

ray of light may be directed to his heart, which will at once disclose its rottenness and pollutions, and lead him to that Saviour who alone can restore him to moral soundness and health. But had he, as the manner of some is, forsaken the assembly of God's people, his disease might never have alarmed him, till it had become too inveterate to yield to the ordinary remedies provided in the gospel by the physician of souls.

Upon the whole, Christians, while it is indisputably the duty of all reasonable creatures to pay God the honour which is due to His excellent Majesty, and while we cannot but feel, in all its weight, our obligation to this, as the disciples of Christ, we must also, from all that has been said, perceive that this honour ought to be paid in an especial manner in public, in presence of those whose sins, whose hopes, and fears are similar to our own. It is unfortunately an opinion too prevalent, that, the desertion of public religious ordinances is attended with no guilt, or at least no such guilt as should alarm the mind. A moment's reflection cannot fail to convince us that this opinion is founded on mistake. To disobey God, cannot, by a well informed mind, be regarded as a light offence. If God has told us to enter with the voice of praise and thanksgiving, in the beauty of holiness; if he has promised to be present in our solemn assembly; if Jesus Christ has declared that wherever two or three are met together, in His name, there he will be in the midst of them to bless them; can we conceive it to be a trivial matter whether we meet with the people of God or not? Let the enemies of our religion despise our holy convocation, and let them keep at distance from it with something like consistency of principle; but let not us who call Jesus Lord and master, allow any thing less than invincible necessity to induce us to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

To many of you the instructions delivered in the house of God may not be such, strictly speaking, as to advance your intellectual improvement. Of the subjects treated here you may have, from other sources, been able to form sufficiently correct notions, in many instances correcter ones than can be derived often from the pulpit. But we are perhaps not wrong in stating, that the same subjects brought before you here, though not treated in a better manner than you have found them treated elsewhere, may, though treated even in an inferior manner, nevertheless produce effects which they fail to produce in a different situation. It is to be supposed that the very act of entering a religious assembly where every one of your friends is found, to all external appearance at least, in a

frame of mind very different from what they, in general, exhibit when out of it; that the thought being present to you that this assembly is met for the one simple and solemn duty of devoutly worshipping the eternal Being, who, though not seen, is yet present with you every successive moment, and of listening to what that Being has been graciously pleased to propound for your instruction, it is not to be supposed but that, in such circumstances, and under the influence of such reflections, the same subjects of religious admonition will more forcibly seize upon your attention than they do in private, and that though the understanding may not be supplied with any new ideas, the heart may be made to feel more strongly those of which it is already in possession.

Besides we have every reason to expect, that in listening to the instructions of God's word in public, that being a duty prescribed to us by God himself, he will cause his richest blessing to descend upon it, without which it would fail, either in public or private, greatly to benefit us.

But, in another view of the point, considering the vast numbers who either have no time throughout the week to devote to the acquisition of religious knowledge, or the greater number still who, though they have time, want the inclination to extend their knowledge upon this all-momentous subject, there can be little doubt that as a mere school of instruction, the assemblies of the faithful ought not to be forsaken.

For when attended with a proper temper of mind, these assemblies will issue in effects, beyond all comparison, higher than can ever be made to flow from any plan for the mere transmission of information. Their institution is for a far nobler end, and as we have said, when frequented for the purpose which originally prompted their appointment, they will, by the Divine blessing, be found to have ministered more perhaps than any other cause, or than all other causes combined, to qualify men for that holy and happy state for which the present is designed as a preparation.

It would be impossible to give in a whole discourse, and of consequence altogether wrong at the conclusion of one to attempt to give, a full account of all the benefits which accrue to a people, viewing them in all their varied conditions, as learned and illiterate, rich and poor, young and old, from the observance of the precept not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. When we say, however, that by yielding obedience to this apostolic direction, religion is preserved in the country, nay, we may say in the world, some opinion may be formed of the important ends