

now so thoughtlessly utter; let them insert, at every turn, the oath or improper expression they are now most accustomed to use, and let them deliberately go, if they can, to repeat in society what they have written in the closet. One would conceive the very absurdity of such an attempt would be an effectual remedy for the evil—that the man who was not thoroughly sickened and disgusted at such a picture of his own folly and guilt, must have an obtuse perception, scarcely capable of distinguishing white from black, light from darkness, or good from evil.

We are, however, conscious, at least we ought to be, that a habit of this kind can only be conquered, like all other evil habits, by the inward ascendancy of divine grace. It is vain to direct against either the shafts of ridicule, or the more solid weapons of irrefragable argument, unless the love of Christ and the desire to glorify him take possession of the heart, fill the thoughts, and give its sacred character to the converse.

It appears scarcely possible that any one duly impressed with a sense of the Divine Majesty, or at all influenced by a desire to please God, could ever fall into this evil.

Remember then, that it was Jesus Christ who said: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

ALPHA.

THOUGHTS ON PRAYER.

Prayer, properly speaking, is not "an unuttered wish," but the earnest expression of desire. Christ "*prayed* the disciples that they would thrust out a little farther from the land." Luke v. 3. Paul "*prayed* the Corinthians to be reconciled to God;" and we make "*known* our requests unto God by prayer and supplication." Phil. iv. 6.

The duty of prayer to God is not enjoined because of any effect it can

have in changing or modifying in any degree the great plan and principles of His government, for "with Him is no variableness." Neither can he become more interested in our welfare, or more solicitous for our happiness, because we pray unto him; for not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice. But he has been pleased, in the developement of the plans of his government, to make our performance of this duty a condition of his grace.

It is His purpose that we feel our wants, and make known our requests unto Him, not by secret desires but by fervent and effectual prayers, in answer to which he promised his richest gifts. So that prayer and the consequent blessing sustain in the Kingdom of God the same relation that in the natural world exists between cause and effect; and their connexion is not more intimate in the latter than in the former case.

Prayer should be incessant. The Apostle enjoined the Thessalonians "to pray *without ceasing*," 1 Thess. v. 17, and the Ephesians are exhorted to call on God, "praying *always* with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with perseverance." Ephes. vi. 18. A man should pray so much that one who knew his habits would say, "He is always praying." This constancy in prayer is important. We are surrounded by "things that are seen and temporal." These make repeated and permanent impressions upon our minds, because things "not seen and eternal" are comparatively shut out from view. Temporal things hinder piety. Spiritual things promote it. It becomes, therefore, the great business of a Christian's life so to look away from the former and contemplate the latter, as to become spiritual in his habits of thought and motives of action.

This can be effectually done only by incessant prayer. By this means