

Spirituality in the Ministry.

How came it that under the ministrations of the apostles men were converted by thousands, and that, even before their death, Christianity was in the household of the Caesars? The immediate successors of the apostles were equally successful: "We are of yesterday," says Tertulian in his gorgeous apology, "yet we have filled your cities, your islands, your islands, your towns, your municipalities—the senate, the camp, the forum." This too was in the second century. Wonderful success! where was the hiding of their power? It has been hinted that to some fastidiously refined and intellectual hearers of the present day, Peter's pentecostal sermon would be tame when placed beside the efforts of some of our "best" modern divines! Where then was the hiding of their power? The apostles were men of like passions with ourselves. Aye, but they were men full of the Holy Ghost and spake as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance! The miracles they wrought did not convert men, these were but the seal of their commission—the gift of tongues did not, it was but a medium through which to communicate with mind—their spirituality alone made them pre-eminent in good works; and, so long as the successors of the apostles continued to be men full of the Holy Ghost, men dwelling near the throne, bathing their souls, freshly, every day in the dew of heaven, intent supremely on the glory of God in the conversion of men, their preaching "cut men to the heart" and the gospel went on conquering and to conquer.

But, alas! soon came the spirit of clerical pride and assuming hierarchism—and at this time there is no evidence that preaching had deteriorated intellectually, or that the pulpit was filled with men less cultivated or eloquent, or that any of the essential doctrines of the cross were kept back. No! they were only a little lifted up with that *pride* which is of the Devil. They could no longer say, "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," for vaulting ambition was beginning to consume them—that wicked was beginning to be revealed whose coming was with all deceivableness! Suddenly the windows of heaven are shut and the spirit is no more poured out, save here and there in local showers. Are those that stand at the altar humbled? Do they return and pray, "take not thy Holy Spirit from us?" No such thing! They yield to a surprising infatuation. Saul grieves Jehovah, and God answers him no more by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets, and his language is, "seek me out a woman that hath a familiar spirit," and, forthwith, there appears one "clothed in purple and scarlet and riding upon the beast," in her hand is a golden cup full of abominations, and she is drunk with the blood of saints.

We need say no more. We only repeat—the history of the ministry is the history of the church. As the ministry declined, the preaching declined into short, noisy and rapid exhortation, until at length it ceased and public worship was filled up with soulless pageantry. The reformation broke the slumbers of ten centuries; and here it is worthy of remark, that almost at the instant, pulpits, that for ages had been silent, or vocalized only by frothy eulogies on mother church or the benefits of indulgences, now resounding with the very truths that were uttered on the day of Pentecost and almost in the very manner.

Salvation only through Faith in the Atonement. This was the doctrine. Changes were rung upon it, but this was the alpha and the omega of the preaching. The clouds had been gathered, and the lightning had gleamed along the path of Wickliffe, and Huss, and Jerome of Prague, and Le Clerc of France, but with the preaching of Luther they met again awakening the nations as at the first.—*Chris. Observer*.

Training of the Conscience.

A seared conscience is the sinner's heritage. It is upon this that the Holy Spirit first lays his hand when he awakens the soul from its sleep of death. He touches the conscience, and then the struggles of conviction come. He then pacifies it by the sprinkling of the blood, showing it Jesus and his cross. Then giving it to taste forgiveness, it rests from all its tumults and fears. Thoughts of peace are ever breathed into it from the sight of the bleeding sacrifice. It trembles no more; for it sees that that which made it tremble, is that very thing concerning which the blood of Christ speaks peace. "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Thus it is softened. Its first terrors upon awaken-

ing could not be called a softening. But no conscious forgiveness and realized peace with God, have been to it like the mild breath of spring to the ice of winter. It has become soft and tender. Yet only so in part.

God's desire however, is to make it altogether tender. He wishes it to be sensitive in regard to the very touch of sin, and earnest in its pantings after perfect holiness. To effect this, he afflicts; and affliction goes directly home to the conscience. The death of the widow's son at Sarepta immediately awakened her conscience, and she cried to the prophet, "O man of God, art thou come to call my sin to remembrance?" 1 Kings xvii. 18. So God, by chastisement, lays his finger upon the conscience, and forthwith it starts up into new life. We are made to feel as if God had now come down to us; as if he were looking into our hearts, and commencing a narrow search. Moreover, we see, in this affliction, God's estimate of sin. Not indeed, the full estimate. No, that we only learn from the suffering of Jesus. But still we gather somewhat of his mind regarding sin, from this new specimen of sin's bitter fruits. This teaches the conscience, by making the knowledge of sin a thing of experience,—an experience that is deepening with every new trial. "If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction, then he showeth them their work and their transgressions: that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity." Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 10.

In these last days how little is there of tenderness of conscience! The world seems to know nothing of it save the name. It is a world without a conscience! And how much do we find the Church of Christ a partaker in the world's sins. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." It is sad to observe in many saints, amid much zeal, and energy, and love, the lack of a tender conscience. For this God is smiting us, and will smite us yet more heavily, until he has made it thoroughly tender and sensitive all over; "hating even the garments spotted by the flesh." This training of the conscience is a thing of far greater moment than many deem it. God will not rest till he has wrought it. And if the saints still continue to overlook it; if they will not set themselves in good earnest to ask for it, and to strive against everything that would produce seariness and insensibility, they may yet expect some of the sharpest strokes that the hand of God has ever yet administered.—*Rev. H. Bonar*.

Directions to Young Converts.

1. Be thankful for what God has done for you. Isa. xii. 1.
2. Be as earnest now as you were in seeking pardon. Heb. vi. 11.
3. Live every moment by faith in Christ. Gal. ii. 20.
4. Do not make the piety of others your standard. Matt. xvi. 24.
5. Do not expect to be very happy, unless you are eminently holy. Isa. xlvi. 18.
6. Diligently and by faith seek entire sanctification. Heb. vi. 1.
7. Punctually and devotionally attend the ministry of the Word. 1 Pet. ii. 2.
8. Value the weekly prayer-meeting. Matt. xviii. 20.
9. Neglect not the communion of saints. Mal. iii. 16.
10. Make family worship interesting and profitable. Ps. cxviii. 15.
11. Have your stated times for closet prayer. Matt. vi. 6.
12. Daily and prayerfully read the Scriptures. Ps. xix. 7.
13. Never neglect a duty because you do not feel much. 1 Sam. ii. 30.
14. Maintain great tenderness of conscience. 1 Tim. i. 5.
15. Guard against pride in your dress. 1 Tim. ii. 9.
16. Avoid all lightness in your conversation. Eph. v. 4.
17. Be very careful in your choice of companions. Prov. xiii. 20.
18. Never parley with the great adversary. James iv. 7.
19. Be zealous for the salvation of souls. James v. 20.
20. Joyfully wait for the coming of the Saviour. Phil. iii. 20.—*Samuel Dunn*.

Judas designated the traitor by giving him a sop, and thereby made palatable the Scripture prediction, that he was betrayed by one who

ate bread with him. Let this teach us that the enjoyment of great privileges does not of itself secure our salvation. Judas had all the means of conversion that the other disciples had, and yet he was the son of perdition. Divine Providence often bestows temporal favors upon those who are devoted to destruction through unbelief and impenitence. Worldly honors, riches, and pleasures are sops often given to the children of disobedience and heirs of wrath. Judas at first probably thought that he sop was a mark of peculiar favour. He probably thought himself the Benjamin of the company, having a mess by himself. And just so it is now. Wicked and ungodly men are permitted to prosper for a while in the world. They roll in luxury. They fare sumptuously every day. They are loaded with honors. Like the rich man in the Gospel, they have their good things now, and their evil things in the world to come. They have their portion here below. *The prosperity of fools, like a drugged cup, destroys them.* O Lord, let me not be so foolish as to envy the prosperity of the wicked, for thy sanctuary hath taught me thy dreadful end. *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.*—*N. O. Presb.*

"Ephraim is a Cake not Turned."

The cake here referred to (Hosea vii. 8) is a cake baked upon the coals. Compare 1 Kings xix. 6. It is "not turned," and therefore, burnt on the one side, and raw on the other. Let us apply the figure—

1. To the men whose consciences are like a cake not turned. On some points they are scrupulous enough, perhaps over-scrupulous; and on other points they are altogether unscrupulous. The evil is greatly aggravated when their conscientiousness runs on matters comparatively small, and leaves out of view the weightier matters of the law; or when it relates mainly to the sins of other people, and very little to their own personal sins. We have known men too conscientious to commune with the church to which they belonged, because of alleged misconduct on the part of that church, or of this or that member in it; but who, in such main matters as the government of their tongues, the religious education of their children, the sanctification of the Sabbath, kindness and liberality to the poor, forgiveness of enemies, communion with God in secret prayer, and tender concern for the salvation of men's souls, seemed to be strangely insensible. Surely their religion was "a cake not turned."
2. To the men whose zeal is a cake not turned—to-day burning with much smoke and a crackling noise, like thorns under a pot, to-morrow extinct. Like a comet that comes dashing in from the depths of space, past the steady evening star, and displaying a prodigious length of tail, as if he would put her to shame by his superior brilliancy, so these Christians now and then blaze forth with a transcendent glow of zeal, and are ready at such times to rebuke their brethren of more even piety, for their tardiness and languor. But anon they are off again where they were before, in the regions of coldness and death. The religion of these men, too, is "a cake not turned."
3. To the men who carry their religion only to certain places—say to the prayer-meeting, the lecture-room, or the communion service; but are not careful to maintain a godly walk in the family, the neighborhood, the shop, the store, the study, or wherever God appoints their daily station. All will agree that the religion of such men is "a cake not turned."—*Ohio Observer*.

The Jew. "Talk of pedigrees," says Blackwood; "tell us of the Talbots, Percys, Howards, and like mushrooms of yesterday! Show us a Jew, and we will show you a man whose genealogical tree springs from Abraham's bosom; whose family is older than the decalogue, and who bears incontrovertible evidence, in every line of his oriental countenance, of the authenticity of his descent through myriads of successive generations. You see in him a living argument of the truth of divine revelation; and in him you behold the literal fulfilment of the prophecies; with him you ascend the stream of time, not voyaging by the help of the dim, uncertain and fallacious light of tradition, but guided by an emanation of the light which to his nation, was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night; in him you see the representative of the once favoured people of God, to whom, as the chosen of mankind,

He revealed himself their legislator, protector and king; who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage.—You behold him established, as it were, forever in the pleasant places allotted to him, you trace him by the peculiar mercy of his God, in his transition states from bondage to freedom; and by the innate depravity of his human nature, from prosperity to insolvency, ingratitude and rebellion. Following him on, you find him the serf of Rome; you trace him from the smouldering ashes of Jerusalem, an outcast and a wanderer in all lands; the persecutor of Christ, you find him the persecuted of Christians, bearing all things, strong in the pride of human knowledge, stiff-necked and gainsaying, hoping all things, "For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and will set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob."

The Theatre.

The Rev. James Hervey was once on a journey with a lady who happened to be in the same carriage, and was expatiating in a particular manner on the amusements of the stage, as in her esteem superior to any other pleasures. Among other things, she said, there was the pleasure of thinking on the play before she went, the pleasure she enjoyed while there, and the pleasure of ruminating on it in her bed at night. Mr. Hervey, who sat and heard her discourse without interrupting her, when she concluded, said to her in a mild manner, that there was one pleasure besides what she had mentioned, which she had forgot. "What can that be?" said she, "for surely I included every pleasure when I considered the enjoyment before-hand, at the time, and afterward; pray what is it?" Mr. Hervey, with a grave look, and in a manner peculiar to himself, replied,—"Madam, the pleasure it will give you on your death-bed." A clap of thunder, or a flash of lightning, would not have struck her with more surprise—the stroke went to her very heart. She had not one word to say, but during the rest of the journey seemed quite occupied in thinking upon it. In short, the consequence of this well-timed sentence was, that she never, after, went to the play-house, but became a pious woman, and a follower of those pleasures which would afford her true satisfaction even on her death-bed.

Power of Prayer.

"There is no way that Christians in a private capacity can do so much to promote the work of God, and advance the kingdom of Christ, as by prayer. By this, even women, children and servants, may have a public influence. Let persons in other respects be ever so weak, and ever so mean, and under ever so poor advantages to do much for Christ and the souls of men—yet if they have much of the spirit of grace and supplication, in this way they may have power with him who is infinite in power, and has the government of the whole world. A poor man in his cottage may have a blessed influence all over the world. God is, if I may so say, at the command of the prayer of faith—and in this respect is, as it were, under the power of his people—as princes, they have power with God and prevail." Though they may be private persons, their prayers are put in the name of a mediator, who is a public person, being the head of the whole Church, and the Lord of the universe. If they have a great sense of the impotence of eternal things, and a concern for the precious souls of men, they need not regret that they are not preachers—they may go in their earnestness and agonies of soul, and pour out their souls before one who is able to do all things.—*President Edwards*.

Wants.

There is a great want of missionaries.—There is a great want of ministers. There is a great want of true and living Christians. There is a great want of revivals of religion. There is a great want of prayer. There is a great want of faith. There is a great want of humility, love, deep anxiety for souls, and a holy consecration to God. "Lord help, or we perish."—*N. O. Presb.*

Wealth.

Martin Luther said, "Wealth is the smallest gift of God: What is it to be compared with His word, or corporeal gifts, such as beauty, health, and activity? What is to the gifts of the mind, such as intellect, science and taste?"