

# Christian Monitor.

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*A Narrative of the state of Religion within the bowels of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church;—and of the General Associations of Connecticut, of New Hampshire, of Massachusetts proper, and of the General Convention of Vermont, during the last year.*

THE General Assembly, of the Presbyterian Church in the U. States of America, in giving to the churches under their care a detailed account of the state and prosperity of Zion, find themselves affected by mingled emotions, in which joy and gratitude have the ascendancy.

A view of the operations of Divine grace in our churches during the past year, clearly demonstrates, not only that God is "ever mindful of his covenant with his people, that he will not forever hide his face from the children of his love, but also, that "the time, even the set time to favour many parts of the American Zion has now come." If, when receiving a particular account of God's dealings with his people, we find, in some instances, that "iniquity abounds, and the love of some who have professed to serve the Lord, has waxed cold; that stupidity, Luke-warmness, deadness, or vice, have paralyzed the arm of religious exertion, or stopped the pulse of religious feeling," the General Assembly feel thankful to the great head of the church, that they are soon relieved from dwelling on these dark and depressing scenes? A brighter and more animating state of affairs soon rises to notice. Instances, in which "the arm of the Lord has been signally revealed" to many, who had been long "sitting in the darkness of spiritual death," or benumbed by a death-like lethargy and indifference to spiritual concerns, gild the prospects, inspire with hope, encourage and animate us to wait

for the Divine blessing in the way of God's appointment, and in the use of those means which he has designated.

In noticing the events, which have transpired during the past year, the General Assembly cannot but regard them as characteristic of a new and highly interesting æra of the church of Christ.—They can state, from information received from different sections of the church; that *infidelity* stalks abroad with a less confident and unblushing aspect, than in times past; that "intemperance and profanity have become less frequent, and that a decent and respectful attention is generally paid to the external duties of piety. True it is, that this state of things does not *every where* prevail. In some sections of the church the people of God are mourning and in tears, because the SABBATH of the Lord is not hallowed, and because instead of "remembering to keep it holy," some continue to do their own pleasure, and attend to secular pursuits on this holy day! *Travelling on the Lord's Day* is not uniformly nor carefully avoided; and though, in some parts of our land, this sin is reprobated and punished, (and the General Assembly mention this fact in the language of commendation, and in hopes that it will receive notice, and imitation,) yet, in others, it is regarded as of a venial character, and committed with but little compunction! The General Assembly advert to this; for the purpose of expressing the sense which they entertain of it, as a flagrant violation of express and commanded duty; as calculated to provoke the Divine indignation and to bring down the heaviest judgments!

It is with pleasure, however, that the General Assembly can report the harmony, the union, and the peace of the church—the fidelity of its ministers; and the instances of exemplary piety; of fervent

Mr. Benjamin Allen, jr. brought forward a proposition, which was accepted, for "forming a Common Prayer Book and Tract Society, for the Diocese of Virginia."

On motion of the Rev. Mr. Hawley, it was agreed that the next meeting of the Convention, shall be at Fredericksburg, on the first Tuesday in May next.

The Right Revd. Mr. Moore then delivered his Address on the state of the Church—on which it was "Resolved unanimously, that the thanks of this Convention be presented to the Right Rev. Richard Channing Moore, D. D. for his eloquent and appropriate Pastoral Address; and that he be requested to furnish a copy thereof for insertion in the Journal."

Thanks were presented to Wm. Munford, Esq. "for his disinterested and faithful services, as Secretary to the Convention," after which, it adjourned till the 1st Tuesday in May next.

*For the Christian Monitor.*

#### BENEFITS OF RETIREMENT.

Some centuries ago it was the fashion for serious people to fly from society, and relinquish the duties of active life, in the hope that they might better worship God and secure their own salvation in a gloomy and indolent solitude. In many of the monastic institutions, we recognize the spirit of piety, but lamentably misguided by ignorance and superstition. On the other hand, I cannot help thinking that in the present times Christians value retirement too little. We suffer ourselves to be so much engrossed with the company, the business and the amusements of the world, that we scarcely set apart an hour now and then for lonely and solemn meditation on the concerns of eternity. The following are some of the principal objects for which we should seek to escape often from the noise and bustle of the scenes in which we are placed.

First, *the study of the Holy Scriptures.* This is at once a duty of the highest importance, and a privilege inexpressibly precious; a duty, alas, too little practised, a privilege too little esteemed, even among those who profess to venerate the bible as a revelation from heaven. The sacred volume is fraught with the most sublime and interesting truths. It incul-

cates those precepts of holiness which are suited to prepare the soul for the exalted employments and pleasures of the kingdom of glory.—It nourishes our resolution and patience in the Christian warfare with encouragements the most animating, and promises the most supporting. This divine treasury is set open before us all; and we are invited and commanded to draw from it abundantly the means of supplying our spiritual wants. In this study, the loftiest genius may be perpetually making new and delightful advances; while the weakest are sure of learning all things needful for their salvation. But in order to gain these advantages, we must apply our minds earnestly to the work, as well as pray for guidance from above. We must get away from the harassing tumult of business, the vain, corrupting glare of worldly parade, the pernicious sophistry of the passions; that we may enquire into the meaning of God's word candidly and deliberately, settling our faith under the awful inspection of his eye. How happy are they who have leisure, and wisdom thus to improve it! How refreshing, beyond the dearest conversation of our fellow men, to hear the God of truth and love speaking to us in our solitary walks, by the doctrines and promises of his gospel!

Secondly, we should seek retirement for *the study of ourselves.* To have a true acquaintance with our own hearts is a thing of prime moment, and at the same time very difficult to attain. Without great care and attention, we may fatally deceive ourselves in the estimation we form of our standing with God. Am I in the way to heaven? Have I scriptural evidences of a genuine conversion? Is my faith of that kind which purifies the heart, and brings forth the fruits of righteousness? Do I sincerely aim to glorify God in all my actions? Am I advancing in religion, or going backward? How do I succeed in conquering my besetting corruptions? Is habitual communion with God experimentally necessary to my peace? Should I be suddenly called away by death, am I prepared for that region of immortal bliss to which I profess to aspire? Such questions as these we should be often endeavouring to decide for ourselves, with as much certainty as

we can possibly reach, by the blessing of God upon our anxious investigations.— But such questions are not likely to be well answered, nor even to be asked with becoming impressions of their weight, amidst the hurry of public life, and the dissipating influence of general society.— If we would profitably examine these deceitful hearts of ours, and know how our accounts stand with God and eternity, we must retire to solitude and silence; and there, imploring the aid of the Holy Spirit, labour to trace the current of our thoughts, affections and motives, so that we may see what we are in the light in which God sees us, who incessantly beholds all that is within us, and will judge us according to truth at the last day.

Thirdly, solitude is necessary for the *all-important exercise of secret devotion*: Religion is the hinge on which our eternal welfare turns; and in its most imposing aspect, it is to every one of us a personal concern. The judicious Christian will not understand me as detracting from the usefulness of social worship, when I say that acts of individual piety are still more useful. It is in our separate devotions that we approach our God the nearest. It is here that we thank him for our peculiar mercies, and present our supplications for peculiar favours, such as the special cases of our souls require. We have sins and imperfections to confess, diseases of the heart to bemoan, which it is not fit that our fellow creatures should be acquainted with. We retire for a while even from the house and the people of God; that we may place ourselves under his inspection alone, and pour out our whole hearts before him. Without such habits as these, we have great reason to believe that we cannot prosper in religion. Secret prayer is requisite to obtain a disposition for the discharge of every other duty. And the practice affords us, in itself, the most striking proof of our religious sincerity. We may sing and pray in the presence of others, in order to obtain their applause. But it is hardly possible to engage and persevere in solitary worship, without feeling the supreme importance of peace with God, and unfeignedly aiming to please him by filial obedience to all his commandments. O sacred hours, when

the heaven-born disciple of Jesus Christ glides away from a turbulent, distracting world, to commune with his God, and to anticipate in some degree those pleasures, holy and unalloyed, which are at his right hand forever more!

I know that many lives must unavoidably be very busy ones. It is impossible to prescribe the quantity of time which any Christian is bound to dedicate to pious retirement. What I wish in offering these reflections is to excite my reader to a conscientious redemption of time for the purposes which have been mentioned.

### PHILANDER.

PHILANDER requests the insertion of the following *erratum*, viz. Page 354, col. 1. line 12. Correct the sentence thus: This saving grace is wrought "by the Spirit and Word of God;" by the Holy Spirit as the efficient cause, and by the word of revealed truth as the instrument in his hands.

NEW-ORLEANS, April 12.—Yesterday divine worship was celebrated for the first time in the Protestant Church, lately erected in this City, and an elegant discourse analogous to the occasion, delivered by the Rev. Mr. HULL; this is the first fabrick intended for worship according to the Protestant rites that has been built on the Island of Orleans, or perhaps in the State of Louisiana. It is a circumstance strikingly indicative of the improving state of manners, and we trust it will be an era in the history of our city, distinguishing the commencement of the reign of morals and religion.

### JEWES.

A letter dated March 20, 1816, recently received in this town, from an American gentleman in Europe, says, "An interesting event took place at Stansted, Hampshire County, England, the beginning of this month. Two Jews were baptized at the Chapel of Lewis Way, Esq. one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, by his brother, the Rev. E. Way. One of them was from Poland, and will soon return thither to his wife and family. They were both, I understand, destined for the Ministry, as are sixteen or eighteen others, residing at Stansted, and pursuing their studies at Mr. Way's expense."

[Recorder.]