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Communications.

Prayer, a reasonable Duty.

The obligation to perform this important duty, seems to grow out of the very relation in which a moral agent must necessarily stand to the Creator and Governor of the universe. It is, therefore, one of the earliest and highest duties incumbent on a dependent moral agent. Deny it; you annihilate dependence. There will then exist a moral being who *needs* nothing from God—who has no *want* to be supplied—who enjoys no bounty he would *wish* to be continued! Such a being must be independent!

The generic nature of prayer consists in a *sense of need, and desire of supply*. It has been invested with modifications of an adventitious character, arising out of particular emergencies. The attributes of prayer have been modified by the *fall*. It is essentially necessary to its acceptability, that it be in the *name of Christ*. This modification will, I conceive, continue through eternity. Confession of sins, is in the present state, a necessary concomitant of prayer. This will be unknown in the regions of glory. Thanksgiving unto God, for his *unspeakable gift*, and all the blessed results, now is, and will eternally continue, an ingredient of this *delightful duty*, so characteristic of the Christian.

If these premises be true, prayer will be a duty for ever incumbent

on, and for ever exercised by a saint in glory, as a necessary result of his moral dependence on the God who made him, and continues to be to him, the author of every good and of every perfect gift. A sense of need, and a desire for a supply, are perfectly compatible with our notions of a felicity competent to moral beings even of unsullied perfection. Had our first parents in the state of primeval innocence, never felt the painful sensation of hunger, they could never have experienced the pleasure arising from the gratification of this appetite. Indeed, in our present state, it is as hard to form an idea of *enjoyment*, without a previous sense of want, as to conceive a notion of a fine portrait, in which all were *light*, without one single *tinge of shade*! This principle is deeply inlaid in our constitution, and strongly evinced in the progressive development of the human character.

This idea, moreover, does perfectly coincide with that indefinite and progressive expansion of the human mind, which we are warranted to believe, will be going on in endless advances in perfection, in the mansions of glory. Now, in the order of nature, expansion must precede impletion, or the capacity must be enlarged, before there can be any void to be filled. But the very existence of a void will generate a sense of *want*. This sense of want, must of course be followed by a desire of enjoyment; and the very existence of this desire in a saint in

5. We shall now endeavour to obviate some of the principal objections alleged, 1st, from scripture, and, 2d, from reason, against the doctrine of a particular atonement, or, that Jesus died only for *some* of the human race, and that consequently only *some* shall be saved. Such alone shall be exempted from deserved eternal misery, on the ground of a substitutional expiation. It will be recollected, we showed, in a preceding number, the impossibility of a sinner's escaping eternal punishment, on the footing of *personal* expiation. The vicarious atonement, however valuable in itself, intrinsically considered, can be of no importance to those who were not embraced in its design. But it is alleged, that the scriptures contain sufficient evidence to establish the point, that an atonement was made equally for all, and consequently that all shall be saved. If the premises could be established, we should most cordially admit the conclusion. We are fully persuaded, that such is not the doctrine of the Bible. We shall now proceed to examine,

1st. Some of the supposed scriptural objections to the doctrine of a limited atonement.

(To be continued.)

S. B. W.

external means of knowledge, by the extraordinary communications of his Spirit. Yet we have no *positive* evidence of such extension. All we can say is, that we think it involves no contradiction to the attributes of the Divinity, or to any declaration in the sacred oracles. Philanthropy, in all such cases, will incline to the side of mercy. The entail of the covenant of grace, embracing the parents and their seed, furnishes to believers the most consolatory hopes, respecting their children, when dying in infancy, and consequently incapable of *objective* revelation. That God may, independently of this entail, extend to the children of heathens, dying in infancy, similar grace, we believe, to be repugnant, neither to the scriptures, nor the reasoning here advanced.

Improvement of Aphorisms.

Maxims, which involve in a brief phraseology the deductions of reason, the compressed treasures of experience, and the results of observation upon men and manners, form an acknowledged good mode of communicating instruction. If formed with ingenuity, they have a captivating influence over the mind; and, especially for the youth, they possess a charm which is almost magical. The human mind is naturally indolent, and averse from the labour and research which must necessarily be encountered in the pursuit of general knowledge; but it is seldom too indolent to seize with eagerness, and to remember with fidelity, the pithy apothegm. Among the illiterate and unlightened, maxims prevail and have a considerable influence upon their conduct, and are often regarded with a strictness which borders on superstition. This fact shows that the instrument has power, and that it may become exceedingly beneficial when judiciously managed. The ancients were aware of this, and have handed down to posterity much of the wisdom of their sages, in this dress; and who knows not, that in the Proverbs of Solomon is embodied a greater mass of wisdom than has ever appeared in the same compass. We have a vast multitude of maxims which are either original in our language, or have been transplanted there, which afford many valuable hints for the regulation of our temper and conduct; but inasmuch as they are valuable only so far as they accord with gospel morality, the Christian has a peculiar property in them, and should improve them to his spiritual interests.

It is our design to present a few brief specimens of the manner in which a Christian may profitably enlarge upon maxims, by reflections of a spiritual cast; and, indeed, they who are candidates for immortality, should thus improve *every thing*

which they hear, observe, know or feel.

1. *"In whatever profession a man is, he should study to be eminent. Mediocrity is below a brave soul—aut Cæsar, aut nullus.*"*

Christians wear the badge of an exalted profession: their's is not the pursuit of fame, or worldly wealth, or perishing honours, if they properly appreciate the spirit of their station; but rising above objects of such transient existence, they esteem this life a pilgrimage; they claim the honour of adoption into the family of God, and fix their gaze upon a crown of blissful immortality.

Their principal object is to promote God's glory, and to secure their own salvation; they profess views, feelings and prospects peculiar to themselves; they lay claim to a spiritual regeneration, which gives them a marked pre-eminence over the world which lieth in wickedness.

The divine life in which they are initiated, has its commencement—various intermediate grades of perfection—and its final consummation. In religion there is no stopping place; we must be either advancing or retrograding; falling below the elevation which we have already attained, or soaring above it. Our conduct has a constant tendency to weaken or strengthen the tone of our Christian graces. The divine admonition is, "to leave the things which are behind, and to press onward towards the things which are before:" we are under sacred obligations to make progress; to add to our faith, virtue, and the remainder of Christian graces in the bright catalogue. The greater our acquisitions, the greater is the tribute of honour which we pay to the gospel; the more we grow in grace, the more we adorn our profession. There are some who think it sufficient to become Christians without

becoming eminent; but, in the language of the maxim, "mediocrity is below a brave soul:" our aim should be noble, our souls should be touched by celestial fire, we should bound on the course, we should pant and struggle after the highest grade of immortality. The Christian who does not absolutely aim to secure the loftiest attainments which the gospel offers, is characterized by a grovelling spirit, which does no honour to his profession.

We should not set before us Moses or Paul as the standards of the perfection to which we would attain: we should not be content with the prayer, "give me a seat at thy saints' feet," but we should imitate no less a personage than JESUS CHRIST, exerting ourselves to become like him as far as the circumstances of the case will permit: we should strive for the nearest seat to the Eternal: we should exert ourselves for the crown which sparkles with the richest gems: we should desire to be among the foremost and most skilful who shout "allelujah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Such noble and elevated views have no alliance with human pride, but are the natural result of graces which have flourished and become invigorated by attentive culture.

The master requires his followers to become eminent in their profession, to be strong in faith, abounding in love, lively in hope, to be richly furnished by grace and godliness, cherished in the heart and rendered visible in the life, for the eternal enjoyment of his presence. This be the believer's motto, *I count not myself as having already attained, but in the buoyancy of hope, I press towards the mark.*

2. *"If men defame us, we should live in such a manner, that nobody will believe them."*

Such was the method by which Plato repelled the calumnies which were liberally heaped upon him by his enemies; and Christians would

* Either Cæsar or nobody.

not dishonour their profession by imitating his noble example. Life is a scene of struggle; we are momentarily exposed to difficulty and danger, but never do we feel more acutely than when our dearest reputation is made the sport of merciless calumny. "Touch my honour, you touch my life," is the violent maxim of nature unsubdued by grace; and even the Christian finds it difficult to curb the stern spirit which so readily rebels when character is called into question. The fire which burns through the veins of the duellist, is with difficulty kept in check by the man of God; and if he possesses not more than ordinary grace, he will at seasons, feel the lurking desire to resist, retaliate, and take revenge, when labouring under unjust reproach. Character should be dear to us, but it is not to be supported by violent measures. We cannot enrich ourselves by injuring our calumniators; we may prosecute them with rancorous violence, but we cannot thereby effectually establish our own credit. If men arraign our motives, misrepresent our words, and traduce our conduct, and thereby render us objects of public odium, we are to avenge the wrong and expose the calumny, by a virtuous and blameless life. Our actions should be so unimpeachably holy, that the report of the traducer will not be credited. The Christian is frequently placed in circumstances, where this mild maxim may be brought into operation; he is often the mark of unjust reproach—nay, he rests under the weight of a wo, when all men speak well of him: but if amidst such trials, he would relieve his own character, and honour the gospel, he should remember and practise the benevolent rule by which the "chiefest apostle" regulated himself, "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat."

3. "He that fears not to do evil, is always afraid to suffer evil."

We observe the sinner glorying in his shame, and working all uncleanness with greediness; he fearlessly persists in habits of iniquity and dares the majesty of Heaven, but when the finger of God touches him, his boasted fortitude forsakes him. Being destitute of a virtuous principle of heart, he is ignorant of the secret of suffering patiently; he may assume the apathy of the stoic, but the coward lurks within; disease to him is a messenger of terror, and the apprehensions of hell torture his soul.

But the reverse of this maxim is true. The Christian who fears to do evil, is not afraid to suffer it. We do not pretend to assert that every believer is exempted from the fear of suffering; but that the natural tendency of grace is to inspire the soul with fortitude. How often has it been illustrated! The early Christians, whose lives were eminently holy, feared not reproach, scourgings, persecutions and martyrdom; and now the disciples of Jesus, when rightly influenced by the principles which they profess, can calmly contemplate their reverses of fortune, the painful diseases which rack mortality, and the irresistible approach of the last formidable enemy.

That fortitude is unshaken which is founded on a principle of genuine piety.

4. "If we be not as happy as we desire, it is well we are not so miserable as we deserve."

Whatever may be our allotment in the present world, we may find much cause for thankfulness; and a ground of gratitude may be observed in our very miseries, because they are not as great as we deserve. None of us are as happy as we desire, since our desires are directed towards an eternal, unalloyed felicity; but were our happiness proportioned to our *desert*, we should be involved in all the miseries of hell.

Let the Christian compare his

enjoyments with his deserts, and he will find that he is much, very much the debtor of sovereign grace; for it is a miracle of grace that any are out of hell. Blessed be God, who judges not according to the rule of man's judgment, but who tempers even his wrath with mercy. Here is a wretch bloated and staggering with disease, the effect of his vices; here a miserable object so devoted to damning lusts, that his prospects for heaven are dissipated; here a trembling criminal, led to the scaffold, with every mark of dishonour, to satisfy the demands of insulted, violated law,—yet such miseries, the best have deserved, and to grace alone is to be attributed our distinction above others.

“Aut sumus, aut fuimus, aut possumus esse quod hic est.”*

If the Christian suffers under affliction, he should comfort himself by the reflection, that God chastens him with tenderness, and that his punishment is lighter than his sin.

W. M. E.

Religious Biography.

Extract from a Sermon delivered in the Third Presbyterian Church in the city of Philadelphia, on the 14th of January, A. D. 1821, at the funeral of Mr. James Martin. By E. S. Ely.

The subject of discourse, on this occasion, may be found in 2 Chron. xxvi. 5. *As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper.*

The words relate to Uzziah, king of Judah. *He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah did. And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God.* The text then follows. The preacher considered it, as expressive of the general doctrine, that those who honour God, shall be honoured by

* We either are, or have been, or might have been what *he is*.

him, in the dispensations of providence and grace. This general doctrine he applied, *first*, to nations in their national capacity; and evinced, that, in proportion to the conformity of our national constitution, general government, and public conduct to the divine law, we may expect prosperity as a nation. He imputed it, to the piety of our ancestors, and to the regard which they paid, in founding our earliest institutions, to the rights of conscience, and the dictates of the sacred oracles, that the American nation has been more specially favoured of God than any that ever existed, with the exception of the Hebrew people, whose government was a theocracy.

Secondly, the preacher applied his general doctrine to inferior associations, to each of the United States, to particular denominations of Christians, to the civil polity of the society of Friends, and to distinct congregations of Christians.

Thirdly, he applied the general doctrine to all the temporal and spiritual concerns of individuals; and here, as a special illustration, he proceeded, contrary to his ordinary practice in preaching, to read the following MEMOIR.

JAMES MARTIN was born in the parish of West Calder, in the shire of Lenleithgou, near the city of Edinburgh, in Scotland, some time in January, A. D. 1732. The day of his birth he was unable to state to me, when, nearly a year ago, he made me acquainted with his history; because he lost his family Bible and all his papers, during the American revolution. But the memory of his youthful days was more perfect, in his old age, than that of any other portion of his life. During his whole pilgrimage, until visited by his last sickness, he was in the habit of arising from his bed before the morning sun, and of retiring to rest early in the evening. This he was confident had contributed to his health, worldly prosperity and happiness. This habit, with most others,