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ART. I.—CHARACTER AND WORKS OF JAY.

Two volumes of Sermons. Fourth Edition. By WM. JAY.

Four volumes of Short Discourses for the Use of Families. Fourth Edition. By WM. JAY.

The Domestic Minister's Assistant, or Prayers for the Use of Families. Ninth Edition. By WM. JAY.

The Christian Contemplated, in a Course of Lectures delivered in Argyle Chapel, Bath. Third Edition. By WM. JAY.

Morning Exercises for the Closet for every Day in the Year. By WM. JAY.

Evening Exercises for the Closet for every Day in the Year. By WM. JAY.

IN introducing the writings of Mr. Jay to the attention of our readers, we bring up a name with which they are all familiar, and which has been regarded by the christian public on both sides of the water for many years, with high respect and veneration. In the department of religious literature which this distinguished clergyman has occupied, we are not aware that there is any name of the present day which holds a higher place; and though he is a foreigner and personally unknown to almost every individual in this country, there are comparatively few who read religious publications at all, who are not familiar with some one or other of his writings. Our object, therefore, in making them the subject of an article is not so much to make them known, as to commend them to the more careful attention of those who are, to some extent, acquainted with them already. We feel it to be a privilege also to record our high sense of the important services which he has rendered by his writings, to the cause of truth and piety; and especially to testify our conviction of the hallowed influence which they have exerted upon the religious interests of our own country.

The early history of Mr. Jay, if we have been correctly informed, is most deeply interesting. We have heard a particular account of the manner in which he was taken up from a humble situation in life, and placed in circumstances which were fitted at once to develop and direct his fine powers, and prepare him for the wide field of usefulness which he was destined subsequently to occupy. If the account which has come to us is correct, it was owing to the discernment and benevolence of the Rev. Cornelius Winter, that Mr. Jay was originally put in the way to be educated for the ministry. This venerable man, preaching, as we have been informed, on some public occasion, was struck with the appearance of a youth whom he saw in the congregation; and he almost instantly formed a resolution that he would inquire respecting his circumstances, and if Providence should seem to favor it, would educate him to preach the gospel. The result of the inquiry was entirely favorable to his wishes; and young Jay, then a mere lad, was by the consent of his parents, taken into the family of this venerable minister, and educated by him with parental care and affection. The result, we hardly need say, was highly gratifying to the feelings of Mr. Winter: every month of his residence with him brought fresh evidence that he was educating a mind of no common order, and disposed to consecrate all its powers to the best interests of man. Mr. Winter lived to reap the fruit of his labors in knowing that he had actually been instrumental of bringing forward one of the most gifted, useful, and honored ministers of the age; and no doubt among the visions of joy which attended the death-bed of that venerable saint, one of the brightest and most cheering must have been the prospect of having his own benevolent influence propagated through such a channel; of surviving his own mortal existence in the labors, and prayers, and combined influence of such a man as William Jay. One of Mr. Jay's publications is an interesting biographical sketch of his excellent friend and guardian; a sketch which is equally honorable to the devoted piety, and sound judgment, and distinguished usefulness, of the person whose character is portrayed, and to the talents, the gratitude, the deep filial sensibilities of him who has portrayed it.

We cannot forbear in this connection to pause a moment, to commend to our readers generally, and especially those whom it may more immediately concern, the great cause of education for the christian ministry. When Jay was taken up and educated by the venerable Winter, there was not either in this country or among the dissenting churches of England, provision on any extended scale, for securing the talents of pious indigent young men for the public service of the church; but now in this country at least, we have an extensively organized and efficient system for gaining this object. We have a society whose operations reach through

the whole breadth of our land, besides many subordinate institutions of the same character, designed to search out the best talents and the most devoted piety in the retreats of mediocrity, and even absolute indigence, and secure their consecration to the holy ministry. Such has been the energy and efficiency of this system already, that many hundreds of young men, within a few of the last years, have gone forth under its influence to preach the gospel—and not a few in the utmost parts of the earth—who but for this great and heaven-born institution, would have remained to this day laboring with their hands, in some obscure and humble occupation. From all the aspects of providence at this time, there is not a shadow of doubt, that our Education Societies are destined to a large share of the work that is to be done in order to evangelize the world; and we confidently expect that it will be much in proportion as this cause grows in public favor, that the moral renovation of the world will be advanced. We would therefore commend this cause with peculiar earnestness to the christian public at large, and particularly to our liberal and opulent christians. That there is a possibility of funds being misapplied here, as in other departments of charity—that young men may be taken up as beneficiaries who may prove themselves unworthy, cannot be denied; but with all the guards which the wisdom and experience of the church have placed at this point, we may safely say that the danger of imposition is comparatively small; and that whoever would not run the risk which giving for this object must involve, would, if he were consistent, withdraw himself from almost every other object of christian benevolence. True, there are not many who can hope to be instrumental in educating such a mind as that of Mr. Jay, for this best of all reasons, that there are few such minds to be educated; but any man who lends his influence and his property to the education cause, may reasonably expect to be the instrument not only of elevating the intellectual and moral destiny of some one or more deserving young man who may thereby be brought into the ministry, but also of exerting a blessed influence on the present and immortal condition of many who may reap the benefit of this extension of ministerial effort. Let the christian whom God has abundantly prospered with the gifts of his providence, contemplate the object which our Education Societies propose and actually accomplish, and let him take counsel from the signs of the times in connection with the teachings of his own judgment and conscience, and we are sure that his heart will kindle and his hand will be open for the advancement of this cause; and it will not be one of the least of the considerations which will influence him, that, in giving for this object, he will in all probability be contributing to sustain the preaching of the gospel by some efficient and useful minister or ministers, after he is in his grave.

But to return. Mr. Jay, owing no doubt to his uncommon maturity of intellect, and the adaptedness of his mind for public speaking, commenced preaching at the early age of sixteen. His first efforts in the pulpit excited great attention, insomuch that he is said, at a very early period, to have been advertised (we must suppose by some indiscreet and injudicious friend) as "the prodigy." It spoke much for the strength of his character, that a mind so youthful as his, should have been every where greeted with so much of the incense of praise, and yet should not have suffered by it; but the desire which he had to please his Master and to save the souls of his fellow men, seems to have absorbed to a great extent every other; and if he was distinguished by the splendor of his gifts, he was equally so by his modesty, humility, and all the more unobtrusive of the christian virtues. It is remarkable, too, that the popularity which he acquired in such circumstances, and of course without a large stock of theological furniture, should have been enduring; but the native vigor and versatility of his mind, in connection with his intense application, enabled him constantly to maintain himself in his public efforts, insomuch that his popularity, great as it was in the beginning, never subsequently declined. He had not been long in the ministry when he was settled at Bath, and has had for many years one of the most respectable and flourishing congregations in England. The liberality of his views has conspired with the superiority of his talents to render him a favorite, not only among the different dissenting denominations, but also with many of the most respected and venerable men of the Church of England; and at home, as well as in our own country, his works are regarded, to a great extent, as the common property of all evangelical denominations.

Mr. Jay's manner in the pulpit, (we happen to have it in our power to write from actual observation,) is exceedingly well adapted to give effect to his impressive and eloquent thoughts. His person is uncommonly good, his voice flexible and melodious, his countenance singularly expressive, his gesture natural and graceful; in short, he has every thing apart from the actual merit of his discourses, to render him an attractive and popular preacher. No one would expect him, indeed, like Hall, or Chalmers, or Mason, to overpower his audience by the burning energy of his thoughts, or the almost terrific boldness of his manner; his power lies rather in winning them to their duty by the gentle arts of persuasion. His manner is a fine compound of dignity and familiarity; while he never lets himself down to anything that even approaches the vulgar on the one hand, he is almost always level to the comprehension of the lowest class of his hearers, on the other. Though he is distinguished for the originality of his conceptions, and the beauty and propriety of his language, yet his thoughts are

so clear in his own mind, and are expressed with such entire perspicuity, that the most intelligent and most illiterate may be alike benefited and delighted. Notwithstanding he has been so long upon the stage, and is now several years past sixty, his popularity is not at all upon the wane; and scarcely any other minister attracts so large a congregation, whether at home or abroad.

Mr. Jay has been before the world as a writer upwards of thirty years. His earliest publications excited a high degree of interest, both in England and this country; and almost every thing from his pen—we believe every work of any magnitude—has gone through several editions. We have placed at the head of this article the titles of his most important publications, though we know of many other smaller works of his, which, in point of excellence, are not behind those we have enumerated. All that he has written may be considered as belonging to the same general class of publications, though several of them are sufficiently distinct in their character from each other, to justify a separate notice. We intend to offer a few remarks upon them in the same order in which we have given their titles, and then illustrate briefly the general influence which the writings of this author are fitted to exert upon the religious character of the age.

The two volumes of sermons which we believe are the earliest of Mr. Jay's larger publications, as they have been long before the world, have acquired a character which can be claimed by comparatively few sermons at the present day. They were manifestly written with more labor than characterizes his recent productions; and we think have less of that graceful ease of manner which belongs to the character of his mind, and which constitutes in a high degree, the charm of all his writings. These sermons, like every thing from his pen, are strictly practical; exhibiting the truth just as it lies in God's word, and its bearing upon the relations, the conduct, the destiny of men. They show a fertile invention, a most intimate acquaintance with the springs of human conduct, the power of reasoning with great effect upon common sense principles, and of bringing men to consider the truth in its application to their own circumstances. These discourses (and we think the same remark will apply to most of Mr. Jay's writings,) seem better fitted to edify and quicken and comfort the christian, than to arrest and convince the careless sinner; though several of them contain very close and pungent appeals to the conscience, and all are adapted to make men reflect on the solemnities of an eternal retribution.

Next in order are the four volumes of short discourses designed for the use of families. While these have the same general characteristics with those already mentioned, they have the additional advantage (considering the object for which they are designed) of being more familiar and better adapted to persons of humble capaci-

ties and acquirements. They well deserve to make part of the reading of every christian family. They are so short as to be heard and read without uneasiness; so plain as to be level to every comprehension; so attractive as to enchain the attention even of the young; and so thoroughly practical that none can attentively read them without finding some new instruction or encouragement in respect to his duty. We know of no better help of the same kind than these sermons afford, to the cause of family religion. If it were the practice of every christian family in the land, to have these discourses read in their hearing from time to time as an occasional and stated religious exercise, we cannot doubt that the effect of it would be greatly to elevate the standard of piety, and especially to bring our youth more extensively under the hallowed influences of the gospel.

“The domestic minister’s assistant, and prayers for the use of families” though not one of Mr. Jay’s earliest works, had reached the ninth edition in England several years ago, and has passed through several (we know not how many) editions in this country. This work is by no means designed to take the place of extemporaneous prayer in any ordinary circumstances: it is intended rather to aid in the cultivation of the gift of prayer; and in some extreme cases to take away apologies for the neglect of this duty. It has been extensively adopted, and has no doubt exerted a most beneficial influence in promoting family religion, both in this country and in England. The prayers are characterized by great simplicity, by a happy variety, by an uncommon adaptation to the circumstances of a family, and it is scarcely necessary to add, by a spirit of rational and sublime devotion. We would not be understood as recommending the adoption of these or any other forms of prayer for stated use, especially where there is the common gift of extemporaneous speaking: but we would urge it upon every christian head of a family, before he attempts to excuse himself from this duty on the ground of inability, to bear in mind that there are excellent forms of prayer made out to his hands; and if he is unwilling to use them, he may very reasonably suspect not only the sincerity of his plea, but the grounds of his claim to be regarded a disciple of Christ. Let any intelligent christian begin by reading prayers in his family reverently and devoutly, and we may expect in most cases, that at no distant period his feelings will lead him to throw away his form, and cast himself upon the resources of his own mind and heart; but even if he should continue in the way in which he begins, though we might not think it the best way, yet we should not dare to make any thing of it, questioning the depth of his devotion, much less the reality of his piety.

One of the most interesting and valuable of Mr. Jay’s publi-

cations is his "Christian contemplated." The design of this work is to exhibit the christian in all his various relations, and in every variety of condition, from the hour of his first being "in Christ," until he is safely landed "in heaven." There is in this work throughout, a constant repast both for the intellect and the heart. The plan of it is not more beautiful, comprehensive and original, than the execution is just, tasteful, and even sublime. As it professedly contemplates the christian under a great variety of circumstances, so it furnishes him instruction, encouragement, and assistance, adapted to every exigency of the religious life. Whether he is in the church, or the family, or the world; whether he is assailed by temptation, or buffeted by adversity, or cheered by the light of God's favor; whether he has the prospect of a long course of service in the cause of Christ, or is admonished that his course must speedily be finished, or that he is sinking even now into the arms of death; there are pages of this work which will come home to his heart with a delightful aptitude, and will by God's blessing yield him the light, or hope, or strength, which any exigency, even the most calamitous, can require. We scarcely know of any uninspired book which the christian may more safely and properly take as "a lamp to his paths" than this; and while it is eminently fitted to assist him in keeping his heart and walking humbly with God, it is not less adapted to quicken and exalt the intellect by bringing it into communion with the conceptions of a highly gifted and original mind, on the most interesting of all subjects. We must not omit to say that the preface to this work, which is unusually long, and might at first be considered as somewhat disproportionately so, is one of the author's happiest efforts. The subjects which he introduces are all of them touched with a master hand, and in a manner which shows that he can be at home as well in the more lofty and abstract regions of thought, as amidst the common sense realities of life.

The next in order of publication was the "Morning Exercises for the closet;" of which there is the less occasion that we should speak particularly, because the work has already been judged of from actual reading, by a large part of the intelligent christians in our country. We may say, however, for the benefit of any whom it has not reached, that each exercise generally consists of two or three pages of reflections upon some passage of scripture; regard being had in the selection, so far as may be, to seasons and events. For instance, the reflections for the first day of January are appropriate to the beginning of the year; the reflections for the 25th of December relate to the birth of the Savior; not, as we presume, because the author knew that was the actual day of our Lord's nativity, but because it is so regarded by some denominations, and he was willing to conform to that day should be in keeping

with their views, especially as no violence could thereby be done to his own, or those of other sects. These exercises are in fact skeletons of sermons; and if we mistake not many of them were used as such by the author, before their publication. In this point of view they are particularly deserving the attention of ministers and theological students: not that we would recommend any thing like close imitation, much less connive at the appearance of plagiarism; but there are certain general qualities belonging to these exercises, which any preacher might study to advantage; and though he should never attempt to incorporate them distinctly into his own discourses, the frequent contemplation of them could scarcely fail to increase the interest of his preaching. The private christian will of course study this work for a different purpose. He will here find many passages of scripture elucidated, which he had always before regarded as obscure; many new beauties unfolding themselves from the sacred word, which had before escaped his observation. If he proceeds in the study of this work with a humble and devout spirit, his love of the bible will constantly increase, his resolutions of holy living will grow stronger, he will have more of the unction of true piety, will be better girded for a conflict with himself and the world, and in short will be going forward not only regularly but rapidly in a state of sanctification. We are aware that several other books, and good books too, have been written upon the same general plan with this; but they are comparatively little known, and, it must be acknowledged, will not bear a comparison with this in point of real merit.

The "Evening Exercises for the closet," is the last of Mr. Jay's publications—at least the latest which has reached this country. It is on the same general plan with the "Morning Exercises," and is designed to be a companion for that in every christian's closet. The interest of this last publication is sustained throughout, and is, we think, in every respect equal to its predecessor. One is surprised, in reading these two works, at the exuberance of the author's invention: they contain no less than seven hundred and thirty short discourses; and yet he has wonderfully contrived to avoid even the appearance of sameness. His expositions of scripture are so simple and natural, and yet in some respects so strongly marked by originality, that in reading them one can scarcely resist the impression that the author has certainly found the very mind of the Spirit, and that he has been little indebted to any human helps for the discovery. We have no doubt that both the Morning and Evening Exercises will become more and more a kind of text book for the christian's closet, and that generations yet unborn will admire the fertility of the mind, as well as the piety of the heart, which originated them.

If the estimate which we have formed of the character of Mr.

Jay's publications be correct, it must be obvious to every one that they are destined to have an important influence in forming the religious character of the age; to say nothing of the more remote influence which they must exert upon posterity. We will consider under a few distinct particulars, what are the effects which have followed, or may be expected to follow, from the labors of this popular and excellent author.

Mr. Jay's writings, if we mistake not, are peculiarly adapted to promote the study of the bible. Not only are the Morning and Evening Exercises for the closet directly of a biblical character, being designed as a sort of practical commentary on various portions of divine truth, but nearly all his other writings abound in scriptural illustration, and are pre-eminently fitted to invest the study of the bible with strong attractions. No writer of the present day makes a more copious use of scripture than Mr. Jay; and we might say, that in his sermons he sometimes carries this to an extreme, were it not for the uncommonly felicitous manner in which his quotations are made. It would seem as if the whole bible were in his memory, and he had the power on every occasion of selecting the very passage that is most to his purpose; and where a writer quotes scripture with such an advantage, we can scarcely call any degree of quotation excessive.

If Mr. Jay should be thought by some to verge to an extreme in respect to the direct use which he makes of scripture in his public discourses, we are constrained to believe that there is a tendency among many preachers, in this country, to go to the opposite end. We certainly do not wish to be led back to the practice of some of our venerable fathers, who were accustomed to string together many passages of scripture without much regard to connection, but detained the hearers by turning over the leaves of the bible to look these passages out; but we do wish that every sermon should have so much of the bible in it, either as it respects language or spirit, that it shall be obvious to every hearer that it is drawn directly from that sacred book. It were reasonable to expect that God should put special honor upon his own word; and hence we find that the frequent introduction of scripture language into a sermon imparts to it in the view of the pious, a kind of unction which it can derive from nothing else. So, too, all experience proves, that there is no argument so strong as "thus saith the Lord;" and many a mind which has wavered through a long course of metaphysical reasoning, has been fixed in its convictions by one plain declaration of the bible. It were well for ministers whenever they are discussing any subject upon which the language of inspiration can be properly employed, to draw from the sacred record to a greater or less extent; and if they find themselves upon a subject which does not admit of this, they may

well inquire whether they have not wanderèd into the mazes of unprofitable speculation, if not of absolute error.

But while we are free to express our conviction, that there is at the present day, too little use made of God's word in the public discourses of the sanctuary, we think it is still more obvious that the bible is far too little consulted by christians, as the great rule of their faith and practice. It is true, indeed, that our sabbath schools and bible classes are doing much, and may ultimately in a good degree remedy the evil; for while it is the tendency of these institutions to imbue the youthful mind with scripture knowledge, they serve to impart a relish for the study of God's word, which will be likely to continue, and be some security for future theological improvement. Nevertheless, there is in most of our churches, especially among the older members, a most culpable degree of ignorance in respect to the great facts and doctrines of the bible. The consequence of this is, that many are unstable in all their ways; they are, in a great degree, at the mercy of every sectary, and fanatic, and errorist, whose claims may happen to be advanced in their hearing; and hence it comes to pass that some of whom in the beginning we had ventured to hope well, have ultimately gone off, as it would seem irrecoverably, into the wilds of error and extravagance. And then again, even where these greater evils do not exist, and where there is, on the whole, evidence of piety, we are sure to find in connection with great ignorance of the scriptures, a low state of sanctification. Truth is the instrument by which the Holy Spirit accomplishes his work upon the hearts of men, and the greater the degree of truth that is in the mind, or the more clearly and correctly it is apprehended, other things being equal, the more rapidly will the soul become conformed to the divine image. If ignorance of the bible impedes the believer's growth in grace, it stands no less in the way of his christian enjoyment. There may, indeed, be a strong commotion among the animal feelings; there may be bright visions of fancy which are mistaken for visions of faith; there may be a wild imaginary joy mounting up well nigh to delirious ecstasy; but there is not the calm, and rational, and enduring joy of the true christian; or if it exist at all, it is only in a measured degree, and sadly mixed with alloy. As truth is the basis of the believer's sanctification, so holiness is the great spring of his enjoyment: of course the more conversant he is with God's word, the more he may expect of that joy which a stranger intermeddeth not with. And his happiness is increased not merely by the indirect influence which the bible exerts through the medium of his sanctification, but by having his mind turned directly upon the bright, and transforming, and ennobling truths which God's word reveals.

We know not, then, of any better means of elevating the stan-

dard of religious character—of promoting the usefulness, the comfort, or the stability of christians, than to elevate the standard of bible knowledge. We would urge on christians of all classes, the importance of making this sacred book part of the *study* of every day; and we would recommend to them to avail themselves of some judicious commentaries or expositions of scripture, as a help in this important undertaking. We would especially press those who are just commencing the religious life, not merely to gain a superficial knowledge of God's word, but to become thoroughly acquainted with it; as nothing else can constitute so good a pledge that they will be fruitful, growing, enduring christians. There is reason to believe that many who have been regarded as the fruits of revivals, but who have subsequently exhibited at least a very equivocal course, if they have not deeply wounded the cause of religion, might by being early established in the truth, have been enabled in their subsequent life to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior. We hardly need add, that with these views of the importance of scriptural knowledge, we are prepared most heartily to commend, and so far as we can, to forward all those institutions which are designed to make our children and youth early acquainted with the bible. We would cheer on all those who are immediately engaged in this benevolent work; and we have no doubt that, whatever else they may do for the interests of religion and for the benefit of their generation, they will have occasion to reckon their efforts in this cause as among the most useful of all their labors.

Mr. Jay's writings are also eminently distinguished for their *practical tendency*. They are indeed by no means deficient in the exhibition of scripture doctrine; but whenever doctrine is discussed, it is always in a practical way. They are not as abstract propositions, but are presented just as they are God's word, and as they stand related to the experience and conduct of men. They are uncommonly adapted to make us acquainted with their own hearts; to carry them back to the very springs of their actions; and to impress them with the conviction that the whole nature of religion is a practical reality. We are not aware that Mr. Jay has written any thing of a merely speculative character: whatever has come from his pen, so far as we know, has an important bearing upon practice, and is fitted to exert a benign and elevating influence upon human character.

It has been a characteristic of some periods of the church, that they have been distinguished by a rage for speculation. No one can go back to the time of the latter christian fathers, or to the days of Thomas Aquinas, without being forcibly struck by the endlessly diversified and hair breadth distinctions which were then resorted to, in the illustration and defense of scripture doctrine; and it were

hardly necessary to say that an age which had so much in its character that was speculative, could not be distinguished by religious action. It was common in those days for men to exhaust all their powers in endeavoring to settle points which did not admit of being settled, and which if they had been, would not make one hair white or black, as it respects the salvation of men or the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. The lamentable result was, that while men were spending their lives in metaphysical quibbling, the great cause for which the Savior shed his blood, seemed to stand still, if not to be on the retrograde: and the revival of the spirit of religious action did not take place until the rage for vain speculation had begun in some measure to die away. If we do not greatly mistake, wherever the doctrines of the gospel are exhibited in connection with much of human philosophy and encumbered by the technology of the schools, they will be found to a great extent inefficient, and the church will be found proportionably listless and inactive. But where these truths are presented in their naked simplicity, and brought home to the mind and heart as common sense realities, without having their influence in any degree neutralized by foreign admixtures, they will be found quick and powerful; and it may reasonably be expected that in such a community there will be a waking from the dreams of carelessness, and a spirit of benevolent activity going forth to bless the world.

Notwithstanding the present age has so much of a practical character, and a large part of the preaching at least in this country, is designed to rouse men to effort, and is in that general sense practical, we think it may reasonably be questioned whether it is in all cases sufficiently particular as it respects the various duties of life. For most men who hear the gospel, it is not enough that general rules of living should be exhibited; but these rules should be carried out into the various details of duty as they occur in every day experience. True, the great object of the minister is to convert sinners and to edify the body of Christ; but it may reasonably be doubted whether he will accomplish either of these objects best, by simply urging the general duties of repentance and faith and obedience. Let him descend to the minuter parts of human conduct, let him illustrate the various duties which men owe to each other in the various relations of life, and the different tempers which they ought to cherish in different circumstances; and while he will be likely to render the christian more exact and faithful in the discharge of his duty, he may also by this very course turn the eye of the sinner inward upon his own deficiencies and neglects, and show him his need of an interest in the great salvation. We have known some good ministers who have rendered their preaching with most of their stated hearers extremely uninteresting, and as it has seemed to us, have greatly mistaken

their duty, by confining themselves to a few favorite topics instead of preaching the whole counsel of God. We have no hesitation in saying, that this is wrong in itself; for it were an unworthy reflection upon the wisdom that dictated the bible, to suppose that it should reveal any truth which it would be unprofitable to inculcate; and what does that minister do who selects a few truths from the bible as topics of public instruction and passes over the rest, but virtually decide that a large part of the whole counsel of God might have been omitted, and neither the church nor the world have been the losers by it. Besides, it seems to us, that the wisdom of heaven is manifest in scarcely any thing more than this—that so many truths are exhibited and in such a variety of forms, that the inculcation of them in their proper order and their due proportions, is fitted to make the strongest and best impression. One reason why so many preach with so little permanently good effect, is that they awaken in their hearers so little interest; and this is to be referred in no small degree to a perpetual recurrence of the same topics under precisely the same forms; and this again is to be set down as the effect of their not taking advantage of the suggestions of divine wisdom in preaching the whole truth in its scriptural connection. One great secret of the charm which pervades Mr. Jay's writings, is that he ranges through every department of human experience, and shows that the Spirit has its appropriate teachings for every condition. Their tendency is not only to make men do right in all circumstances, but to do right intelligently and upon principle.

It is another characteristic of Mr. Jay's writings that they are eminently fitted to *cherish a devotional spirit*. We have already had occasion to remark that his "family prayers," while they show the fertility of his mind, the purity of his taste, and the originality and beauty of his conceptions, also breathe, in an uncommon degree, the spirit of genuine devotion. But most of his other writings, though they are designed primarily to instruct, and are indeed, in a high degree, instructive, are delightfully pervaded by the same spirit. His Morning and Evening Exercises are particularly designed to be the companions of the closet; and it would seem scarcely possible that they should be used by any christian, as they were intended to be, without bringing him into an appropriate frame for communion with God.

It will be obvious to any one who reflects how much the present age is characterized by the spirit of active enterprise, that there is danger that it will suffer in its devotional character;—danger that while christians have their hands full of work, their hearts will be comparatively barren of devout exercises; that their active efforts in building up the kingdom of Christ will be suffered to interfere with the more retired business of keeping their hearts,

and communing with God. We do not complain that the religious character of the age has too much in it that is practical; but we have much reason to fear that many christians of the present day sometimes render apologies to their consciences for a partial neglect of their closets, on the ground that their time is so much engrossed by duties of a public nature, that they have little left for any thing else. Whenever this state of things exists, it is an evil which ought at once to be corrected; for not only does it indicate an approaching decline of the spirit of piety, but it looks as if the spirit of benevolent action would not endure; and whenever the christian loses sight of his dependence on God in his benevolent efforts, he may rest assured either that his zeal will soon languish or his efforts will be unsuccessful. While, therefore, there is danger from the enterprising character of the age, that christians will grow deficient in the appropriate internal exercises of piety, it is of vast importance in order that this very characteristic of the age may continue, and the energies of the church be brought into still more extensive and active operation, that the principle of piety should be maintained in all its vigor. No christian need apprehend that he shall accomplish less by his active labors for the cause of Christ, because a due proportion of his time is given to the duties of the closet. On the other hand, he who is most faithful and constant in his attendance on these duties, and who has the largest measure of the spirit of devotion and dependence on God, will be sure to go forth to his work with more zeal and to accomplish it to better purpose. And we do not expect to see the whole energies of the church put forth in benevolent action, until we see them brought more deeply into exercise in fervent and effectual prayer.

Perhaps it may occur to some that if the spirit of devotion might seem to be in danger from the actively benevolent character of the age, there is sufficient security against the apprehended evil, at least so far as our country is concerned—from the revivals that mark the present age. It might seem, at first view, that a revival consists so much in the exercises of devotion, that no christian could mingle in it without having his heart overflow with a devotional spirit; and yet the melancholy fact is, that ministers and private christians who are active in revivals, are in some respects more exposed to neglect their own hearts in such circumstances than in almost any other. As there is danger in the case just mentioned that the spirit of devotion will be lost in the bustle of public enterprise, so there is danger in the case to which we now refer, that in the effort that is necessary for maintaining and carrying forward a revival, in the exertions which are constantly put forth to awaken the careless, and guide the inquiring, and detect false hopes, those who are thus engaged will particularly forget that they have much to do at such a time, in keeping their own hearts and advancing their

own sanctification. If we knew the reason, as God knows it, why many revivals which, at the beginning, have promised much, have seemed prematurely to come to a close, and to produce but little fruit, we have no doubt it would be that christians had too little to do with their closets, and that they were putting their own zeal and activity in place of an humble dependance on God. We come then to the conclusion that the two great features of the religious character of the age, as it respects our own country,—viz. that it is an age of benevolent effort and an age of revivals,—expose the church to the neglect of a devotional spirit, while they imperatively require that she should cultivate it.

It is a matter of great moment in connection with this subject, that we make the proper distinction between the form and spirit of devotion. Though it cannot be expected, that the spirit will exist without the form, yet it is certain that much of the form may exist without the spirit. The fact that an individual is always ready to guide the devotions of a public assembly, or even that he may seem to evince on such occasions an uncommon degree of fervor, is certainly no sure indication that he is in a truly devotional frame; or that he is under the habitual influence of an elevated piety. If the same individual has much to do with his closet, that certainly is much better evidence that the true spirit of devotion has been kindled in his heart; though it is possible that he may regularly attend to the forms even of closet devotion, while yet he is influenced by no better spirit than a spirit of self-righteousness. The truth is that the spirit of genuine devotion, is no other than the spirit of true piety; and its holy breathings are felt not merely in the closet, or in the public assembly, or in the private circle for prayer, but in the world, in all the intercourse of life, in every condition in which men can be placed. He who loves to pray in public, while he neglects in a great degree his closet devotions, may indeed edify others, but he is deceiving himself: he may have the gift of prayer but the *grace* is wanting. He who goes frequently into his closet to pray, while yet the influence of his prayers never reaches his conduct in the world, is also a self-deceiver, and without any thing which God regards as the spirit of devotion. It is the spirit, not merely the form, which fills the christian's heart with joy, and brings down blessings upon the world.

Another striking characteristic of Mr. Jay's writings is, that they exhibit in the best sense a *truly catholic spirit*. Not that there is any thing in them that looks like lowering the standard of christian doctrine or practice, or of yielding up any thing that is essential in religion—far from it: the great doctrines and duties of the gospel are constantly stated and urged in all their importance; and erroneous doctrines and practices meet with their deserved condemnation. But after all, the author never seems to be

trammelled by sectarian peculiarities; and scarcely ever occupies ground upon which he would not be cordially met by christians of every evangelical denomination. This no doubt is one great reason of the universal popularity which his writings have gained both in Great Britain and this country; and hence too we have found many who had been long conversant with his writings, who yet had never been able to discover to what denomination he belongs, and some who had always had the impression that, instead of being an Independent, as he actually is, he is a (low church) Episcopalian. No doubt he has his attachment to Independence; but it is so far from being a bigoted attachment that he opens the arms of his charity wide to every evangelical christian, let his denomination be what it may. Men may differ from him in many unimportant particulars, and yet instead of standing aloof from them as errorists, he cordially welcomes them as fellow disciples of a common Master.

The spirit of christian catholicism, which Mr. Jay's writings evince, is what we wish to see more and more extensively pervade the religious community. We are by no means disposed to plead for an annihilation of sects, or for any attempt to range all the followers of Christ under the same human banner. On the contrary, we fully believe that the division of the christian world into various denominations is not without some important uses; and that if its legitimate influence is not neutralized by unchristian jealousies and alienations, it may hasten rather than retard the ultimate triumph of the church. But while we are willing that each denomination holding the great truths of the gospel in their purity, should have a being, and exert its appropriate influence in its own way, we are not willing that any denomination should make its unimportant peculiarities the practical test of discipleship; we are not willing that those sectarian principles should have currency, which go to unchristianize a large part of the professed followers of Christ. The true principle on this subject, it seems to us, is something like this,—let each evangelical denomination enjoy its peculiarities of faith, and worship, and church government, without being molested by others, and without attempting to force them upon others. Let each one also have, to a certain extent, its own benevolent institutions; at least if it is disposed thus to have them, let it not be regarded by others as a just ground of complaint. And let all without this narrow circle be common ground on which all the followers of Christ may meet each other, without respect to any other name than that of christian. And even while each sect is cultivating its own private field, let there be no spirit of unhallowed rivalry in its operations; and let all that is done be done with ultimate reference to the general good. This, we fully believe, is the only sectarianism which the gospel permits, and all that goes

beyond it is nothing better than the spirit of the world. Christians, let them call themselves by whatever human name they may, must love each other, and behave towards each other as brethren, else they will do little to honor their Master, and give out but a dubious light before the world. Their second object must be to glorify God in the salvation of their fellow men; and if they forget this object in their attachment to the interest of a denomination, instead of making that attachment subordinate to it, they may indeed labor hard, but they may have much reason to fear that to the eye of Omniscience they will not appear to be laboring for the Lord Jesus Christ.

As the ministry, where it is enjoyed, must always have an important influence in forming the character of a church and congregation, so there is perhaps no particular in which that influence operates more powerfully than in this to which we refer. Let a minister often appear in his pulpit in the spirit of a polemic, let him dwell upon the doctrines of the gospel, and especially on the less important of them in a controversial way; let him in his intercourse with his people show himself much more disposed to denounce other sects than his own, and to magnify the differences which exist between himself and them; and the almost certain consequence will be that a congregation thus trained will bear a polemic character, though it is scarcely less certain that a considerable portion of them will have been driven by his imprudence into the very errors against which he has been contending. We are far from believing that cases may not and do not even frequently occur, in which it is right for a minister not only to defend the truth against particular errors, but even directly to attack and expose those errors; but this ought never to be done unless circumstances clearly demand it; and in general a far better way of keeping down error is to exhibit the simple truth without an intimation that there are any who oppose it. Ministers have a degree of responsibility on this subject which they ought to regard with solemn interest, as it depends in a great degree on the course which they adopt, whether the church is to move forward in her great work, in her combined strength and majesty, or whether her energies are to be weakened and her influences abridged by internal animosities and divisions. Let the delightful spirit which Mr. Jay has exemplified in his writings, pervade all the different communities of the followers of Christ, and though we may still have different denominations, yet it will be manifest that there is but one body. Under such an influence the world would be compelled again to the exclamation which was made in the early ages of the church—"behold how these christians love one another."

In the writings of Mr. Jay there is a remarkable consistency, and they are fitted in an eminent degree, to form a *consistent religious character*.

One principal reason why most of the professed followers of Christ exert so little influence in favor of his cause, is, that their christian character is marred by such palpable inconsistency. This inconsistency results from the very practical estimate which they form of the comparative importance of different duties; and from the neglect of some, or other, or all of the duties of the christian life. We have known some men, whose general conduct in the world was in a good degree exemplary, who were yet criminally negligent in respect to their own families, and it may be, have never performed the duty of family prayer. We have known others who have discovered great zeal in the cause of revivals, and have been forward in extraordinary efforts to bring down the Holy Ghost, and have denounced with unsparing severity all who seemed to evince a sluggish spirit, who have nevertheless had little sympathy in the great objects of christian benevolence, who have looked coldly upon the cause of temperance as making a dangerous inroad upon their traffic, and who have ever had an equivocal character for moral honesty in the world. These are only specimens of the almost infinite variety of inconsistencies which appear among the professed disciples of Christ; and it is easy to see how they contribute to abate the good influence of christian character. The neglect of duty, or the doing of positive evil, must of course exert a bad influence, independent of its connection with a christian profession; but when that connection is considered, how manifestly does it neutralize, to a great extent, the influence of the really good actions with which it may happen to be associated! How much more natural will it be for an ungodly and gainsaying world, in such a case, to account for what is good by setting it down to the charge of gross hypocrisy, than to account for what is evil, by supposing it to be nothing more than the occasional lapse of a man who is sanctified but in part! And hence we find in actual experience, that inconsistent professors *are* charged on every side with base hypocrisy; and then religion is indirectly made responsible for their failings; and then the triumphant, and convenient, though perhaps silent, conclusion is at once arrived at, that religion itself is the mere creature of imposture. No doubt there are multitudes now in the world of woe, and many others on their way thither, who will have to refer the miseries of an eternity, to the wretched use which they have made of the inconsistencies of professed christians.

Now, if we do not mistake, Mr. Jay's writings are not more remarkable for any thing than their tendency to counteract this evil. They bring before us with great felicity, and without any apparent referencé to system, the various duties of men, just as they are inculcated in God's word, giving to each its proportionate importance. There is no elevating of faith at the expense of works, or zeal at the expense of morality, or alms at the expense of prayer; but each

duty stands forth with its own claims, holding its appropriate place. In short, we know of few writings which are fitted to make an impression more in this respect like that of the bible itself, than those of Mr. Jay. Whoever reads them attentively and imbibes their spirit, will not be punctilious in respect to one set of duties, and lax in regard to another; but he will be only attentive to all; and under such an influence his christian character, instead of being unsightly and monstrous, will develop itself in fair and beautiful proportions.

After what we have already said of Mr. Jay's writings, we scarcely need add, that they are fitted to *form christian character on the most lovely and attractive model*. It cannot be disguised, that as the beauty of christian doctrine has sometimes been marred by human philosophy, so the loveliness of christian example has been obscured by what has almost seemed a cold and lowering melancholy. There have been those, and they are yet to be found, who appear habitually gloomy from principle; who set down the playfulness and buoyancy of the animal spirits to the account of an inveterate waywardness; and who never venture to speak on the subject of religion at all, but with what seems an air of affected solemnity. There are those who, while they carry this spirit with them into all the intercourse of life, display it especially in their personal addresses to those whom they would influence to attend to their soul's salvation; and make it a point to begin every such conversation with the utmost abruptness, and sometimes in a manner to shock all the finer sensibilities. We do not doubt that this course has often been adopted with the best motives, and that the individuals concerned have supposed they could accomplish more good in this than in any other way; but we have as little doubt that such a course is inconsistent with the spirit of the bible, and at war with all just notions of the philosophy of the mind. In all cases of this kind we would have deep solemnity, but we would have associated with it the utmost tenderness; a spirit and a manner which should be adapted to find its way to the kindest feelings of the heart. And in the common intercourse of life, while christians should take heed that they avoid the appearance of evil, they should also manifest by their consistent and dignified cheerfulness, that religion is not the parent of gloom; and that those who come under its influence, enter a path which is in the best sense "pleasantness and peace." If irreligious persons are liable to be confirmed in their irreligion by the careless and trifling deportment of professed christians, they are not less exposed to the same evil by seeing a christian profession constantly associated with a morose and forbidding gloom. Let religion be exhibited in all its cheerful attractions, while yet it retains its appropriate seriousness and dignity, and it cannot fail to commend itself to the judgment, and

conscience, and better feelings of all who witness such a manifestation.

There are few men probably to whom the present age is more indebted for whatever of consistent cheerfulness its religious character may possess, than to Mr. Jay. Other writers, as we have already intimated, may have done more than he, to rouse the slumbering conscience of the sinner, and bring him into the attitude of conviction and repentance; but few, we think, have done more to hold up religion to the world in all its divine and beautiful attractions. We cannot take leave of this interesting and popular writer, without commending his writings to every class of our readers. We would commend them especially to the young christian, as being eminently fitted to form him to a high degree of religious enjoyment, activity and usefulness. We would commend them to the man who would know much of the windings of his own heart, and would have maxims of true practical wisdom in his own mind, to regulate every part of his conduct. We would commend them even to the man who scoffs at religion as a fable; for if he can contemplate that view of the gospel which these writings present, without acknowledging that it is consistent, beautiful, even glorious, then it is because he belies his own convictions, or because his infidelity has made him a madman.

ART. II.—SPRAGUE ON REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

Lectures on Revivals of Religion; By WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D. Pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church in Albany. *With an introductory Essay*, by LEONARD WOODS, D. D. *Also an Appendix, consisting of Letters from the Reverend Doctors* Alexander, Wayland, Dana, Miller, Hyde, Hawes, M'Dowell, Porter, Payson, Proudfit, Neill, Milledoler, Davis, Lord, Humphrey, Day, Green, Waddel, Griffin, and Rev. C. P. Mc'Irvine.

As christian spectators, we cannot be supposed to regard with indifference, the discussions which are going on respecting revivals of religion. That there is not, among the friends of revivals, a perfect harmony of sentiment, respecting all the measures which should be adopted for promoting them, is notorious; yet the difference, we believe, respects *measures*, far more extensively than principles; and measures, concerning which, for the most part, no specific directions are given in the scriptures, and good men, consequently, may be supposed to entertain some diversity of sentiment. Respecting the nature, the author, and the results of these revivals, and the great principles which should decide our conduct in promoting them, there is, among the great body of christians in our country, but one sentiment. That, in respect to both measures