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Religious.

From the A. R. Presbyterian.

The Great Want of the Times—What is it?

Believers. I suppose I will not miss the mark far, when I say that every considerable interest of the church, of the State, of families and of individuals, is suffering more at the present time from infidelity and its near kinsman, practical atheism, than from any other cause; or, perhaps, from all other moral causes, whatever. I do not mean that there are more open-mouthed, speculative infidels or atheists of the school of Hume, and Voltaire, and Paine, and Hobbes, than there has been at any previous period of the last three centuries; but I do mean that there is less effective faith of the great truths which infidelity hates and assails than at any time during that period. The truth of God's character, rather than of this existence; the truth that he, by and through Jesus Christ, is the effective Administrator of the entire affairs of the universe; that he is constantly exercising a determining power upon the current events of time; that he orders, in minute detail, everything that takes place, and dispenses awards and punishments, setting up and pulling down at pleasure; that he is holy and hates all sin, and does chastise men and nations for their sins; that his favor is essential to success in any enterprise, and that, that favor must be conciliated, by conducting that enterprise according to his will; that the Bible, which is the word of God, is "profitable to direct," in every department of human activity; and that the supremacy of Jesus Christ and his mediatorial functions, and utility, both as the meritorious cause and medium of all divine favor, must be practically acknowledged, in order to a safe, prosperous, and healthy state of affairs in this world—are, almost all of them, mere speculative notions, having almost no determining power over the great public mind. Hence it is, I have no doubt at all, that God is striving with this land by so many judgments and terrible things—judgments, so palpable, and so unequivocal and pointed, that "a man, though a fool, need not err therein."

I repeat it, therefore, that *believers* is the great want of the times. It has been very popular for some years past to flout and rail at New England Puritanism, and to hold it up as a hideous monster of hypocrisy and every abomination. That New England Puritanism, like the religion of every other section of this country, has largely deteriorated, I have no doubt. The wild olive, no doubt, has been engrained upon the old stock, and as a consequence, much bitter fruit is borne; but at the same time I must say, the general faith of Puritanism, as it existed two hundred years ago in New England, would be of incalculable benefit now, in bringing us back to God, and filling us with that reverence and submission for which he is contending with us.

Let us take a glimpse of that faith, as seen in some well-authenticated facts of history. About the year 1600, various calamities are said to have befallen the people of New England. Bradford, the historian, as quoted by Belcher, the author of a history of the religious denominations of the United States, says, "At length many calamities befall the colonies; blasting and mildew

destroyed the hopes of the husbandman; vessels were wrecked; houses and stores were destroyed by fire; a pestilence raged through the colony; and in the political horizon, a dark and ominous cloud was gathering. These circumstances led the General Court, in May, 1670, to call upon the churches to appoint messengers to meet in Boston, for the solemn discussion of these two questions: "What are the provoking evils of New England?" and "What is to be done so that these evils may be reformed?"

What does all this mean? Why, it obviously means that it was the prevailing sentiment of those times that the "Lord reigned;" that when there was evil in a city, the Lord did it; that God was just, and afflicted communities for their sins; and that, when so afflicted—when blasting and mildew came upon their fields—when their ships were wrecked at sea—their houses and stores were burned up—when pestilence raged and political dangers threatened—it was the righteous God contending with them for their sins; and that it was the duty of the rulers of the land to call for a searching out of the producing causes of such evils; and that all, both high and low, rich and poor, should humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, that he might take away from them the blow of his hand, by which they were likely to be consumed.

Was this superstition? If it was, it pleased God, at all events; for we are told that immediately following the deliberations, fastings, confessions and prayers of the convention called by the General Court, there was a remarkable blessing of God came upon the land in the form of a general awakening and a great revival and reformation.

Another fact will serve to show what kind of faith, and what degree of it, prevailed in those days. There was a Judge Sewel, of Salem, who on one occasion, at the court of Oyer and Terminer, had participated in condemning certain persons to be executed for witchcraft. Afterwards, in reflecting upon the matter, it pleased God to show him his wrong; and after he became convinced of it, he could have no peace, till he made an humble public confession of his sin and implored the pardon of it. This Judge thought that God took cognizance of the administration of law, and was displeased by malfeasance, and that he punished it by heavy blows upon the person and relatives and interests of him who had done the wrong; and that it was the way to escape from such chastisements, to publicly confess his sins and implore the pardon of God.

Was this superstition? Verily, it looks very much like what the Bible enjoins upon men in authority—"Wherefore, O King, let my command be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy wicked works by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquility." (Dan. iv: 27.) And yet what would be thought and said of the Judge now who did as Judge Sewel did? Would he not be laughed to scorn? True it is, in those days there were some absurd notions and practices. Judge Sewel, and Increase, and Cotton Mather, believed in witchcraft, and at one time thought it right to put witches to death. But even such absurdities as these reveal consciences fully alive to the authority of what they understood to be the will of God. This, indeed, was the great leading characteristic of those times. Men's consciences bowed to the will of God as they thought it was taught in his word.

Now it is not generally so. There are ten thousand things about which men seem to think neither God nor conscience has anything to do. In ten thousand matters of affection, of purpose, and of action, we never consult God nor conscience, but follow the sight of our own eyes. The great truth of a special Providence—that the current events of any period are a dispensation of God, aiming largely at rewarding and punishing men, and states, and churches, according to their deeds—is ignored by nine-tenths of this generation. And by this species of infidelity the judgments and chastisements and contentions of God are almost entirely neutralized. We look upon agency, or of some strange and inexplicable thing called chance. Hence the intensity of our hatreds against our enemies, and the bitterness with which we curse our luck.

We repeat it, therefore, the great need of the times is *faith*—faith in God's character, in his word, in the doctrine of his special providence, in the mediation and supremacy of Jesus Christ—faith to lay hold upon God's covenant and strength; and to "commemorate him" concerning work of his hands." Civil government, national prosperity, successful agriculture and commerce—a salutary social system, and social, civil and political institutions, prolific of peace and happiness to man—a salutary educational system—a church, effective as the church of God ought to be, in moulding governing principles for society, and bringing everything into the obedience of faith—all are works of God's hand, concerning which we must command him by a faith which lays hold on his covenant. The want of such a faith is a terrible evil—it is a dead palsy to the community where it exists. "Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

R. A. R.
From the A. R. Presbyterian.

Holiness.

Holiness is the opposite of sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law." Holiness is obedience to the law. Sin is the opposition of the heart and the life to God; holiness is conformity to God, or as Christ is the image of the invisible God, holiness is conformity to Christ in moral character. "He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." He did no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth. The spirit of his mind, and the deeds of his life were all in perfect agreement with the law of righteousness. The love of God ruled in his heart, and he always did those things which were pleasing to his Father. All God's people are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son. They are to let the same mind be in them which was in Christ, and to walk as he also walked; and they are holy only in so far as they resemble him in the temper of their mind, and in their outward conduct. Conformity to Christ in moral character is holiness.

Men are by nature unholy. They exercise forbidden affections, and do not put forth those affections which the divine law requires. The first man was made upright; but by his wicked revolt from God, he lost that moral excellence which assimilated him to his glorious Creator, and plunged into sin and misery. All his posterity are born in his own likeness. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." All are by nature children of wrath, conceived in sin, and destitute of holiness. Sin has corrupted their moral character and constitution, and brought them under the dominion of influences which are impure in their nature and tendency; and thus it disqualifies them for the service and enjoyment of God. Hence a radical moral change must be experienced before we can serve God acceptably, or enjoy the happiness of his kingdom. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord." "Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God."

Holiness begins in regeneration. Until transformed by the renewing of our minds, our prevailing dispositions and desires are not right—are not in conformity with the rule of holiness—and all our moral exercises are unholy. "They that are in the flesh can not please God." The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. But in those who are made the subjects of the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, holy principles and dispositions are implanted; spiritual life is communicated; the native enmity and alienation of the heart to God and to holiness is taken away, and a feeling of love is generated in the soul. They are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. They who loved and chose sin, experience a change in consequence of which they will love and choose holiness. Thus a good work is begun in them. The dominion of sin begins to be destroyed; and the soul begins to be fitted for the service and the fellowship of God. Old things begin to pass away, and all things to become new. They begin to put off the old man which is corrupt, and to put on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. This new creation is the beginning of religion in the heart. The work, in its commencement, is

imperfect and its progress to perfection gradual. It is like the mustard seed which when planted is the smallest of all seeds, but which increases by an onward growth until it becomes so large that the birds lodge in its branches. Or like leaven which diffuses its influences from one part of the general mass to another until the whole is leavened. Those similitudes, employed by Christ to shadow forth the advancement of religion in the hearts of Christians, teach that the believer is, at first, sanctified in a small degree, and that he grows in grace until he arrives at the fullness of the stature of Christ. He is at first a babe; afterwards he forgets the things that are behind, and presses forward towards the mark of the prize of his calling in Christ Jesus.

The word *sanctification* is employed in the Bible to describe that work of grace by which men are made holy. It is not used to signify something in its nature distinct from regeneration or conversion, but the progress of the gracious work of which regeneration is the commencement. They differ not in kind, but in degree. The efficient agent in both is the same; the means used are the same; the result accomplished is substantially the same. In the beginning of the work by which men are transformed into the moral likeness of their Maker, holy dispositions and principles are implanted in the soul; in sanctification they are nourished and developed, until by a gradual progress, all sinful dispositions being mortified, and all holy dispositions being fully matured, the subject of this grace is immediately, upon death, made perfect in holiness and therefore meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

It is God who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He begins the good work, and he performs it until the day of Jesus Christ. "They will sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean: from all your iniquities, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." In this passage is a brief description of that work of grace by which sinners are converted and sanctified. It is eminently the work of God; a work which he promises graciously to perform on his being inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. If we would be partakers of that holiness without which we can not see the Lord, we may spread out before him his great and precious promise, and say: "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities, and cleanse me from my sins. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." J.

The Dying Soldier.

"Put me down," said a wounded soldier in the Crimea, to his comrades who were carrying him, "put me down; do not take the trouble to carry me any further; I am dying."

They put him down and returned to the field. A few minutes after an officer saw the man wailing in his blood, and said to him, "can I do anything for you?"

"Nothing, thank you."

"Shall I get you a little water?" said the kind-hearted officer.

"No, thank you; I am dying."

"Is there nothing I can do for you?"

"I have no friends that you can write to. But there is one thing for which I would be much obliged. In my knapsack you will find a Testament; will you open it at the fourteenth chapter of John, and near the end of the chapter you will find a verse that begins with 'Peace.' Will you read it?"

The officer did so, and read the words: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

"Thank you, sir," said the dying man. "I have that peace; I am going to that Saviour; God is with me; I want no more." These were his last words and his spirit ascended to be with Him he loved.

Be grateful for every act of kindness shown, and always be ready to prove your gratitude by doing all you can to help those who have done you good.

"Ye are the Light of the World."

Though Christ says emphatically of himself, "I am the light of the world," he also says, with equal force, of his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." He meant to teach that there is no contradiction whatever in these expressions, for Jesus is primarily and his followers are secondarily "the light of the world." He meant to teach that though he was "that light," yet the world would know him, and form their impression of him and the doctrines he taught, in a large measure from the way in which he was exhibited in the lives of his disciples. Hence the command, "Let your light so shine before men that others seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven."

The Christian has no innate light, but is only "the light," inasmuch as he reflects the Lord Jesus. Every true Christian is a mirror which reflects Christ's glory, his power and love; and a consistent Christian example is a means of leading men to honor God, and of greatly promoting their highest good. It would be far better for both the church and the world if Christians felt this more keenly, and were more careful in their example. A recent address says, "Christians are too careless about separation from the evil that is in the world. It must be a separation not merely of person, but of character and life. I may have to spend hours every day with an ungodly man; it may be torture to do so, and I might get away from him without violating duty, but remaining in his society affords opportunity for showing the character and temper of the Christian."

Moreover, the light of the Christian life may show what salvation is. Salvation is not to be kept as a secret in an alabaster box. The salvation provided for us is a salvation from sin, and for the practice of holiness. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" The Christian's life makes Christ manifest. "When they saw them they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." The pupil of any eminent master of painting, sculpture, or architecture, makes manifest the competency and skill of his professor, that is, if he be at all an apt learner. In like manner the Christian makes manifest the glory of his Lord.

Further, the consistent Christian as an *unobscured light* reveals especially the Father which is in heaven. The candle is not put under a bushel. The Christian's light may be obstructed by such things as these, "fellowship with the works of darkness;" silence when he should speak out; intentional concealment of his relation to Christ; absence from the place of duty, &c., &c. Conduct which is the reverse of this gives light, and it is light which can not be hid. By our good works we should glorify our Father. We are made for this. We are saved for this. We are redeemed unto God. We are to think of ourselves as redeemed not so much from hell as unto God. We should think of Christ's redemption as bringing us back to the Father. And to glorify God is for his sons and daughters to make mention of his name, to cause him to be praised, and to be praised through his children.

Have light in yourselves. Don't let it be only in your Bible, or hymn book, or any other thing. Be a light, and take heed lest the light that is in you be darkness. Be a light in the right place. Home is a right place for the Christian to shine. How unhappy is it when a man is all brightness in a religious service and all darkness at home. The shop, the counting-house, the circle of friends, the bed of sickness, the chamber of death, are all right places for the Christian's light to shine; and so is the place of innocent enjoyment and pure recreation, as well as the church and the Lord's table. Make your light shine. There need be no ostentation. Some people put out their candle by overmuch snuffing.

Remember, too, that ye are the light of the world. You may be called to some dark place to be a light there, and you are to go. If the world's light is not with the Christian, it is nowhere. It is not with men of science. Their power is in showing us God's works; the light of the world needs is not with statesmen, not with scholars, though they have some light to give. The light that is essential to the world is with the Christian. It is the light of life. "Ye are the light of the world."

Give us this Day our Daily Bread.

We easily forget, and yet how unreasonably, our personal and constant dependence on God. We can see how the poor widow, whose barrel of meal has failed, and whose cruse of oil is spent, should and can ask thus humbly and urgently the day's provender; but it seems strange to us at first, that such a petition should suit as well the rich—the owner of houses and farms and bank stock—the man whose garner contains food that would supply bread for myriads of months besides his own, and this not for to-day only, but for years hence—the merchant, it may be, whose groaning warehouse would victual whole navies. We can see how David might, naturally and most urgently, offer such a prayer as is our text, on the day when he and his soldiers were hungering, and the shew-bread was given them; but how Solomon his son could use it, when his purveyors sent him, month by month, such profuse supplies for his table and palace, seems not so easy to be understood. And yet this very language would equally suit both—the hunger-bitten father in the day of his want, and the luxurious son in the season of his imperial opulence. Job in his pained days, when he was the richest of all the men of the East, and when his sons were feasting each in his own house; and Joseph, when opening the granaries of Egypt, where he had laid up the food of seven plentiful years, for an entire nation—each needed the spirit, if not the terms, of this prayer; and we doubt not each was wont to sit down to his own well-stored board in the temper, dependent and grateful, which is inculcated by this very prayer. Do not, the rich depend! Let an inveterate and forgotten God send but a horde of his insect ravagers into the garner of wealth and pride, and how soon, and how surely, is all their accumulated abundance converted into rotteness. Let him allow their tried sagacity to be at fault, and how easily one rash speculation sweeps off, as with the besom of destruction, the gains of a lifetime, and writes them bankrupt and penniless.

A man may be proud of his industry and economy and skill; a nation may exult over its enterprise and energy; but are not these, or the qualities that win bread, and win it abundantly, themselves *gifts of Heaven*? "Is it not He that giveth thee power to get wealth?" The statesman or political economist, who overlooks this palpable truth, has little reason to boast of his discernment. All the praises of a man or of a measure—of a political leader, or of a party and its policy—that stops short of God, is like the stolidity of the beauteous fisherman represented in Scripture as burning incense to his net and drag. Is it not He that bestowed all the material constituents of wealth, the ores and gems hid in the recesses of the earth, as well as the harvests reaped from its field; and is it not His Providence that discovers to man, in the fitting age and hour, the treasures of nature, and suggests all the inventions of art? If He be forgotten or defied, it is but for him to speak, and the blighting of the root on which a whole people feeds, shall send famine, and perhaps pestilence through all its borders; or leaving to a nation these stores, he may curse them, and our abundance pauperize our equality and poison our virtues.

An Idle Christian.

"I had rather be sick than idle," says Seneca. But the Christian who lapses into idleness, as regards the work of faith and labor of love, suffers from both evils at once: some sickness of the soul has smitten him already, and this slothfulness is the symptom of its presence and power. The malady must be one of serious type, too; for no slight ailment, surely, could chill into inaction the love and ardor that hope to pour their grateful tide through eternity, and that wait for the words which it is not possible for man to utter, as the only vehicle of adequate expression to their overflow of fullness. What avails to freeze these, until their current run cold and sluggish under the ice-crust of formality, must needs be of most grave and malignant import.

Let the slothful Christian, then—feeling that he is un-Christian so far forth as he is slothful—set vigorous self-searching on foot, to ferret out the soul-disease which threatens his spiritual strength and life. Let him not doubt that his idleness, in the matter of godly work, must aggravate the malady from which it flows; since, while many have found ease on "the devil's cushion," (as Gautier aptly styles indolence,) it stands to reason that no one can ever find health there. Let him not play the part of the man benumbed with cold, who sits still shivering, when with a little stirring he might send the warm blood coursing through his veins, and "be himself" again; but let him straightway enter upon every form of Christian labor within the power of his hand, according to that "working of Christ which worketh mightily" in the saints—even the weakest of them. Let him cry to the Lord for help against the spirit of sloth, that "idleness, the sepulchre of a living man," may entomb him no longer—that, through the quickening of the Holy Ghost, he may experience a resurrection to new activity in the Christian life.

The Influence of Fiction on the Mind.
I am not to enter upon a crusade against the pursuit of works of fiction. I should be so sorry to deprive the child from "Robinson Crusoe" or the "Pilgrim's Progress," or to prevent any one from becoming acquainted with the character of "Jeanie Deans" or But I do protest against that constant and indiscriminate perusal of romances in which so many indulge. In the use of such stimulants I am an advocate not of total abstinence, but of temperance principles. I am not afraid of an occasional glass of fiction, provided persons be not constantly sipping at it, and provided they be taking solid food in far larger measure. For every novel devoured, let there be eaten and digested several books of history or of biography, several books of good theology, and at least a book or two of science. If you examine some of our circulating libraries you will find a very different proportion—far more works of fiction than works of truth. Those who consume this garbage will soon take its hue, as the worm takes the color of the green herbage on which it feeds; and the furnishing of their mind becomes excessively like the circulating libraries to which I have referred; a strange medley, in which the vain and fictitious occupies a far larger place than the real and the solid.

Nor let it be urged by the novel reader, that he does not believe the tale when he reads it, so no evil can possibly arise from the perusal of it; for the mischief may be produced altogether independent of his belief or his disbelief. It arises from the impressions produced, unconsciously abiding, and unconsciously operating. Like the poison caught from visiting an infected district, it is drawn into the system without one being aware of the precise spot from which it comes, or even of its existence. Like the evil influence of companions, these "evil communications corrupt good manners," all the more certainly because they work pleasantly and imperceptibly. Even when the novels are all proper in themselves, the immoderate use of them has a pernicious tendency. It has been shown by Bishop Butler and by Donald Stewart that it is injurious to the mind to stimulate high feeling—as is done in the novel—when the feeling is not allowed to go out in action. It is a good thing to cherish compassion towards a person in distress, when we are led in consequence to take steps towards the relief of that person. But it is not so good a thing to indulge in sympathy towards an imaginary person whom we can not aid. . . . "From these reasonings it appears," says the philosopher, last named, "that an habitual attention to exhibitions of fictitious distress is in every way calculated to check our moral improvement. It diminishes that uneasiness which we feel at the sight of distress, and which prompts us to relieve it. It strengthens that disgust which the loathsome concomitants of distress excite in the mind, and which prompts us to avoid the sight of misery; while at the same time it has no tendency to confirm those habits of active benevolence without which the best dispositions are useless."—Dr. McCook.

There is not a grace that can adorn the Christian character but you will have need to appear in at some time or other.