

CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.

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Doctrine and Duty.

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.]

GOOD THOUGHTS.

In the second chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, verse 1, the apostle exhorts us "To give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard, lest at any time we let them slip." The force of the verb here employed, has often been noticed by commentators: it means to glide away, to escape.

1. Then there is a tendency to let good thoughts glide away from our minds. There is a constant conflict in us between the seen and the unseen; and the former has many advantages over the latter. This is one ground of the tendency to which we have referred. We are far more powerfully affected by the sight of a fire, or of a shipwreck, than we are of by merely hearing of it. Now, since the things that relate to salvation, are given us by report; and consequently objects of faith, and not of sight, we are in constant danger of letting them escape from our minds, while their place is quickly supplied by things that are seen and perishing. Our only remedy, then, is an increase of faith. "Lord increase our faith."

Another ground of this tendency is, that the great subject of salvation is not properly understood. Every one knows how close the connexion is between understanding a statement and maintaining a lively remembrance of it. A very interesting Lecture may be delivered to a company of persons on any branch of science; the illustrations and experiments may be of the most successful and happy character; but, unless the persons have been accustomed to think on the subject of the Lecture, unless they understand something of the elements of the science, the probability is, that much of the labour of the Lecturer will have been spent in vain. Now the elements of the plan of salvation are very few and very simple, and it is a pity to say the least, that so many think so little about them, and are so careless about having them understood. *Wherein lies the power of the truth—the truth respecting Jesus, to purify the heart and produce holy happiness in the soul? How many professing Christians there are*

whose thoughts never break the skin of this interesting subject of enquiry. And yet if it were understood, how much interest would it give to the other parts of the wonderful scheme.

Another ground of this fatal tendency to forgetfulness is, that we are not sufficiently careful to interweave religion with our every day business. "Whether therefore ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." What a great gulf there often is, between things secular and things religious! John Newton somewhere remarks towards the close of his life, "that he was just beginning to see God in every thing." Practical religion may be seen in every thing. A man can as truly, though not so publicly and impressively, shew his regard to religious principle, and conscience, in the least transaction of a secular nature, as at the martyr's stake. This is the centre where the various systems of infidelity may be said to meet. They admit a general belief, but deny particulars. They aim at divorcing God from his own world.

2. Nor can any cure be devised for these evils: the evils once discovered will suggest the appropriate remedies. Let us cultivate a more intimate acquaintance with divine things. Let us seek to be more heavenly and spiritually minded. What an unnatural thing is it for us to live a day without devoting some portion of it to close thought on some part of divine truth. Shall the whole strength of the intellect be pended on business? Ah! how foolish, we must soon leave all; while every new discovery we make of Jesus' character, and every good thought riveted on the mind, will contribute something to our stock of eternal riches.

Let us cultivate a closer acquaintance with the holy scriptures. It is by coming in contact with the mind of the Spirit that we become spiritual. And with reading let us cultivate meditation; this is in the mental, what digestion is in the physical economy. Spiritual dyspepsy is little better than gross ignorance; for all practical and really useful purposes it is not any better. The good man has his delight in the law of the Lord, and on his law does he meditate day and night. He hides the word in his heart that he may not sin against God.

3. Why does this matter demand so much earnest attention? "The things which we have heard," spoken of in the passage

which suggested these thoughts, are the truths respecting Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God, and not in the sense in which all good men are so, but in a sense peculiar and alone. Neither is he an angel, but the creator of angels. His word then must possess authority. What he says must be imperative. Another reason is found in the verse that follows. The doom that fell on the transgressor of Moses's law: he died without mercy. If we would escape condemnation then from the lips of Jesus—if we would be screened from the wrath of the Lamb, we must give earnest heed. Our character must possess not only negative but positive qualities. Good thoughts like good seed are very prolific; from one seed in a few years acres may be covered. So from one good thought, what good may spring, who can tell! The prodigal son said: I will arise and go to my father. This was a good thought, and it led to his restoration to the bosom of his father's family. Joseph said, how shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God? This was a good thought; and through means of it Joseph became the saviour of his father and his brethren.

Reader, have you not had good thoughts and stifled them? have you never yielded to temptation, and experienced the blasting influence of sin upon your religious affections? And if you persist in this cause, what will the end be? If you do not like to retain God in your knowledge now, have you not cause to fear that he may give you up to a reprobate mind through an eternal hereafter.

Brockville.

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THE FIRST RESURRECTION.

Concluded.

It will now be proper to notice a few objections which are usually made to the interpretation previously given of Rev. xx. 4-6.

1. *The Book of the Revelations is a symbolic Book; and, consistency requires that we should interpret it as such, and as such only.*

The book of the Revelations is in part symbolic, and in part plain; and to interpret the symbolic, as plain; or, the plain, as symbolic, would be to pervert the word of God. Each part must, therefore, be interpreted