

been in their graves a hundred years. And so error is perpetuated, because men persist that, with regard to religion, they ought to be children in understanding. If error is to be exploded, and if we are to have right views of Divine truth, we must call into exercise our intelligence. If, in matters pertaining to religion, men, instead of being like children, would only use the intelligence which they use in the affairs of business, if they would bring with them to the Church the good strong sense which they take with them to the market, we should soon see a great alteration for the better. I have heard it said that many men put off religion with their Sunday clothes; this is bad, but it is just as bad, and perhaps more general, for men to put off common sense with their week-day clothes.

The exercise of the understanding is also demanded by the doubts and difficulties which, in the estimation of so many, encompass Christianity. The progress of the intellect in scientific research has brought to light many facts which appear to contradict the testimony of Scripture, and has produced some theories that are avowedly opposed to Scripture; and there is scarcely a single principle of the Christian religion which is not the object of attack. When such a work as the "Essays and Reviews" appears, it is very easy to protest against the inconsistent position of the writers of these productions, and to say that their teaching is in direct opposition to the principles of their own church; but the question that men of sense are asking, and will ask, is not, Are these principles in harmony with a fables of religion and ordination vows? but, Are they true? Nor will it weigh much with shrewd and observant men that many thousands of eager aspirants for ecclesiastical preferment prove their orthodoxy, to their respective bishops, by signing documents condemnatory of these startling heresies. There must be something more than protests or we shall be in a miserable plight. If all that we can say is, "This is heterodox and that is neological, this comes from Germany and that, my dear friends, is very different from the theology of the Puritans," we shall expose ourselves to the just contempt of all intelligent men. If the various attacks upon Christianity are to be met and repulsed, mere declamation will not do; for refutation we must look to the exercise of the understanding. There are still some people who would fain discourage inquiry under the apprehension that it is favourable to scepticism. What an admission! What an implement is thus put into the sceptic's hands! May he not turn round upon us, and, somewhat uttering our own Master's words, say, "Ye love darkness rather than light, because your principles will not bear investigation?" Even if it were desirable to repress the spirit of inquiry it is impossible. Protestantism established itself upon the right of private judgment, and it must abide the consequences; it is committed to the issues and outworkings of this great principle.

The importance of the exercise of the understanding in relation to religion is also seen in connection with the study of Scripture. Suppose that all scepticism is happily vanquished, and that we all heartily accept this book as containing the revelation of the Divine will; then I would submit that, without the diligent application of the understanding, we shall not see the full glory of the truth. The great principles of salvation certainly lie upon the surface of the Scriptures, and are tolerably plain to every man's observation; but in this book there are other and hidden glories. Just as beneath the fruitful soil which bears the trees, and the flowers, and the herbage, and the corn, there may be precious metallic ores, so it is with the word of God. There are treasures on the surface, which present themselves to every man's notice; but there are treasures beneath which must be diligently and laboriously sought for; and the Scriptures will become increasingly interesting, valuable, consolatory, and we shall have a higher opinion of their excellence, and a stronger conviction of their truth, in proportion as we devote our understanding to the attentive study of them in all their details. It is thus only the full glory of truth can be discovered. I do not undervalue, much less do I deny, the enlightening efficacy of the Holy Spirit; but the Holy Spirit, in revealing the things of God, makes use of the human understanding as its instrument. It is to be feared that many Christians do not know half the glory and the grandeur of the religion they possess; do not know half the glory and the grandeur of it that they might know. Many have brought to the contemplation of Scripture a fervent fancy, and, under the name of spiritual interpretation, have made much nonsense out of Scripture, and turned its truths into weak, silly, contemptible sentiment; they have discovered some mystery of godliness in every pillar of Solomon's temple, and means of grace in all the broken planks by which Paul and

his companions got safe to land; they have, as Thomas Fuller says, "reaped what God never sowed;" but, as he adds, "they do not eat what they thus reap, for such grainless husks, when seriously thrashed out, vanish all into chaff." It is surely time that this childish trifling ceased, and that, dispensing with this feeble sentimentalism, we brought our sense, and not our nonsense, to the study of God's work.

Once more; it will not do to be children in understanding when we take in hand any work which has for its object the advancement of religion. There is such a thing as "zeal which is not according to knowledge;" and the history of this kind of zeal illustrates very abundantly the necessity which exists for a high degree of intelligence in things pertaining to religion. There can be no doubt that thousands of well-intentioned and godly men fought in the ranks of the Crusaders; and it would be a great mistake to suppose that all persecutors have been destitute of true religion. This, at all events, is certain, that Papists, Protestants, and even Puritans, have cherished the spirit of intolerance, and been so deluded as to suppose that by persecuting those whom they considered heterodox, they were doing God service. Let us also bear in mind the fact, that immense sums of money have been wasted and very valuable lives sacrificed in unwise schemes and projects, most conscientiously set on foot with a view to extending the kingdom of Christ in the world. Our Saviour says, be it observed, not to the credit, but to the great discredit of his disciples, "The children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light;" and he intimates that all the sagacity, the knowledge, the foresight, the well-based calculations, which guide men in worldly affairs should be imitated by his people in their Christian undertakings. We have all seen designs frustrated and brought to nought just because those who had the management, or mismanagement, of them were in understanding children, and not men. Everything we do for Christ should be done from love to him and to our fellow-creatures; but, still, no motives however good, no desires however holy, no prayers however earnest, will save from disaster and failure the Christian undertaking that is not under the guidance of knowledge and sound sense.

Christian Messenger.

HALIFAX, SEPTEMBER 25, 1861.

Offences and Church Discipline.

SECOND ARTICLE.

In pursuing the subject to which our attention was asked last week, by a brother in the country, we may remark, that the difficulty of admonishing a fellow-member in a christian church is greatly diminished when he is first convinced that the admonition is offered in a spirit of meekness. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." Skill is required even in the management of an injured part of the body, how much more is it demanded in the treatment of a weakened moral faculty. In taking away the exhausted wick which diminishes the brightness of a lamp we have to use much care and caution; we may do it so as to greatly enrich its brilliancy, but if done in a careless manner or too severely we damage its light and perhaps cause it to go out altogether, leaving us in darkness instead of improving its lustre.

The more delicate operation of seeking to trim the spiritual lamp of a christian brother, should be attempted with far greater consideration or similar results may follow.

The scriptural rule given by the Apostle to the Galatians is always applicable, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault ye which are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of meekness considering thyself lest thou also be tempted."

No assumption of superiority should be indulged or it closes up the avenues to the brother's heart. Any act which calls for rebuke indicates that the heart is not fully open to better influences and an injudicious attack on such person's self-love is sure to be resisted. A person who has gone astray or into error usually thinks himself unfortunate rather than blame-worthy. Even when his own conduct has been of such a character as to cause him to be despised by his fellowmen, he cherishes the idea that he has been illused, and that it is rather by the accidental force of circumstances calling for commiseration rather than reproof, that he has been brought into such an unsatisfactory condition.

This morbid state of mind then demands the exercise of all the gentleness of Christian love, and the sympathy so beautifully described in the above text, to reach the evil soul to be remedied.

We would willingly avoid further public discussion of this subject, but what we have already said on it would fail in being of service without some more practical application of the principles laid down; we therefore make some additional extracts from the work we made use of last week:

Offences are usually considered as of two kinds: namely, private and public. These terms are not designed to express the nature or degree of evil done, nor are these classes very clearly defined. This distinction has reference mainly to the objects of offences, and the manner of treatment.

PRIVATE OFFENCES.—A private offence is an offence committed by one member against another member, and not against the whole church, as such. It is an injury done by word, action, or otherwise, intentionally or unintentionally, by one member, against the person, character, estate or feelings, of another member.

So long as such matters of difficulty exist and are treated privately; that is, between the persons concerned, and are not brought before the church in a public manner for its notice and action, they are private offences; but become public when brought before the church.

The course to be pursued in such a case, is prescribed by our Saviour in Matthew xviii. Any departure from this rule, is in itself an offence. It is as follows:

1. First Step.—The member who considers himself injured, must go to the offending one, tell him his cause of grief, and between themselves alone, if possible, adjust and settle the difficulty. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

2. Second Step.—If this step shall fail of success, then the offending member must take one or two of the brethren, seek another interview with the offender, and thus, possibly, by their united wisdom and piety, they may succeed, where himself alone had failed. "But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

3. Third Step.—If this attempt also be unsuccessful, then the injured one must tell the whole matter to the church, and leave it in their hands to be disposed of as they shall think best. "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; and if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and a publican."

It should be most solemnly impressed on the mind of every church member and every church officer, that this course, for the treatment of personal difficulties, was prescribed by Christ as a positive law for his church, and that it stands invested with all the sanctions of divine authority, and can never be departed from with impunity. If every church would require a strict and invariable compliance with this course of procedure, it would greatly lessen the number of personal difficulties, and make those which did arise comparatively harmless.

PUBLIC OFFENCES.—A Public Offence is one, not against any particular individual, but against the church as a body; an injury to the cause of piety, a reproach to the Gospel, a scandal to the Christian name and profession.

Every difficulty or offence, when it claims the attention of the church as a body, and comes before it for its action, is a public offence. All those difficulties which individuals cannot appropriately reach or undertake; or such as they might, but will not attempt to settle; or such as having attempted, they fail to reconcile or remove, come within this class.

The following constitute the more common causes of public offence:

1. False Doctrine.—Holding doctrines fundamentally false, and contrary to the faith of the church, and the word of God.—Gal. i. 9: 2 John 12.

2. Disregard of Authority.—When a member refuses to regard the authority, and submit to the requirements of the church.—Matt. xviii. 17. 1 Thes. v. 14.

3. Contentions and Strife.—Where a member is factious, foments discords, stirs up strife, and becomes a leader of evil, disturbing or destroying the peace of the church.—Rom. xvi. 17.

4. Immoral Conduct.—Such acts and practices as are inconsistent with that rectitude and purity of life, which the Gospel inculcates and requires.—1 Cor. v. 11.

5. Disorderly Walk.—Such a course of conduct, or habit of life, as is contrary to, and subversive of, the professed faith, and established order of the church, of which the person is a member. It does not necessarily imply immorality of conduct.—2 Thes. iii. 6. 11.

6. Covetous Spirit.—Where a member will not contribute according to his evident ability for the support of the Gospel, and refuses to bear his proportion of the pecuniary burdens of the church, evincing a covetous disposition.—Eph. v. 5. 1 Cor. v. 11.

7. Arrogant Conduct.—Where a member in a spirit of pride and arrogance, assumes authority which does not belong to him, and undertakes to domineer over the members and to rule the church.—3 John 9.

8. Going to Law.—The going to law with brethren "before unbelievers," and the prosecution of each other before civil tribunals, instead of settling their difficulties "before the saints."—This was severely censured by the Apostle, and deserves to be made a cause of discipline in every church.—1 Cor. vi. 6.

We propose to conclude the consideration of this matter next week, by giving the same author's views on what should be the treatment applied in these several cases. We can but admire the beautiful simplicity of Christ's laws

in this as in all other matters relating to His church and people.

EDUCATIONAL.—The Rev. Dr. Forrester has been spending several days of the past week in visiting the Schools of the City. On Thursday last he gave an address in the Lecture Room, Dalhousie College, on "The best method of supporting Education, and of elevating its standard in large towns." The audience was far below what it should have been for the consideration of so important a matter. About forty or fifty persons were present. He forcibly described the defects in our educational arrangements, especially in the city of Halifax. The want of competent teachers, he thought, was now in some measure provided for by the establishment of the Normal School. In other countries some allowance was made by way of inducement to students to attend such institutions. Here no such assistance was offered, and yet the attendance had far exceeded the most sanguine expectations. The necessity for some means to be adopted for the purpose of giving adequate remuneration to good teachers, he thought was now the great desideratum. The general assessment of the people he deemed for the only efficient means of raising a revenue this purpose. He observed that there should be more provision of School accommodation for Halifax. He thought the Schools of the capital far inferior to many in the country, and absolutely a disgrace to the citizens. The erection of two large School-houses—one in the north and the other in the south, he deemed a highly desirable object to be accomplished. He believed the only effectual remedy was the introduction of the assessment principle, and that but little progress could be expected in educational matters till some general measure of that nature was enacted by the Legislature.

At the close of the Lecture S. L. Shannon, Esq., was requested to take the chair. He made some very judicious remarks on the subject of providing for education and the necessity for elevating the position of the teacher. A vote of thanks to the lecturer was moved by the Rev. Mr. Cochran, seconded by A. Mackinlay Esq., and passed unanimously.

On Saturday the 21st Dr. Forrester by invitation met a number of the Teachers of the city and neighbourhood. The principal subject which occupied the attention of the meeting was that of the best means of securing a regular attendance of pupils, and of making the parents more highly appreciate the education of their children.

The enemies of truth and righteousness are busy sowing the seeds of infidelity and palming on the people their vile trash. Some parties, finding, we suppose, that their occupation, in this line, in the U. States, is at present, gone, have lately been going through some of our western counties with some small pamphlets, trying to induce the people to purchase their publications, in prose and poetry (doggerel). Specimens of these vile productions have been forwarded to us by a friend. If the sentiments were no worse than the form in which they are presented, they would be deserving of general execration, as they must be destructive of all elevated taste as well as thought. They are not only miserable in their style and language, but destructive of all respect for the Bible and atheistic in their tendencies, damaging to the mind as well as the heart.

One of these commences with the following couplet:

"FRIENDS AND BROTHERS—LADIES AND GENTS; I HAVE a word to you, And if you'll list, I'll speak it out, and let you see if 't is true."

After 24 pages of the same character, it closes with—

"If ever saved, we must be saved by efforts of our own, Unless we wait—take nature's gait, which slowly plights the crown."

Let the friends of truth be prepared to expose the real character of such men and their productions.

We have been requested to announce the following "for the information of the numerous friends of the enterprise among our readers."

ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN BIBLE UNION.

New York, September 13th, 1861.—The Anniversary of the American Bible Union will be held in the meeting-house of the First Baptist Church, corner of Broome and Elizabeth Sts., New York, Wednesday and Thursday, October 2 and 3, 1861.

The business meeting for the election of officers and managers, the appointment of committees, &c., will commence Wednesday evening, at 9 o'clock, in the Lecture Room of the church.

Members and delegates are requested to register their names at the Bible Rooms, 350 Broome St., early on Wednesday morning, for the arrangement of committees and the assignment of places of accommodation, during the meetings.

C. A. BUCKNER, Recording Secretary.