

AN EXPOSITION OF 1 CORINTHIANS III. 10-15.

“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

THERE are few passages of Scripture concerning which more numerous and more contradictory explanations have been given than this. The most noteworthy of these schemes of exposition may be classed under three, from which they differ only in some minor details. The first of these is the scheme of the common current of the Popish writers, and of many of the Patristic interpreters. It makes the foundation to be the orthodox doctrines of the gospel, as Rome understands them; the various builders to be Christians; the gold, silver, precious stones, to be good works superadded to faith by Christians; the wood, hay, and stubble, venial sins committed by Christians; and the day and fire which shall burn up the latter, the season and the punishments of purgatory. The Christian who has added such venial sins to an orthodox faith is accordingly represented by the 15th verse, as getting to heaven indeed, but with loss, and by passing through the purgatorial fires. The obvious drift of this whole explanation is, therefore, to make the passage teach that there is a purgatory.

This interpretation is too bald and crude to satisfy even learned Papists. Cardinal Bellarmine, for instance, who is perhaps the ablest and most learned of their polemics, himself refutes it, in order to establish one more plausible. The arguments are obvious, such as, that the several builders are all obviously ministers, as is implied by the whole current of the chapter, and not professed Christians in general. The cardinal then presents the following scheme, countenanced by some of the early fathers,

which leads by a more circuitous way, to the same doctrinal result as the first. The foundation which Paul says he laid is the orthodox gospel; the several builders are legitimately ordained church-teachers; the gold, silver, precious stones, which they superadd to the foundation, are the correct and accurate details of Popish doctrine; the wood, hay, stubble, are inaccurate and incorrect details of doctrine, not indeed positively heretical (for they would have sent the teacher straight to hell), but ill-judged and partially perverted; the day and the fire are the season and punishments of purgatory, in which such teachers shall be chastised. But such teachers, if genuine Catholics at bottom, shall reach heaven at last, after passing through purgatory. The inference then is, that if this passage teaches a purgatory for imprudent or imperfect ministers, it may be assumed, by good logical consequence, to await all other classes of Christians, except the beatified who die in actual perfection.

The third scheme is that followed by the current of respectable Protestant commentators; for example, by Calvin, the continuators of Matthew Henry, and Scott. They give the same interpretation with Bellarmine to the foundation, the various builders, and the contrasted sets of materials in the superstructure, only they suppose the foundation to be, the doctrine of the cross understood as Protestants hold it. They then suppose the day to be the day of judgment, when the preaching of God's ministers shall be strictly tested, and the fire to be the penetrating and holy judgment of God concerning his creatures; or, as Calvin interprets, with nearly the same virtual result, the fire represents the Holy Ghost, as in Acts ii. 3, by whom the hearts and teachings of ministers will be searched. This terrible and holy ordeal of the divine inquest will utterly explode all erroneous superstitions, and self-righteous doctrines which have been attached to the pure doctrines of the cross. But if the minister has truly embraced and preached Jesus Christ, he shall be saved in spite of his unfortunate errors in smaller points of doctrine. Yet he will lose much of the glory and blessedness graciously bestowed by God on wise, orthodox, and faithful ministers, and will gain the gate of heaven as it were with difficulty, and only by running as it were through a fiery ordeal, to reach it.

This explanation avoids the unscriptural and superstitious consequences of the two others; and leads to no practical

error. Yet we are persuaded that it still comes short of the meaning of Paul, and misses therefore his true intent, and the rich instructions contained in it. We will first state the view which seems the true one, and then give the grounds of dissent from all the three schemes recited, following the order of the passage of Scripture itself, instead of attempting to refute each scheme separately. Brevity and clearness will thus be promoted.

We hold, then, that as Paul names himself "wise *master*-builder," he means by the other various builders ministers of rank inferior to the apostolic, coming after him. The foundation which he laid is that blessed cluster of fundamental doctrines which set forth Christ crucified as our salvation. The building reared on this foundation by various hands is the church of Jesus Christ, taken generally; and the gold, silver, precious stones, are genuine and regenerate persons introduced into the church by the labors of wise and faithful ministers, while the wood, hay, stubble, represent spurious converts, and unconverted professors of religion, introduced into the church by less judicious laborers. When the day of judgment comes, this church universal, thus variously built, shall be tested by the holy, searching and penetrating inquest of God the judge, even as a material building would be by having the torch applied to it. In such a building, the living rock on which it is founded, and the imperishable stone and precious metals, would remain after the conflagration; but the perishable materials would be utterly consumed. So, nominal Christians, spurious converts, whose faith is a dead faith, however connected with a genuine and orthodox church of Christ, will be cast into hell, and forever consumed by God's wrath; while true Christians will remain uninjured. And in the judgment day, those ministers who by their soundness, prudence and fidelity have added genuine converts to Christ's church, will receive a reward from the free undeserved grace of their Lord. These ransomed souls having stood the test of the judgment day, will shine as stars in their crowns. But this gracious reward will be lost by those injudicious and rash ministers who had introduced unsound professors into the church. If the ministers are themselves built on the Rock Christ Jesus, they will indeed be saved; but they will see the unregenerate members whom they have brought into God's house sink to hell

under his strict judgment, and will wear in heaven a crown stripped of its jewels.

Although this scheme is found in none of the commentaries which the writer has consulted, no originality is claimed for it. It was first orally suggested to him in its leading feature by the late Dr. F. S. Sampson.

An unprejudiced consideration will show the congruity of this explanation in all its parts, and with the rest of the scripture; and in this there is no little evidence of its correctness. That the various builders represent ministers in the church is evident, and indeed, is disputed by none of the modern interpreters. That the structure is the church and the contrasted sets of materials are genuine and spurious church members, we may solidly establish by several proofs. *1st.* The passage itself expressly asserts that the foundation laid is Jesus Christ. But the usual tenor of scripture figure, in both the Old and New Testaments, represents the church of Christ as the structure built on that foundation, and individual Christians as the constituent parts of the structure. Let the reader only refer to the well known passages in Isaiah xxviii. 16; Matt. xvi. 18; Eph. ii. 20-22; 1 Peter ii. 4, 5. In all these passages, the building resting on this foundation is the church, and Christians are the stones united to that sure basis. Why suppose that the apostle departs from this uniform mode of using the figure here? But *2nd.* The context of our passage settles the meaning. The subject is introduced by that unseemly strife in the Corinthian church in which the disciples ranked themselves in parties, according to the minister by whom they had been gathered in. The apostle's object is to rebuke this division, by showing that the foundation is one; that the only Efficient in making a true Christian is God; that the only function of any minister is to be an instrument in building up this one structure, not two rival buildings, and that all should tremble with holy fear, because a man might be connected with the true, orthodox church of Christ, and might even be introduced into it by a minister who was a sincere Christian, and yet be damned. In introducing this train of thought, Paul employs two similes, that of the husbandman and that of the builder. But the latter suits his purpose best in some respects, and he expands it. In verse 9th he says to the members of the church: "Ye are God's

husbandry: *ye* are God's building." And in verse 16th he repeats: "Know *ye* not that *ye* are the temple of God?" We may justly claim, therefore, that the apostle himself decides for the sense we have given. The different constituents built upon the true foundation are the different classes of church members, regenerate and unregenerate. *3rd.* It seems far less natural to speak of erroneous or human doctrines connected with the gospel, as consumed by the fire of God's heart-searching justice, than of unsound persons. The former metaphor is unusual and unnatural; the latter is customary and easy.

In the next place, we concur with the Protestant interpreters in understanding by "*the day*" which shall declare every man's work, the day of final judgment. It is spoken of emphatically as *the day*, as though it were well known. What day so emphatic and marked in the mind of a Bible Christian as "the day of judgment?" The very phrase is repeated almost perpetually. "God hath appointed *a day* in which he will judge the world." (Acts xvii. 31.) "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until *the day* of Jesus Christ." (Phil. i. 6.) There is a striking and curious confirmation of this meaning only eleven verses from the passage on which we are remarking. In 1 Cor. iv. 3 Paul says: "With me it is a very small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment." So reads the English version, but in the original it stands literally "to be judged of you *or of man's day.*" The translators seem justly to have considered that the meaning of a *day of judgment* was so plain in the word "day" that it was proper to institute "judgment" for "day," in order to make sense to the English reader. Now, if the day which shall declare each minister's work, so as by fire, is the day of judgment, there is no countenance here for the doctrine of purgatory, for the plain reason that, according to all Papists, purgatory is finished completely before the day of judgment comes. The same conclusion follows also from the 15th verse, where the unsound work is destined to "be burned." The word rendered "burned" means "burned down," "burned to a thorough destruction." But the pretended fires of purgatory are represented by Papists as only perfecting him who is subjected to them.

The next point to be proved is the meaning we have assigned to "the fire" which is to try every man's work in that day. Cal-

vin understands by it the Holy Ghost, who was symbolized by tongues of fire sitting on each disciple at the day of Pentecost. Other sound expounders understand by it the strictness of the divine holiness and justice, by which ministers and their followers will be judged. We would think either sense admissible, and practically they come to the same thing; for if we suppose the Holy Ghost here alluded to, it is only as a spirit of truth and judgment. But the second sense is somewhat more accordant with scripture usage. In Hebrews xii. 29 the fact that "our God is a consuming fire" is assigned as the reason why we should serve him with reverence and godly fear. In Mal. iii. 2, Jesus Christ is described as like a refiner's fire and fuller's soap; and it is said that he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver to purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. In both these cases the fire represents the character of the divine attributes with which we have to deal. That the fire in our passage cannot mean what the Papists suppose, the actual fire and torments of a purgatory, is plain from the fact that it is throughout only figurative. The minister who, though united to Christ, has built up his church with bad materials, "shall be saved, yet *so as* by fire." The particles we have italicized clearly suggest a simile. If the saving of the workman by fire is figurative, it is reasonable to suppose the testing of his work by fire is figurative also. This, a correct exposition, removes every shadow of meaning favorable to a purgatory. The strict and terrible ordeal through which the foolish workman will get to heaven, and in which his foolish work will utterly perish, is the ordeal of the judgment day.

This striking passage, thus restored to its true meaning, presents many valuable, practical inferences. One of these is that Christ's church is composed in this world of mixed characters; some are regenerate and some are unregenerate; and this is true even of churches founded on Jesus Christ by apostles and built up by pious ministers who reach heaven. Thus that view of the church is confirmed which Christ gives in the parable of the tares and wheat (Matt. xiii. 36) and of the net and fishes (Matt. xiii. 47), and that unscriptural doctrine is again overthrown, by which the attempt is made to exclude our children from the church. Another practical lesson terribly enforced by this passage is that addressed to ministers at the end of the

10th verse, "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."

The apostle enforces a solemn caution to take heed what kind of accessions are gathered into the church. And this caution is addressed, not to heterodox, but to orthodox ministers., who truly hold Christ the head and preach fundamental truths. A moment's consideration will show that it is one of vast importance to American Christians, not only because of the consequences of the evil to ministers and people, but because of the prevalence of unsound profession among us.

One form in which ministers, substantially sound, perpetrate this mischief is the lack of diligence, firmness, and fidelity in purging the roll of the church by admonition and discipline. If any member of the spiritual building evinces an unsound and perishable nature, he should be removed from the structure of the church itself before the fiery day of inquest destroys him and mars his pastor's reward. The unconverted man is better anywhere than in the full communion of the church.

Another way in which unsound accessions are often made is by the application of lax or erroneous tests to the religious experience of new converts. The minister preaches Christ indeed, he points out the right way of salvation, but, from indolence, ill-judged softness of temper, or ambition to count large numbers of converts, he admits many to his communion without taking time and pains to apply discriminating tests of a true conversion. In the light of this third chapter of First Corinthians, how vain and foolish does this ambition to report numbers appear. It is not the wood, hay, stubble that will truly add to the altitude of the structure and the reward of the workman, but only the gold, silver, and costly stones. The more of the former he heaps up, the larger ruin is he preparing for his own hopes. There is, therefore, scarcely a more solemn duty that a minister has to perform than that of trying and training young Christians before he admits them to a profession.

But there is still a third form of the error, which is most mischievous and extensive among us, and which we would, therefore, unfold with greater particularity. It is the habit of endeavoring to promote religious feeling by other means than the application of enlightening and saving truth to the soul, while that truth is also presented with a good degree of fidelity.

With those who do not truly preach Christ we have nothing to do just now; for they cannot even claim to be building their spurious and perishable trash on the apostolic foundation. But there is a set of expedients, used frequently in connection with good preaching, by Presbyterians sometimes and more by others, which are familiarly known by the name of "new measures." Some of these expedients are capable of a partial apology, as when they profess to enlist the intercessions of God's people for an anxious soul, but they are more often calculated to mislead, by confounding natural religious feelings with the supernatural and sanctifying; and thus they often result in the heaping up of much wood, hay, and stubble in the church. Let us then examine the dangers of these methods, by looking into the facts of human nature as influenced by religious excitements.

The first fact to which we would call attention is, that all excitements about religion are not therefore good, or pious, or sanctifying. It may be supposed that a thing so obvious would need no remark; but it is amazing how blindly multitudes of Christians credit any strong emotion about religion as being, of course, wholesome and beneficial emotion. That the man feels acutely, that he has been profoundly disturbed, and has attained to more comfortable emotions, seems to be all these good people demand, in order to think well of him; and any excitement *about* religion is hailed as a precious religious revival. It is forgotten that grace is supernatural, while a multitude of religious emotions are very natural. The word *religion* has been so long used as the same with *Christianity*, that men have lost sight of the fact that there is a multitude of religions, some bad, yea vile, and only one good; that all mankind, down to the basest pagan tribes, have their religious systems and religious fears, anxieties, joys and triumphs. Emotion merely religious may be compatible with the most depraved and atrocious state of character, and with creeds utterly false. To think of future welfare, to be goaded by a guilty conscience, to be full of feeling and passion about eternal realities, may be just as congruous with paganism as with Christianity. And Turkish Dervishes, Hindoo-Faquirs, or Indian Medicine-men, have their *religious revivals*, just as truly as our ill-judging churches. That is, they have their seasons of prevalent and contagious religious emotions, agitating at once large masses of men. Now, since these things are so,

would it not be reasonable to suppose that poor human nature may frequently be subject to these spreading impulses of merely natural, unsanctifying feelings about religion in our Christian lands as well as in heathendom, and that there is probably a great deal of feeling here also about the soul which yet does no good to the soul? Indeed, these contagious accesses of feeling are so natural to the human race, that they may occur about many other subjects besides religion. We have seen our political revivals, fostered by inflammatory speeches, songs, badges, processions, which were as truly *revivals* as, and perhaps little less worthless than, many religious excitements. It is not enough then to produce feeling about the soul; we must aim to produce right feeling. And this is only produced by revealed truth intelligibly presented to the understanding, and applied by a supernatural agent. All else, no matter how genuinely warm or intense, is only that sorrow of the world that worketh death, and needeth to be repented of. The whole labor of the wise minister, therefore, will be to replace this natural religious feeling by the supernatural.

Let us next advert to the principle of sympathy in the human soul. We so habitually limit the operations of this, in our thoughts, to the sorrowful emotions, that we almost forget its universality. The Creator has formed man with this law of feeling, that the mere witnessing of any human emotion colors the soul of the spectator with a similar emotion, in a less degree. In the object of the sympathy, the emotion was propagated according to the laws of the understanding, which presents to the heart some view of facts rationally adapted to be the motive or occasion of the feeling. But in the subject of the sympathetic feeling, there is no acting of the understanding, no view presented by it to the heart, unless we call the mere perception of emotion in the other person a view of the understanding. The sympathetic emotion is wholly unintelligent, is superinduced by the mere sight of the feeling in another, and usually vanishes when that is removed. In proof, we point to the facts that we are saddened when we see a person weep, although we do not know the cause of his grief, and if we see persons angry or fighting, we partake of their excitement, though we know and care nothing of them or their quarrel. In a word, our sympathetic feeling is provoked, not by the rational cause of the feel-

ing we behold, but by the mere beholding of the feeling. Again, it should be remarked that sympathy is involuntary and immediate. The senseless passions of mobs, where men are suddenly led to clamor or fight with vehemence for objects of which they are utterly ignorant and careless, are familiar and trite illustrations of this power.

It will now be at once seen that we have here an engine which may be used to a slight extent as occasion of genuine, gracious emotions; but which admits of indefinite and tremendous abuse for the excitement of spurious, senseless, religious feeling. It is usually called into use by rash ministers in two ways, of which one is the rhetorical painting of startling or moving pictures in their discourses, and the other is the parade or display of the religious passion in those who are already inflamed with it. These ill-starred artists have learned by experience that the machinery of the sympathetic passions is one on which they may count with perfect regularity. No human feeling can be exhibited to human beings without awakening the corresponding feeling to some degree. In some persons the susceptibility is slight, in some it is strong: but the more widely the sympathetic flame is spread the more power does it have to propagate itself, and the more certainly, promptly, and fiercely. Nothing more is needed than to display the desired passion, either by the dramatic rhetoric of the preacher, or by the collecting and exhibition in public of persons already infected; the result naturally follows. Feelings of supposed religious anxiety, conviction, penitence, gratitude, spiritual joy, spread from heart to heart, assuming the garb of true spiritual emotions. But from the very nature of sympathy, they are unintelligent; that is to say, they are produced by mere contagion from the feeling of others, without any view presented by the understanding of the truths by which true, gracious emotion should be produced, and therefore it is a sheer impossibility that they can be sanctifying; because the Holy Spirit, the sole agent of sanctification, only works on reasonable souls by the instrumentality of *truths intelligently comprehended*. The understanding is the only channel through which the sanctifying means can reach the heart. The subject of this sympathy does not truly feel for his own sins; he only feels for another who is feeling for his sins. He

is not properly anxious for his own soul; he is only anxious about the anxiety of another for his soul.

We are now perhaps prepared to give an answer to the question, how far sympathy may be legitimately employed as a lever for moving the careless about the things of God. This law of sympathy, yea, of the religious sympathies, was given to our souls by our Maker; was it for nothing? Has it, unlike all his other works, no legitimate use? Again: the true orator, when he arouses feeling by the exhibition of his own feeling, undoubtedly appeals to the law of sympathy. Is all this improper? We answer, no: there is a legitimate use which may be made of this law. We often find our fellow-men because of their inattention insensible to the clear truths presented to the understanding, which are the Spirit's sole instruments for salvation. It is then desirable to superinduce feeling in connection with these truths, even if it be at first unintelligent feeling, and such as is not sanctifying, in order that saving truth may catch the attention, may be truly heard, remembered, and by God's further blessing felt. We would then allow to these sympathetic impressions their proper place as means, but as means of secondary grade and importance. They are, indeed, only means to other means; they are but an expedient for securing attention to that more direct means, the truth, by which alone saving impressions can be made. If therefore the preacher aims to excite the sympathetic religious emotions by that scriptural and rational warmth of feeling with which he is expounding scripture truth to the understanding, with that feeling which such truths should reasonably stimulate in a gracious and enlightened heart, he does well: he is guilty of no abuse. For, while he aims to produce the sympathetic emotion which, if it remained mere sympathy, would be unintelligent and worthless for ulterior good, he also presents Bible truths to the understanding, gaining for them the warmth and quickened attention of the temporary feeling; so that by their truths the hearer's soul may now, perchance, be profited. But if he merely seeks to excite and harrow the sympathies by touching or dramatic incident, or by fiery displays of passion, which contain no perspicuous explication of Bible truths, he is abusing his power. He is exciting by mere contagious influence a senseless and worthless agitation, which can do no good, being accompanied with no light for the

understanding, and which is likely to do irreparable evil, by being mistaken for true religious feeling. Again, the exhibition of genuine religious emotion, which is the just fruit of right views of truth held by the understanding, may have a valuable sympathetic effect on others; as when that exhibition is properly made in the daily duties of a holy life, in the approaches to the throne of grace, in the tender expostulations of the Christian with his impenitent neighbor. The sympathetic softening may make way for the teachings of instructive example or discourse to the mind before inattentive. But when emotions are paraded in publicity and inflamed by the artifices of the ecclesiastical "manual exercise," in order to propagate a passion beyond that begotten by the truth itself, the result is unmingled mischief. The misguided subject is taught to regard this unintelligent passion as the end, instead of a very secondary means, and to rest in it as constituting gracious affections. It is as though the sick man, benumbed with the approaching chill of death, should mistake the warmth of the appliances used from without for the glow of that animal heat, the inward and living result of vitality, which the former could only serve to stimulate. To apply our comparison to the soul, where the true principle of vitality exists, which the Spirit of God bestows and which he only bestows by the means of THE TRUTH intelligently apprehended in the understanding, the artificial caloric applied from without may do some good, by stimulating the internal spiritual heat which is the effect of genuine spiritual life and which therefore must ever originate from within. But all the warming of a dead corpse with external applications of heat which human art can imagine will never make it a living man. It may hasten putrefaction! Just as soon as the applications are suspended, it will be a cold marble corpse again. And how ruinous would be that error which should mistake the fleeting touch of warmth given from without for the true animal heat?

The nature of sympathetic excitements has now been somewhat explained. It has been shown that the mere witnessing of emotion superinduces some degree of the same emotion in the soul of the spectator, and that this excitement is not produced by any rational view of a cause of emotion seen, or at least supposed to be seen, in the understanding, as is always the case with independent emotions; but that it is immediate

and unintelligent. But now, the first great fact which we mentioned must be recalled. It was that some sort of religious—not Christian or sanctifying—feeling is native to man; and that high degrees of such feeling are compatible with the deepest depravity and often co-exist with it. What are we to expect, then, but that this blind, sympathetic excitement will, in accordance with the great law of association, excite these religious feelings in their direct forms also? Thus the state of the agitated soul, instead of presenting that single and simple emotion we have thus far described, becomes very mixed and complex. The unreasoning impulse of sympathy mingles with the rational but unsanctified emotions produced by the convictions of the sinner's awakened understanding, and perhaps with those also awakened under the teachings of the Holy Ghost. The three-fold elements would require nice and careful discrimination to distinguish between them, but the storm of excitement leaves the subject of them no disposition to watch or investigate. Let us here remember also, another fearful fact, that Satan is often at hand, striving to mislead and pervert those movements for good which he cannot wholly prevent, by his false and destructive suggestions. For example: we will make the more favorable supposition, that the emotion exhibited by the indiscreet minister, or the persons whom he parades, for the purpose of starting the agitation, is genuine, spiritual emotion. The only direct effect it has on the spectators, in virtue of the law of sympathy, is to awaken the contagion of an unintelligent excitement. But this sympathetic wave immediately starts the emotions of natural religious feeling, consisting of the sinful sorrow of a guilty conscience, selfish anxiety and slavish fear, with perhaps superstition. The two elements mingle, and how natural is it that the ignorant soul, especially if misled by the father of lies, should suppose them as pure and spiritual as those feelings in the Christians before him, from whom he has caught the infection? "The heart is deceitful above all things." There is here deep feeling *about* God and religion; it is mistaken for godly feeling.

But now, to the storm there will succeed calm, just as surely as day follows after night, summer after winter, and the ebb tide after the flood. The human soul never endures a high tension of emotion for a long time at once. If there is no other cause to relax it, the result will be produced by the very violence of

feeling: the passion wears itself out. The natural fancy is possessed with lively pictures of the loveliness of Christ, and the imagination embraces him in a sense, but not the heart; for there is no scriptural view of the evil of sin, or desirableness of his redemption, which is a redemption unto holiness. It may be a slavish fear compels to a sort of surrender of some sin, which the frightened transgressor concludes he is willing to desert rather than endure hell fire. Now, suppose some indiscreet friend, or the sinner's own anxious self-love, or Satan, who knows so well how to quote scripture, should whisper the suggestion: "Is not this calm, this surrender, the peace of believing?" There is every prospect that the delusion will be embraced. And when once harbored, the spurious joy which it suggests of course tends to propagate and increase itself for a time.

The consequent peace is deep and sweet just according as the previous pain was pungent. It is mistaken for spiritual joy. Self-love of course prompts a spurious gratitude and praise for it; and causes the heart to love the scenes, the means and the companions of its delicious intoxication. And now we have "the stony ground hearers" reproduced. (Matt. xiii. 20-21.) The dead heart, having no true vitality to generate spiritual emotion from within, sinks into a chill and dreary vacuity when alone; and thus it is all the more prone, for a while, to crave a return to the place and the scenes where the exhilarating appliances were enjoyed. It loves that exciting companionship which alone can save it from the unwelcome conviction that it is as wicked as ever, and thus the graces of brotherly love and delight in ordinances are simulated for a season by its spurious affections. He is befooled into the church. And now many things confirm his mistake. Do feelings decline? He says: "Christians should not live on frames." Does sin triumph again over him? He remembers that even a Paul had a "law in his members, warring against the law of his mind." Habits formed during the fever-fit of his religion, together with pride of consistency, cause him still to persevere in some duties; and other unsanctified principles propagate other observances. Quite a warm zeal may be begotten by party feeling, the social principle, self-love, desire of applause, meddlesomeness, emulation, or the love of power. Let self-love or pride of intellect hallow to itself some creed or system, by enshrining it on the

polluted altar of its self-worship, and forthwith it is loved and asserted. To hear it ably expounded or defended gives vivid pleasure; to hear it assailed arouses indignation. Thus the sinner is deluded into the belief that he loves God's truth. And almost all the marks of Christian character may be thus counterfeited.

But the whole is not yet stated. In many accessions made to the churches means of excitement are applied still more deadly in their results. We speak now of what are called the anxious seat and the altar; the directing of all persons who can use certain language, supposed to be decisive of a change of heart, to rise or kneel in their places in the public congregation; and the various other arts for tricking persons into a hurried committal of themselves. If these arts have any object, the whole and obvious design must be to excite certain natural emotions, with the hope of stimulating by their means warmer religious feeling. But, as we have seen, the great evil is the mixture of the natural with the supernatural; and the main desire of the wise minister is, to separate and suppress the former, in order that the latter may be clearly evinced unto the saving of the soul. We will not dwell now so much upon the fact that persons of a true sense of propriety, modesty and humility, will usually be the last to make these unseemly exposures of themselves; and so the very persons who would most profit by the attentions and instructions of the ministers—if those instructions were worth anything—are overlooked, and fail of them entirely. But what are the unsanctified emotions which these usages excite?

1. In the first place, they arouse the blind sympathies in a powerful and dangerous degree. Then a flustered and abashed modesty produces tremendous agitation in all young persons and females. The social and domestic affections are also employed, by using parents as decoys for children, or children for parents, sisters for sisters; and even lovers for lovers, so unscrupulous is the spirit of management often displayed. Again, when the exposure has once been made, and the notoriety acquired, the unfortunate victim feels that he is "in for it;" and every principle of pride pushes him on to act out his part, and force, by every expedient, the continuance of his artificial feeling. So, if advantage is taken of the turmoil and whirlwind of

passion which often attends such scenes, to exact an unthinking avowal of conversion in public, either in act or word, a terrible motive is created, out of the pride of consistency, to persevere in that profession, and to shun the self-examination which might reveal the mortifying delusion, until the soul is undone. Men nearly ignorant of the fearful machinery of the human emotions, and unconscious of the significancy and influence which even slight acts possess with the soul in times of intense excitement, tamper with these springs of eternal weal or woe with a heedless and rash hand. It would be less insane for the surgeon's apprentice to toy with the naked jugular vein, with the point of his master's keen bistoury! What an argument is there here against entrusting the work of the ministry to any but a "scribe instructed unto the kingdom of God!" (Matthew xiii. 52.)

2. Let us now inquire, what is the testimony of that sure guide, experience, concerning the fruits? It is notorious that, even where the preaching is orthodox, discriminating, and faithful, the accessions made to the church by this class of means are often found to be "wood, hay, stubble." Some congregations of Christians report almost annual and splendid accessions, which, if half genuine, should in a few years have raised them to the highest spiritual power and prosperity; yet, after a long series of such revivals, the churches are found small, languishing, and unsound as ever. The thing is so well known that in many regions the public coolly expects about forty-five out of fifty, or even a higher ratio, to apostatize ultimately. And this, alas, is not the language of exaggeration! The sinful world, too, instead of awe and reverence—which the world always feels in the presence of God's Spirit, even when it fights with the heavenly visitor,—looks on with disrespectful levity, and makes such revivals its jests. A multitude of these unsubstantial accessions fall away so speedily that there is scarcely time to count them as communicants; but of those who continue church members, is there not reason to fear that numbers had better be open apostates? Even the judgment of charity decides that our churches have many dead members. These are the result of this building with wood, hay, and stubble, by hasty or unskilful workmen.

We have seen how natural and common are the elements of a religious excitement; that it is so entirely possible for them to

act utterly without anything good or holy, that they are found frequently among pagans and heretics, and that similar excitements may even arise where religion is not in question at all. We have seen the modes in which the natural and sinful exercises may easily counterfeit the genuine and supernatural. We have seen the evidence of a sure *experience*, which shows that the mistake does occur in multitudes of cases. The apostle tells us what are its fatal consequences. The wood, hay, stubble, shall be utterly burned; the miserable victims of all this handicraft of self-deception shall lose their souls; and the ministers who work the machinery, if they escape hell themselves, will escape it "so as by fire," and will lose the reward of their labors. And now, does it not seem amazing that even uneducated men, who have some good sense and scriptural knowledge, should, in view of these truths, perpetrate the acts which are often done amidst religious excitements; that ministers of the gospel, for instance, should triumphantly proclaim a given young person regenerate in the face of the crowd, because forsooth he has extracted from the confused, the almost frantic mind, some random expression of faith or love towards Christ? Or that they should persistently inflame all the spurious emotions we have described, and then, on the ground that they are felt, recognize whole crowds of persons ignorant and credulous, as true converts to Christ, without either allowing the time or taking the pains to discriminate between the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of their own arts, which is so exceedingly apt to ape and simulate God's work? We would distinctly admit that many truly good men are concerned in this error, because of an honest, but misguided zeal to save souls; but yet a portentous amount of guilt is contracted and of everlasting mischief done in this way. That the error of management be explored and thoroughly exposed is one of the most urgent religious wants of our age.

I object to this well known system farther :

3. Such measures are hazardous for the awakened, not only because (see above) they produce a mischievous turmoil of the natural sympathies, or worse, where the utmost perspicacity, solemnity, and sincerity are desirable; but

(a.) They raise a false issue for the sinner's conscience. The real issue is as stated in John vi. 29, or Acts xvii. 30, or ii. 38. The

false is, Will you come to the anxious seat? or some similar observance. Thus follows unavoidable confusion of conscience. If the person awakened has dignity and good sense, he will probably refuse to come, and then the *drift* of the system is to tell him that *therein* he has rebelled against God and grieved the Holy Ghost; hence, groundless distraction. If he is more gullible, and *goes*, it is implied that he has performed a saving act, or at least one that has *gratia congruens*. It is *in vain they disclaim*; for the common sense reasons, "Why so much urgency, if the means is not truly effective of something?" The altar, or anxious bench, is called the "foot of the cross," "blessed place," etc. Those who come are *gloried over*. Hence—

(b.) The victim is placed in a false position, where his soul is subjected to most vicious considerations. It is claimed, these measures "bring the sinner to a decision, and make him commit himself." Yes, unfortunately; but only mischievously. "*C'est le premier pas qui conte?*" True, of *sinful* courses, the completion of which is in the sinner's own depraved power and will; not otherwise. Is this decision a *determination-to come to Christ?* Then the man is a believer. Why not instruct him as such? He has gotten past the need for "measures." Is it a determination to do *something else?* Then it is mischievous, for until he comes to Christ he does *nothing*.

But he has "committed himself." Yes, unfortunately. **Not** to his God, to enlightened, honest, deliberate conscience, but to false pride, to a human public, to false shame. If he does not go on, he is—not unjustly—left full of indignation and spite for the mortifying attitude; he feels he has been entrapped. If he cowers before the false shame, then a fearful temptation is created to "get up" a spurious conversion with counterfeit graces. Look at *results!*

The system is very like the Romish plans of ensnaring vows, etc.

(c.) They foster a vicious and unhealthy development of the religious character. The exposure and parading of sentiments which should be most sacred and delicate before a public audience, and that a *promiscuous* one of Christians and sinners, many of the latter profane, and even scoffing, is deadly to delicacy of feeling, especially among young persons and females. The system produces a sensational religion, and a dependence

on clap-trap for religious warmth. Modesty and reserve being broken down, there is a fearful danger of awakening vain glory, and a fondness for display and applause. The new measures tend to banish *reverence*, which is the essential spirit of true piety, and to foster a flippant and profane spirit. They are an inlet for disorders, as lay preaching, the thrusting forward of neophytes into an unwholesome publicity in leading in prayer and exhortation, etc., and even the public praying and exhorting of women. For the prime thing to be done is to *make a sensation* anyhow, and if stale novelties will not effect this, then fresher ones must be resorted to.

In this connection, I note the two other pleas for these new measures: that they are necessary to give suitable special *instruction* to inquirers; and that they lead believers to special prayer for them. To the first I reply, no time or move could well be more *unpropitious* for such instruction. Witness the actual transactions; a few muttered or whispered words of commonplace to a mind blind with confusion and passion. If individual instruction is needed, no place is suitable except the pastor's study or the person's home; if collective, then the desk is the proper place. As to the latter plea, what sort of intercessory spirit is that which must needs be *piqued* by the *sight* of the weeping, agitated mourners before it will pray for them? More like clap-trap than faith.

4. The real impulses which propel ministers to the new measures, while sometimes ignorantly pious, are more frequently improper, a prurient impatience to hurry and huddle the work which God reserves as his own,—sinners' conversion,—with a secret mistrust of the power of the simple truth, with prayer and faith; a love of notoriety, and of the reputation of effectiveness; a desire to count large numbers of converts, and especially an indolence which is impatient of God's method, the detailed, unobtrusive, sustained work of pastoral and catechetical instruction. It is, in a word, a system of spiritual *quackery*. It relies not on spiritual powers, but on theatrical sympathies and manipulations.

5. The charge would be sufficient against the new measures, that they constitute an *Εθελο-θρησκεία*. The system is not set down and authorized for us in God's word; and this is enough to make it contraband to a strict Protestant. They plead sun-

dry things in all Protestant churches, all probably different from, and additional to, what was in the primitive precedent, as pews in churches, choirs, etc. Answer: If these are right, they are only the natural and fair development of rites of worship which are ordained in sacred Scripture. The new measures are more,—a substantive addition. The motive stamps them as the sin of will-worship; for that motive is notoriously the desire to employ human inventions, springing out of the mistrust in God's plans. Every corruption of popery was, at its inception, a "new measure," prompted and apologized for precisely as we hear in our day, and several of them decidedly more plausible and reverential: pictures and statues in churches, relics, monkery, confessional and penance, processions, sacred dramas, etc. Only time is needed to develop these modern ones into as palpable a system of man-made religion as popery.

Last. Events have disclosed a marked tendency of the *new measures* to foster Pelagian and semi-Pelagian doctrines. See the history of the New School and of the Missionary Baptists, both of whom were largely corrupted by these measures. See their chief prevalence among semi-Pelagian sects, United Brethren, Wesleyans, Lutherans (New School), Winebrennerians, Cumberland Presbyterians, *et al.* In fact, they do not *cohere* with the Bible doctrines of original sin, effectual calling, and sovereign grace.

In connection with these measures, let us consider the usage of the prompt admission of professed converts to the Lord's table. The reasons *against* this usage are obvious. In favor of it, they plead (*a*,) That it is well to get them *committed* at once; (*b*,) The example of the apostles at Pentecost, etc. The answer to the first is, that it is the wrong sort of committal, to motives factitious and unwholesome. To offset the apostolic example, Dr. Miller says that there was a special reason why they must be seemingly precipitate, namely, that the bulk of their converts were only assembled for the week of the feast, and would then disperse. Dr. Alexander says: A similar precedent would impose on us community of goods, that Christ chose, not to make his apostles infallible as to every point and detail of pastoral discretion by an inspiration, but left them to learn from experience like other Christians. It may be added: suppose God was pleased to give, in that work, a gen-

eral purity, and to reveal to the apostles a guarantee of it, such as are not given in our modern revivals, then, of course, we are not to imitate their immediate reception. Paul says to Timothy, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." In a word, experience shows that to imitate them would now be mischievous, and a violation of that pastoral prudence which is undoubtedly enjoined. (See Shorter Catechism, Question 97; Book of Discipline, Chap. I., Sec. II.; Directory of Worship, Chap. IX.)

Time has exposed the hollowness of the conversions under discussion so frequently that the persons who persist in employing the dangerous methods dare not deny it. But their plea is "that some are genuine converts; that one soul is of priceless value, and that, if nine out of every ten go back, they are only where they were before, while the tenth is saved." The apostle does not speak thus. The wood, hay, and stubble, when built into God's spiritual temple, is not as well off as when left in the forest or the field. That building is destined to be tried by fire; and in that day woe unto the perishable stuff which has been thrust into it. The plea just stated assumes two things both of which are untrue. One is that the majority, who prove to be spurious fruits of these excitements, are no worse off than before; the other is that the small minority of genuine fruits would not have been gathered in without these means. Of the latter assumption I remark, first, that it is notoriously untrue. In almost every case where true grains of living wheat are found among the masses of chaff raked together by these efforts there will be formed a preparatory work in the heart, the result of intelligent scriptural teaching and consistent Christian example, watered for some time by the Holy Spirit in the retirement of their homes. And the only result of the revival appliances as to them has been to hurry them a little, perhaps, in their disclosures of their new feelings, and at the same time to mar and pollute the wholesome soundness of their spiritual character. Had scriptural means of grace been used with them, and no others, they would have come into the church in due time, none the less surely, and with a piety more symmetrical and profound.

Nor is the other assumption true, that the rest who are not savingly converted are no worse off than before. Is it nothing that the power of divine grace and the sanctity of a religious

profession are dishonored before the world, till the very name of revival becomes trivial? Is it nothing that the misguided converts who apostatize have the guilt of broken vows and professions, and perhaps of sacraments profaned, added to all their previous lists? But this is not all; the spiritual effects of one of these delusive and abortive excitements are blighting. At best, the sensibilities of the subject are exhausted and worn out to no purpose, until his heart becomes almost incapable of impression, and his "conscience is seared with a hot iron." Those who have passed through two or three of these fires are usually found the most impious and heaven-daring of profane swearers, revilers and mockers, where they are not restrained by principles of social decency and respectability. If they belong to the latter class, they are usually found in a state of skepticism or hostility as to the very truth of Christianity. They feel that a cruel trick has been played upon their inexperience by the ministers and friends of Christianity in thus thrusting them, in the hour of their confusion, into false positions, whose duties they do not and cannot perform, and into sacred professions which they have been compelled shamefully to repudiate. Their self-respect is therefore galled to the quick, and pride is indignant at the humiliating exposure. No wonder that they look on religion and its advocates henceforward with suspicion and anger. Often their feelings do not stop here. They are conscious that they were thoroughly in earnest in their religious anxieties and resolves at the time, and that they felt strange and profound exercises. Yet bitter and mortifying experience has taught them that *their* new birth and experimental religion at least was a delusion. How natural to conclude that those of all others are delusions also? They say: "the only difference between myself and these earnest Christians is, that they have not yet detected the cheat as I have. They are now not a whit more convinced of their sincerity and of the reality of their exercises than I once was of mine. Yet I know there was no change in my soul; I do not believe that there is in theirs." Such is the fatal process of thought through which thousands have passed; until the country is sprinkled all over with infidels, who have been made such by their own experience of spurious religious excitements. They may keep their hostility to themselves in the main; because Christianity now "walks in

her silver slippers;" but they are not the less steeled against all saving impressions of the truth.

But what shall we say of that large number, who having entered the church with a counterfeit conversion, continue there as formal and dead professors, blinded by habit, pride of consistency, and self-righteousness, to their real condition? Their case is, alas! worse if possible than the former. Humanly speaking, everything concurs to keep them insensible to their true condition. Their false hope, like an adamant shield, turns aside every arrow of wholesome admonition or awakening. Is Christ offered in the gospel as a Saviour for lost sinners? They consider themselves as among the found. Is the danger of the unconverted painted in the most alarming colors? It is nothing to them, for they consider themselves as among the converted. Are the privileges of believers held forth? They appropriate them all, saying to themselves: "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." The result is that their mistaken professions convert all the gracious promises, which are the nutriment of the regenerate soul, into deadly poisons to them; and close their mouths against the reception of a single one of those bitter but wholesome convictions, which are the necessary medicines for their dangerous case. Let ministers address faithful and discriminating warnings to professed Christians, against self-deception, or against inconsistency, and you shall see that all the truly humble, sound, consistent Christians in the audience, whose piety nobody doubts, will at once accept the admonition with contrite thankfulness, and diligently search their hearts therewith as with a lighted candle. But every dead professor, for whom they were especially intended, will be seen busily applying the warnings to his neighbors, and with a self-satisfied air perhaps admiring and complimenting the fidelity of his pastor! "Verily, the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before" these (Matt. xxi. 31). Let us appeal again to the testimony of experience. We know that the churches contain multitudes of these dead believers; and yet, though they are usually church-goers, and so, within the reach of the means of grace, when revivals come, it is the rarest thing in the world to hear anything of the conversion of this class. A few of those who have undergone a spurious conversion and discovered their delusion are now savingly renewed, along with

numbers of open, careless sinners; but how few of those who "have a name to live and are dead?" When Satan gets the "wood, hay, and stubble" quietly built into God's spiritual temple, he is best pleased; for he knows that they will probably remain there undisturbed till the day that trieth every man's work by fire; and then they will be inevitably consigned to everlasting burnings. THEN "LET EVERY MAN TAKE HEED HOW HE BUILDETH."

It is not intended in these remarks to imply that delusive conversions and unsanctified communicants are only found in those congregations which employ the dangerous expedients described above; but only that they may be reasonably expected to be more frequent among them. So strong is the tendency to self-deception and formalism in man's sinful soul, much of it will exist in spite of the most scriptural preaching and cautious management. Doubtless the purest churches have dead branches. But does not this sad fact constitute a strong reason for shunning all those expedients by which this danger of self-deception, so prevalent at best, is manifestly increased in a high degree?

RULES FOR PASTOR IN REVIVAL.

1. The chief use to be made of the juncture is to *present important truth*. Hence catechetical work should be then most active, preaching most doctrinal.

2. Gently repress all excitement which the Holy Ghost does not make.

3. Give personal instruction as much as possible *in private*.

4. Beware of permitting anxious persons to *lean on* the pastor, instead of the Saviour.

5. Keep John vi. 29, and Acts xvi. 31, *ever foremost*. Do not permit anxious persons to feel that anything is done, until this is done.

6. Present Christ in his prophetic and kingly, as well as his priestly work.

7. Don't allow *any one* to thrust you aside from your proper share in the work.

8. Minimize the recoil of the excitement.

9. Commend Dr. Plumer's *Hints on Past. Theol.*, Ch. XXI.

THE WORLD WHITE TO HARVEST:

REAP, OR IT PERISHES.¹

“Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”—JOHN iv. 35.

THE most familiar truths are the most influential. This is a fact which our ambition to be novel often causes us to overlook. Much that is ingenious, and at the same time correct, has been said upon the commercial, civil, and social results of missions and of Christianity. There is some danger of our prosecuting the evangelical work from these considerations, to the exclusion of the more sacred motives drawn from eternity. In the latter must ever be the main spring of the church's zeal. The same vast, old, familiar truths, which made Paul, Peter, Jesus Christ, missionaries, that the whole human race are children of wrath and in the highway to everlasting ruin; these must move our missionary efforts also. Our faith should constantly recur to these great facts, to receive from them fresh impulses of their might. This is just the method of our Saviour in the text, when he introduces the enforcement of gospel effort by saying, “Lift up your eyes and look on the fields.” And the preacher of the gospel ought to be far more ambitious to be able to restate these trite but potent doctrines, with a seriousness, fervor, and palpable faith appropriate to their awful importance, than to win the applause of his brethren by an eloquent or ingenious novelty. There is the more reason that we should recur to our principles, now that infidelity so boldly charges that the church is no longer impelled in her evangelical toils by a vital and actual faith in the threatenings of sacred Scripture against “the nations that forget God.” They have found, alas, but too much pretext for the taunt, in the biting

¹ A sermon preached for the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, in New York, May 2, 1858.