

INFINITE WISDOM EMPLOYED FOR US.

When we are told to cast all our care upon God, for he careth for us, we are told that God employs his mind for us, and takes up our burden of care, and bears it himself—that we may spare our solicitudes and anxious stretch of mind, because God's mind has come to bear more effectually upon that which makes us anxious. If it be needful things that awake our solicitudes we need not be anxious. For our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of these things. He knows it, and that is enough. He has anticipated our wants, and will not be slow to meet them. If we are in covenant with God, we have engaged to provide for every real want, Jehovah-jireh.—A man of large wealth and many cares sometimes employs a steward to bear the cares of his master's house, and relieve him of the burden. But here the master of the house assumes the cares of the servants. Sitting in the store house of his boundless wealth, he looks out upon us; and before our need is known to ourselves, his messenger is on foot to bring the supply.

Often when in perplexities and straits, we are made to realise how short-sighted we are. Evils are impending, which we know not how to escape; and we say, Oh that I had the wisdom of God, to foresee and forelay events for this occasion! But that is just the thing promised in that word, "He careth for you." He who has said, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God," has in that saying pledged all his own skill to direct the working of all things for the good of them that love him. This promise opens a field on which we see all things and events set forth in a train, as so many of God's workmen: each doing his work under the direction of God's hand, and therefore working effectually for the good of them that love God. This is nothing more, nor less than Infinite Wisdom working for us—caring for us. For the occasion, Infinite Wisdom becomes ours as effectually securing our good, as if it were an attribute of our own minds. It is as well to have God employ his wisdom in caring for us, as it would be, if he could, to give his wisdom to us, and let us employ it for ourselves. If we have unerring wisdom, planning and directing events for us, that may extinguish every care.

The like may be said of God's power pledged to work for us. We are often called to breast the strength of a current of events seemingly adverse, and to feel how weak and helpless we are, and to sigh for a power like God's, to turn aside or overrule the adverse events. It is then that we have need to know that Infinite Power is pledged, and is working for us—that there is one caring for us who can and does order events just as he will. If disasters happen to the children of God, it is not because he could not prevent, nor because he did not care, but because he saw that they would be for good—and that the trial of their faith was more precious than that of gold.—The disasters are not the results of a stronger power working against us, but of a power working for us, that is able to bring good out of evil, and a power that nothing can resist.

"He careth for you." He gives you the use of his infinite wisdom and power, to control events for you, and bring all to an issue, as happy for yourself as if it cared for you alone. He gives you infinite wisdom, not to be used by yourself, not subject to your will, but exercised according to the good pleasure of his own will, and thus he secures for you its best and most perfect use. He does not place the mighty engine of Infinite Providence in your own hand, but he appropriates to you both the engine and the services of the engineer. He careth for you. Are you in deep distress, and at your wits' end? You may know that God is pursuing a plan that embraces all needful provision for you, and that by him all the complexity and darkness of present events will have a solution satisfactory to yourself. Are you, in obedience to his call, engaged in enterprises too great for your own skill and strength, and have you the burden of the cares of a seemingly hopeless work? Remember that he careth for you, and brings his own skill and power to the task. In a conflict for Christ, do you wrestle with principalities and powers, ye may go forth clad in God's armor, and in the use of God's strength.

The paths of virtue, though seldom those of worldly greatness, are always those of peace, sanctity and peace.

ROBERT HALL'S PRAYERS.

The sentiments of the following paragraph we admire, and it is gratifying to see such testimonies to the devotional habits of one of the greatest men of any age. We cannot agree with Mr. Foster in the view which he takes of Mr. Hall's devotional exercises, nor indeed with the principle on which his remarks are founded. Mr. Foster appears to have been disappointed because his public prayers did not partake of that intellectual character which distinguished his preaching, but was, as he thinks, the very reverse in respect to concentration and determination in the direction of thought; and he "cannot tell on what principle it was that he preferred a manner so different in that exercise from its operation in all other employments." Our conception is, that if his prayers had possessed that character of consecutiveness and intellectuality for which Foster pleads, they would have lost much of their charm and real power. A discourse in which it is proposed to instruct men should be, in our opinion, very different in its general character from the utterances of the heart before God. In the latter case whatever has the air of labored preparation is irrelevant and out of place. Surely one of the great elements of devotion is its spontaneity, its feeling, its simplicity, and as we may say, its entire artlessness; and we cannot but believe that this vivid conception of the true design of prayer was the principle in Mr. Hall's mind, which Mr. Foster thinks "cannot be known or conjectured." From this resulted the humble earnestness, the holy aspirations, the awe, the pathos, which characterized his prayers. He, in a sense, laid aside the man, and became wholly the saint, whenever he ascended the mount of communion with God. In preaching, he moved in an element of light—in prayer, in the element of love.

So habitually devout and vigorous was his mind, that he was capable of the most sudden and singular transitions from intercourse with man to intercourse with Heaven. The following is a curious instance of this. Mr. Hall had been indulging in that species of innocent merriment and jocularity to which he sometimes yielded; and in the midst of a very humorous story, the clock struck twelve, in an instant he laid down his pipe, exclaiming, "Sir, it is midnight, and we have not had family prayer." The next moment he was on his knees, absolutely absorbed in devotion, and pouring forth the most solemn and reverential petitions at the footstool of mercy.

Another instance of his religious ardour and filial tenderness, occurred at Arnsby, on a visit. It was related to the present writer by one of the witnesses. On his way from Leicester he had expatiated on his father's excellences, and the scenes of his earliest days. As soon as he entered the house in which his father had resided, he hastened into the parlor, fell on his knees, and poured forth the most devout and fervent supplications. The two or three individuals who were present speedily withdrew, that they might not interrupt his feelings. Soon afterwards he went into the burial ground, and dropping on his knees at his father's grave, with his hands extended over the monumental stone and his eyes closed, he offered up an extraordinary series of petitions. Among these he breathed forth an impassioned desire to "join the blessed company above;" and entreated that he might be "permitted to know his departed father in the heavenly world; and that their united prayers, often presented on earth, might then be turned into praise, while they beheld their Redeemer face to face together."

LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR.

The love of our neighbor involves the love of his soul, and a concern as real for the redemption of his soul as for the salvation of our own. If we love the soul of our neighbor, there will be an affectionate and tender inquiry into its state towards God; compassion for it in its perilous condition; readiness to inform it of what is essential to its restoration and happiness; intense anxiety that it should not indulge false and ruinous hopes; a holy watchfulness for its best interests; and readiness to prevent any injury from befalling it, just like that promptness which we see when all around the family hearth rush to remove a spark of fire from the dress of a friend. In every age of the world men have endeavoured to burst asunder the bands of the responsibility for the souls of others. This was the spirit of

Cain. God held him responsible for the welfare of Abel; but even amid the cries of his brother's blood rising loud to heaven, he was reckless, and by his recklessness he became accursed. In the account of his stewardship he insulted his God with the query, "Am I my brother's keeper?" When the blood of a reeking world cries to God, "No one careth for my soul?" shall the church of Christ, in the spirit of Cain, reply, "Am I my brother's keeper?" or "Who is my neighbor?" Let it rather, like Aaron, "take a censer and put fire therein from off the altar, and put on incense, and go quickly unto the congregation, and stand between the dead and the living that the plague may be stayed."

The insensibility and the recklessness of the Jewish church are expressed with terrible truth in the reply of the chief priest and the elders to Judas. When his conscience awoke to the unexampled guilt of his treachery and crime, he became from compunction and remorse, concerned for his soul, and returned the hire of unrighteousness to the dignitaries that had employed him, saying "I have sinned." Instead of cherishing his contrition, and promoting the repentance, they replied, with a cold indifference that must have chilled and withered him, "What is that to us? see thou to that." When we are shocked with such instances of brutal irreligiosity, we are inclined to think that no pressure of temptation would compel us to imitate it; yet when we read of the crimes and the cruelties, the wrongs and the sufferings of the heathen, though our lips would not express and our hands would not pen, still our hearts and our conduct actually say "What is that to us?" Such a spirit in the Christian is as outrageous and inhuman as it was in the Jewish church. God has made the Christian church to be its heathen brother's keeper. To every Christian this is the message of God: "When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man! thou shalt surely die, if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his sins—but his blood will I require at thine hand." It was after Paul had kept back from men nothing that was profitable, but shown them and taught them publicly, and from house to house, that he took them to record that he was pure from the blood of all men.—*Jenky.*

RELIGION GIVES EMINENCE TO CHARACTER.

Religion is calculated and intended to give eminence to the character of its possessor; and this it could not do without being an influential and a master principle. A form of eminence will never give real distinction to a character. Pedantry is the form of learning, flattery is the form of praise, a counterfeit is the form of a sterling coin, doggerel is the form of poetry, daubing is the form of painting; and rites and ceremonies are the forms of devotion. These things never give eminence to a character. In our present circumstances, in the flesh, religion cannot be manifested without forms; therefore it is not criminal to have forms of religion; but to have the forms without the power, and to have the pretensions without the reality, are nothing but hypocrisy. The case of a formalist is like that of a man who has a thousand counterfeits, which are found wanting, and declared to be so, by the standard of the kingdom, and who yet persists in the assertion that they are the real coin of the realm. Since, then, the form of godliness is not godliness, it is an infinite wrong to religion to hold it responsible for the conduct of men, who avowedly do not live under its influence and control. Nothing but religion suffers opprobrium in this way. There are many upstarts who make ridiculous and unworthy pretensions to philosophy, poetry, learning, &c., but no man, on that account, thinks it right to traduce the sciences or revile the arts; but as soon as any fictitious specimen of pietism is detected, pure and undefiled religion has to bear all the reproach. Religion receives this treatment, a treatment which is as unphilosophical as it is wicked, because men are happy of any pretext to blame the cause of their Maker. True religion, notwithstanding this unjust treatment, is true power; it has weight and pressure to constrain all minds, force and momentum to impel all hearts, pungency and penetration to impregnate all principles, and vitality and action to affect and model every fact and every event brought under its control. It is the power of God in the soul of man.

THE SPIRITUALLY DEAD.

There are multitudes of people who seem to live, but are no better than dead, and they might as well be in their graves; they are, properly speaking, *unburied dead*. They have in them nothing of the life of the gospel, nor any symptoms of it; no sight, no sense of spiritual things, no affection. This we shall find if we make trial of them. We may preach to them all day long, and do no more good by it than if we were to preach to a man in his coffin. If we were to cry into their ears, or blow a trumpet, to give them warning of the fire of judgment, they would hear nothing. If we were to watch them night and morning, we should find that they never open their lips in prayer to God. Show them the wonders of His word, they see nothing. The sun of the noon-day shines upon the eyes of a dead man without any effect. If we offer to them the bread of life, they want it not; for a dead man hath no appetite. Were the souls of men as visible as their bodies, we should see as much difference betwixt devout Christians and the children of this world, as betwixt a living healthy body and a dead corpse. And now I think we may fully understand the meaning of those words which the apostle borrows from the prophet—"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."—*Jones, of Nayland.*

AN ANECDOTE.

We find the following among the selections of the Newbury Herald. I recollect listening, when a boy, to a conversation between two Baptist clergymen—the one an uneducated but valuable extemporaneous speaker; the other an educated man, and a writer of beautiful, clear and logical sermons, but notorious for the hesitancy which he manifested whenever he attempted to preach "without notes." "How is it, brother J.," said the latter, "that you, without education, are able to get up at a moment's warning, and speak so well, while I just as certainly fail as I attempt it?" "Well, brother S. I'll tell you. You're just like a rich farmer, who goes into his tool-house to get a hoe, and finds so many there that it takes him half an hour to pick out the best; and as likely as not, after all, goes off in a hurry with a poor one; while I'm just like one of his men who hires out by the day, and comes in the morning to the corn-field, all ready for work, with his old hoe on his shoulder." The thoroughly educated man very often fails as an extemporaneous speaker, from the mere excess of education, and good taste; while a man without education, and sometimes with scarce brains enough to furnish the head of a clever parrot, goes off in a steady stream of words, as if he were a rain-sput in a thunder storm. "Many a full barrel of cider,"—once said a witty friend of mine—"runs slower than a nearly empty one, which runs all the faster when so nearly out that it has to be propped up behind."

THE ROSE AND THE CLAY.

One of the most eminent authors and philosophers has told the following little fable, in order to illustrate the great advantages which are to be derived from keeping company with the wise and virtuous. As I entered the bath one day a friend presented me with a piece of perfumed clay. I was so pleased with the rare odor that I exclaimed, "In what favored region of the earth wast thou found? I am enraptured with thy heavenly fragrance!" It modestly replied, "I am nothing but common clay; but I had the good fortune to lie for many years at the foot of a rose-bush, and the sweet influence of so close an intimacy has produced this effect upon me which you admire; or else in truth I should have been nothing but a lump of worthless clay, as is my nature." And what art thou, O man! if thou dost not partake of the secret influence of a purer Being? Worthless clay! Ay, and worse than worthless—a mass of poison and corruption. Let the Christian learn humility and gratitude from this lesson of the Mahometan.—*Portian Fables.*

ALL THINGS REMIND US OF DEATH.

All the succession of time, all the things in nature, all the varieties of light and darkness, the thousands of accidents in the world, and every contingency to every man and every creature, doth preach our funeral sermon, and call us to look how the old sexton, Time, throws up the earth and digs a grave, where we must lay our sorrows, and sow our bodies, till they rise again in eternity.