

MEDITATION FOR WEDNESDAY (THE FOURTH DAY).

ON FALSE SHAME IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

“The Lord is for me; I will not fear; what can a man do unto me?” (Ps. cxviii. 6.) As Israelites we must sanctify the name of our God, and Holy Writ teaches that it is a solemn duty incumbent on us all. Woe to those who, ashamed of their faith, deny their God; for whosoever rejects the Lord will be rejected by Him. Why should such scandalous cowardice exist? Should we not rather glory in serving the Lord of all? Men think themselves honoured in serving the princes of the earth; but how much more glorious is it to serve the King of kings! Let us rejoice in our sacred mission, and confess before all men the Eternal our God, while to deny Him even in appearances merely is an outrage of His sovereign Majesty, indicative of an abject and debased mind.

None but the meanest characters are ashamed of being ridiculed for being pious, and they evince a servile dependence on the opinions of the worst of men. He who dreads the raillery of the wicked proves himself wanting in strength of mind for the pursuit of the good.

There are many indifferent to the judgment of others when their tastes, interests, and pleasures are concerned, who yet find it hard, when surrounded by scoffers, to approve of the good and practise it, or to acknowledge the obligations of religion, and fulfil them. But can any thing be more humiliating and servile than to appear what one is not, and not to dare to seem what one is? Cannot those words of bitter irony, with which the Psalmist speaks of idols, be applied to such minds?—“Mouths have they, but speak not; ears have they, but hear not.” (Ps. cxv. 5, 6.) These words convey a true though humiliating picture of those pitiful characters whom false shame enslaves. They have ears, but will not hear; they have tongues, but will

not speak, except to approve of that which is approved of by those around them; they have eyes, yet do not see the meanness and servility of their own conduct. Did they possess the dignity of character and nobility of sentiment which true religion bestows, which raise man in his own esteem, they could not fall into such a state of debasement and error

And can you, Israelites! the first-born of religion, chosen as the promulgators of the divine revelation, raised so high by the hand of God, descend from your glorious rank to profane and deny it? Instead of proudly confessing your belief openly, as befits the nation of priests, will you betray, renounce your God, to crouch before the idols of the world? And even this is not all. False shame in matters of religion leads to infidelity; and then reason is sacrificed, and truth deserted, for the vulgar pomp and worldly advantages of error and apostasy. Thus does false shame in religion become more fatal than were the persecutions of the tyrants of past times, who only tormented the body, while the former corrupts and degrades the soul.

But, after all, the world really holds such characters in the lowest estimation. They are degraded in the eyes of the very individuals whom they wish to please, and thus fail utterly in their unworthy object. Let us therefore free ourselves from such a bondage, and throw off the yoke which the opinion of others imposes on us. Let us maintain our dignity and liberty of conscience, and remain firm in faith and in our devotion to God's law.

What can man do for or against us? When, one day, we shall appear before God, can man shield us from His justice? Let us, then, burst the chains which bind us to worldliness and pleasure, and bear a free and full testimony to the truth. Our fathers did so at the expense of their earthly happiness, our martyrs sealed it with their blood, and we ourselves can readily bear up against sarcasm and ridicule, when it is in the cause of duty and of God.

RESOLUTION.

Although I despise false shame in religion, I have nevertheless not rarely been misled by it, and have merited Thy displeasure, for fear of incurring man's raillery, often denying what I felt to be true, and performing the evil which I condemned in my heart. I affected to be what I was not, and have frequently failed in the performance of my religious duties, sacrificing them to the whims and prejudices of those around me. But I will throw off this despicable yoke. I will publicly confess Thee my God, and glory in Thy service, and in the fulfilment of Thy holy law; "for it is better to seek shelter with the Lord than to put trust in man." (Ps: cxviii. 8.)

Let scoffers laugh, and the impious disapprove; but for myself, "I will not fear; what can man do unto me?" I will serve Thee, O Lord! with all my soul, and at my death strive to merit Thy approval, so that I may be received in Thy abode of eternal bliss! Amen.

Read Psalm xciv.

MEDITATION FOR THURSDAY (THE FIFTH DAY).

ON OUR DUTIES AS ISRAELITES.

"He hath told thee, O man! what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee: nothing but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah vi. 8.) Moses, in his last address to the people of Israel, bids us remember that the observance of the holy law imposed on us by God is neither too difficult for us, nor beyond our strength. To follow it we neither need to traverse deserts, to ascend mountains, nor to cross the seas; it is near us, within our reach; for we read in Deut. xxx. 12, 14; "It is not in heaven that thou shouldst say, Who shall ascend for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we