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RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATIONS.



*To the Editor of the Christian Observer.*

**Y**OUR having the kindness to insert the enclosed remarks in your work will much oblige,

Yours,

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In the present day—a day which may indeed be called “a day of trouble, of rebuke, and of blasphemy,” and yet a day which, from the progress of true religion, shines with many a ray of bright hope and earnest expectation—one great question ought to occupy the mind; how to overcome the evil, and to extend the good: how to confound the works of Satan, and to enlarge and establish the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Many are the attempts which are now being made for this purpose. Societies are in active operation to suppress vice, to reform our prisons, to afford a refuge for the destitute, to provide an asylum for the penitent, to educate the young, to circulate the holy Scriptures, to evangelize the heathen, and to promote Christianity among the Jews. Each of these institutions has its peculiar excellence, but they are all limited in their object and in their effort. No one great and extensive plan has yet been adopted, which may, at the same time, effectually benefit ourselves, our families, our country, and the world at large.

The aim of this paper is humbly to suggest such a plan, not with a view to disparage other benevolent attempts, but to give life, and vigour, and energy to them all. The plan is this: TO UNITE THE HEARTS OF ALL SINCERE CHRISTIANS IN CHRIST. OBSERV. No. 230.

**E**ARNEST PRAYER FOR THE GENERAL EFFUSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. This will meet the full extent both of our wants and of our desires.

The limits of this paper require brevity; but if the Scriptures are examined, the following truths will be clearly seen—namely, That no human effort is of itself sufficient to change the heart of man, or to build the spiritual temple of the Lord. God employs men as instruments, but He is himself the great agent. “Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God only giveth the increase.” “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts:”—That the Holy Spirit, as the Lord Jehovah, the third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity, is infinite in power; that with Him nothing is impossible, for all hearts are open to Him, and all creatures subject to His will:—That, exclusively of His almighty power as God, in the economy of our salvation He has undertaken offices which are fully sufficient to secure the most extensive blessings. He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He takes away the stony heart, and gives an heart of flesh. He assists in prayer; He acts as our teacher and remembrancer; He guides into all truth; He glorifies the Lord Jesus, and sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts. He has also a boundless treasury of every requisite to accomplish his purposes: for He takes of the things that are Christ's, and shows them to his people; and in the Lord Jesus we know are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and

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knowledge. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The Holy Spirit, therefore, has only to pour out from this inexhaustible treasury, and what man by all his unassisted efforts can never attain will be immediately accomplished. The same power which, on the day of Pentecost, effected the conversion of three thousand unbelieving Jews under one discourse, can convince the most prejudiced, and change the hearts of the most obdurate of the present day. When He "makes bare his arm," "the mountains will flow down at his presence," "a nation shall be born in a day," and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

Whilst the sacred Scriptures thus acquaint us with the power of the Holy Spirit to effect these great objects, they afford us every reason to expect this Divine aid whenever general prayer is made for its attainment. The prophecies clearly show that days of great blessedness are before us, and that those days will be preceded or accompanied by a very large effusion of the Holy Spirit. The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Joel, plainly predict this effusion, whilst Ezekiel confirms those predictions by the most striking emblems. Who can read the remarkable vision of the valley full of dry bones, and the interpretation given of that vision, without being convinced that the Holy spirit will yet exercise this office in a very remarkable manner; so powerfully, that those who are now as a multitude of dry bones shall stand up as a great army of true believers? The Divine Oracles at the same time assure us, that it is in answer to prayer that this blessing will be bestowed. It was not till the prophet had said, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live," that the life-giving Spirit came. In another prophecy also, after promises of great mercies, it is added, "I will

yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Such is the appointed connexion between this Divine gift and prayer for its bestowment.—So much is this the order in which God is pleased to grant his mercies, that he has promised not only to pour out a spirit of prayer and supplication upon his people, but to lead them to excite one another to implore this blessing, for thus it is written, "The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts; I will go also." And when prayer is offered, God declares, "Before thy call I will answer, and whilst they are yet speaking I will hear."

Without, therefore, entering into the question as to the exact period of those glorious times, we have every reason to believe, that whenever prayer is generally made for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit, a wide and copious effusion of his sacred influences will be afforded. The earnest supplications, therefore, of every sincere Christian for that promised blessing; and his unwearied efforts, in humble dependence upon God, to excite a similar earnestness in others, are objects greatly to be desired. For the readier attainment of these objects, the following hints are respectfully offered.—

That all the ministers of Christ should seek a deeper, and more abiding conviction of their own personal need of the Divine influences of the Holy Spirit—both for their own growth in grace, and for success in all parts of their ministerial labours—in order that, under this conviction, they may be led to more earnest secret prayer for this blessing:

That, like Daniel and his companions, they should unite with their brethren, as opportunity may offer, in prayer for a more general effusion of the Holy Spirit:

That they should preach upon

the various offices of the Holy Spirit, in order that their congregations may be more practically acquainted with his important office in the work of salvation;—and that, in their general discourses, they should more habitually honour the Holy Spirit, by entreating his Divine aid, and ascribing their success to his gracious influences :

That all Christians should be invited to devote individually a set portion of time (*say, from seven till eight o'clock on the morning of the Lord's day,*) for private prayer and meditation on this subject. Their prayer for this blessing may include themselves, their family, their friends, their ministers, their neighbours and fellow-worshippers, their country, the heathen, the Jews—all the ministers of Jesus Christ, and all societies formed for doing good.

That all heads of families should on a fixed occasion, (*say, Monday evening,*) entreat the same blessing in their family devotions :

That all Christians should read the Scriptures with a view to a more intimate acquaintance with this subject; and that they should mention it to their religious correspondents at home and abroad; each Christian using his utmost ability to make this union for prayer as extensive as possible :

That whilst Christians offer their prayers in simple reliance on the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, they should accompany them with deep humiliation for their own sins, for the sins of their country, and for the sins of the whole church;—and aim, in their conduct, to walk in love with all their fellow-Christians, to be watchful against grieving the Holy Spirit, and in all things to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

I am happy to state, that several ministers, and many private Christians, have already begun to act conformably to these hints; and it is hoped that, by the Divine blessing, such a devout union of

heart in prayer, will eventually, and I trust will ere long, become very general. Such an union cannot be contemplated without feelings of exalted pleasure and bright expectation. It is an union in which no party-spirit is raised, no principles are sacrificed, no private feeling is hurt, no doubtful question agitated, no funds are required. It is an union of piety and love! We are not called upon to violate the dictates of our conscience, or to infringe upon the discipline of the religious society to which we belong. Each Christian may associate in prayer with those of his own more immediate communion; yet at the same time may unite in heart with all who are seeking the same object. The poor may assist as well as the rich; the invalid, unfitted for active exertion, may, in this way, aid in building the spiritual temple; whilst those who are at the most remote distance may meet together at the Throne of Mercy, and where practicable at the same hour of prayer.

It was among the last petitions of our blessed Lord, that all who believe in him MIGHT BE ONE. Let it be our desire to be thus united! Let us trust in God simply, pray to him fervently, expect largely, watch soberly, and wait patiently.

“SURELY I COME QUICKLY: EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS.”

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*To the Editor of the Christian Observer.*

Nor being altogether satisfied with the present state of a discussion, which has appeared in your pages, of a passage in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, I venture to offer you a few remarks, upon it; not in the vain hope of supplying a satisfactory solution to the difficulty, but with the humbler ambition of suggesting some principles of criticism which ought, I think, to direct us in our decision, and the neglect of which