

## DIGNITY OF CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP.

In the Old Testament and in the New, we read of men who despised their birth-right; and in our own times we meet with many in the Christian church who have no true idea of the dignity of the relation in which they stand, and who treat it, therefore, with a sort of relative contempt. It was not so in apostolic days. Then those who joined the church did so at every hazard. To be allowed to occupy such a position before heaven, angels and men, to receive Christ's baptism, to be called by his name, to enter into a visible association of his own forming in order to realize the designs of his Messiahship, is a privilege and an honor which will be better understood in a future state of being than it is in the present. For, hereafter, we shall be more deeply impressed with the greatness of Christ's condescension toward us, and, of course, with the dignity of an acknowledged relation to Him in which angels might glory.

Now, to discharge well the duties of such a position is a matter of great moment on account of the sublime end for which the church, as a divine institution, was founded; on account of the love which the Saviour bears to her, and the issues involved in her success. For the church is the only voluntary association in the world which bears on it the impress of Christ's authority. The family, and the civil State, to be sure, are institutions of divine origin, being founded in nature and necessity; but in these we find ourselves without any act of choice on our part, having, at our natural birth entered both. The church, however, is an association established by our Lord, into which we can enter aught only by our own act, in the spirit of obedience and of love; and it is the only institution on which he has placed his peculiar sanction, founding it upon his Messiahship, and saying of it, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He loved his church as a visible institution, commended its welfare to all who would serve him, so that apostles, disciples, and a whole army of martyrs rejoiced to promote its prosperity even at the cost of self-denial, pain and death. If then we would "strive lawfully" for the benefits connected with this membership, involving our own spiritual good, the extension of religion and the approbation of God, we must, as the faithful did in ancient times, set the church in our estimation far above every other institution—must cherish and honor it for the love we bear to its exalted Head, and for our brethren and companions' sake must say, "Peace be within thee."

Yes, professing Christian! if you treat Christ's church as secondary to any other institution, it can do you but little good, and you can bring it but little profit or honor. If you give your time, your thoughts, your energy, your property, so much to other associations that you are seldom prepared to meet the calls of the church, you may be sure that our divine Lord will never reward or thank you, or call you "blessed" on account of the trifling fragment you bestow, as if that came from the heart like a gift of love. All this sin of omission you may be guilty of without an immediate rebuke from Him. To use an expression of Paul, you may "DESPISE THE CHURCH OF GOD"—you may turn your back upon its assemblies, you may wish that it were more exclusive so as to welcome only those who possess congenial natures instead of receiving men and women of all classes, the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, and every repenting sinner who comes knocking at its door for admission—you may slight her invitation to be one of her true co-workers on the ground that you find more pleasure and get more good in other fellowships—nevertheless, it is clear from the Scripture that in the end you will see that you have committed an irretrievable mistake, that when all the beauty, and grace, and fashion of human institutions have perished, that the church will then emerge from all obscurity, will be free from every imperfection, and will be hailed as all worthy into the angelic brotherhood.

Whosoever then would "strive lawfully" for this plenitude of blessing connected with a name and a place in the house of God, which is the church of God, "the pillar and the ground of the truth," let him honor it as an institution of Heaven, not of men; let him own that he is not worthy of the privilege of being in it, remembering that our Lord will reward a hearty service, but will treat as an indignity to himself, the offer of a condescending patronage to his cause, or any tribute of a cold and reluctant co-operation. He would

say of these, as he did of old respecting the "blind and lame" offered in sacrifice; "Offer these now to thy governor—will he accept them?" Let each one consider, that in his church-covenant which has received his pledged faith; there are no duties suggested, which Christ himself does not demand, that unless we give them high precedents in our plans of life we cannot adequately fulfil them, and that instead of receiving at last the plaudit, "Well done, faithful servant," every one, thus living, will be censured and dishonored as a slothful steward. The caution given to the Corinthian Christians, is as applicable now as ever, that is, that each one have a care lest in any thing he "give offence to the church of God," and see to it that he "excel to its edifying."—*Chris. Watchman and Reflector.*

## The Clock.

In every well-regulated counting-house you will find a clock, and the date of the month, and the day of the week glare there at you in large figures. You could not do without them. They talk with you from morning until eve. Now they say: you have to receive; then again; you have to pay. Make haste; the mail is about to close. Hurry on, your steamboat will leave. But five minutes and bank hours will be over. It is time for your breakfast or dinner. To-day is the thirty-first; settle up your accounts. It is the first day of the month; collect your dues. Every day, every hour, they have something to tell; and generally you are very attentive listeners. Now and then you look with a dissatisfied air at your time-keeper, and murmur *too late*; or you leave your friend in disgust, and complain that another day has gone by in which you have made nothing beyond your expenses.

But tell me, have you got a clock in your bedroom? Do you ever talk there with that faithful servant before you go to sleep? Just place yourself in your arm-chair right opposite to him; and he soon will commence talking. Look at him,—tic, tac, tic, tac;—a minute gone, forever. Five minutes \* \* \* five minutes nearer to eternity. "Eternity!" \* \* \* O, stop one moment; let me collect my thoughts. \* \* \* tic, tac; he does not hear you; you would wish to stop those slow moving fingers, but they go—and onward. When you entered into this world the clock spoke: *a time to be born*; once he will speak: *a time to die*. But now he says: *a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to keep silence and a time to speak—a time to labor and a time to pray—a time to eat and a time to thank God*. Now he speaks: *Have you made up your accounts with your fellow-men? Have you forgiven them their trespasses? Have you remembered the poor, the orphan and the widow?* Ten o'clock. *This night thou mayest die. How stands your account with God?*

Look at that clock a moment longer; ask yourselves: "What have I done this morning from VI to VII? Did I arise with a word of praise to the Father of lights?" VII to VIII. "Did I commence my business in the name of Jesus Christ?" Let your thoughts follow the ciphers on the face of your always onward moving companion, and before you reach the hour of ten for the second time, you will surely have remembered that many things remained undone which should have been done; many words been spoken which you should wish to efface; many thoughts entered your heart which you did not combat and conquer; but if your clock then might bring you down upon your knees with the prayer: LORD, TEACH ME SO TO NUMBER MY DAYS THAT I MAY APPLY MY HEART UNTO WISDOM, you will find you clock not such a bad friend after all. You will seek oftener his solitary company; you will like to commune with him; by-and-by you will find it easier to settle his claims on you; and when at last he will speak the solemn word, *Time to die*, you may be found ready and willing to exchange this life, which is but a vapor that appeareth for a little time, for a world where time shall be no longer.—*N. O. Presbyterian.*

## Dying in Peace.

A mother in Israel entered upon her last illness. Her mind was clear, as she looked at death and the scenes beyond it. The nature of the account which she was about to render to an infinitely holy Judge, overwhelmed her. She was afraid to appear before Him, and have her destiny unalterably fixed for eternity. For two days she was in great distress of soul.

The next day she appeared to be dying. Then the light of God's countenance was lifted upon her, and her mouth was full of praises. "I feel," said she, "as if I had the presence of God with me, and I lift my heart in humble thankfulness. Is this reality, or is it delusion? God has appeared for me, and granted me more than I could ask or even think. I hoped to be accepted at last; but such comfort in this world is more than I expected. Why are his chariot wheels so long in coming? Lord, come quickly!"

"Are you in haste to leave us?" said one. "Oh, I will wait God's time," was her reply. She soon fell into a gentle sleep. When she awoke her raptures had departed; but perfect calmness and peace of mind remained. One asked her if she was willing to live? "I have no will about it," was her reply.

She remained several days in this state of mind. At length manifest symptoms of death began to appear. Her bodily pains were very great; but in the midst of them she exclaimed, "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." As she lingered, some one expressed the hope that death might not be so near as they had supposed.

"I hope I am dying," said she. "Lord Jesus receive my departing spirit: come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Shortly afterwards she expired.

"That," said one who witnessed her departure, "is dying in peace."

Who will not exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous,—let my last end be like his?" Who will live the life of the righteous?—*N. Y. Observer.*

## Conscience never Dies.

A Jeweller, a man of good character and of considerable wealth, having occasion to travel, in the way of his business, at some distance from the place of his abode, took his servant. He had with him some of his best jewels and a large sum of money. The master having occasion to dismount on the road, the servant took a pistol from his master's saddle and shot him dead on the spot; then rifled him of his jewels and money; and hanging a large stone to his neck, he threw him into the nearest canal. With his booty he made off to a distant part of the country, where neither he nor his master was known. There he began to trade in a low way at first, that his obscurity might screen him from observation. In a course of years he rose into wealth, married into a good family, was esteemed among the people, had a share in the government, and at length was chosen chief magistrate. In this office he maintained a fair character, and continued to fill it with no small applause, both as governor and judge; till one day as he sat upon the bench with some of his brethren, a criminal was brought before him accused of murdering his master. The jury heard the cause, the testimony was full, and a verdict of guilty was pronounced. The assembly waited with anxiety to hear from the mouth of the first judge of the court the sentence of death. Meanwhile he appeared to be in unusual disorder and agitation of mind, and his color changed often. At length he rose from his seat, and coming down from the bench, placed himself just by the unfortunate man at the bar. "You see before you," said he, addressing the judges, "a striking instance of the just rewards of heaven, which this day, after thirty years' concealment, present to you a greater criminal than the one found guilty." Then he made ample confession of his guilt, and of all its aggravations. "Nor can I feel any relief," said he, "from the agonies of an awakened conscience, but by requiring that justice be forthwith done in the most solemn manner." We may easily imagine the amazement of the assembly, and especially of his fellow judges. However, they proceeded, upon this confession, to pass sentence of death upon him.

## Perils of Falsehood.

When once a concealment or deceit has been practiced in matters where all should be fair and open as the day—confidence can never be restored any more than you can restore the white bloom to the grape or plum which you have once pressed in your hand. How true is this! and what a neglected truth by a great portion of mankind. Falsehood is not only one of the most humiliating vices, but sooner or later it is most certain to lead to the most serious crimes. With partners in trade, with partners in life—with friends, with lovers, how important is confidence! How essential that all guile and hypocrisy should be guarded against, in the intercourse

between such parties! How much misery would be avoided in the history of many lives, had truth and sincerity been guiding and controlling motives, instead of prevarication and deceit. "Any vice," said a parent in our hearing a few days since, "any vice at least among the frailties of a milder character, but falsehood. Far better that my child should commit an error, or do a wrong, and confess it, than escape the penalty, however severe, by falsehood and hypocrisy. Let me know the worst, and a remedy may possibly be applied. But keep me in the dark—let me be misled or deceived, and it is impossible to tell at what hour a crushing blow, an overwhelming exposure, may come."

## The Absolute Duty of attending to our Spiritual Concerns.

By the nobler part of our nature we are placed in the most solemn relations to another economy. And *not to have a deep sense of this fact*, implies that *something is enormously wrong*. This immortal spirit was appointed but for a few years to this earth; but eternally to another state. And it is placed in relations comporting with its eternity of existence; to God the one infinite Being, the one sole perfect and independent essence; to the Redeemer, the Lord, and the life of the new economy; to an unseen state; to an order of exalted, holy and happy beings in that state; to a pure, exalted, and endless felicity in that state. And do I give, in conformity to one law of my nature, a great measure of my affection to the things to which I have a subordinate and temporary relation, and *refuse* affection towards those to which I have an eternal relation? How marvellous, and how lamentable, that the soul can consent to stay in the dust, when invited *above the stars*; having in its own experience the demonstration that this is not its world; knowing that even if it were, the possession will soon cease; and having a glorious revelation, and a continual, loud call from above!—*Rev. John Foster.*

## The Image of God in the Soul.

There is something in the expressions used to describe the work of the Christian, which ought to excite our attention. It is spoken of as the renewing of the lost image, or the likeness of God in the heart. Hence it is sometimes called *Godliness*, or *Godlikeness*. Our business then as Christians is to grow in the image or likeness of God. Many individuals would be very much flattered, if told that their personal charms were equal to some renowned *beauty*, whose praise has spread over the world. Others feel themselves highly honored when called a second Washington, or Howard, or Luther, or Calvin, or Wesley.—It is considered a great thing to be halting along after the footprints which the great and good who have gone before us have left upon the sands of time. But the image the Christian bears is not that of any earthly potentate, patriot, philanthropist, martyr, apostle or angel merely. It is the image of God in his soul. His life is an imitation of God. What a work it is to be like Him! What an honor to bear his image, and reflect his spirit among men; to speak, act, think and love somewhat as God does. Whatever God thinks, we should think, in our sphere of thought; as He desires, we should desire; as He feels, we should feel; as He loves, we should love. Do you understand this, or do we talk in an unknown tongue, when we speak of bearing the image of God in the soul? As this is what was lost in the first Adam, so it is what we are to regain in the second. Little does the Christian world know it is to be feared, the full import of these terms. If regenerated, we have begun to have formed within us this image of God; but what exalted heights are before us, in his matchless perfection in which we may grow and assimilate to God, and yet remain at such an infinite distance from Him. Let us then forsake every worldly passion, and let this heavenly ambition inspire and fill the soul. Why "grovel here below," and live at our "poor dying rate," when it is our privilege to "mount up with wings as eagles—to run and not be weary—to walk and not faint."—*Practical Preacher.*

## Christian Experience.

The Christian, in his suffering, is often tempted to think himself forgotten. But his afflictions are the clearest proof that he is an object both of Satan's enmity, and of God's fatherly discipline. Satan would not have man suffer a single trouble all his life long, if he might have his way. He would give him