

The Religious Intelligencer

AN EVANGELICAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER, FOR NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA.

That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ—PETER.

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THE RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCER

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ship in which they reside, but the NAME of the

office where they wish to receive their pa-

pers, that we want.

The Guilt and Evils of Covetousness.

Nor does covetousness operate less injuri-

ously by taking of his supreme trust from God,

and giving it to the world. If a staff be placed in the

hand of a bent and feeble man, what more natu-

ral than that he should lean on it. Man is that

impotent traveller, and wealth is the staff which

others support his steps. Hence, in the word

of God, it is repeatedly intimated that to possess

riches and to trust in them, is one and the same

thing. "Except where grace makes the distinction.

The term mammon, for instance, according to

its derivation, imports whatever men are apt to

confide in. The original term for faith is of

the same derivation, and for the same reason—

because it implies such a reliance on God as the

worldly mind places on riches. So that mam-

mon came to signify riches, as men so commonly

put their trust on them. And when our Lord

perceived the astonishment he had excited by

exclaiming: "How hardly shall they that have

riches enter into the kingdom of heaven," the

only explanation which he gave, and which he

deemed sufficient, imported, that as the danger

of riches consisted in trusting in them, so the

difficulty of possessing them, and not trusting in

them, is next to an impossibility—a difficulty

which can only be surmounted by omnipotent

grace.

Now to trust in any created object, is to par-

take of its littleness, mutability and debasement.

But money is a creature of circumstances, the

work of every wind; the Christian mammonist,

therefore can only resemble the object of his

trust. By choosing a heavenly treasure, and

making it the object of paramount regard, he

would have gradually received the impress of

its celestial attributes; but by giving his heart

to earthly gain, he identifies himself with all its

earthly qualities; lets himself down, and adapts

himself to its insignificance; and vibrates to all

its fluctuations, as if the world were an organized

body, of which he was the pulse.

The inconsistencies in which his covetous at-

tachments involved him, are grievous and many.

His enlightened judgment impels him for happi-

ness in one direction, and his earthly inclinations

draw him in another. In the morning, and in

the evening, he prays, "Lead us not into tem-

ptation, but deliver us from evil;" and yet, dur-

ing the interval, he pursues the material of

temptation with an avidity not to be exceeded

by the keenest worldling. He hears, without ques-

tioning, our Lord's declaration concerning the

danger of riches; and yet, though he is already

laden with the thick clay, and is daily augmen-

ting his load, he doubts not of passing through the

eye of the needle, as a matter of course. He

professes to be only the steward of his property;

and yet wastes it on himself, as if he were its

he may emulate the most worldly in the embel-

lishment of his house, the decoration of his per-

son, the splendor of his equipage, or the luxury

of his table.

Accordingly, the only apparent difference be-

tween him and them, is—not in the greater mo-

deration of earthly aims, nor in the superior sim-

plecity of his tastes, the spiritual elevation of

his pursuits, the enlarged benevolence and Chris-

tian devotedness of his life—but, at the time which

they occupy in spending, he employs in accumu-

lating; the energies which they waste in world-

ly pleasures, he exhausts in worldly pursuits; the

property which they devote to amusement abroad

he lavishes on indulgences at home; and while

they are pursuing their gratification in one di-

rection, he is indemnifying himself for not join-

ing them by pursuing his gratification as eagerly

in another. The loss of one of the bodily senses,

it is said, quickens the perception of those that

remain; worldliness alone remains to him, and

that is quickened and strengthened by perpet-

ual exercises. All that is unsatisfied in his na-

ture flows from the fountain of his heart with

the greater force, that it has only this one chan-

nel in which to run. He may therefore be the

more worldly in reality, for not allowing himself

to be worldly in appearance. His worldliness is

only compressed into a smaller compass. Pro-

fect what he may, and stand as high as he may

in the opinion of his fellow professors, he is es-

entially a worldly man. The world has its seats

as well as the church, and he may be said to

belong to one of the "stricter sects" of the

world.

Covetousness generates discontent, and this is

an element with which no Christian grace can

be held in affinity. It magnifies trivial losses,

and diminishes the most magnificent blessings

to a point; it thinks highly of the least sacri-

fice which it may grudgingly make in the

cause of God, feels no enterprise in his service,

and never considers itself at liberty to leave its

little circle of decent selfishness, in which its

murms on account of what it has not are al-

ways louder than its thanks for what it has. "Let

your conversation," therefore, says the apostle,

"be without covetousness, and be content with

such things as ye have." "Godliness with con-

tentment, is great gain."

Covetousness neutralizes the effect of the

preaching of the gospel. The Saviour saw this

abundantly verified in his own ministry; and his

parable of the sower intimated, that his ministers

would see it exemplified in theirs also. The

judgment of the hearer, it may be, is convinced

of the divinity of religion; he feels its power, and

trembles; he beholds its attractions and is cap-

tivated. And could he, at such times, be detach-

ed awhile from his worldly pursuits, and be oc-

cupied with the melting and majestic claims of

the gospel, he might, by the agency of the Holy

Spirit, be induced to lay up for himself a trea-

sure in heaven. But the seed has fallen among

thorns; "The cares of this world and the deceit-

fulness of riches choke the word, and render it

unfruitful." His impressions are written in

sand; and no sooner does he leave the house of

God than his worldly plans and prospects come

back like the returning tide, and utterly deface

them.

Closely allied with this evil are formality and

hypocrisy in religion. "They speak one to

another, every one to his brother, saying, Come,

I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh

forth from the Lord. And they come unto thee

as the people cometh, and they sit before thee

as my people, and they hear thy words, but they

will not do them; for with their mouth they

service of the world, and enrolled themselves

among the servants of God, does covetousness

again reclaim, and swear them to allegiance

afresh. They "did run well," but the fable of

Atalanta became their history—a golden bait was

cast in their path; they stopped to take it, and

lost the race. In how touching a manner does

the apostle refer to the fatal declension of some—

probably living characters, known both to him-

self and Timothy—and impute their apostasy

entirely to their avarice. "Money, . . . (said he)

which while some coveted after, they have erred

from the faith, and pierced themselves through

with many sorrows." And how likely is it that

Bunyan drew from personal observation, when,

in his inimitable allegory, he describes the pro-

fessed pilgrims, Hold-the-world, Money-love,

Save-all and By-ends, names which still stand for

living realities—as leaving the road, at the soli-

citation of Demas, to look at a silver mine "in a

little hill called Lucre. Now," he adds, "whether

they fell into the pit by looking over the brink

thereof, or whether they went down to dig, or

whether they were smothered in the bottom by the

damps that commonly arise, of these things I

am not certain; but this I observed, that they

never were seen again in the way."

But where covetousness does not lead the pro-

fessed believer to open apostasy, it involves him

in the guilt of idolatry; and this, in the eye of

Scripture, is a step beyond. If the reformer be

the rejection of the true God, the latter is the

adoption of a false one. Endeavour to escape

from the charge as he may, his covetousness is

idolatry. The general impression on hearing

this proposition is, that the term idolatry is only

employed by the apostle in an accommodated

sense—that covetousness is only figurative idol-

atry. But in the figure lies its force. There is

not more essential idolatry, at this moment, on

the face of the earth, than that which the avari-

cious man pays to his gold. The ancient Per-

sian, who adored the sun only as the visible im-

age of God, was guiltless of idolatry compared

with him. And the only pretence he can have

for saying he is not guilty, is that he does not

perform acts of bodily prostration before it. But

acts of mere formal homage are no more

necessary to constitute a man a worshipper of

mammon, than they are to render him a real

worshipper of God; in each instance, the homage

of the heart is in the stead of all outward pro-

strations. And does not his gold receive that?

Is not his heart a temple from which God has

been excluded, in order to make room for mam-

mon? While he worships God formally, as if

he were only an idol, does he not accord to his

gold as much cordiality as if it were God? re-

garding it with all those deep feelings, and men-

tal glances, of confidence, which should be re-

served for God alone? The idols of the heathen

world, so to speak, between heaven and earth,

observing the vision of God, intercepting and

appropriating the incense which should have as-

cended to the eternal throne; and doest not his

gold, instead of leading his thoughts in gratitude

to God, stand between him and the Divine Being,

concealing God from his view, engrossing his

thoughts to itself, and filling him with that sat-

isfaction which the soul should find in God alone?

If his gold could be endowed with the power of

perception, would it not be tempted to think

itself a God? If it possessed the power of read-

ing his heart towards it, would it not find its im-

age enshrined there? and a degree of affection

lavished on it, and a closeness of communion

maintained with it, such a god as might accept?

His covetousness is idolatry.

Among the fatal evils inflicted by covetous-

during most of the sermon, in tears. He, how-

ever, restrained his emotions within bounds till

he approached the close of the sermon. Then,

addressing the unconverted part of his audience,

he besought them not to become hardened in

their guilt, or neglect the salvation of their souls,

because some who had borne "the vessels of the

Lord" had sinned. "I need not," he added,

with great tenderness of spirit, "make a more

distinct reference; but O, remember that if I,

and these my brethren in the ministry, and every

other professing Christian in the world, were to

make shipwreck of faith and character, and to

fall into crime like poor —, religion would

be still the same grand system of truth and mor-

ality, and you would be eternally lost if you

rejected it. The Lord Jesus Christ is the stan-

dard of character, and not poor sinners like

us."

Reflections on the Death of Nancy

Steeves.

BY FRANCES J. DOBSON.

While meditating on the various changes

which have taken place, since my last visit to the

home I loved, (the home of earlier days,) I

thought of a sweet youth whom death hath sepa-

rated from us. Her gentle voice is now silent in

death, and I trust she is reaping her reward in

that brighter world, where sorrow shall never

come. She was loved and admired by us all; but

ah! how piercing the thought which penetrates

my heart we shall see her no more.

While she sleeps beneath the sod, her epitaph

bears to our minds, the words of our Saviour,

she is "not dead but sleeping." Her friends

have wept, and taken their last adieu and care-

fully and solemnly laid away her emaciated frame

beneath the sod of a sweet country church-yard,

where they can visit her grave and shed tears of

sorrow over the mouldering form of the one they

loved so fondly. Her seat is now vacant; her

footsteps are no more heard at twilight. How

lonely every thing appears! She is missed from

the affectionate family circle; is absent at the

hour of evening prayer; no longer to be