

save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. He resolved to spend, and to be spent in the service of his divine Master. He counted not his life dear to him, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God.†

The religion of the apostle was as unlike that of the mere spiritual sentimentalist as it possibly could be. He did not merely talk of the love of Christ, but demonstrated by his devotedness to the service of the Great Redeemer, that he was habitually influenced by the constraining power of that love. He did not merely talk of the value of souls, but his heart's desire, and prayer to Almighty God, for sinners, was, that they might be saved;* and knowing, that there was no other name given under heaven, among men, whereby they could be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, he was instant in season, and out of season, in exhibiting the glory and the grace of this all sufficient Saviour.

The apostle had received a commission, from the Great Head of the church, to preach among the Gentiles that gospel, by which alone they could be turned from dumb idols, to serve the living God. He was engaged in performing the arduous duties, involved in this commission, when he arrived at the city of Athens—a city, which, at the time it was visited by the apostle, was one of the most renowned for the taste, the learning, and the politeness of its inhabitants. Its architecture was of the most polished and magnificent order. Its philosophy was the theme of universal admiration. Every art and science which at that period, contributed to the comfort and refinement of mankind; was liberally patronized by its rich and prosperous population; and nothing of a temporal kind seemed to be wanting, to constitute it a city which the Lord had blessed. But there was one thing in which it was deficient; or rather, it was distinguished by one particular, which was like a foul blot upon a very lovely picture, or a disgusting ulcer upon a beautiful body. Athens was as much distinguished by its idolatry, as by its devotedness to art and science; and many of its most splendid edifices were as much the monuments of its folly, as of its genius, wealth and greatness. In the language of the sacred historian, *it was a city wholly given to idolatry*; and, on this account, the apostle's spirit was stirred within him. He not only mourned over its ignorance and impiety, but he felt himself most powerfully constrained to instruct its deluded inhabitants in the truths of the gospel—at once exposing the worthlessness of the gods, in whom they trusted, and preaching to them "Jesus, and the Resurrection."*

But supposing that only one-half of the inhabitants of Athens had been idolaters, are we to imagine that the apostle would have been indifferent about the salvation of that half? Are we to imagine that he would have passed them by, with self-complacent derision, or with unfeeling contempt, like that with which the Levite is represented as treating his fellow-Jew, who had been robbed and beaten?† The apostle too well knew the value of a single soul, to suppose, that his sympathies were uncalled for—that his benevolent exertions were unnecessary, in short, that his work was done while one sinner remained to be converted to Christ, and to be blessed with the enjoyment of his favour.

Now, Athens, although it was a large and populous city, was not to be compared, as regards the number of its inhabitants, with the vast and teeming metropolis of the British empire. In the time of Demosthenes, its population is said to have been but one hundred and sixteen thousand. What then may we suppose would be the feelings of the apostle, were he now to witness the almost countless thousands who fill the squares and streets, the lanes, the alleys, and the courts of London; and who, if not idolaters by name, are, to an extent which cannot be contemplated by the Christian without horror, the victims of a far more debasing, irrational and loathsome idolatry, than was ever professed by the most deluded and ignorant Athenian?

The idolatry of Athens embodied itself in statues which were the noblest productions of human art; and in temples whose magnificence was at least calculated to expand and elevate, in some measure, the minds of those who beheld them. It is true that it gave a sanction to some forms of sensuality which are obnoxious to both the letter and spirit of our holy religion; but the idolatry to which multitudes around us are devoted, is associated with everything that is most horrifying in cruelty—most degrading in the prostitution of mental endowments—most impious in rebellion against God, and most vile and revolting in all those vices which are hostile to the true dignity and happiness of man.

Does the reader ask where this idolatry is to be found? Alas! it is possible to be so familiar with an evil, as to cease to regard it as such. By constantly gazing on deformity we may find it to become attractive; and by long-continued intercourse with vice, we may be led to esteem it virtue. And it is to be feared that many whose hearts are stirred within them to feel the deepest compassion for the heathen in distant lands, can look unmoved, upon that hideous mass of idolatry at home, which, while it is upheld by millions, and by the sacrifice of all that is noble and precious, is constantly hurrying its victims to the same doom which awaits the murderer, the blasphemer and the infidel.

Intemperance is the idolatry of Britain; and in London alone, there are, at this moment, far more who are wholly given up to this idolatry, than constituted the entire population of Athens, when its spiritual condition moved the compassion and the zeal of the great Apostle. *Strong drinks* have been our idols for ages; and so great is the veneration of the multitude for these idols, that for the sake of them, they will banish every affection for the Creator from their hearts, and sacrifice all that is most valuable with a degree of prodigality which was never surpassed by the most devoted worshipper of a Jupiter, a Baal, or a Kali. These are statements which, if true, ought surely to awaken the most intense anxieties of the Christian Professor. Let us then candidly examine into the truth of them, that, if found to be correct we may at once be led to inquire, by what means the evil may be removed and thus, its dreadful consequences be averted.

INTEMPERANCE POSSESSES ALL THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF IDOLATRY.

It arises from an unnatural craving, not merely for a creature, but for a purely human invention; and in addition to this, it is the violation of every law by which the Creator would have us govern both mind and body for his glory, and our own happiness. If an inordinate desire for those objects which in themselves, are lawful and necessary, be idolatry—if covetousness contains the elements of this dreadful sin, and that it does so, we have the plainest statements of the sacred Scriptures to assure us,* can anything be more essentially idolatrous, than that homage which a man renders to intoxicating drink when he allows it to do violence to the laws of his physical constitution—to subvert the empire of reason, and to banish the love of God from his soul?† Shall an individual be chargeable with idolatry, because, while ignorant of the unseen but Omnipresent God, he invests the glowing sun with divine attributes, or bows himself down before the brightness of the silvery moon; and shall that man be judged free from idolatry who resigns his whole being to the influence of intoxicating drinks—who says, by the praises he heaps upon them—by the wealth he devotes to their service, and by the frequency with which he courts their favour, "Ye are my gods?"

It is not the picture, the statue, the altar, or the temple, which the idolater may reverence, that gives birth to the sin of idolatry. These things are but the visible signs of that alienation of the heart, from the living and true God, which preceded their existence. They are but the symbols of erroneous principles, and perverted affections; and the idolatry of the inner man has often subjugated every power and feeling and sentiment to itself, while its existence has been unattested by any statue or altar or temple, or priesthood.

But the idolatry of intemperance is not merely a sin of the heart—it is not merely the going forth of the soul after a creature, to the neglect of the Creator. The subject of this sin, is subject to it in body, soul and spirit; and wherever its votaries, exist in any number, and are permitted to follow out the suggestions of their depraved desires, they give the most substantial proofs of their devotion to their idols,—proofs, as obvious as any which demonstrated to the mind of the Apostle, that Athens was a city wholly given to idolatry.

The Intemperance of Britain is distinguished by all the external characters, which have ever marked the most imposing or offensive forms of idolatry

I.—IT IS DISTINGUISHED BY ITS TEMPLES.

These are now far more numerous than the sanctuaries of God:*

* "Drunkness is a flattering devil, a sweet poison, a pleasant sin; which whosoever hath, hath not himself;—which whosoever doth commit, committeth not a single sin, but becomes the centre, and the slave, of all manner of sin." St. Augustine.

† Col. iii. 5. * In England and Wales there are one hundred thousand