

PRACTICAL THOUGHTS

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Practical thoughts by William Nevins

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WILLIAM NEVINS

**PRACTICAL
THOUGHTS**

PRACTICAL
T H O U G H T S .

BY REV. WILLIAM NEVINS, D. D.,
LATE PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN BALTIMORE.

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The following pages consist of miscellaneous articles published by the lamented author within the year 1834 and the months of January and February, 1835, chiefly in the *New-York Observer*, with the signature "M. S." the initials of his name. They were written after the insidious disease by which God was pleased to transplant him to a higher sphere of labor had so affected his voice as in a great degree to disable him from his stated public ministrations. This discipline was evidently blessed in his rapid sanctification; his obtaining uncommonly clear views of truth and duty; and his ardent desire to do something to rouse Christians to greater attainments in personal holiness, and through their efforts and prayers to bless the world. His mind acted with unwonted vigor; he panted to speak to multitudes for God and eternity, and adopted the only means then remaining to him—his pen. When about two-thirds of the articles were written, he was called suddenly to part with his beloved wife; and the hallowed influence of the affliction is most apparent in the subsequent articles, the last of which, "*HEAVEN'S ATTRACTIONS*," with the additional fragment, seemed almost prophetic of the event which was soon to follow.

It was hoped that the substance of these articles might be embodied in a volume under the author's own supervision; but his strength was inadequate to the task. They are now published in accordance with a few general suggestions made by him a little before his death, and in the form substantially in which they at first appeared.

PRACTICAL THOUGHTS.

1. Do you Pray in Secret?

I know not how it is with the reader, but I know that many persons are not in the habit of secret prayer. They have no closet, no place of retirement to which they daily resort, and where, when they have shut the door, they pray to their Father which is in secret, and in solitude seek the society of God. I am acquainted with one who for many years neglected this duty, which all religions recognize, and which even nature teaches. Sometimes he read the Bible, and no part of it oftener than the sermon on the mount. - Of course he must have frequently read those words of the great Teacher, in which, taking it for granted that his hearer prays, he tells him what he should do when he prays: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet;" (the person is supposed to have some place called his closet, to which he is accustomed to retire for prayer;) "and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." He read this, but he gave no heed to it. During all this period he asked nothing, though he received much. God did not neglect him, though he neglected God; and as he pray-

ed none, so he praised none. Sometimes, indeed, he said, "Thank God!" but it was said in so much thoughtlessness, that it was set down profaneness rather than praise. It is true, at that time he would never allow that he was ungrateful; but he was, and now he sees that he was. He lived, and moved, and had his being *in* God, and yet was *without* God in the world. Many and precious were the thoughts of God towards him, but in all *his* thoughts God was not. Not even when he was in trouble did he ask, "Where is God my maker?" I wonder the Lord had not become weary of bestowing his bounty on such an one. It is because he is the Lord and changes not. But for that, the person of whom I speak would have been consumed long ago. There is nothing he admires more than the long-suffering of God towards him, and he hopes to spend eternity in admiring it, and exchanging thoughts with his fellow-redeemed on this and kindred subjects.

He supposes that he is not the only one who has neglected secret prayer. He fears that this neglect is even now the habit of many. They are *shy* of God. I know not why they should be. He is doing every thing to woo and win them, and to secure their confidence. So much has he done, that he asks (and I cannot answer) what he could have done more. He waits on his throne of grace to be gracious to them, but they come not near to him. He even calls to them to come to him, using too the language of