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ELEMENTS OF WEAKNESS AND OF STRENGTH  
IN CONGREGATIONS.

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THE truth is, — and it is one which can hardly be too strongly asserted or deeply felt, — *it is, in most instances, feeble Christians that make feeble churches*; and it is energetic Christians — let them be rich or poor, and let the number at first be many or few — that constitute strong ones. It is not money that gives strength, but ready hands and warm hearts and willing minds. It is not the want of money which produces weakness so much as a want of disposition to use it. There is a great difference in parishes\* with respect to their pecuniary ability, no doubt; but there are probably very few parishes, if they were willing to retrench a very little from their luxuries and superfluities, — for which they would be the better and not the worse, — that would not be able to contribute for religious objects twice as much as they do. The ear-

\* The term parish here has no geographical meaning. It is quite commonly used in New England as an equivalent for congregation or worshiping society. — Ed. L. C.

liest churches, those which were planted by the Apostles, were all comparatively poor. The words of Peter were, "Silver and gold have I none." It was the declaration of Paul, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called : but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty ; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to naught things that are." Yet, notwithstanding all these disadvantages in their outward condition, these churches, as shown by the result of their efforts, were, in general, and so far as relates to all spiritual matters, abundantly strong.

Leaving out of the view, therefore, all other causes which may affect the condition of religious communities, it will serve the present purpose to notice a few of those which depend upon the moral and religious state of the churches themselves. The causes which tend to produce weakness, and those which tend to produce strength, are in general the opposites of each other, and consequently to speak of one is, in every case, to imply its opposite.

There are two correlative terms, which of themselves are sufficient to cover the whole ground,— *Death and Life*. The dead are, of course, without strength. It is the living only that possess any energy, and that are able to exert any power. We do not expect anything from the dead. Our hopes are altogether in the living. The same is likewise true in a moral and spiritual sense. If a church is dead, it can have no strength whatever ; and unless it can be resuscitated, unless by some miracle it can be raised from the dead, there is no reason to expect

any efforts from it. If it is a living church, then there will be ground for hope. It may be weak, it may be sickly, it may seem to be almost expiring; still, if it lives, it must possess some strength, and there is a chance that it may recover and acquire more. "Let the dead bury their dead." We do not expect to work miracles. It may not be well to waste efforts upon it. There is enough for us to do to improve the condition of the living. This case may therefore be passed by.

The corresponding states which are nearest akin to these are *Sleep and Watchfulness*. The strong man armed is as helpless as a child while his senses are locked in sleep. Samson was shorn of his strength when sleeping in Delilah's lap. While men slept, the enemy came and sowed his tares. Whatever degree of strength a church may possess when fully awake, it will avail nothing at other times. It is written of the sluggard, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy wants as an armed man." And this is as true in the figurative sense as the literal, and it is as true of churches as of individuals. That man will never prosper in his business who devotes all his hours to sleep, and that church will never become strong and flourishing which is always disposed to indulge itself in a similar way. Let it keep awake, let it always be upon the alert, let it ever be in readiness to engage in every good word and work, let it afford no opportunity for the sower of tares to gain access to the field, or a treacherous friend in an unguarded moment to reduce it to weakness by severing its locks of power, and all will be well. Indolence is said to have been the "original sin." There is no good

reason to doubt that it is one of the most easily besetting sins, especially in regard to the performance of religious duties. Let it be repented of and forsaken, and the number of feeble churches will be very greatly diminished.

Other elements are *Unbelief and Faith*. They who believe nothing will accomplish nothing, hope nothing, attempt nothing. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." He that would labor for Christ must believe in him as the sanctified and sent of God, and the revealer of his will. And he that would labor for the good of man must believe in man's capacities and wants, or he will have no sufficient motive for exertion. Thus faith in God, and Christ, and man are all necessary;—faith in the fulfilment of the Divine promise, in the works of an overruling providence, in the efficacy of Christ's mediation and in the ultimate success of human efforts. Not only is it true that nothing can ever be done without faith, but in every undertaking the result will always be "according to our faith." Hence the exhortation of the Apostle: "Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong." Hence the declaration of Jesus: "All things are possible to him that believeth." And again: "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." And hence the words which were employed by our Saviour upon a still different occasion: "If ye have faith, as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you;"—meaning, no doubt, that through the power of faith they would be able to remove mountains of difficulties, and to accomplish everything that is within the

power of man. The church that is able to exercise such a faith, in surmounting obstacles, and in accomplishing the work which is expected of it, will never be deficient in strength.

Next to unbelief and faith are *Timidity and Courage*. "If thou faint in the day of adversity," said one of old time, "thy strength is small." The man who refuses to "plough," because he is afraid of the "cold," shall "beg in harvest and have nothing." The man who is continually crying out, "There is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets," will not be very likely to accomplish any great results with reference to anything whatever. And a number of such persons who may chance to be in company will not be very likely to render each other much assistance. A person who is always anticipating failure, will rarely be disappointed; and a church that is always ready to yield to the most trifling difficulties, and to become discouraged under adverse circumstances, which are temporary in their nature, can hardly expect success, and certainly does not deserve it. Resolution, energy, perseverance, fearlessness in meeting dangers and in overcoming difficulties, will enable men to work wonders, in all the varied interests and pursuits of human life. There was true philosophy in the words of the Roman poet, — "Possunt, quia posse videntur," — *They can, because they think they can*. Men can always do what they believe themselves capable of doing, when their judgment is equal to their energy of will. The members of a Christian society should never allow themselves to feel discouraged, or to speak dispondingly in regard to their condition and prospects, unless it is their determination to do what they can to make themselves weak; for that is cer-

tainly one among the many ways of doing it, and it is one of the surest ways. It was not, therefore, without reason, that Peter exhorted the early Christian converts to add to their faith virtue, not virtue in its more general sense, but *courage*.

Next in order may be specified *Ignorance and Knowledge*. Ignorance in regard to the fundamental principles, the doctrines and duties of religion, on the one hand, and a correct understanding of them, a readiness always "to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason for the hope that is in us, with meekness and fear," upon the other. It was truly said by one who uttered the words of experience as well as wisdom, "He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth strength." Ignorance may be obstinate in its errors, but it can accomplish nothing in aid of the truth. As a rock, descending upon the roof that shelters us, its tendency is not to uphold, but to crush. In Protestant communities at least, where men are accustomed to think and decide and act for themselves, in relation to all questions of faith and conscience, those churches are not apt to be the strongest in which the greatest amount of ignorance prevails. Fanaticism and every species of delusion here find their proper materials upon which to work. The natural results must inevitably follow. Weakness will come at last. The chaff will be blown away with the wind. The fire will burn among the stubble, consuming with it all that remains of the wheat; and that is the end.

Among other causes may be mentioned *Dissension and Concord*. Jesus affirmed that "a house divided against itself cannot stand." This is true in every application of the words; and it is especially true of divided churches

and congregations. Every sort of disunion, and every tendency towards it, is an element of weakness; and everything that tends to bind people together in closer bonds of sympathy and affection, is an element of strength. The most able and efficient parishes are always those which are most united; the least so of all, other circumstances being equal, are those which are most discordant. And it is sad to say, that the condition of things in the church at Corinth — a condition of things which caused the Apostle so much anxiety, and which he labored so hard to correct — was by no means peculiar to that time and place. Trouble in parishes, trouble in churches, is a thing of very common occurrence, and is amongst the most difficult to be removed and the most disastrous in its results. Every thing of this nature should be carefully guarded against, prevented if it can be, and remedied as soon as possible. But the mere absence of discord is not sufficient. There should be active co-operation. Two drops of water, mere particles of matter, may *unite*, but they still remain *inert*. A cord of many strands is undoubtedly stronger than if it had but one; but the number is of no consequence, if the cord is never used. The members of a religious body should not only “stand fast in one spirit,” but “with one mind” they should “strive together for the faith of the Gospel.” Then will the work of the Lord prosper in their hands: then will their efforts be crowned with success; and they will increase in numbers, and go from strength to strength.

And, finally, among other causes of decline or growth, among other elements of strength or weakness, may be mentioned those of *Neglect and Promptness in relation to all matters of parish business*. Some parishes, like some

individuals, are always dilatory about everything. Indeed, the character of a parish, in this particular, is a true exponent of the character of the individuals that compose it. Nothing is ever done in its season. Whatever degree of willingness there may be in regard to any object, no movement is made, at the time when it should be made, towards its accomplishment. If repairs are needed, there is no one to go forward and see that the matter receives prompt attention. If liabilities are incurred, no way is provided to meet them. The old proverb is verified, that "what is everybody's business is nobody's;" and so nobody is ready to act in the case. The consequence is, that there are many discomforts which might have been easily avoided, and many embarrassments which ought not to have existed; debts are contracted; creditors are impatient; the people become indifferent, the minister dissatisfied and discouraged; there is a "falling away;" the church expires, having thus exhausted the whole of its "little strength." The model parish pursues a course which is just the reverse of this, — doing all things when they ought to be done, doing them just in the manner in which they ought to be done, and neglecting nothing which should receive attention. It undertakes nothing without first providing the means. It promises nothing which it does not fulfil. It makes no enemies, and everywhere gains friends. People have confidence in it, and readily join it. The minister finds sufficient motives for exertion, and spares no labor. Thus all things combine and work to its advantage. No one will hear from any quarter the complaint that such a church is weak.

In the remarks which have been made, nothing more



has been aimed at than to direct attention to these several topics, and to offer a few suggestions. Let them be taken for what they are worth. If they shall serve to quicken the religious life, to awaken the slumbering energies, to show the necessity of a stronger faith, and greater courage, and an increase of true religious knowledge, in our churches,— if they shall tend to promote union and co-operation, and to correct faults in regard to some practical matters, which are quite too common, and of no small importance,— they will have accomplished all of which they were intended. But whether they do this or not, the words of the Apostle may have a fitting application: “ If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things.*”

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## THE RELATION BETWEEN POETRY AND WORSHIP.

BY REV. JAMES MARTINEAU.

WORSHIP is an attitude which our nature assumes, *not for a purpose, but from an emotion.* Whenever it is genuine, it is the natural and spontaneous utterance of a mind possessed by the conception of the infinite relations in which we stand, and aspiring towards a point of view worthy of their solemnity. And though it breathes forth the deepest and greatest of desires, it is essentially an end, and not a means; and, like the embrace of friendship, or the kiss of domestic affection, loses all its meaning, when adopted from conviction of its reasonableness, or with a view to personal advantage. Those who ask, or

who would explain, *what it is for*, — whether disposed to regard it as serviceable for persuading God or for benefiting man, — have as absolutely lost its true spirit, as the mother would forget her true nature, if she were to regulate her caresses by expediency. The plaints of a sacred sorrow, the cry of penitence, the vow of duty, the brilliancy of praise, shed forth, like the laughter and the tears of infancy, from a heart conscious of nothing else, are examples of the true and primitive devotion.

In opposition to this *Natural* idea of worship stands the *Utilitarian*, which considers it an “Instrumental act;” whether, according to the *sacerdotal* view, its instrumentality is thought to be mystically efficacious with God; or, according to the *rationalistic*, intelligibly beneficial to man. The statements which this last-mentioned theory makes, respecting the value of worship to the conscience and the heart are all quite true. But the churches which begin to justify their outward devotion by appeal to this consideration have already lost their inward devoutness; and the individual who, with this notion of self-operation, speaks a prayer, performs an act of disciplinary prudence, not of Christian piety, and takes the air of heaven for the sake of exercise, rather than in love of the light, and quest of the immensity of God.

It is evident that the natural sentiments of worship have been the parents of all that is great in sacred art: and that architecture, music, painting, and poetry, first allied themselves with religion, — not condescendingly, in order to improve it, — but reverently, to receive from it their noblest consecration. They put themselves submissively into its hands, willing to take whatever forms its plastic power might impress, if they might only serve as its out-

ward voice and manifestation. The cathedral aisle sprung up and closed over the place of prayer, like an effort to grasp the infinitude of God. Christendom, feeling that the mere articulate speech of men was harsh when it took up the Holy Name, adopted melody as its natural language, and prayed upon the organ. But the first encroachment of the rationalistic spirit checked these creations of piety, and dragged genius from the altar. Religion could not look in the glass without discovering the secret of her beauty; and too infirm to retain her simplicity, assumed the weeds of self-mortification. The Puritans pressed the fatal question what was the use of all these glorious symbols; inasmuch as he who is a spirit can take no pleasure in material forms, and the Being whose presence swells the midnight heavens could see nothing fair in any temple made with hands. Art instantly took flight at the suggestion; and the grandeur and harmony of religion showed themselves no longer in the forms of worship, but rather in the actual life, of this class of men. The minster beheld the rise of the conventicle; and the solemn anthem was exchanged for the rude and shouting psalm. In these days, the rugged features of our forefathers' religion have been softened: art is invited back, not to plead with God, but to delight and benefit man, through whose senses it is thought well to act upon his soul. But neither is this kind of expediency productive of any thing great. It is critical, not creative; it has no new ideas indeed to express; merely the old methods to follow for fostering the piety of men; and reaches therefore only tasteful imitation.

And as religious art in general, so sacred poetry in particular has its origin in the natural and its decline in the

Utilitarian view of worship. Every simple utterance of a deep affection, not poured out with an aim, but merely overflowing, is poetry in its essence, whatever be its form; and on the other hand no expression of thought or feeling which has an ulterior purpose, of instruction, exposition, persuasion, impression, can have the spirit of poetry, though it may receive the usual diction and rhythm of verse. There may be truth, beauty, eloquence, but not poetry. And if this be so, it is evident that all natural devotion is but a mode of poetry, while no rationalistic devotion can ever reach it. The spontaneous effusion of the former has only to fall into regular and musical shape and it becomes a hymn. The deliberate productions of the other, in subordination to a purpose beyond themselves, must always miss the true lyrical character; and must furnish us only with rhymed theology, versified precepts, or biblical descriptions capable of being sung, with more or less of skill in concealing the didactic spirit, and imitating the poetical style. By those who have overlooked this principle, it seems to have been supposed, that there are certain ideas which, considered as the subject matter of composition, are in themselves religious and poetical, and constitute a stock of materials capable, when constructed into verse, of passing into a devotional ode; whereas it is neither the matter nor the form of thought that makes religion or poetry; but the state of mind and affection in the author producing them, which may impress a sacred and an ideal character on an indefinite variety of materials and modes of sentiment and language.

## A WORD FOR THE YOUNG.

BY REV. L. CARPENTER, L. L. D.

COULD the young but fully discern, or could they be brought fully to believe, the general, the almost necessary effects of cherishing impure thoughts and feelings, one would hope that many a thoughtless wretch would be saved the pangs of remorse, — many a life be prolonged for usefulness, — many a soul be preserved from perdition. But they hear of the power of habit, and the connexion between desire and action, and the enslaving nature of vicious feelings; — and they speak of these things, and perhaps reason about them; but they feel not their full force: they cannot conceive, from their versatile thoughts and feelings, how any can gain such an ascendancy as to lead imperiously to destruction; and, though they may yield a speculative assent to the representations of those who have their own sad experience to guide them, or speak from the sad experience of others, yet a full practical belief is wanting, and they go on with thoughtless security, even when walking among the thickest snares of the enemy.

In a thousand, in ten thousand instances, *the first step to ruin has been the indulging in impure conversation.* “What harm can it do so long as we do not act wrong?” has been the reply to the suggestions of the religious friend, or to the suggestions of conscience. What harm? — why the worst, that of strengthening propensities which wisdom loudly commands to curb.—Words, with an unperceived, sometimes scarcely perceptible, connexion, introduce and invigorate trains of thought and af-

fection ; they call up their corresponding imagery, or bring into play their corresponding feelings. The more these are called to the mind, the more they become connected with other trains of ideas, and with accidental circumstances of time and place. Thus they are introduced where otherwise no connexion would have existed ; and being thus indulged and strengthened, the imagination becomes disordered and debased, and what to the pure mind would be pure, then furnishes food for unhallowed thoughts, cherishes, unhallowed desires, and often strongly excites to licentious actions. — Can it then be asked, “ Where is the harm ? ” In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, this will be the result in some shape or other : — but take the hundredth ; surely it must be admitted that holiness cannot reside in so impure a habitation. Gusts there may be of devotional feeling ; but settled habitual piety cannot exist in a heart so debased. Every holy feeling must be checked, almost annihilated, by those opposing desires. Both classes cannot rule ; and those which submit, will soon cease to be the regulating motives of the conduct, will soon lose their vividness and their vigour.

I am confident I do not overcharge the picture. There is no call for exaggeration : the consequences are so obvious, that those who are alive to duty’s call, who listen to the still small voice which speaks within them, will obey the warning and shun the first lure of vice however harmless its appearance. I shall be grateful, if what I say should reach the heart of one young person who has not yet seriously thought of the necessity of keeping the heart with all diligence ; should preserve one from listening to or sharing in licentious conversation, from reading licentious books, or those which have the felt effect of exciting irre-

gular thoughts and desires, from indulging, where they have been accidentally called into the mind, ideas and feelings which could not be shamelessly owned to a revered friend ; — or if it should lead any to impose a restraint upon themselves which before they had not thought necessary, and thus preserved from farther wanderings. But the effort will not have been lost, if it should merely rouse the sleeping conscience ; it may diminish the evil, if it do not eradicate it : — that torper of the conscience is the death of all the highest principles of religious worth.

Give up any thing — yes, every thing — rather than depart from duty : it is the command of Jesus, and wisdom directs to obey. Cultivate the love of duty, the desire of following its dictates to the utmost. Whatever leads you towards the paths of sin, let it be sacrificed, however dear or valuable. Hold yourselves ready to obey the first promptings of conscience ; and let no present good, no present evil, have sufficient power over you to lead you to forfeit your hopes of heaven. It is better to lose all here, than subject yourselves to misery hereafter : better to sacrifice every hope of happiness here, than lose the happiness of eternity.

Would that my young readers might be led to serious thought by these reflections, that they would make them the foundation of their principles of conduct. They are prompted by the earnest wish to save them from knowing, by experience, the dreadful consequences of indulging irregular desires, of fostering them by reading or by conversation ; — by the earnest wish to make those feel who have already erred in this respect, that though they perhaps have not yet thought so, they have in reality entered into the paths of sin, — that they in some measure share

in the criminality of licentiousness, — in order that before they have run those lengths which there is reason to apprehend, before they have given full scope to enslaving passions, they may be induced to stop, and to reflect, and to impose a check upon unholy feelings, and, perhaps, by the blessing of God upon their exertions, enabled to change altogether the current of imagination and desire, and to yield their hearts to the constant influence of pure and worthy affections.

I know I do not urge the young to a generally easy task, when I urge them to watch over and regulate their thoughts and feelings. Those who have enjoyed the inestimable advantage of parents more attentively to the future welfare of their offspring than to their present gratification, and their own present enjoyment, and who, by the wise direction of parental care, have been early taught the habit of self-restraint, — who in small things have learnt to subdue their inclinations, — who can cheerfully give up an immediate pleasure in obedience to the directions of the beloved guardians of their early years, — they have the rudiments prepared for that control over their passions which will make their voice, if not unheard, at least not obeyed, — for that noble, dignified self-command which will make the sacrifice of inclination comparatively easy and certain, whenever duty demands the sacrifice. — If this prudent self-control (which one who was dreadfully deficient in it pronounced to be “wisdom’s root,”) have not been cultivated, the difficulty will be much greater; but a strong sense of duty will sometimes well supply the deficiency. At any rate the work must be attempted, for the happiness of life, the happiness of eternity, greatly depends upon it.



To those who happily have not yet felt the power of licentious inclinations, as well as to those who perceive wrong tendencies in their minds and are desirous of correcting and restraining them, it may not be useless to suggest some obvious directions, which will assist them to submit their hearts to that regulation whose end is peace and everlasting happiness.

1. Shun, as much as practicable, the company of those whose words or actions are inconsistent with that purity of mind which the gospel inculcates, and which it is your highest wisdom to cultivate. In choosing your situations for life, let it be your object to keep clear of those which will inevitably lead you into temptation. If with all your care and caution, you are exposed to the influence of evil example, if you are obliged sometimes to hear or see what has a tendency to call up wrong feelings in the mind, earnestly endeavour to connect with it feelings of disapprobation, — never suffer yourselves to approve what you know that God forbids, — and strive to divert the current of thought and feeling from that channel into which they have unintentionally been led. For this purpose, then,

2. Endeavour to find full and useful, or at least innocent, employment for your time and thoughts. Think nothing innocent which diminishes your power over your own minds, which leads you to seek for gratification rather than improvement. Devote yourselves to the full discharge of the duties of your station: let your amusements be active and cheerful, but innocent: and let your leisure time be, as much as practicable, employed in cultivating those branches of knowledge which will furnish a useful occupation for your thoughts, and at the same

time expand the powers of your minds. Every hour spent in such pursuits (where higher duties do not demand it,) is an hour well spent; not only as they cultivate and improve the mind, but as they prevent, for the time, the introduction of wrong thoughts and feelings, and give the mind an habitual bent to those which refine it, and which, while they oppose and check impure desires and affections, claim an alliance with and cherish those which will accompany to heaven.

3. Cultivate a high sense of your duties to others. Remember that you are placed here not for your own welfare merely, but to contribute all you can to the welfare of others. With this view let every feeling be checked that prompts to conduct which will narrow, perhaps altogether destroy your powers of usefulness, which will necessarily prevent the due fulfilment of social duty, and perhaps lead others to depart, even more widely than yourselves, from the course which prudence and benevolence and piety all direct as necessary for your well being. — Think, too, what you owe to those who for a long succession of years have been your guardians; who have cared for you when you could not care for yourselves; who, to fulfil their duties to you, have gone through numberless anxieties and privations, and experienced many painful days and sleepless nights; and who have laboured to instil those principles and to give that regulation which direct the heart to God and duty, and which, carefully cultivated by yourselves, will make you useful, respectable, and happy. Let it be your earnest determination, that your conduct shall not wound those to whom under Providence you owe every thing.

4. Cultivate, by all the means in your power, and par-

ticularly by sincere obedience, the feelings of conscience and habitual submission to its dictates. Judge of their correctness by a diligent attention to the precepts of the gospel, and by the holy example of Jesus. Think how he would have acted in your situation, and aim to imbibe some portion of his heavenly spirit. Arm your internal monitor with the sanctions which Jesus revealed; and let the hopes and fears of eternity be called in to support its authority. Never tamper with your conscience yourselves, nor listen to those who would do so, by making you view with less disapprobation what you know to be wrong, and diminishing your ready and lively approbation of what you know to be right. Bear in mind that you may tamper with your conscience till you make it speak what language you please, for a time at least. Habitually obey its warning voice, and it will preserve you amidst the discordant emotions which would endanger your spiritual well-being, and will safely guide you through the intricacies of life in the paths of holiness. Above all, and to support all,

5. By habitual exercise—by constant, serious, thoughtful attendance on the public duties of religion, and on those of the families in which you reside, and especially by your own devotions in private—cultivate those devout affections which will bring the thoughts of God to regulate your hearts and your lives. Seek for his aid and blessing, by the morning and evening offering of prayer; and cherish the sense of God in your souls. Whether the idea occur or not to your minds, it is indisputably true, that you are always, and in all situations, under the inspection of that great Being who searcheth the heart. Let this thought be blended as much as possible with all

your motives; and often make a direct reference of them to him. Frequently put to yourselves the question, Are they such as He approves? am I indulging trains of thought and feeling which check such as the thoughts of God inspire? or can I consistently unite with them those thoughts, and cheerfully think of His constant presence? — “Harbour not a thought or a feeling, indulge not a desire, which you would be ashamed to own to a respected friend,” has often been the advice of virtuous prudence. Religion extends the admonition, and tells you, that there is an eye which seeth when no human eye seeth, which discerneth the recesses of the heart. In His presence we live: it is His approbation which must make us happy. Let His will then be our guide, and in all things let us follow whatsoever it leadeth here, for it will finally lead us to heaven.

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## JESUS IN GETHSEMANE.

BY REV. J. J. TAYLER.

THE Saviour had not one near, on whom he could rely. A sense of desolation and loneliness came over him. His companions were wearied and asleep; and he withdrew from them, to seek counsel and solace with the one unfailing Friend. He felt a weight on his soul. He knew what a duty God had cast on him, and anticipated the great issues that were depending on its faithful execution. Its magnitude enhanced his fears, and made him doubt himself. He was troubled also by the weakness and irreso-

lution and childish unpreparedness of those whose thoughts he had tried to raise to the height of his own great cause, and to inspire with courage and self-possession proportionate to the coming danger and trial. It was the hour of his enemies. The power of darkness was upon him. His highest faith was momentarily eclipsed. Presence of mind, strength of purpose, capacity of endurance — all seemed to be giving way. Nothing remained, but to throw himself on God — for human weakness to lay hold of the divine strength. Humility and devout submission were the virtues that now culminated in his soul. They checked all rashness; they beat down all presumption; they broke forth in that one deep and earnest prayer — “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.” In that breathing of profound and self-renouncing humility — in that entire reference of all things to God — went forth the word that brought back strength to the failing spirit. Sad and solemn rose its accents to heaven on the stillness of the midnight air — with ever-deepening fervour as the sense of weakness and peril grew; — till God’s presence was fully realised, and a helping angel stood at his side; and then all was calm — and the terror passed away. And so it is ever with man, when the highest duties test his allegiance, and perils at which the stoutest quake, are a condition of their performance. There is a fearful struggle within, that bewilders the brain and makes the heart sick; till the will is firmly fixed, and the final resolve is taken, and God is trusted and obeyed with implicit faith. Then strength enters the soul, and the Spirit conquers. This is that victory of faith “which overcometh the world.”

Rarely is this highest of victories achieved without terrible accompaniments even of bodily exhaustion and pain. The flesh sympathises with the struggles of its nobler companion. Sweat and blood attest the inward agony. The immortal overpowers the perishable. The ethereal spark is too quick and strong for its earthly vehicle, which melts and wastes away before its consuming energy. Yea, our very infirmities bear witness to the might of the spirit, which tramples on the body, and subjugates it to its will, and asserts its own kindred with the eternal and divine. When the agony has been undergone, and the conflict is past — sweet indeed is the final peace. It is the peace of conscious strength, reposing after victory, and calmly awaiting the certain issue of God's merciful providence. Then comes the assurance of faith and principle — the steadfast resolve — the hand prepared for every good and noble work — the soothed and trusting spirit that shrinks no more at the aspect of danger, but looks out on all things with an eye of quiet and hopeful love. Then the martyr-soul goes back from the solitude of prayer and faces the world anew. Filled with a holier vigilance and tenderer solicitude for those who are yet weak and timorous and dull; and when it finds them "sleeping for sorrow," it puts words of warning in their ear, and cries — "Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." Then — whatever may yet remain of pain and grief and peril for its further trial, it can meet it all without dismay. With spiritual insight it discerns in these things, the orderings of that invisible hand which it rejoices to own and obey — the transitory process of earthly discipline, which is still needed to draw out its strength and complete its purification — a renewed

chastening of yet unvanquished passions and infirmities, that it may enter with enlarged capacities of action and enjoyment on its immortal heritage. Though earlier associates in the work of God should forsake it and relapse into the world, it is disquieted no more. Its human sympathies are with them still, and its prayers go up for them in love to heaven. From all disappointments and sorrows it has a refuge in God. A holy tranquillity possesses it. In desertion and solitude it is sustained by the thought — “I am not alone, for the Father is with me.”

Such is the significance of the scene in Gethsemane. It exhibits the highest form of humanity sustaining the heaviest load of woe, and displays the strength and peace that result from the triumph of the spiritual over the natural man. Who can look back on this scene without an increase of love and reverence and trust? Who can behold in Christ such a beautiful harmony of the human and divine, without feeling it a glory to partake of a nature like his, and acknowledging with a deeper gratitude and more solemn awe the inspirations of the Parent Spirit which are the source of all that is good in him and us? If we substitute for this view, [the orthodox theory of his nature and of the conflicts it underwent in the closing scenes of his life — we meet with nothing that is in harmony with our human consciousness, or expresses the universal and enduring relations of man and God. A single, unparalleled prodigy is offered us instead, which may work on the imagination, but finds no response in the interior sense of our moral being. To estimate even the divine, we must rise out of the bosom of our familiar humanities. Our native feeling of moral fitness has been deadened by the artificial treatment of theology. Were

deep-fixed associations removed, which have been engrained in our minds by the systematic teachings of centuries — no parent could look with approval on a history which sets before us the agony of a guiltless child, bearing the weight of others sins to satisfy the inexorable demands of a Father's wrath. We should rather think of Christ as wearing our nature, not as a penal robe, but in proof of its native excellence and destined glory — to make us partakers of his own divine spirit — to lead us on through life's trials and difficulties — and introduce us into the happier scenes of our Father's courts above.

We need increased sympathy with the spirit of Christ. We require to be constantly roused by his warning voice. Too often we lie oppressed and drowsy on the ground of duty, when danger is near and unsuspected temptation is stealing upon us. We resign ourselves to a world of dreams, and let great opportunities go by: and when principle demands resistance and self-sacrifice, we betake ourselves to ignominious flight. We too easily persuade ourselves, that life is a pleasant and easy task. It is an awful mistake. Is Heaven so slight a boon, that we can leisurely walk up to it and appropriate it in a life of comfortable sloth and self-indulgence? Virtue, it is true, carries its own recompense along with it; but it must grow out of labour and self-discipline. When these have become a second nature, and brought the natural and spiritual into perfect harmony, then, and not till then do they surround our being with a perpetual bliss. In the most favourable of outward conditions and with the happiest native temperament, life's great purpose cannot be accomplished without the strenuous exertion of all our faculties — without constant vigilance, and perpetual



sacrifice of personal inclination, and unceasing resistance to evil without and within. The best men are they who have made the greatest effort for truth and right, and drawn wisdom out of the sorest trials. Our nature will not bear a softer treatment in this life. Unbroken ease with exemption from disappointment and trial, and immediate command of all the sources of enjoyment — relaxes the springs of virtuous activity, nourishes the taint of selfishness, and makes life a tasteless experience. The soul is nursed for heaven by the discipline of a sacred sorrow. The look that is fixed on immortality, wears not a perpetual smile; and eyes through which shine the light of other worlds, are often dimmed with tears. And yet when the countenance is earnest and sad, unutterably blessed — not to be bartered for any earthly good — may be the peace within. What could we take in exchange for pure and noble principles — for faith unflinching — for love unquenchable — for that spirit of prayer which goes up unceasing to the Father, and brings down his silent blessing on the heart? Child of affliction, bewail not thy lot. Seek out the wisdom that is hidden in it. Pursue with firm step and steadfast aim, the immortal issue to which it leads. Cherish the peace thou wilt ever find in a pure and loving heart. Thy Master was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet the peace of God filled his spirit in the agony of Gethsemane and the death-struggle of the Cross.

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WAR is a great evil in the world, but want of temper is a greater. I intend no paradox; soberly I believe the fretfulness of human life is a greater evil, and destroys more happiness, than all the trappings of invasion and conquest. — *Bartol.*

## FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

DURING the past month the mail from Europe brought a letter from this devoted woman, by which it appears she was still in the Crimea toward the close of August. From the state of her health a few months since it was thought she would have been compelled to leave, at least for a time, the scene of her labor of mercy, and return to England. But let us hope that her health is so far restored that she will be enabled to abide at her post yet longer. And to this let us add still another hope that her services may not much longer be required. The letter is brief but characteristic. It is written from Scutari Hospital to the widow of an Artilleryman, who had died a few days before, and encloses some relics found on his person, and a few sentences of consolation and sympathy.

The humane mission of Miss Nightingale to the Crimea has made her name a familiar and revered word to all, and has entitled her to a place in history. She went where she saw she was wanted, and she put her hand firmly and faithfully to the work of mercy. The sick, wounded, and dying soldiers in Scutari hospital have blessed her as their ministering angel. Official routine occasionally cramped her efforts for the relief of the suffering, but we have sometimes seen how the strong Christian love in her heart gave her confidence to storm the old fortress of formalism, and set aside its obstructions. When sick men were becoming more sick every hour through lack of beds and bedding, and when beds and bedding for their use were in the government store, but could not be had without an impossible compliance with some routine regulation, she courageously cut the knot of the difficulty by breaking

open the door, and transferring the right things to the right places. Miss Nightingale and her associates in this charge upon the door is rather a grander sight in our eyes than that of Lord Cardigan and his dragoons at Balaklava.

When Florence Nightingale left her affluent English home, and organized her band of nurses for the Crimea, the country was unanimous in its admiration and gratitude. It was a novel step in an English Maiden, and not only novel, but heroic in the highest sense. The English people are proverbially attached to precedents, and man or woman who attempts anything not duly sanctioned by custom does so at imminent risk. Here, however, the risk was taken, and the approbation became at once universal. Miss Nightingale speedily had her full meed of praise in the newspapers — not more, we think, than she merited, but far more, we are sure, than she herself could have read with satisfaction.

But this humane and heroic woman, as we know, had not been long at her post of mercy before those skilled in such matters discovered defects in her theology. They found out that she was not “Evangelical.” While the more orthodox might have been giving all due attention to the question of justification by faith, she was, at any rate, justifying the genuineness of her religion by her works of daily and nightly self-sacrifice — thus showing that she had read St. James, as well as St. Paul. But while her lack of orthodoxy was evident, it was not so clear as to what school of heterodoxy she belonged. Some affirmed that she was a Puseyite, others that she was a Unitarian. The discussion reached England, and of course appeared in the newspapers. The *Times* emphatically cried shame on the controversy, and in view of what she had done, and was doing,

appealed to the good sense and feeling of the people of England against such criticism of Miss Nightingale's theology.

And truly it was a sorry affair to raise any question about heterodoxy of belief where there was such evident orthodoxy of life. Why not follow the Saviour's teaching and accept the fruits as the test? When will conventional orthodoxy learn to accept the divine Christianity of Christ, instead of the dogmatic Christianity of its creed? We have seen the question of Miss Nightingale's theology opened on this side of the Atlantic, also, by an incidental statement in one of the New York secular newspapers. The writer, apparently from sufficient knowledge, stated that she was a Unitarian. This was disputed on the grounds that she attended an Episcopal church, and co-operated with Episcopalians in their works of charity—a statement, which, we believe, is correct in both particulars, while the inference sought to be drawn from it, was soon discovered to be unreliable. It did not thence follow that she accepted the three creeds, and the thirty-five articles. It is well known that there are many Unitarian families throughout England and America who worship in congregation with other Christians, in consequence of having no church of their own communion near at hand. This is the case with the Nightingale family. And with regard to co-operating with other Christians in works of charity, Unitarians would be false to all their principles if they declined to do so. In Miss Nightingale's case we find it stated on the authority of positive knowledge that she co-operated in such works with Roman Catholics, both in England and Germany. But we must not hastily infer from this that she belongs to the Pope. The truth is, she belongs

to Christ — to his genuine church universal — and with her large heart she does not stop at theological barriers in doing her Master's work. Where the hungry and thirsty, the sick and the suffering are, there is she willing to do and to suffer on their behalf, without thinking of dogmatic creeds at all.

The sectarians, however, cannot readily comprehend this. We remember one writer in a New York paper who made a maudlin appeal against connecting Unitarianism with Miss Nightingale's name, because, he said, they all wished to honor her. The inference here is obvious. If this noble Christian woman held the doctrine of the simple Unity of the Supreme Being, she must forfeit respect, though her Christian love should enable her to remove mountains. There is still too much of this feeling every where, and all around us. The Lord Christ makes a peremptory demand that every disciple of his shall protest against it, and withstand it. It is love, and deeds of love, not creeds, or belief in creeds, that he makes the test.

We have not hitherto noticed the discussion concerning Miss Nightingale's theology, because it did not strike us as very dignified, and might have been very well spared. But as the rash ignorance of a narrow orthodoxy provoked it, it was only proper that it should be settled, if possible. Be she Unitarian or Trinitarian, a due regard for her mental rights will not permit us to make her way of thinking a reproach to her. To satisfy a legitimate curiosity, however, we may state here, that, as the Apostle Paul was by descent "an Hebrew of the Hebrews," so is Florence Nightingale an Unitarian of the Unitarians. Her father is of the Shore family of Sheffield — well known there, and throughout England. They were, until

lately, bankers in Sheffield, and had their residence at a neighbouring village named Norton, where at their own charges they maintained a Unitarian ministry. On his accession to some property connected with the name of Nightingale, Florence's father assumed this name, and hence hers. His residence is in Hampshire. Her mother is a daughter of William Smith, for many years member of parliament for Norwich, and a man of considerable note in his day. He was a prominent member of the Unitarian body — the frequent President of their public meetings, and one of the most distinguished of the English Dissenters. He was the stable and persevering friend of civil and religious liberty in the House of Commons. At a time when it required far more courage to do so than now, he brought in a Bill to relieve from the pressure of a penal law those who impugned the doctrine of the Trinity, he manfully fought the battle for the repeal of the Roman Catholic disabilities, and the Test and Corporation Acts, and was the faithful advocate of the abolition of Slavery in the British West Indies. He was a fine example of the English Unitarian gentleman — open as day with his own opinions, and ready to avow and stand by them at all hazards, but equally ready, also, to secure perfect freedom for all others. It was Sidney Smith, we believe, who, in the Edinburgh Review, styled him the King of the Dissenters. Of this man Florence Nightingale's mother is the daughter. So that it will be seen her descent is directly from two of the most distinguished Unitarian families in England. She is in no wise untrue to her antecedents. A refined and highly educated woman, she lives a life of active charity, and is in sympathy with all who do so, be their sphere small or great. The pic-

ture of old John Pounds, the lame shoemaker of Portsmouth, surrounded by his pupils, hangs on the wall of her private chamber at home. John Pounds was a Unitarian; but he was also the originator of ragged schools in England — and thus a co-labourer with Miss Nightingale in the great work of her life. We are assured by those who speak from actual knowledge that she is liberal in her theology — that “by birth, by profession, by practice, and by expressed conviction, she is a Unitarian.” But her heart sympathies are less with a sect than with humanity — an additional evidence, as we are ready to affirm, of her fidelity to the principles of Liberal Christianity.

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## INTELLIGENCE.

### AUTUMNAL UNITARIAN CONVENTION.

THE fourteenth Autumnal Convention was held at Providence, R. I., on the 23rd, 24th and 25th October. Everything had been prepared by the members of Dr. Hall's and Dr. Hedge's churches for all who might be their guests. A committee waited at the Railway Station to receive the clergy and laymen from a distance, and escorted them to the accommodations prepared for them. On the evening of the 23rd (Tuesday) the services were commenced in the Westminster Church — Dr. Hedge's. Prayer was offered by the Rev. Dr. Farley of Brooklyn, N. Y., and a sermon preached by Rev. O. Stearns, of Hingham, Mass., from Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. After the close of the religious exercises the Convention was called to order by Rev. Rufus Ellis, of Boston, Chairman of the Committee of Arrangements, for business, and the officers

of the Convention were appointed. Rev. Dr. Lothrop, of Boston, President ; Rev. Dr. Burnap, of Baltimore, and Hon. Samuel Hoar, of Concord, Mass., as Vice Presidents ; and Rev. Mr. Lowe, of Salem, and Rev. Mr. Livermore, of Clinton, as Secretaries. From eight till nine o'clock on Wednesday morning, a meeting was held for conference and prayer at the Westminster church. Prayers were offered by Rev. Dr. Farley, of Brooklyn, and Rev. Mr. Hale, of Worcester ; and addresses were delivered by Rev. Dr. Farley, Rev. Dr. Hall, of Providence, Rev. Mr. Staples, of Lexington, Rev. Dr. Hill, of Worcester, and Rev. Mr. Ryder, of Hubbardston.

The following were the subjects proposed for consideration at the meetings of the Convention :—

1. The best mode of rendering the Church a more efficient and a more living organization.
- 2 How may Christians most effectually spread the knowledge of Christ.
3. The peculiar duties of Unitarian Christians as such.

The sessions of the Convention on Wednesday were held, in the morning, at the Westminster Church ; and, in the afternoon, at the Church, on Benefit Street, (Rev. Dr. Hall's,) where a sermon was preached in the evening by Rev. Mr. Stebbins of Portland.

On Wednesday evening there was a social gathering and collation ; and on Thursday the meetings were at Dr. Hall's church. The Convention closed its session on Thursday noon.