

The Religious Intelligencer.

AN EVANGELICAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER FOR NEW BRUNSWICK AND NOVA SCOTIA.

Rev. J. McLeod.

"THAT GOD IN ALL THINGS MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST."

Peter.

[Editor and Proprietor.]

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WORLDLY AMUSEMENTS.

BY PRESIDENT CHARLES G. WINNEY.

A few more words will be permitted, perhaps, on the subject of worldly amusements. In these articles, I, of course, use the term amusements in the popular sense of pleasure-seeking, by a resort to worldly entertainments, agreeable sports, and pastimes. The question often arises, "Are we never to seek such amusements?" I answer: It is our privilege and our duty to live above a desire for such things. All that class of desires should be extinguished by living so much in the sight of God, and having so deep a communion with him as to have no relish for such amusements whatever. It is certainly the privilege of every child of God to walk so closely with him, and maintain so divine a communion with him as not to feel the necessity of worldly excitements, sports, pastimes, and entertainments, to make his enjoyment satisfactory. If a Christian avails himself of his privilege of communing with God, he will naturally and by an instinct of his new nature, repel solicitations to go after worldly amusements. To him such pastimes will appear low, unsatisfactory, and even repulsive. If he is of a heavenly mind, as he ought to be, he will feel as if he could not afford to come down and seek enjoyment in worldly amusements. Surely a Christian must be fallen from his first love, he must have turned back into the world, before he can feel the necessity or have the desire of seeking enjoyment in worldly society. To such a mind that society is necessarily repulsive. Worldly society is insincere, hollow, and to a great extent a sham. What relish can a spiritual mind have for the gossip of a worldly party of pleasure? None whatever. To a mind in communion with God, their worldly spirit and ways, conversation and folly is repulsive and painful, as it is so strongly suggestive of the downward tendency of their souls, and of the destiny that awaits them.

I have had so marked an experience of both sides of this question, that I think I can not be mistaken. Probably but few persons enjoy worldly pleasure more intensely than I did before I was converted; but my conversion followed it, completely extinguished all desire for worldly sport and amusements. I was lifted at once into entirely another plane of life and another kind of enjoyment. From that hour to the present, the mode of life, the pastimes, sports, amusements, and worldly ways that so much delighted me before, have had a positive aversion to them. I have never felt heavily, I must say, that my Christian life has been a happy one. I have had as much enjoyment as is probably best for men to have in this life, and never for an hour have I had the desire to turn back and seek enjoyment from anything the world can give. But some may ask, "Suppose we do not find sufficient enjoyment in religion, and really desire to go after worldly amusements. If we have the disposition, is it not as well to gratify it?"

There is any more sin in seeking amusements than in entertaining a longing for them?" I reply that professed Christians are bound to maintain a life consistent with their profession. For the honor of religion, they ought to deny worldly lusts, and not, by seeking to gratify them, give occasion to the world to scoff and say that Christians love the world as well as they do. If professors of religion are backslidden in heart and entertain a longing for worldly sports and amusements, they are bound by every consideration of duty and decency to abstain from all outward manifestations of such inward lustings. Some have maintained that we should conform to the ways of the world somewhat—at least, enough to show that we can enjoy the world and religion too; and that we make religion appear repulsive to unconverted souls by turning our backs upon what they call their innocent amusements. But we should represent religion as it really is—as a living, above-hand in that of Christ, and keeps it there. He will be led safe and certainly home to God. All these excuses of youth, of middle life, and old age, for not coming to Christ, are indeed worthless in the sight of God.

Life is a great fact. Religion is the only guide that can lead us out of the labyrinth of its mysteries into the clear sunlight of God's presence. The evidences of christianity are more than probabilities, and these great truths are joined to the destiny of the immortal soul. Is it wise then to excuse ourselves from becoming christians?

We press the thought of personal duty and obligation upon each one who has never found in Christ the hope that maketh not ashamed. Indeed, from what do many seek to be excused? From the hope of heaven through Christ. From loving God and keeping his commandments. From the joys of religion now, and from the comforts of religion in death. From the presence of Christ, from the joy of the redeemed, from the rest of heaven. From these things, and from all they include and promise, men turn away as if it were a privilege to be shut out from all forever.

The real cause of all this indifference is in the alienation of the heart from God. Those who are disposed to find truth in the religion of Christ, can do so. Those who feel they need salvation in the way of the gospel, will realize that they are in danger of being lost, and are convicted of their sinfulness, do not try to frame excuses. Eternity too will take away all men's evils, objections, and self-interest. Speechless and without excuse, by and by.

PRAYER FOR MINISTERS.

The Apostles were men, and needed and desired the aid of their fellow Christians; hence we find Paul saying, "Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified." The ministers of the gospel in the present day feel the same need, have a similar desire, and are warranted in using the same language to their brethren and sisters in Christ.

Ministers are exposed to temptation. Their official position makes them prominent marks for the devil and his emissaries. If an opponent in warfare seeks to tamper with members of the other side, officers rather than privates are selected to be dealt with; and sharpshooters are often stationed in certain places for the special purpose of picking off the officers of an army. And so the devil will seek to lead ministers from duty, or to cause them to fall. Therefore christians should pray especially for ministers, that they may understand themselves and realize the motives by which they are actuated; that they may discern the approach of evil, come in what form it may, and that they may be able to resist temptation of every kind, steadily, continuously, and earnestly. We note here, however, that we differ from those, who think that, as a rule, ministers are in special danger of falling into great sins. We think that their great dangers lies in temptations to omissions of duty; and to little deviations from propriety. But these things, with serious consequences, are often fraught with serious consequences.

Ministers have a difficult work to perform. They have prejudices to overcome; and these are often strong, very strong. The preconceived notions of men are often, and usually, in direct opposition to the teaching of the Scriptures; and men hold tenaciously to these preconceived opinions. There are discordant elements and feelings to be harmonized. One will not accept the gospel for himself, because he thinks he sees so much inconsistency in the conduct of christians; and another will not do that he knows to be his duty, because he has a prejudice against somebody. Therefore, christians should pray that ministers may be endowed with wisdom from on high; that they may know what to do, and what to say, in the difficult positions in which they are placed; that they may be faithful in dealing with all classes of persons; that they may be plain in their instructions; that men may not be able to misunderstand the truth; and that they may be persevering in their efforts, and not be easily discouraged.

Ministers can not succeed without divine help. This statement is true of all men, whatever their employment or their profession; and it is especially true of ministers, who are engaged in proclaiming scriptural truths, which the natural man does not understand, because they are spiritually discerned, and in dealing with men who are in error, and are unwilling to be convinced of it; who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil, and who prefer the death of sin, to the life of righteousness. Therefore, christians should pray that ministers may be taught of God; may have skill to divide aright the word of God, giving to every one his portion in due season; and they should also pray that the Holy Spirit may bless the word preached, and press it upon the hearts of the hearers, so that it may lead sinners to see their lost and ruined condition, and to trust in Jesus Christ for salvation, and that it may lead believers to draw closer to Jesus Christ, to rely more implicitly upon him, and to live more consistent and devoted lives.

The apostle Paul assumes that the spread and reception of the gospel is an object of interest to christians, hence he enforces his request for their prayers by adding, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified. And is he not correct in assuming this? Does not every christian desire that the word of the Lord may have free course? Do they not desire the glory of God? Is not this desire the natural result of love to Christ? And do we not realize that Jesus Christ has known that God would answer prayer. He has realized it in his own personal experience. He has seen it in the cases of others. He has known cases in which in answer to prayer, the obstructions which were in the way of the progress of the truth have been removed. He has seen those who have been stout hearted against the gospel of Jesus Christ; who in answer to prayer have been brought under its influence, and have been led to yield to its power. And there is nothing unphilosophical about her claim. They say that it is unreasonable to expect that God should alter his plan because men pray unto him. But is not this a part of his plan? God has his plan about the giving to men the fruits of the earth, but in general this gift is dependent on, and follows the labors of the husbandman; and why may not the bestowal of spiritual blessings be dependent on, and a result of prayer? Is there any more change of plan in one case than in the other? Is not the one just as reasonable as the other? And are not both eminently fitting and proper?

And the word of God is glorified when his word has free course. Its proclamation is more efficient. Its results are more evident. It is seen to be the power of God unto salvation in those who believe, and to have a sanctifying influence upon men. And God is glorified in the success of his word. His loving kindness and grace are made known. He is proved to be the friend of men. Able to save, willing to save, to save to the uttermost. Looking at this whole matter, we see that self-interest should lead christians to pray for ministers, for they cannot receive blessings from God without their brethren receiving a

CHRIST KNOCKING.

How does he knock? Various—sometimes gently, sometimes loudly. What, now, is the language of a literal knock? What does it involve? Three things: 1. Some one is outside—the knock indicates it. 2. The person within, is the recognized proprietor of the house, whose it is to open the door. 3. The person within wishes to enter; the knock telegraphs it to the ear within.

You may be in the cellar, the attic, the kitchen, the parlor—the knock without conveys these three things to your mind. The same holds true of Christ's knocking. He is without—excluded from every unregenerate heart. He wants to enter. The sinner must open the door. "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in." Christ knocks largely through the agency of the Holy Spirit. By means of the truth conveyed to the soul through the eye or the ear. He whom Christ sent into the world, knocks at the hearts of sinners.

One Sabbath morning an avowed Universalist read these words, "He who converts a sinner from the error of his way, will save a soul from death." "Wife," said he, "what does this mean? What death is here referred to? It can't be the death of the body, for people die after they are converted. It must be the death of the soul." That knock knocked all his Universalism out of him, and he was soon rejoicing in Christ.

"Did you ever pray?" said a christian wife to her christian companion. In one week he was a new man. He found no peace until he found it in believing. That was the knock that led him to open the door.

During a protracted meeting in Maine a careless young lady heard, in the dead hour of the night, the voice of prayer. It came from the minister who was stopping at her father's house. Curious to know what he was praying for, she listened. The man of God, supposing that only the ear of God heard, was pouring out his soul in supplication for that thoughtless young woman. That was the knock which led Christ into her heart.

An unconverted young woman stands by the bedside of a dying Christian. They have loved each other like two sisters. Unable to articulate, the dying one speaks through her eye. Catching the eye of her friend, and looking upward, she silently and significantly says to her, "Meet me up there." A single tear slid out from under the eyelid and, pausing on her pallid cheek, and remained there after the spirit had fled. To the survivor that crystal sermon was the most effective sermon ever addressed to her. No rest could she find, though she struggled for months, till she opened the door and let Christ in. For twenty-five years that individual has been the companion and helper of a minister of Jesus.

COMFORT IN THE DARK HOUR.

"There never was such an affliction as mine," said a poor sufferer, restlessly tossing in her bed in one of the wards of a city hospital. "I don't think there ever was such a racking pain."

"One," was faintly uttered from the next bed. The first speaker paused for a moment; and then, in a still more impatient tone, resumed her complaint. "Nobody knows what I pass through. Nobody ever suffered more pain."

"One," was again whispered from the same direction. "I take it to mean yourself, poor soul!" but "O, not myself! not me!" exclaimed the other; and her pale face flushed up to the very temples, as if some wrong had been offered—not to herself, but to another.

She spoke with such earnestness that her restless companion lay still for several seconds, and gazed intently on her face. The cheeks were now wan and sunken, and the parched lips were drawn back from the mouth as if in pain. Yet there dwelt an extraordinary sweetness on the placid brow, such as can only be imparted by a heart-acquaintance with Him who is "full of grace and truth."

"O, not myself! not me!" she repeated. "There was a short pause; and then the following words, uttered in the same low tone, slowly and solemnly broke the midnight silence of the place: "And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand; and they bowed the knee before him, saying, Hail King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. . . . And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots. . . . And sitting down they watched him there. . . . And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads. . . . And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

The voice ceased, and for several minutes not a word was spoken. The night nurse rose from her chair by the fire, and mechanically handed a cup of barley water, flavored with lemon juice and sugar, to the lips of both sufferers. "Thank you, nurse," said the last speaker. "They gave him gall for his meat; and in his thirst they gave him vinegar to drink." "She is talking about Jesus Christ," said the other woman, already beginning to lose restlessly from side to side. "But," added she, "talking about his sufferings can't mend ours—at least not mine." "But it lightens ours," said the nurse. "I wonder how?" "Insh." And the gentle voice again took up the strain.

RANDOM READINGS.

SETTLED FOREVER.—Some persons are always confessing and re-confessing, repenting and re-repenting, and never can look upon any portion of their religious experience as a settled and accomplished fact.

A writer represents a minister to whom a deacon told over his tale of perpetual dolor as saying, "Deacon, I remember your son stontly rebelled against your authority, some time ago, but afterwards felt sorry and repented of his sin, and humbly asked your forgiveness. Did you forgive him?" "Of course I did." "What did you forgive him for?" "Because I could not help it, when I saw how sorry he was." "And does he still ask forgiveness?" "No—no! Nothing is said about it. It is all settled forever."

"Now, do you believe that you can be better to your son than God is to you. He pardons like a father." It is easy for a father to forgive his erring son. And sin once forgiven is settled forever between them. If the wanderer should come every day asking for forgiveness for what is already forgiven, and pleading for mercy when mercy has already been shown, would not the father feel both injured and insulted?

When the prodigal son had worn the best raiment, and eaten the fattest calf, and had received such tokens of his father's pitying and accepting love, would it have been fitting for him to plead with tears for forgiveness and acceptance? Would not every petition have been a proof that he doubted his father's sincerity, and disbelieved his words of loving welcome? What excuse could he have made for thus marring the joyousness of that festive hour in which the father said, "This my son was dead and is alive, was lost and he is found?" Would it have been fitting in him to have refused a place at the feast because he was unworthy, or to have hidden away in some corner in shame and tears, while his father's heart was glowing with affection for his repentant son?

MONKEY FOR CHRIST.—There is an insupportable connection between spiritual prosperity and Christian liberality. "Ho that watereth shall be watered also himself." Prov. 11: 24, 25; Luke 9: 38; Prov. 3: 9; Deut. 15: 7, 8, 10; Isaiah 32: 8; Matt. 25: 40; 2 Cor. 9: 6, 7; Acts 20: 35. The reader will please refer to the above texts. Facts confirm their truth.

An English gentleman gave the first year eighty dollars to the Bible Society and increased his contributions from year to year, until he gave over twenty thousand dollars annually. When asked how his charities increased so largely, he answered "the more I give the more I get." The poor people of Glasgow, Scotland, used to say that "David Dale gave his money by shovelfuls, and God Almighty shovelled it back again." Some years ago a Christian worker, who has long devoted his life to voluntary religious labors in the West, stopped in a large town where he was a stranger to every one. Stepping into the store of a prominent merchant, who was noted for christian activity, he introduced himself to the proprietor, and remarked that he would remain for a few days, visit the families, gratuitously circulate religious publications, etc. "Well," replied the merchant, "I have heard of you before, and here is five dollars to help you along."