

**THE CLOSET AND THE
CHURCH. A BOOK
FOR MINISTERS**

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The closet and the church. A book for ministers by T. Binney

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T. BINNEY

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A Book for Ministers.

BY T. BINNEY.

LONDON :
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MDCCKLIX.

TO
THE RISING MINISTRY,
MORE ESPECIALLY OF THE
CONGREGATIONAL DENOMINATION,

THIS BOOK OF

The Closet and the Church,

IS

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

BY

THEIR FRIEND AND BROTHER,

THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

THE following discourse was delivered at the Autumnal Meeting of "The Congregational Union of England and Wales," held at Leeds, in the year 1845. Its publication was very urgently called for by the Assembly at the time; but various reasons prevented acquiescence in the request. Some of these reasons still remain in almost all their force. This is especially the case with those which arise from the nature of the subject, and my mode of treating it. The theme is of such a sort, and the argument is so conducted, as to make the piece more fit, as it seems to me, for the minister's private ear, than for the curious gaze of the common eye. The character of the composition, too, is a ground of repugnance to publication. It is of that rough, rude order,—that artificial and somewhat exaggerated sort of utterance, which *I designedly adopt* when writing what is to be read to a mixed multitude; very

different, therefore, from that quiet and subdued style which any one would choose, and which, indeed, would naturally present itself, as the vehicle of reflections on a devotional subject, if written only for perusal in the closet. Certain circumstances, however, have recently led the author to get over these difficulties, springing from conviction, feeling and taste, and to permit the appearance of the discourse. His obstacles could only have been removed by his writing a new and different book,—one, more elaborately complete in its parts and structure, and free from those strong lines, large proportions and glaring colours, which such pictures and representations require as are rapidly passed before a popular assembly. Such a book, however, it is quite out of my power to write at present; nor do I know that it would secure the ends sought by this, better than itself. I have reason to believe that, as it is, the present publication will not be unacceptable to some of my brethren, and have ground therefore to hope that it may not fall to the ground without fruit. I am quite willing to risk other things, for the sake of securing this latter result.

I earnestly pray, and I humbly solicit every devout reader to join me in my request, that the Great Head of the Church may graciously con-

descend to bless this small effort, and to shed down abundantly, on ministers in general, and "on all congregations committed to their care," "the healthful Spirit" "of grace and of supplication,"—a blessing which would be at once the source and the symptom of "a revived ministry," and an "earnest church!"

There are two things which rather contribute to my satisfaction in sending forth this book. The *first* is, that, though it will not be, in all respects, a substitute for one which many of my indulgent friends and readers expected about this time,—(and which I had hoped to have produced, but that during the greater part of the year I have been quite incapacitated for writing, and have had often to remit my regular public duties,)—yet by some it will be received in the character indicated. As these will mostly be my brethren in office,—from whom I have recently received great kindness, in connection with the discharge of an important public function, and to whom, especially the younger of them, I very affectionately inscribe this Discourse,—any good that it may do may really be more extensive and lasting, in its ultimate consequences, than if it had addressed itself to a greater number of readers. The *second* is, that with a discourse

entitled "THE ULTIMATE DESIGN OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY—to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus," and with "THE SERVICE OF SONG in the House of the Lord," this piece, "THE CLOSET AND THE CHURCH," referring to ministerial devotion, will, together, have a sort of completeness,—uttering, respectively, some few thoughts on Preaching, Prayer, and Praise; and though they will by no means be what a book deliberately composed *all at once* on these subjects, *in all their bearings*, would have been, they will yet form a volume, that may suggest some useful hints, or communicate some quickening or guiding impulse to the minds of students and young ministers, if not to general readers and elder men. Editions of the other two pieces, just mentioned, are intended to appear immediately. They will be uniform, as to size, with this; and may be bound together, if the purchaser so wills.

I know not that I could better conclude these few prefatory remarks, than by the following passage, which I find in the works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller, vol. iv. p. 316. It occurs in a sermon occasioned by the death of the Rev. J. Sutcliffe, of Olney, founded on Jude, 20, 21. "Building yourselves up in the love of God, *praying in the Holy Ghost, &c.*" It is worthy

of notice as the combined testimony of two eminent men and "good ministers of Jesus Christ," to the great subject so imperfectly handled in the following pages. The author is happy in being able to introduce and to fortify his own reflections, by what comes as the expression at once of matured wisdom, rich experience, and dying regret.

"That religion which has its foundation in the faith of Christ will increase by '*praying in the Holy Spirit.*' As there is no true practical religion without faith in Christ, so there is no true prayer but '*in the Holy Spirit.*' It is true '*that men ought* always to pray, and not to faint;' but it is no less true that we know not what to pray for *as we ought*, but as the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: clear proof this, by the way, that that may be man's duty which yet, owing to his depravity, cannot be performed but by divine grace; and that the Holy Spirit works that in us which God as the governor of the world requires of us; writing his law upon our hearts, or working in us that which is pleasing in his sight.

"The assistance of the Holy Spirit, however, is not that of which we are always sensible. We must not live in the neglect of prayer at any time because we are unconscious of being under divine