to the Source of all strength and peace and joy. Yes, and we may well take a frequent *Out-look* also to see how our work progresses, and what our fellow-Christians are doing, and how our fellow-creatures are suffering and what we can do to help and to save them. While we "look to ourselves" let us also be looking after others. Above all let us be *looking unto Jesus*, the author and perfecter of our faith, the model for our lives and the guide into all truth. Beholding Him, we may be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Unworthy Expedients.

A CAUSE is judged by the means that are used to advance its interests. It should not always be so, but for the most part it is so. Even the Church of Jesus Christ cannot dissociate itself from this fact, and too often it has suffered because of the unworthy expedients by which it has been sought to secure its advancement. Just recently we have had our attention called to two or three illustrations of this. It has been reported recently that in the West a certain Evangelist had wagered publicly that if one of his agents were sent to any given church, in ten days there should be fifteen conversions or he would forfeit to the church \$1000. In another church, this time it is the East that is guilty, it is reported there was recently what was termed a "Foot Auction." A number of young ladies, it was said, arranged themselves behind a curtain with simply their unclad feet showing beneath; then a company of young men were supposed to parade before the curtain and, selecting the extremities that seemed most inviting, would bid for the fair owner of them. The one assigned to him for whom he might be the highest bidder was under his escort for the evening accompanied by the obligation to defray all the expenses she might incur during the entertainment. Still one other has come to our notice. A certain small church, it is reported, fell into difficulties, as churches are sometimes wont to do. Money must be raised in order to save the property. Certain young ladies, it is said, arrayed themselves in minstrel garb with burnt cork and all, and proposed to give an exhibition of such minstrelsy as usually associates itself therewith.

Comment on these things, it seems to us, is almost needless. To state them, and they have not been exaggerated, is to formulate their condemnation. If a church cannot be sustained without foot auctions or minstrel exhibitions, then our thought is it had better not be sustained at all. The Church of Jesus Christ is engaged in a life-and-death struggle with sin and worldliness and the devil. It has the power in this struggle to conquer if it will. The Holy Spirit is promised to it and the ever-abiding presence of Jesus Christ and the power of his word. If it cannot succeed with these, it certainly cannot succeed by the unworthy expedients we have indicated, and others akin. Let us keep up the

standard of the cause we represent. Let us walk worthy of our vocation in the means employed as in the life manifested. Let us in no wise substitute tin whistles or trombones, or anything savoring of these things, for the direct and positive and manly and heartfelt presentation of the claims of Jesus Christ. This is that to which we are summoned, and the opposite of that in connection with the cause of our Lord may take its place under the definition of unworthy expedient. Nothing that would lead the indifferent or the worldly to emit a derisive laugh or formulate a heartless sneer should ever be resorted to in connection with the Church of Jesus Christ.

Burial on Sunday.

SUNDAY funerals mean Sunday labor, which is a sufficient reason for their discontinuance. There are some reasons that make Sunday an appropriate and consistent day for laying away our dead. There is quietness which is soothing to the bereaved; there is a reverence in the silence which rests on city and country which comports with the solemn act of burial. It affords an opportunity to many to express their sympathetic kinship with the sorrowing who on week-days are tied down to business, and sometimes the preacher's voice reaches those who never enter a house of prayer. If there were nothing to the contrary we would be in favor of burial on Sunday. But there is much to the contrary. There is much labor involved. Grave diggers, cemetery officials, carriage drivers, stable men, undertakers and their employees, all are robbed of their day of rest. With many of our city undertakers Sunday is the busiest day. Why then should not these be considered in preference to the convenience of relatives and friends? In certain cases it is almost a necessity to bury on Sunday, but these are exceptional. In most cases it is simply a want of consideration of others, or worse, a vain and selfish desire to have present as many people as possible, and especially members of lodges, which decides the choice of the day. Sunday funerals often interrupt attendance on public worship and Sunday-school. They exact the time and sympathy of pastors who need to consume both for the special work of the church. It is not easy or gracious to refuse a service of this kind; the refusal will be misunderstood and alienate the family, but when a pastor conducts a funeral service in addition to his other duties, it is a strain on both body and soul. Still, this is the least evil connected with Sunday funerals. The greatest objection is that they involve the labor of so many who have no assured day of rest.

The question of the minister going to the grave is sometimes a difficult one. In some sections of the country it is not customary, in others it is expected that he shall conduct a brief service there. In most cases pastors are able to do this; though when the congregation is large and the days of the pastor very crowded, it becomes a severe tax on his time. But we should remember that there is something in the heart of most of us which shrinks from the committal of our dead to the earth without a word of Scripture or prayer. It is a supreme moment when the pastor's presence and service are a genuine comfort to the bereaved, and if he is wise and watchful he will use the opportunity in commending himself to their hearts that he may further impart spiritual good unto them.—*The Baptist Commonwealth.*

Because the Roman Catholics in Ireland are most of the time making a fuss of some kind, many people may suppose that they are the great majority of the population of that island. It is a mistaken impression. A writer in the *Interior* tells that the Episcopal church of Ireland ministers to a population 60,000 adherents, and the Presbyterian Church has 445,000 supporters in the same country.