

Sunday Reading.

CONCESSIONS OF THE CHURCH TO THE WORLD.

"There are practical concessions which are even more to be deplored than any speculative luxuries." These concessions must be guarded. There is a line between the Church and the world. It is best for Christians not to stand on it, or to try how near they can come to it, but to take position at a safe distance on the right side.

To change the figure: "we must kindle a great fire, unless we would be ever tending it." Christianity lies in the world upon conditions that it is aggressive, and not compromising.

The Church has a just claim for concessions from the world; and the latter will make them, if the former stands firm. Sinners are ready to subdue themselves, and will do it, if not upheld by God's people.

Saints shall judge the world. Why should they not, in their lives and manners, lay down a rule of living for the world—a rule of manners, dress, pleasure, company, and business?

Take an illustration. A. is a member of the Church. His social position is unexceptionable, and his children grow up around a family altar. His daughter marries—and a wedding-party is given. The guests brought in are mostly irreligious, gay, fashionable people, but must be there because they are friends, neighbors, or relatives by the new alliance. Now, the world has boldness enough, we might say impudence, to propose its own style in that house. It comes there with cards, cards, and roulette; and, if not resolutely met and opposed by authority, that occasion of chastened gladness, that home of family religion, will be decorated by strange manners and amusements. If allowed, they will move the old family Bible from the stand, and play a game; they will revel and do "such like."

Has the Christian best of that house the gall to say, "No,"—convinces, alas, about the sacred altar of the domestic sanctuary, the world is allowed to come in like a flood. All previous teaching is trampled down, and all pious precedent contradicted. The parson is dounced off, and the world takes possession.

Or boldness in the Church to stop such innovations and incursions on the threshold! Or for Christian meanness in those who name the sacred Name. Give place to the devil, and he will run over you. The bones of the pious are the last retreats of religion. Alas, when these are given up to the world!

Have you not a right to preserve the manner and spirit of that occasion: to demand that it shall be conducted on Christian principles—yes, Methodist principles—and if the world don't like that, then let the world take the best of it, and go somewhere else?

After these concessions have been made, and self-respect prostrated, and conscience wounded, and reproach brought on the Church, in what has the world been improved by indulgence? Nothing. It is just as wedded to sin and as alien from God as ever.

Again: in the matter of dress and of display. Is it not inviting the true order of things to see the people of God dropping their simplicity and their sincerity, and straining after the world; imitating those whose spiritual interests and standards are admitted to be wrong; submitting to do homage at the shrine of the god of this world; casting into measures which have not the sanction of faith; practicing what their creed disallows?

What moral cowardice is this! Instead of self denial, it is the denial of Christ.

The world ought to be met by the Church in a different manner. They can come to you—ought to come; but you cannot go to them. If you are right, and they are wrong, concessions from you cannot profit them; but must ruin them.

Stand upon your Christian rights. Maintain your ground. The honor of Christ, the truth, love for the souls of men and for your own soul; consistency, self respect, your vote to the Church, all forbid concessions to the world.

The world is constantly pressing upon the Church, and never leaves an inch of undivided ground unoccupied. Yet, there is a resisted pressure. Whatever a disposition is manifested to give way in the least, there the arts of the enemy are tried. Now he assumes the shape of blandishment, now of threat. Every weapon is used, and every art. Concession after concession is made by the Church in wages, in discipline—in small things, in great things; and finally in every thing; and, but for names, there is no telling the difference between the Church and the world.

To this it comes at last: There is but one safe rule of action: refuse to make these concessions in the beginning—Nashville demands.

LITTLE SINS.

Let us be on our guard against little sins, against what men call little sins, for there is nothing really little in the way of sin—Watch against anything that wounds the conscience, however slightly. Conscience is a sacred thing. Guard well your spiritual life. Watch against the little sins that in secretly may wound and thus in the end destroy. You can easily kill a man by stabbing him with one blow to the heart. But may you not easily kill a man also by stabbing a little vein in his wrist? The blood may only flow deep and drop, but if you do it step that wound will bleed to death, and just as surely as it was plunged a dagger into your heart, and sent you into eternity in a moment. Beware, then, of the little things that keep the wounds of the soul open, guard against little sins, which, if not guarded against, will as surely destroy the soul as one great sin.

John Nelson says, Satan seldom comes to Christians with great temptations, or with temptation to commit a great sin. You bring a gossling and a raddle together, and they are very safe neighbors. But bring a few shavings and set them a light, and then bring a few small sticks and let them take fire, and the log be in the midst of them, and you will soon get rid of your log. And so it is with little sins. You will be startled with the idea of committing a great sin, and so the devil brings a little temptation and leaves you to indulge yourself. "There is no great harm in this, no great peril in that," and as by these little chips we are first easily lured up, and at last the great green log is burned. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation—Rev. Nelson Hall, D.D., B.

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