

Correspondence.

INDIVIDUALISM AND CENTRALIZATION—II.

BY REV. E. H. GILLET.

Absolute individual independence is but another name for the perfection of social anarchy. Mutual duties pertain to our mutual relations, and to refuse to recognize them under the plea of personal independence is simply to carry the spirit of an Ishmael into the social sphere.

But if there is any sphere where the boast or claim of independence is especially misplaced and incongruous, it is the sphere of religious profession. Here it breathes forth a spirit in direct conflict with the specific injunctions: "Bear ye one another's burdens."

The same principles, moreover, which apply to the relations of individual members of a church, apply also to the relations of individual churches. This was fully recognized by the Fathers of New England, even while they violated the freedom of the churches by subjecting them to the control of the State.

Why is it that even under the loosest system of church order or even anarchy, ministers are united in associations, and assume mutual obligations and control, in the reception, discipline or expulsion of members? Why not an "independent" minister as well as an "independent" church?

The singular and vehement opposition to this which is developed in some quarters, subjects itself inevitably to the suspicion of interested motives. Why would any man be a political Ishmael? Is it that he may be at liberty from the common restraint? Does he want an independence which is incompetent with subjection to law?

church independence, which would make as many sects as there are local organizations, and deny all recognition of a common bond? Are they such as will bear the investigation of Christian truth? Are they not of necessity kindred to, and developed from, that selfishness of human nature which rejects the imposition of everything like restraint upon the individual will?

No one would act wisely in sacrificing individuality of character to a stereotyped uniformity. We leave to Rome the monopolizing claims of a unity more material than moral, a unity that may be phrased—the thinking of millions done for them by one man. But the opposite extreme is not without its mischiefs. Whatever tends to separate and disunite the members of the body of Christ; to cherish in their hearts a sense of independence of mutual obligation as individuals and churches; to foster the idea of rights which are prized only under impatience of control, must work evil and only evil.

PROFANITY.

We have two thoughts respecting profanity which we earnestly commend to our young men-readers. We address them to young men because the habit of profane swearing is almost always acquired in youthful days—always, so far as our personal observation extends. We never knew a man, who had preserved a clean speech up to the age of ripe manhood, become corrupt in tongue afterward.

Profane swearing is an open confession of suspicious veracity. The man who thinks it necessary to fortify his word with an oath, virtually acknowledges his plain assertions to be of doubtful credit. No reason can be given for encumbering these assertions with the profane oath, except to secure for them a surer belief. If that reason really exists, then his ordinary truthfulness is not to be relied on. If it does not exist—i. e. if his truthfulness without the oath is reliable—then his profanity is gratuitous impiety. As it does not like most other acts of wickedness, bring one tangible result, which can be construed even into a momentary reward, it exhibits that most dangerous of all phases of depravity, signing only for the sake of sinning.

Thus the profane oath, whether regarded by him who utters it as necessary to support his word, or not, is a virtual confession of such want of principle as forbids our trust in his truthfulness. And his word, under the impious adjuration, secures just as little confidence as it would without it. To that adjuration no legal responsibility is annexed. He is safe from the penalties of legal perjury. And he is not the man to feel any influence from the thought that his profane adjuration will enhance the awful punishment of falsehood when he shall meet the avenging law of his blasphemed God.

The profane swearer fastens upon his whole moral character a reproach which is often far beyond the truth. There is no question but many men have fallen into the habit of profanity, whose moral character is in other respects too good for so shameless a vice. Profanity is the one outward blemish of their lives. They are otherwise too good for so

atrocious a depravity, but, in spite of their effort to give to their profanity an air of respectability from their many outward virtues, they find that, like the spot of ink on the white sheet, the spreading of taint is always from black to white.

Let one of these men go as a stranger into a community seeking a new home, and desiring to secure reputation among his future neighbors as a man of general integrity and virtue. Let him then follow up his habit of rolling from his tongue, on every trivial occasion, vile blasphemies and awful imprecations. What impression is he likely to produce concerning his whole moral character? How will the good and virtuous, all whose confidence is most pleasant and advantageous, regard his coming among them? As an acquisition, or an infliction? Doubtless the latter, and not alone for the reason that he is a profane man, but because from such a man there can be no natural expectation of any good. His better traits will have a long struggle against the reasonable prejudice which his profanity has awakened, before they will secure any general recognition.

We are compelled to say that it is no injustice to the profane swearer that his general good name must always rest under this cloud. He suffers no wrong in the case, but what he deliberately inflicts upon himself. Nothing can be more natural than the views of the public mind concerning the probabilities of his character. Men look for the motives to other sins, and they find them. Theft expects gain; falsehood has a point to carry; uncleanness has a foul gratification in view; but, as already suggested, in the whole list of human crimes, profanity stands alone as a sin without one tangible motive—a crime instigated only by a natural preference of sin before goodness. It is sinning for the sake of sinning—nothing else. It is not natural that we should look for general virtue in one who rolls up against himself so much presumptive evidence of general corruption.

And he has the less reason to complain of this general judgment of men, because so light a sacrifice on his part would avert it. Gaining nothing, by profanity, what can he expect to lose by the total disuse of it? The respect of any? No, not even of sinners of his own stripe. His reformation may provoke their scoffs, but what are these when he knows that he nevertheless commands their unwilling, unconfessed, but real respect?—If he is unconscious of virtues which have not their fair credit with men, nothing is easier than to place himself right on the record. Stop swearing!

THOMAS CHALMERS.

THE APOSTLE OF CITY MISSIONS—VII.

We may conclude these papers, which are designed to keep alive a warm and practical interest in the great work of evangelizing the masses, by a view of those characteristics of Dr. Chalmers which led him to this field of effort and qualified him for the wonderful success which he achieved. The first characteristic mentioned by Dr. Wayland in this connection was

"THE MYSTERIOUS ELEMENT OF SYMPATHY." In the finely endowed nature of Dr. Chalmers, "Exhibited in its greatest power in his relations with humanity," says Dr. Wayland:

His love for man was intense, and he felt that every human being was his brother. Wherever he happened to be visiting, his attention was always directed to the children. He was the playmate of his own children, and not unfrequently was found by his visitors romping with them like one of their playmates. He felt himself one with all the thousands of outcasts with whom he became acquainted in his pastoral visitations. In them he saw the degraded masses throughout his native country, and he imposed upon himself the labor of attempting to elevate and renew them with a self-devotion that ended only with his life. This moved him to his labors at Kilmany. It increased in power, as with his own eyes he beheld the misery which festered in the Tron parish and in St. Johns. This established the Sabbath school in St. Andrews, and stimulated him to those labors which led to so glorious a result. It was the hope of filling Scotland with Christian institutions that strengthened him to labor until he saw 222 churches erected for the Establishment. In the

hope that the Free Church would accomplish this object, even in declining health he again put on the harness, and did not lay it aside until he had been the means of building 600 churches for its accommodation. When he feared that the wish of his heart would not be accomplished through this latter agency, aged and feeble, but with unchanged love for the fallen and degraded, if he could not move the whole country, he resolved to show what might be done by one example, and he commenced his great missionary work at the West Port. In its filthy alleys and dirty workshops he spoke to these degraded men and women, with an outpouring love and a tender earnestness, with which not even his most admired efforts at the Tron Church and St. Johns could be compared.

Such sympathy for man in his fallen condition led him to the most tender and intimate intercourse with individuals upon their spiritual interests, and gave him a power for good which no amount of oratory, at arms' length, could have bestowed. An eye-witness says of Dr. Chalmers' pastoral visits at Kilmany: "I have a very lively recollection of the intense earnestness of his addresses on occasions of visitation in my father's house, when he would unconsciously move forward on his chair to the very margin of it, in his anxiety to impart to the family and servants the impression of eternal things that so filled his soul."

Another scene from the latter portion of his life beautifully illustrates that feature of sympathy which led him to mingle freely with the humble, which gladly recognized the divine image in the hearts of the poor, and which thus qualified him for his great work of bringing the Gospel to bear effectually upon this class of society. The scene belongs to the summer immediately before his death, and is laid in Jedburgh, where there had been a remarkable revival of religion. Dr. Chalmers showed the deepest interest in the spiritual state and history of individual cases, and visited, in connection with the pastor a number of persons believed to have undergone a saving change, for the purpose of conversation with them. Mr. Purves, the pastor at Jedburgh, thus describes one of these interviews:

Never shall I forget the scene which presented itself, when, near the close of the narrative, I turned round to see its effect upon our venerable father. The whole scene was such one as a painter would have liked to perpetuate. There were two beds running along one side of the apartment, on the edge of which ten or a dozen persons had, since the interview began, ranged themselves, including one of our humble elders, and several individuals who, during the two or three previous years, had been turned from darkness to light. The countenances of several of these, as they were lighted up with Christian sympathy, greatly arrested Dr. Chalmers, as he told me afterwards. But he himself was the most interesting object of all. The figure he presented, was not a little grotesque, but profoundly affecting. He was himself in the corner of the apartment, facing the little group, but rather behind the woman and me. The person in whose house we were had been baking bread before we entered, and the table at the end of which he had placed himself was covered with meal. Not observing this, he had placed one elbow in the midst of it, and pulling out a drawer in an old wardrobe on the other side, on which to rest his other elbow, there he was, sitting in this posture, with a hand behind each ear to catch what was passing, and with a countenance so inexpressibly bland and benignant, on which the interest, sympathy, and delight of the good man's heart had cast such a heavenly radiance, as I shall never forget while I live. He put several questions himself as to the former and present state of things of his own accord, engaged in prayer with and for the little group around him, like a father or one of the ancient patriarchs, commending them to the care and keeping of God Almighty. It was a wonderful outpouring, full of unction, compared with which even his eloquence was but tame.

This tender sympathy for his fellow-men took a practical shape. It led him to those unparalleled labors for the elevation of the neglected and irreligious poor which we have described.

CONSERVATION. TERRITORIAL SYSTEM.

We quote again from Dr. Wayland: From this brief review of the career of Dr. Chalmers, we see that in obedience to the Saviour's command he consecrated himself to the work of carrying the gospel to every creature. Unparalleled multitudes crowded to hear, admire, and honor him. But he saw that this was not yielding obedience to the Master's command. Those who came were but few in comparison with the multitudes who did not come. The poor, degraded, and vicious would never enter those magnificent temples, commonly called the houses of God. The gospel must be carried to them; and wherever he went, he at once commenced the performance of this duty. He marked out a district, he sought out fellow-laborers, he labored with them; he was certain that thus the gospel in love and affection would be carried to every family. And never did the gospel fail to produce its effect. This, which he denominated his territorial system, is, if I may so call it, one of the most important discoveries in philanthropy. It is worthy of the thoughtful consideration of all good men. Were any of our cities thus divided into districts,

each under the care of a small number of the disciples of Christ, who would carry the gospel to every family, and practically exhibit the love of the Saviour to the fallen and miserable, in ten years moral and social changes would be witnessed that would cheer the heart of every benefactor of his race.

And it is to be remarked that the wisdom of Dr. Chalmers' plans was commensurate with his charity. He saw that notwithstanding the thousands of pounds which were given by the city to support the poor, together with the vast amount that was contributed by individual liberality, pauperism was every year more distressing, and that it was rapidly on the increase. He arrived at this conclusion: that the mere giving of money by the public is rather a curse than a blessing, and that even in the case of private charity it is frequently of the same character; that the law of the New Testament is perfectly economical and merciful,—if a man will not work, neither shall he eat. God speaks before us the fertile earth, abundant for the supply of all the wants of man; but it is his will that we should obtain our part of this abundance only as the result of labor. Hence he established it as an axiom, that it is of no use to attempt to help the poor unless you engage them to aid in helping themselves. He would allow but little to be given in charity, and then in only extreme cases. Relief was granted only to those who were disabled, and then only for a season, if their relatives were able to help them. Pains were taken to find labor for all who were able to work. The principle of self-respect was constantly inculcated, and they were taught to be ashamed of being on the poor-roll. Even education was not afforded as a gratuity; all were obliged to pay for it,—not at its full price, for much was done in the work of preparation by charity; but none were deprived of the pleasure of feeling that they paid for it. It was by such labors as these that in a few years the parish of St. Johns, instead of demanding £1,200 (\$5,760) for supporting it in misery and vice, was more than able to support itself.

CONCLUSION.

After this let no one consider human beings, how degraded soever; beyond the reach of the saving influence of the gospel. The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God, to pulling down strongholds. Let us then, in the assurance of faith and earnestness of love, go forth, confidently expecting that when in simplicity of heart we labor for him, Christ will give us the victory. Nor have such results been confined to the West Port and to the labors of Dr. Chalmers. The effects of carrying the gospel in love among the degraded inhabitants of St. Giles, London, are much the same. A multitude of children have been plucked from the very jaws of destruction, by the Howard Mission, from one of the worst localities in New York. We expect missionaries to go ten thousand miles to carry the gospel to people of a strange language; why should we not become missionaries to the perishing and miserable at our own doors?

Would that all pastors, and especially all city pastors, shared in the noble Christian zeal and sympathy of Chalmers for the irreligious masses of the population, and were impelled like him to go forth and seek at least their share of the perishing thousands around them! Would that, like him, they felt the vital necessity of personal contact with the souls whom they would benefit, and, with mingled boldness and charity, would engage in the most decided, aggressive measures upon the irreligion and wickedness which surround them—the evil which will not be attracted, but which must be overcome, by the good.

We commend Dr. Wayland's Memoir to all young pastors. It would be a good work to place a copy of it in the hands of all the students in the graduating classes of our Theological Seminaries.

A Memoir of the Christian Labors, Pastoral and Philanthropic, of Thomas Chalmers, D. D., LL. D. By Francis Wayland. Boston: Gould & Lincoln. 12mo. pp 215.

DEARTH OF RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE.

Seldom have we witnessed a season of such almost entire lack of exciting religious and ecclesiastical news. Since the close of the great assemblies of the Churches—last May, now nearly three months since, things in the religious world have so kept the even tenor of their way that there has been almost nothing in the way of news to put into the papers. The anniversaries of colleges and schools have afforded a brief and partial interest; but the season for these is also past, and all is quiet again as the stagnant and motionless atmosphere in which we are living.

Sometimes the report of no news is good news, but that can scarcely ever be the case in Church affairs, in which aggression and conquest is a necessary condition of well-being. The cause of religious progress seldom or never advances so quietly as to escape attention, and therefore the absence of reports of success generally indicates a season of unsuccess. We are not gratified, therefore, at the fact that for more than three months we have not published a revival notice; and about the same is true of our contemporaries.—Christian Advocate and Journal.

To render good for evil is God-like; to render good for good is man-like; to render evil for evil, is beast-like; to render evil for good is devil-like.

TENDENCIES TO PRESBYTERIAN UNION.

The Evangelical Repository, (of the United Presbyterian Church,) closes a review of the present movements toward a general union of Presbyterians in Great Britain, with the following remarks concerning prospects of a like nature in our own country.

Having glanced at the prospects of Union among Presbyterians abroad, I turn to the minutes of late meetings of the family at home; and on perusing these, I think I see a decided tendency towards Union here. There was, at the late meetings of the various Presbyterian bodies in this country, a warmer exchange of fraternal feeling than has ever taken place before. The union of the Old and New School Assemblies cannot be distant. There is a flowing together that nothing human can prevent. I shall rejoice heartily at the marriage. The New School, I think, been benefited in a theological point of view since the separation; and the Old School has learned important lessons. They will mingle now without serious jarring, and will work more earnestly together.

More serious difficulties are in the way when we come to think of union between the United Presbyterian Church and either of these bodies; yet we do not regard the matter as hopeless. In three years, one great question that separated us from the Old School, has been settled and taken out of the way. The severer logic of Divine Providence must have convinced them that we were right in regard to human slavery, and that they were wrong. How long it may require the same or similar logic, to convince us both in regard to other points, we have no means of knowing. But this much is true, that we shall be convinced by some means, and we shall be one.

The question of Secret Societies stands in the way. But if the evil that has been done and attempted by secret oath-bound associations during the progress of this rebellion, were developed, I am persuaded that a revelation would be made that would be astounding. May not the time soon come when such a revelation will be made, and may not the result be the reputation, on the part of the Christian Church, of the members of all such associations? Let no one say that this is unlikely; for we have seen greater improbabilities than this become facts in history.

Psalmody is another difficulty. But may not the way be opening for harmony of views in relation to this question? The United Presbyterian Church is pledged by her principles to adopt a better version of the Psalms whenever such shall be presented to her from any source. It is now the opinion of a large majority of her ministers, and also of many of her members, that the time has come when she might be furnished with a version at least as nearly conformed to the original as the one in use, and much more poetical. From this condition of our Church, I turn to the proceedings of our General Assembly (O. S.) and find that our brethren there are dissatisfied with their present Psalmody. It is but a few years since they published a revised hymn-book, and now they must have another. Much time was spent in the Assembly in the discussion of the question. The result was, the appointment of a committee to select and publish a new book of hymns, with appropriate accompanying music. I doubt not this committee will labour severely, and do their work as well as it would be possible for any committee to perform it. Neither do I doubt that the Assembly will adopt, substantially, the book reported by the committee. But will the church be for any length of time satisfied with it? The history of hymnology assures us that she will not. In a few years she must have another book; and so on, until the Church returns to the point from which she departed, namely, the use of Psalms of inspiration. All hymn-singing Churches are more or less at unrest; they are drifting on the wide ocean, and they will not be able to sing steadily until they return.

Is there any evidence, however, that any of them will return soon to the use of the Scriptures Psalms? I think that there are indications, at least in the Old School Assembly, of such return—not at once, but gradually. When the question of Psalmody was before the late Assembly, Dr. Junkin said that he "belonged to the class called the 'boys,' and therefore he would speak; since the discussion had in a great measure fallen into the hands of that class. He was reminded of the remark of Dr. Alexander to his class-mate, Elijah P. Lovejoy, when the latter had given a very glowing and poetical description of the creation, in his peculiarly shrill voice:—'You can't beat Moses.' So none of our young men can beat David, Asaph and Paul. The true idea of Psalmody was not mere praise, but also experience, and also for admonition."

If you mind nothing but the body, you lose body and soul too. If you mind nothing but earth, you lose earth and heaven too.

Improve the wit you have bought at a dear rate, and the wisdom you have gained by sad experience.

When God punishes another, he threatens thee; when he wounds another, he warns thee.

What can you get by bad company? If you are truly good, they will either taunt or despise you.

It is a great mercy to be preserved in health, as to be delivered from sickness.

Learn of Christ who was sensible of injuries, yet patient under them.

Take heed of being infected with the breath of a profane heart.

Honesty is the best policy, and innocence the best wisdom. Keep the body under but the spirit up. Keep such company as God keeps.