

an appropriate dwelling-place for the king of kings.

In the early days of Christianity, the sequestered cave, or the unnoticed upper-room, was the best that the followers of the cross could have for the worship of their God and Saviour; and often, that homage must be paid, and the holy mysteries of their religion joined in, before daylight woke their watchful and unrelenting enemies to persecution. Ages passed before a testimony could be borne to the world of the Christian appreciation of their faith, by having its truths proclaimed and its ordinances celebrated in spacious and costly sanctuaries.

In new lands, but just reclaimed from the wilderness, and whose inhabitants are struggling with the difficulties and privations of early settlement, the house of prayer will of necessity bear its likeness to the edifices of rude and hasty construction, which are the best the people can erect for their own accommodation. But as population advances, and wealth increases, and comforts are multiplied, the log school-house, or the ungrudged best room in the shanty, will give place to the neat, and spacious, and chastely decorated Church. And so in the past few years a most gratifying improvement is to be observed in our edifices of prayer—as well in the rapid increase of their number, as in the style of their construction.

A Christian community will, indeed, always feel an earnest longing to substitute the special and consecrated sanctuary for the merely temporary place of worship. They will have a strong desire to set apart an exclusive spot for holy ministrations—a place where no words are heard but those of prayer and praise—no lessons taught but those of Christian faith and practice. For we must be pained by the incongruity of having the rites of Christianity administered this hour in a place, where perhaps the next hour will be the exhibition of foolish talking and jesting,—of harsh political declamation—and it may be of ungodly and blasphemous conversation. And it is not well to be forced to have recourse to a building, oven set apart as such, in which the declaration of Catholic truth on one portion of the Lord's day, is followed, it may be a few hours after, by the outpourings of heretical teaching: where the plea of unity is succeeded by the advocacy of religious division; where there is an unhappy blending of truth and error—a presentation of the Church at one time in her pureness and oneness, and the Church at another as mutilated by the strife and jealousy of contending parties. These are reasons for providing, in all cases, as speedily as possible, a place (applicable to no other use) for worshipping God and enjoying all the ministrations and ordinances of our holy faith.

And there is always much in the aspect and appointments of his hallowed house of prayer—the special home and resting place

of believers—which wins and binds us to the work of piety and devotion. There is, or should be, nothing there to indicate the world's business or the pursuits of time; but every thing pointing in type and symbol to Him that ruleth in heaven and earth—every thing to rouse and maintain the spirit that befits eternity.

The principals in which we have been nurtured, resting as they do upon God's holy word, would, if faithfully adhered to, preserve us from the extremes into which, as respects the duties and privileges of Divine worship, men are prone to fall. We have here, as the experience of the times teaches us, a double error to avoid and contend against. We have, on the one hand, superstition, native in some degree to man, and like every other infirmity demanding the correction of heavenly grace, driving believers into a mere material worship—into a devotion in which the heart and understanding have not their legitimate share. And we have, on the other hand, the hard, bald scepticism, that crying evil of the age, denying to our material part its due co-operation in this holy work, and refining away its duties into a sort of ethereal feeling, which excludes too surely the practical work of worship from the daily life.

In the former case, our Lord's own teaching and appointments show that the work of devotional duty is not to be overburdened by undue ceremonial, nor its spirit crushed beneath an overpowering weight of material covering. The outward and visible ordinances are few and simple, which he has specially enjoined as symbols of the faith of his Church, and the channel of means through which His grace should operate to the improvement and perfection of the believer. And it was from a thoughtful and judicious appreciation of our Lord's meaning in these institutions, that the pure and reformed branch of his Church to which we belong has manifested so much simplicity in the order of her devotional work.

I may venture, my brethren, to analyze this question briefly. Where there is too much of a material dress upon religion—where the work of devotion is mixed up with an undue preponderance of ceremonies and forms; the mind and spirit become, as we may say, materialized: the thoughts and feelings acquire, as it were, a corporeal grossness. There is a sensuality and earthiness engendered in the affections thus employed. This is but natural, where the eye and ear, for instance, are too exclusively engaged: impressions in this case, play around the senses, and stop short there: the inner man is not thoroughly reached; the inner life is not adequately affected.

That I am not uttering here a theory only, or making a mere fanciful deduction, is evident from what we see and know of the practical influence of a system of religion conducted on that almost exclusively mate-

rial, or sensual basis. We find in the countries and amongst the people where it prevails, much outward devotion, and much time spent in the work; but the inward soul and life appears not to be correspondingly affected, there is but a plaything as it were, with the sympathies and passions of the sensual nature. This is evident, as well from the almost total estrangement from the outward and practical duties of devotion of the better educated and intellectual classes in such communities, as from the large amount of vice and crime existing amongst the ruder masses, in comparison with those countries where a system of religion more congenial to the spiritual part of man is pursued. In Roman Catholic countries—the proportion varying, of course, with the influence of climate and the habits of the people—we find upon authority which is hardly to be questioned, that the crime of murder alone is from five to fifty fold more prevalent than in Great Britain, for example, where the vast preponderance of the population is Protestant. We have, indeed, but to look at the moral condition of Italy and Spain, in comparison with that of our own favoured mother country, to be assured of the fact, that the tendency of their system of religion is to leave the inner man comparatively untouched, and to centralize religion in mere animal emotion. Superstition is the necessary consequence; and that easy, but dangerous credulity, which assumes that a penance can atone for a crime, and that the priest's word can assure a pardon.

But we must guard ourselves against a one-sided or partial view of this weighty question; we must beware of running into the opposite extreme. The abuse of a good thing does not justify us in neglecting its use,—much less does it warrant its entire rejection. There must, in corporeal beings, be a legitimate action for the senses; if the body must take its part with the spirit in the work of religion, then must the body have its appropriate exercise. And the Lord of all wisdom has himself enjoined the employment of visible signs and emblems in religion, in condescension to the cravings and necessities of our weaker nature.

From not carefully considering this natural want of our corporeal being, and neglecting a suitable provision for it, many practical evils follow. An abstract contemplative religion, a mere intellectual and spiritual exercise, a simple bare perception by faith, engenders mysticism, and by and by indifference, and at last infidelity. With occupation given, in the work of religion, to only one part of man, the other is soon overburdened and diseased. The appetite being all for the intellectual, the craving in this case soon comes to be merely for what may gratify the "itching ear," and pander to the intellectual taste;