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DEVOTED TO RELIGION, MORALITY, LITERATURE, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.—T. MEREDITH, EDITOR.

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## TERMS.

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From the (London) Christian Observer.

## ON THE TEST OF SPIRITUAL SAFETY.

To know that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and that our names are written in heaven, is a privilege not to be valued by any ordinary standard. Thousands are miserable for want of it; and daily confirm their misery by persevering in that "broad way" which, whether swept by morality or defiled by vice, surely leadeth to destruction. Even the followers of the Lamb are not, in all instances, possessed of that precious knowledge to which I have now referred. I have occasionally, like the poet Cowper, wanted the consolations, while they have manifested the spirit of the Gospel; and they have written bitter things against themselves notwithstanding it has been evident to their brethren that they were "made accepted in the Beloved."

As the assurance of spiritual safety is of such inestimable value, so it is a subject on which the most devoted Christians are not entirely agreed. Witness the conflicting sentiments of John Wesley and some of his contemporaries; he is insisting on assurance as the indispensable evidence of conversion, and they confidently deny it while each party respectively appealed to Scripture. In the present day similar discrepancies are found among the saints of God. Chas. Malan, for instance, in his well-known religious publications, makes it the very test of conversion, that we "know we have eternal life," and that in a personal sense, so as to have no doubt whatever of our interest in Christ. Nor will the divine in question, and the advocates of his system of theology, admit that any other test of our Christian security should be instituted than our simply believing the record God has given us of his Son, (1 John v. 10.)

The present subject being one of unquestionable importance, may I be enabled by the Spirit of truth to treat it agreeably to his own revealed will. To begin with our simply believing the divine record. Where such a faith is implanted by the Holy Spirit, it may safely be admitted as a proof that the Lord has had mercy on our souls, and "called us with a holy calling; yet it supplies a test of his acceptance to the individual alone. Who is so intimately acquainted with the heart of man as to pronounce that "individual" sincere, on the mere ground of his profession? Though the spirit itself may bear witness to his spirit that he is a child of God, still may he not, on the contrary, deceive his own heart on this infinitely momentous point? Jesus Christ accordingly tells us in his word, (Matt. vii. 22.) that it is one thing to be confident of our acceptance, and another to be really accepted on the great day. If, then, it be insisted on, by those to whom I have alluded, in order to prove our title to "glory and immortality" in Christ; we have simply to ask, "do I believe God's promise?" and also to examine ourselves "whether we be in the faith; and to prove our own selves." I would submit it to the impartial reader, if this former test, when wholly severed from the latter, be not uncertain, unsatisfactory, and above all unscriptural?

What, I would ask, will be its probable operation in the case of young religionists, and indeed of all who may adopt it rather suddenly than seasonally? Rejecting as legal and pharisaical, and in principle akin to bondage, all inquiry whatever, either as to our conduct or disposition, as evidences of our spiritual safety, they maintain that he who hath the Spirit hath the witness in himself. What follows? Wanting, as I have ventured to suppose, Christian seriousness of mind, and being led away by strong feeling, they will scarcely commune with their heart; and prove the character of their actions by the only infallible rule of faith and life. Never can they stop and ask, consistently with their views of assurance, if they possess those marks of acceptance which (as I shall presently demonstrate) are specially pointed out in Scripture. On the contrary, they look above them, when considering the all-important question. Am I a child of God? I do not affirm that this theory necessarily leads to such Antinomianism in practice; but I verily think that such is its probable result. For if we are at liberty to conclude "we are in Christ Jesus," without any direct reference to the spirituality of our life and conversation, (Rom. viii. 1, 5, 8,) then, though such spirituality be wanting, may we not still imagine we "abide in him?" Let a patient be told by his physician, "if you are fully persuaded of your recovery you need not regard any other evidence of the fact;" the patient might possibly be right; yet were it not probable he would be deceived? The application may safely be left to the judicious reader.

I pass on, then, to some other tests of our spiritual safety, which are of a plainer, a more practical, and I conceive, of a more spiritual kind; premising, however, that they are wholly and essentially different from the grounds of our acceptance with God, and therefore to be carefully distinguished from them. One of the most satisfactory, because of the most tangible of these tests, is that love of the brethren which is mentioned by the Apostle John, (1 John iii. 14.) "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Here, if any where, we may reach the point of certainty. For by nature, we are "enemies to God," we are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," and count the society of

saints a burthen rather than a privilege. Accordingly, when a lady of rank, after a spiritual change had been wrought in her by divine grace, once met the sainted Wilberforce at Barley-Wood, she was suddenly so much affected as to shed many tears, and that at the painful recollection of having once abhorred his very name. When, therefore, she loved and honoured it, was not that change of feeling at least a presumptive proof of a corresponding change of character and condition before God?

That such a test as I am now considering will invariably be applied by Christians to the relief and consolation of their spirits, I am far from intending to affirm. There are cases of spiritual distress in which all arguments are insufficient to remove, or even to diminish its intolerable pressure. The utmost ingenuity of the sufferer is perhaps exercised for the purpose of defeating the effort to console him. He is not to be reasoned, even on scriptural grounds, out of the dreary apprehension that he has no part nor lot in Christ. Yet even here the verse in question has been known to shed a ray of hope on the despairing soul. I myself once met with a very encouraging instance of the kind, and am therefore strengthened in the persuasion that the love of the brethren, however imperfect, or even interrupted in its course (as in the case of Paul and Barnabas, Acts xv. 24.) is still, as a dominant principle, an evidence of the Lord's mercy to our own souls, and of their spiritual acceptance in Christ. And I would the rather press the point, since it is far more easy to determine whether we love the brethren, than whether we are contrite, like Mary, or pray like the converted Saul, or possess those gracious dispositions which form the substance of the beatitudes.

Not, however, that any one scriptural evidence of our interest in Christ is either to be overlooked or undervalued. What God has taught, man must implicitly receive: what the Lord values, man must in no wise disregard. Prayer, therefore, when proceeding from the heart, and directed to the great objects of reconciliation to God through the blood of Jesus, of conversion by his Holy Spirit, and of a consistent Christian life, must be his immediate work, and on that account is an index of our participation of the rich blessings of the Gospel covenant. As such it was clearly recognized by God himself in the instance of the great apostle, Acts ix. 11. And the more this grace is exercised, especially in the season of temptation, or in the hour of sorrow, the more cause have we to rest satisfied that the Lord has mercifully taught us how to pray. I speak not of our devotional frames or feelings. They vary even in the best. Yet however dull our affections at a throne of grace, if still we pray like David, (Ps. cxix. 25.) "My soul cleaveth unto the dust; quicken thou, me according to thy word," is not this petition an evidence that we are taught of God, and adopted of his dear children? Never does a man of this world mourn secretly before God over such failures in devotion nor implore such spiritual recovery as a blessing of the highest order.

How closely the beatitudes are connected with that spiritual safety I have noticed, is, I conceive, sufficiently clear to all who impartially regard them. I have indeed heard it asked, "Did the dying thief possess these evidences of his safety?" Admit that he did not visibly or confessedly possess them; yet who will deny that they were implanted in him by the Holy Spirit, and that they did exist, however feebly or imperceptibly, in his then contrite breast? His, however, was a case of no ordinary occurrence. After all, the beatitudes are unmeaning, if we are not permitted, and even required, to ask, in order to decide the question of our own individual interest in the blood of Christ—Am I meek, poor in spirit, and especially pure in heart, &c. &c. Notwithstanding that impurity which cleaves to the most exalted earthly saint, there is a comparative purity imputed to him by the Spirit, as appears by certain passages in the Holy Scripture. Heb. ii. 14; viii. 10; Phil. ii. 5. If, therefore, it is the fixed and intense desire of our hearts that God would cleanse their very thoughts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit (prayer before the communion service,) have we not an abundant proof that we are made "new creatures," and consequently are in Christ Jesus?

In the third chapter of the first epistle of St. John and third verse, the question now under discussion is very simply and practically decided. "Every man that hath his hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." "He that committeth sin is of the devil." On that love of the brethren which is next insisted on by the apostle, I have already dwelt. The whole chapter ought indeed, to be seriously studied both by those who have hitherto been distressed from want of some sufficient evidence of their saving union with Christ, and by those who would confine such evidence within the limits of that inward testimony which the Spirit generally bears to the safety of the true believer.

Nor is it unimportant to remark, with what tenderness the Lord speaks to those whom he has not yet enriched with the full assurance of faith. He does not, like some pious, but alas! misjudging men, charge such persons with the unbelief, (though undoubtedly in some sense chargeable with it;) but he says to them "fear not," Isaiah xxxv. 4; "O man greatly beloved," Dan. x. 11, 16; "It is I, be not afraid," Matt. xiv. 27. And in Rom. xiv. 1, St. Paul exhorts, in the spirit of his heavenly Master, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye."

Is it then a fair inference from the foregoing observations, that we are not to seek and cherish the inward testimony of the Holy Ghost to our spiritual acceptance and security? Surely not. In attempting to handle a very difficult as well as important point in Christian experience, I have chiefly designed to show that we are not to be restricted to that one branch of evidence; and that those who advocate such restriction are themselves liable to serious delusion on the subject. Happy are they who are mercifully taught by God to know in whom they have believed—to know that they have passed from death unto life, to know that they have eternal life in Christ. Yet

those who are denied such knowledge have no ground whatever to conclude that they are not his children. This, I trust, has now been sufficiently established by a fair appeal to Scripture. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," is therefore the language in which all who look unto Jesus, whether trembling or confidently, should be addressed, and more particularly by their ministers. The heart of the righteous should be made sad, neither by withholding from him those texts which speak of our completeness and joyful alliance in the Saviour Christ; nor, on the other hand, by concealing those which pronounce a blessing on the contrite, the timid, and the poor in spirit. Let your readers bear with me, as far as I may appear to them to have erred, either in my conception or representation of the subject. Truth is my object; and the Lord, by his Spirit, lead us all into truth, till at length he lodge us in a region where the perception of divine things will be forever clear, the judgment forever sound, and the soul forever happy, in "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

When I speak, as I have now done, of those proofs of our reconciliation to God in Jesus Christ which our spiritual character may supply, I would not overlook those deeply affecting cases, in which nothing but "looking unto Jesus," exclusive of all such proofs, can uphold the desponding Christian. Such a one is what to argue, "If I look unto myself I despair. Let him then look out of himself to One who was 'holy, harmless, and undefiled,' and who having obeyed the law for us, is therefore emphatically called THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. To him should every inquiry respecting the evidences of our acceptance lead the fallen creature, the miserable sinner. Thus, while we regard such evidences as inseparable from our spiritual safety, we must still make them subservient to a simple reliance upon Him, who is himself 'all our salvation.' In a word, where the life proves the reality of our faith in Jesus, it is of course unnecessary to press the application of the test in question.

From the S. R. Telegraph.

## THINGS WHICH HINDER THE USEFULNESS OF MINISTERS.

I have pointed out briefly the duties of ministers, and how they are to be discharged. But notwithstanding the worth of souls—the incalculable interests involved in the minister's success—and the promise of Christ to be with his ministers to the end of the world, we see their work advance very slowly. It should be a point of much interest to all who love the cause of Christ, to know why the ministry accomplishes so little. It will be our business at present to point out some of the reasons why so little is done by many ministers in our land.

1. *Lack of personal care*, is one great reason of so little being done in the vineyard of the Lord. If any thing is accomplished, it must be by effort. The farmer who is idle during summer, cannot expect a crop. So the minister who attempts nothing, will accomplish nothing—Many never visit their people. Some visit the wealthy and pious families, but pass by those who have the greatest need of their attention—"The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Some are entirely contented with preaching a dry, didactic sermon on Sabbath. That man whose chief concern is his own ease will never accomplish much for Christ. We must deny ourselves—"take up the cross"—follow the Saviour in his untiring toils for perishing men. We must be "instant in season." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand." In this way alone can success be expected.

2. *Too great a desire for the good opinion of men*. A minister is sometimes afraid to tell the truth, lest it should give offence to some of the influential and wealthy amongst his people. This course the Lord will never bless. Paul says, "If I pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." James says, "Whosoever will be a friend of the world is an enemy to God." We see the meaning of these passages illustrated in the conduct of Christ and his Apostles. Their great concern was to please God by declaring the message which he had committed to them, regardless of whatever might be said, thought or done, by the multitudes who heard them.

3. *Another hindrance is an undue regard for the feelings of the people*.—There are some men of dispositions naturally so very affectionate that even when they see their fellow men sinking to hell, they cannot bear the thought of wounding their feelings by telling them their condition. A physician sometimes finds it necessary to give great pain, to save the life of his patient. So the feelings of a sinner must not be regarded, if his soul is at stake.

4. *Ministers often do not like to condemn themselves*.—They have their faults—their imperfections. To preach the truth would condemn themselves. The truth is therefore often withheld. Such a minister cannot expect to be useful. God requires him first to obey the truth, and then to preach it.

5. *Too great a regard for temporal interests* often prevents ministers from the discharge of their duty. Fidelity in reproving sin, might give offence to some, and thereby diminish their support. So little faith have some men in the promises and protecting care of God, that they had rather depend on the support of men—had rather offend God by unfaithfulness, than to offend men by fidelity.

6. *Some ministers allow themselves to be too much perplexed about unkind remarks made concerning them*. Great pains are taken to vindicate their characters, and every thing must be explained to every enemy of God and the gospel who may choose to be offended, and wishes to vent his spleen by slandering the herald of the cross. The more concern a minister manifests about such things, the more ready the world will be to harass him in that way. Let him treat such things with the neglect which they deserve and they will soon die.

7. *Ministers are often so trammelled with the*

world that their usefulness is almost entirely destroyed. Sometimes they are to be blamed. They love the world—form many plans of acquiring its wealth—employ many hands—devote the whole week to the management of their worldly matters. So that when the sabbath arrives they are entirely unprepared for its sacred and responsible duties—unprepared both in heart and matter for the instruction of the people. Sometimes the guilt and the responsibility rests on the people. They live in ease and affluence—"clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day," whilst he that weeps, and prays, and toils, for their good, wants the necessities of life. He must have food and raiment. It must come from his people, or he must resort to something else. He knows little about the world—succeeds badly—is pitted, but not relieved by those who ought to sustain him and who are the occasion of his difficulties. The same man cannot be devoted to the world and devoted to his work as a minister. One must be neglected.

8. *Another important reason of ministers not being more successful, is the low standard of religion in their own hearts*. They should exemplify to their people the truths which they preach. They should continually have the "joy of God's salvation." Above all they should have strong faith in prayer. Of all things prayer is most needful for the success of the truth in winning souls to Christ.

A few of the reasons for the very limited success of the ministry are here briefly and hastily presented. Happy would it be for all who preach the gospel, if the inquiry were generally made—"Why am I not more useful?" If the world is ever to be converted through a preached gospel there must be a new spirit in the ministry. We must have a race of men entirely devoted to God—men who fear nothing but God—Men who seek only to know and do their duty, no matter how great the self-denial.

From the Watchman.

## CONSOLATION FOR THE AFFLICTED.

MR. EDITOR.—It is a duty to administer consolation to those in affliction; and as I perceive by your paper, that Br. SIMON has sorrow upon sorrow, because he cannot manage his minister; and as I have had considerable experience in these matters, and have always been successful, I am prepared not only to sympathise with him in his troubles, but to administer such solace, as may be the means of his relief. Let him not be discouraged.

I am a Deacon of a certain church, and have been from its commencement. God has blessed me with a considerable share of wealth, and enabled me to do a great deal for the church and society. In fact it was owing to my influence that the church was established; the meeting-house obtained, and the ministry supported. How evident it is that God has given me this influence; and that I ought to use it.

Our first minister disagreed with me about some things, and I soon got rid of him. The second was no more disposed to submit; but I made his place so uneasy, that his health was affected, and he was dismissed. At last by my influence we invited Rev. Mr. Steadfast; and my wife and I used to call him our minister; and we had every reason to hope, that he would be ruled by our counsel. But we soon found that we were sadly disappointed. When every method had been tried without success, we concluded that he must be dismissed. And in order to do this effectually, and give a good appearance to the world, we determined to get up a disaffected party in the church. A few of the brethren, including the other Deacon, held some ultra Calvinistic notions which our Pastor did not believe in; and we first contrived to set them against him; because he did not preach the whole truth. Then, as I had it in my power to be benevolent, I assisted certain brethren in the church by lending money and endorsing notes; in consequence of which, out of gratitude to me, they at once entered into my views, and assisted me in this time of trouble. My wife, too, who is a very shrewd woman, (though I say it myself,) prejudiced the minds of a number of the sisters against the minister, so that they could not be edified by his preaching; and persuaded them to go and tell him so. She had also many opportunities to perplex the minister's wife. The disaffected brethren of course could not be edified. We had now got six or seven brethren out of more than forty; and as many sisters, and called ourselves the aggrieved party. And many a time did we sit in secret conclave to consider what was to be done. We well knew, that during the few years of his ministry, the society had more than doubled, and the church nearly trebled in numbers; a new house of worship had been erected because the old one was far too small. We had also enjoyed two revivals of religion; but we did not consider that God had blessed his labors, but other ministers who had occasionally preached with us. And when any of the converts, in relating their experience, alluded to their Pastor as the instrument in their conversion, a case which frequently occurred, we advised them not to mention it. And though the society had increased so much, we considered that it was because our minister was just calculated to please the world.

After long consultation, I and the other Deacon, were appointed a committee to wait on the Rev. Mr. Steadfast, and represent to him affectionately that many of the church were not edified by his preaching, and that it would be well for him to ask a dismission. He received us kindly; but he looked and spoke as if he knew all our secret plans; at least we felt so. He was very decided; and was not disposed to ask a dismission while the majority of the church wished him to remain. This answer came upon us like a thunder clap; for we had no reason to suppose that we could obtain such a majority. It was truly a trying case; and we were in a sad dilemma.

The society, which was now large and flourishing, were well satisfied with the labors of the Rev. Mr. Steadfast; and looked with an evil eye

on some of our machinations. But as they could not do without my money in the support of the ministry; (at least they thought so,) they were prudent enough to keep still. Many were the church meetings, which we called, in the hope of getting that majority, but in vain, for all the church except ourselves were decidedly in his favor, and particularly opposed to me, because I had dismissed the two former ministers; besides many other similar things. I never was so completely defeated in my life. I had exhausted all my means, and was at my wit's end. And yet Mr. Steadfast, astonishing as it was, attended all the social meetings faithfully and preached on the Sabbath as if nothing had happened. We contrived to find fault with every sermon, and spread our objections far and wide, so that we knew that he must hear of them, but still he pursued the same course, and always treated me and all the disaffected members, remarkably well. I was in fact almost entirely discouraged.

But now comes the secret; it was like some of the prime inventions of the present day. I thought myself that I was the treasurer of the society. And it so happened at that time that it was very inconvenient to collect any money to pay the minister; so that instead of paying him at the end of the quarter, I paid him nothing for six months. It seemed to be a hard case but it operated like a charm. In addition to all the other difficulties, which we had produced, it had such an effect on the mind of Mr. Steadfast, that he asked his dismission, so unexpectedly that no one knew of it till the moment. It was like a case of the most obstinate dyspepsia, and this simple remedy removed the difficulty. And now I advise Br. Simon, and all others in similar troubles, to make the experiment, and they will not make it in vain. Our ministers are generally poor; and there is nothing which will have a more powerful effect.

Now, Mr. Editor, we will admit, that some body must rule; and why should not men of wealth and influence have this authority? Mr. Steadfast often used to insinuate privately that ministers were the appointed RULERS of the church, according to the Bible; but I always considered such passages to be a "mere rhetorical flourish," like the declaration, that "all men are born free and equal." I know the Bible says so; and so it says, that wives must be obedient to their husbands, yet my wife never thought that she was under obligation to obey; and wives generally think that belongs to ancient times. Besides we have the example of the apostolic church in our favor. "Desisteth loth to have the pre-eminence." Such things existed then and why not now? And although a large proportion of our ministers are dismissed by a few influential men, who are determined to rule; yet it is agreeable to the Bible; for we are said to "have no continuing city nor abiding place." And even the apostles themselves removed frequently from place to place, and never remained but a few years in one church.

Is it reasonable that ministers should rule the church? When they come into a place they are strangers there, and they have every thing to learn as the child does his alphabet. Whereas the "old standards" know every inch of the ground, and every step to take. Now if all our churches would but just agree to give their wealthy brethren the power to dismiss the ministers, (and I think they ought to have the power to settle them likewise,) then the minister would submit; and there would be no more difficulty; and our influential brethren who are weighed down with a load of sorrow, would be delivered from all their troubles; and thus ministers would be, according to the Scriptures, "the servants of all."

BARNABAS.

From Booth's Pastoral Cautions.

## DIVINE INFLUENCE.

Take heed that you pay an habitual regard to divine influence, as that without which you cannot enjoy a holy liberty in your work, or have any reason to expect success. We have heard, with pleasure, that the necessity of such an influence, to enlighten, to comfort, and to sanctify the human mind, makes one article in your theological creed—an article, doubtless, of great importance; for as well might the material system have sprung out of nonentity without the almighty fiat, as an assemblage of holy qualities arise in a depraved heart without supernatural agency. As well might the order, harmony and beauty of the visible world be continued, without the perpetual exertion of that wisdom, power, and goodness which gave them birth, as the holy qualities of a regenerate soul be maintained and flourish, independent of the divine Spirit.

Now, my brother, as the knowledge of any truth is no farther useful to us than we are influenced by it, and act upon it; as doctrinal sentiments are not beneficial, except in proportion as they become practical principles, or produce correspondent feelings and affections in our own heart; so you should endeavour to live continually under the operation of the sacred maxim, "Without me ye can do nothing." With humility, with prayer, with expectation, the assistance of the Holy Spirit should be daily regarded. In all your private studies, and in all your public administrations, the aids of that sacred Agent should be sought. Consistency of conduct, peace in your own breasts, and success in your own labors, all require it; safely you do not mean merely to compliment the Holy Spirit, by giving his work a conspicuous place in your creed. Were you habitually to study and preach your discourses, without secret previous prayer for divine assistance, the criminality of your neglect would equal the inconsistency of our character. If Christianity be the religion of sinners, and adapted to their apostate state, it must provide, as well for our depravity, by enlightening and sanctifying influence, as for our guilt, by atoning blood.

Nor can you pray over your Bible in a proper manner, when meditating on the sacred text, without feeling a solemnity in your ministerial employment. That solemnity should always attend you in the pulpit: for a preacher who trifles there, not only affronts the understanding of eve-