

RELIGION SHOULD COST US SOMETHING.

We hear much said about the freeness of salvation—so much that some would almost make themselves believe it to be a sin to be at any expense on account of it. Hence the good brother rejoiced exceedingly to think that he had been a professor of religion so many years, and it had cost him only twenty-five cents!—How cheap! Worship God with nothing and have an excellent opportunity to accumulate the things of this world! But this is not the way the true Christian feels. He is ready to acknowledge that God has a claim upon his body, mind, and all that he possesses, and he feels bound at all times to act with reference to that claim. The consequence is, that his religion costs him something.

So it was with David when he desired to make an acceptable offering unto God, and worship him in such a manner as to avert existing calamities, and secure his blessing. He needed a suitable place to build an altar, and appear before his God. The place, the sacrifice, the materials necessary, were all gratuitously offered him; but understanding that there is something more in true worship than the mere external act—that there must be a sacrifice—a giving up of the world, he says, "Nay, I will surely buy it of thee at a price." So he bought it, prepared it, and then worshipped God acceptably.

That which costs us nothing is worth nothing.

1. In our own estimation. So it is in regard to the things of the world. I do not say that nothing is useful which costs us nothing. The air which we breathe is of the greatest utility; yet we put no price upon it. It is considered as a symbol of nothing among men; and to offer it to God would be to offer him nothing. We estimate the value of things not so much according to their utility as according to their necessary cost. Things of no utility have their prices without which they cannot be obtained; and things that are useful have their prices graduated by the scarcity and consequent cost. This is the case with the metals. Let gold be as plenty as iron, and we might be as willing to exchange it as the aborigines of Mexico. Let it become as plenty as the sand and clay of our streets; and how would it differ from them in value? It might be made into vessels, and the labour expended would give it value just as it gives value to our glass and pottery ware. The fact is, if gold cost a man nothing it would be worth nothing to him, and so with everything else.

That knowledge which requires the greatest sacrifice is, as a general rule, the most valuable to us. How soon will a child learn sin and folly! He will seem to catch almost instinctively that which is of no benefit, while valuable discipline and erudition comes only by severe study—by close and persevering application. In no other way can he become an adept in the arts, sciences, and literature. He must devote time and money to it. He must sacrifice ease and comfort for the sake of it. But there is no special effort required to devour the light literature of the day, and become an adept in vice.

The same principle is true in religion. If it requires nothing it amounts to nothing. If there is no letting go, and giving up, of the world—no sacrifice of time, talents—of pride, selfishness, there will be no benefit derived from it; and in proportion to the sacrifice will be the benefit. We must "Buy the truth and sell it not." There must be a "living sacrifice" for it. "Yes," says one, "but we are to buy it without money and without price." To be sure, there is no specific sum of money required for it, or indeed any money. The poor may have it without money, yet he may be properly said to buy it as well as the rich. He cannot have it for nothing, and if he offers a sacrifice which costs him nothing, he will receive a religion worth nothing. "But how is this?" says one. Christ has told us, it is a "treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found it, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field." It is the *pearl of great price*, which the finder could only buy at the sacrifice of all that he hath. Matt. xiii. 46. So it must be. No man can obtain true religion by giving up all that he hath in his possession and affections. If he has money, he must make an entire surrender of that, as well as everything else. Himself and all that belongs to him must be dedicated to God. Now, if I am required to make such a sacrifice, it is futile—it is mere mockery, for me to offer unto God that which costs me nothing.—*Morning Star.*

Indifference to Sabbath Schools.

"I pray thee have me excused," is the language of too many of the professed followers of Christ, forgetting the solemn covenant they have entered into, to consecrate themselves to the service of God; they form the habit of saying, at the call of every duty, however easy to be performed, "I pray thee have me excused." My heart has been pained at the thought, that so many are verily guilty, in the sight of God, for indulging in such awful apathy, in the cause of the Sabbath School. It is one of the most delightful employments that a Christian can be engaged in, and nothing but uncontrolled providences, should ever hinder a child of God from this blessed work.

There are many, very many, who stay away and refuse to lend their aid, as teachers or scholars; they will allow anything for an excuse. One young lady has left a class of interesting little girls, with whom she had met with their smiling faces, they had listened, in breathless silence as she told the story of Jesus, and pointed them to Calvary, the Spirit had begun to make impressions upon their tender hearts and as it began to germinate, a withering blast came over it, their teachers left, the class came a few Sabbaths, and are their teacher at meeting, and as soon as the morning service is ended she hastens home,—they look sorrowfully at each other, and ask, can she love us? At length, justified by her absence, they leave, the class is broken up, and more than certain, the interest goes with it. Is the teacher not responsible for all this? who will not say, if she had been found faithful, that all these dear youth would have been gathered into the fold of God—their names enrolled in the Lamb's book of life. Teacher, God has a controversy with you! Another don't like the confinement, and has no time to study, and has prayed to be excused. He had a regular class that he had instructed for a long time, they were very constant and attentive, but soon, those young men, that had respected the Sabbath School, became careless and inconstant, their minds less susceptible, they finally leave the school and religious restraints,—become hardened and impenitent, and die unconverted! Oh! if he had been found at his post, this class might have been converted to God, and become the heralds of salvation to their fellow men.

It is impossible for a Sabbath School to flourish, without a deep felt interest, a willingness to spend and be spent for its advancement. We should be devoted to our work, ever feeling our great responsibility, and never absent ourselves without such reasons as would avail with God. We shall never regret any labour or sacrifice we make, when we take a retrospective view of our lives in the light of eternity. For we are rapidly hastening to the judgment where we must give an account of our stewardship to God.

I Have Nothing to Give.

So said a member of the church, to one of the appointed collectors for Foreign Missions. And yet he professed to be a disciple of Jesus Christ—to be governed by the self-denying principles of his gospel.

Nothing to give. And yet he talked of the preciousness of the gospel to his soul—of the hopes he entertained of salvation through its blood-purchased provisions—but he has nothing to give to extend those hopes and joys to those whom he professes to love as himself.

Nothing to give. And he sometimes attends the monthly concert and prays that God will send the gospel to the ends of the earth. He has said many times during the year, "Thy kingdom come," and pretended that it was prayer. If dollars were as cheap as words, the treasury of benevolence would be full. If Christians were as liberal with their purses as they are with their prayers, there would be no lack of means for sustaining the missionaries of the cross in every land.

Nothing to give. That means, the missionaries may starve, and the heathen may go to hell, before I part with any of my money for their relief.

Nothing to give. And he wears decent apparel, lives in a comfortable house, sets a plentiful table, and seems to want for nothing necessary to the comfort of his family.

Nothing to give. And the heathen are stretching out their hands in imploring petition for the bread of life, and warm-hearted Christian ministers, and even Christian women, are standing upon the shores of our own land and looking across into the darkness, and weeping for the means to carry them there, that they may minister to the spiritual necessities of those perishing millions.

Nothing to give. Yet God, in his providence, is constant and munificent, in his benefactions. Every day his treasury is opened, and fresh blessings are freely dispensed.—God never answers to the claims of his creatures upon his daily benevolence, "I have nothing to give." What we have to bestow comes all from Him; and no conceivable reason can be imagined why we should cease or hesitate to give while he furnishes the means.

Nothing to give. Then you ought specially to labor that you may earn something to give away. Oh! is not this asking too much?—What! work on purpose to devote the wages to benevolence. Engage in hard manual labor for the very purpose of devoting the proceeds to charity. Does not that savor a little of fanaticism? Precisely the fanaticism of St. Paul—"Let him labor, working with his own hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."

"That man may last—but never lives, Who much receives and nothing gives; Whom none can love—whom none can thank—Creation's blot—creation's blank."

[Ch. Watch. & Reflex.

The Lunatic and the Sportsman.

In an article on "The World at Large," the purport of which is to show that men who are reputedly sane often act insanely, a writer in Chambers' Journal reproduces this story:

A gentleman of fortune visited a lunatic asylum, where the treatment consisted chiefly in forcing the patients to stand in tubs of cold water: those slightly affected, up to the knees, others, whose cases were graver, up to the middle; while persons very seriously ill, were immersed up to the neck. The visitor entered into conversation with one of the patients, who appeared to have some curiosity to know how the stranger passed his time out of doors.

"I have horses and greyhounds for coursing," said the latter, in reply to the other's question.

"Ah, these are very expensive."

"Yes; they cost me a great deal of money in the year, but they are the best of their kind."

"Have you anything more?"

"Yes; I have a pack of hounds for hunting the fox."

"And they cost a great deal, too?"

"A very great deal. And I have birds for hawking."

"I see; birds for hunting birds. And these swell up the expense, I dare say."

"You may say that, for they are not common in this country. And then I sometimes go out alone with my gun, accompanied by a setter and a retriever."

"And these are expensive too?"

"Of course. After all, it is not the animals of themselves that run away with the money; there must be men, you know, to feed and look after them, houses to lodge them in—in short, the whole sporting establishment."

"I see; I see; you have horses, hounds, setters, retrievers, hawks, men; and all for the capture of foxes and birds. What an enormous revenue they must cost you!—Now, what I want to know is this; what return do they pay? What does your year's sporting produce?"

"Why, we kill a fox now and then—only they are getting rather scarce hereabouts—and we seldom bag less than fifty brace of birds each season."

"Hark!" said the lunatic, looking anxiously round him. "My friend," in an earnest whisper, "there is the gate, behind you; take my advice, and be off out of this place while you are safe. Don't let the doctor get his eyes upon you. He ducks us to some purpose; but, as sure as you are a living man, he will half drown you."

True Economy.

To dispense our wealth liberally is the best way to preserve it, and to continue masters thereof; what we give is not thrown away, but saved from danger. While we detain it at home (as it seems to us) it really is abroad, and at adventures; it is out at sea, sailing perilously in storms, near rocks and shelves, amongst pirates; nor can it ever be safe, till it is brought into this port, or insured this way; when we have bestowed it on the poor, then we have lodged it in unquestionable safety—in a place where no rapine, no deceit, no mishap, no corruption, can ever by any means come to it. All our doors and bars, all our forces and guards, all the circumspection and vigilancy we can use, are no defence or security in comparison to the disposal thereof; the

poor man's stomach is a granary for our corn, which never can be exhausted: the poor man's back is a wardrobe for our clothes, which never can be pillaged; the poor man's pocket is a bank for our money, which never can disappoint or deceive us; all the rich traders in the world may decay and break; but the poor man can never fail, except God himself turn bankrupt; for what we give to the poor we deliver and intrust in his hands, out of which no force can wring it, no craft can filch it; it is laid up in heaven, whither no thief can climb, where no moth or rust do abide. In despite of all the fortune, of all the might, of all the malice in the world, the liberal man will ever be rich: for God's providence is his estate; God's wisdom and power are his defence; God's love and favor are his reward. God's word is his assurance, who hath said it, that "he who gives to the poor shall not lack." No vicissitude, therefore, of things can surprise him, or find him unfurnished; no disaster can impoverish him; no adversity can overwhelm him.

Selfishness in the Pursuit of Wealth.

Thorough selfishness destroys or paralyzes enjoyment. A heart made selfish by the contest for wealth, is like a citadel stormed in war. The banner of victory waves over dilapidated walls, desolate chambers, and magazines riddled with artillery. Men, covered with sweat, and begrimed with toil, expect to find joy in a heart reduced by selfishness to a smouldering heap of ruins.

I warn every aspirant for wealth against the infernal canker of selfishness. It will eat out the heart with the fire of hell, or bake it harder than a stone. The heart of avaricious old age stands like a bare rock in a bleak wilderness, and there is no rod of authority, nor no incantation of pleasure, which can draw from it one crystal drop to quench the raging thirst for satisfaction. But listen not to my words alone; hear the solemn voice of God, pronouncing doom upon the selfish: "Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were a fire."—*Rev. W. H. Beecher.*

Calvin's Poverty.

Amongst the many false accusations made against the great Calvin, during his life, was that he was avaricious, and was accumulating large treasures. In reply to this charge, Calvin states the following facts:—"About eight years ago, a gentleman died in my house, who had deposited a sum of more than two thousand gold dollars, and without my giving him a receipt. As soon as I saw he was in danger, I declared, though he wished me to dispose of the money as I thought best, that I would not undertake such a weighty affair.—I took care he sent eight hundred dollars to Strasburg, to aid the unfortunate refugees in that city. At my earnest request, he named responsible persons to dispose of what remained. When he wished to give me a sum which others would not have despised, I resolutely refused it."—"My death," said he, "will prove what they would not believe in my life."—"And so it happened," remarks Dr. Henry, in his *Life and Times of Calvin*, "all his goods and possessions amounting to about forty pounds." He derived no profit from any of his books, dedicated though they were to princes and noblemen. The only present he received was a silver goblet, given him by the Lord of Varennes, and which he bequeathed to his brother. Even this circumstance, however, that he had a goblet to leave was made a subject of ridicule and abuse.

THE FAITHFUL PASTOR.—An anecdote was told me by a well known Irish character, Thaddeus Conolly, who used to spend much of his time in wandering through Ireland, and instructing the lower classes in their native language. "I went," said he, "one Sunday into a church, to which a new incumbent had been lately appointed. The congregation did not exceed half a dozen, but the preacher delivered himself with as much energy and affection as if he were addressing a crowded audience. After service, I expressed to the clergyman my surprise that he should hold forth so fervently to such a small number. 'Were there but one,' said the rector, 'my anxiety for his improvement would make me equally energetic.' The following year Conolly went into the same church, the congregation was multiplied twenty fold; a third year they found the church full."—*Dr. Gitty.*