

of all this, the elect, the true-hearted disciples of Christ, will be safe. His angels will guard them. *He will gather them under his protecting wing; "gather them with his arm, and carry them in his bosom."*

Here we have a beginning, a progress, and an end. At the end is comfort to the elect, and destruction to the wicked and malignant persecutors.

[To be concluded.]

---

## ARTICLE VI.

### THE PRACTICAL ELEMENT IN CHRISTIANITY.

By Rev. Charles White, D. D., President of Wabash College, Ia.

DIVINE revelation may be regarded either as a body of truths for intellectual inquiry and admiration, or as a collection of rules and motives for the guidance of human life. These two aspects run into each other, but may be properly conceived of and spoken of separately. For its contemplative uses, religion cannot be too greatly esteemed and respected. Its lessons and influences, however, for this real, acting world, where we spend the preparatory portion of our being, are more immediately important and indispensable.

It is the happy feature of our time that religion, like science, has left her cloistered retreats and her abstruse speculations, and passed into the earnest, matter-of-fact concerns of mankind. This decided assumption of the practical on the part of religion, marks the present as a signal era, in her aggressive movements toward the conquest of the world. This was to have been unhesitatingly looked for by all the pious students of the Divine character. A visible and effective industry is a distinguishing attribute of the great Author of Christianity. Said Christ: "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." This, that is, the Divine example, is the great principle of the universe. Christianity without practical bearings would have been an anomaly and a contradiction in the Divine dispensations.

We proceed to consider the *fact* and the *advantages* of a practical character in Christianity.

I. First, the *fact* of such a practical character.

One proof of this may be found in the mission itself which religion is to fulfil in the world. That mission is, in brief terms, to carry light, purity, happiness to the entire family of man. Its great work in this universal sphere is to wake all the immense tract of intellect that slumbers in the nations; to purify all the moral spirit that heaves and glows underneath it; to effect an intellectual and moral creation striking and illustrious like that of the six days of Omnipotence in the beginning. There is included, it is perceived, in such an immense accomplishment, a mission into every heart of a thousand millions, a mission into every such heart, as a place of evil spirits to cast them out, as a place of death to raise the dead, as a place vacant of all moral goodness to settle a family of affections fit for heaven. Such a mission to all that dwell on the face of the earth, a mission charged with such social, intellectual and moral regenerations, leaves no doubt of the character of religion being that of a great practical instrumentality.

A glance at the almost insuperable difficulties to be overcome in effecting the meliorating religious changes indicated, will serve farther to establish the practical nature of Christianity. The contentedness of ignorance with its own darkness; the depth of moral corruption; the inveteracy of human prejudice; the tendency of men to fatal forms of error;—these present obstacles and resistances which nothing but an agency most practical can remove. What pains and prayers and incessant persuasions are required to train one child to virtue? What practical power then is wanted to enter a *world* and cleanse all human thought, all human feeling, all human action? It is to be remembered that the world besides being purified is to be kept clean. Each thirty years presents another thousand millions for the action of Christianity. It has the same great regenerations to effect for each successive generation down to the end of the world. Religion, in order to such a vast and continued accomplishment, must be a perpetual as well as an immense activity.

The practical element in the system of Divine ethics appears in the prominence which it gives to the individual as a responsible actor.

Pantheism absorbs man in the Deity. God, according to this form of Atheism, is the immense ocean including all existence; man is a single drop of the grand universal mass, undistinguishable and irresponsible. Other forms of infidelity extinguish all but a single point of man's existence, by cutting off all of it lying beyond death, thus robbing him of immortality. To a being thus narrowed to a

hand-breadth, action or inaction, industry or indolence, have but a slender importance. The Socialists are in danger of sinking and paralysing the individual by lodging in a community nearly all his independent motives and responsibilities.

In all society constructed under despotisms, monarchies, titled aristocracies, the individual is generalized and much obscured in a great amalgamation known as the national character, will, government. In respect to all private interests, as well as public, the visible organ of authority, the representative of the empire, speaks, arranges, decides; the individual is scarcely known, consulted, cared for. Like one of the boxes or packages of a ship's cargo, he goes with the rest and partakes of the general destiny, not of his own will or wisdom, but simply because he chanced to be stowed away in the hold along with the common mass. Religion contemplates specially our individuality. It clusters upon man a large family of individual duties. It does not overlook his relations to society, nor remit or diminish one claim resting upon him to mingle and move with the mass of the community. But here, in this his social position, where he is wont to be counted, not as a whole but as a small augmentation of a whole, as an infinitesimal of the common mass of public feeling, public opinion, public influence — even here religion follows out her element, her commingled drop, arrests it, and legislates for it as a unit, an isolation! She invests her individual with full, undivided responsibility. She never permits him to merge himself with his fellows, corporate or non-corporate; she never permits a single particle of his conscience to be yielded up on his entering any fraternity; she never permits one item of service to be withheld on the plea that copartners are under equal obligation to perform it; she proposes to bestow her full glorious rewards on him singly, if he singly be worthy; she proposes all her woes to him singly, if singly he be unworthy. By thus separating men from masses and amalgamations, by thus setting down each man apart and constituting him an entirety accountable to breathe, to think, to desire, to will, to act, to attain, religion holds an influence in producing human activity of vast and incalculable power. Left with none to depend on but himself he must act, or gain nothing, he must act, or lose everything. No man has an oarsman to push him while he is asleep. He must up and strike for himself; lusty and alone must stem the tide or be swept on hopelessly into uselessness, ruin and oblivion. The associated fact, ever recognized in the Scriptures, if not by statement certainly by inference, that the great ends of life, not attained personally, are not attained at all; that who

succeeds not by his own labors has failed; and who wins not by his own prowess is defeated — this adds a perpetual and powerful influence to great and multiplied individual labors. The conscious dignity with which religion invests men, by investing them with this conscious individuality, is an additional inducement to human activity. As a self-constructing, self-acting, self-responsible isolation among the works and intelligences of God, man is intensely prompted in order to be worthy of himself, to attempt great outward efficiency and accomplishment. Brave a man may be, as an undistinguished ingredient of a body of soldiery; but detached and drawn forth singly for a daring exploit, the motive to chivalrous action is immensely augmented. By religion every man without exception is thus detailed and assigned singly to a momentous, a hazardous, a holy service. He feels the honor and importance of his position; he turns his eye upon the great interests dependent upon himself alone; his heart swells with noble, high purposes, as he thinks of the part committed all to himself to perform. Under a lofty and generous impulse, created by this consciousness of a great entrustment exclusively in his own hands, he will go out to almost incredible energies and labors.

Religion, by thus making every man an independent, responsible actor, has set up and secured in the world an agency capable of producing a religious industry and thrift and accomplishment as great and important as the world needs. What forbids that the earth should be all tilled and all be made fruitful even as a well-watered garden?

The practical bearing of religion is apparent from another fact, that it enjoins those internal states of the heart which are eminently fitted to produce action.

Whatever links and involves itself immediately and strongly with the warm workings of the soul, will always necessarily have an eminently active and practical character. The production of outward activities is on this wise. All feeling, all stirring in the heart, loves and demands an outward expression, an ostensible form. Emotion will not remain in the soul still and quiet permanently, any more than ignited gunpowder will smoulder slowly away without an external manifestation. Nor is the spirit's excitement content with the moving of particles among themselves as a mere ebullition; they swell up, run over, spread abroad; they create all around a rich scene of life and of fruit. Without emotions issuing thus into action, man would be, in respect to all other beings, if not in respect to himself, a mere physical structure, a mere block to move and be moved by im-

pect or attraction. But he is not such a thing; he is no block; he is a being of deep, vivacious sensibilities, every one of which is making outward demonstrations incessantly. Is it for a moment to be supposed or admitted that the human affections, in all other cases giving birth to vigorous activities, become inoperative lethargies the moment they have a religious character? The moment they have a religious character they rise to intenser energies, superior stability. Especially do they make larger and more remarkable external exhibitions. Let us represent to ourselves, then, the assiduous labors, the crowded occupations to which men are pushed by their worldly passions in the absence of religious feeling. Let us mark how under the love of money man crosses all the lines of latitude and longitude; how impelled by a love of honor he goes up to the cannon's mouth; how under the impulses of a secular enterprise the earth is covered over with the traces of his presence and his industry; how the mark of his axe and his fire is left wherever he has pitched his tent; how, wherever he has favorably settled himself, dwellings, roads, harvests, cities, temples, exchanges, armaments, overthrows, reconstructions have invariably attended him. These are testimonies of his vast outward energies and achievements in obedience to the secular portion of his sensitive nature.

My allegation is that, equal to all this and greater than all this, and a thousand fold better than all this, are the active services which are produced by the emotions of religion. Affectionate reverence for God is one of these. Let the Divine character be opened gloriously to a susceptible, responsive understanding and heart, so that this affectionate reverence shall be deep and great; equally deep and great will be the active obedience that shall follow. There have been celebrated earthly captains, who had inspired such an enthusiasm and respect on the part of a subject people or an armed host, that their announced wish and will would instantly put millions in motion. Will not a fervent consecration of the heart to the great Sovereign of the world make his intimations more effective! Will not his presence and his word call out submissions and services greatly surpassing these in fidelity, importance and permanence? Think of a company of men; the Almighty in the midst of them; their souls all moved, thrilled, uplifted toward him! What will they shrink from to which their great Master calleth?

Another of the emotions of religion is a penitential feeling, a true contrition for all offences against the will of Heaven! Than this there is no more active a principle belonging to our nature. What

service does he not attempt whose spirit, for having neglected service or having committed wrong, is broken, deeply sorrowing! Nothing is so marked as his obediences, nothing so assiduous and careful and persevering. I would rather have a suffusion of the soul with sorrow for past misdoings to induce Christian duty, than all the developed terrors of the world to come, than all the opened glories of heaven. We sometimes see a man, with an energy and a perseverance and a vigilance above himself, doing whatever his hand findeth to do; undismayed, unceasing, uncomplaining we observe him in all circumstances whatsoever; so resolute and undiverted and effective is he as to arrest general attention. That man has just come from the confessional, the world's great confessional, the cross of Christ! Into the ear of mercy has he just uttered his penitential griefs for his many transgressions. These services that we witnessed were the works meet for repentance. Let the penitence of the church be quadrupled and her holy accomplishments will be probably fifty fold. And penitence is the grand fundamental inculcation of the Gospel, a great and radical element of a Christian character. Wherever Christianity passes and plants this contrition for sins deep in the heart of a community, we look with confidence for most visible external reformations.

But the great emotion of religion is benevolence. This cannot live in the heart unproductive of visible labors without acting contrary to its character. It is well-wishing to others; it is fellow-feeling; its objects are out of itself. In behalf of these it produces large and numerous visible exertions, according to intensity and opportunity. Were man a bundle of perfect selfishness, he would act vigorously on a sphere around him just so broad as to include every possible contributor to his own dear interests. This area would constantly change its dimensions as he fancied he might bless himself by extending or contracting it. So would his labors on the same field be diminished or increased on the same principle of personal advantage. How infinitely superior to this varying narrowness is the principle of benevolent feeling as a generator of human action. This has no change or contraction of boundaries. Wherever in the universal family of man good is needed, thither would it travel; every acre of the world would it plant thick with the trees of righteousness. It would permit nothing to abate its efforts but the diminution of human want and woe. As there is always a tide to stem, it never lays upon its oars. As human society is always full of evils, so it is always abroad with both hands full of blessings.

Better than statement or discussion here would be an actual example of practical results in matters of religion under the action of this principle. Let the life of Paul be that example. We set out with the Apostle, all fired with religious philanthropy, from the city of Antioch on the express business of carrying the religion of Christ through the provinces of Lesser Asia. In Pisidia he boldly preaches the name of Jesus; his person is insulted and his life endangered. He flees to Iconium and lifts up his voice to the people in behalf of the same cause; at the prospect of being stoned he escapes to Lystra, and there, in the midst of his proclamations, is actually stoned and drawn out of the city for dead. He revives, and after other efforts returns to Jerusalem and relates the story of his preaching, his sufferings and his deliverances. Now we cross with him the Aegean Sea, on the same holy errand as before. He first stops at Philippi and announces his great message of mercy from Heaven. Here, after being whipped cruelly, cast into prison, thrust into the inner dungeon, made fast in the stocks, he was delivered from his enemies and passed on to Amphipolis, Apollonia and Thessalonica, everywhere preaching the word. At the last city, the master of the house where he lodged, was dragged before the magistrate for admitting him within his doors. From the next place he is compelled to make his escape by a private journey, but not until he has fulfilled his mission to the people. Now he is in Athens, next at Corinth, in both places unfolding and discussing in his own warm, argumentative, impetuous eloquence, the Gospel of Christ. An insurrection in the latter drives him to Ephesus; from thence he passes to Jerusalem. Will he not now rest in the bosom of the church, and venture no more abroad to endure the malice and assaults of the enemies of the Gospel? Oh no! this is not the spirit of the Apostle to the Gentiles. Too ardent in his great mission to allow ease or rest, quickly we find him back again to Antioch; from thence he pushes through all the northern provinces of Asia Minor; stops two years at Ephesus, where he nearly loses his life in a great clamor and tumult raised against him. Next he visits Greece, travels over all Macedonia, then is at Corinth, then back to Macedonia, then through Asia visiting the cities on the Mediterranean; then again at Jerusalem. Here he is arrested and confined; after two years he proceeds bound to Rome. The undaunted Apostle preaches the kingdom of God in the imperial city two years, teaching with all confidence those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.

Such was Paul under the impulses of the grand passion of reli-

gion. No stonings, no exposures to wild beasts, no laboring with his own hands for support, no hunger or thirst, no imprisonment, no shipwrecks, no over-awing edicts of governors, no perils of robbers, no intrigues of false brethren, no maledictions of open foes, no solicitations of friends, produced the least discouragement or remission in his immense activities. Had these obstacles and persecutions been a hundred fold greater, if not positively insuperable and intolerable, he would have been the same man of ubiquity. The same cities and countries would have heard him thundering in the midst of all their corruptions and dissipations; courts and kings would have been startled with his unintimidated reasonings of righteousness, temperance and judgment. This too, be it remembered, was no peculiar enthusiasm which moved the Apostle of the Gentiles to such incredible exertions. True, it is a spirit which is mightiest in the mighty. In Paul's warm, vast heart it found a readier welcome and a richer nutrition than is generally afforded it; in his life it made grander demonstrations than is usual. But it is essentially the same powerful excitement and agency in every man whom it occupies at all. Suppose it actually to have effected a lodgment in every individual of a whole community, and to have set all stirring zealously forward after the manner of the great Apostle. The surface of society would present a scene of religious energies and accomplishments truly wonderful. Almost the industrious assiduities and ripe blessedness of Heaven would be there.

There is not a single emotion belonging to Christianity which is not in like manner productive of great and noble action. If in many instances religion in the hearts of men has not produced in the lives of men the fruits which ought to have been expected, it has not been owing to the lack of practical capability and tendency on the part of that religion itself, but to the feebleness of holy feeling in the soul, and also to wicked disobedience to what faint promptings did exist within.

It is to be also remembered that religion does not receive credit for all that she effects among men. Her accomplishments are not always so marked and striking as to be immediately and fully acknowledged. She has her noiseless labors, her invisible, permeating social influences, her unnoticed assiduities at the fireside, her created amenities in the retirement of humble life. Often by means of this busy interior working, there comes over the face of a community a delightful moral health, a refreshing benevolence and peace, while careless on-lookers are scarcely aware of the blessed power which has been quietly, unostentatiously producing the important change.

Let the soul of an individual or of a community be imbued as the spirit of God imbued, with a deep, living godliness, let both be true to themselves, and they will become but blessed personifications of religious energy. A scene full of works of faith and labors of love will ever rejoice around them.

Our conclusion is, that the Gospel, by arousing and appropriating to itself the most powerful and expansive passions of which man is capable, becomes the source of the highest and the widest outward accomplishments of which man is capable. Most clearly Christianity is not a thing for the monastic cell, not a thing for entombing in the interior heart, not for retirement within itself to live solely in its own fervors, joys, hopes. It is a family of outbursting emotions, to speak audibly in startling tones, to walk abroad among men, to act and energize among the elements of society, to effect a moral resurrection and life in the midst of reigning desolations.

The practical character of religion appears, also, from the nature of its doctrines. These are of decidedly active tendency.

In theological dogmas, more than anywhere else, we are to look, it has been supposed, for the mere theoretical of Christianity. Here, it has been understood, lie treasured sublime facts, deep philosophies, pure intellections solely for the mind's occupation and enjoyment, not for application to our earnest labors, physical or moral. Here cloistered fanatics have thought was food for the soul through a whole life of world-renunciation and world-abandonment. Religion has no such abstractions, no dogmatic and scholastic speculations separated from the serious duties of life. Were it admitted that possibly there may be doctrines in physics without practical bearings, Christianity claims to have no unfruitful principles; it insists everywhere that in respect to its revelations there can be no faith without works. Every one of its announcements has the form or the force of a precept or a motive, a direction or an impulsion to outward action.

A practical tendency will be admitted at once to belong to God's great moral laws with their impressive sanctions; to the developed methods of his providence; to the announced principles of right and wrong by which he governs and judges mankind; to the revealed conditions of mercy according to which he pardons, cleanses, justifies. These laws, dispensations, principles, conditions, recognize all human duty, address all human conscience, appeal to all human susceptibility of gratitude, involve all human interests. Both singly and unitedly they must, from their relations to us, very powerfully influence human action. If, therefore, among the revelations of Christianity there be

anything approximating to mere abstractions, mere matters of the mind's thought alone, apart from vigorous doing, it cannot be any of these promulgated laws, duties, sanctions, provisions of salvation, principles of providence, awards of government. It must rather be found connected with the Divine attributes. That an isolated perfection of Jehovah should stand in its infinite grandeur wholly unconnected with human activity, may seem perhaps a natural supposition. It is, however, undoubtedly a mistaken one. These attributes are in and of themselves great practical lessons in human duty; they are high and impressive motives to Christian diligence. Christianity represents them as everywhere present and everywhere most vigorously employed. We ourselves perceive that of the whole universe of matter and of mind nothing is still. Action is made to react, enterprise to beget enterprise, events to elaborate events, thought to generate thought, result to evolve result. And all this energy and movement and development and accomplishment, of which the heavens and the earth are full, the Scriptures counsel us to regard but the mighty and constant working of God's wisdom and goodness and power. Here is an ever-speaking rebuke of all our lethargy and idleness, a vast excitement to all practicable enterprise and industry. Who can stand still while his great Creator and Benefactor is busy at work all around him with an infinite skill, benevolence and energy?

The Divine perfections opened by Christianity arouse to effort and labor in another manner, by presenting to men a high and perfect standard of duty and character. The moral nature of the Deity, as one grand assemblage of excellencies, as one great glory to which each attribute contributes a separate pencil of rays, is too pure, exalted and impressive not to produce on the part of man a deep sense of delinquency and depravity, not to awake most earnest struggles after likeness of character.

Another practical tendency still have the attributes of God, from their bearing toward us as under religious responsibility. When God's omniscience is presented, an infinite, universal intelligence, from which no darkness can exclude, no distance remove, no secrecy escape, which is equally familiar with the hidden and the open, the minute and the vast, the heart and the life; when such a searching knowledge is presented by Christianity as ever looking down into the depths of our hearts and abroad over every portion of our earthly conduct, we are startled into solicitude and carefulness; we are awaked and pushed to great vigilance and exertion. When also by the same Christianity the high purity and justice of the Deity are

described as turning from our corrupted natures and evil lives with deep and utter loathing, and then issuing upon them both a dreadful, unmingled, eternal reprobation, we are still more intensely and permanently roused to cleanse thoroughly our hearts before God, to run unceasingly in the way of all his commandments.

In opening in upon the souls and the conduct of men, in this way, the all-seeing eye and the holy, just heart of the Eternal One, with attendant approvals and condemnations according to character, the Gospel has provided as powerful an inducement to laborious, untiring, serious industry, as it is possible for us to conceive. The same is true of all the "invisible things" of God. The doctrines of the Divine attributes, no less than theological tenets generally, are arguments for human action, manifest, strong, effective.

The plain, unmetaphysical manner employed by the Scriptures in announcing the doctrines of religion, give them this same practical aspect and tendency. Regeneration, for example, is not presented as a theological subtlety, involving the question of the subject's activity and passivity; of the exact division of labor between the Spirit and the sinner himself; of the change consisting in a new-implanted principle, or a new current of exercises; these matters are not discussed nor so much as alluded to. As a momentous practical concern it is everywhere treated. Has the moral resurrection taken place? Has the costume of darkness been laid aside, and the garments of light been put on? Has the convert stopped sinning? Is he abounding in the work of the Lord? Do grapes grow on the vine, sweet waters flow from the fountain? These are the great questions which the Scriptures present to be settled. Entirely practical are they all.

So of the resurrection. Religion presents this doctrine with no abstruse speculations on the subject of identity. It neither asks nor declares anything in respect to the rising with the same particles that were buried; concerning the rejunction of limbs and portions left on different continents; the reclaiming of human dust that had entered into different individuals successively. The presentation is fitted to have an impressive bearing upon our behavior. They that have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life; they that have done evil shall come forth to the resurrection of damnation. With solemn emphasis it is practically inquired, what manner of persons therefore ought ye to be in all holy conversation. The doctrine is announced to regulate life; to induce arrangements for death and for a glorious appearing with him who is our Resurrection and our Life.

The doctrine of the atonement has the same practical mode of inculcation. Did the Saviour literally suffer the whole penalty of the law, so as to be in a strict and full sense the sinner's substitute? Can man on that ground put in any claim to heaven? If just penalty were not all endured, how could the remainder be remitted? Is the Saviour's own personal righteousness literally imputed to believers? Did the Divine nature suffer? If that is impossible, how could the sufferings of mere humanity be a satisfaction to Divine justice? Why should the innocent suffer for the guilty? Who has found a single one of these questions either propounded or satisfied in the sacred volume? In all simplicity it is announced as a great practical truth: "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me; Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world; He that hath the Son hath life; He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; The love of Christ constraineth us." The simple doctrine, Christ crucified, unconnected with mystery or philosophy, is presented not only as a solid basis of all Christian reliance and hope, but as able to work a hearty abandonment of all wickedness; to lead men in the way of holiness; to act the part of a grand, constraining, moral power for the world.

In like manner is presented the general judgment, practically. No metaphysical curiosity is gratified in respect to time, place, practicability and uses of the final hearing before God. No question is answered as to the reason of bringing the guilty out before the universe, instead of permitting them to go silently and unnoticed to their fearful destiny; nor as to the reason that when once assigned to their last doom, they should be afterwards summoned before the Almighty for trial. Nothing of all this is found. But the great, solemn audit is referred to for the sake of an immediate influence upon the conduct and character of men. The scenes attendant, the revelation of all character, the separation of the righteous from the wicked, the final retribution, dreadful or glorious, the beginning of the eternal states of all the dead — these are announced to awake men to deep solicitude and watchfulness over the deeds done here in the body, so decisive of all questions and destinies before God; to present a vast incentive to every individual to make his ten pounds or five pounds gain other ten or other five; to induce men to perform assiduously, religiously the six great charities to the Saviour, when a hungered, athirst, a stranger, naked, sick, in prison; to arrest and awe and prostrate the world in actual, prevailing prayer before the throne, for mercy, sanctification and hope. The simple Scripture, "For we

must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ," exerts now and is adapted ever to exert a wide and amazing practical power over mankind.

The profoundest student and believer in Christian doctrine is likely to be the most assiduous observer of Christian precepts, the most valuable example of Christian practice. A grand working world this would be, were the doctrines of religion admitted to their full and rightful place in its communities. It is to be feared that they have not their proper prominence and power in the public preaching of the country. These neglected, practice dies, just as, when food is withdrawn, muscular action ceases.

II. I pass from the *fact* of the practical tendencies of religion, to a consideration of the *value* and *importance* of such tendencies.

The external services of Christianity render it capable of becoming an effective counteraction of all irreligion.

The powers of evil are decidedly practical. All the passions of vice produce the activities of vice; all the interior devisings of mischief appear in the outward accomplishings of mischief. Though in its grosser forms wickedness loves the night time and skulks in lanes and concealments, yet even from these places it steams up infections into the whole structure and movements of society. It finds its way in some of its forms into all the business and all the pleasures of life. It is upon all the currents of travel, and in all the bazars of traffic. It seems never to sleep, and never to suffer the least paralysis or remission. It is ever and everywhere on the alert. It is a busy, malicious meddler in the house and by the way, in the city and country, in the workshop and on the farm, in the counting-room of the merchant and in the office of the manufacturer. It does something to move the muscles and limbs of all communities. It speaks all languages. It knows the technicalities of all arts and professions. It sets up distilleries and grogeries and gambling houses. It patronizes theatres and circuses and duels and street fighting. It fills every community full with wrong and outrage.

Now religion was never expected to oppose and remove this active, universal mischief-doer, by nestling itself down cosily and quietly in a sweet, gentle corner of the human heart. It was not expected to do this by merely insinuating itself into the intellects of mankind as a passive faith in the great doctrines of Christianity. It was not expected to do this wholly by even the devotions and Divine communion permitted to the followers of Christ in the presence-chamber of God. These doctrines and these devotions, it is most true, are hea-

venly, are entirely essential; they are the great frame and limbs and vital circulation and invigorating breathing of religion. But in order to compete with such a spirit and power of wickedness as the world is filled with, besides a strong structure and an interior vitality, religion must be an outwardly stirring, pushing, aggressive agency, and that beyond any other which is abroad in society. In the grand rush of the powers of evil, that must rush still more powerfully. Christianity must have more eyes out upon the scene of life, must employ more spades, pickaxes and drills to push moral thoroughfares and aid the travels and freights of philanthropy, than Satan can muster to assist the dissemination of iniquity and woe. This that it needs to do the practical character of religion, adapts and empowers it to accomplish perfectly. All that sin can do, religion can undo; all its infections it can neutralize; all its wastes and deaths restore.

There are special evils attendant upon the rapid advancement of society in general wealth and improvement. There come in with this progress toward refinement, lavish expenditure, luxury, effeminate gratifications, dwarfed mind, neglect of life's serious duties, fatal religious opinions, depreciated integrity, general corruption. As an antidote to all these deteriorations, religion carries its practical agency into the busiest scenes of enterprise and advancement; with all its industrial energies, sound practical teachings and transforming power, keeps up flush with the front rank of civilization. Expended, however, in desires, joys, hopes, blessed meditations, religion would have but little influence on the projecting, accomplishing generation of the present time.

The world all abroad on the currents and waves will pay its deference to religion, if it sees that also as one of life's craft dashing its way with other keels, and trying the same tides and winds. The world will even acknowledge superiority and accept a pilot from the sacred bark, if she is out in the ocean-roads, and at the mouths of the great havens and marts of commerce. But they will not run after her into coverts and eddies, or under the lee shores of promontories and islands. It is just the practical genius of Christianity, with her full sails set, to be visibly abroad where pass all the world's inbound and outbound cargoes; it is just its practical genius to be out amid all the adventures, expeditions and movements of men, to convey, to pilot, to moor. Let no one indulge fears for human society, except from the exclusion of true religion. Let this, in the use of its full energies, assist and augment all our thrift, consecrate all our enterprise, appropriate all our accumulations, dictate all our legislation;

breathe in all the eloquence of our orators, speak its authoritative lessons in all our pulpits, spread its purifying power everywhere, and all is safe, all is illustriously progressive.

The practicalness of Christianity makes it an important nourisher of piety in the heart.

It is an important principle in our moral constitution, that outward expressions of emotion become themselves stimulants of emotion. The reaction is as invariable and certain as the action. Excellent works minister nutrition and vigor to the interior powers of godliness, just as a thrifty foliage furnishes elaborated juices for the roots below. Emotions which are fainting and sinking, it is always found, can be immediately revived by carrying them into action; by giving them outward manifestations; by permitting them to breathe out audibly and visibly. Thus the obediences of Christianity work the spirit of Christianity; the visible doings of righteousness, the interior vitalities of righteousness. Not only does the practice of religion enrich the soul of religion, but in the absence of such practice, godliness shrinks and decays. The sensibility of the heart becomes effete when denied outward and visible activities, just as fires are suffocated when driven in upon themselves and pent up closely and fast.

The allegation is, therefore, that, both by positive enrichment and by preventing deterioration, godly doing creates godly feeling, so that he who is making a purity and a light around himself, is erecting a holiness and an illumination within himself. It is not enough at a safe distance inactively to survey human want and woe. Man must descend from his post of observation, and actually pass into every habitation of ignorance and sin, which the eye has surveyed. If one do this; if as an angel of mercy and of light he give himself to the great work of purifying and enlightening the whole population; if he carry instruction to all who will receive it; if he approach every corrupted one with holy and urgent counsels; if he pull the brutalized and lost out of the fire by his own exertions; if he prosecute these incessant labors in rescuing men from sin and woe and ignorance, in the face of dangers and obloquy and ingratitude and misrepresentation, his piety will have grown into a great, rich, inexhaustible fountain, into a grand reservoir of living waters, always to overthrow and refresh.

Besides a happy influence directly in warming and augmenting the piety of the heart, outward exertions assist to keep that piety well balanced and symmetrical. The religious character left in monastic seclusion is likely to have its qualities unequally excited and ad-

vanced. Devoutness before God may be cultivated to the exclusion of benignity toward men; spiritual fervor may become more prominent than patience and self-control; the spirit of reverence may grow to be stronger than the spirit of forgiveness; the spirit of exhortation and rebuke, than the spirit of self-sacrifice; a vague admiration of holiness, than intelligent desire for personal righteousness. Piety confined in the heart is likely to select some object, and grow enthusiastic and extravagant and exclusive in its behalf, until a partial monomania succeeds. A thorough-going system of activity in the cause of God and man, is the best thing to effect an equilibrium. It arouses and cultivates the *whole* interior man. All that monasticism had permitted to sleep, is likely to be carried into the grand current of zeal and self-improvement. Personal piety in this way receives back to her noble form her withered limbs, her blind eye, her deaf ear, her dumb tongue all made whole; her clustered graces live and shine together like a full orb without spot or eclipse.

There is one sad deterioration to which religion shut up in the soul is specially liable, an over-estimate of itself, self-complacency, spiritual pride. This is, as all know, an obstacle to improvement nearly insuperable. Swollen up with a belief of one's superior godliness, higher attainments are not struggled for, scarcely prayed for. Self-conceits and self-gratulations on account of great supposed godliness, are best cured by hard service out in the families of the world, much as the swell and bluster of imagined courage are in the actual strife of life for life. The matter is subjected to the test of experiment. In order to humble religious pride, great self-sacrifices and self-fatigues and self-dangers should be entered upon. The self-exalted one, to know his metal, must try the battle-axe, and the winter campaign, and the night-watch, and the short allowance, and the forced march. It is easy to imagine one's self in a state of communion with God, when by seclusion worldly attractions are totally excluded; gentle, and easy to be entreated, when nothing is met to ruffle the spirit or thwart the purposes; full of benevolence, when no being of want is present to solicit our charity; a prodigy of philosophic contentment, when everything is wafting us prosperously whither we most desire to be borne; a wondrous example of self-possession and of fortitude, when there is no danger and no required endurance. To learn humility, to dispossess the spirit of its imagined strength and worth, let men go out into the world, where they will be tempted and sifted and vilified and persecuted and defrauded and afflicted and cast down and forsaken. That is the furnace to discover to the in-

dividual himself what in his character is dross, and what is gold. In order then to a deep, symmetrical, humble, unexceptionable piety in the heart of the church, visible labors, great labors in the cause of truth and righteousness must be valued, insisted on, augmented, persevered in.

Mark further how the practical character of religion assists the cultivation of the stern public virtues of the Christian. In the cloister many negative qualities may be well enough acquired. From envy, revenge, avarice, discontent and malice, the heart may be kept comparatively clean, when deeply sequestered where there are few excitements, all away from the busy scenes of the world. But the sturdy, positive virtues grow best in the conflicts and struggles of life. Love of right becomes strong and lofty, when cherished and obeyed under those powerful temptations and rivalries found on the open theatre of human action. Submission to Providence grows into a sublime and Christian philosophy under the painful ills and reverses of the real world. Consecration of one's self to the work of human progress and salvation, is nourished into a holy magnanimity in the active labors of beneficence. All the moral attributes of man are wrought into the soul as inseparable elements and vigorous habits, under external difficulty and obstacle and discouragement and labor and blandishment. Shut up a man in still seclusion, to deep meditation, to soul-exercises and effervescences, if you would make him a pale, moral pigmy. If you would construct and mould him into a glorious being of giant heart, bring him out to the sun; let the winds sweep over him; let the storms rock him; let the tides dash him; let the currents take him and drift him and peril him. Great Christians were never wholly or chiefly made in retirement, any more than great captains in genteel saloons, or great navigators on board dismantled receiving-ships, moored to the wharves of elegant cities. The stirring scenes where religion calls men into action incessant and arduous, are certainly the places to educate true moral heroes. Out of great tribulation, where all was struggle and labor, came they who are glorious in heaven.

Such is the influence of the practical character of religion in promoting both interior godliness and the great public virtues. It is not asserted here that this method of active Christian labor is the only one of fostering noble, pious qualities. It is not intimated that much time alone with God is not absolutely essential to growth in grace. Close, warm, frequent communion with Heaven is entirely indispensable. An additional manner of cultivating the heart is all that is here suggested.

When other efforts have nearly failed, and one of Christ's disciples has been left frigid and sterile, new labors of love and augmented works of faith have often sent great life and love down into his spirit. Every blow of his arm in the service of God has started a new gush of the spiritual current into and out of his heart, and sent a living and waking thrill through his whole moral being. Piety, on the other hand, confined in the soul, is warmed only to be evaporated by its own ebullitions; is kept under a bushel only to be suffocated; is withdrawn from circulation only to become a rust-eaten coin; is stopped in a pool only to grow stagnant or freeze.

These observations in reference to the existence and valuable influence of the practical element in Christianity, have many substantiations in the Scriptures. On this subject the testimony of the Bible is clear and emphatic. Not every one, taught our Saviour, not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Said Christ, in another place, I must work the works of him that sent me. It was a world of works when he fulfilled his mission; the mission itself was a mission of works. By works is faith made perfect; faith without works is dead, writes an apostle. Do works meet for repentance, is a Divine injunction. Blessed, it is alleged in the Revelation, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; they rest from their labors and their works do follow them. My Father worketh hitherto and I work. A sublime truth; an illustrious example! It is another scriptural proof and recognition of the practical nature of Christianity, that the heaven for which it proposes to prepare us, is presented as a scene of immense, unceasing, vigorous, universal engagement; that every resident spirit is described as only a concentrated, energizing, everlasting activity, whom every evolving age of eternity will call to more crowded, more august occupation.

The practical element of Christianity renders it specially suited to the present times of unusual action and progress. Amid the universal enthusiasm now prevalent, religion is decidedly the greatest excitement; amid the vast stir and advancement, it is the most stirring and progressive agency; among all agitations, the greatest agitator; among all things revolutionary, the boldest innovator.

It would be proper, in showing how fitted Christianity is to our stirring era, to refer to the very special and valuable development of purity and of power which it is itself likely to receive in the excited and crowded scene where it is now called to act. But our immediate concern is with the fact that into this great Babel the Gospel

is competent to introduce all needed excitement, aggressiveness, direction, order and righteousness. Be it so that human passion is pushing into unheard-of schemes, avarice making bolder attempts for gain than ever before, ambition playing more desperate games for place and power, love of pleasure levying wider and more imperious contributions for sensual gratification. Be it so that the excitements and collisions and turmoils and hurrying rush of business exceed all that society has ever witnessed. Immense as these activities are, religion is perfectly adapted to them all, can control them all, can move with them all, can turn them all into the channel of its own still vaster and holier operations. Certainly a practical and active Christianity has special adaptations to the present age.

The practical element of Christianity offers no small encouragement to the ministers of the Gospel. They preach an active and efficient religion. Their messages and appeals faithfully delivered will spread around them manifest and marvellous effects. They are permitted to see the work of their own hands. Stop, stop, some one cries, is not the sovereignty of Divine grace overlooked and forgotten in this remark? Doth not the Scripture say, that Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase? This is not forgotten. The sovereignty of Divine grace is unconditionally subscribed to. But the freeness and the fulness with which the same grace is made to attend upon the faithful ministrations of the Divine word, are ever to be freshly remembered, as a high encouragement for Paul to plant and Apollos to water. The history of the church for eighteen hundred and fifty years is appealed to for proof that visible and real religious reformations, actual establishments and extensions of the church, have occurred under a kind Providence, to a great extent in proportion to the able and godly preaching of the Gospel. In connection with such preaching, have the sovereign riches of Divine grace been signally revealed and exerted. Let us stand then on the grand truth, corroborated by a thousand Scriptures and by innumerable providences, that religion faithfully preached is a most efficient practical transformer all around the preacher himself. Ministers, it is true, frequently witness seasons when they seem to labor in vain and spend their strength for nought; when they are constrained to cry: "Who hath believed our report, to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" But as in nature so in morals, there are often processes and advancements which are silent and unobserved. We go out in the spring-time, when the world is waking into life, and we cannot see the actual growing of a single germ,

aspire or plant. Let only a few days pass, and nature will be found to have put on, as if by rapid creation, a gorgeous, luxuriant vegetation. So under the able and godly preaching of the word, without apparent, incipient movements or manifested causes, all invisibly and noiselessly, will a rich moral scene frequently be discovered to have sprung up and spread itself abroad to greet and gladden Christ's desponding servants. All godly ministers shall reap if they faint not. Rejoicing shall they come bearing sheaves, golden, ripe, abundant.

In respect to private Christians, it is a just expectation that they bear much fruit. The religion they profess being remarkable for its outward, striking, important effects, certainly labors, sacrifices, reformations, moral progress should be ever understood to be inseparable from their lives. Imbued with the energetic, enterprising spirit of Christianity, where they find in the great moral field no harvest, they will push the plough, scatter the seed, cultivate, protect and make one; when they find one already ripe, they will put in the sickle with a strong arm and bind up the sheaves. Great things are to be done; they will go forth and do them. Life weareth away; what their hand findeth to do, they will do quickly and with their might.

---

## ARTICLE VII.

### REMARKS ON THE IDEA OF RELIGION;

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO PSYCHOLOGICAL QUESTIONS, BY D. KARL LECHLER, CHAPLAIN OF THE INSANE ASYLUM AT WINNENTHAL.

By Rev. William A. Stearns, Cambridge, Mass.

[THIS Article is from the last number of the *Studien und Kritiken* for 1851. In giving it an English dress, considerable condensation has been attempted and a few passages altogether omitted, as unimportant to the subject. By the preparation of this treatise for the press, an endorsement of all its thoughts and shadings of thought is not intended; it is presented to the readers of the *Bibliotheca* simply as an able discussion of a most important question, and as showing the present tendencies of the German mind in its sounder theological