

The Practice of Piety

The Practice of Piety

Directing a Christian to Walk,
That He May Please God

Lewis Bayly

Introduced by Joel R. Beeke

Biographical preface by Grace Webster



Soli Deo Gloria Publications
. . . for instruction in righteousness . . .

Soli Deo Gloria Publications

An imprint of Reformation Heritage Books

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Grand Rapids, MI 49525

616-977-0889

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www.heritagebooks.org

Paperback reprint 2019

ISBN 978-1-60178-668-5

This edition of *The Practice of Piety* was taken from the Hamilton, Adams, and Co. edition published in London in 1842.

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INTRODUCTION

It is quite astonishing that Lewis Bayly's classic on piety, *The Practice of Piety: Directing a Christian How to Walk that He May Please God*, has not been reprinted this century until now. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this work was the most universally read English book of devotion next to *Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan himself ascribes the commencement of his spiritual life in some measure to the perusal of this practical handbook on piety. One Puritan pastor complained that his flock regarded it as authoritative as the Bible!

First published in the early 1600s (the exact date is unknown, but was probably 1611), *The Practice of Piety* was printed in its second edition in 1612 in an amplified form. By 1643 it had reached its thirty-fourth English edition; by 1714, its fifty-first English edition; by 1792, its seventy-first English edition! In 1842 Grace Webster produced an edition with biographical notes. Throughout these centuries, *The Practice of Piety* appeared in most European languages, including Dutch (1620), French (1625), German (1629), and Polish (1647). New England Puritans even translated it into the Indian language used in Massachusetts (1665).

Born at Caermarthen and educated at Oxford, where he earned a B.D. in 1611 and his doctorate in divinity in 1613, Lewis Bayly was ordained into the ministry at Evesham, in Worchestershire, England in 1611. According to Anthony à Wood, the classic for which he became renowned was based upon a series of sermons he preached on piety shortly after the commencement of his ministry. This work, together with his fame as a

INTRODUCTION

preacher, brought him to London in 1612 where he became rector of St. Matthew's, chaplain to Henry (prince of Wales), and treasurer of St. Paul's. He was made prebendary of Lichfield in 1613, archdeacon of St. Alban's and chaplain to the king in 1616. On December 8, 1616 he was consecrated bishop of Bangor, a position he held until his death in October of 1631. He was survived by his wife and four sons.

Bayly's puritan convictions brought him into frequent conflict both at court and in his remote diocese of North Wales. In 1621 he was imprisoned for some months for his aversion to the infamous *Book of Sports*, and for other minor charges. Fresh charges, endorsed by William Laud, were brought against him in 1626, but resulted in nothing more than continued harrassment. In 1630 he was accused of ordaining clergy who had not fully accepted the doctrine and discipline of the church, but ably defended himself.

Nor did Bayly escape persecution from within the Puritan party itself. As Thomas Tout has noted, "So great was its (that is, *Practice of Piety*) fame for piety on puritan lines that some zealots grudged the glory of so good a work to a bishop of the English church, and scandalous stories, easily refuted, sought to deprive Bayly of the credit of its authorship" (*Dictionary of National Biography* 1:1369).

Bayly's *Practice of Piety* is replete with practical, Puritan guidelines on the pursuit of holy living. The author commences his work with "a plain description of God [in] his essence, person, and attributes." He treats the doctrine of God as a basis for piety and divine grace as a ground for every grace which we sinners need. The

INTRODUCTION

remainder of the volume deals with the reasons for, and the conditions and objectives of piety.

Bayly arranges his work around the two destinies of mankind. Either we are traveling the broad way to destruction or by divine grace are on the narrow way leading to life eternal. He graphically describes our natural miserable state. The unrepentant sinner has misery as his constant companion—misery in infancy, in youth, and especially in adulthood and old age. From the tragic scene of hell as a bottomless lake reserved for those who die unregenerate, Bayly turns to the unspeakable glories of heaven. He confesses that the contrast so overwhelms him that he can no longer keep pen in hand. Stressing the necessity of the new birth and holy living, he concludes: “Get forthwith the oil of piety in the lamp of thy conversation, that thou mayest be in continual readiness to meet the bridegroom.”

The remainder of Bayly’s treatise is devoted to how readiness for Christ’s second advent may be obtained and retained. He first approaches this readiness negatively, showing how to overcome seven obstacles: wrong teaching, the poor example of prominent persons, God’s patience in delaying a sinner’s punishment, presuming upon God’s mercy, ungodly company, the fear of piety (as if it made its possessors depressed), and the illusion of a long life. Positively, Bayly then stresses how piety is to be cultivated in the remaining sections of his work (five through forty-four). He provides wise advice on the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible-reading, meditation, psalm-singing, Sabbath-keeping, stewardship, the commemoration of the Lord’s Supper, and walking daily with God. He directs how to guide our thoughts, words,

INTRODUCTION

and actions in times of health and in times of sickness and affliction. He provides directives to protect us from despair and from the fear of death. In short, this is a book about how to live well and how to die well.

Notwithstanding Bayly's occasional tendency to foster a type of highly introspective meditation which may well lead to the melancholy he sought to avoid, we maintain that this is a most helpful book which clearly sets out the narrow way which is entered upon through conversion and leads to eternal life. We would say of Bayly what Calvin said of Luther, "Let us be imitators of his excellencies rather than apers of his excesses." Certainly one of Bayly's great excellencies, which we would do well to imitate, is his marshalling of approximately two thousand texts to support scripturally the practice of piety he commends to us.

Like Calvin, Bayly wrote his greatest work to promote piety. Neither Calvin nor Bayly were embarrassed by the concept, practice, and duty of godly piety. Though they abhorred false piety which promotes self-deceit and legalism, both the Reformers (as exemplified by Calvin) and the Puritans (as exemplified by Bayly) were fully persuaded that "piety" was to be used primarily in a positive sense. They would have been aghast at the embarrassment shown by many contemporary Protestant evangelicals who have succumbed to society's pejorative usage of piety. Too often we have allowed our secular society to define terms of sacred import.

We heartily welcome the first twentieth-century printing of this classic and pray that it will be used mightily by God to foster and restore a commitment to scriptural piety. Let us never be embarrassed by genuine

INTRODUCTION

piety—God knows we need more of it in our personal lives, our families, and our churches! Rather, let us be embarrassed and ashamed of our remaining impiety in our thinking, conversation, and actions.

Accompanied by the Spirit's blessing, this book has potential for much good. If taken seriously, *The Practice of Piety* would serve as a death-knell to all brands of loose Antinomianism and "easy-believism" forms of Arminianism; it would drive us to Christ for holiness, confessing with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 7:24-8:1).

Read *The Practice of Piety* slowly, meditatively, prayerfully, and, I would recommend, annually. Ask yourself repeatedly, "Am I putting this wise spiritual director's scriptural advice into practice? Am I pursuing holiness—that holiness without which no man shall please God or be received into the eternal glories of a holy heaven?"

Our hearty thanks to the publisher for returning this classic into print. May it be so widely read that the twenty-first century, D.V., will need the number of printings called for in former centuries!

Joel R. Beeke
Grand Rapids, MI

BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE.

“ The Church! Am I asked again, What is the Church? The ploughman at his daily toil—the workman who plies the shuttle—the merchant in his counting-house—the scholar in his study—the lawyer in the courts of justice—the senator in the hall of legislature—the monarch on his throne—these, as well as the clergymen in the works of the material building which is consecrated to the honour of God—these constitute the Church. The Church is ‘the whole congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered.’ The Church is so constituted under its Divine Head, that not one of its members can suffer but the whole body feels—nay, the great Head himself feels in the remotest and meanest member of his body: not the meanest member of the body can make an exertion in faith and love, but the blessed effects of it are felt, to the benefit of the whole, ‘which groweth by that which every joint supplieth, to the increase of itself in love.’”—BISHOP BLOMFIELD.

ONE who hopes to effect any good by his writings, must be so pure in his life, that what he proposes for instruction or imitation must be a transcript of his own heart. But general improvement is so little to be anticipated, that almost any attempt which may be made by an individual in his zeal to do good, seems to be lost labour. Those whose character has attained to the greatest perfectness, are at all times the persons most willing and anxious to avail themselves of any hint or suggestion which might tend to improve them in virtue and knowledge, so that what is intended for universal benefit serves but to instruct a very few, and those few the individuals who require it least. Serious works, meant to reform the careless, are read only by those who already are serious, and disposed to assent to what such works set forth. In that case their object,

humanly speaking, is in a great measure defeated. It seems hopeless to attempt to infuse a taste for serious reading into the minds of the thoughtless multitude. Write down to the capacity of the weak and slenderly informed, or write up to the taste of the intellectual portion of them; give it cheap, or give it for nothing, it is all the same—a man will not thus be forced or induced to read what you put in print for his especial benefit.

The most powerful means, therefore, of promoting what is good, is by example, and this means is what is in every individual's power. One man only in a thousand, perhaps, can write a book to instruct his neighbours, and his neighbours in their perversity will not read it to be instructed. But every man may be a pattern of living excellence to those around him, and it is impossible but that, in his peculiar sphere, it will have its own weight and efficacy; for no man is insignificant who tries to do his duty—and he that successfully performs his duty, holds, by that very circumstance, a station, and possesses an influence in society, superior to that which can be acquired by any other distinction whatever. But it is only those who propose to themselves the very highest standard, that attain to this distinction. There are many different estimates of what a Christian's duty is, and society is so constituted, that very false notions are formed of that in which true excellence and greatness consists; besides, many men who are theoretically right are practically wrong—all which detracts from the weight of Christian influence upon human society. But however much human opinion may vary, and however inconsistent human practice may be, there is but one right rule; and it is only he who has this rule well defined in his

own mind, who can exhibit that preëminence in the Christian life which is the noblest distinction to which man can attain. It is deeply to be regretted that they who seek for this preëminence are a very small number compared with the mass of the professedly religious world. But small though the number be, the good which might be effected through their means is incalculable, if they were bound as in solemn compact to discountenance all those vices and habits which the usages of society have established into reputable virtues — thus becoming as it were a band of conspirators against the prince of this world and his kingdom — transfusing and extending their principles and influence, till they draw men off from their allegiance to that old tyrant by whom they have been so long willingly enslaved.

It has been said of genius, that it creates an intellectual nobility, and that literary honours superadd a nobility to nobility. Such, in a supereminent degree, may be said of holiness. Holiness constitutes a royal family—yea, a nation of kings, whose honours shall never fade, and whose reign shall have no termination.

“Happy is the man who in this life is least known of the world, so that he doth truly know God and himself.” It is to be hoped that this sentiment, taken from the “*Practice of Piety*,” was applicable to its learned author, about whom almost nothing is extant to furnish materials for the pen of the biographer.

LEWIS BAYLY was born in the ancient borough of Caermarthen, in Wales, about the middle, or towards the end of the 16th century; but of the precise date of his birth, or of his parentage, no record remains; neither is it known in what house he received his edu-

cation, nor what degree he took in arts ; but it is supposed that he must have been educated at Exeter College, Oxford, for it is recorded that as a member of that College he was admitted to the reading of the sentences in the year 1611. About that time he was minister of Evesham, in Worcestershire, and chaplain to Prince Henry, and afterwards minister of St. Matthew's Church, Friday Street, London. He took his degrees in divinity in 1613-14, and being much famed for his great eminence in preaching, he was appointed, on the decease of the amiable and pious Prince of Wales, to be one of the chaplains of his father, King James I.

The King soon afterwards nominated him to the Bishopric of Bangor, in the room of Dr. H. Rowlands. It is thus recorded: " 1610. Ludov. Bayly, A.M. Admissus ad Thesaurariam S. Pauli per resign. Egidii Fletcher, LL.D. Reg. London. 1616, 11 Jun. Franc. James, SS. T. P. ad eccl. Sancti Matth. Fryday Strete per promotionem Ludovici Bayly, SS. T. P. ad episcopatum Bangor."

He was consecrated at the same time with Dr. Lake, Bishop of Bath and Wells, at Lambeth, on Sunday, 18th December 1616, by George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury, assisted by Bishop Andrews of Ely, Dr. Neale, Bishop of Lincoln, Dr. Overall, Bishop of Litchfield, and Dr. Buckeridge, Bishop of Rochester.

It appears that Bishop Bayly on more than one occasion came under the royal displeasure chiefly about matters connected with the marriages of the royal family. It is recorded of him, that on Monday, March 9, 1619, Mr. Secretary Nanton, by the King's orders, called Bishop Bayly into the council chamber, and there gave him a severe reprimand, in the presence of

the two clerks of council in ordinary, because, in his prayer before sermon the previous Sunday in Lincoln's Inn, he had prayed for the King's son-in-law and his daughter the Lady Elizabeth, under the titles of King and Queen of Bohemia, before His Majesty had owned the title. The Secretary aggravated the matter much, and in conclusion told him His Majesty was deservedly offended with him, and so left him under high displeasure.

If Bishop Bayly's satisfaction at the union of the Princess Elizabeth with Frederick the Elector Palatine, the head of the Protestant league in Germany, made him, with a promptitude which gave offence to the chary monarch, recognise the new title of that princess when her consort was chosen to the crown of Bohemia, it is not to be wondered at, that he gave equal offence by evincing his disapprobation of the alliances contemplated for the Prince Charles. Happy in the one instance at any accession of dominion to the Prince Palatine, by which the interests of the great protestant cause which he headed might be advanced, he could not but feel, in respect of the other case, intense anxiety in a matter on which the future peace and prosperity of the Church in his native land so much depended. Actuated by that integrity of character which the prospects of secular advancement could not bend, and disdaining the compliances of the courtier where the interests of religion were at stake, he could not enter into the peculiar views of his royal patron with regard to the matches he had an eye to for Prince Charles, for whose spiritual welfare he was deeply concerned. The bright example of Prince Henry, who was immoveably attached to the principles of the Reformation, was fresh in every one's remem-

brance—"he who was compounded of all loveliness, the glory of the nation, the ornament of mankind, a glorious saint." Thus Mr. Joseph Hall * justly describes him who was illustrious for every Christian virtue; and that Charles might walk in the footsteps of his deceased brother, that pattern of princes, whom would to God all princes would imitate, was the earnest desire of Bishop Bayly's heart. To him he inscribed "THE PRACTICE OF PIETY," and the whole tenor of the Dedication manifests his faithfulness and his anxious solicitude for the establishment of the Gospel in the hearts both of the Prince and people.

That any alliance below that of a great king was unworthy of a Prince of Wales, was the vain and characteristic notion of King James, which opinion made him resolve that no princess but a daughter of France or Spain should be united to his son. Not to coincide with this opinion, or to suggest any other alliance, was sure to incur the royal displeasure. Bishop Bayly could not coincide. What had been endured for the establishment of the Reformation was still in the memory of many living witnesses, and not a matter of remote history, as it now is, and accounted by certain classes out of date and out of fashion to be referred to, as fostering party spirit. Scarce fifty years had elapsed since England had enrolled her glorious division of "the noble army of martyrs." Their fiery tribulation, it is true, was now over, and they had entered into their rest; but the memory of their sufferings for the name of JESUS had not passed away. The eyes of some that had witnessed the agonies of the meek sufferer Hooper, one of the earliest martyrs of that period, perhaps were not yet closed in death: The ears that

* Bishop of Norwich.

had heard his gentle voice raised aloft entreating for God's love more fire, that his protracted conflict should the sooner cease, were not yet deaf in the dreamless sleep of the grave; yea, the eyes that had wept to behold his mortal agony were ready to weep again at the remembrance of him standing immoveable in the refiner's fire, praying for strength, and smiting upon his breast till the arm dropped off from his body, and still smiting with his other hand, while his swollen tongue and lips, shrivelled with the flame, continued to move with unutterable prayer.*

We who read the record of such sufferings bless ourselves that we live in happier times. But, in an age when religious liberty was but ill understood by all parties, the spectators of such scenes must have been indelibly impressed that the same might be enacted over again. Bishop Bayly could not but participate in such feelings; and in what manner he had expressed his dread of the match proposed for the prince with the Infanta of Spain, or whether he had interfered or remonstrated, is not known. But on account of his opinion on that subject, and other matters which brought upon him the displeasure of the Court, he was thrown into the Fleet prison; but was soon afterwards acquitted, and again set at liberty. In Annual Register, Jacobus I. sub Ann. 1621, this passage occurs (15th July 1621) "*Episcopus Bangoriensis examinatur et in Le Fleet datur, sed paulo post liberatur.*"

If one might be allowed to hazard a conjecture with regard to the other grounds of offence to the King, might it not have been his refusing to read in his church the "Book of Sports" which had been pub-

* See Fox's Martyrs.

lished in the year 1617, and which the Clergy were enjoined to read to their congregations, for neglect of which some of them were prosecuted in the Star Chamber?

Such are the few particulars connected with this excellent man, and useful and faithful minister, which I have been able to collect, and these relate only to his public life. But those features of private character which render biographies interesting to curiosity, and those circumstances which enable one to trace the developement of the human mind, and the gradations whereby a man rises to eminence, are wholly wanting. But enough remains to warrant our identifying him with those men of all ages to whom mankind stands indebted, and who have justly earned an honoured name for their efforts to improve society.

“ *Quique sui memores alios fecere merendo :
Omnibus his nivea cinguntur tempora vitta.* ”

Thus the Latin poet expresses it ; but we have a more sure word of testimony regarding them who have thrown their mite into the treasury of Christian usefulness, “ great is their reward.” Yea those whose work has been to convert souls “ shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

LEWIS BAYLY departed this life on Wednesday 26th October 1631, and was buried in his church at Bangor. He left four sons, Nicholas, John, Theodore, and Thomas. Nicholas, a military man, a major in Ireland, died 1689. John, Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, and a publisher of sermons entitled “ *The Angel Guardian*,” Psalm xxxiv. 7 ; “ *Light Enlightening*,” John i. 9 ; and several other books much esteemed in their time, died in the year 1633 ; and Theodore and Thomas were likewise educated for the

Church. Doctor David Dolben, of St. John's College, Cambridge, who was Bishop Bayly's successor to the see of Bangor, found, at his first visitation in the year 1632, these two sons, Theodore and Thomas, occupying Welsh curacies. Thomas, who had been educated at Cambridge, was afterwards Rector of Brasted in Kent: but being represented as popishly affected, he was ejected from his living. He suffered much in the civil wars, and brought himself into great trouble by his political writings. He wrote many histories of his travels abroad, and railed freely against all the commonwealths of Europe. He most desperately attacked the newly-erected one of England, for which injudicious and unpleasing publication he was committed to Newgate; but escaping from prison, he fled to the Continent, where he long lived in obscurity, and died in an hospital there. This unfortunate man, firmly attached to the Royalists, we find mentioned as a Commission Officer with the Marquis of Worcester, in the year 1646, defending Ragland Castle against the Parliamentarians. In the enumeration of his sufferings in the civil wars which he relates, he tells he had been "deprived of £1000 a-year, and had lost blood and liberty,—he who was a peer's son, and his mother a knight's daughter." This is the only intimation which I find of the rank of the lady to whom Bishop Bayly was married.

These few facts are all that remain of his family history and domestic relations. Of his public capacity as a minister of Christ, it may again be repeated that he was a powerful preacher of the Gospel. **THE PRACTICE OF PIETY** remains a durable monument of the soundness of his faith, the purity of his doctrines, and the practically useful way and method whereby he

exercised that most valuable gift of preaching with which he was endowed. That book was the substance of several sermons which he preached while he was minister of Evesham. He threw these discourses into that form as a manual for the use of his people, and it soon became the most popular book in England. Year by year, edition after edition issued from the press; copies of it were multiplied throughout the whole of England, till it was in every man's house, and in the hands of every one that could read. Nor was its circulation confined to Britain alone; it was equally well esteemed abroad. In what year it was first published I am not able to state; but the eleventh edition of it was published at London in the year 1619 (Bodl. 8vo. B. 185 Th.;) and when Bishop Lloyd was nominated to the see of Bangor in the year 1673, it had been printed above fifty times in English, besides many times in the Welsh tongue, the French, Hungarian, Polish, and various other continental languages. It was held in such high estimation in France by the protestants there, that John Despaigne, a French writer and preacher in Somerset House Chapel, made a complaint of its popularity (1656), and said the common people looked upon its authority as almost equal to that of the Scriptures. Indeed it was so universally read by all classes, that the authorities in England took cognizance of the matter, and though the order of the day was for every man to have a Bible in his pocket, yet, with that unaccountable distortion of judgment which often attends human deliberations, and seeming to forget that its use and tendency is to draw men to study more and more the Divine will, and to seek a more intimate acquaintance with the Word of God, the Parliament brought it under consideration, in order to

prohibit the reading of it, and to suppress its future publication.

About that same period, a lying report concerning its authorship was raised by some of the prejudiced narrow-minded factious sectarians of those times, who were not willing that a book so highly esteemed should be written by a bishop. Some said it was written by Price, Archdeacon of Bangor, and that Bishop Bayly had taken the credit of it to himself; and an author, who takes all advantages of calumniating the clergy and speaking against the Established Church, said that it was written by a puritan minister. (Ludov. Molinæus in lib. suo cui lit. est, Patronus bonæ Fidei, &c., edit in oct. ann. 1672, in cap. continent specimen contra Durellum, p. 48.) “Nevertheless,” he observes, “whoever be the author, it has been very serviceable to persons of all ranks in England, and was equally purchased by both parties (viz. the Episcopal party and the Puritans), and those of the Episcopal party by reading it became better.”

An attempt was afterwards made to suppress the Bishop's name upon the title-page; and when a new edition was printed in the Welsh language, a person of the name of Gouge caused the title-page to be torn out of the whole impression, and a new title-page to be wrought off without the author's name. This disrespect to the Bishop's memory, particularly to this edition set forth in his native language, was found great fault with by the gentlemen in the country, and Bishop Lloyd, of Bangor, caused the author's name to be written on the title-pages of all the copies that were to be distributed in that neighbourhood, many of which the Bishop wrote with his own hand, and Dr. Humphreys wrote the rest by his order. Many of Bishop Bayly's contemporaries, clergymen who had been intimate with

him, and also several old men, his parishioners, who were alive when Dr. Humphreys was appointed to the see of Bangor, and who knew well that he was the author of it, spoke with great veneration of his memory, and with regard to his book assured Bishop Humphreys, from whose original papers, in the possession of Dr. White Kennet, Bishop of Peterborough, these facts were derived, that highly esteemed as the "PRACTICE OF PIETY" was, Bishop Bayly had learning for a greater work than that.

To enumerate the editions through which it has gone would be impossible. Scarcely any work ever had such a prodigious circulation; by reason that it is not the book of a sect or party, but is a general book, acceptable to all who agree in the grand doctrinal and practical truths of the Gospel. From the testimony of various writers, it appears to have been remarkably beneficial; and during the period of its amazing popularity, it was equally sought for by churchmen and nonconformists, and was equally valued by both.

Peter Pindar characterizes Mr. Whitebread as bribing voters with

"Bunyan's, and *Practices of Piety*."

instead of the more substantial douceurs usual on these occasions. Whether this be a mere figure of speech used by that scurrilous lampooner, or whether it indicates that the work was circulated by the religious professors of that period, I cannot determine. Certain it is, that of the many manuals which have been written to direct the Christian in his religious duties, this is the most valuable. It may have been supplanted in popularity by the multitude of ephemeral productions of modern times, but as it holds a priority in the date of its composition, so it will maintain its rank in the

scale of standard religious literature as an original English work, when their name and place are known no more.

A book which the blessing of God has accompanied in one period of the Church, may be alike blessed on its revival now. It pertains to subjects of unchanging interest. The science of religion, as derived from God's revealed will, is the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. No change of human affairs, effected by human advancement in other sciences, can alter its truths or diminish their importance. It was written at a time when a peculiar lustre adorned the ministers of religion. It was an age of eminence in divinity such as the world had not witnessed since the primitive days of Christianity, and which the world has not witnessed again. The Church had come out of its bloody conflicts "fair as the sun, and clear as the moon." The ministers of religion had not settled down into deadness and mediocrity, which become the characteristics of the clergy when the Church is at her ease, and when they lose sight of what their spiritual forefathers have suffered for the truth, and the free course of the Gospel which they are privileged to enjoy. They forget what the defence of the truth cost others, because it costs themselves nothing. Religion, as it now exists, is to them honourable, fashionable, and advantageous in a worldly sense, therefore they take it easily.

Lukewarmness is the besetting sin of the present day. If there be any zeal about doctrines, it is not for essential truths, but about doubtful questions. If there be any zeal about duties, it is not for the promotion of piety and personal holiness, but for some particular duties, which leading characters, or the force and influence of public opinion, have brought into fashion. Make a virtue popular, and all other virtues are lost

sight of in that one. The characteristics of the genuine disciples of Jesus are lost in the Christian's anxiety to conform himself to the world. He constantly betrays his dread of losing his grasp of present advantages; and no improvement can be expected until men professing to fear God divest themselves of this worldly spirit, and selfishness, and the desire to increase in this world's goods, and to advance their families in this world's distinctions. Women, also, who possess such influence in society, would require to exalt the Christian character from the lamentably low standard to which it is reduced, that they may become "as the polished corners of the Temple." But this cannot be, until they aim at something better than to be smatterers in superficial learning, or until the sum of their existence be something more than "embroidery, small scandal, prayers, and vacancy." Above all, until they cease to be busy bodies in the affairs of others, and indulgers in evil surmisings, or indeed in surmisings of any kind—that source of unspeakable evil in society, whereby are sacrificed the peace and respectability of individuals and families, and of which Satan, the father of lies, is the busy promoter; and it rejoices his malignant nature to see the constant agitation in which it keeps the world, and the heart-burnings which it occasions.

Human plans of education and improvement may do much towards refining mankind, and adding to the adornments of life, until society become like a fair monument of polished marble, "beautiful indeed outside," and which might be mistaken for a temple consecrated to purity and virtue, but in reality a habitation of death and cavern of moral putrefaction. The Gospel is the axe which must be laid to the tree of human corruption. The ministers of God, those men who have the inward

call, as well as the outward commission, are the labourers sent forth to this work. If they tire in their work, and lie down to rest, or execute it feebly, can they wonder to see roots of bitterness springing up everywhere, and flourishing and occupying the good ground which they have neglected.

A martyr for religious liberty, after receiving sentence of death, protested before going to the scaffold that he was "not so much cumbered how to die as he many a time had been how to preach a sermon." And another minister, Mr. Thomas Shepard, whose watchfulness to discharge the duties of the ministry is worthy of imitation, exhorted some young ministers who were about him on his death-bed to remember "that their work was great, and called for great seriousness. For his own part he told them three things:—First, that the studying of every sermon cost him tears; he wept in the studying of every sermon. Secondly, before he preached any sermon he got good by it himself. Thirdly, he always went up into the pulpit as if he were going to give up his accounts to his Master."

It was the opinion and experience of one* whose preaching, and writings on the Christian faith and life were the means of awakening many millions of souls from a lifeless formality to an inward sense of religion, that "one of the principal expedients for reviving the evangelical spirit in the churches when under a decay, is to call to the people to live up to the plainest precepts of Christ; such as self-denial, mortification, contrition, resignation, and the like; instead of filling their minds with the niceties of controversial and speculative

* John Arndt, general superintendent or principal minister in the Duke of Zell's dominions, who died 1621.

matters, which seemed to him rather to nourish, than to abate pride and self-love, those springs of corruption."

"THE PRACTICE OF PIETY" has been superseded by innumerable treatises on the same subject, but not excelled; while it retains its claim to originality in that department of religious literature. Its power to awaken the conscience, there is reason to believe, has been, by the blessing of God, most effectual. Two notable instances may be recorded. When John Bunyan was married, he and his wife were in extreme poverty, being totally destitute of any provision, and they had not one article of household stuff between them. But Mrs. Bunyan possessed for her portion a copy of "Bayly's Practice of Piety," which she had received from her father on his death-bed; and she being a well-disposed woman, sprung of godly parents, induced her husband to read it from time to time. This begot in him a desire to reform his vicious life, and he forthwith began. But it seemed to proceed all in self-righteousness and formality, and it was a considerable time before he felt the freeness of the grace of God. But a thing begun is half finished; therefore we must value the beginning of all good works. "God is at much pains with sinners, ordinarily, ere he draw them fully, wholly, and effectually to himself." Many and varied are the means and instruments which he employs, but all tend towards the one great point, the conversion of the soul to himself. Another eminent person whose awakening may be traced to the effects of that book, was Mr. James Frazer of Brea, minister of Culross in Fife, born 1639, who suffered much in the cause of religious liberty. He himself states, after describing a youth spent in carelessness and sinful conformity to the world like other young men of rank and fashion,

that he began seriously to think of his responsibility as an accountable and immortal being, and determined to reform his life. He thereupon “made a conscience of all duties. The occasion,” says he, “of this reformation and great change was this. One Sabbath-day afternoon I read on a book called ‘*The Practice of Piety*’ concerning the misery of a natural man, the torments of hell, and the blessedness of a godly man, and some directions for a godly life. The Lord so wrought, and my heart was therewith so affected and drawn, that without more ado I thenceforth resolved to become a new man, and to live not only a harmless life, but a godly and devout life; and to turn my back upon all my old ways, and utterly to forsake them.” Farther on in his Christian experience, when he had attained to the blessed hope of the Gospel, he states, “this hope produced a cheerful endeavour to seek the Lord, which I did, and was labouring to do good unto others, and to spread the knowledge of Christ; by which means I daily grew in the knowledge and love of God. One of the books I most read was ‘*The Practice of Piety*,’ which God did bless to me. And thus,” he adds, “Grace makes a great, wonderful, and universal change; changing the outward life and inward frame; ‘All things are new,’—new prayers, new love, new company, new opinions, and new principles.”

Among all the rises and downfalls of kingdoms—from those of which history has preserved almost nothing save the name, to those whose greatness and power seemed constituted to last till the end of time—one kingdom, one nation alone, viz. the kingdom of God, the CHURCH, has stood immoveable, surviving shocks and vicissitudes that would have cast down temporal dominions, and obliterated them from the earth. And however varied it may have appeared—whatever at-

ternations of lustre and obscurity may have passed over it—whatever designations it may have assumed—whatever storms nigh to destruction may have shaken it—whether its subjects were few or many—whether it consisted of one simple patriarchal family, or was spread over the empires of the civilized world, comprising different kindreds, and nations, and tongues,—yet by distinctive marks it can be always recognised as the one peculiar nation destined to outstand all temporal kingdoms—the one peculiar people distinguished by internal characteristics, as well as marked by the special dealings and dispensations of its Almighty Ruler through the successive ages of time.

No community but itself could have outlasted what it has endured from the internal divisions and animosities of persons struggling for opposite interests, as well as the assaults from without of hostile powers thirsting for its destruction; but with a singular, preternatural, unconquerable energy, it survives every shock, waxing stronger and stronger after each attack—shewing that it is upheld and invigorated by a power that cannot be subdued, nor finally overthrown. Security, blindness, and ease, belong to the kingdom of the wicked one, but nowhere characterize the kingdom of God. The Church on earth is called sons or children, because it needs continual care, discipline, chastisement, and teaching. The Church in heaven is called the *bride*, no longer to be corrected and kept in awe as a child, but to reign and rejoice in the full possession of that peace and security, which, in its militant state, it never could possess. Those who form their judgment of Christianity from the Holy Scriptures, must see that too much ease and worldly prosperity injure the Church as well as the individual Christian. These, instead of promoting the real interests of a kingdom

which is not of this world, accelerate its corruption. And when Christianity is propagated merely by human authority and worldly inducements, what it gains in numbers and earthly glory, it loses in purity, soundness, and spirituality.

Though the whole earth were but one vast area overspread with temples for the service of God, and you could not plant the sole of your foot but where it might be said this is consecrated to God's glory, yet as little true worship might ascend to him as there does now from the desolate places of the world where his name was never heard. Extent of territory is nothing unless the corrupt soil of the human heart have been subdued. Nations may throw off the yoke of superstition, and a corrupt religion and Satan's kingdom lose nothing by the change. "Men judge of the outside chiefly, but God values least of all that part which shines brightest in the eyes of men."*

A pious and prayerful life persevered in by the individual Christian is one of the truest means of extending the Church of God. Many think they are extending the Redeemer's kingdom when they are but extending their own name and fame. The Church of God is the meek, the pure, the peacemakers, the humble, the steadfast, the just. These are the living stones which compose the spiritual edifice, and this spiritual edifice, this Church of God, comprises all that is excellent on earth, and that only of earth which shall endure through the eternal ages of Heaven.

All else—men's honours and achievements, men's inventions, men's vanities, is doomed to everlasting perdition. To think of wicked doers and their works being doomed to destruction is comparatively nothing,

* Fenelon.

but it is an appalling consideration to know that the reputable things, the honourable things of the world—the highly esteemed, shall pass away into everlasting contempt.

If personal holiness be a true means of extending and establishing the Church of God, union among Christians, as it is a chief token of Christ's presence among his people, is also a powerful means of advancing the Gospel and the spiritual interests of mankind. But when the disciples of Jesus dispute by the way about the preference due to themselves and their opinions, they are seeking their own preëminence and not their master's glory. Mankind are represented as sojourners and travellers. This analogy implies sociality and companionship. Where many are travelling the same road they must of necessity converse as they journey. The wicked go in company together to the place of destruction though the ways are broad and various, how much more the righteous, when to their destination there is but one road, and that a narrow one.

Activity is another essential mark of the Christian character, and a means by which the kingdom of God is promoted. The kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of Christ we all know are the two grand divisions of the human race. All other divisions are trifling and of transient duration. The distinctions of blood and kindred, nation and language, sect, party, and opinion are among those fashions of the world which shall pass away. But these two divisions are permanent, yea eternally permanent. The righteous all are one in Christ Jesus. The wicked, the slothful Christians, the fearful, the unbelieving, all are one with Satan. He leaves no means untried to keep souls out of Christ's kingdom. He hates an awakened frame of spirit. Those who do