

THE SCEPTICAL SHOEMAKER.

'I have read,' said the shoemaker, 'a great deal about the heathen gods and I believe the account of Christ is taken from some of the heathen writings.'

'Will you abide by your own decision on two questions that I will put to you?' said the Bible-reader. 'If so, I will freely do the same. I will abide by your own answers; by doing so we shall save much time and arrive more quickly at the truth.'

'Well,' said he, 'out with it, and let us see if I can answer; there are few things but that I can say something about.'

'Well, my friend,' replied the reader, 'my first question is Suppose all men were Christians, according to the account given to us in the gospels concerning Christ, what would be the state of society?'

He remained silent for some time in deep thought and then was constrained to say:

'Well, if all men were really Christians in practice as well as in theory, of course we should be a happy brotherhood indeed.'

'I promised you,' said the reader, 'that I would abide by your answer. Will you do the same?'

'O yes,' he readily replied; 'no man can deny the goodness of the system in practice; but now for the other question; perhaps I shall get on better with that. You have a chalk this time against me.'

'Well, my next question is this:—Suppose all men were infidels—what then would be the state of London and of the world?'

He seemed still more perplexed, and remained a long time silent, the reader doing the same. At length he said, 'You have certainly beaten me, for I never before saw the two effects upon society. I now see that where the Christian is despised and his religion is despised, I thank you; I shall think of what has passed this afternoon.'

The sequel was that he was fully persuaded in his own mind to give up all his infidel companions and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. But the change did not stop here. When first the reader called he had to sit on an old, dirty chair with a number of half-starved children sitting in their rags on the floor around him neglected and uncared for: now they have removed to a better home in a cleaner street. Within all is cheerful and happy. The father, no longer faithless,

dolights in the company of his wife and children, all of whom are neatly dressed; and his chief happiness is to read and speak to them of the things which belong to their everlasting peace.

FAMILY WORSHIP.

The practice of family worship is the grand defence against all attacks by a priestly caste, who set up their temples and tell us to pray by their mediation. Nay, but our houses are temples, and every man is a priest in his own house. This is a brazen wall of defence against superstition and priestcraft.

Family prayer is the nutriment of family piety, and woe to those who allow it to cease. I read the other day of parents who said they could not have family prayer, and one asked this question: 'If you knew that your children would be sick through the neglect of family prayer, would you not have it? If one child was smitten down with fever each morning that you neglected prayer, how then?'

Oh, then they would have it.

'And if there was a law that you should be fined five shillings if you did not meet for prayer, would you find time for it?'

Yes.

And so the inquirer went on with many questions, and wound up with this: 'Then it is but an idle excuse when you, who profess to be servants of God, say that you have no time or opportunity for family prayer?'

Should an idle excuse rob God of his worship, and our families of a blessing? Begin to pray in your families; and especially if things have gone wrong, get them right by drawing near to God more distinctly. Did I hear you say, 'We do not want to be formalists?' No, I am not afraid you would be. I am afraid of your neglecting anything that tends towards your own spiritual growth and therefore, I pray you, labour at once to acquaint yourself with God and be at peace. Draw near to the Lord again, more thoroughly than you have done before; for it is the only way by which the backslidings of persons and families are at all likely to be corrected.—*Spurgeon.*

"Do you feel that you love Christ?" was asked of an aged and dying Christian "Better than that," was the reply, "Christ loves me."