

The Religious Intelligencer.

AN EVANGELICAL FAMILY NEWS PAPER FOR NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA.

REV. E. McLEOD.]

"THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS

MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."--Peter.

[Editor and Proprietor.]

Vol. IX.—No. 21.

SAINT JOHN,

NEW BRUNSWICK, FRIDAY, MAY 23, 1862.

Whole No. 437.

THE INTELLIGENCER.

THE EARNEST MINISTER.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUYLER.

Before us lies the life of John Angell James, that man whose name is made up of "of two apostles vinctulated by an angel." Opposite the title-page is that broad beaming countenance that we once looked upon reverently as it rose before a crowded audience in the town-hall of Birmingham. No one could mistake that face. Robert Hall declared that it was the most remarkable one he ever saw, and he was sure that Mr. James would be the first man recognized at the resurrection. One thing is very certain, that multitudes will there recognize him as their faithful spiritual teacher, who first led them to the cross of Christ. He will then stand in the foremost rank of that throng who wear the crown of rejoicing that is conferred upon the earnest minister.

After reading carefully the biography before us, we are persuaded that here lay the secret of that influence that carried his name throughout Christendom. John Angell James was not a profound theologian. He was not an acute controversialist. He wrote no commentaries. He untied no knotty questions of exegesis. He made no discoveries in philosophy. Yet it is probable that he numbered more readers, more hearers, and more converts to Jesus Christ, than any English preacher of this century. And this enviable distinction he won by simply following the straight single path of preaching the Gospel of Christ with all his might and main. "I set out in my ministry," he says, "with the idea of usefulness so deeply imprinted on my heart that I could never lose sight of it long together; and I mean usefulness of one kind—that is, the direct conversion of souls."

This aim, thus early adopted, became the master passion of his life. For fifty years Mr. James laboured in the same busy city, amid the whirling of the wheels and the jingling of the money-changers. What for? He built a chapel that would hold well-nigh two thousand auditors. What for? Simply that he might gather as many of his busy neighbors as possible to hear him preach Jesus Christ. He wrote a little volume of which a half-million copies have already been issued, and which has been translated into the tongues of Holland, France, Germany, Russia, and Italy. Its sole object was to direct the anxious inquirer to the blessed Saviour. It was written originally for a group of young men and women whom Mr. James was meeting every week, and for whose salvation he felt an intense concern. And so through the whole of that half century of holy toil, the one undying inspiration of his life was to bring sinners to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. "If you perish," he said to his hearers in his farewell letter found after his death, "your blood will not be upon me. Your ruin will lie at your own door. I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God."

In reading the life of James we are reminded of the devoted John Welsh, who used to keep a placid upon his bed that he might wrap himself in it when he rose during the night for prayer. Sometimes his wife found him on the floor weeping. When she complained, he would say, "Oh! woman, I have the souls of three thousand to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them." Here was the earnest minister who felt his momentous responsibility during the week while preparing his heaven-commanded message to dying men. It haunts him in the silent watches of the night. It rises with him at the waking of the morn. It breathes itself out in the fervid utterances of the closet.

But it is in the pulpit that an earnest ambassador of Jesus, like Angell James, or Welsh, or Payson, or McChesney, brings all the gathered years and emotions and inspirations and studies of the week to one converging and glowing focus of intensity. Whatever is most convincing in argument, or most winning in entreaty, or most thrilling in appeal, he seizes upon and appropriates to his mighty theme. He pleads. He warns. He invites. He points now to the yawning pit, red flames of wrath, and now to the cross red with the Saviour's blood. The grandeur of his theme possesses him. It leads him out of himself. Nay, he is no longer in this world, or of it. Its allusions have all passed away. He is surrounded by other and more solemn auditors. The light of eternity plays about him and reveals the tremendous pomp of the judgment scene. To his eye, the great consummation has already come! The Judge is descending. The books are opening. The heavens are passing away with a great noise. The angels are separating the vast multitudes to the right hand and to the left hand of the Judge; and among them he sees his own hearers. Some of them he sees crowned with the unfading crown; and some of them—appalling sight!—are driven off walling to the gates of despair!

With such a spectacle before him, with the shrieks of his perishing neighbours ringing in his very ears, can any appeal be too importunate, can any entreaty be too earnest? Even if his overwhelming solicitude moves him to tears, he feels that it is better for him to weep here than for his hearers to weep in hell.

Thus fired was the Great Apostle when he made Felix tremble on his marble throne. Such was the irrepressible emotion of Whitefield when he preached until the plumes on duchesses' head-dresses shook with the agitation of their wearers, and even courtly Chesterfield cried out, in view of a sinner sinking into the pit, "Good God! the man is gone!" Such was the intense agony of Bunyan when he "went to his people as in chains,

to preach to them in chains; and carried that fire in his own conscience that he persuaded them to beware of." Such was the heavenly earnestness of Samuel Rutherford when he exclaimed, "My witness is above, that your heavens would be two heavens to me, and the salvation of each of you as two salvations to me."

The Summerfields, the Spencers, and the Angell Jameses of this world will not dread to meet their auditors at the bar of God. For they ceased not to warn those auditors with tears and entreaties. But amid the vast assemblage at that tribunal, who will appear to have been guilty of a stranger folly than the unfaithful minister of Christ, who, with the Bible in his hands, yet forbore to warn men of their impending danger? That sinners were morally insane in this life, they will then confess of themselves. How they came to be guilty of such madness, they can comprehend. But how any man who knew to what a hell they were rushing, should have neglected to warn them against it, will be enough to fill them with amazement and abhorrence. And as they turn away toward their prison-house of darkness, oh! how they will vent their terrible reproaches on faithless ministers as agents and accomplices in their eternal ruin.

A DEATH BED CONVERSION.

The following was related by Mr. Weaver while preaching in London. It illustrates the importance of faithful dealing with the impenitent. How many souls are lost because the truth is not faithfully pressed home upon them by those who are their spiritual counsellors:—

He noticed the difficulty of getting to the hearts of the rich through all the surroundings of their gay pleasures; and related an anecdote of a young lady in whom another pious lady had taken an interest, and entreated his (Mr. Weaver's) interest. He prayed and she prayed that a way of access to her might be found, and they trusted to the Lord to open a way. Well, he is at last sent for to see this young lady who is ill. A cab receives him, and in it he finds her nurse, who cautions him that he must be gentle with the lady, as she was not in a state to bear excitement. "Ah!" he said, "there will be excitement in hell if she is not saved; she must be saved at any cost here;" and so he preached to the nurse on the way, as he found she was in a dangerous condition herself. When he got into the chamber he found the mother and father by her bedside. She was an only daughter, and they of course, loved her very much. "Oh dear!" she said, "I hope I shall get better, mamma, but do not weep." He went up to her and asked, "Well my dear sister, do you think anything about Christ?" She answered, "No, I never did." "Well," he said again, "you are on the brink of death—I must tell you that I think you are going to die, my dear young sister." "Oh, to die!" she said, "and I am only twenty." He began to talk to her about heaven, and hell, and God. She said, "I won't hear that." She wept, and he parted from her. Next day he called again, and they told him he must not speak of excitement to her. He merely said, "My dear young sister, have you found Christ?" "I don't want you here, sir," she answered; but he gently told her to lay her burden on Christ; the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. Next day he called again, and they said to him, "We have had a better night, sir." She herself said eagerly, "Oh, Mr. Weaver, come here. The second time you called you told me the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and I have believed it, and I believe that he will cleanse me." The doctor came in just then, and he said she had not four-and-twenty minutes to live. "Oh, you are to die!" her mother said weeping bitterly. "No, dear mamma, I am only going to heaven, like Lazarus." Then she addressed her father, "Papa, I want to ask you one question? 'What is it, E—r?' 'I am going to die and you are unconverted; you never told me I had a soul to be saved—never told me of a heaven or hell. You trained me up to shine at balls and frivolities, and engage only in the pleasures of the world; but for Mr. Weaver and that other pious sister where would I be? Will you turn? Will I meet you in heaven?' And the father said, 'Lord help me!' And she continued, 'My sins are all forgiven,' and asked him (Mr. Weaver) to sing one of the hymns, which he did. She again exhorted her father to believe, and he dropped on his knees and said, 'God help me, I will, by the help of God meet you in heaven, E—r.' The mother did the same; and the dying lady said again, 'Mr. Weaver, tell my parents that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.' Then she fell asleep and died happy. The Lord help us to do likewise.

OUR PASTOR OUGHT TO LEAVE.

While visiting a neighbouring congregation, not long since, I heard a member of the church utter these words: "Our pastor ought to leave."

The question at once arose in my mind, "Why? What evil hath he done?"

"O! nothing," was the reply. "He is a good man. Every one has the most perfect confidence in his piety, his zeal for God, and his love for the souls of his fellow men; but then we think he ought to leave."

"But why? Does he not preach the truth?"

"Yes! He is very correct in his theology; preaches sound, practical Gospel sermons; but then they are so dry, and that is his fault."

"Are you certain of this? All Gospel truths are dry to dry hearts, and is not this the character of most of his hearers? Have not their souls been parched by worldliness till they give scarcely any sign of life? And is not this their fault? And when the Sabbath comes, do they not go to church, if they go at all, with their souls covered

with the dust of earth? No wonder they think his preaching dry."

"But he is not building up the church."

"He is not! Neither did Noah, that old preacher of righteousness. For more than a hundred years did he labour in the same place without adding a single member; and the reason was he had bad material to work upon. He was a very dry preacher until the storm came."

"So, also, our Saviour gathered in but a few during His ministry. To the mass of those who listened to His words, He was a dry preacher—a root out of dry ground. But where was the fault? Was it with Him? Or was it not rather with the dry hearts to whom He preached? Had you lived in those days, and been among the number of those who occasionally heard Him, and witnessed the small results of His labours, I fear you would have uttered the same sentiment—'He ought to leave.'"

"But he is not interesting to young people."

"Young America, I suppose you mean. This is indeed sad; but I can tell you what is interesting to them. That dance at your house the other night, interested them. The light and sneering remarks which you sometimes make about your pastor, interest them. The indifference you manifest in spiritual things interests them. No wonder that when you and others of the same spirit, are doing so much to direct their interests, he should find it difficult to fasten their thoughts upon the subject of religion."

"But he does not visit as much as we wish our minister to do."

"This, again, is bad. It may be that you are right—that he ought to go; but I have known a minister to refrain from visiting some places as often as he otherwise would, because when there he seldom heard anything but corn, cattle, and hogs, and not being in sympathy with these, he preferred their society but seldom. But as this is not your habit, we will pass on to another point."

"But he does not pray with us when he comes."

"Does not? Strange! Who is priest in your house? Whose duty is it to offer up the morning and evening sacrifice? It certainly is not his. He has just as much right to take the direction of your family meal, as your devotion. He will pray when you ask him, or he will sit quietly while you pray, and never utter one word of complaint, because it is in your house; and it is both your right and your duty to rule there."

"But he often fails to visit the sick of his congregation."

"Is it possible? The case grows worse and worse. We may as well have the law and condemn him at once. Here it is: 'Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him.' This is the Scripture, and the very best you can find upon this subject. Supposing the elders here spoken of are ministers, where rests the first duty? Is it not with the sick, or their friends? And did you call for him? Did you take any pains to let him know that there was a demand for his service, as a minister in your family? If not, what right have you to grumble? The fault is on your part. You did not do your duty; and till yours was done he had none to do. Upon the doing of yours rests the obligation on his part, and because you neglected your duty, he ought to leave." Strange logic this. Why don't you tell your physician that he ought to leave; if perchance, your child falls and hurts his nose, and he is not there in a moment, uncalled? You might, with just as much propriety, blame him for not coming when not called, as your minister. Do your duty, and if he is a good man he will do his; if he does not, then "he ought to leave."

THE BAPTISM OF FIRE.

It is always of service in the study of the Bible, to have the view of different expositors, if their opinions are the result of candid inquiry, and are expressed without dogmatism. The following view of the baptism by fire differs widely from that commonly entertained, and may stimulate our readers to a more careful examination of the passage. We find it in the *Vermont Chronicle*:

It has been supposed by some that fire denotes judgment or wrath. It has been urged that John himself explained what it meant by the baptism of fire, by adding the words—"but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

We suspect that such interpretation is entirely wrong. The idea of baptism admits of so little congruity with the idea of punishment that we are constrained to seek another explanation.

John the Baptist was sent among his countrymen to prepare the way for the coming of Christ. He performed his mission by awakening expectation of the Messiah. It was his aim to elevate their conception of the greatness and excellence of the Promised Deliverer. And when the people began to muse and wonder whether he, prophet of the wilderness, was not the One Promised, it remained for him to discriminate between his own service and the office and work of Christ, in such a way as to show the latter would be far more closely searching and profoundly spiritual. Therefore he said, "I baptize with water; but He shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

The statement used by John was simple and not diverse. Baptism with the Holy Ghost and baptism with fire were concomitant ideas. Baptism of the Spirit would express the regenerative influence that should accompany the ministry of Christ; baptism with fire would express that inward strength and fervor, and devotedness, which should be imparted with spiritual life.

Such modes of expression were quite consonant to habits of the Jewish mind. Throughout the

record of Jewish history, fire had been the symbol of the Divine presence. It was seen in the bush upon Horeb, that illumined the mountain and shone on the wilderness, yet consumed not. It was seen in the pillar that guarded the night, encampment of Israel through their long journey. It was seen in that indescribable brightness which rested above the mercy-seat and beneath the overshadowing cherubim.

They, therefore, who were listening to John, would naturally receive his allusion to a baptism of fire as a clear intimation of a fresh disclosure of the power and presence of God.

We are not to look for full explanation of the words immediately following in the discourse of John, but should rather turn to another scene.

Jesus, not yet ascending, is saying to His disciples: "Wait for the promise of the Father. John baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Spirit."

"Not many days" they waited, and upon them the Holy Ghost descended like a mighty rushing wind. Then appeared tongues of flame, hovering, in mid-air, and resting on each of them. It was a baptism with the Spirit, and it was a baptism with fire. Those disciples speaking as the Spirit gave them utterance, and spending their energies as endowed with power from on high, afford us an example of what it is to realize the promised baptism: Then shall we not seek the same; and for the church, and for her ministry also, pray and entreat a baptism with the Spirit and with fire.

DYING HOURS OF FOUR INFIDELS.

When I came to my parish there existed in it an infidel club; the members were principally tradesmen, whose original object in meeting was probably more for the purposes of conviviality, than any open derision of the word of God. Their conversation, however, often turned on religious subjects, which were treated by them with the utmost contempt. The mistress of the house, as I understand, objected to have her Bible used, if its sacred contents were to be turned into ridicule; but this was, however, insufficient to deter the party from their profane designs, for another copy was soon procured in its place, and one of the members appointed preacher to the club. His business was to select such portions of Scripture as were most likely, by being perverted, to excite the mirth of his audience.

I had resided in the parish about a year and a half, when hearing that one of my parishioners, a tradesman, was taken ill, I called on him. The sick, and as it proved the dying man, was the very person who had acted as chief orator to the club. Not knowing his character, or the life which he had been leading, I addressed him generally on the necessity of vital religion, and of an entire dedication of the heart to God; dwelling on the comforts which religion holds out to those whose faith rests on Christ. Supposing me to be fully aware of his conduct, he received what I said as an allusion to his own state of mind, and with great clearness and talent, for he was a very clever man, described his state, and acknowledged his sins, yet expressed no hopes of pardon through the atonement of Christ. He was aware of his danger, yet he saw no way of salvation. Often by his shrewdness and wit he had raised a laugh against religion; but he now deeply felt the want of that consolation which faith in Christ can alone bestow. He wept profusely, earnestly expressing his resolutions of amendment should it please God to raise him from his bed. He never did rise, nor did I see him again; for whenever I called afterwards, which I did two or three times, I was constantly told that he was too ill to see me. Whether he was really senseless, or whether his friends did not wish me to see him, I do not know.

The second person was of a very different character; a man of little natural talent, but of so nervous a habit, and such ungoverned temper, that at times he seemed almost deranged. Such was the general opinion of his character, that when I was told of his sickness, a friend who was present, on hearing my determination to visit him, urged me to consider the matter, as I should certainly be insulted. My friend, seeing I had determined to go, offered to accompany me, but I declined his offer; and was much surprised, on entering the sick room, to find myself received with civility, and, after a few minutes, thanked for my visit. The patient was in a highly excited state. He entered into conversation freely, and appeared to be endeavouring to atone for his former sins, by studying the word of God with great diligence in his last hours. He did not seem to have attained to the most distant idea of salvation through Christ. He was completely without hope. I had to begin from the very foundation, and his mind was too much weakened to comprehend clearly what he read. One morning I found him reading a book which had been lent him by a neighbour. Being anxious to guard him against error, I requested to see it. It proved to be a religious work; I took it into my hands, and pointing out the general scheme of salvation as contained in it, called his attention to those subjects on which I thought he had displayed the greatest ignorance; encouraged him to persevere in prayer; and added, that though he had slighted the call till the eleventh hour, he must strive to work for one hour, at least, in the Lord's vineyard. He seemed strongly impressed; and the next day, when I alluded to the conversation, he took out the book to show me how many pages he had read since I had seen him; for he did not seem as yet at all to understand the nature of a Christian's hope. On another occasion, when I endeavoured to show the love of God in having spared him, and not taken him out of the world in the midst of his profane

ness, his mind seemed to be softened by former recollections, and he called to his memory the time when he regularly attended church with his family. "Those were happy days, sir," said he. I alluded to his neglect of public worship of late years; "Yes," he replied; "I first had a dispute about a seat; I then neglected church. Sometimes on a fine day I walked to a church in the country; but latterly, from evil company and indifference, I have never attended any place of worship." His sickness continued, and he at last felt himself sinking into the grave. After he had taken entirely to his bed, I was one day sitting by him, and speaking of the love of God in the redemption of man, and that he would "in no wise cast out" those who came to him by Christ, I referred to various passages of Scripture. He turned to me with an eye inflamed at once by madness or fever, and by horror at the approach of death; confessed his sins in the sight of God, and called on me to save his soul. I told him salvation was from Christ alone, and that I could not save him. "Yes," said he, half raising himself out of bed, and throwing his arm on my shoulder; "but you can guide me." I told him, that must be done by the Spirit of God alone; but that I would kneel down and pray for that Spirit. He seemed to pray fervently. I saw him for a few days; but he gradually wandered more and more in conversation, and his mind and body at last giving way together, he sank, and died.

The third was of another disposition of mind; a low, depraved man, given up entirely to self-indulgence. At the death of the first person above mentioned, he attended the funeral; and on the following Sunday appeared at church. I forgot entirely the subject of the sermon, but remember that in the midst of it he cried out, "That is I," and disturbed the congregation. I turned to the spot, but all was again silence. He however repeated the exclamation two or three times, and was with difficulty kept quiet by the neighbours. I suspected at the time, and I believe now, that he was partly intoxicated. I took an opportunity of speaking to him, but apparently made no impression. He went on in his former sottishness, and died in a state of senseless stupidity. I visited him several times, but only once found him in a fit state for religious conversation; I then recalled to his mind our former interview, and his total neglect of my advice. He acknowledged the truth of my observations, promised an entire change if he recovered, then relapsed into his former insensibility, and expired.

The fourth was a man of strong reasoning powers, self-willed, passionate, of profligate habits, and generally unpopular. His idea was, that he knew everything, and was wiser than any other person in the affairs of this world, as well as those of eternity. He argued, I understand, with great acuteness. I found him ill one day when I was visiting a sick child, and fancying that he was himself in great danger from the symptoms I perceived, I addressed a few words to him also. He had, I believe, felt my attention to his son, and wished not to appear angry with me, but rose up, walked across the room, and seemed displeased while I repeated the leading doctrines of the Christian faith, and said that I hoped when he approached death, he would feel the comforts of religion. He was civil, but endeavoured to turn the conversation, by saying, "I am ill, certainly, sir; but I shall not die yet." I did not press the subject any further at that time; but urged him to read a work, the reasoning of which I thought would suit his state of mind, and perhaps lead him to further inquiry. But it was to no purpose; he would not read, and avoided me afterwards. He became worse, and after a sickness of a few days died. I saw him only once during his illness, and that was after he had ceased to speak; but I have no reason to suppose that he showed any contrition. I am happy, however, to say, that his death decidedly raised the attention of his family to religious subjects.

The unbelief of these persons arose, I fully believe, from immorality. And every person who indulges in any sin whatever, whether of temper or the senses, takes one step towards infidelity; and if he continues in it, deprives himself of the consolations held out in the gospel to believers. Our Saviour declares, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John iii. 19. The love of sin leads men to reject the Lord Jesus Christ, and his holy laws. Do you believe in him as the "way, the truth, and the life?" Are you resting all your hopes on him as the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world?" Here only can you be safe and happy in life and death. "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16.

NEGLECTING THE GREAT SALVATION.—Most of the calamities of life are caused by simple neglect. By neglect of education children grow up to weeds and briars; by neglect of sowing a man will have no harvest; by neglect of reaping the harvest will rot in the fields. No worldly interest can prosper where there is neglect; and why may it not be so in religion? There is nothing in earthly affairs that is valuable that will not be ruined if it is not attended to, and why may it not be so with the concerns of the soul? Let no one infer, therefore, that because he is not a drunkard, or an adulterer, or a murderer, that therefore he will be saved. Such an inference would be as irrational as it would be for a man to infer that because he is not a murderer his farm will produce a harvest, or that because he is not an adulterer therefore his merchandize will take care of itself. Salvation would be worth nothing if it cost no effort; and there would be no salvation where no effort is put forth.—Barnes.