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DISCOURSES ON HUMAN LIFE.

BY ORVILLE DEWEY,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH, IN NEW-YORK.

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TO THE CONGREGATION, WORSHIPPING IN THE CHURCH OF
THE MESSIAH, IN NEW-YORK.

MY BRETHREN AND FRIENDS,

In anticipation of leaving my pulpit for an absence of two years in Europe, I have collected these out of the mass of Discourses which I have delivered to you, and I beg leave to present them to you, as an expression of that interest in the true and vital prosperity of Religion among you, which neither time nor distance, nor parting oceans nor foreign climes, nor any thing else, I trust, can weaken. You will observe, that although it is a volume of Discourses on Human Life, it is scarcely a Series. The discourses were written without any original intention of making a series, and mostly without any reference to each other; and I may therefore need the public indulgence for the occasional recurrence of the same topics—of the same ideas—possibly of the same expressions. Such as the Volume is, I commit it to you, in grateful remembrance of those hours in the sanctuary, where they have been the subject of our common meditations.

Bidding you an affectionate farewell for a season, I am
your friend and servant,

ORVILLE DEWEY.

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DISCOURSE I.

ON THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LIFE.

JOB IV. 12—16. NOW A THING WAS SECRETLY BROUGHT TO ME, AND MINE EAR RECEIVED A LITTLE THEREOF. IN THOUGHTS FROM THE VISIONS OF THE NIGHT, WHEN DEEP SLEEP FALLETH ON MEN ; FEAR CAME UPON ME, AND TREMBLING WHICH MADE ALL MY BONES TO SHAKE. THEN A SPIRIT PASSED BEFORE MY FACE, AND THE HAIR OF MY FLESH STOOD UP. IT STOOD STILL ; BUT I COULD NOT DISCERN THE FORM THEREOF ; AN IMAGE WAS BEFORE MINE EYES ; THERE WAS SILENCE ; AND I HEARD A VOICE.

HUMAN life to many, is like the vision of Eliphaz. Dim and shadowy veils hang round its awful revelations. Teachings there are to man, in solemn and silent hours, in thoughts from the visions of the night, in vague impressions and unshaped reveries ; but, on this very account, they fail to be interpreted and understood. There is much teaching ; but there is also much unbelief.

There is a skepticism, indeed, about the entire moral significance of life, which I propose, in this discourse, to examine. It is a skepticism—sometimes taking the form of philosophy, sometimes of misanthropy and scorn, and

sometimes of heavy and hard-bound worldliness—which denies that life has any lofty, spiritual import; which resolves all into a series of toils and trifles and vanities, or of gross and palpable pursuits and acquisitions. It is a skepticism, not about creeds, not about Christianity—it lies farther back—lies far deeper; it is a skepticism about the very meaning and intent of our whole existence.

This skepticism I propose to meet; and for this purpose, I propose to see what argument can be extracted out of the very grounds on which it founds itself.

The pertinency of my text to my purpose, as I have already intimated, lies in this: there is much of deep import in this life, like that which Eliphaz saw in the visions of the night—not clear, not palpable, or at least not usually recognised and made familiar; but it cometh, as it were in the night, when deep sleep falleth on men; it cometh in the still and solitary hours; it cometh in the time of meditation or of sorrow, or of some awful and overshadowing crisis of life. It is secretly brought to the soul, and the ear receiveth a little thereof. It is as a spirit that passeth before us, and vanisheth into the night-shadow; or it standeth still, but we cannot discern the form thereof; there is an undefined image of truth; there is silence; and at length there is a voice.

It is of these unrecognised revelations of our present being that I would endeavour to give the interpretation; I would attempt to give them a voice.

But let us spread out a little in the first place, the sceptic's argument. It says, "what is there in human existence that accords with your lofty, Christian theory? You may talk about the grandeur of a human life, the sublime wants and aspirations of the human soul, the

solemn consciousness, amidst all life's cares and toils, of an immortal destiny—it is all a beautiful dream! Look over the world's history, and say, what intimations does it furnish of that majestic design—the world's salvation? Look at any company of toiling and plodding men in the country around you; and what are they thinking of, but acres and crops, of labor and the instruments of labor? Go into the noisy and crowded manufactory, and what is there, but *machinery*—animate or inanimate—the mind as truly girded and harnessed to the work, as the turning-lathe or the banded wheel? Gaze upon the thronged streets, or upon holiday crowds, mixing the oaths of the profane with the draughts of the intemperate; and where is the spiritual soul that you talk of? Or look at human life in a large view of it, and of what is it made up? 'Trouble and weariness'—you see that it is the cynic's complaint—"trouble and weariness; the disappointment of inexperience or the dulness of familiarity; the frivolity of the gay or the unprofitable sadness of the melancholy; the heavy ennui of the idle or the plodding care of the busy; the suffering of disease or the wasted energy of health; frailty, its lot, and its doom, death; a world of things wasted, worn out, perishing in the use, tending to nothing, and accomplishing nothing; so complete the frivolity of life with many, that they actually think more of the fine apparel they shall wear, than of the inward spirit, which you say is to inherit the immortal ages!"

All this, alas! is too true; but it is not true to the extent nor in the exclusive sense, alledged. That but few meditate on their lot as they ought, is perfectly true; but there are impressions and convictions that come into the mind through other channels than those of meditation.

They come perhaps, like the shadowy vision of Eliphaz, in darkness and silence ; vague, indistinct, mysterious awful ; or they come in the form of certain, but neglected and forgotten truths. And they come, too, from those very scenes, in which the eye of the objector can see nothing but material grossness or thoughtless levity. This is what I shall especially attempt to show. I shall not undertake, in this discourse, to go farther ; but I believe that I shall not perform a useless service to the true faith of our being, if I may be able, in some measure to unveil and bring to light, those secret intimations which are often smothered, indeed, but which from time to time, are flashing out from the cloud of human cares and pursuits.

“ Man,” it is said, “ is bound up in materialism, imprisoned by the senses, limited to the gross and palpable ; far-reaching thoughts, soaring aspirations, are found in essays and speculations about him rather than in his own experience ; they are in books rather than in brick-yards and ploughed fields and tumultuous marts.”

What stupendous revelations are cloaked and almost hidden by familiarity ! This very category of skepticism—what is it, but the blind admission of the sublimest truth ? A *man* is recognized as standing amidst this palpable cloud of care and labor—enclosed, it is said, shut up in sense and matter—but still a *man* ! A dungeon is this world, if you please so to represent it ; but in this dungeon, is a prisoner—moaning, sorrowing, sighing to be free. A wilderness world it is, in the thought of many ; but *one* is struggling through this wilderness, who imparts to it a loftier grandeur than its own ; his articulate voice, his breathed prayer, or his shout amidst the dim solitudes—nay

the very sound of his axe in the forest depths—is sublimer than all the solemn symphonies of autumn winds sweeping through its majestic aisles.

Grant that matter and sense are man's teachers; and consider these teachings in their very humblest form, in their very lowest grade—what they teach *perforce*, and in spite of man's will. What are they? Materialism itself suggests to man the thought of an immaterial principle. The senses awaken within him the consciousness of a soul. Of a soul, I say; and what is that? Oh! the very word, soul, is itself soiled by a common use, till we know not what it means. So that this universal endowment of humanity—this dread endowment, by which infinity, eternity, nay and divinity belong to its innate and inmost conceptions, can be at once admitted and almost overlooked, in the account of human existence.

In man the humblest instruments reveal the loftiest energies. This is not enthusiasm, but philosophy. The modern French philosophy has the merit of having distinctly unfolded this principle; that all our mental perceptions suggest their opposites—the finite, the infinite: the seen, the unseen; time, eternity; creation, a God. The child that has tried his eye upon surrounding objects, soon learns to send his thought through the boundless air, and to embrace the idea of infinite space. The being that is conscious of having lived a certain time, comes to entertain as correlative to that consciousness, the conception of eternity. These are among the fundamental facts of all human experience. Such, to a man, in distinction from an animal, is the instrumentality of his very senses. As with a small telescope, a few feet in length and breadth, man learns to survey heavens beyond heavens, almost infinite;

so with the aid of limited senses and faculties does he rise to the conception of what is beyond all visible heavens, beyond all conceivable time, beyond all imagined power, beauty and glory. Such is a human life. Man stands before us, visibly confined within the narrowest compass; and yet from this humble frame, stream out, on every side, the rays of thought, to infinity, to eternity, to omnipotence, to boundless grandeur and goodness. Let him who will, account this existence to be nothing but vanity and dust. I must be allowed on better grounds, to look upon it, as that, in whose presence all the visible majesty of worlds and suns and systems sink to nothing. Systems and suns and worlds are all comprehended in a single thought of this being, whom we do not yet know.

But let us pass from these primary convictions which are suggested by matter and sense, to those spheres of human life, where many can see nothing but weary labor, or trifling pleasure, or heavy ennui.

Labor, then—what is it, and what doth it mean? Its fervid brow, its toiling hand, its weary step—what do they mean? It was in the power of God to provide for us as he has provided for the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven, so that human hands should neither toil nor spin. He who appointed the high hills as a refuge for the wild goats and the rocks for the conies, might as easily have caused marble cities, and hamlets of enduring granite, to have been productions of nature's grand masonry. In secret forges and by eternal fires, might every instrument of convenience and elegance have been fashioned; the winds might have woven soft fabrics upon every tree, and a table of abundance might have been spread in every wilderness and by every sea-

shore. For the animal races it *is* spread. Why is it not for man? Why is it especially ordained as the lot of man, that in the sweat of his brow he shall eat his bread? Oh! sirs, it hath a meaning. The curse, so much dreaded in the primeval innocence and freedom of nature, falls not causeless on the earth. Labor is a more beneficent ministration than man's ignorance comprehends, or his complainings will admit. It is *not* mere blind drudgery even when its end is hidden from him. It is all a training, it is all a discipline—a development of energies, a nurse of virtues, a school of improvement. From the poor boy that gathers a few sticks for his mother's hearth, to the strong man who fells the forest oak, every human toiler, with every weary step and every urgent task, is obeying a wisdom far above his own wisdom, and is fulfilling a design far beyond his own design—his own supply, accumulation, or another's wealth, luxury or splendor.

But now let us turn to an opposite scene of life. I mean pleasure and dissipation. Is this all mere frivolity—a scene that suggests no meaning beyond its superficial aspects? Nay, my friends, what significance is there in unsatisfying pleasure? What a serious thing is the reckless gaiety of a bad man? What a picture, almost to move our awe, does vice present to us? The desperate attempt to escape from the ennui of an unfurnished and unsatisfied mind; the blind and headlong impulse of the soul to quench its maddening thirst for happiness in the burning draughts of pleasure; the deep consciousness which soon arises of guilt and infamy; the sad adieu to honor and good fame; the shedding of silent and bitter tears; the flush of the heart's agony over the pale and haggard brow; the

last determined and dread sacrifice of the soul and of heaven, to one demoniac passion—what serious things are these? What signatures upon the soul, to show its higher nature? What a fearful hand-writing upon the walls that surround the deeds of darkness, duplicity and sensual crime? The holy altar of religion hath no seriousness about it, deeper, or I had almost said, more awful, than that settles down upon the gaming table, or broods oftentimes over the haunts of corrupting indulgence. At that altar, indeed, is teaching; words, words are uttered here; instruction, cold instruction, alas! it may be, is delivered in consecrated walls; but if the haunts of evil could be unveiled, if the covering could be taken off from guilty hearts, if every sharp pang and every lingering regret of the vitiated mind, could send forth its moanings and sighs into the great hearing of the world, the world would stand aghast at that dread teaching.

But besides the weariness of toil and the frivolity of pleasure, there is another state of life that is thought to teach nothing, and that is ennui; a state of leisure, attended with moody reveries. The hurry of pursuit is over, for the time; the illusions of pleasure have vanished; and the man sits down in the solitariness of meditation; and “weary, flat, stale and unprofitable, appear to him all the uses of this life” It seems to him, as I once heard it touchingly expressed even by a child, “as if every thing was nothing.” This has been the occasional mood of many lofty minds, and has often been expressed in our literature.

“Life’s little stage, (says one) is a small eminence,
Inch high above the grave; that home of man,
Where dwells the multitude; we gaze around;
We read their monuments; we sigh; and while

We sigh, we sink ; and are what we deplored ;
Lamenting, or lamented, all our lot ! ”

“ To-morrow, ” says our great dramatist,
“ and to-morrow, and to-morrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time ;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. * * * * *

Life’s but a walking shadow ; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more ; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. ”

But bound up with this poor, frail life, is the mighty thought that spurns the narrow span of all visible existence. Out of this nothing, springs a something—a significant intimation, a dread revelation of the awful powers that lie wrapped up in human existence. Nothing more reveals the majestic import of life than this ennui, this heart-sinking sense of the vanity of all present acquisitions and attainments. “ Man’s misery, ” it has been well said, “ comes of his greatness. ” The sphere of life appears small, the ordinary circle of its avocations, narrow and confined, the common routine of its cares insipid and unsatisfactory—why ? Because he who walks therein demands a boundless range of objects. Why does the body seem to imprison the soul ? Because the soul asks for freedom ; because it looks forth from the narrow and grated windows of sense upon the wide and immeasurable creation ; because it knows that around and beyond it, lie outstretched the infinite and the everlasting paths.

I have now considered some of those views of life which are brought forward as objections against our

christian theory of its greatness. My purpose in this discourse is not to penetrate into the wisdom of its deeper relations, but to confine myself to its humblest aspects, and to things that are known and acknowledged to be matters of fact.

With this view, I proceed to observe in the last place, that *every thing* in this life bears traits that may well stir our minds to admiration and wonder.

How mysterious is the connection of mind with matter; of the act of my will with the motion of my hand; this wonderful telegraphic communication between the brain and every part of the body! We talk of nerves; but how knoweth the nerve in my finger, of the will that moves it? We talk of the will: but what is it, and how does its commanding act originate? It is all mystery. Within this folding veil of flesh, within these dark channels, every instant's action is a history of miracles. Every familiar step is more than a story in a land of enchantment. Were the marble statue before us, suddenly endowed with that self-moving power, it would not be intrinsically more wonderful than is the action of every being around us.

The human face is itself a wonder. I do not mean in its beauty, nor in its power of expression; but in its variety and its individuality. What is the problem that is here solved? Suppose it were stated thus: given, a space nine inches long and six inches broad; the form essentially the same, the features the same, the colors the same; required, unnumbered hundreds of millions of countenances so entirely different, as, with some rare exceptions, to be completely and easily distinguishable. Would not the whole mechanical ingenuity of the world

be thrown into utter despair of approaching any way towards such a result? And yet it is completely achieved in the human countenance. Yes, the familiar faces that are around us bear mysteries and marvels in every look.

Again, the house thou dwellest in—that familiar abode—what holds it together, and secures it on its firm foundation? Joint to joint, beam to beam, every post to its socket, is swathed and fastened by the mighty bands that hold ten thousand worlds in their orbits. This is no phantasm of the imagination; it is the philosophical fact. All actual motion, and all seeming rest, are determined by unnumbered, most nicely balanced, and at the same time, immeasurable influences and attractions. Universal harmony springs from infinite complication. And therefore, every step thou takest in thy dwelling—still I only repeat what philosophers have proved—the momentum of every step, I say, contributes its part to the order of the universe.

What then is a life, conscious of these stupendous relations, and what are its humblest dwellings? If you lived in a palace that covered an hundred miles of territory, and if the stamping of your foot could convey an order to its farthest limits, you would feel that that, indeed, was power and grandeur. But you live in a system of things, you dwell in a palace, whose dome is spread out in the boundless skies, whose lights are hung in the wide arches of heaven, whose foundations are longer far than the earth and broader far than the sea, and you are connected by ties of thought, and even of matter, with its whole boundless extent. If your earthly dwelling, your house of life, were lifted up and borne visibly among the stars,

guarded with power and clothed with light, you would feel that that was a sublime fortune for any being to enjoy. To ride in a royal chariot would be a small thing compared with that. But you are borne onward among the celestial spheres; rolling worlds are around you; bright, starry abodes fill all the coasts and skies of heaven; you *are* borne and kept by powers—silent and unperceived indeed—but real and boundless as the immeasurable universe.

The infinite, we allow is mysterious; but not less so, in truth, is the finite and the small. It is said that man cannot comprehend infinity. It is true, and yet it is falsely said in one respect. The declaration that we cannot understand infinity, usually conveys the implication that we can comprehend that which is the opposite of infinity, that is, the little scene around us. But the humblest object beneath our eye as completely defies our scrutiny, as the economy of the most distant world. Every spire of grass, of which the scythe mows down millions in an hour, holds within it secrets, which no human penetration ever fathomed. Examine it with the microscope, and you shall find a beautiful organization; channels for the vital juices to flow in; some to nourish the stalk; others, to provide for the flower and prepare the seed; other instruments still, to secrete the nutriment that flows up from the soil, and to deposit and incorporate it with the plant; and altogether, a mechanism more curious than any, perhaps, ever formed by the ingenuity of man. And yet there are questions here, which the profoundest philosopher cannot answer. What is the principle of life,—without which, though the whole organization remains, the plant dies? And what is that

wonderful power of secretion? No man can tell. There are inscrutable *mysteries*, wrapped up in the foldings of that humble spire of grass.

Sit down now, and take thy pen, and spread out thine account, as some writers have done, of the insignificance of human life. But wilt thou pause a little and tell me first, how that pen was formed wherewith thou art writing, and that table whereon thy tablets are laid? Thou canst tell neither. *Wilt* thou not pause then, when the very instruments thou art using, should startle thee into astonishment? Lay thine hand where thou wilt and thou layest it on the hiding bosom of mystery. Step where thou wilt, and thou dost tread upon a land of wonder. No fabled land of enchantment ever was filled with such startling tokens. So fraught are all things with this moral significance that nothing can refuse its behest. The furrows of the field, the clods of the valley, the dull beaten path, the insensible rock, are trod over and in every direction, with this hand-writing, more significant and sublime than all the beetling ruins and all the buried cities, that past generations have left upon the earth. It is the hand-writing of the Almighty!

In fine, the history of the humblest human life is a tale of marvels. There is no dull or unmeaning thing in existence, did we but understand it; there is not one of our employments, no, nor one of our states of mind, but is, could we interpret it, as significant—not as instructive, but as significant as holy writ. Experience, sensation, feeling, suffering, rejoicing—what a world of meaning and of wonder lies in the modes and changes and strugglings and scarings of the life in which these are bound up. If it were but new, if we had been cast upon “this shore of

being" without those intervening steps of childhood that have now made it familiar ground, how had we been wrapt in astonishment, at every thing around, and every thing within us !

I have endeavoured in the present discourse—perhaps in vain—to touch this sense of wonder : to arouse attention to the startling and awful intimations, to the striking and monitory lessons and warnings of our present existence. And if some of the topics and suggestions of my discourse have been vague and shadowy, yet I am ready to say—better to be startled by the shadows of truth, than to sleep beneath its noontide ray : better to be aroused by the visions of a dream, than to slumber on in profound unconsciousness of all the signs and wonders of our being. Oh ! that I could tear off, this dreadful commonplace of life, and show you what it is. There would be no want then, of entertainment or excitement, no need of journeys or shows or tales to interest us ; the every-day world would be more than theatres or spectacles ; and life all-piercing, all-spiritual, would be more than the most vivid dream of romance—how much more than the most eager pursuit of pleasure or profit !

My Brethren, there is a vision like that of Eliphaz, stealing upon us, if we would mark it, through the veils of every evening's shadows, or coming in the morning with the mysterious revival of thought and consciousness ; there is a message whispering in the stirred leaves, or starting beneath the clods of the field, in the life that is everywhere bursting from its bosom. Every thing around us images a spiritual life—all forms, modes, processes, changes, though we discern them not. Our great business with life is so to read the book of its teaching,—to

find that life is not the doing of drudgeries, but the hearing of oracles! The old mythology is but a leaf in that book, for it peopled the world with spiritual natures. Many leaved science still spreads before us the same tale of wonder. Spiritual meditation, interpreting experience, and above all, the life of Jesus, will lead us still farther into the heart and soul and the innermost life of all things. It is but a child's life to pause and rest upon outward things, though we call them wealth and splendor. It is to feed ourselves with husks, instead of sustaining food. It is to grasp the semblance and to lose the secret and soul of existence. It is as if a pupil should gaze all day upon the covers of his book and open it not, and learn nothing. It is indeed that awful alternative which is put by Jesus himself—to gain the world—though it be the whole world—and to lose our own soul.

DISCOURSE II.

THAT EVERY THING IN LIFE IS MORAL.

JOB VII. 17—18. WHAT IS MAN THAT THOU SHOULDST
MAGNIFY HIM, AND SET THINE HEART UPON HIM; AND
THAT THOU SHOULDST VISIT HIM EVERY MORNING, AND
TRY HIM EVERY MOMENT?

THAT we are tried every moment—is the clause of the text, to which I wish in this discourse, to direct your meditation. By which, in the sense of the passage before us, is not meant that we are continually afflicted, but that we are constantly proved and put to the test; that every thing which befalls us, in the course of life and of every day, bears upon us, in the character of a spiritual discipline, a trial of our temper and disposition; that every thing develops in us feelings that are either right or wrong. I have spoken in my last discourse of the moral significance of life. I propose to speak in this, of the possible moral use and of the inevitable moral effect of every thing in life. My theme in short, in this—that every thing in life is moral—or spiritual.

There is no conviction which is at once more rare, and

more needful for our improvement, than this. If the language of Job's discontent and despair in the chapter from which our text is taken, is not familiar to many, yet to very many, life appears at least mechanical and dull. It is not such, in fact, but it appears such. It appears to be mere labor, mere business, mere activity. Or it is mere pain or pleasure, mere gain or loss, mere success or disappointment. These things, if not mechanical, have at least, to many minds, nothing spiritual in them. And not a few pass through the most important transactions, through the most momentous eras of their lives, and never think of them in their highest and most interesting character. The pervading morality, the grand spiritual import of this earthly scene, seldom strikes their minds, or touches their hearts. And if they think of ever becoming religious, they expect to be so only through retirement from this scene, or, at least, through teachings and influences and processes far removed from the course of their daily lives.

But now I say, in contradiction to this, that *every thing in life*, is spiritual. What is man, says Job, that thou visitest him every morning? This question, presents us, at the opening of every day, with that view of life, which I propose to illustrate. That conscious existence which, in the morning, you recover from the embraces of sleep—what a testimony is it to the power and beneficence of God? What a teacher is it, of all devout and reverent thoughts? You laid yourself down and slept. You lay, unconscious, helpless, dead to all the purposes of life, and unable by any power of your own ever to awake. From that sleep, from that unconsciousness, from that image of death, God has called you to a new life—he has restored to you the gift of existence. And now what meets you on

this threshold of renewed life? Not bright sunbeams alone, but God's mercies visit you in every beaming ray and every beaming thought, and call for gratitude; and you can neither acknowledge nor resist the call without a moral result. That result may come upon you, sooner than you expect. If you rise from your bed, with a mind undevout, ungrateful, self-indulgent, selfish, something in your very preparations for the day, something that may happen in a matter slight as that of the toilet, may disturb your serenity and cloud your day at the beginning. You may have thought that it was only the *prayer* of the morning that had any religion, any thing spiritual in it. But I say that there is not an article in your wardrobe, there is not an instrument of daily convenience to you, however minute or otherwise indifferent, but it has a power so far moral, that a little disarray or disorder in it, may produce in you a temper of mind, ay a *moral* state, of the most serious character. You may not be conscious of this; that is, you may not be distinctly sensible of it, and yet it may be none the less true. We are told that the earth, and every substance around us, is full of the electric fluid; but we do not constantly perceive it. A little friction, however, develops it, and it sends out a hasty spark. And so in the moral world—a slight chafing, a single turn of some wheel in the social machinery—and there comes, like the electric spark, a flashing glance of the eye, a hasty word, perhaps a muttered oath—that sounds ominous and awful as the tone of distant thunder! What is it that the little machinery of the electrical operator develops? It is the same power, that gathering its tremendous forces, rolls through the firmament, and rends the mountains in its might. And just as true is it, that the little round of our

daily cares and occupations, the humble mechanism of daily life, bears witness to that moral power, which, only extended, exalted, enthroned above, is the dread and awful majesty of the heavens.

But let us return to our proposition. *Every thing is moral*, and therefore, as we have said, great and majestic ; but let us for a few moments confine ourselves to the simple consideration, that every thing in its bearings and influences is moral.

All times and seasons are moral ; the serene and bright morning—we have said—that wakening of all nature to life ; that silence of the early dawn, as it were the silence of expectation ! that freshening glow, that new inspiration of life, as if it came from the breath of heaven ; but the holy eventide also,—its cooling breeze, its falling shade, its hushed and sober hour ; the sultry noontide, too, and the solemn midnight ; and spring-time and chastening autumn ; and summer that unbars our gates and carries us forth amidst the ever-renewed wonders of the world ; and winter that gathers us around the evening hearth : all these as they pass, touch by turns the springs of the spiritual life in us, and are conducting that life to good or evil. The very passing of time, without any reference now to its seasons, develops in us much that is moral. For what is the passing of time, swifter or slower—what are its lingering and its hastening, but indications—but expressions often, of the state of our own minds ; it hastens often, because we are wisely and well employed ; it lingers, it hangs heavily upon us, because our minds are unfurnished, unenlightened, unoccupied with good thoughts, with the fruitful themes of virtue ; or because we have lost almost all virtue in unreasonable and outrageous impatience. Yes, the

idle watch-hand often points to something within us; the very dial-shadow falls upon the conscience!

The course of time on earth is marked by changes of heat and cold, storm and sunshine; all this too is moral. The weather,—dull theme of comment as it is often found—is to be regarded with no indifference as a moral cause. For, does it not produce unreasonable anxieties, or absolutely sinful complainings? Have none who hear me ever had reason to be shocked to find themselves *angry* with the elements; vexed with chafing heat, or piercing cold, or the buffeting storm; and ready, when encountering nature's resistance, almost to return buffet for buffet?

But let us turn from the course of inanimate nature, to matters in which our own agency is more distinct and visible.

Go with me to any farm-house in the land, and let us see what is passing there, and what in the lofty and spiritual import of its humble history. It is the theatre of strenuous toils and besetting cares. Within doors is work to be done; that work which is proverbially "*never done*:" and without, the soil is to be tilled, the weeds and brambles are to be rooted up, fences are to be builded—of wood or stone—and to be kept in repair; and all this is to be done with tools and instruments that are not perfect, but must be continually mended; the axe and the scythe grow dull with use; the plough and the harrow are sometimes broken; the animals which man brings in to assist his labors, have no instincts to make them do the very thing he wishes; they must be trained to the yoke and the collar, with much pains and some danger.

Now the evil in all this, is not the task that is to be performed, but the grand mistake that is made about the spi-

ritual purpose and character of that task. Most men look upon such a state of life as mere labor, if not vexation; and many regard it as a state of inferiority and almost of degradation. They *must work*, in order to obtain sustenance, and that is all they know about this great dispensation of labor. But why did not the Almighty cast man's lot beneath the quiet shades and amid embosoming groves and hills, with no such task to perform; with nothing to do, but to rise up and eat, and to lie down and rest? Why did he ordain that *work* should be done, in all the dwellings of life, and upon every productive field, and in every busy city and on every ocean wave? Because—to go back to the original reason—it pleased God to give man a nature destined to higher ends than indolent repose and irresponsible indulgence. And because, in the next place, for developing the energies of such a nature, *work* was the proper element. I am but repeating perhaps, what I have said before to you, but I feel that in taking this position, I am standing upon one of the great moral landmarks which ought to guide the course of all mankind; but on which, seen through a mist or not seen at all, the moral fortunes of millions are fatally wrecked. Could the toiling world but see that the scene of their daily life is all spiritual, that the very implements of their toil, or the fabrics they weave, or the merchandize they barter, were all designed for spiritual ends; what a sphere of the noblest improvement might their daily lot then be? What a revolution might this single truth produce in the condition and character of the whole world? But now, for a man to gird himself for spiritual improvement—what is it? Why, with most men, it is to cast off the soiled and dusty garments of toil—the slough of mere

worldly drudgery as they are called—and to put on the Sunday suit and go to church, or to sit down and read a book. Good employments are these, but one special design of them is, to prepare the mind for the action of life. We are to hear and read, we are to meditate and pray, partly at least, for this end—that we may act well. The action of life is the great field for spiritual improvement. There is not one task of industry or business, whether in field or forest, on the wharf or the exchange, but it has spiritual ends. There is not one of the cares or crosses of our daily labor, but it was especially ordained, to nurture in us patience, calmness, gentleness, disinterestedness, magnanimity. Nor is there one tool or implement of toil, but it is a part of the great spiritual instrumentality.

Every thing in life, then, I repeat, is essentially spiritual. Every relation in life is so. The relations of parent, child, brother, sister, friend, associate, husband, wife, are throughout every living tie and thrilling nerve that binds them together, *moral*. They cannot subsist a day nor an hour, without putting the mind to a trial of its truth fidelity, forbearance, disinterestedness.

But let us take the case of the parent—of the young mother, for instance. She may have passed her youth in much thoughtlessness; in a round of fashionable engagements that have left her little time to think, even when approaching the most solemn relationships of life; and she may have become a wife and mother, before she has settled, or even meditated, any reasonable plan or principle of life and of duty. Now, I am not about to say that the new charge committed to her hands, brings with it many obvious duties and strong obligations; but I desire you to observe how, what is moral in the case, is

thrust upon her ; as if a hand were suddenly stretched forth into her path, with movement and gesture that bade her pause and consider. For, *what* is in that path ? It is a being, though but a little child, in whom is suddenly revealed that awful attribute, the indomitable will. That will, perhaps, utters itself in a scream of passion ; it stamps upon the ground in a fury of anger ; it vents itself in tears ; or flashes in lightning from the eye. Yes, the being that a few days before was an unconscious and helpless infant in her arms, has all at once put on the terrific attribute of will ; and its astonished guardian stands aghast, as if an uncaged lion had broken upon her path. *What*, then, is in that path ? I answer, it is what nothing but moral firmness can fairly meet, and nothing but the gentleness and patience of piety and prayer can ever successfully and wisely manage, control and subdue ! And I say again, that if moral action, if religious consideration was never before awakened, that very epoch, that very hour, might reasonably be the commencement, with her, of a complete and spiritual regeneration ! For nothing less than actual regeneration from a thoughtless, self-indulgent life, ever did, or ever can, prepare any one thoroughly and faithfully to discharge the duties of a parent.

Again, every thing in the condition of life is moral ; wealth, the means of lavish expense, or the argument for avaricious hoarding ; poverty, the task-master that exacts labor, or inflicts self-denial ; mediocrity of means, the necessity, the vexatious necessity, as some will consider it, of attending to the little items of expense, or the mortifying inferiority to others, in the splendor of equipages and establishments ; trade, the splendid success, the fortunate

speculation, the disappointed hope, the satisfactory endorsement, the dishonored note, the sharp bargain—all moral; the professions and callings of life, some making their incumbents unreasonably proud, others making their equally useful agents, unreasonably humble. When we look upon things in this light, how moral is every thing around us! This great city is one extended scene of moral action. There is not a blow struck in it, but has a purpose, and a purpose ultimately good or bad, and therefore moral. There is not an action performed but it has a motive; and motives are the very sphere of morality. These equipages in our streets, these houses and their furniture—what symbols are they of what is moral, and how are they, in a thousand ways, ministering to right or wrong feeling? You may have thought that you were to receive the teachings of morality and religion only by resorting to church; but take your seat in your well-furnished, perhaps, splendid apartment, and there is not an object around you but may minister to the good or bad state of your mind. It is a little empire of which your mind is the creator. From many a trade and occupation and art in life, you have gathered contributions to its comfort or splendor. The forest, the field, the ore-bed, the ocean—all elements, fire, water, earth, air, have yielded their supplies to form this dwelling-place, this palace of your thoughts. Furniture, whose materials came from beyond the sea; polished marbles wrought from the quarries of Italy; carpets from the looms of England; the luxurious couch, and the shaded evening lamp—of what are all these the symbols? What emotions do they awaken in you? Be they emotions of pride, or be they emotions of gratitude; be they thoughts of self-indulgence

only, or thoughts, merciful thoughts, of the thousands who are destitute of all the comforts of life—what a moral complexion do they bear?

Nay, and this spiritual dispensation of life may press down upon a man in a way he little thinks of. For how possible is it, that amidst boundless wealth, in its most gorgeous mansion, and surrounded by every thing that can minister to pleasure, a family may be more miserable than the poorest family in the land!—the children, spoiled by indulgence, made vain and proud by their over-estimated advantages, made peevish, impatient, and imbecile, by perpetual dependence on others, and not half so happy even, as thousands of children who are half clad and unshod, and who never knew what it was to give a command; their elders, injured or ruined in constitution by luxuries, enfeebled and dulled in mind by the hard tasks that are imposed on the functions of the body, and yet absurdly puffed up with pride that they can live splendidly and fare sumptuously every day—how possible is it, I repeat, that coarse fare and a pallet of straw, may turn out to be better than the bed of down, and the loaded table, and the cellar of choice wines! Ay, the loaded table, what a long moral account, accumulating day by day, through years, may have been written upon that table; and payment, perchance, must be made on the couch of agony!

Again, society is throughout, a moral scene. I cannot enlarge upon this point as it would be easy to do, but must content myself with one or two observations. Conversation, for instance, is full of inward trials and exigencies. It is impossible that imperfect minds should commune together without a constant trial of their tempers

and virtues. Though of the most friendly and kindred spirit, they will have different opinions, or varying moods; one will be quicker or slower of apprehension than the other on some point; one will think the other wrong, and the other will feel as if it were unkindly or uncharitably construed; and there will be dispute, and pertinacity, and implication, and retort, and defence, and complaint; and well, if there are not sarcasm and anger. And well, if these harsh sounds do not invade the sanctuary of home! Well, if they do not bring disturbance to the social board, and discord amidst the voices of music and song!

Is not every thing, then, in social life, moral?—really a matter of religion—a trial of conscience? You enter your dwelling. The first thing that you see—and it may be a very slight thing—may call upon you for an act of self-command. The thing may not be as it should be; but that is not the most material consideration; that is not what most concerns you. The material consideration is, that your mind may be put out of its proper place, that you may not be as you should be. You go from your door. The sight of the first man you behold, may call for a trial of all your virtues. You enter into the throng of society. Every turn of your eye, may present an occasion for the exercise of your self-respect, your calmness, your modesty, your candor, your forgetfulness of self, your love of others. You visit the sick, or necessitous. Every step may be one of ostentation, or at least of self-applause; or it may be one of true generosity and goodness. You stand amidst the throng of men; and your position has many relations; you are higher or lower than others, or you are an equal and a competitor; and

none of these relations can be wisely sustained without the aid of strong religious considerations. Or, your position is fixed and unalterable. You are a parent ; and you give a command or make a request. A thoughtful observer will perceive the very tone of it to be moral ; and a friend may know that it has cost twenty years of self-discipline to form that gentle tone ! Or you are a child ; and you obey or disobey ; and let me tell you that the act, nay the very manner of your act, is so vitally good or bad, that it may send a thrill of gladness, or a pang, sharp as a sword, to the heart of your parent. Or you are a pupil ; and can any act or look be indifferent, which by its levity, or negligence, or ill-humor, adds to the already trying task of those who spend anxious days and nights for you ?

But I must leave these specifications, which I find indeed cannot well be carried into the requisite detail in the pulpit ; but I must leave them also for the sake of presenting in close, one or two general reflections on the whole subject.

I observe then, that the consideration of every thing in our life, as moral, as spiritual, would impart an unequalled interest and dignity to life.

First, an unequalled interest.

It is often said that the poet, or the man of genius, is alive to a world around him, to aspects of nature and life, which others do not perceive. This is not strictly true ; for when he describes his impressions he finds a responsive feeling in the breasts of his readers. The truth is—and herein lies much of his power and greatness—that he is vividly and distinctly conscious of those things which other men feel indeed, but feel so vaguely, that they are

scarcely aware, till told, of them. So it is in spiritual things. A world of spiritual objects, and influences, and relations, lies around us all. We all vaguely deem it to be so ; but what a charmed life—how like to that of genius or poetic inspiration—is his, who communes with the spiritual scene around him ; who hears the voice of the spirit in every sound ; who sees its signs in every passing form of things, and feels its impulse, in all action, passion, being !

“The kingdom of heaven,” says our Saviour, “is like a treasure hid in a field.” There is a treasure in the field of life, richer than all its visible wealth ; which whoso finds, shall be happier than if he had discovered a mine of gold. It is related that the mine of Potosi was unveiled, simply by tearing a bush from the mountain side. Thus near to us lie the mines of wisdom ; thus unsuspected they lie all around us. “The word,” saith Moses, speaking of this very wisdom. “is very nigh thee.” There is a secret in the simplest things, a wonder in the plainest, a charm in the dullest. The veil that hides all this requires but a hand stretched out, to draw it aside.

We are all naturally seekers of wonders ; we travel far to see sights, to look upon the mountain height or the rush of waters, to gaze upon galleries of art or the majesty of old ruins ; and yet a greater than all these is here. The world-wonder is all around us ; the wonder of setting suns and evening stars—the wonder of the magic spring-time—of tufted bank and blossoming tree ; the wonder of the Infinite Divinity, and of his boundless revelation. As I stood yesterday and looked upon a tree, I observed little jets as of smoke, darting from one and another of its bursting buds. Oh ! that the secrets

of nature might thus burst forth before us ; that the secret wisdom of the world might thus be revealed to us ! Is there any splendor to be found in distant travels, beyond that which sits its morning throne in the golden East ; any dome sublimer than that of heaven ; any beauty fairer than that of the verdant and blossoming earth ; any place, though invested with all the sanctities of old time, like that home which is hushed and folded within the embrace of the humblest wall and roof ? And yet all these—this is the point at which I aim—all these are but the symbols of things far greater and higher. All this is but the spirits' clothing. In this vesture of time is wrapped the immortal nature ; in this brave show of circumstance and form, stands revealed the stupendous reality. Break forth, earth-bound spirit ! and *be*, that thou art—a living soul—communing with thyself—communing with God—and thou shalt find thy vision, eternity—thine abode, infinity—thy home in the bosom of all-embracing love !

“ So build we up the being that we are ;
 Thus deeply drinking in the soul of things,
 We shall be wise perforce.

Whate'er we see,
 Whate'er we feel, by agency direct
 Or indirect, shall tend to feed and nurse
 Our faculties, shall fix in calmer seats
 Of moral strength, and raise to loftier height
 Of love divine, our intellectual soul.”

And thus, in the next place, shall we find that all the real dignity and importance that belong to human life, belong to every human life ; e. i. to life in every condi-

tion. It is the right mind, the right apprehension of things only, that is wanting, to make the peasant's cottage as interesting, as intrinsically glorious, as the prince's palace. I wish that this view of life might be taken by us, not only because it is the right view, but because it would tend effectually to promote human happiness, and especially contentment. Most men look upon their employments and abodes as common-place and almost as mean. The familiar objects around them, appear to them almost as vulgar. They feel as if there could be no dignity nor charm in acting and living as they are compelled to do. The plastered wall, and the plain deal boards, the humble table, spread with earthen, or wooden dishes—how poor does it all seem to them! Oh! could they live in palaces of marble, clothed with silken tapestries, and filled with gorgeous furniture, and canopies of state—it were something. But now, to the spiritual vision, what is it all? The great problem of humanity is wrought out in the humblest abodes; no more than this is done in the highest. A human heart throbs beneath the beggars gabardine; it is no more than this, that stirs with its beating, the prince's mantle. What is it, I say, that makes life to be life indeed—makes all its grandeur and power? The beauty of love, the charm of friendship, the sacredness of sorrow, the heroism of patience, the soul-exalting prayer, the noble self-sacrifice—these are the priceless treasures and glories of humanity; and are these *things of condition*? On the contrary, are not all places, all scenes, alike clothed with the grandeur and charm of virtues like these? And compared with these, what are the gildings, the gauds and shows of wealth and splendor! Nay, compared with every man's abode—his sky-dome and earth-dwel-

ling—what can any man's abode be? Thou livest in a world of beauty and grandeur. Who liveth in a fairer a more magnificent world than thou? It is a dwelling which God hath made for thee; does that consideration deprive it of all its goodliness? And suppose thou wast rich, and wast surrounded with all the gaiety and grandeur of wealth. How might they hide from thee, alas! all the spiritual meanings of thy condition! How might the stately wall and the rich ceiling hide heaven from thy sight! Let thine eye be opened to the vision of life, and what state then, what mere visible grandeur, can be compared to them? It is all but a child's bauble, to the divine uses of things, the glorious associations, the beatific visions that are opened to thee! God hath thus "magnified," and to use the strong and figurative language of our text, "set his heart" upon the humblest fortunes of humanity.

There are those who, with a kind of noble but mistaken aspiration, are asking for a life which shall in its form and outward course, be more spiritual and divine than that which they are obliged to live. They think that if they could devote themselves entirely to what are called labors of philanthropy, to visiting the poor and sick, that would be well and worthy—and so it would be. They think that if it could be inscribed on their tomb-stone, that they had visited a million of couches of disease, and carried balm and soothing to them, *that* would be a glorious record—and so it would be. But let me tell you, that the million occasions will come,—ay, and in the ordinary paths of life, in your homes and by your fire-sides—wherein you may act as nobly, as if all your life long, you visited beds of sickness and pain. Yes, I say, the

million occasions will come, varying every hour, in which you may restrain your passions, subdue your hearts to gentleness and patience, resign your own interest for another's advantage, speak words of kindness and wisdom, raise the fallen and cheer the fainting and sick in spirit, and soften and assuage the weariness and bitterness of the mortal lot. These cannot indeed be written on your tombs, for they are not one series of specific actions, like those of what is technically denominated philanthropy. But in them I say, you may discharge offices, not less gracious to others, nor less glorious for yourselves than the self-denials of the far-famed sisters of charity, than the labors of Howard or Oberlin, or than the sufferings of the martyred host of God's elect. They shall not be written on your tombs; but they are written deep in the hearts of men—of friends, of children, of kindred all around you: they are written in the secret book of the great account!

How divine a life would this be! For want of this spiritual insight, the earth is desolate, and the heavens are but a sparkling vault or celestial mechanism. Nothing but this spirit of God in us, can "create that new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." For want of this, life is to many, dull and barren, or trifling, uninteresting, unsatisfactory—without sentiment, without poetry and philosophy alike, without interpretation or meaning or lofty motive. Whirled about by incessant change, making an oracle of circumstance and an end of vanity, such persons know not why they live. For want of this spiritual insight, man degrades himself to the worship of condition, and loses the sense of what he is. He passes by a grand house, or a blazoned equipage, and bows his whole lofty being before them—forgetting that

he himself, is greater than a house—greater than an equipage—greater than the world. Oh! to think, that this walking majesty of earth should so forget itself, that this spiritual power in man, should be frittered away, and dissipated upon trifles and vanities—how lamentable is it! There is no Gospel for such a being; for the Gospel lays its foundations in the spiritual nature. There is nothing for man, but what lies in his spirit—in spiritual insight—in spiritual interpretation. Without this, not only is heaven nothing, but the world is nothing. The great Apostle has resolved it all in few words. “There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit—but to all others there is condemnation,—sorrow, pain, vanity, death. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

DISCOURSE III.

LIFE CONSIDERED AS AN ARGUMENT FOR FAITH
AND VIRTUE.

MATTHEW IV. 4. BUT HE ANSWERED AND SAID, IT IS WRITTEN THAT MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDETH OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.

THE necessity to man of something above all the resources of physical life, is the subject to which, in this discourse, I shall invite your attention.

In two previous discourses on human life which I have addressed to you, I have endeavored to show, in the first place and in general, that this life possesses a deep moral significance, notwithstanding all that is said of it, as a series of toils, trifles and varieties, and in the next place, and in pursuance of the same thought, that every thing in life is positively moral—not merely that it is morally significant, but that it has a positive moral efficiency for good or for evil. And now I say in the third place, that the argument for the moral purpose, is clenched by the necessity of that purpose, to the well-being of life itself. “Man,”—

says our Saviour, with solemn authority—"shall not live by bread alone, but"—by what? how few seem to believe in it!—"by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

How few seem to believe in it—how few do believe this, in the highest sense—and yet how true is it! Into how large a part even of the most ordinary life, enters a certain kind and degree of spirituality! You cannot do business, without some faith in man—that is in the spiritual part of man. You cannot dig in the earth, without a reliance on the unseen result. You cannot step or think or reason, without confiding in the inward, the spiritual principles of your nature. All the affections and bonds, and hopes and interests of life, centre in the spiritual. Break that central bond, and you know that the world would rush to chaos.

But something higher than this indirect recognition is demanded in our argument. Let us proceed to take it up in form.

There are two principles then, involved in the moral aim, and embracing its whole scope, whose necessity I propose now to consider. They are faith and virtue; the convictions, that is to say, on which virtue reposes, and the virtue itself. Something above a man's physical life must there be to help it—something above it in its faith—something beyond it, in its attainment.

In speaking of faith as necessary to human life, I need not here undertake to define its nature! This will sufficiently appear as we proceed. What I wish to speak of, is, in general, a faith in religion—in God, in spiritual truth, and hopes. What I maintain in general, is the indispensableness to human life of this religious faith. My

present purpose is, to offer some distinct and independent considerations in support of this faith; and these considerations I find based, imbedded, deep-founded in human life.

To illustrate the general character of the view which I wish to present, let us make a comparison. Let it be admitted then, and believed, on the one hand, that there is a God; let the teachings of Jesus, also, be received—that this God is our Father; that he has a paternal interest in our welfare and improvement; that he has provided the way and the means of our salvation from sin and ruin; that he hears our prayers and will help our endeavors; that he has destined us, if faithful, to a future, and blessed and endless life; and then, how evident is it that, upon this system of faith, we can live calmly, endure patiently, labor resolutely, deny ourselves cheerfully, hope steadfastly, and “be conquerors,” in the great struggle of life, “yea and more than conquerors, through Christ who has loved us!” But take away any one of these principles; and where are we? Say that there is no God, or that there is no way opened for hope and prayer, and pardon and triumph, or that there is no heaven to come, no rest for the weary, no blessed land for the sojourner and the pilgrim; and where are we? and what are we? What are we, indeed, but the sport of chance, and the victims of despair? What are we, but hapless wanderers upon the face of the desolate and forsaken earth—surrounded by darkness, struggling with obstacles, distracted with doubts, misled by false lights—not merely wanderers who have lost their way, but wanderers, alas! who have no way, no prospect, no home? What are we, but doomed, deserted voyagers, upon the dark and stormy sea, thrown amidst the baffling waves,

without a compass, without a course, with no blessed haven in the distance to invite us to its welcome rest?

What now is the conclusion from this comparison? It is that religious faith is indispensable to the attainment of the great ends of life. But that which is necessary to life, must have been designed to be a part of it. When you study the structure of an animal, when you examine its parts, you say "this was designed for food; there must be food for this being, somewhere; neither growth nor life is possible without it." And when you examine the structure of a human mind and understand its powers and wants, you say with equal confidence, "this being was made for faith; there must be something, somewhere, for him to believe in; he cannot healthfully grow, he cannot happily live, without it."

The argument which I now urge for faith, let me distinctly say, is not that which is suggested by worldly prudence—that religion is a good thing for the State, useful to society, necessary for the security of property; and therefore to be received and supported. The concession that the great interests of the world cannot be sustained without religion, and therefore that religion is necessary, is considered by many, I fear, as yielding not to reasoning fairly, but to policy. This was the view of religion, doubtless, which pervaded the ancient systems of polytheism. It was a powerful state engine; a useful social economy; and hence, with multitudes, it was little more than a splendid ritual. It was not a personal thing. It was not received as true, but only as expedient. Now, that which I maintain is this—not that religion is necessary, and therefore respectable; not that religion is necessa-

ry, and therefore to be supported in order that the people may be restrained and managed, and held in check ; but my argument is, that religion is necessary, and therefore *true*. The indispensableness of religion, I hold, is not merely a reason for its being supported, but a reason for its being believed in.

The point maintained, let me now more distinctly observe, is this ; that in every kind of existence, in every system of things, there are certain primary elements or powers, which are essential to its just order and true well-being, and that under a wise Providence, these elements must be regarded as bearing the stamp of divine appointment and authority. Find that which is necessary to any being or thing, and you find that which was designed to be a part of that being or thing. Find that which, in the long run, injures, hurts, or hinders ; find that which is fatal to the growth, progress or perfection of any being or thing, and you find that which does not properly belong to it. He who would cultivate a tree, knows that a soil, and a certain internal structure, are necessary to that end. And if he should, with that end in view, set himself to deprive it of those essential elements of growth, his act would be one of perfect fatuity.

Let us dwell upon this point and the illustration of it, a little longer.

In the human body, we say, food is necessary. Stint it, and the body languishes ; cut off the supply, and it ceases to exist. So in the human body, the circulation of the blood is necessary. Interrupt it, and the body is diseased ; stop it, and the body dies. How truly has our Saviour denominated his doctrine, the

very food and life-blood of the soul. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you; whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life;" meaning, according to a figurative and well-know use of language at that time, his spirit and doctrine. And how manifestly true is it! Cut off from any soul all the principles that Jesus taught—the faith in a God, in immortality, in virtue, in essential rectitude; and how inevitably will it sink into sin, misery, darkness and ruin! Nay, cut off all sense of these truths, and the man sinks at once to the grade of the animal.

Again, in the system of the universe, there is one principle that is essential to its order; the principle of gravitation. Sever this bond that holds all worlds and systems together, and they would instantly fly into wild and boundless chaos. But society, in its great relations, is as much the creation of heaven, as the system of the universe. Sever then, all the moral bonds that hold it together; cut off from it every conviction of truth and integrity—of an authority above it, and of a conscience within it; and society would immediately rush to disorder, anarchy and ruin. If then, to hold society together and to bind it in happy order, religion be as necessary as gravitation is to hold together the frame of nature, it follows that religion is as really a principle of things as gravitation; it is as certain and true.

Once more; animal life has its law—instinct. And when we look at the races of animals, and see how indispensable this law is to their welfare; when we see

that without this principle, they would inevitably fall into misery and destruction, we have no doubt that instinct is a heaven-ordained law. Equally necessary to *man*, is some law. What is it? He has appetites, propensities, passions, like the animal; but he has no instincts to control them and keep them safe. What law then must *he* have? Will it be said that prudence, the love of himself, the love of happiness, is sufficient to guide him? That will depend upon his idea of happiness. If it is purely sensual, then he is left to the impulses of sense; and that too without the guardianship of instinct, and with all the additional peril, in which the infinite cravings of his soul put him, and against which, indeed, no barrier of instinct or prudence could ever defend him. But if his idea of happiness includes a spiritual good, that implies a faith in the spiritual; and this is the very faith for which I contend. And I contend, too, that this faith—faith in moral principles, faith in virtue and in God—is as necessary for the guidance of a man, as instinct is for the guidance of an animal. This, I believe, will not be denied. I believe that every man must be conscious that to be given up to his sensual impulses, without any faith in virtue or in God, would be as certain ruin to him, as it would be to an animal to be sent into the world without the control of instinct. And if it be so, then has the one principle, a place as truly appointed, a mission as truly authentic in God's providence, as the other.

But further; man and animal too, need more than safety. They need some positive good—something that satisfies. The animal has it, in the pleasures of

sensation. But will these suffice for a man? It would be an insult to any one, feeling as a man, formally to answer the question. But if higher pleasures are demanded, these must be the pleasures of the soul. And these pleasures must depend on certain principles; they must recognize a soul; that is, they must recognize the properties and responsibilities of a soul; they must recognize a conscience and the sense of an authority above us; and these are the principles of faith.

Moreover, the soul on earth is placed in fearful straits of affliction and temptation. This too, it would be but an insult to human feeling formally to prove. And in this view, I maintain, and I only maintain what every reflecting man must feel to be true, that no tolerable scheme of life—no tolerable scheme of a rational, tried, suffering, and yet improving and happy existence—can be formed, which leaves out the religious principle, the principle of faith. I do not ask you to receive this as what is said in the pulpit, or is wont to be laid down in religious discourse; but I desire you to see that it stands and stands eternally, in the very truth of things. A man *cannot* suffer and be patient; he *cannot* struggle and conjure; he *cannot* improve and be happy, without conscience, without hope, without God in the world. Necessity is laid upon us to embrace the great truths of religion and to live by them, to live happily; and can the language of this necessity be mistaken? Can it be, that while there is one thing, above all others, necessary to support, strengthen, guide and comfort us—that one thing—upon which moreover, the hearts of the wise and good have ever rested,—should be, of all things in the world, the thing most false, treacherous, and delusive?

It would be strange indeed, if it were so ; and strange would be the assertion even to the point of incredibility. What !—we should say,—has every thing in the universe certain laws and principles for its action—the star in its orbit, the animal in its activity, the human body in its functions—and has the human soul nothing to guide it ? Nay, man as a physical being has strong and sure supports. Has he none as a spiritual being ? He knows how to feed and nourish his body ; there are laws for that. Must his soul die, for want of aliment—for want of guidance ? For his physical action too, he has laws of art. The builder, the sower, the toiler at the oar and the anvil, has certain principles to go by. Has the **MAN** none at all ? Nay more, the wants of *animal* sense are regarded. In every hedge, and water-pool, and mountain-top, there is supply. For the rational soul is there no provision ? From the lofty pine, rocked in the darkening tempest, the cry of the young raven is heard. And for the cry and the call of all that want and sorrow and agony that overshadow and rive the human heart, is there no answer ?

But I cannot argue the point any farther ; and I need not ; it is too plain. The total rejection of all moral and religious belief, strikes out a principle from human nature as essential to it, as gravitation is to inanimate nature, as instinct is to animal life, or as the circulation of the blood, to the human body.

It is on this principle that it is said, “he that believeth not, shall be damned.” This is apt to be regarded as a harsh declaration ; but the truth is, it is only the assertion of a simple fact ; and of a fact which every thoughtful and feeling mind knows to be true. The Bible

speaks, as we should speak to the famished man, saying "eat—drink ; or die !" Its words—"death," and "damnation"—mean nothing else but that unavoidable misery which must spring from boundless wants unsatisfied—boundless wants which nothing but boundless objects, the objects of faith, can satisfy.

I have now considered life as an argument, and an independent argument, for faith. It would be easy to spread this view of life, over the whole ground of that preliminary discussion, which introduces the evidences of Christianity ; and to show that the presumption of reason and experience, and the whole weight of that presumption, instead of being, as is commonly supposed, against the believer, is, in fact, in his favor. But the space which I designed to give to this topic, is already taken up by the few hints which I have laid before you ; and I must now pass to the other branch of my discourse, and occupy the time that remains to me, with the consideration of life as an argument for accomplishing its moral design—in other words, as a motive to virtue. This too, as well as the former, I propose to consider as an independent topic.

Thus then, I state it. Let what will, be true, or be false : admit ever so little into your creed, reject ever so much ; nay, go to the uttermost limits of skepticism ; deny revelation ; deny the "elder Scripture" written in the heart ; deny the very being of a God!—what then ? I will now express no horror nor wonder, though I might do so : I will speak to you as a calm reasoner : and I say, what then ? Why, here you are, a living being—there can be no skepticism about that ; here you are a living being—alive to happiness, alive to misery ; here you are, in vicissitude, in uncertainty, in all the accidents of a

mingled lot, in conditions and relations that touch all the secret springs of the soul ; here you are, amidst a frail life, and daily approaching to certain death ; and if you say you have no concern nor care for the end of all this, then have you forfeited all claim to the attributes of a reasonable nature, and are not to be addressed as a reasonable creature.

But no one says this. No one refuses to come within the range of those considerations that bind him to fulfil his destiny, to accomplish the legitimate objects of his being, to be upright, virtuous, and pure. No one rejects this bond in theory, however he may resist it in practice.

Let us see, then, how strong this bond is. Let us look at life, as a social, and as an individual lot.

God has ordained that life should be a social condition. We are members of a civil community. The life, the more than life of that community, depends upon its moral condition. Public spirit, intelligence, uprightness, temperance, kindness, domestic purity, will make it a happy community. Prevailing selfishness, dishonesty, intemperance, libertinism, crime, will make it a miserable community. Look, then, at this life which a whole people is living. Look at the heavings of its mighty heart, at the throbbings of the universal pulse of existence. Look at the stream of life, as it flows, with ten thousand intermingled branches and channels, through all the homes of human love. Listen to that sound as of many waters, that rapturous jubilee, or that mournful sighing, that comes up from the congregated dwellings of a whole nation.

I know that to many the public is a kind of vague abstraction : and that what is done against the public—the

public interest, law, or virtue—presses lightly on the conscience. Yet what is this public, but a vast expansion of individual life?—an ocean of tears, an atmosphere of sighs; or a surrounding world of joy and gladness? It suffers with the suffering of millions: it rejoices with the joy of millions. Who then art thou—private man or public man, agent or contractor, senator or magistrate, cabinet secretary or lofty president—who art thou that darest, with indignity and wrong, to strike the bosom of the public welfare? Who art thou, that with vices, like the daggers of a parricide, darest to pierce that mighty heart, in which the ocean of existence is flowing?

But have we, in this general view, presented all that belongs to social life? No; there are other relations. You are a parent or a child, a brother or a sister, a husband, wife, friend, or associate. What an unequalled interest lies in the virtue of every one whom thou lovest? Ay, in his virtue, nowhere but in his virtue, is garnered up the incomparable treasure. Thy brother, thy husband, thy friend,—what carest thou for, compared with what thou carest for his honor, his fidelity, his kindness? Thy parent—how venerable is his rectitude!—how sacred his reputation!—and what blight is there to thee, like his dishonor! Thy child—ay, thy child!—be thou heathen or christian, thou would'st have him do well: thou hast poured out all the fulness of parental love in the one desire, that he may do well; that he may be worthy of thy cares and thy freely bestowed gains; that he may walk in the way of honor and happiness. And yet he cannot walk one step in that way without virtue. Such, yes such, is life in its relationship. A thousand clasping ties embrace it; each one sensitive and thrilling to the touch;

each one like the strings of a delicate instrument, capable of sweet melodies and pleasures; but each one, wounded, lacerated, broken, by rudeness, by anger, and by guilty indulgence.

But that life, my friends, whose springs of powerful action are felt in every department and relationship of society; whose impulses are abroad every where, like waves upon the boundless sea—that life gathers up and concentrates all its energies upon the individual mind and heart. To that individual experience—to mine, to yours—I would last appeal.

The personal experience of life, I say—by what strange fatality is it, that it can escape the calls which religion and virtue make upon it? Oh! if it were something else; if it were something duller than it is; if it *could*, by any process, be made insensible to pain and pleasure; if the human heart were but made a thing as hard as adamant, then were the case a different one; then might avarice, ambition, sensuality channel out their paths in it, and make it their beaten way, and none might wonder at it, or protest against it. If we *could* but be patient under the load of a worldly life; if we could—Oh! Heaven! how impossible!—if we could bear the burthen, as beasts of burthen bear it; then as beasts might we bend all our thoughts to the earth, and no call from the great heavens above us, might startle us from our plodding and earthly course.

But to what a being, to what a nature, am I permitted in the name of truth and religion to speak? If I might use the freedom with which one would speak to a son, who was casting off all holy bonds, I should say—“you are not a stone; you are not an earth-clod; you are not an

insensible brute ; yet, you ought to be such, to refuse the call of reason and conscience. Your body should be incapable of pain and your soul of remorse. But such you are not and cannot make yourself." When the great dispensation of life presses down upon you, my friend, how is it with you ? You weep ; you suffer and sorrow. I hold every human being to that. Think what we will ; speculate as wildly, doubt as rashly, as we can, yet here is a matter of fact. Cold, dead, earthly, or philosophic, as we may be, yet we are beings that weep, that suffer and sorrow. What ! sorrow and agony—can they dwell in the same heart with worldliness and irreligion, and desire no other companionship ? Tell me not of the recklessness of melancholy and disappointment, or the desperation of vice. Say not, *young* man, that you care nothing what befalls in this miserable and worthless life. Recklessness, with its scornful lip and its smothered anger—desperation, with its knitted brow and its glaring eye—I have seen it ; and what is it ? What is it, but agony—agony which almost chokes the voice that is all the while striving to tell us how calm and indifferent it is ?

But let us look at the matter, coolly—coolly as if it were a matter of the most deliberate calculation. You are a toiler in the field of life. You would not consent to labor, for a week, nor for a day—no, and you will not lift one burthen from the earth, without a recompense. Are you willing to bear those burthens of the heart—fear, anxiety, disappointment, trouble—compared with which the severest toil is a pleasure and a pastime ; and all this without any object or use ? You are a lover of pleasure. And you would not voluntarily forego an hour's pleasure without some object to be gained by it—the preservation

of health, or the prospect of future, compensatory enjoyments. Are you willing then to suffer—to be sick or afflicted—for so, from time to time, does the dispensation of life press upon you—are you willing to have days and months lost to comfort and joy, overshadowed with calamity and grief, without any advantage, any compensation? You are a dealer in the merchandize of this world. You would not, without a return, barter away the most trifling article of that merchandize. Will you thus barter away the dearest treasures of your heart, the very sufferings of your heart? Will you sell the very life-blood from your failing frame and fading cheek, will you sell tears of bitterness and groans of anguish, for nothing? Can human nature—frail, feeling, sensitive, sorrowing human nature—afford to suffer for nothing?

I have touched now upon the darker coloring of human experience; but that experience, whether bright or dark, is all vivid; it is all, according to the measure of every one's power, earnest and affecting; it is all in its indications, solemn and sublime; it is all moving and monitory. In youth, in age, it is so; in mature vigor, in failing and declining strength; in health and in sickness; in joy and in sorrow; in the musings of solitude, and amidst the throng of men; in privacy and amidst the anxieties and intrigues of public station; in the bosom of domestic quietude, and alike in the press and shock of battle—every where, human life is a great and solemn dispensation. Man, suffering, enjoying, loving, hating, hoping, fearing,—now soaring to heaven, and now sinking to the grave—man is ever the creature of a high and stupendous destiny. In his bosom is wrapped up, a momentous, an all-comprehending experience, whose unfolding is to be, in ages and worlds, un-

known. Around this great action of existence, the curtains of time are drawn, but there are openings through them, to the visions of eternity. God from on high looks down upon this scene of human probation; Jesus hath interposed for it, with his teachings and his blood; heaven above, waits with expectation, hell from beneath, is moved at the fearful crisis; every thing, every thing that exists around us, every movement in nature, every counsel of providence, every interposition of heavenly grace, centres upon one point—upon one point—*the fidelity of man!*

Will he not be faithful—will he not be thoughtful—will he not do the work, that is given him to do? To his lot—such a lot; to his wants, weighing upon him like mountains; to his sufferings lacerating his bosom with agony; to his joys, offering foretastes of heaven; to all this tried and teaching life, will he not be faithful? Will not you? Shall not I, my brother? If not, what remains—what can remain, to be done for us? If we will not hear these things, neither should we believe though one rose from the dead. No; though the ghosts of the departed and the remembered, should come at midnight through the barred doors of our dwellings; though the sheeted dead should stalk through the very aisles of our churches; they could not more powerfully teach us than the dread realities of life—nay more, and those memories of mispent years too, those ghosts of departed opportunities, that point to our consciences and point to eternity, saying “work while the day lasts, for the night of death cometh in which no man can work!”

DISCOURSE IV.

LIFE IS WHAT WE MAKE IT.

EPISTLE OF PAUL TO TITUS I. 15.—UNTO THE PURE ARE ALL THINGS PURE.

AND to expand the same sentiment a little ; all things bear to us, a character corresponding with the state of our own minds. Life is what we make it ; and the world is what we make it.

I can conceive that to some who hear me, this may appear to be a very singular, if not extravagant statement. You look upon this life and upon this world, and you derive from them, it may be, a very different impression. You see the earth perhaps, only as a collection of blind, obdurate, inexorable elements and powers. You look upon the mountains that stand fast for ever ; you look upon the seas, that roll upon every shore their ceaseless tides ; you walk through the annual round of the seasons ; all things seem to be fixed—summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, growth and decay ; and so they are. But does not the mind, after all, spread its own hue over all these scenes ? Does not the cheerful man make

a cheerful world? Does not the sorrowing man make a gloomy world? Does not every mind make its own world? Does it not—as if indeed a portion of the Divinity were imparted to it—does it not almost *create* the scene around it? Its power, in fact, scarcely falls short of the theory of those philosophers, who have supposed that the world has no existence at all, but in our own minds. So again with regard to human life, it seems to many, probably, unconscious as they are of the mental and moral powers which control it, as if it were made up of fixed conditions, and of immense and impassible distinctions. But upon all conditions presses down one impartial law. To all situations, to all fortunes high or low, the *mind* gives their character. They are in effect, not what they are in themselves, but what they are, to the feeling of their possessors. The king upon his throne and amidst his court, may be a mean, degraded, miserable man; a slave, to ambition, to voluptuousness, to fear, to every low passion. The peasant in his cottage, may be the real monarch; the moral master of his fate; the free and lofty being—more than a prince in happiness—more than a king in honor. And shall the mere names which these men bear, blind us to the actual positions which they occupy amidst God's creation. No; beneath the all-powerful law of the heart, the master, is often a slave; and the slave—is master.

It has been maintained, I know, in opposition to the view which we take of life, that man is the creature of circumstances. But what is there in the circumstances of the slave to make him free in spirit, or of the monarch to make him, timid and time-serving? This doctrine of fate—that man is but a bubble upon the sea of his fortunes,

that he is borne a helpless and irresponsible being upon tide of events,—is no new doctrine, as some of its modern advocates seem to suppose ; it has always formed a leading part of the creed of Atheism. But I ask if the reverse of this doctrine is not obviously true ? Do not different men bring out of the same circumstances totally different results ? Does not that very difficulty, distress, poverty or misfortune, which breaks down one man, build up another, and make him strong ? It is the very attribute, the glory of a man ; it is the very power and mastery of that will which constitutes one of his chief distinctions from the brute, that he can bend the circumstances of his condition to the intellectual and moral purposes of his nature.

But it may be said, that the mind itself, is the offspring of culture ; that is to say, the creature of circumstances. This is true, indeed, of early childhood. But the moment that the faculty of moral will, is developed, a new element is introduced, which changes the whole complexion of the argument. Then a new power is brought upon the scene, and it is a ruling power. It is delegated power from heaven. There never was a being sunk so low, but God has thus given him the power to rise. God commands him to rise, and therefore, it is certain, that he can rise. Every man has the power and every man should use it, to make all situation, all trials and temptations conspire to the promotion of his virtue and happiness. In this, then, the only intelligible sense, man, so far from being the creature of circumstances, creates them,—controls them,—makes them, that is to say, to be all they are of evil or good to him as a moral being.

Life then is what we make it, and the world is what we

make it. Even our temporary moods of mind, and much more, our permanent character whether social or religious, may be appealed to as illustrative of this truth.

I. Observe, in the first place, the effect of our most casual moods of mind.

It is the same creation upon which the eyes of the cheerful and the melancholy man are fixed; yet how different are the aspects which it bears to them! To the one it is all beauty and gladness; "the waves of ocean roll in light, and the mountains are covered with day." It seems to him as if life went forth rejoicing upon every bright wave, and every shining bough, shaken in the breeze. It seems as if there were more than the eye seeth,—a presence—a presence of deep joy—among the hills and the vallies, and upon the bright waters. But now the gloomy man, stricken and sad at heart, stands idly or mournfully gazing at the same scene, and what is it? What is it, to him? The very light,—“Bright effluence of bright essence increate,”—yet the very light seems to him as a leaden pall thrown over the face of nature. All things wear to his eye a dull, dim, and sickly aspect. The great train of the seasons is passing before him, but he sighs and turns away, as if it were the train of a funeral procession; and he wonders within himself at the poetic representations and sentimental rhapsodies that are lavished upon a world so utterly miserable. Here, then, are two different worlds in which these two classes of beings live; and they are formed and made what they are, out of the very same scene, only by different states of mind in the beholders. The eye maketh that which it looks upon. The ear maketh its own melodies or discords. The world without reflects the world within.

II. Again, this life, this world is what we make it, by our social character; by our adaptation, or want of adaptation, to its social conditions, relationships and pursuits. To the selfish, to the cold and insensible, to the haughty and presuming, to the proud who demand more than they are likely to receive, to the jealous, who are always afraid they shall not receive enough, to the unreasonably sensitive about others' good or ill opinion, and in fine, to the violators of social laws, of all sorts,—the rude, the violent, the dishonest and the sensual,—to all these, the social condition, from its very nature; will present annoyances, disappointments, and pains, appropriate to their several characters. Every disposition and behavior has a kind of magnetic attraction, by which it draws to it, its like. Selfishness will hardly be a central point around which the benevolent affections will revolve; the cold-hearted may expect to be treated with coldness, and the proud with haughtiness, the passionate, with anger and the violent with rudeness; and those who forget the rights of others, must not be surprised if their own are forgotten; and those who forget their dignity, who stoop to the lowest embraces of sense, must not wonder, if others are not concerned to find their prostrate honor, and to lift it up to the remembrance and respect of the world. Thus, the bad make the social world they live in. So, also, do the good. To the gentle, how many will be gentle—to the kind, how many will be kind! How many does a lovely example win to goodness! How many does meekness subdue to a like temper, when they come into its presence! How many does sanctity purify—how many does it command to put away all earthly defilements, when they step upon its holy ground! Yes, a good man, a really good man, will find that there is good-

ness in the world ; and an honest man will find that there is honesty in the world ; a man of principle will find principle, yes, a principle of religious integrity, in the hearts of others. I know that this is sometimes denied, and denied with much scorn and self-complacency. But when a man says that true religious virtue is all a pretence, though the charge is put forward in quite another guise. I confess that I most of all suspect the heart of the complainant. I suspect that it is a heart itself estranged from truth and sanctity, that can find no truth nor sincerity in all the religious virtue that is around it. True, most true, most lamentably true it is,—nothing is *so* lamentably true,—as that there is too little religious fervor in the world ; but still there is a feeling ; there is some religious sensibility,—the most precious deposit in the heart of society,—there is some anxiety, on this great theme, holy and dear, to him whose mind is touched with that inexpressible emotion ; and he whose mind is so touched, will as certainly find those deep tokens of the soul's life, as the kindling eye will find beauty amidst the creation, or as the attuned ear will find the sweet tone of music, amidst the discords of nature. Thus it is, that the mind discovers social virtue and develops the social world around it. The corrupt mind elicits what is bad ; and the pure mind brings out what is good.

But the pure mind makes its own social world, in another sense. It not only unfolds that world to itself, but all its relations to society are sanctified ; the otherwise rough contracts of life are softened to it, and its way is graciously made smooth and easy. The general complaint is, that society is full of mistrust and embarrassment, of competitions, and misunderstandings, and unkind

criticisms and unworthy jealousies. But let any one bear within him, a humble mind ; let him be too modest to make any unreasonable demands upon others, too mistrustful and tenderly solicitous about the keeping of his own heart, to be severe or censorious : let him simply be a good man—full of true and pure love to those around him,—full of love to God—full of holy indifference to earthly vanities,—full of the heaven-ward thought, that soars far beyond them ; and what, now, has this man to do with wordly strifes and intrigues, with poor questions of precedence, and the small items of unsettled disputes, and unsatisfied suspicions ? An excellent simplicity that cannot understand them—a high aim that cannot bend its eye upon them—a generous feeling that cannot enter into them—a goodness that melts all difference into harmony—this is the wise man's protection and blessing.

III. I have spoken of the world of nature, and of the world of society. There is also a world of events, of temptations and trials and blessings ; and this, too, is what we make it. It is what we make it by our religious character.

There are no blessings—and it is a stupendous truth that I utter—there are no blessings which the mind may not convert into the bitterest of evils ; and there are no trials which, it may not transform into the most noble and divine of blessings. There are no temptations from which the virtue they assail, may not gain strength, instead of falling a sacrifice to them. I know that the virtue often falls. I know that the temptations have great power. But what is their power ? It lies in the weakness of our virtue. Their power lies not in them, but in us, in the treason of our own hearts. To the pure, all things are

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pure. The proffer of dishonest gain, of guilty pleasure, makes them more pure; raises their virtue to the height of towering indignation. The fair occasion, the safe opportunity, the goodly chance of victory, with which sin approaches the heart to ensnare and conquer it—all are turned into defeat and disgrace for the tempter, and into the triumph and confirmation of virtue. But to the impure, to the dishonest, false-hearted, corrupt, and sensual, occasions come every day, and in every scene, and through every avenue of thought and imagination. To the impure occasions come, did I say—rather do they make occasions; or if occasions, if opportunities, come not, evil *thoughts* come; no hallowed shrine, no holy temple, no sphere of life, though consecrated to purity and innocence, can keep them out. So speaketh the sacred text, and in this very striking language, “To the pure all things are pure; but to them that are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; for even their mind and conscience is defiled.”

Thus might we pass in survey all the circumstances of man's earthly condition, and bring from every state and pursuit of human life, the same conclusion. Upon the irreligious man, the material world has the effect to occupy him, and estrange him from God; but to the devout man, the same scene is a constant ministration of high and holy thoughts. Thus also, the business of this world, while it absorbs, corrupts and degrades one mind, builds up another in the most noble independence, integrity and generosity. So, too, pleasure which, to some, is a noxious poison, is, to others, a healthful refreshment. The scene is the same. The same event happeneth to all. Life is substantially the same thing to all who partake of its lot. Yet some

rise to virtue and glory, and others sink, from the same discipline, from the same privileges, to shame and perdition.

Life, then, I repeat, is what we make it, and the world is what we make it. Life, that is to say, takes its coloring from our own minds; the world, as the scene of our welfare or woe, is, so to speak, moulded in the bosom of human experience. The archetypes, the ideal forms of things without—if not as some philosophers have said, in a metaphysical sense, yet in a moral sense—they exist within us. The world is the mirror of the soul. Life is the history, not of outward events—not of outward events chiefly—but life, human life, is the history of a mind. To the pure, all things are pure. To the joyous, all things are joyous. To the gloomy, all things are gloomy. To the good, all things are good. To the bad, all things are bad. The world is nothing but a mass of materials, subject to a great moral experiment. The human breast is the laboratory. We work up those materials into what forms we please. This illustration too—if any one should take me too literally—will furnish the proper qualification. The materials, indeed, are not absolutely under our control. They obey the laws of a higher power. Those laws, too, are fixed laws. Yet the chemist in his laboratory, accomplishes all that he rationally desires to accomplish. The elements are enough under his command to answer all his purposes. Nay, if they did not furnish difficulties and require experiments, his science would not exist; his knowledge would be intuition. So with the moral experimenter. He has to overcome difficulties, to solve

questions; still, within the range of rational wishes, and in submission to the power of God, he can work out what results he pleases; and if there were no difficulties, there would be no virtue, no moral science of life.

I am sensible that I have dwelt at considerable length upon the proofs of my doctrine; but I must beg your indulgence to some farther consideration of it, in application to two states of mind; I mean to complaint and discouragement. These states of mind have, indeed, the same leaning, but still they are very different. Complaint is bold and open-mouthed, and speaks like one injured and wronged. Discouragement is timid and silent: it does not consider whether it is wronged, but it knows that it is depressed, and at times, almost crushed to the earth. There are many minds to be found in one or other of these conditions. Indeed, I think that the largest amount of human suffering may be found in the form either of complaint or of discouragement; and if there be any thing in the doctrine of this discourse, to disarm the one, or to relieve the other, it well deserves a place in our meditations.

Our complaints of life, mainly proceed upon the ground that, for our unhappiness, something is in fault besides ourselves, and I maintain that this ground is not fairly taken. We complain of the world; we complain of our situation in the world.

Let us look a moment at this last point—what is called a situation in the world. In the first place, it is commonly what we make it, in a literal sense. We are high or low, rich or poor, honored or disgraced,

usually, just in proportion as we have been industrious or idle, studious or negligent, virtuous or vicious. But in the next place, suppose that, without any fault of our own, our situation is a trying one. Doubtless it is so, in many instances. But then I say that the main point affecting our happiness in this case, is not our situation, but the spirit with which we meet it. In the humblest conditions, are found happy men; in the highest, unhappy men. And so little has mere condition to do with happiness, that a just observation, I am persuaded, will find about an equal proportion of it, among the poor and the rich, the high and the low. "But *my* relation to the persons or things around me," one may say, "is peculiarly trying; neither did I choose the relation; I would gladly escape from it." Still, I answer, a right spirit may bring from this very relation the noblest virtue and the noblest enjoyment. "Ah! the right spirit!"—it may be said—"to obtain that is my greatest difficulty. Doubtless, if I had the spirit of an angel, or of an Apostle, I might get along very well. Then I should not be vexed, nor angered, nor depressed. But the very effort to gain that serene and patient mind, is painful, and often unsuccessful." Yes, and the ill success is the pain. It is not true, that thorough, faithful endeavor to improve is unhappy; that honest endeavor I mean, which is always successful. On the contrary, it is, this side heaven, the highest happiness. The misery of the effort is owing to its insufficiency. The misery then, is mainly our own fault.

On every account therefore, I must confess, that I am disposed to entertain a very ill opinion of misery. Whether

regarded as proceeding from a man's condition or from his own mind, I cannot think well of it. I cannot look upon it with the favor which is accorded to it by much modern poetry and sentiment. These sentimental sighings over human misfortune which we hear, are fit only for children, or at least for the mind's childhood. You may say if you will, that the preacher's heart is hard when he avers this, or that he knows not trial or grief; but if you do, it will be because you do not understand the preacher's argument—no, nor his mind neither. What I say to you, I say to myself—the mind's misery, is chiefly, its own fault. Sentimental sighings there may be in early youth, and in a youthful and immature poetry; but he who has come to the manhood of reason and experience, should know, what is true, that the mind's misery is chiefly its own fault; nay more, and is appointed, under the good providence of God, as the punisher and corrector of its fault. Trial is indeed a part of our lot; but suffering is not to be confounded with trial. Nay, amidst the severest trials, the mind's happiness may be the greatest that it ever knew. It has been so, in a body racked with pain, —nay, and in a body consumed by the fire of the martyr's sacrifice. I am willing, however, to allow that some exceptions are to be made; as for instance, in the first burst of grief or in the pains of lingering disease. The mind must have time for reflection, and it must have strength left to do its work. But its very work—its very office of reflection, is to bring good out of evil—happiness out of trial. And when it is rightly guided, this work it will do; to this result it will come. In the long run, it will be happy, just in proportion to its fidelity and wisdom. Life will be what it makes life to be, and the world will

be what the mind makes it. With artificial wants, with ill-regulated desires, with selfish and sensitive feelings of its own cherishing, the mind must be miserable. And what then, is its misery? Hath it not planted in its own path the thorns that annoy it? And doth not the hand that planted, grasp them? Is not the very loudness of the complaint, but the louder *confession*, on the part of him who makes it?

The complaint nevertheless with some, is very loud. "It is *not* a happy world," a man says, "but a very miserable world; those who consider themselves saints may talk about a kind providence; *he* cannot see much of it: those who have all their wishes gratified may think it is very well; but he never *had his* wishes gratified; and nobody cares whether he is gratified or not; every body is proud and selfish," he says; "if there *is* so much goodness in the world, he wishes he could see some of it. This beautiful world! as some people call it—for his part he never saw any thing, very beautiful in it; but he has seen troubles and vexations, clouds and storms enough; and he has had long, tedious, weary days, and dark and dull nights; if he could sleep through his whole life, and never want any thing, it would be a comfort." Mistaken man! doubly mistaken—mistaken about the world—mistaken in thyself; the world thou complainest of, is not God's world, but thy world; it is not the world which God made, but it is the world which thou hast made for thyself. The fatal blight, the dreary dulness, the scene so distasteful and dismal, is all in thyself. The void, the blank, amidst the whole rich and full universe is in thy heart. Fill thy heart with goodness, and thou wilt find that the world is full of good. Kindle a light within, and

then the world will shine brightly around thee. But till then, though all the luminaries of heaven shed down their entire and concentrated radiance upon this world, it would be dark to thee. "The light that should be in thee is darkness, and how great is that darkness!"

But I must turn in close, to address myself for a moment, to a very different state of mind, and that is discouragement. Complaint is to be blamed; but there is a heavy and uncomplaining discouragement, pressing upon many minds, which demands a kinder consideration. They have tried and not succeeded; they have tried again, and failed, of the ends, the objects, which they sought; and they say, at length, "we give over; we can never *do* any thing in this world; ill fortune has taken the field against us, and we will battle with it, no longer." Yet more to be pitied are those who have never had even the courage to strive; who, from their very cradle, have felt themselves depressed by untoward circumstances, by humble state or humble talents. Oftentimes the mind in such a case is, in culture and power, far beyond its own estimate; but it has no aptitude for worldly success; it has no power to cause itself to be appreciated by others; it has no charm of person or speech; it is neglected by society, where almost every one is too much occupied with his own advancement to think of pining merit; it is left to silent and solitary hours of discouragement and despondency. And in such hours—perhaps there are some here present who can bear me witness—the thoughts that sink deeply into the heart, though never, it may be, breathed in words, are such as these. "*My* chance in this world, is a poor one; I have neither wealth, nor talents, nor family—I have nothing,

to give me importance ; I have no friends to help me forward, or to introduce me favourably to the world ; I have no path open to me ; my success is poor, even my expectation is poor. Let the fortunate be thankful ; but I am not fortunate ; the great prizes are not for me ; despond I needs must, for hope I have none ; I will sit down in silence, and eat the bread of a neglected lot ; I will weep—but even that is useless ; away then, hope ! away tears !—I will bear my heart calmly, though sadly, in its way, through a cold, ungenial, unkind world.”

And yet above this man is spread the sublimity of heaven, around him the beauty of earth ; to this man is unfolded the vision of God ; for this man Christ hath died, and to him, heaven is unveiled ; before this man lies the page of wisdom and inspiration ; and wisdom and sanctity, it is still given him to learn and gain—wisdom and sanctity, inward, all-sufficing and eternal. The universe is full and rich for him. The heaven of heavens invites him to its abode !

Oh ! the intolerable worldliness of the world!—the worldliness of fashion and fashionable opinion ! the worldliness of our eager throngs, and our gay watering-places, and our crowded cities, and our aspiring literature, and our busy commerce ! Distinction ! to be raised a little above the rest—to be talked of and pointed at, more than others—this hath blinded us to the infinite good that is offered to all men. And this distinction—what is it, after all ? Suppose that you were the greatest of the great ; one raised above kings ; one to whom courts and powers and principalities paid homage, and around whom admiring crowds gathered at every step. I tell you that I would rather have arrived at one profound conclusion of

the sage's meditation in his dim study, than to win that gaze of the multitude. I tell you that I had rather gain the friendship and love of one pure and lofty mind, than to gain that empty applause of a court or a kingdom. What then must it be to gain the approval, the friendship, the love of that ONE, infinitely great—infininitely dear to the whole pure and happy creation?

Before these awful and sublime realities of truth and sanctity, sink! all worldly distinction, and worldly imaginations! Discouragement and despondency!—for a creature to whom God hath offered the loftiest opportunity and hope in the universe? A humble, depressed, unfortunate lot!—for him, before whom are spread the boundless regions of truth, and wisdom, and joy? A poor chance!—for him who may gain heaven? Ah! sir, thy poverty, thy misfortune, is all in thyself. In the realm of God's beneficence, is an infinite fulness, and it all may be yours. Even to the despised and persecuted Christians of old the Apostle said this; and it is still, and forever true, to all who can receive it. "Therefore," says he, in his lofty reasoning, "let no man glory in men; for all things are yours; whether the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!"

DISCOURSE V.

ON INEQUALITY IN THE LOT OF LIFE.

PS. CXLV. 9. THE LORD IS GOOD TO ALL, AND HIS TENDER MERCIES ARE OVER ALL HIS WORKS.

WHAT I wish to suggest for your consideration from these words, is not the goodness of God only, but his goodness to all. I wish in other words, to examine the prevailing opinion that there is a great inequality in the distribution of the blessings of life. In opposition to this opinion I take up the words of the text.

The Lord is good *to all*. It is not said merely that his tender mercies are over his works, but that they are over *all* his works. His providence is not only kind, but its kindness extends to every human being.

There is no general view of life perhaps, with which the minds of men are more strongly impressed, than with the apparent inequalities of the human lot. It is probably the most prolific source of all secret repining and open complaint. Affliction of a severe kind, comes but seldom; but this inequality in the state of life is permanent. It is perfectly obvious too. Every one can see

the difference between his situation in life, his dwelling, his equipage, and the observance which is paid to him—and those which belong to his more prosperous, wealthy, or honored neighbor. The distinctions of life indeed, chiefly consist in the glare of outward things, and therefore more powerfully impress the senses.

Now if it can be made to appear that there is in fact, considerable deception in these estimates ; that things are far more impartially balanced in the system of providence at large, than is commonly imagined ; that inequality is not the rule of its operations, but only the exception to the rule ; it would serve the important purpose of making us more contented with our lot ; more happy in the opportunities and means of happiness that are given to us all ; and more submissive and grateful, I would hope, to that Being who has so equally and so bountifully distributed them.

To this subject then, let me direct your thoughts this morning.

I. And in the first place you see, at once, an instance and an illustration of this impartiality of Divine Providence, in the inequalities caused by nature ; in the allotments of climate, temperature, soil and scenery.

There is no one of us perhaps, whose thoughts have not sometimes wandered to fairer climes than our own, to lands of richer productions and more luxuriant beauty, to those isles and shores of the classic East, where all the glory of man has faded indeed—where all the monuments of his power and art have fallen to decay—but where nature lives forever, and forever spreads its unfading charm ; to the verdant and sunny vales of the South—regions of eternal Spring—where the circling seasons as

they pass, let fall no chill nor blight upon the fresh and fragrant bosom of the earth. But is there no counterpart to this scene? Where does the volcano lift up its subterraneous thunders, and pour forth its flaming deluge? It is in these very regions of eternal Spring. It is on the green and flowery mount, on the vine-clad hills—fast by the quiet fold of the shepherd, and amidst the rejoicings of the vintage. Whence comes the fearful rumor of the earthquake, that has whelmed a city in ruins? It comes from the land of the diamond and the cane; from the hills of Ophir; from groves of the palm and the olive; from vallies loaded with fruits, and fanned with aromatic gales—where if nature is more energetic to produce, she is also more energetic to destroy. Where does the dire pestilence walk in darkness, and the fell destruction waste at noon-day? Amidst groves of spices, and beneath bowers of luxuriance; and the beam that lights its victims to their tomb, is the brightest beam of heaven, and the scenes of which they take their last hasty leave, are the fairest that nature displays—as if life and death were intended to be set in the most visible and vivid contrast. And where, but there also, is that worse than plague, and pestilence, and earthquake—that degradation of the mind—that wide spreading pestilence of the soul—that listless indolence, which only arouses to deeds of passion! Let the millions of Southern Asia tell. Let Turkey, so often drenched with blood, answer. Let the wandering Arab, let the stupid Hottentot, let the slothful and sensual inhabitants of the fair isles of the Pacific teach us. Who would not rather struggle with fiercer elements, than to sink an ignoble prey to the soft languors of pleasures and the besotting indulgences of passion? Who would

not far prefer our wintry storm, and “the hoarse sighings of the East wind,” as it sweeps around us, if they will brace the mind to nobler attainments, and the heart to better duties?

There is one class of virtues that is fostered by the rigors of our climate, which deserves to be particularly noticed. I mean the *domestic* virtues. We are compelled by the inclemency of our seasons, not only to have some permanent place of abode, but to resort to it. In milder regions, men live abroad—they are scarcely obliged to have any domicile. We are compelled to live at home, and we attach a meaning to the term, and we hallow it with feelings that were unknown to the polished Greek and the voluptuous Asiatic. It is the angry and lowering sky of winter, that lights up the cheerful fire in our dwellings, and draws around the friendly circle. It is the cheerlessness of every thing abroad, that leads us to find or make pleasures within; to resort to books and the interchange of thought; to multiply the sources of knowledge and strengthen the ties of affection. It is the frowning face of nature, like the dark cloud of adversity, that lends attraction to all the sympathies and joys of home.

II. But I come now in the second place to consider the impartiality of Divine Providence, in the condition of human life. Life—to borrow a comparison from the science of political economy—life, like nature, is a system of checks and balances. Every power of conferring happiness, is limited or else counteracted, by some other power either of good or evil. There is no blessing or benefit, but it has some drawback upon it; and there is no inconvenience nor calamity, but it

enjoys some compensation. This results from the very nature of things. You cannot enjoy things incompatible. You cannot at once enjoy, for instance, the pleasures of the country and the town. You cannot mingle the quietude of obscurity with the emoluments and honors of office. You cannot have at the same time, the benefits of affliction and the joys of prosperity. If you would reach the loftiest virtue, you must sometimes endure sickness and pain, and you must, sometimes, be bowed down with sorrow. If you would have perpetual ease and indulgence, you must resign something of noble fortitude, holy patience, and of the blessed triumphs of faith.

The inequalities which appear in the condition of human life, relate chiefly to the possessions, the employments, or the distinctions of society. If we should examine these, we should probably find that they are of less importance to our happiness than is commonly imagined. Indeed, we know that they all depend chiefly on the use that is made of them; and their use depends upon the mind. Distinction and mediocrity, leisure and toil, wealth and poverty, have no intrinsic power of happiness or misery in their disposal. There is a principle *within*, that is to render them good or evil.

But not at present, to insist on this; these circumstances of inequality, in *themselves*, are less than they seem. It is common, I know, to hear of the prerogatives, the power, the independence, of the higher classes of society. But Divine Providence acknowledges no such nobility; no such exemption from the wants of the human lot. It teaches us very little

about prerogative or independence, however the pride of man may flatter him. No tower of pride was ever high enough to lift its possessor above the trials and fears and frailties of humanity. No human hand ever built the wall, nor ever shall, that will keep out affliction, pain and infirmity. Sickness, sorrow, trouble, death, are all levelling dispensations. They know none high nor low. The chief wants of life, too, the great necessities of the human soul, give exemption to none. They make all poor, all weak. They put supplication in the mouth of every human being, as truly as in that of the meanest beggar.

Now consider society for one moment, in regard to its employments. And there is not, perhaps, a greater infatuation in the world, than for a man of active and industrious habits, to look with envy or repining upon the ease and leisure of his neighbor. Employment, activity, is one of the fundamental laws of human happiness. Ah! the laborious indolence of him who has nothing to do; the preying weariness, the stagnant ennui of him who has nothing to obtain; the heavy hours which roll over him, like the waters of a Lethean sea, that has not yet quite drowned the senses in their oblivious stupor; the dull comfort of having finished a day; the dreariness in prospect of another to come; in one word, the terrible visitation of an avenging Providence to him that lives to himself!

But I need not dwell on a case so obvious, and proceed, at once to mention the distinction of wealth and poverty.

It must not be denied that poverty, abject and desperate poverty, is a great evil; but this is not a common lot, and it still more rarely occurs in this country, without faults

or vices, which should forbid all complaint. Neither shall it here be urged, on the other hand, that riches are acquired with many labors and kept with many cares and anxieties; for so also it may be said, and truly said, has poverty its toils and anxieties. The true answer to all difficulties on this subject, seems to be, that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth. The answer in short, may be reduced to a plain matter of fact. There is about as much cheerfulness among the poor as among the rich. And I suspect, about as much contentment too. For we might add, that a man's life if it consist at all in his possession, does not consist in what he possesses, but in what he *thinks* himself to possess. Wealth is a comparative term. The desire of property grows, and at the same time the estimate of it lessens with its accumulation. And thus it may come to pass, that he who possesses thousands may less feel himself to be rich, and to all substantial purposes, may actually be less rich, than he who enjoys a sufficiency.

But not to urge this point, we say, that a man's life does not consist in these things. Happiness, enjoyment, the buoyant spirits of life, the joys of humanity, do not consist in them. They do not depend on this distinction, of being poor or rich. As it is with the earth—that there are living springs within it, which will burst forth somewhere, and that they are often most clear and healthful in the most sterile and rugged spots—so it is with the human heart. There are fountains of gladness in it: and why should they not revive the weary? Why should they not cool the brow of labor, and the lips that are parched with toil? Why should they not refresh the

poor man? Nay, but they do; and they refresh him the more, *because* he is poor and weary. Man may hew out to himself cisterns—and how often are they broken cisterns—which are scrupulously and proudly guarded from his poorer fellow-man: but the great fountains which *God* has opened are for all. This and that man may endeavor to appropriate them to himself; he may guide them to his reservoir; he may cause them to gush forth in artificial fountains and to fall in artificial showers in his gardens; but it is artificial still; and one draught of the pure well-spring of honest, homely happiness, is better than them all; and the shower which heaven sends, falls upon the rich and the poor, upon the high and the low alike, and with still more impartial favor, descends upon the good and the evil, upon the just and the unjust.

III. This impartiality will be still more manifest, if we reflect in the third place, that far the greatest and most numerous of the divine favors are granted to all, without any discrimination.

Look, in the first place, at the natural gifts of Providence. The beauty of the earth, the glories of the sky; the vision of the sun and the stars; the beneficent laws of universal being; the frame of society and of government; protecting justice and Almighty providence—whose are these? What power of appropriation can say of any one of these—“this is mine and not another’s?” And what one of these would you part with for the wealth of the Indies, or all the splendors of rank or office? Again, your eye-sight—that regal glance that commands in one act, the out-spread and all-surrounding beauty of the fair universe—would you exchange it for a sceptre, or a crown? And the ear—that gathers unto its hidden

chambers all music and gladness—would you give it for a kingdom? And that wonderful gift, speech—that breathes its mysterious accents into the listening soul of thy friend; that sends forth its viewless messages through the still air, and imprints them at once upon the ears of thousands—would you barter that gift for the renown of Plato or of Milton?

No, there are unappropriated blessings—blessings which none can appropriate—in every element of nature, in every region of existence, in every inspiration of life, which are infinitely better than all that can be hoarded in treasure, or borne on the breath of fame. All, of which any human being can say, “it is mine,” is a toy, is a trifle, compared with what God has provided for the great family of his children! Is *he* poor to whom the great store-house of nature is opened, or does he think himself poor because it is God who has made him rich? Does *he* complain that he cannot have a magnificent palace to dwell in, who dwells in this splendid theatre of the universe?—that he cannot behold swelling domes and painted walls, who beholds the “dread magnificence of heaven,” and the pictured earth and sky? Do you regret the want of attendants, of a train of servants, to anticipate every wish and bring every comfort at your bidding? Yet how small a thing is it to be waited on, compared with the privilege of being yourself active—compared with the vigor of health and the free use of your limbs and senses? Is it a hardship that your table does not groan with luxuries? But how much better than all luxury, is simple appetite!

The very circumstances which gain for the distinctions of life such an undue and delusive estimation,

are such as ought to make us cautious about the estimate we put upon them. They are distinctions, and therefore likely to be overrated; but is that a good and sound reason why we should affix to them an undue importance. Are the palaces of kings to be regarded with more interest than the humbler roofs that shelter millions of human beings. What more is the marriage of a queen—to the individual mind—though surrounded with the splendor and state of a kingdom; though accompanied with shining troops and announced by roaring cannon—what more is it than that marriage of hearts, that is every day consummated beneath a thousand lowly roofs? The distinctions of life, too, are mostly factitious, the work of art, and man's device. They are man's gifts, rather than God's gifts; and for that reason I would esteem them less. They are fluctuating also, and therefore attract notice, but on that account too, are less valuable. They are palpable to the senses, attended with noise and show, and therefore likely to be over-estimated. While those vast benefits which all share and which are always the same, which come in the ordinary course of things, which do not disturb the ordinary and even tenor of life, pass by unheeded. The resounding chariot, as it rolls on with princely state and magnificence, is gazed upon with admiration and perhaps with envy. But morning comes forth in the east, and from his glorious chariot-wheels scatters light over the heavens and spreads life and beauty through the world: morning after morning comes, and noontide sets its throne in the southern sky, and the day finishes its splendid revolution in heaven, without exciting, perhaps, a comment or a reflec-

tion. The pageant of fashion passes, and has the notice of many an eye, perhaps, to which it is all in vain that the seasons pass by in their glory; that nature arrays herself in robes of light and beauty, and fills the earth with her train. To want what another possesses, to be outstripped in the race of honor or gain, to lose some of the nominal treasures of life, may be enough with some of us, to disturb and irritate us altogether; and such an one shall think little of it that he has life itself and that he enjoys it; it shall be nothing to him that he has quiet sleep in the night season, and that all the bounties of the day are spread before him; that he has friends and domestic joys, and the living fountain of cheerful spirits and affectionate pleasures within him.

Nor must we stop here in our estimate. There is an infinite sum of blessings which have not yet been included in the account; and these, like all the richest gifts of heaven, are open and free to all; I mean the gifts, the virtues, the blessings of religion.

It has already, indeed, sufficiently appeared, not only that the inequalities in the allotments of Providence, are attended with a system of compensations and drawbacks, which make them far less than they seem; and also on account of the vast blessings which are diffused every where and dispensed to all, that inequality, instead of being the rule of the Divine dealings, is only a slight exception to them. But we come now to a principle, that absorbs all other considerations: virtue, the only intrinsic, infinite, everlasting good, is accessible to all. If there were ever so strong and apparently just charges of partiality

against the Divine Providence, this principle would be sufficient to vindicate it. "O God!" exclaims the Persian poet Sadi, "have pity on the wicked! for thou hast done every thing for the good in having made them good!"

How false and earthly are our notions of what is evil! How possible is it that all advantages besides religion, may prove the greatest calamities? How possible is it that distinction, that successful ambition, that popular applause, may be the most injurious, the most fatal evil that could befall us? How possible that wealth may be turned into the very worst of curses, by the self-indulgence, the dissipation, the vanity or hardness of heart that it may produce! And there is a judgment too, short of the judgment of heaven, that pronounces it to be so—the judgment of every right and noble sentiment, of all good sense, of all true friendship. There is a friend, not a flatterer, who, as he witnesses in some one, this sad dereliction, this poor exultation of vanity, this miserable bondage to flattery, or this direful success of some dark temptation—who, as he witnesses this, will say in his secret thoughts, with the Persian sage, "Oh! God, have pity on the wicked; have pity on my friend! would that he were poor and unnoticed, would that he were neglected or forsaken, rather than thus!" It is therefore a matter of doubt whether those things which we crave as blessings would really be such to us. And then, as to the trials of life, their unequalled benefits are a sufficient answer to every objection that can be brought against their unequal distribution.

We hear it said that there is much evil in the world ;

and this or that scene of suffering is brought as an example of the partial dealings of heaven; and it is felt, if it is not said, perhaps, that "God's ways are unequal." But the strongest objector on this ground, I think, would yield, if he saw that the attendant and fruit of all this suffering, were a fortitude, a cheerfulness, a heavenliness, that shed brighter hues than those of earth, upon the dark scene of calamity and sorrow. I have seen suffering, sorrow, bereavement, all that is darkest in human fortunes, clothed with a virtue so bright and beautiful, that sympathy was almost lost in the feeling of congratulation and joy. I have heard more than one sufferer say, "I am thankful; God is good to me;" and when I heard that, I said, "it is good to be afflicted." There is, indeed, much evil in the world; but without it, there would not be much virtue. The poor, the sick and the afflicted, could be relieved from their trials at once, if it were best for them; but if they understood their own welfare, they would not desire exemption from their part in human trials. There might be a world of ease and indulgence and pleasure; but "it is a world," to use the language of another, "from which, if the option were given, a noble spirit would gladly hasten into that better world of difficulty and virtue and conscience, which is the scene of our present existence."

In fine, religion is a blessing so transcendent, as to make it of little consequence what else we have, or what else we want. It is enough for us—it is enough for us all; for him who is poor, for him who is neglected, for him who is disappointed and sorrowful; it

is enough for him, though there were nothing else, that he may be good and happy for ever. In comparison with this, to be rich, to be prosperous, and merely that, is the most trifling thing that can be imagined. *Is it not enough for us, my brethren, that we may gain those precious treasures of the soul, which the world cannot give nor take away; that the joys and consolations and hopes of the Spirit and Gospel of Christ may be ours? Has not he a sufficiency—is not his heart full—is not his blessedness complete, who can say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee: all things else may fail—my heart may lose its power, and my strength its firmness—but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”*

The lesson, my friends, which these reflections lay before us, is this: to learn that we are all partakers of one lot,* children of one Father; to learn in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content, and therein to be grateful. If you are ever tempted to discontent and murmuring, ask yourself, ask the Spirit within you, formed for happiness, for glory and virtue, of what you shall complain. Ask the ten thousand mercies of your lives, of what you shall complain: or go and ask the bounties of nature; ask the sun that shines cheerfully upon you; ask the beneficent seasons as they roll, of what you shall complain; ask—ask of your Maker—but God forbid that you or I should be guilty of the heinous ingratitude! No, my friends, let us fix our thoughts rather, upon the full and overflowing beneficence of heaven—upon the love of God. Let us fix our affections upon it, and then we shall

have a sufficiency ; then, though some may want and others may complain ; though dissatisfaction may prey upon the worldly, and envy may corrode the hearts of the jealous and discontented ; for us there shall be a sufficiency indeed ; for us there shall be a treasure which the world cannot give, nor change, nor disturb—
“an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.”

DISCOURSE VI.

ON THE MISERIES OF LIFE.

ROMANS VIII. 20. FOR THE CREATURE—THAT IS MAN—WAS MADE SUBJECT TO VANITY—THAT IS TO SUFFERING—NOT WILLINGLY, BUT BY REASON OF HIM—OR AT THE WILL OF HIM—WHO HATH SUBJECTED THE SAME IN HOPE.

In considering the spiritual philosophy of life, we cannot avoid the problem of human misery. The reality presses us on every side, and philosophy demands to sit in judgment on the fact.

I have often wondered that, with such themes as are presented to the pulpit, it could have ever been dull; still more that it should be proverbially dull. So practical are these themes, so profound, so intimate with all human experience, that I cannot conceive, what is to be understood, save through utter perversion, by a dull religion, a dull congregation, or a dull pulpit. If there were an invading army just landed upon our shores; if there were a conflagration or a pestilence sweeping through our city, and we were assembled here to consider what was to be done—in all seriousness and most advisedly do I say, that no

questions could be raised, on such an occasion, more vital to our welfare, than those which present themselves to us here, on every Sunday. Take off the covering of outward form and demeanor from the heart of society, and what do we see? Is there not a struggle and a war going on—not upon our borders, but in the midst of us—in our dwellings, and in our very souls?—a war, not for territory, nor for visible freedom; but for happiness, for virtue, for inward freedom! Are not misery and vice, as they were fire and pestilence, pressing, urging, threatening to sweep through this city, every day? Is not an interest involved in every day's action, thought, purpose, feeling, that is dearer than merchandize, pleasure, luxury, condition—dearer than life itself?

Does any one say, that religion is some abstract concern, some visionary matter, fit only for weak enthusiasts or doting fools—which has nothing to do with him nor with his real welfare; a thing indifferent—gone and given over to indifference,—beyond all hope of recovery; in which he cannot, for his life, interest himself? Ay, proud philosopher! or vain worldling!—sayest thou that? Is misery something abstract—with which thou canst not interest thyself? Is sin—that source of misery—is the wrong thought, the wrong deed—the deed folded, muffled in darkness, the thought shut up in the secret breast, which neither flashing eye nor flushing cheek may tell—is this, I say, something abstract and indifferent? And is the holy peace of conscience, the joy of virtue, a thing for which a human being need not—cannot care? Nay, these are the great, invisible, eternal realities of our life—of our very nature!

I have said that suffering, as the most stupendous fact

in human experience, as the profoundest problem in our religious philosophy, presses us on every side. I will not mock you with formal proofs of its existence. And do not think either, that on this subject, I will go into detail or description. One may easily understand human experience—interpret the universal consciousness—too well, to think *that* either needful or tolerable. I will not speak of sicknesses or disappointments or bereavements, many though they are. I will not speak of the minds—more in number than we think—that bear the one, solitary, deep-embosomed grief;

One fatal remembrance, one sorrow that throws,
 In dark shade alike o'er their joys and their woes,
 To which life nothing brighter nor darker can bring,
 For which joy hath no balm, and affliction no sting.

I will not speak of the sighing that rises up from all the world, for a happiness unfound. But I point you to that which is seldom expressed—to that which lies deeper than all—that *eternal want*—which lies as a heavy residuum at the bottom of the cup of life—which albeit unperceived, amidst the flowings and gushings of pleasure, yet when the waters are low, ever disturbs that fountain-head, that living cup of joy, with impatience, anxiety and blind up-heaving effort after something good. Yes, the creature, the human being is made subject to this. There is a wanting and a wanting, and an ever wanting, of what is never—never on earth—to be obtained! For let us be just here. Religion itself does not altogether assuage that feeling; for even we ourselves, says the Apostle, groan within ourselves. No; religion itself does not suppress that groan; though it does show, and therein is a

most blessed visitation, that it can satisfy that feeling as nothing else can, and that it has in it, the elements for satisfying it fully and infinitely.

I dwell somewhat upon this point as a matter of fact, my brethren, because I conceive that it is one office of the preacher, as it is of the poet and philosopher, to unfold the human heart and nature, more fully to itself. Strange as the opinion may be thought, I do not believe that men generally know how unhappy, at any rate how far from happiness, they are. That stupendous fact—the soul’s misery—is covered up with business, cares, pleasures and vanities. Were human life unveiled to its depths—were the soul—disrobed of all overlayings and debarred from all opiates—to come down, down to its own naked resources, it seems to me at times, that religion would need no other argument. With such apprehension at least as I have of this subject, I feel obliged to preach, as to some, and not a few, who not having taken the religious view of their existence, have come to look upon life with a dull and saddened eye. I believe there are not a few—it may be that they are of the more solitary in the world, and who have not as many stirring objects and prospects in life as others—who look upon the path that stretches before them as cheerless, and threatening to be more and more so as it advances; who say in their silent thoughts, “I shall live, perhaps, too long! I shall live, perhaps, till I am neglected, passed by, forgotten! I shall live possibly, till I am a burthen to others and to myself; Oh! what may my state be, before I die!”

Yes, “the creature was made subject to misery;” and if you will find a rational being, not under that law, you must seek him, without the bounds of this world.

To this case then, to this great problem involved in human existence—let us give our thoughts this evening.

And in the first place, I would say, let not the vast amount of happiness in this world, be forgotten in the sense of its miseries.

They who say that this is a miserable world, or that this is a miserable life, say not well. It is misanthropy, or a diseased imagination only, that says this. Life is liable to misery, but misery is not its very being; it is not a miserable existence. Witness—I know not what things to say, or how many. The eye is opened to a world of beauty, and to a heaven—all sublimity and loveliness. The ear heareth tones and voices that touch the heart with joy, with rapture. The great, wide atmosphere, breathes upon us—bathes us with softness and fragrance. Then look deeper. How many conditions are happy! Childhood is happy; and youth is prevailingly happy: and prosperity hath its joy, and wealth its satisfaction; and the warm blood that flows in the ruddy cheek and sinewy arm of honest poverty, is a still better gift. No song is so hearty and cheering—none that steals forth from the windows of gay saloons—as the song of honest labor among the hills and mountains. Oh! to be a man—with the true energies and affections of a man—all men feel it to be good. To be a healthful, strong, true-hearted, and loving man—how much better is it, than to be the minion, or master, of any condition—lord, land-grave, king, or Cæsar! How many affections too are happy—gratitude, generosity, pity, love, and the consciousness of being beloved! And to bow the heart, in lowliness and adoration, before the Infinite, all-blessing, ever-blessed One—to see in the all surrounding brightness and glory,

not beauty and majesty only, but the all-Beautiful, all-Majestic, all-Conscious *Mind* and *Spirit* of love—this is to be filled with more than created fullness—it is to be filled with all the fullness of God!

A world where such things are—a world above all, where such a presence is—seemeth to me, a goodly world. I look around upon it, I meditate upon it, I feel its blessings and beatitudes; and I say, surely it is a world of plenteousness and beauty and gladness, of loves and friendships, of blessed homes and holy altars, of sacred communions and lofty aspirations and immortal prospects; and I remember that He who made it, looked upon it, and saw that it was very good. And strange it seemeth, indeed, to our earlier contemplation of it, that in such a world, and beneath the bright skies, there should be the dark stroke of calamity—a serpent winding through this Eden of our existence.

But it is here; and now let us draw nearer, and behold this wonder beneath the heavens—*misery!*

What is its nature? What account are we to take of it? What are we to think of it? On this point, I must pray your attention to something of detail and speculation; though I must be, necessarily, brief.

What then is the nature of misery? Is it an evil principle, or a good principle in the universe? Is it designed to do us harm, or to do us good? Doubtless the latter; and this can be shown without any very extended or laborious argument.

Misery then, evidently springs from two causes—from the perfection of our nature, and from the imperfection of our treatment of it—that is, from our ignorance, error, and sin.

I say, that misery springs, first, from the perfection or excellence of our nature. Thus remorse, a pained conscience—that greatest, and though half-benumbed, most wide-spread of all misery—never would afflict us, had we not a moral nature. Make us animals, and we should feel nothing of this. So of our intellectual nature—let poor, low instinct take its place, and we should never suffer from ignorance, error, or mistake. And our very bodies owe many of their sufferings and diseases to the delicacy of our nerves, fibres, and senses. Gird a man with the mail of leviathan—arm him with hoofs and claws—and he would have but few hurts, diseases, or pains. But now he is clothed with these veils of living tissues—with this vesture of sensitive feeling, spread all over his frame—that his whole body may be an exquisite instrument of communication with the whole surrounding universe; that earth, air, sky, waters, all their visions, all their melodies, may visit his soul through every pore, and every sense. In such a frame, suffering evidently is the incident, not the intent. And then, in fine, if you ask, whence comes this ever-craving desire of more—more; more happiness, more good, more of every thing that it grasps; what does this show primarily, but the extent of the grasp, the largeness of the capacity, the greatness of the nature? That universal sighing, of which I have spoken, which is for ever saying, “who will show me any good?” comes not from the dens and keeps of animals, but from the dwellings of thoughtful, meditative, and immortal men.

But in the next place, I say, that our misery cometh from the imperfection of our treatment of this elevated and much-needing nature—from our ignorance, error,

and sin. We do not satisfy this nature, and it suffers, from vague, ever-craving want. We cannot satisfy it perhaps ; which only the more shows its greatness ; but we do not, what we *can*, to satisfy it. We wound it too, by transgression, and it groans over the abuse. We err perhaps from want of reflection, and the consequences teach us wisdom. The child that puts his hand in the fire, will not put it there again. A cut finger is a brief lesson—a short copy writ in blood—to teach discretion. The *man* is taught to transfer that lesson to the whole scene of life. All elements, all the laws of things around us, minister to this end ; and thus, through the paths of painful error and mistake, it is the design of providence to lead us to truth and happiness.

Is then, the principle of misery in *this* view, an evil principle ? If erring but taught us to err ; if mistakes confirmed us in imprudence ; if the pains of imperfection only fastened its bonds upon us, and the miseries of sin had a natural tendency to make us its slaves, then were all this suffering only evil. But the evident truth, on the contrary, is, that it all tends and is designed, to produce amendment, improvement. This so clearly results from the principles of reason, and is so uniformly sustained by the testimony of scripture, that I do not think it necessary to quote from the one, nor any farther to argue from the other.

Misery then is a beneficent principle in the universe. He who subjected the creature to misery, subjected him in hope. There is brightness beyond that dark cloud. It is not an inexplicable, unutterable, implacable, dark doom,—this ministration of misery ; it is meant for good. It is meant to be a ministration to virtue and to happiness.

I say, to virtue and happiness. These are the specifications of what I mean, when I say that suffering is a beneficent principle. It springs from the perfection or excellence of our nature, and thus far certainly, all is well with our argument. It springs from imperfection in our treatment of it; but it is designed to remove that imperfection; and still therefore the path of our argument though it lead over desolations and ruins is clear and bright. But still further I say, that it is not an abstract argument; a mere fair theory having no foundation in truth and fact.

I will reason from your own experience. The pained thought—the painful feeling in you—tell me what it is, and I will tell you, how it is made to work out good for you. Is it ennui, satiety, want? All this urges and compels you to seek for action, enlargement, supply. Is it that most sad and painful conviction—the conviction of deficiency or of sin? This directly teaches you to seek for virtue, improvement—for pardon, and the blessedness of pardon. Is it the sorrow of unrequited affection, or a sighing for friendship, in this cold and selfish world too seldom found? This is an occasion for the loftiest generosity, magnanimity and candor. Is it sickness or bereavement—the body's pain or the heart's desolation? Fortitude, faith, patience, trust in heaven, the hope of heaven—these are so much meant as the end, that, indeed, there are no other resources for pain and deprivation.

And these happy results, I say, have not failed to be produced in the experience of multitudes. It is no visionary dreaming of which I have spoken, but a matter of fact. Even as Christ was made perfect through sufferings, so are his followers. How many have said, in their thoughts,

when at last the true light has broken upon them—" Ah ! it *is* no contradiction—the dark path *does* lead to light ; pain *is* a means of pleasure ; misery of happiness ; penitential grief, of virtue ; loss, deprivation, sorrow, are the elements—or rather they are the means—of all that is best in my character ; it is fortunate for me that I have suffered ; it is good for me that I have been afflicted ; it is better, —how far better with me now, than if I had been always and only happy."

Nay, and even from that comparison, by which past suffering enhances all present and coming enjoyment, I could draw an argument almost sufficient for its vindication in the great scheme of providence. The pains of a sick and dying child, are often referred to, as the most mysterious things in providence ; but that child, it should be remembered, may be, and probably, will be, happier forever, for that dark cloud that brooded over the cradle of its infancy. And for myself I must say, that if I were now standing on the verge of a tried life, with the prospect of everlasting happiness before me, I should not regret that I had been a sufferer ; I should count it all joy rather, and be sure that my eternal joy would be dearer for it.

But this is not, it is true, the chief consideration. Suffering is the discipline of virtue—that which nourishes, invigorates, perfects it. Suffering, I repeat, is the discipline of virtue ; of that which is infinitely better than happiness, and yet which embraces all essential happiness in it. Virtue is the prize, of the severely contested race, of the hard-fought battle ; and it is worth all the strifes and wounds of the conflict.

This is the view, which we ought, I think, manfully and courageously to take of our present condition. Partly

from our natural weakness, partly from want of reflection, and partly from the discouraging aspects which infidel philosophy and ascetic superstition, have thrown over human life, we have acquired a timidity, a pusillanimity, a peevishness, a habit of complaining, which enhances all our sorrows. Dark enough they are, without needing to be darkened by gloomy theories. Enough do we tremble under them, without requiring the misgivings of cherished fear and weakness. Philosophy, religion, virtue should speak to man—not in a voice, all pity—not in a voice, all terror—but rather in that trumpet tone that arouses and cheers the warrior to battle.

With a brave and strong heart should man go forth to battle with calamity. He shall not let it be his master, but rather shall he master it—yea, he shall be as an artificer, who taketh in his hand an instrument to work out some beautiful work. When Sir Walter Ralagh took in his hand the axe, that was in a few moments to deprive him of life, and felt its keen edge, he said, smiling, “this is a sharp medicine, but it will cure all diseases.” Indeed the manner in which the brave English Noblemen and Clergy of the olden time, went to death, even when it was to appease the jealousy or wrath of unjust monarchs, is illustrative of the spirit I would recommend. Fortitude, manliness, cheerfulness, with modesty and humility, dressed them, even on the scaffold, in robes of eternal honor. And surely he who takes an instrument in his hand, which is not to slay him, but with which he may work out the model and perfection of every virtue in him, should take it with resolution and courage; should say, “with this sore pain or bitter sorrow, is a good and noble work for me to do, and well and nobly will I strive to do it. I will not

blench nor fly from what my Father above, has appointed me. I will not drown my senses and faculties with opiates to escape it. I will not forsake the post of trial and peril." Do you remember that noble boy who stood on the burning deck at the battle of Nile? Many voices around said, "come down!—come away!" But the confiding child said, "father, shall I come?" Alas! that father's voice was hushed in death; and his child kept his post till he sunk in the whelming flame. Oh! noble child! thou teachest us firmly to stand in our lot, till the great word of providence bids us fly, or bids us sink!

But while I speak thus, think me not insensible to the severity of man's sufferings. I know what human nerves and sinews and feelings are. When the sharp sword enters the very bosom, the iron enters the very soul—I see what must follow. I see the uplifted hands, the writhen brow, the written agony in the eye. But God's mercy, which "tempers the blast to the shorn lamb," does not suffer these to be the ordinary and permanent forms of affliction. No, thou sittest down in thy still chamber, and sad memories come there, or it may be, strange trials gather under thy brooding thought. Thou art to die; or thy friend must die; or worse still, thy friend is faithless. Or thou sayest that coming life is dark and desolate. And now as thou sittest there, I will speak to thee; and I say—though sighs will burst from thy almost broken heart, yet when they come back in echoes from the silent walls, let them teach thee. Let them tell thee that God wills not thy destruction, thy suffering for its own sake—wills thee not—cannot will thee, any evil; how could that thought come from the bosom of infinite love! No, let thy sorrows tell thee, that God wills thy repentance,

thy virtue, thy happiness, thy preparation for infinite happiness! Let that thought spread holy light through thy darkened chamber. That which is against thee, is not as that which is for thee. Calamity, a dark speck in thy sky, seemeth to be against thee; but God's goodness, the all embracing light and power of the universe, forever lives, and shines around thee and for thee.

“ Evil and good, before him stand
Their mission to perform.”

The angel of gladness is there; but the angel of affliction is there too—and both alike for good. May the angel of gladness visit us as often as is good for us!—I pray for it. But that angel of affliction! what shall we say to it? Shall we not say—“ come thou too, when our Father will—come thou, when need is—with saddened brow and pitying eye, come; and take us on thy wings, and bear us up to hope, to happiness, to heaven—to that presence where is fullness of joys—to that right hand, where are pleasures for evermore!”

There is one further thought which I must not fail to submit to you, on this subject, before I leave it. The greatness of our sufferings, points to a correspondent greatness in the end to be gained. When I see what men are suffering around me, I cannot help feeling that it was meant not only, that they should be far better than they are, but far better than often think of being. The end must rise higher and brighter before us, before we can look through this dark cloud of human calamity. The struggle, the wounds, the carnage and desolation of a battle, would overwhelm me with horror, if it were not fought

for freedom, for the fire-side—to protect infancy from ruthless butchery, and the purity of our homes from brutal wrong. So is the battle of this life, a bewildering maze of misery and despair, till we see the high prize that is set before it. You would not send your son to travel through a barren and desolate wilderness, or to make a long and tedious voyage to an unhealthy clime, but for some great object : say, to make a fortune thereby. And any way, it seems to your parental affection, a strange and almost cruel proceeding. Nor would the merciful Father of life, have sent his earthly children to struggle through all the sorrows, the pains and perils of this world, but to attain to the grandeur of a moral fortune, worth all the strife and endurance. No, all this is not ordained in vain, nor in reckless indifference to what we suffer, but for an end, for a high end, for an end higher than we think for. Troubles, disappointments, afflictions, sorrows, press us on every side, that we may rise upward, upward, ever upward. And believe me, in thus rising upward, you shall find the very names that you give to calamity, gradually changing. Misery, strictly speaking and in its full meaning, does not belong to a good mind. Misery shall pass into suffering, and suffering into discipline, and discipline into virtue, and virtue into heaven. So let it pass with you. Bend now patiently and meekly, in that lowly “worship of sorrow,” till in God’s time, it become the worship of joy—of proportionably higher joy—in that world where there shall be no more sorrow nor pain nor crying—where all tears shall be wiped from your eyes—where beamings of heaven in your countenance, shall grow brighter by comparison with all the darkness of earth.

And remember too, that your fore-runner unto that blessed life, passed through this same worship of sorrow. A *man* of sorrows was that Divine Master, and acquainted with grief. This is the great Sabbath of the year* that commemorates his triumph over sorrow and pain and death. And what were the instruments, the means, the ministers of that very victory—that last victory? The rage of men, and the fierceness of torture; arraignment before enemies—mocking, smiting, scourging; the thorny crown, the bitter cross, the barred tomb! With these he fought, through these he conquered, and from these he rose to heaven. And believe me, in something must every disciple be like the master. Clothed in some vesture of pain, of sorrow or of affliction, must he fight the great battle and win the great victory. When I stand in the presence of that high example, I cannot listen to poor, unmanly, unchristian complainings. I would not have its disciples account too much of their griefs. Rather would I say, courage! ye that bear the great, the sublime lot of sorrow! It is not forever that ye suffer. It is not for naught, that ye suffer. It is not without end, that ye suffer. God wills it. He spared not his own Son from it. God wills it. It is the ordinance of his wisdom for us. Nay, it is the ordinance of Infinite love, to procure for us an infinite glory and beatitude.

* Easter Sunday.

DISCOURSE VII.

ON THE SCHOOL OF LIFE.

PSALM LXXI. 17. O GOD, THOU HAST TAUGHT ME FROM MY YOUTH.

LIFE is a school. This world is a house of instruction. It is not a prison nor a penitentiary, nor a palace of ease, nor an amphitheatre for games and spectacles ; it is a school. And this view of life is the only one that goes to the depths of the philosophy of life—the only one that answers the great question, solves the great problem of life. For what is life given? If for enjoyment alone, if for suffering merely, it is a chaos of contradictions. But if for moral and spiritual learning, then everything is full of significance—full of wisdom. And this view too, is of the utmost practical importance. It immediately presents to us and presses upon us the question—what are we learning? And is not this, truly, the great question. When your son comes home to you at the annual vacation, it is the first question in your thoughts concerning *him* ; and you ask him, or you ask for the certificates and testimonials of his teachers, to give you some evi-

dence of his learning. At every passing turn in the great school of life, also, this is the all-important question. What has a man got, from the experience, discipline, opportunity of any past period? Not, what has he gathered together in the shape of any tangible good; but what has he got—in that other and eternal treasure-house—his mind! Not, what of outward accommodation the *literal* scholar has had, should we think it much worth our while to inquire; not whether his text books had been in splendid bindings; not whether his study-table had been of rich cabinet-work, and his chair softly cushioned; not whether the school-house in which he had studied, were of majestic size, or adorned with columns and porticoes; let him have got a good education, and it would be comparatively of little moment, how or where he got it. We should not ask what honors he had obtained, but as proofs of his progress. Let him have graduated at the most illustrious university, or have gained, through some mistake, its highest distinctions, and still be essentially deficient in mind or in accomplishment, and that fatal defect would sink into every parent's heart, as a heavy and unalleviated disappointment. And are such questions and considerations any less appropriate to the great school of life; whose entire course is an education for virtue, happiness, and heaven? "O God!" exclaims the Psalmist, "thou hast taught me from my youth."

Life, I repeat, is a school. The periods of life, are its terms; all human conditions are but its forms; all human employments its lessons. Families are the primary departments of this moral education; the various circles of society, its advanced stages; kingdoms are its universities; the world is but the material structure, built for the

administration of its teachings ; and it is lifted up in the heavens and borne through its annual circuits, for no end but this.

Life, I say again, is a school : and all its periods, infancy, youth, manhood, and age, have their appropriate tasks in this school.

With what an early care, and wonderful apparatus, does Providence begin the work of human education ! An infant being is cast upon the lap of nature, not to be supported or nourished only, but to be instructed. The world is its school. All elements around, are its teachers. Long ere it is placed on the first form before the human master, it has been at school ; insomuch that a distinguished statesman has said with equal truth and originality, that he had probably obtained more ideas by the age of five or six years, than he has acquired ever since. And what a wonderful ministration is it ! What mighty masters are there for the training of infancy, in the powers of surrounding nature ! With a finer influence than any human dictation, they penetrate the secret places of that embryo soul, and bring it into life and light. From the soft breathings of Spring to the rough blasts of Winter, each one pours a blessing upon its favorite child, expanding its frame for action, or fortifying it for endurance. You seek for celebrated schools and distinguished teachers for your children ; and it is well. Or you cannot afford to give them these advantages, and you regret it. But consider what you have. Talk we of far-sought and expensive processes of education ? That infant eye hath its master in the sun ; that infant ear is attuned by the melodies and harmonies of the wide, the boundless creation. The goings on of the heavens and the earth, are the

courses of childhood's lessons. The shows that are painted on the dome of the sky and on the uplifted mountains, and on the spreading plains and seas, are its pictured diagrams. Immensity, infinity, eternity, are its teachers. The great universe is the shrine, from which oracles— oracles by day and by night—are forever uttered. Well may it be said that “of such”—of beings so cared for— “is the kingdom of heaven.” Well and fitly is it written of him, who comprehended the wondrous birth of humanity and the gracious and sublime providence of heaven over it, that he took little children in his arms and blessed them.

So begins the education of man in the school of life. It were easy, did the time permit, to pursue it into its successive stages; into the period of youth, when the senses not yet vitiated, are to be refined into grace and beauty, and the soul is to be developed into reason and virtue; of manhood, when the strength of the ripened passions is to be held under the control of wisdom, and the matured energies of the higher nature, are to be directed to the accomplishment of worthy and noble ends; of age, which is to finish with dignity, the work begun with ardor; which is to learn patience in weakness, to gather up the fruits of experience into maxims of wisdom, to cause virtuous activity to subside into pious contemplation, and to gaze upon the visions of heaven, through the parting veils of earth.

But in the next place, life presents lessons in its various pursuits and conditions, in its ordinances and events. Riches and poverty, gaieties and sorrows, marriages and funerals, the ties of life bound or broken, fit and fortunate or untoward and painful, are all lessons. They are not

only appointments, but they are lessons. They are not things which must be, but things which are meant. Events are not blindly and carelessly flung together, in a strange chance-medley: providence is not schooling one man, and another, screening from the fiery trial of its lessons; it has no rich favorites nor poor victims; one event happeneth to all; one end, one design, concerneth, urgeth all men.

Hast thou been prosperous? Thou hast been at school; that is all; thou hast been at school. Thou thoughtest perhaps, that it was a great thing, and that thou wert some great one; but thou art only just a pupil. Thou thoughtest that thou wast master and hadst nothing to do but to direct and command; but I tell thee that there is a Master above thee; the Master of life; and that He looks not at thy splendid state nor thy many pretensions; not at the aids and appliances of thy learning; but simply at thy learning. As an earthly teacher puts the poor boy and the rich, upon the same form, and knows no difference between them but their progress; so it is with thee and thy poor neighbor. *What* then hast thou learnt from thy prosperity? This is the question that I am asking, that all men are asking, when any one has suddenly grown prosperous, or has been a long time so. And I have heard men say in a grave tone, "he cannot bear it!—he has become passionate, proud, self sufficient, and disagreeable." Ah! fallen, disgraced man! even in the world's account. But what, I say again, hast thou learnt from prosperity? Moderation, temperance, candor, modesty, gratitude to God, generosity to man? Well done, good and faithful; thou hast honor with heaven and with men. But what, again I say, hast thou learnt

from thy prosperity? Selfishness, self-indulgence and sin?—to forget or overlook thy less fortunate fellow?—to forget thy God? Then wert thou an unworthy and dishonored being, though thou hadst been nursed in the bosom of the proudest affluence, or hadst taken thy degrees from the lineage of an hundred noble descents—yes, as truly dishonored, before the eye of heaven, though dwelling in splendor and luxury, as if thou wert lying, the victim of beggary and vice by the hedge or upon the dung-hill. It is the scholar, not the school, at which the most ordinary human equity looks; and let us not think that the equity of heaven will look beneath that lofty mark.

But art thou, to whom I speak, a poor man? Thou, too, art at school. Take care that thou learn, rather than complain. Keep thine integrity, thy candor and kindness of heart. Beware of envy; beware of bondage; keep thy self-respect. The body's toil is nothing. Beware of the mind's drudgery and degradation. I do not say, be always poor. Better thy condition if thou canst. But be more anxious to better thy soul. Be willing, while thou art poor, patiently to learn the lessons of poverty; fortitude, cheerfulness, contentment, trust in God. The tasks I know are hard; deprivation, toil, the care of children. Thou must wake early: thy children, perhaps, will wake thee; thou canst not put them away from thee to a distant nursery. Fret not thyself because of this; but cheerfully address thyself to thy task; learn patience, calmness, self-command, disinterestedness, love. With these the humblest dwelling may be hallowed, and so made dearer and nobler, than the proudest mansion of self-indulgent ease and luxury. But above all

things, if thou art poor, beware that thou lose not thine independence. Cast not thyself, a creature poorer than poor, an indolent, helpless, despised beggar, on the kindness of others. Choose to have God for thy master, rather than man. Escape not from his school, either by dishonesty or alms-taking, lest thou fall into that state worse than disgrace, where thou shalt have no respect for thyself. Thou mayest come out of that school ; yet beware that thou come not out as a truant, but as a noble scholar. The world itself doth not ask of the candidates for its honors, whether they studied in a palace or a cottage, but what they have acquired and what they are ; and heaven, let us again be assured, will ask no inferior title to its glories and rewards.

Again, the entire social condition of humanity is a school. The ties of society affectingly teach us to love one another. A parent, a child, a husband or wife or associate, without love, is nothing but a cold marble image—or rather a machine, an annoyance, a something in the way to vex and pain us. The social relations not only teach love but demand it. Show me a society, no matter how intelligent, accomplished and refined, but where love is not,—where there is ambition, jealousy and distrust, not simplicity, confidence and kindness ; and you show me an unhappy society. All will complain of it. Its punctilious decorum, its polished insincerity, its “ threatening urbanity,” gives no satisfaction to any of its members. What is the difficulty ? What does it want ? I answer, it wants love : and if it will not have that, it must suffer, and it ought to suffer.

But the social state, also powerfully teaches modesty and meekness. All cannot be great ; and nobody may

reasonably expect all the world to be engaged with lauding his merits. All cannot be great ; and we have happily fallen upon times, when none can be distinguished as a few have been in the days of semi-barbarous ignorance. All cannot be great ; for then nobody were. The mighty mass of human claims presses down all individual ambition. Were it not so, it were not easy to see where that ambition would stop. Well that it be schooled to reason ; and society, without knowing it, is an efficient master for that end. Is any one vexed and sore under neglect ? Does he walk through the street unmarked, and say that he deserves to be saluted oftener and with more respect ? Does the pang of envy shoot through his heart, when notice is bestowed on others, whom he thinks less worthy than he is ? Perhaps, society *is* unjust to him ? What then ? What shall he do ? What can he do, but learn humility and patience and quietness ? Perhaps the lesson is roughly and unkindly given. Then must society through its very imperfection, teach us to be superior to its opinion ; and our care must be, not to be cynical and bitter, but gentle, candid and affectionate still.

Society is doubtless often right in its neglect or its condemnation ; but certainly it is sometimes wrong. It seems to be the lot, the chance, the fortune, the accident of some to be known, admired, and celebrated. Adulation and praise are poured out at their feet while they live, and upon their tomb when they die. But thousands of others, intrinsically just as interesting, with sentiments that mount as high on earth, and will flourish as fair in heaven, live unpraised and die unknown. Nay, and the very delicacy of some minds forbids their being generally

known and appreciated. Tact, facility, readiness, conversation, personal recommendations, manners, and connections help on some ; and all these may be wanting to minds that have none the less worth and beauty. Who then would garner up his heart in the opinion of this world? Yet neither let us hate it ; but let its imperfection minister to our perfection.

There are also broken ties ; and sometimes the holiest ties wear themselves out ; like imperfect things, alas ! as they are. What, *then*, is to be learnt? I answer, a great lesson. What is to be done? A great duty. To be just ; to be true ; to cherish a divine candor ; to make the best of that which seems not well ; to pour not vinegar upon the galling chain, but the oil of gentleness and forbearance. So shall many a wound be healed ; and hearts shall be knit together in a better bond than that of hasty impulse—the bond of mutual improvement, strengthening mutual love.

But not to insist more at large upon the disciplinary character of all the conditions of life and society, let us consider, for a moment farther, some of its events and ordinances.

Amidst all the gaiety and splendor of life there is a dark spot ; over its brightest career, there comes a sudden and overshadowing cloud ; in the midst of its loud and restless activity there is a deep pause and an awful silence ;—what a lesson is death !—death that stops the warm current and the vital breath, and freezes mortal hearts in fear and wonder ; death that quells all human power, and quenches all human pride ; death, “the dread teacher,” the awful admonisher, that tells man of this life’s frailty, and of a judgment to come. What a lesson is death ! Stern, cold,

inexorable, irresistible—the collected might of the world cannot stay it, nor ward it off; the breath that is parting from the lips of king, or beggar—the breath that scarcely stirs the hushed air—that little breath—the wealth of empires cannot buy it, nor bring it back for a moment. What a lesson is this to proclaim our own frailty, and a power beyond us! It is a fearful lesson; it is never familiar. That which lays its hand upon all, walks through the earth, as a dread mystery. Its mandate falls upon the ear in as fearful accents now, as when it said to the first man, “thou shalt die! dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”—It is a universal lesson. It is read every where. Its message comes every year, every day. The years past are filled with its sad and solemn mementos; and could a prophet now stand in the midst of us and announce the future, to more than one of us, would he say, “set thy house in order; for this year thou shalt die.” Yes, death is a teacher. I have seen upon the wall of our school-rooms, the diagram, that sets forth some humble theorem; but what a hand-writing is traced by the finger of death upon the walls of every human habitation! And what does it teach? Duty; to act our part well; to fulfil the work assigned us. Other questions, questions of pride and ambition and pleasure, may press themselves upon a man’s life; but when he is dying—when he is dead, there is but one question—but one question—*has he lived well?* I have seen an old man upon his bier; and I said, “hath he done the work of many years faithfully? hath he come to his end like a shock of corn fully ripe? Then all is well. There is no evil in death, but what life makes.” I have seen one fall amidst life’s cares, manly or matronly, and when the end came not like a catastrophe—not as unlooked

for—when it came as that which had been much thought upon and always prepared for; when I saw the head meekly bowed to the visitation or the eye raised in calm bright hope to heaven, or when the confidence of long intimate friendship knows that it would be raised there though the kind veil of delirium be spread over it—I said, “the work is done, the victory is gained; thanks be to God who giveth that victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” I have seen an infant form, sweetly reposing on its last couch, as if death had lost all its terrors, and had become as one of the cherubim of heaven; and I said, “ah! how many live so, that they will yet wish that they had died, with that innocent child!”

Among our christian ordinances, Brethren, there is one that celebrates the victory over death; and there is one, that is appropriate to the beginning of life. They are both teachers. Baptismal waters, the emblems of a purity received from God and to be watched over for God; the consecration unto obedience to the great truths of Christianity—to the doctrine of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost—these teach us, parents, of a charge to be solemnly kept, of duties to be faithfully rendered. The sacramental table—what is it but an altar, set up amidst the realm of death, to the hope of everlasting life? To keep us in mind of him, who conquered death, and brought life and immortality to light, who gave his life a ransom for many, who became a curse for us that we might be redeemed from the curse of sin, who died that we might live forever—lo! these symbols that are set forth from time to time in the house of God, in the school of Christ! Touching memorials of pain and sorrow and patient en

durance! Blessed omens, on God's altar, of peace and forgiveness and glorious victory!

Such, my friends, are some of the lessons of the school of life. Indulge me in one or two observations on the general character of this school, and I shall have completed my present design.

Life is a finely attempered, and at the same time, a very trying school.

It is finely attempered; that is, it is carefully adjusted, in all its arrangements and tasks, to man's powers and passions. There is no extravagance in its teachings; nothing is done for the sake of present affect. It excites man, but it does not excite him too much. Indeed, so carefully adjusted are all things to this raging love of excitement, so admirably fitted to hold this passion in check, and to attemper all things to what man can bear, that I cannot help seeing in this feature of life, intrinsic and wonderful evidence of a wise and over-ruling Order. Men often complain that life is dull, tame and drudging. But how unwisely were it arranged, if it were all on gala-day of enjoyment or transport! And when men make their own schools of too much excitement, their parties, controversies, associations and enterprizes, how soon do the heavy realities of life fasten upon the chariot-wheels of success when they are ready to take fire, and hold them back to a moderated movement!

Everything, I say, is tempered in the system of things to which we belong. The human passions, and the correspondent powers of impression which man possesses, are all kept within certain limits. I think sometimes of angel forms on earth; of a gracefulness and beauty more than mortal; of a flash or a glance of the eye in the elo-

quent man, that should rend and inflame a thousand hearts, as lightning does the gnarled oak ; but do we not see that for the sensitive frame of man, enough excitement is already provided ; that the moderated tone of things is all man's ear could bear ; the softened and shaded hue enough for his eye ; the expressions of countenance and gesture, such as they are, enough for his heart ! Nay, how often is the excitement of thought and feeling so great, that but for the interruptions of humble cares and trifles—the interpositions of a wise providence—the mind and frame would sink under them entirely ! It would seem delightful, no doubt, in the pilgrimage of life, to walk through unending galleries of paintings and statues ; but human life is not such ; it is a school.

It is a trying school. It is a school, very trying to faith, to endurance and to endeavor. There are mysteries in it. As to the pupil in a human school, there are lessons of which it does not understand the full intent and bearing, as he is obliged to take some things on trust ; so it is in the great school of providence. There are hard lessons to be got in this school. As the pupil is often obliged to bend all his faculties to the task before him, and tears sometimes fall on the page he is studying, so it is in the school of God's providence ; there are hard lessons in it.

In short, the whole course of human life is a conflict with difficulties ; and if rightly conducted, a progress in improvement. In both these respects, man holds a position peculiar, and distinct from that of the animal races. They are *not* at school. They *never* improve. With them too, all is facility ; while with man comparatively, all is difficulty. Look at the ant-hill, or the hive of bees.

See how the tenant of the one, is provided with feet, so constructed that he can run all over his house, outside and inside—no heavy and toilsome steps required to go upward or downward ; and how the wings of the other, enable him to fly through the air, and achieve the journey of days in an hour. Man's steps compared with these, are the steps of toilsome endeavor.

Why is this so ? Why is man clothed with this cumbersome mass of flesh ? Because it is a more perfect instrument for the mind's culture, though that end is to be wrought out with difficulty. Why are his steps slow and toilsome ? Because they are the steps of improvement. Why is he at school ? That he may learn. Why is the lesson hard ? That he may rise high on the scale of advancement.

Nor is it ever too late for him to learn. This is a distinct consideration ; but let me dwell a moment upon it in close. Nor, I say, is it ever too late for man to learn. If any man thinks that his time has gone by, let me take leave to contradict that dangerous assumption. Life is a school ; the whole of life. There never comes a time, even amidst the decays of age, when it is fit to lay aside the eagerness of acquisition or the cheerfulness of endeavor. I protest utterly against the common idea of growing old. I hold that it is an unchristian, a heathen idea. It may befit those who expect to lay down and end their being in the grave, but not those who look upon the grave as the birth-place of immortality. I look for old age as, saving its infirmities, a cheerful and happy time. I think that the affections are often full as warm then, as they ever are. Well may the affections of piety be so ! They are approaching near to the rest that remaineth ;

they almost grasp the prize that shall crown them; they are ready to say, with aged Simeon, "now let thy servant depart." The battle is almost fought; the victory is near at hand. "Why,"—does any one still ask—"why does the battle press hard to the very end? Why is it ordained for man that he shall walk, all through the course of life, in patience and strife, and sometimes in darkness?" Because from patience is to come perfection. Because, from strife is to come triumph. Because, from the dark cloud, is to come the lightning-flash, that opens the way to eternity!

Christian! hast thou been faithful in the school of life? Art thou faithful to all its lessons? Or hast thou, negligent man! been placed in this great school, only to learn nothing, and hast not cared whether thou didst learn or not. Have the years passed over thee, only to witness thy sloth and indifference? Hast thou been zealous to acquire everything, but virtue, but the favor of thy God?

But *art* thou faithful, Christian? God help thee to be yet more so, in years to come. And remember for thine encouragement, what is written. "These things saith the first and the last, who was dead and is alive; I know thy works and tribulation and poverty, (but thou art rich;) fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; be faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life."

DISCOURSE VIII.

ON THE VALUE OF LIFE.

(Preached on New Year's day.)

JOB III. 2—3. AND JOB SPAKE AND SAID, LET THE DAY PERISH, WHEREIN I WAS BORN.

THERE is a worldly habit of viewing this life, and especially of depreciating its value, against which, in this discourse, I wish to contend. It is the view of life which many of the heathens entertained, and which better became them, than those who hold the faith of christians. "When we reflect," says one of the Grecian sages, "on the destiny that awaits man on earth, we ought to bedew his cradle with our tears." Job's contempt of life, so energetically expressed in the chapter from which my text is taken, was of the same character. We may observe, however, that Job's contempt of life, consisted not with the views entertained by the children of the ancient dispensation, and was emphatically rebuked, in common with all his impious complaints, in the sequel of that affecting story. The birth of a child among the Hebrews was

hailed with joy, and its birth-day was made a festival.

But there are times and seasons, events and influences in life, which awaken in many, sentiments similar to those of Job, and which require to be considered.

The sensibility of youth sometimes takes this direction. It is true, indeed, that to the youthful mind, life for a while is filled with brightness and hope. It is the promised season of activity and enjoyment, of manly independence, of successful business, or of glorious ambition—the season of noble enterprizes and lofty attainments. There is a time, when the youthful fancy is kindling with the anticipations of an ideal world; when it is thinking of friendship and honor of another sort than those which are commonly found in the world; when its promised mansion is the abode of perfect happiness, and its paths as they stretch into life, seem to it as the paths that shine brighter and brighter for ever.

But over all these glowing expectations, there usually comes, sooner or later, a dark eclipse; and it is in the first shock of disappointed hope, before the season of youth is yet fully past, that we are probably exposed to take the most opposite and disconsolate views of life. It is here that we find real, in opposition to factitious sentimentalism. Before this great shock to early hope comes, the sentimental character is apt to be affectation, and afterwards it is liable to be misanthropy. But now it is a genuine and ingenuous sorrow, at finding life so different from what it expected. There is a painful and unwelcome effort to give up many cherished habits of thinking about it. The mind encounters the chilling selfishness of the

world, and it feels the miserable insufficiency of the world to satisfy its longings after happiness ; and life loses many of the bright hues, that had gilded its morning season. Indeed, when we take into account the unwonted and multiplied cares of this period, the want of that familiarity and habit which renders the ways and manners of life easy, the difficulties and embarrassments that beset the youthful adventurer, the anxiety about establishing a character and taking a place in the world, and above all, perhaps, the want of a self-discipline ; when we take all this into the account, to say nothing of the freshness of disappointment, we may well doubt whether the period of entrance into life, is the happiest, though it is commonly looked upon as such. It is not perhaps, till men proceed farther in the way, that they are prepared, either rightly to estimate or fully to enjoy it. And it is worthy of notice in this connection, that those diseases which spring from mental anxiety, are accounted, by physicians, to be the most prevalent between the ages of twenty and forty.

Manhood arrives at a conclusion unfavorable to life, by a different process. It is not the limited view occasioned by disappointment, that brings it to think poorly of life, but it assumes to hold the larger view taken by experience and reflection. It professes to have proved this life, and found it little worth. It has deliberately made up its mind, that life is far more miserable than happy. Its employments, it finds, are tedious, and its schemes are baffled. Its friendships are broken, or its friends are dead. Its pleasures pall and its honors fade. Its paths are beaten and familiar_ and

dull. It has grasped the good of life; and every thing grasped loses half of its charm; in the hand of possession every thing is shrivelled and shrunk to insignificance.

Is *this manhood*, then, sad or sentimental? No; farthest possible from it. Sentiment, it holds to be ridiculous; sadness, absurd. It smiles, in recklessness. It is merry, in despite. It sports away a life, not worth a nobler thought, or else it wears away a life, not worth a nobler aim, than to get tolerably through it. This is a worldly manhood; and no wonder that its estimate of the value of existence is low and earthly.

Poetry has often ministered to a state of mind, loftier indeed, but of a like complexion. "Life," says the Grecian Pindar, "is the dream of a shadow."

"What," says the melancholy Kirk White—

"What is this passing life?
A peevish April day,
A little sun, a little rain,
And then night sweeps along the plain,
And all things fade away."

The melancholy of Byron is of a darker complexion; one might anticipate, indeed, that his misanthropy, as well as gloom, would repel every reader; and yet a critic has observed that this is the very quality which has caught and held the ear of the sympathizing world. If the world does sympathize with it, it is time that the christian preacher should raise his voice against it. One may justly feel, indeed, for the sufferings as well as perversions of that extraordi-

nary mind ; but its skepticism and scorn must not be suffered to fling their shadow across the world, without rebuke or remonstrance. Its sufferings, indeed, are a striking proof, which the christian teacher might well adduce, of the tendency of earthly passion and unbelief to darken all the way of human life.

The pulpit, also, I must allow, has fallen, under the charge of leaning to the dark side of things. It may be said perhaps, that if its instructions are to have any bias, it is expedient that it should lean to the dark side. But error or mistake is not to be vindicated by its expediency, or its power to affect the mind. And its expediency, in fact, if not its power, in this case, is to be doubted. Men of reflection and discernment are, and ought to be, dissatisfied with disproportionate and extravagant statements, made with a view to support the claims of an ascetic piety, or a cynical morality. And one mistake, the preacher may find is, to the hearer, an intrenchment strong, against a hundred of his arguments.

It is true, also, that religious men in general, have been accustomed to talk gloomily of the present state. I do not mean such religious men as the wise and holy saints of old. Let the rejoicing apostles, rejoicing in the midst of the greatest calamities ; let the mild cheerfulness of their Master, stand as monuments against the perversions of later times. It has strangely come to be thought a mark of great piety towards God to disparage, if not to despise the state which he has ordained for us ; and the claims of this world have been absurdly set up, not in comparison, only, but in competition, with the claims of another ; as if both were not parts of one system ; as if a man could not make the best of this world and of

another at the same time ; as if we should learn to think better of other works and dispensations of God, by thinking meanly of these. Jesus and his apostles did not teach us to condemn our present condition. They taught that every creature and every appointment of God, is good, and to be received thankfully. They did not look upon life as so much time lost ; they did not regard its employments as trifles unworthy of immortal beings ; they did not tell their followers to fold their arms as if in disdain of their state and species ; but it is evident that they looked soberly and cheerfully upon the world, as the theatre of worthy action, of exalted usefulness, and of rational and innocent enjoyment.

But I am considering the disparaging views of life ; and against these views, whether sentimental, worldly, poetical or religious, I must contend. I firmly maintain, that with all its evils, life is a blessing. There is a presumptive argument for this, of the greatest strength. To deny that life is a blessing, is to destroy the very basis of all religion, natural and revealed ; and the argument I am engaged upon therefore, well deserves attention. For the very foundation of all religion, is laid in the belief that God is good. But if life is an evil and a curse, there can be no such belief, rationally entertained. The Scriptures do not prove, nor pretend to prove, that God is good. They assume that truth as already certain. But what makes it certain ? Where does, or can the proof come from ? Obviously, from this world, and from nowhere else. Nowhere else can our knowledge extend, to gather proof. Nay more, I say, the proof must come from this *life* and from nothing else. For it avails not—if life itself is doomed to be unhappy—it avails not to the argument to say that this

world is fair and glorious. It avails not to say that this outward frame of things, this vast habitation of life, is beautiful. The architecture of an Infirmary may be beautiful, and the towers of a prison may be built on the grandest scale of architectural magnificence ; but it would little avail the victims of sickness or of bondage. And so if this life is a doomed life—doomed by its very condition to sufferings far greater than its pleasures ; if it is a curse and not a blessing ; if sighs and groans must rise from it, more frequent and loud, than voices of joy and gladness, it will avail but little that heaven spreads its majestic dome over our misery ; that the mountain walls, which echo our griefs, are clothed with grandeur and might ; or that the earth, which bears the burthen of our woes, is paved with granite and marble, or covered with verdure and beauty.

Let him then, who says that this life is not a blessing ; let him who levels his satire at humanity and human existence, as mean and contemptible ; let him who with the philosophic pride of a Voltaire or a Gibbon looks, upon this world as the habitation of a miserable race, fit only for mockery and scorn, or who with the religious melancholy of Thomas, a Kempis or of Brainard, overshadows this world with the gloom of his imagination till it seems a dungeon or a prison, which has no blessing to offer but escape from it—let all such consider that they are extinguishing the primal light of faith and hope and happiness. If life is not a blessing, if the world is not a goodly world, if residence in it, is not a favored condition, then religion has lost its basis, truth its foundation in the goodness of God ; then it matters not what else is true or not true ; speculation is vain and faith is vain ; and all that

pertains to man's highest being, is whelmed in the ruins of misanthropy, melancholy and despair.

The argument in this view is well deserving of attention. Considered as a merely speculative point, it is nevertheless one on which every thing hangs. And this indeed is the consideration which I have been stating—that the whole superstructure of religious truth is based upon this foundation truth, that life is a blessing.

And that this is not a mere assumption, I infer in the next place, from experience. And there are two points in this experience to be noticed. First, the love of life proves that it is a blessing. If it is not, why are men so attached to it? Will it be said, that it is “the dread of something after death,” that binds man to life? But make the case a fair one for the argument: say, for instance, that the souls of men sleep, after death, till the resurrection; and would not almost every man rather live on, during the intermediate space, than to sink to that temporary oblivion?

But to refer in the next place to a consideration still plainer and less embarrassed; why are we so attached to our local situation in life, to our home, to the spot that gave us birth, or to any place, no matter how unsightly or barren,—though it were the rudest mountain or rock,—on which the history of years has been written? Will it be said, that it is habit which endears our residence? But what kind of habit? A habit of being miserable? The question needs no reply. Will you refer me to the pathetic story of the aged prisoner of the Bastille, who, on being released and coming forth into the world, desired to return to his prison; and argue from this, that a man may learn to love, even, the glooms of a dungeon, provided they become habitual? But why did that aged prisoner desire to

return? It was not because he loved the cold shadow of his prison-walls: but it was, as the story informs us, because his friends were gone from the earth; it was because no living creature knew him, that the world was darker to him, than the gloomy dungeons of the Bastile. It shows how dear are the ties of kindred and society. It shows how strong and how sweet are those social affections, which we never appreciate, till we are cut off from their joys; which glide from heart to heart, as the sunbeams pass unobserved, in the day-light of prosperity; but if a ray of that social kindness visits the prison of our sickness and affliction, it comes to us like a beam of heaven. And though we had worn out a life in confinement, we go back again to meet that beam of heaven, the smile of society; and if we do not find it, we had rather return to the silent walls that know us, than to dwell in a world that knows us not.

“But after all, and as a matter of fact, how many miseries, it may be said, are bound up with this life, too deeply interwoven with it, and too keenly felt, to allow it to be called a favored and happy life! Besides evils of common occurrence and account, besides sickness and pain and poverty, besides disappointment and bereavement and sorrow, how many evils are there that are not embraced in the common estimate; evils that are secret and silent, that dwell deep in the recesses of life, that do not come forth to draw the public gaze or to awaken the public sympathy! How many are there who never tell their grief—how many who spread a fair and smiling exterior over an aching heart!”

Alas! it is but too easy to make out a strong statement: and yet the very strength of the statement, the strong feel-

ing, at least, with which it is made, disproves the cynical argument. The truth is, and it is obvious, that misery makes a greater impression upon us, than happiness. Why? Because, misery is not the habit of our minds. It is a strange and unwonted guest, and we are more conscious of its presence. Happiness—not to speak now of any very high quality or entirely satisfying state of mind, but only of a general easiness, cheerfulness and comfort—happiness, I say, dwells with us, and we forget it; it does not excite us; it does not disturb the order and course of our thoughts. All our impressions about affliction, on the other hand, show that it is more rare, and at the same time, more regarded. It creates a sensation and stir in the world. When death enters among us, it spreads a groan through our dwellings; it clothes them with unwonted and sympathizing grief. Thus, afflictions are like epochs in life. We remember them as we do the storm and earth-quake, because they are out of the common course of things. They stand like disastrous events in a table of chronology, recorded because they are extraordinary; and with whole periods of prosperity between. Thus do we mark out and signalize the times of calamity; but how many happy days pass—unnoted periods in the table of life's chronology—unrecorded either in the book of memory or in the scanty annals of our thanksgiving? How many happy months are swept beneath the silent wing of time, and leave no name nor record in our hearts! How little are we *able*, much as we may be disposed, to call up from the dim remembrances of the year that is just ended, the peaceful moments, the easy sensations, the bright thoughts, the movements of kind and blessed affections, in which life has flowed on, bearing us almost unconsciously upon its bosom,

because it has born us calmly and gently! Sweet moments of quietness and affection! glad hours of joy and hope! days, ye many days begun and ended in health and happiness! times and seasons of heaven's gracious beneficence! stand before us yet again, in the light of memory, and command us to be thankful and to prize as we ought the gift of life.

But, my brethren, I must not content myself with a bare defence of life as against a skeptical or cynical spirit, or as against the errors and mistakes of religion. I must not content myself with a view of the palpable and acknowledged blessings of life. Life is more than what is palpable, or often acknowledged. I contend against the cynical and the superstitious disparagement of life, not alone as wrong and as fatal indeed to all religion; but I contend against it as fatal to the highest improvement of life. I say, that life is not only good, but that it was made to be glorious. Ay, and it has been glorious in the experience of millions. The glory of all human virtue arrays it. The glory of sanctity and beneficence and heroism is upon it. The crown of a thousand martyrdoms is upon its brow.

Through this visible and sometimes darkened life, it was intended that the brightness of the soul should shine, and that it should shine through all its surrounding cares and labors. The humblest life which any one of us leads may be what has been expressively denominated "the life of God in the soul." It may hold a felt connection with its infinite source. It may derive an inexpressible sublimity from that connection. Yes, my Brethren, there may be something of God in our daily life; something of

might in this frail inner man ; something of immortality in this momentary and transient being.

This mind—I survey it with awe, with wonder—encompassed with flesh, fenced around with barriers of sense ; yet it breaks every bound, and stretches away, on every side, into infinity. It is not upon the line only, of its eternal duration that it goes forth—forth from this day of its new annual period, through the periods of immortality—but its thoughts like diverging rays, spread themselves abroad and far, far into the boundless, the immeasurable, the infinite. And these diverging rays may be like cords to lift it up to heaven. What a glorious thing, then, is this life ! To know its wonderful Author—to bring down wisdom from the eternal stars—to bear upward its homage, its gratitude, its love to the Ruler of all worlds—what glory in the created universe is there, surpassing this ? “Thou crownest it—it is written—thou crownest it with loving kindness and tender mercy : thou crownest it with glory and honor ; thou hast made it a little lower than the angelic life.”

Am I asked, then, what is life ? I say, in answer, that it is good. God saw and pronounced that it was good, when he made it. Man feels that it is good when he preserves it. It is good in the unnumbered sources of happiness around it. It is good in the ten thousand buoyant and happy affections within it. It is good in its connection with infinite goodness, and in its hope of infinite glory beyond it. True, our life is frail in its earthly state, and it is often bowed down with earthly burthens ; but still it endures and revives and flourishes ; still it is redeemed from destruction, and crowned with loving kindness and tender mercy. Frail too, and yet strong is it, in its

heavenly nature. The immortal is clothed with mortality; and the incorruptible with corruption. It is like an instrument formed for heavenly melody; whose materials were taken indeed, from the mouldering and unsightly forest: but lo! the hand of the artificer has been upon it; it is curiously wrought; it is fearfully and wonderfully made; it is fashioned for every tone of gladness and triumph. It may be relaxed, but it can be strung again. It may send forth a mournful strain; but it is formed also for the music of heavenly joy. Even its sadness is "pleasing and mournful to the soul." Even suffering is hallowed and dear. Life has that value, that even misery cannot destroy it. It neutralizes grief, and makes it a source of deep and sacred interest. Ah! holy hours of suffering and sorrow—hours of communion with the great and triumphant Sufferer—who that has passed through your silent moments of prayer and resignation and trust, would give you up, for all the brightness of prosperity?

Am I still asked what is life? I answer, that it is a great and sublime gift. Those felicitations with which this renewed season of it is welcomed, are but a fit tribute to its value, and to the gladness which belongs to it. "Happy," says the general voice, "happy New-Year!" to all who live to see it. Life is felt to be a great and gracious boon, by all who enjoy its light; and this is not too much felt. It is the wonderful creation of God; and it cannot be too much admired. It is light sprung from void darkness; it is power waked from inertness and impotence; it is being created from nothing; well may the contrast enkindle wonder and delight. It is a stream from the infinite and overflowing goodness; and from its first

gushing forth to its mingling with the ocean of eternity, that goodness attends it. Yes : life, despite of all that cynics or sentimentalists say, is a great and glorious gift. There is gladness in its infant voices. There is joy in the buoyant step of its youth. There is deep satisfaction in its strong maturity. There is holy peace in its quiet age. There is good for the good ; there is virtue for the faithful ; there is victory for the valiant. There is spirituality for the spiritual ; and, there is, even in this humble life, an infinity for the boundless in desire. There are blessings upon its birth ; there is hope in its death ; and there is—to consummate all—there is eternity in its prospect.

As I have discoursed upon this theme, it is possible that some may have thought that it has nothing to do with religion ; that it is a subject merely for fine sentiments and for nothing more. Let me tell such a thinker that this subject has not only much to do with religion every way, but that it furnishes, in fact, a test of our religion. To the low-minded, debased and sensual, this life must, doubtless, be something very poor, indifferent and commonplace ; it must be a beaten path, a dull scene, shut in on every side, by the earthly, palpable, and gross. But break down the barriers of sense—open the windows of faith—fling wide the gates that darken the sensual world, and let the light of heaven pour in upon it—and then what is this life ? How changed is it !—how new !—a new heavens, indeed, and a new earth. Yes, this earth which binds one man in chains, is to the other, the starting place, the goal of immortality. This earth which buries one man in the rubbish of dull cares and wearying vanities, is to the other, the lofty mount of meditation, where heaven

and infinity and eternity are spread before him and around him. Yes, my friend, the life thou leadest—the life thou thinkest of—is the interpreter of thine inward being. Such as life is to thee, such thou art. If it is low and mean, and base—if it is a mere money-getting or pleasure-seeking or honor-craving life—so art thou. Be thou lofty-minded, pure and holy—and life shall be to thee the beginning of heaven—the threshold of immortality.

DISCOURSE IX.

LIFE'S CONSOLATION IN VIEW OF DEATH.

JOHN XI. 25. JESUS SAID UNTO HER, I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

THESE words, my brethren, so stupendous in their import, so majestic in their tone—when and where were they uttered? They were uttered in a world of the dying; in a world which is the tomb of all past generations; in a world from whose dreary caverns, from whose dark catacombs, and alike from whose proud mansoleums and towering pyramids, no word ever issued that spake of any thing but death. They were uttered in an hour, when bereavement, dimmed with tears and fainting with sorrow, was sighing for help more than human.

It was at Bethany. You remember the affecting story of Mary, and Martha her sister, and of Lazarus their brother. So simply and truly is it told, that it seems as if it were the relation of what had taken place in any village around us. “Now a certain man,

named Lazarus of Bethany, was sick." How does such an event when it becomes sufficiently marked with peril to attract attention, spread anxiety and apprehension through a whole neighborhood. Life pauses, and is suspended on the result. "Lazarus was sick." What fears, watchings, and agonies of solicitude, hover around the sick man's couch, none but the inmates of his dwelling can know. It was in such an emergency that Mary and Martha fearful and troubled, sent a message to their chief comforter and friend, saying, "behold, he whom thou lovest, is sick." Jesus, for reasons perhaps beyond our knowledge, does not immediately answer the call of distress. He remains two days in the same place. Then the dreaded event had taken place; all was over; and he calmly says to his disciples, "our friend, Lazarus sleepeth." So does he contemplate death, not as a dread catastrophe, but as a quiet sleep, a sacred repose, succeeding the weary and troubled day of life. Beautifully says our great dramatist,

"After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well."

But so does it not appear to the bereaved and sorrowing sisters. They are plunged into the deepest distress. It is a time of mourning in that still and desolate house at Bethany. The dead is buried; but grief lives, and the hours pass in silent agony. The sympathizing neighbors from the village are still there, and many friends from Jerusalem are with the afflicted sisters to comfort them concerning their brother.

At length, the Master approaches. Martha, ever

more alert and attentive to what is passing, first hearing of it, goes forth to meet him. Soon however she returns, and says to Mary, her sister, secretly—gives her a private intimation—how much passes in the dumb show, in whispers, where deep grief is!—she says, in a low tone, “the Master is come, and calleth for thee. And as soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came unto him.” The language of both when they meet him is the same—turns upon the same point—“Lord, if thou hadst been here, our brother had not died.” What natural and living truth is there, in this simple trait of feeling! How natural is it for the bereaved to think that if this or that had been done—if this or that physician had been called—if some other course had been adopted, or some other plan or clime had favored, the blow might have been averted. The thoughts all shrink from the awful certainty—revert to the possibility of its having been avoided; and catch at all possible suppositions to find relief. But the awful certainty nevertheless overwhelmed the mourning sisters; “the end had come; their brother was dead—was dead!—no help now—no change to come over that still sleep”—so mourned they; and Jesus beholding their distress, groaned in spirit and was troubled. “Jesus wept.” He was not one, who, with cold philosophy or misplaced rapture in his countenance, looked on bereavement and agony—looked on death. He was not one who forbade tears and sorrows. He was not one who approached the grave with an air of triumph, though he had gained a victory over it; but it is written, that “again groaning within himself, he came to the grave.” No, humanity shud-

ders, and trembles, and groans when it comes there, and may not, by any true religion, be denied these testimonies to its frailty.

But still there were words of soothing and comfort uttered by our Saviour on this occasion; and let us now turn to them and consider their import. “Martha said to Jesus, Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” She had probably heard the doctrine of a future life from himself; but alas! that life seems far off; dim shadows spread themselves over the everlasting fields; they seem unreal to a person of Martha’s turn of mind; she wants her brother again as he was but now by her side; she entertains some hope that Jesus will restore him; she says, “even now, I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.” Jesus does not reply to this suggestion; he does not tell her whether her brother shall immediately come back to her; but utters himself in a more general and a grander truth. “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die; believest thou this?” As if he had said, be not too curious nor anxious in your thoughts, but confide, Martha, in me. You believe in a future resurrection, or renewal of life; you hope for the immediate resurrection of your brother; but be satisfied with this,—“I am the Resurrection;” all that resurrection, re-

newal of life, heavenly happiness means, is embodied, consummated, fulfilled in me. Nay, it is not some future return to being of which I speak; he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Already, he hath begun to live immortally. Death is for the body; but for that soul, no death. Its affections are in their very nature immortal; and have in them the very elements of undecaying happiness.

Let us attend a moment to the two parts of this instruction; what our Saviour uttered as already the belief of Martha; and what he added in the emphatic declaration, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

"Thy brother shall live again;" thy brother. Not some undefined spirituality, not some new and strange being shall go forth beyond the mortal bourne; but life—life, in its character, its affections, its spiritual identity, such as it is here; thy *brother* shall rise again. He is not lost to thee; he shall not be so spiritually changed as to be forever lost to thee. On some other shore—as if he had only gone to another hemisphere, instead of another world—or some other shore, thou shalt find him again—find thy brother. Thus much must have been taught, or there had been no pertinency, no comfort in the teaching. To have only said that in the eternal revolutions and metamorphoses of being, life, existence should in some sense be continued, or that all souls should be re-absorbed into the Parent Soul, would have been nothing to this mourning sister. Without conscious identity, indeed, without continued existence, a future life has no intelligible meaning; and certainly without it, there could be no such thing as reward or retribution. And since the

social element is an essential part of our nature, that element must be found in a nature which is the same : and that being so, to suppose that friends should meet and commune together, without recognition, is as absurd, as it would be unsatisfactory. Most clearly—to confine ourselves to the case before us—such a promise of future existence—that is, of a vague, indefinite, unremembering existence—would be no comfort to sorrowing friendship. To individual expectation it would be something, but to bereaved affection, nothing. It is to such sorrow—one of the bitterest in this world—that of a sister left alone in the world—that Jesus speaks ; and he says, “ thy brother shall live again.”

“ Thy brother shall live again.” What words are these to be uttered—amidst the wreck’s of time, the memorials of buried nations, the earth-mounds swelling far and wide above the silent dust of all that has ever lived and breathed in the visible creation ! Whence come such stupendous, such amazing words as these ? From beyond the regions of all visible life, they come. From the dark earth beneath us, no voice issues ; from the shining walls of heaven, no angel forms beckon us. Silence, dust, death are here ; no more : the earth entombs us, the heavens crush us, till those words come to us, heaven-sent, from the great realm of invisible life. O blessed revelation ! Life there is for us, somewhere—I ask not where. I can wait God’s time for that. Blessed fields there are somewhere in the great embosoming universe of God, that stretch onward and onward for ever, and the happy walk there. There shall we find our lost ones, and be with them evermore. “ Father,” said our Saviour when he was about to depart,—“ I will that they whom thou

hast given me, be with me, where I am." Shall that prayer be answered? Then shall there be a glorious fellowship of good men with Jesus and with one another. Are we not sometimes, when we think of this, like Paul, "in a strait between two"—between the claims of friendship on earth and of friendship in heaven,—and ready to say, "for us it is better to depart and be with Christ?" Are we not ready to say—as the disciples did of Lazarus—when our beloved ones are gone from us—"let us go and die with them?"

And then in addition to this inexpressible comfort and hope, what is it that our Saviour so emphatically says to Martha? "*I am* the Resurrection and the Life." Something *in addition*, we may well suppose it must be. And I understand it to be this. He that believeth on me—that is, receiveth me, hath the spirit, the spiritual life that is in me—the same love of God—the same trust in God—is already living an immortal life. He shall never die. That in him which partakes of my inward life, shall never die. It is essentially immortal, and immortally blessed; and no dark eclipse shall come over it, between death and the resurrection, to bury it in the gloom of utter unconsciousness, or to cause it to wander like a shadow in the dim realms of an intermediate state. "*I am* the Resurrection. Thy brother who hath part in me, lives *now*, as truly as I live." As he says in another place, "I am the bread of life; he that eateth me, even he shall live through me;" so he says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life; and to him that is partner and partaker with me, belongeth not death, but only resurrection, continued life, life everlasting."

Let us now proceed to consider one or two further

grounds for consolation that are suggested by this teaching of our Saviour.

That which he especially proposes to his bereaved friends at Bethany, is faith in him. It was a faith in him as the Saviour of the world, as one who was commissioned to bring life and immortality clearly to light, as one who through his own death and resurrection should open the way to heaven. But we should not do justice to this sentiment of faith, if we did not regard it as something more than any mere view of him as Saviour ; if we did not regard it as the most intimate participation of the spiritual life that was in him. That participation embraces, doubtless, general purity of heart and life, a humble resignation to God's will, a thoughtful consideration of the wise purposes and necessary uses of affliction ; but especially it embraces as the sum and source of all, the love of God. Faith in Christ, is nothing more emphatically than it is the love of God, his Father. Upon nothing does he more earnestly insist, and upon this he especially insists as the pledge and the test of fidelity to him.

To this, then, let me particularly direct your attention as the most essential part of that faith which is to comfort us.

It is the love of God only that can produce a just sense of his love to us. It is only a deep and true sense of his love to us, that can assuage the wounds of our affliction. This results from the very nature of things. It is not a technical dogma, but a living and practical truth. It is not a truth merely for certain persons called christians, who are supposed to understand this language ; but it is a truth for all men. We suffer under the government of God. It is his will that has appointed to us change, trial,

bercavement, sorrow, death. The dispensation therefore will be coloured to us throughout—it will be darkened or brightened all over, by our views of its great Ordainer. Ah! it is a doubt *here*—it is some distrust or difficulty, or want of vital faith on this point, that often adds the bitterest sting to human affliction. When all is well with us, we can say that God is good, and think that we have some love to him; but when the blow of calamity or of death falls upon our dearest possession—strikes down innocent childhood, or lovely youth, or the needed maturity of all human virtue or source of all earthly help and comfort—strikes from our side, that which we could least of all spare—Oh! it seems to us a cruel, cruel blow!—and we say perhaps, in our distracted thoughts, “*is* God good, to inflict it upon us. He—Oh! He could have saved, and he did not; he would not. Why would he not? Does he love us—and yet afflict us so?—yet crush us, break us down, and blight all our hopes? Is this a loving dispensation?”

My friends, there is but one remedy for all this—the love—the love—the true, pure, childlike love of God: such love and trust as Jesus felt—even as he, the smitten, afflicted, cast down, betrayed, crucified; who was urged, in the extremity of his sorrow to say, “Father, if it be possible remove this cup from me;” yet immediately added, “Father, not my will, but thine be done.” This is our example. This is our only salvation. Nothing but this love of God, can yield us comfort. If there is no ground for this, then there is no place for consolation in the universe. There may be enduring, there may be forgetting; but there can be no consolation. If there is ground

for this love and trust, who in the day of trouble will not pray God to breathe it into his broken heart?

I have said that doubt, distrust, want of faith, is our difficulty. But I do not mean that we seriously and deliberately doubt the goodness of God. How *can* we doubt? How *can* the Infinite Being be any thing but good? What motive, what reason, what possibility I had almost said, can there be to Infinite power, Infinite sufficiency, to be any thing but good? How *can* we—except it be in some momentary paroxysm of grief—how, I say, *can* we doubt? How doubt—beneath these shining heavens—amidst the riches, the plenitude, the brightness and beauty of the whole creation—with capacities of thought, of improvement, of happiness in ourselves that almost transcend expression—nay, and with sorrows too, that proclaim the loss of objects so inexpressibly dear! Whence but from love in God, could have come a love in us so intense, so transporting, so full of joy and blessedness—nay, and so full too of pain and anguish? No! such a love in me assures me that it had its *origin* in love. Could the Being who made me intelligent, have been himself without intelligence? Nor could the Being want love, who has made me so to love—so to sorrow for what I love. By my very sorrows, then, I know that God loves me—I say not whether with approbation, but with an infinite kindness, an infinite pity. What *I* need is, but to *feel* it,—to pray for that feeling—to meditate upon all, that should bring that feeling into my heart—to take refuge amidst my sorrows, in the assurance that God loves me, that he does not willingly grieve or afflict me, that he chastens me for my profiting, that he could not show so much love for me, by leaving me unchastened, untried, undisciplined.

“ We have had fathers of our flesh who chastened us—put us to tasks, trials, griefs—and we gave them reverence—felt, amidst all, that they were good. Shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of our spirits and live.” Great is the faith that must save us. It is a faith in the Infinite: a faith in the Infinite love of God!

From this faith arises another ground of consolation. It is, not only that all is well; but that in the great order of things, *that* which particularly concerns us—enters into our peculiar suffering—is well. Our case perhaps, is bereavement—heavy and sorrowful bereavement. Is it a messenger of wrath? Is any one of its circumstances, of its peculiarities—so poignant and piercing to us—an indication of divine anger? Awful thought! Immitigable calamity, if it were so! But no; it is appointed in love. Can God do any thing for anger's sake? To me, it were not God, of whom this could be said. Let it be, that a *bad* man has died. Has God made him die, because he hated him? I believe it not. If he has lost his being, I believe that it is well that he has lost it. If he has gone to retribution, I believe it is well that he has gone to that retribution; that nothing could be better for him, being what it is. If *I* were that unhappy being, I would say, “ let me be in the hands of the infinitely good God, rather than any where else.” But if it is a good being that has gone from me, an innocent child, or one clothed with every lovely virtue—one whom Jesus loved as he loved the dear brother in Bethany—to what joys unspeakable has that being gone! In the bosom of God—in the bosom of infinite love, all with him is well. Could that departed one speak to us—that lovely and loving one, invested with the radiance and surrounded with the bliss of some heavenly

land—would not the language be—“mourn not for me, or mourn not as having no hope. Dishonor not the good and blessed One, my Father and your Father, by any distrust or doubt. Mourn for me—remember me, as I too remember you—long for you—but mourn with humble patience and calm sustaining faith.”

How is with us, my brethren, in this world, and what, in contemplation of death, would we say to those that we shall leave behind us? “Grieve not for me,” would not one say?—or “grieve not too much, when I am gone. I cannot bear that you should suffer that awful agony, that desolating sorrow, that is often seen in the house of mourning. Remembered I would be—oh! let me have a memorial in some living, affectionate hearts!—I would never be forgotten—I would never have it felt that the tie with me is broken:—but let the memory of me be calm, patient, sacred, gently sorrowing if need be, but yet ever partaking of the blessedness of that love which death cannot quench. Let not my name gather about it an awfulness or a sacredness, such that it may not be uttered in the places where I have lived; or if in the sanctuary where it is kept, there is a delicacy that forbids the easy utterance of it, still let it not be invested with gloom and sadness. Think of me when I am gone, as one who thought much on death; who had thoughts of it, more and greater than he could in the ordinary goings on of life, find fit occasion to utter. If you could wish that I had said more to you, on this and many other themes, yet give the confidence, that you must ask, for that secret world within us all,—that world of a thousand tender thoughts and feelings, for which language has no expression. Think of me as still possessing those thoughts and feelings—as still the same to you—as one

that loves you still ; for death shall not destroy in us, that image of Christ, a pure and holy love. If I retain my consciousness, I must still think of you ; with more than all the love I ever felt ; it cannot be otherwise. And if I am to sleep till the resurrection, though my hope is far different—believing in Jesus, my hope is that I am already of the Resurrection ; yet if it be so, that God has ordained that pause in my existence, it is surely for a wise purpose—it is doubtless best for me—and to the ever good and blessed will of God, I calmly and humbly submit myself : to that ever gracious will, I pray you to be patiently and cheerfully resigned. How much better is it than your will or mine ! What boundless good may we not expect, from an Infinite Will, prompted by an Infinite Love ! Lift up your lowly thoughts to this : lift them up to the heavenly regions, to the boundless universe, to the all-embracing eternity ; and in these contemplations lose the too keen sense of this breathing hour of time, of this world of dust and shadows ; and, of brightness and beauty, too : for all is good ; all in earth and in heaven, in time and eternity, is good.”

Thus, I conceive, might a wise and good man, about to depart from this life, speak to those whom he was to leave behind him. And thus might those who have died in infant innocence—thus might angel-children speak from some brighter sphere. And if it were wisdom thus to speak, then let that wisdom sink into our hearts, and bring there its consolation. Perfect relief from suffering it cannot bring ; sorrow we may, we must ; many and bitter pains must we bear in this mortal lot ; Jesus wept over such pains, and we may weep over them ; but let us be wise—let us be trustful—let the love of God fill our hearts

—let the heavenly consolation help us, all that it can. It can help us much. It is not mere breath of words to say that God is good, that all is right, all is well; all that concerns us is the care of Infinite Love. It is not a mere religious common-place, to say that submission, trust, love can help us. More than eye ever saw or the ear ever heard, or the worldly heart ever conceived, can a deep, humble, child-like, loving piety bring help and comfort in the hours of mortal sorrow and bitterness. Believest thou this? This was our Saviour's question to Martha, in her distress. "He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And he that liveth and believeth on me, shall never die. Believest thou this?" This humble, this heart-believing, my friends, is what we need—must have—must seek. The breathing of the life of Jesus in us—the bright cloud around us, in which he walked—this can comfort us beyond all that we know—all that we imagine. May we find that comfort! Forlorn, forsaken—or deprived, destitute—or bereaved, broken-hearted—whatever be our strait or sorrow—may we find that comfort!

My Brethren, I have been communing now, with affliction. It is a holy and delicate office; and I have been afraid, when speaking with all the earnestness I felt, lest I should not speak with all the delicacy I ought; lest I should only add to grief, by touching its wound. But I felt that I was coming to meet sorrow—I know that I often come to meet it here—it has of late, occupied much of my mind—and I could not refrain from offering my humble aid for its relief.

I reflected too that I was coming this morning, to this

sacred table*—this altar reared for the comfort of all believing souls—reared by dying hands, to the resurrection—to the hope of everlasting life. It was the same night in which he was betrayed—it was when *he* was about to die, that Jesus set forth in the form of a feast, this solemn and cheering memorial of himself; and uttered many soothing and consoling words to his disciples. He did not build a tomb, by which to be remembered, but he appointed a feast of remembrance. He did not tell his disciples to put on sackcloth, but to clothe themselves with the recollections of him, as with the robe of immortality. Death indeed, was a dread to him—and he shrunk from it. It was a grief to his disciples and he recognized it as such, and so dealt with it. But he showed to them a trust in God, a loving submission to the Father, that could stay the soul. He spoke of a victory over death. He assured them that man's last enemy was conquered. Here then amidst these memorials of death, let us meditate upon the life everlasting. Let us carry our thoughts to that world where Christ is, and where he prayed that all who love him, might be with him—where, we believe, they are with him. Let our faith rise so high—God grant it!—that we can say—“Oh! grave, where is thy victory? Oh! death, where is thy sting? Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord!”

* Preached before the Communion.

DISCOURSE X.

THE PROBLEM OF LIFE, RESOLVED IN THE LIFE OF
CHRIST.

JOHN I. 4. IN HIM WAS LIFE, AND THE LIFE WAS THE
LIGHT OF MEN.

THE words, life and light, are constantly used by the Apostle John, after a manner long familiar in the Hebrew writings, for spiritual happiness, and spiritual truth. The inmost and truest life of man—the life of his life, is spiritual life—is in other words, purity, love, goodness; and this inward purity, love, goodness, is the very light of life—that which brightens, blesses, guides it.

I have little respect for the ingenuity that is always striving to work out from the simple language of Scripture, fanciful and far-fetched meanings; but it would seem, in the passage before us, as if John intended to state one of the deepest truths in the very frame of our being; and that is, *that goodness is the fountain of wisdom.*

Give me your patience a moment, and I will attempt to explain this proposition. In it, was life—that is, in this manifested and all-creating energy, this out-flowing of the power of God, was a divine and infinite love and

joy ; and this life was the light of men. That is to say—love first, then light. Light does not create love ; but love creates light. The good heart only can understand the good teaching. The doctrine of truth that guides a man, comes from the divinity of goodness that inspires him. But, it will be said, does not a man become holy or good, *in view* of truth ? I answer, that he cannot *view* the truth, but through the medium of love. It is the loving view only, that is effective ; that is any view at all. I must desire you to observe that I am speaking now of the primary convictions of a man, and not of the secondary influences that operate upon him. Light may *strengthen* love ; a knowledge of the works and ways of God may have this effect, and it is properly presented for this purpose. But light cannot *originate* love. If love were not implanted in man's original and inmost being ; if there were not placed there, the moral or spiritual feeling, that loves while it perceives goodness, all the speculative light in the universe, would leave man's nature, still and forever cold and dead as a stone. In short, loveliness is a quality which nothing but love can perceive. God cannot be known in his highest—that is, in his spiritual and holy nature, except by those who love him.

Now of this life and light, as we are immediately afterwards taught—Jesus Christ—not as a teacher merely, but as a being—is to us the great and appointed source. And therefore when Thomas says, “how can we know the way of which thou speakest,” Jesus answers, “*I am* the way, and the truth and the life ; no man cometh to the Father but by me.” That is, no man can truly come to God, but in that spirit of filial love, of which I am the example.

In our humanity there is a problem. In Christ only is it perfectly solved. The speculative solution of that problem, is philosophy. The practical solution is a good life ; and the only perfect solution is, the life of Christ. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

In him, I say, was solved the problem of life. What is that problem? What are the questions which it presents? They are these. Is there anything that can be achieved in life, in which our nature can find full satisfaction and sufficiency? And if there be any such thing—any such end of life; then is there any adaptation of things to that end? Are there any means or helps provided in life, for its attainment? Now the end must be the highest condition of our highest nature; and that end we say, is virtue, sanctity, blessedness. And the helps or means are found in the whole discipline of life. But the end was perfectly accomplished in Christ, and it was accomplished through the very means which are appointed to us. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin; and “he was made thus perfect through sufferings.”

Our Saviour evidently regarded himself as sustaining this relation to human life; the enlightener of its darkness, the interpreter of its mystery, the solver of its problem. “I am the light of the world,” he says; “he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” And again; “I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me, should not abide in darkness.” It was not for abstract teaching to men that he came, but for actual guidance in their daily abodes. It was not to deliver doctrines alone, nor to utter or echo back the intuitive convictions of our own

minds, but to live a life and to die a death ; and so to live and to die, as to cast light upon the dark paths in which we walk.

I need not say that there *is* darkness in the paths of men ; that they stumble at difficulties, are ensnared by temptations, are perplexed by doubts ; that they are anxious and troubled and fearful ; that pain and affliction and sorrow often gather around the steps of their earthly pilgrimage. All this is written upon the very tablet of the human heart. And I *do* not say that all this is to be erased ; but only that it is to be seen and read in a new light. I *do* not say that ills and trials and sufferings are to be removed from life, but only that over this scene of mortal trouble a new heaven is to be spread, and that the light of that heaven is Christ, the sun of righteousness.

To human pride, this may be a hard saying ; to human philosophy, learning, and grandeur, it may be a hard saying ; but still it is true, that the simple life of Christ, studied, understood and imitated, would shed a brighter light than all earthly wisdom can find, upon the dark trials and mysteries of our lot. It is true that whatever you most need or sigh for—whatever you most want, to still the troubles of your heart or compose the agitations of your mind, the simple life of Jesus can teach you.

To show this, I need only take the most ordinary admissions from the lips of any christian, or I may say, of almost any unbeliever.

Suppose that the world were filled with beings like Jesus. Would not all the great ills of society be instantly relieved ? Would you not immediately dismiss all your anxieties concerning it—perfectly sure that all was going on well ? Would not all coercion,

infliction, injury, injustice, and all the greatest suffering of life, disappear at once? If, at the stretching out of some wonder-working wand, that change could take place, would not the change be greater far, than if every house, hovel and prison on earth, were instantly turned into a palace of ease and abundance and splendor? Happy then would be these "human years;" and the eternal ages would roll on in brightness and beauty! The "still, sad music of humanity," that sounds through the world, now in the swellings of grief, and now in pensive melancholy,—would be exchanged for anthems, lifted up to the march of time, and bursting out from the heart of the world!

But let us make another supposition, and bring it still nearer to ourselves. Were any one of us a perfect imitator of Christ—were any one of us clothed with the divinity of his virtue and faith; do you not perceive what the effect would be? Look around upon the circle of life's ills and trials, and observe the effect. Did sensual passions assail you? How weak would be their solicitation to the divine beatitude of your own heart! You would say, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Did want tempt you to do wrongly, or curiosity to do rashly? You would say to the one, "man shall not *live* by bread alone; there is a higher life which I must live;" and to the other, "thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Did ambition spread its kingdoms and thrones before you, and ask you to swerve from your great allegiance? Your reply would be ready; "get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Did the storm of injury beat upon

your head, or its silent shaft pierce your heart? In meekness you would bow that head—in prayer, that heart, saying, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” What sorrow could reach you—what pain, what anguish, that would not be soothed by a faith and a love like that of Jesus? And what blessing could light on you, that would not be brightened by a filial piety and gratitude like his? The world around you, would be new, and the heavens over you would be new—for they would be all, and all around their ample range, and all through their glorious splendors, the presence and the visitation of a Father. And you yourself, would be a new creature; and you would enjoy a happiness, new, and now scarcely known on earth.

And I cannot help observing here, that if such be the spontaneous conviction of every mind at all acquainted with Christianity, what a powerful independent argument there is for receiving Christ as a guide and example. It were an anomaly, indeed, to the eye of reason, to reject the solemn and self-claimed mission of one, whom it would be happiness to follow—whom it would be perfection to imitate. Yet if the former—the special mission—were rejected; if it were, as it may be, by possibility, honestly rejected; what is a man to think of himself, who passes by, and discards the latter—the teaching of the life of Christ? Let it be the man, Rousseau, or the man, Hume, or any man in these days, who says that he believes nothing in churches, or miracles, or missions from heaven. But he admits, as they did and as every one must, that in Jesus Christ was the most perfect unfolding of

all divine beauty and happiness that the world ever saw. What, I say, is he to do with this undeniable and undenied Gospel of the life of Jesus? Blessed is he, if he receives it; that is unquestionable. All who read of him—all the world, admits that. But what shall we say if he rejects it? If any one could be clothed with the eloquence of Cicero or the wisdom of Socrates, and would not, all the world would pronounce him a fool—would say that he had denied his humanity. And surely if any one could be invested with all the beauty and grandeur of the life of Jesus, and would not; he must be stricken with utter moral fatuity; he must be accounted to have denied his highest humanity. The interpretation of his case is as plain as words can make it; and it is this; “light has come into the world and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.”

“In him was life,” says our text, “and the life was the light of men.”

I have attempted to bring home the conviction of this, simply by bringing before your minds the supposition that the world, and we ourselves, were like him. But as no conviction, I think, at the present stage of our christian progress, is so important as this, let me attempt to impress it, by another course of reflections. I say of *our* christian progress. We have cleared away many obstacles, as we think, and have come near to the simplicity of the Gospel. No complicated ecclesiastical organization nor scholastic creed, stands between us, and the solemn verities of Christianity. I am not now pronouncing upon those accumulations of human devices; but I mean especially to say, that ne

mystical notions of their necessity or importance, mingle themselves with *our* ideas of acceptance. We have come to stand before the simple, naked shrine of the original Gospel. We have come, through many human teachings and human admonitions, to Christ himself. But little will it avail us to have come so far, if we take not one step farther. *Now*, what I think we need is, to enter more deeply into the study and understanding of what Christ was.

This, let us attempt. And I pray you and myself, Brethren, not to be content with the little that can now be said; but let us carefully read the Gospels for ourselves, and lay the law of the life of Christ, with rigorous precision to our own lives, and see where they fail and come short. It is true indeed, and I would urge nothing beyond the truth, that the life of Jesus is not, in every respect, an example for us. That is to say, the manner of his life was in some respects, different from what ours can, or should be. He was a teacher; and the most of us are necessarily and lawfully engaged in the business of life. He was sent on a peculiar mission; and none of us have such a mission. But the spirit that was in him, may be in us. To some of the traits of this spirit, as the only sources of light and help to us, let me now briefly direct your attention.

And first, consider his self-renunciation. How entire that self-renunciation was; how completely his aims went beyond personal ease and selfish gratification; how all his thoughts and words and actions were employed upon the work for which he was sent into the world; how, his whole life, as well as his death, was an offering to that

cause—I need not tell you. Indeed, so entirely is this his accredited character; so completely is he set apart in our thoughts not only to a peculiar office, but set apart too and separated from all human interests and affections, that we are liable to do his character in this respect, no proper justice. We isolate him, till he almost ceases to be an example to us; till he almost ceases to be a *virtuous* being. He stands alone in Judea; and the words, society, country, kindred, friendship, home, seem to have, to him, only a fictitious application. But these ties bound him as they do others; the gentleness and tenderness of his nature made him peculiarly susceptible to them; no more touching allusions to kindred and country can be found in human language, than his; as when he said “Oh! Jerusalem! Jerusalem!” in foresight of her coming woes—as when he said on the cross, “behold thy mother!—behold thy son!” Doubtless he desired to be a benefactor to his country, an honor to his family; and when Peter, deprecating his dishonor and degradation, said “be it far from thee, Lord! this shall not be unto thee,” and he turned and said unto Peter—“get thee behind me Satan, thou savourest not the things that be of God but those that be of men,” it has been beautifully suggested that the very energy of that repulse to his enthusiastic and admiring disciple, shows perhaps that he felt that there was something in his mind that was leaning that way; that the things of men were contending with the things of God in him; that he too much dreaded the coming humiliation and agony to wish to have that feeling fostered in his heart.

But he rejected all this; he renounced himself—renoun-

ced all the dear affections and softer pleadings of his affectionate nature, that he might be true to higher interests than his own, or his country's, or his kindred's.

Now I say that the same self-renunciation would relieve us of more than half of the difficulties and of the diseased and painful affections of our lives. Simple obedience to rectitude, instead of self-interest—simple self-culture, instead of ever cultivating the good opinion of others,—how many disturbing and irritating questions would these single-hearted aims, take away from our bosom meditations! Let us not mistake the character of this self-renunciation. We are required not to renounce the nobler and better affections of our natures—not to renounce happiness—not to renounce our just dues of honor and love from men. It is remarkable that our Saviour, amidst all his meekness and all his sacrifices, always claimed that he deserved well of men—deserved to be honored and beloved. It is not to vilify ourselves that is required of us—not to renounce our self-respect, the just and reasonable sense of our merits and deserts—not to renounce our own righteousness, our own virtue, if we have any; such falsehood towards ourselves gains no countenance from the example of Jesus: but it is to renounce our sins, our passions, our self-flattering delusions; and it is to forego all outward advantages which can be gained only through a sacrifice of our inward integrity, or through anxious and petty contrivances and compliances. What we have to do, is to choose and keep the better part—to secure that, and let the worse take care of itself; to keep a good conscience and let opinion come and go as it will; to keep high, self-respect, and to let low self-indulgence go; to keep inward happiness, and let outward ad-

vantages hold a subordinate place. Self-renunciation, in fine, is, not to renounce ourselves in the highest character—not to renounce our moral selves, ourselves as the creatures and children of God; *herein* rather it is to cherish ourselves, to make the most of ourselves, to hold ourselves inexpressibly dear. What then is it precisely to renounce ourselves? It is to renounce our selfishness; to have done with this eternal self-considering which now disturbs and vexes our lives; to cease that ever asking “and what shall we have?”—to be content with the plenitude of God’s abounding mercies; to feast upon that infinite love, that is shed all around us and within us; and so to be happy. I see many a person, in society, honored, rich, beautiful, but wearing still an anxious and disturbed countenance—many a one upon whom this simple principle—this simple self-forgetting, would bring a change in their appearance, demeanor, and the whole manner of their living and being—a change that would make them ten-fold more beautiful, rich and honored. Yes; strange as it may seem to them—what they want, is, to commune deeply, in prayer and meditation, with the spirit of Jesus—to be clothed, not with outward adorning, but with the simple self-forgetting, single-hearted truth and beauty of his spirit. This is the change—this is the conversion that they want, to make them lovely and happy beyond all the aspirations of their ambition, and all their dreams of happiness.

Have you never observed how happy is the mere visionary schemer, quite absorbed in his plans,—quite thoughtless of every thing else? Have you never remarked how easy and felicitous, is the manner in society, the eloquence in the public assembly, the whole life’s action, of one who has forgotten himself? For this reason

in part it is, that the eager pursuit of fortune is often happier than the after enjoyment of it; for now the man begins to *look about* for happiness, and *to ask* for a respect and attention which he seldom satisfactorily receives; and many such are found, to the wonder and mortification of their families, looking back from their splendid dwellings, and often referring, to the humble shop in which they worked; and wishing in their hearts, that they were there again.

It is our inordinate self-seeking, self-considering, that is ever a stumbling-block in our way. It is this which spreads questions, snares, difficulties around us. It is this that darkens the very ways of providence to us, and makes the world a less happy world to us, than it might be. There is one thought that could take us out from all these difficulties; but we cannot think it. There is one clue from the labyrinth; there is one solution of this struggling philosophy of life within us; it is found in that Gospel, that life of Jesus, with which we have, alas! but little deep, heart-acquaintance. Every one must know that if he could be elevated to that self-forgetting simplicity and disinterestedness, he would be relieved from more than half of the inmost trials of his bosom. What then can be done for us, but that we be directed, and that too in a concern as solemn as our deepest wisdom and welfare, to the Gospel of Christ? "In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

In him was the life of perfect love. This is the second all-enlightening, all-healing principle that the Gospel of Christ commends to us. It is indeed the main and positive virtue, of which self-renunciation is but the negative side.

Again, I need not insist upon the pre-eminence of this principle in the life of our Saviour. But I must again

remind you that this principle is not to be looked upon as some sublime abstraction—as merely a love that drew him from the bliss of heaven, to achieve some stupendous and solitary work on earth. It was a vital and heart-felt love to all around him; it was affection to his kindred, tenderness to his friends, gentleness and forbearance towards his disciples, pity to the suffering, forgiveness to his enemies, prayer for his murderers; love flowing all round him as the garment of life, and investing pain and toil and torture and death, with a serene and holy beauty.

It is not enough to renounce ourselves, and there to stop. It is not enough to wrap ourselves in our close garment of reserve and pride, and to say, “the world cares nothing for us and we will care nothing for the world; society does us no justice, and we will withdraw from it our thoughts, and see how patiently we can live within the confines of our own bosom, or in quiet communion, through books, with the mighty dead.” No man ever found peace or light in this way. The misanthropic recluse is ever the most miserable of men, whether he lives in cave or castle. Every relation to mankind, of hate or scorn or neglect, is full of vexation and torment. There is nothing to do with men, but to love them; to contemplate their virtues with admiration, their faults with pity and forbearance, and their injuries with forgiveness. Task all the ingenuity of your mind to devise some other thing, but you never can find it. To all the haughtiness and wrath of men, I say—however they may disdain the suggestion—the spirit of Jesus is the only help for you. To hate your adversary will not help you; to kill him will not help you; nothing within the compass of the universe can help you, but to love him. Oh! how wonder-

fully is man shut up to wisdom—barred, as I may say, and imprisoned and shut up to wisdom; and yet he will not learn it.

But let that love flow out upon all around you, and what could harm you? It would clothe you with an impenetrable, heaven-tempered armour. Or suppose—to do it justice—that it leaves you, all defencelessness, as it did Jesus—all vulnerableness, through delicacy, through tenderness, through sympathy, through pity; suppose that you suffer, as all must suffer; suppose that you be wounded, as gentleness only can be wounded; yet how would that love flow, with precious healing, through every wound! How many difficulties too, both within and without a man, would it relieve! How many dull *minds* would it rouse; how many depressed minds would it lift up! How many troubles, in society, would it compose—how many enmities would it soften—how many questions, answer? How many a knot of mystery and misunderstanding would be untied by one word spoken in simple and confiding truth of heart! How many a rough path would be made smooth, and crooked way, be made strait! How many a solitary place would be made glad, if love were there; and how many a dark dwelling would be filled with light! “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

Once more, there was a sublime spirituality in the mind of Jesus, which must come into our life to fill up the measure of its light. It is not enough in my view, to yield ourselves, to the blessed bonds of love and self-renunciation in the immediate circles of our lives. Our minds must go out into the infinite and immortal regions, to find sufficiency and satisfaction for the present hour. There

must be a breadth of contemplation in which this world shrinks—I will not say to a point—but to the narrow span that it is. There must be aims, which reign over the events of life, and make us feel that we can resign all the advantages of life, yea, and life itself; and yet be conquerors and more than conquerors through him who has loved us.

There is many a crisis in life when we need a faith like the martyr's to support us. There are hours in life like martyrdom—as full of bitter anguish, as full of utter earthly desolation—in which more than our sinews—in which we feel as if our very heart-strings were stretched and lacerated on the rack of affliction—in which life itself loses its value, and we ask to die—in whose dread struggle and agony, life might drop from us, and not be minded. Oh! then must our cry, like that of Jesus, go up to the pitying heavens for help, and nothing but the infinite and the immortal can help us. Calculate, then, all the gains of earth, and they are trash—all its pleasures, and they are vanity—all its hopes, and they are illusions; and then, when the world is sinking beneath us, must we seek the everlasting arms to bear us up—to bear us up to heaven. Thus was it with our great Example, and so must it be with us. In him was life—the life of self-renunciation, the life of love, the life of spiritual and all-conquering faith—and that life is the light of men. Oh! blessed light! come to our darkness; for our soul is dark, our way is dark, for want of thee—come to our darkness, and turn it into day; and let it shine brighter and brighter, till it mingles with the light of the all-perfect and everlasting day!

DISCOURSE XI.

ON THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE.

(Preached at the close of the year.)

I CORINTHIANS VII. 29. BUT THIS, I SAY, BRETHREN,
THE TIME IS SHORT.

The epochs of time, are among the most powerful teachers of religion. One of those epochs we are now again approaching. We are assembled in the Sanctuary, my friends, on the last Sabbath evening of the year. How short is the period, since we were last assembled, at a similar epoch? Truly, the time is short: the time of life is short. Well, that it has its periods, its pauses for reflection! Let the dying year then teach us. It would argue a kind of brutish insensibility to take our leave of another such period—so large a period of our lives—and to ask ourselves no questions about life, its course, its great design, its solemn close. The departing year is the emblem of departing life; and *these* last hours have solemn thoughts to offer us, like to those which will visit us

in the last hours of our stay on earth. Let us meditate upon time, then, while to meditate may profit us—before it be said, not of the departing year only, but of departing life, “it shall be no longer.”

In particular, I shall, for the present, invite you to meditate on the shortness of time—that is, of the time of life; its shortness in relation to time absolutely considered; the shortness, still more, of that portion of life which can be rescued from the unavoidable demands of the body, and devoted singly, in contemplation and prayer, to the soul; and its shortness, in fine, and yet more emphatically, in comparison with the work we have to do, and the consequences that are depending on it.

First; the brevity of life, compared with time absolutely considered.

It is common I know to make the reflection that life is short, but I do not think it is common to feel it. Least of all is it common in the earlier periods of life. Its termination is, then, contemplated as afar off, amidst the shadows of age, amidst the dimness of an uncertain future; and life seems to be almost boundless. The indefinite is all that we mean by the boundless; and life possesses that indefiniteness, that it imposes upon the young mind almost the feeling that it has no end. There is another influence, tending to produce the same result; and that is worldliness. To the worldly mind, life is every thing. And if life *is* every thing, it must be something vast and immense. For we were made to grasp interests of infinite magnitude; the intellectual comprehension of a immortal mind must be of this nature. It must feel that the objects

which engross it, are vast and momentous. And therefore, although we fix our minds upon the little interests of a day, these interests instead of appearing to be the little things that they are, do rather swell out and expand, in our view, to an importance and durableness corresponding to the vastness of our capacities, to the reach of our desires, to the extent of our hopes. So that the greatness of our nature, instead of going out, as it ought to do, to the divine objects and enduring ages of a future life, often makes to itself a greatness of this world, and an immortality of this frail and fleeting life. So it must be. The feelings, the desires, the fears and hopes, the interests and the objects, that are wrapt up in the soul of man, *must* expand to an indefinable magnitude, and run onward to an indefinable duration.

If we would correct this erroneous estimate of things, let us, for a moment, compare our life with the generations that have gone before us. How many thousands and millions of human beings have lived and died, within the compass of known and recorded history! How many millions, just like ourselves—with just as many and capacious feelings and desires, with just as strong fears and hopes, with just as weighty interests and dear objects, have had their hour upon earth, and have passed away from the sum of human existence! How many generations have passed, like the passing clouds upon the face of the earth—how many generations, I say, have thus passed, of which, and compared with which, our life is but a vapor! What then is the stability or the permanency of our earthly being? What *is* it, when the lives or unnum-

bered and innumerable millions, have all been included in the brief space of this world's duration? Look around upon your objects, and magnify them to the utmost, and, then, tell us what they are. You are a merchant. Your ships are traversing distant oceans. Your property is spread abroad, perhaps, on the waves of two hemispheres. Your plans, your expectations are great, and life, in your account, is, also, something great. It seems to you, to have many treasures, and many long years in store for you. Life seems to you, it may be, to have a range sufficiently extensive to satisfy your desires. The world, you say, is enough for you. But where are the princely traders of Tyre and Tarshish? Where are the merchants of Babylon, that were the great men of the earth? And where are all their treasures? Is the breath of existence that was breathed in Babylon, three thousand years ago, and that you are breathing again, as soon to pass away—is this enough for you? Was the taper of shining prosperity, that was kindled in many a house in Rome, and went out ages since—that was kindled in the morning and died away at evening—was it a thing bright and enduring enough to satisfy all your desires? Nay, where are the men whose footsteps resounded on yonder pavements fifty years since?—busy, active, prosperous, and perhaps, rich—where are they? A few years hence, another preacher will ask the same question concerning us, and the answer will come from our graves!

Or, you are a man, with the objects of ambition before you. You would be distinguished in your occupation, or pursuit, or profession, or in the style of

living, or in the dignity of office. You would be known—to the literary, or the great, or to the multitude. You would be the *first*—in some chosen sphere,—in genius, in conversation, in industry, in wealth, or in wit. Your heart beats high with this hope, and you have plans and projects; and the life which is to accomplish them, rises into a momentous concern. But oh! vain toil of ambition!—poor strife for the pre-eminence—brief hour of success! what is it? What is it to gain a certain position, which the moment it is reached, is lost forever? How many have struggled just as you do—have struggled and striven, and wearied themselves out with exertions and anxieties, and worn down their faculties with study, or care, and have vexed their spirits with fears and envyings, and they are gone! the brief struggle is over; the coveted wealth or honor is lost at the very moment of attainment. Like the waves of the everflowing sea, their earthly fortunes have risen and fallen,—have risen but to fall—and to be lost in the tide of passing generations. So shall thine fall and mine; and he who moralizes on this very spot, a century hence, may think as little of us, as we do of those, who two hundred years ago, wandered, with their bow and spear, along this wooded shore,—and have vanished, a dark cloud, from the face of the earth.

Or, to specify once more, you are a parent;—a father or a mother: and your children are growing up around you, and their prospects are opening before you the scenes of future years. You are living anew in them, and you hope to live long with them; and so, it may be, you shall. But in how many thousands and mil-

lions of dwellings has all this passed,—all that is precious and sacred in the joy and hope of domestic love,—and it is gone, like an evening's pleasure, or the dream of morning? There have been fathers and mothers, and husbands and wives, and affectionate children and kindred,—the long ages have been crowded with those who were clothed as we are, with all the sympathies of this mortal life; but the bright cloud of happiness that shone upon them, and kindling with all the hues of hope, lead them onward, was even a vapor that appeared for a little time, and then vanished away. I was reading some while since, the life of a celebrated person, no other than Sir Walter Scott—a man whose writings have filled the world with his fame—who was surrounded by troops of friends and admirers;—and his biographer, speaking of a large company of his most intimate friends, including the most of his own family, who were gathered at his residence in the summer of 1821, makes this striking reflection—“Death has laid a heavy hand upon that circle—as happy a circle I believe as ever met. Bright eyes now closed in dust, gay voices forever silenced, seem to haunt me as I write. With three exceptions, they are all gone!” But sixteen years had passed, and with three exceptions, all were gone. So shall thy family ties be broken, and thy troops of friends and thy gay circles shall sink to rest, and other beings shall come forward to share the same fate, till all be gathered into the habitations of eternity.

Such is the brevity of our life compared with the periods of this world's duration. How brief is it, then in comparison with the periods of eternity! When we look back

upon the history of the world, upon its eras and revolutions, the successions of empire, and the progress of generations and races of men, we are apt to feel as if these periods of time were vast, and almost immeasurable. But to that Being, who is from everlasting to everlasting, "a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." To that Being, who has placed orbs of light at such distances in the heavens, that a ray, travelling with its inconceivable speed, has required years to come to us,—to that eternal Being the history of this world must be as the history of an hour. What then is our life? We talk of the insects, that are born and perish in the sun-beam,—that live and die in the passing breeze of summer; such are we. In the range of duration from the past to the coming eternity, our life is but a moment, a passing breath of air, a vanishing beam of light. Like the arrow that flieth, like the weaver's shuttle, like the vapour which a ray of the sun dissolveth, like the flying shadow upon the summer's field, so our life passeth away. "O remember," says Job, "that my life is a breath: the eye of him that hath seen me, shall see me no more; thine eyes are upon me, and I am not. As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so man goeth down to the grave."

II. But if life is thus short, in relation to time absolutely considered, it is yet shorter in its specific opportunities for gaining any certain, any abiding, any spiritual good.

There is the toil of the hands, and the toil of the head—which often, as little tends to make the heart better and happier: there are many and long hours of weariness, when the burden of the body weighs heavily upon us; there

are food and raiment to be prepared, after toil has provided them ; and then comes

“Sleep, that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care,
The death of each day’s life.”

And when all the demands of the mortal nature are thus satisfied, how small a portion is left for direct and specific attention to that which is immortal. I say for direct and specific attention. I do not forget that I have often insisted, that the *whole* of life, all its care, business and pleasure, may be and must be consecrated to the service of the spirit. I certainly do and must remonstrate against the common idea that life is divided into distinct departments, one of which belongs to business, another to pleasure, and another to religion. I say that they all belong to religion. But still it is to be no less carefully stated and earnestly maintained, that in order to this consecration of the entire life to religion, there must be certain seasons for meditation, self-examination and prayer. Religion must be the spirit of every hour ; but it cannot be the meditation of every hour. That must be the business of certain times and seasons. And what I say is that these seasons are made by the pressure of other engagements, to be but too few and short. We can often send up from the midst of our labors and engagements, an ejaculatory prayer to God ; we can deeply and devotedly commune with him, each morning before we enter upon the secular pursuits of the day ; we can give our thoughts wholly to such contemplations, in the seasons of public worship. And we can, I think, in many a silent hour when the day is going down, when the evening

shadows fall, sit down, in solitariness and meditation, and think of the uses and ends of life. And what I urge is that we make a diligent use of these brief opportunities and seasons. If you were sent to a distant country, with a momentous commission to execute, if your time was limited and brief, and if from the necessary cares and fatigues of a hasty journey, you had only a few momentary intervals of thought, a little season in the morning and in the evening, and an occasional day of rest, to study the business you had to transact; would you be found idling away those intervals, and seasons, and opportunities? Or, would you be found putting off the study of the very business on which you were sent, to the moment of your leaving the country? Would you put off to the crowded and agitating hour of your departure, all careful and deliberate consideration of the very object of your journey? O, christian! O man whosoever thou art! pilgrim of these hasting years! traveller to eternity! Art thou putting off thy great concern? Art thou forgetting thine errand? Art thou idling away the precious seasons of prayer and meditation? Art thou never seeking nor finding the brief intervals for reflection and resolution and solemn vows to heaven? Let the past year testify. How has it been with us in the sanctuary? When the voice of prayer has ascended, here, have we seized the moments as precious, and given our whole hearts to God? Or has the dreadful and deadly sin of formality cleaved to us, and is the hand-writing of memory upon these walls, a hand-writing of condemnation? And how, moreover, has it been with us in our retirements and in the midst of our business—of our merchandize and labor, of our counting rooms and offices? Have frequent and earnest thoughts

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of christian fidelity and truth, of spiritual mindedness, and silent offerings of prayer, gone up from them, as a memorial and a witness for us? Good friends! I must ask these questions with myself, and I hope there is no impropriety in giving them expression to you. For I have preached in vain, if there are no such witnesses for me in your places of business, in your houses, in your hearts.

These are enquiries, indeed, that become us at all times; but *most* of all in these last hours of the departing year, when the admonition is growing louder and louder, of the brevity of our life, and the transient nature of all its opportunities. And these circumstances in which we at this moment stand, if any can, must give force to the exhortation, that we be found more faithful, and earnest, and diligent, and ready to every good word and work. For we are taught by the swift hours that are hasting to fill up the measure of another period of our lives, that the time is short—short even at the largest—and shorter still in the portion of it, that may be rescued for thoughts of the soul.

III. And let us now add to these reflections, that our life is yet more and more, emphatically brief, when considered in relation to the work we have to do. It is in this respect chiefly, that we are wont to account any period of time, either long or short. The season that would be long for an amusement, would be short for obtaining an education. The time that would hang heavily on our hands in a party of pleasure, would fly all too swiftly for the transaction of a complicated business. The moral business of this life, the spiritual education for future worlds—how vast a work is it!

I will not wrap the future in mysteries; nor strive to

throw upon it, gigantic shadows of danger, that may serve only to alarm the imagination. I would that the simple, the undisguised, the unutterably solemn verities of a moral retribution, could be set before us ; and that we might see there—no image, no dazzling brightness, no impenetrable gloom, but—every virtue enjoying its blessed recompense, and every sin, reaping, in loneliness and sorrow, its fruits of bitterness. Nor, will I speak to you, in set and technical phrases, of the preparation for futurity. But I say, that every step you take in the moral course, every moral temper you cherish, shall penetrate far and with unknown power, into the periods of your future being. I speak, with words of truth and soberness, and I might say, with the solemn and reiterated asseveration of the great teacher, “verily, verily” it shall be thus.

Let us then antedate the periods, let us forestall the allotments, the very procedures of the coming retribution ; let us commune with the powers of the world to come, and ask *them* what we shall do to be saved:—to be saved, from the dominion and woe of our unholy passions. They will tell us, and our reason will tell us, and our observation will tell us, every thing will proclaim, that it is no slight or brief work. To pluck the root of bitterness from our hearts ; to quench the fires of anger, and envy and pride ; to controul and calm the wild and wayward passions ; to become self-denying and humble, and gentle, and pure and heavenly in our disposition ; to rise to the love of God and to the practice of habitual devotion ; to be, in fine, the happy and glorious creatures that God made us to be—Oh ! this is a mighty work. No such toil is there upon the billows of ocean nor on the furrowed earth, as this toil of the spirit ! It is no slight work, I had

almost said, to form *evil* habits, to contract the stains of guilt. But when day after day had added its shade to that dark spot on the soul, when indulgence after indulgence has lent power to some evil passion, when ceaseless repetition has imparted strength to some evil habit, and circumstances have long ministered food to it, and falsehood in its thousand forms, has bound it to the soul with its thousand chains,—who shall think the work of recovery an easy task? Shall it take a long time for vice to grow, and gain the mastery? and shall less be required for rescue from it, and for virtue to gain the ascendancy? Shall the sin that has obtained a place and an abode within us only by long solicitation—shall it be expelled in a moment? Is the work of care, briefer than the work of neglect? Is self-denial more easily or more quickly to be accomplished, than self-indulgence? Do we account it, a slighter task to extirpate an evil passion, than it was to form it? No, it may take but a moment to receive the touch of contagious moral disease, but if that disease shall be suffered to fix itself, if it be not instantly counteracted, it shall require long and wearisome hours and days to heal it! One assault, one blow of temptation may cause the feeble virtue of man to waver, and eventually to fall; but hard shall be the effort to collect his prostrate powers, and slowly shall he rise from that deep degradation!

Take an instance, any instance. You are an irritable person. And the sin of anger, you must put away from you, before you can be permanently happy, in this world or in any other. Can you conquer it in a day? Can you do it in a month? Can you do it in a year? How short and hasty is the period of life in which you have to do this work! If you had but this single sin to struggle with,

every moment of your coming life, in which you could pray and strive against it, might not be too much to accomplish the task of self-government; alas! it might be all too short. But it is not one sin only; it is a host, that you have to encounter. You are worldly, or vain, or envious, or sensual; and you may be all these. And in addition to all this, you may be undevout; and never have learned to take hold of the strength of prayer and to put on the armour of God. Your foe is legion, and dwelleth among the rocks and fastnesses of habit; and this host of evil tempers and passions, warring against your happiness and forever to war against it, till conquered—this host there is no miracle to dispossess or overcome. Or shall I say, that reflection, and effort, and self-denial, and watchfulness, and prayer are the miracles, that are to do it. Yes, they are miracles, too seldom seen; and when they are seen, and when they put forth all their strength, they are of no sudden operation; they must do their work slowly.

And yet, I say again, how short is the time in which they have to do their work! How short, at the longest, is the life, in which these spiritual prodigies and signs and wonders are to be wrought out! Let the departing year, ere yet it is gone forever, again admonish us of the brevity of life—again tell us, that the time is short. How many things that we have done during this one brief year, shall remain upon the earth when we are gone! We have worked with the frail materials of earth, but they are stronger than we. The very leaf, on which we have written our bonds and deeds, or our testaments, or our thoughts of religion, truth and wisdom—that very leaf, which the flame of a taper could consume in a moment, shall last longer than we. The very raiment which clothes us, though it be of the frailest texture, may be more endur-

ing than we, and the feeble moth that consumes it, may be our survivor. How truly is it said, that our foundation is in the dust, and that we are crushed before the moth! We have got gain, and we have builded houses, and we have proudly launched forth our ships to have dominion over the seas; but our gains shall be for others; and these habitations which we have reared, shall remain long after they have known us no more; and the ships we have builded, shall breast the shock of the ocean billows, when the last wave of earthly trouble shall have passed over us forever!

Once more let the departing year admonish us. We have come together to receive its admonition. Let it not be in vain. It may be the last admonition of this kind, that we shall ever receive. When the next message of the closing year, comes to warn us, it may find us gone, where admonitions never come. Now therefore, let us be faithful. Now, let us resolve, while it is called to-day, and in every coming day, let us strive—to do every spiritual work, that our hand findeth to do, with our might—without delay, without neglect, without any possible failure.

The time is short. How brief, how transitory, how evanescent is a year! So will life appear, when we stand on the borders, to us, of all earthly time. Look back upon the past year. It is gone like a dream! A few such dreams—and life itself is gone forever! But there is one thing that can turn this unsubstantial and otherwise fearful dream of life, into a blessed reality; and that is steadfast virtue, humble piety, devoted prayer, the true service of God. So live then, that life be not a frightful dream to visit your soul hereafter, with threatening and horror, but a blessed reality to bear you up to the regions of an immortal life.

DISCOURSE XII.

REFLECTIONS AT THE CLOSE OF DAY.

GENESIS XXIV. 63. AND ISAAC WENT OUT TO MEDITATE
IN THE FIELD AT EVENTIDE.

THE employment of the evening hour, here described, and attributed to the ancient patriarch, is variously represented by different commentators. Some say that he went out to meditate, others to pray, and others render it, that he went out simply to walk in the field, at eventide. I have only to remark that there is no impropriety in supposing either of these to be the true meaning; and that all of them might be very naturally united, in such an hour and place.

But be this as it may—I am about to propose to you some of those reflections which are suitable to the close of day.

I. And the first and most natural reflection to make at the return of the evening, is, on the blessings we have enjoyed: the blessings of nature, of existence,

and the blessings with which life and the world, are filled. To the contemplation of nature simply considered—to the contemplation of that grand display which every day's revolution opens to us, there is a prevailing indifference, arising, I think, from causes which are not altogether of a moral character. There have been so many fanciful and merely pretty descriptions of nature, as to have brought a kind of discredit on all professed meditations of this kind. It is almost felt as if it were the province of poets and sentimentalists only, with which common men on common occasions, have little or nothing to do. And thus many of us, by a sort of formal maxim, have shut ourselves out from some of the most delightful and ennobling reflections. We have a *natural* obstacle to contend with of sufficient strength, without creating any artificial ones. The *commonness* which attaches to every thing in the world around us, has almost unavoidably tended to bring down all that is splendid, beautiful and majestic in nature, to the character of what is tame, ordinary, and uninteresting. With what emotion does a man enter into some populous and magnificent city, which he has never before seen! With what enthusiasm do our travellers visit Rome, and survey its noble ruins of aqueducts, and temples, and triumphal arches! With what a fascination of the senses, should we wander through some of those Oriental palaces or halls, of which we read; amidst magnificent decorations of every material, form, and coloring—golden lamps, and resplendent mirrors, carved work and tapestry, and silken couches and carpets rich with all the dyes of the East; where luxury, and art, and imagination have gathered

all their treasures—where the air that circulates through them is loaded with perfume, and breathes with music :—we should probably feel almost as if we were in another and ethereal world. And yet I do not hesitate to say, that all this is perfectly flat and insipid compared with what we witness in the revolution of every day ! Let it only be new,—let it be seen for the first time—let the earth be surveyed in such a season as this which is now passing over us ;—let a being like ourselves, be brought from some region where the sun never shone, where the fields were never clothed with verdure nor the trees with foliage—let him behold first, the glorious coming of the day, the golden East, the Sun as he would burst from the clouds that wait upon his rising ; let him look up to the heavens that spread in awful beauty and sublimity above him ; let him gaze upon the earth around him with all its fair and various forms, its fresh verdure and flowery fields, its trees and forests, all waving in the breeze of morning ; let him hear the song from the groves—the song of happiness that blends with all the sounds of the wakening earth ; let him catch in his view the living streams as they flow, the extended plains, the majestic mountains, and then go forth and survey the boundless tracts of ocean ; let him wander the live-long day, through all this world of beauty and magnificence,—and how poor and meagre would be to him, all the works of human power and art ! Would he not meditate, as he walked forth at the eventide of such a day ? Would he not say—“ what a day has this been ? a day of wonders ! ” Would he not almost instinctively bow down in adoration and gratitude, and in language like that which the

poet has put into the mouth of the first man who saw all this loveliness and glory, would he not say,

“ These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair. Thyself how wondrous then!
Unspeakable—who sittest above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.”

Another subject of reflection appropriate to the eventide is life; life I mean, now, as a blessing.

A day's existence, since there are innumerable days like it, is commonly regarded, I believe, as one of the most indifferent matters of reflection; as scarcely worthy of notice, unless it be to speak of its vanity and unimportance, and the little it has offered of what is either interesting or estimable. Such, alas! is the fruit of prevailing irreligion. If it be asked of most persons concerning the day that has passed over them, what it has offered that is worthy of note, it is common to hear it spoken of with the greatest indifference, and often with ennui and weariness. It seems to be thought of, as a hasty and vanishing moment; and a moment, too, which if it had not been hasty, would have been far worse than indifferent or wearisome. I do not say, that we should be often making grave or sentimental comments on the day that is past; but I fear that the opposite habit of speaking—the light or indifferent or dull habit, but too well indicates the insensibility there is to the value of existence, to the value of a day.

Others may feel something of its value. In their even-

ing offerings of thanksgiving, they may acknowledge the favor of God to them that they have lived another day. But how little—may it not be?—that the most considerate and devout feel the import of this acknowledgement! How great is the privilege of existence!—to live, to think, to be—to have come forth, as we have, from darkness, from nothingness, to the joyful precincts of life and light; to be clothed with these senses, mysterious ministers, that bring all nature around, subject to us—all its fruits, its fair forms, its beautiful colors, its fragrance and its music, subject to our dominion. Doth not the *ephemeral insect*, that perishes in the hour or the day of its birth, that is confined to a little spot of earth, or pool of water—yet doth it not sport in the beams of life? Is not the *winged creature*, the frail passer-by of a season, buoyant and melodious with the joy of its transient being? Hath not the goat upon the high hills—hath not the eagle in the mountain-top, a gift, for which he might well pay thanks, if he could do so? And what thanks then shall man render for his rational, religious, immortal being—man that he is, unlike the beasts of the field, capable of being thankful? *Theirs* is a life of sensation; *his*, a life of the soul. *Their* guidance and limit is instinct; *he* walks in the paths of knowledge, of improvement—yea, in the everlasting paths of improvement and hope. *They* shall pass away—from every valley and mountain, from every living stream, and every region of air, they shall quickly pass to the shades of eternal oblivion. But *man* that liveth now, shall live forever. The day that is passing over him, belongs to a series of endless days and ages. What value shall he not attach to such an existence? What tribute of gratitude

can be too profound, to mark its successive periods—its morning hour, and shades of evening?

I have spoken of nature and life, my friends; and besides their own intrinsic character and excellence, what blessings do they spread before us, each day? How many are the testimonies of God's beneficence, in our condition and our nature, in our social relations and individual experience, in occupation and in leisure, in business and recreation, in peace at home and safety abroad, in the pursuits and pleasures of daily activity, and the invitations of nightly repose? Perhaps we think not of all this, and we go to the kind rest that heaven has provided, with complaint upon our lips. We say that we have many cares and crosses and vexations. And yet it may be, that there is no chamber of sickness in our dwelling, no suffering friend to sympathize with; no want at our daily board, no anguish of bereavement in our hearts. Oh! these would make us comprehend how favored is the lot of health and cheerfulness and competence.

And yet after all, how inadequate would be the best sense we could entertain of the blessings of a single day. Swiftly its hours and minutes pass, thickly its cares and occupations crowd upon us; but more swiftly do its mercies come, more closely do they press us on every side. The divisions of time, its minutes and instants, supply no measure, no means of enumeration, for the benefits we receive. As each beating pulse is the signal of unnumbered movements in our animal frame, so the passing moments of life, mark, but do not count, innumerable operations and benefits in the universal frame of nature, and the countless tribes of living creatures. Ages of happiness are crowded into moments of God's goodness; and

yet the moments of his goodness are lengthened out to everlasting ages. "How precious are thy thoughts unto us, O God, how great is the sum of them; if we should count them, they are more in number than the sand; when we awake we are still with thee."

Such are some of the thoughts of God's mercies, with which it would become us to close the day.

II. Of our faults and offences it becomes us in the next place, to think. Conscience has now its hour, and may, unmolested, do its office. It is a delicate monitor, and often in the eagerness and hurry of our daily pursuits, it is trodden down, or passed by and neglected. But in the silence of evening, it has a distinct and audible voice. And for us, erring, sinning men, it is greatly wise to listen,

"To talk with our past hours,
And ask them what report they bore to heaven,
And how they might have borne more welcome news."

The ancient philosophers earnestly recommended to their followers, to appropriate a part of each evening to a review of the acquisitions of the day. But the christian philosopher, who knows that there is something more important even than knowledge, and far more difficult to obtain, will more earnestly exhort his disciples to settle at the close of every day, the great moral account with it. This account is not to be satisfactorily settled in any general way; not by the vague acknowledgement that we are sinners, that we have our share, of course, in human imperfection, that we are frail and erring mortals like the rest. Our particular faults must be dealt with, not our general delinquencies only—our particular omissions of duty must be called to mind; forgetfulness towards our

Creator, or injury to our fellow-beings, either in deed, word, or thought. Our errors and offences are *daily* repeated, and what chance exists of their correction, if they are not daily recollected, and resolved against? It is *for want* of this daily and specific consideration of their faults, that so many persons, and so many, even, who profess to be leading a religious life, go on, ten, twenty or thirty years, without making any evident progress, without any material amendment of their bad tempers or spiritual negligences—just as passionate, as avaricious, as selfish or worldly, as they were years ago. Who has not been alarmed, for his very capacity of moral improvement, at the frequent remark, so often made and so sadly verified—that men continue through life very much what they were in their early dispositions? “I see he is the same!” says some shrewd observer, and yet perhaps he speaks of one whom he knew forty years ago, and who, perhaps, during all these forty years has imagined that he was a good christian. But let it be known, that he is not in any valuable sense a good christian, if he really be in all moral respects the same. He is not the true disciple of a thorough, spiritual, heart-searching conscience or Christianity. It is the nature of real religion to advance. It can no more rest than the rising light. It can no more fail to shine brighter and brighter. The doctrine of growth in grace is not an obsolete doctrine. It is the experience, it is the hope of every good man. It is his refuge from the gloom of utter wretchedness and despair.

I am not wandering from the subject. He who will at every evening, seriously review the faults of the day, cannot fail in process of time to correct them—cannot fail to

improve. And I know not how he can make this progress in any other way.

Nay, I fear that we must say more than this,—however severely the rule may press upon many of us. We must say, that the man of a truly spiritual mind and tender conscience, *will* take this daily, serious and solicitous account of his faults and sins. I care not to maintain, that it will be in the *evening*, though that season will most naturally invite his thoughts to such a contemplation. But he cannot let day after day pass, without any special attention to what he feels to be the great interest of his life,—his growing purity, likeness to God, and preparation for a heavenly happiness.

But I say, that the evening will be the time most suitable for this employment. The man of a faithful conscience will then naturally ask, how he commenced the day; with what thoughts and purposes; with what sincerity and earnestness of desire unto Almighty God for his aid and blessing. He will then pursue his inquiries into the labors and pleasures of the day. “Have I been industrious in business or study; temperate in the gratification of my senses and appetites; strong in the controul of my passions; unwavering in my adherence to truth in my words, and to principle in my actions?” And to ask a still more serious and painful question—painful through the fears it awakens—“what have been my motives, in practising the duties of diligence, moderation and integrity?—These are duties which I owe to myself. Have I, moreover, in these and all other duties been faithful to God? Have I venerated his authority? Have I truly desired and aimed this day to serve him? Have I often thought of him in his works and ways; and am I more and more learning to make the

whole of my life, an offering to his goodness, a progress in the knowledge of his perfection, and a communion with his presence? In fine, have I this day been true to my social relations—true and faithful as a parent or a child, as a husband or wife, as the member of a family, of a friendly circle, or of the community? Have I been faithful in my transactions? Can I not only lay open my account-book, but the secret thoughts of my heart, to my neighbor, and appeal to him for the honesty in which I have dealt with him? Have I also been mild, forbearing, and considerate in all cases? Has no one gone from my presence soured, chagrined or irritated by my rude, haughty or hasty manners and words?"

"Doubtless," a humble man will add, "I have done many things wrong;" but the question he has further to ask is, "do I regret it, and am I now resolved, that I will do so no more?"

I have only to add on this head, if you will permit me, one piece of advice—which is, that these impressions and purposes should be revived in the morning, and should be brought into an earnest application to God for his grace and guidance. This practice, I am sure, could not fail, eventually to change the whole tenor of our life if it be wrong—to change it from the image of the earthly, to the image of the heavenly.

III. Finally the close of the day, calls us to consider the brevity and the end of life. We shall soon lay aside the garments of mortality, never to take them up; the blessings of life will soon be enjoyed; its sins will soon exist only in painful remembrance; its cares and toils will be succeeded by the repose of the grave. "The night of death cometh in which no man can work." It

cometh;—you see not the sun actually move in the sky, but how soon it reaches the horizon! Life passes thus imperceptibly; you see not, that it approaches to its limit; and yet it is approaching. The night cometh. You perceive not its advance, and you probably will not. You will be occupied with business; you will be agitated with plans for the future; you will be pursuing or enjoying; you will be on a journey, or taken up with the comforts or the cares of your home; and in an hour when you think not, the shadows of evening will descend, and chase away the vision of life forever!—Such to most men's experience, is this present existence,—short, transient, fleeting; flying with a rapidity like that of the luminaries of heaven, and yet passing as silently in its course, as imperceptibly as they; and let it be remembered, as surely passing. The sun is not more certainly hastening through his daily revolutions, than he is, with every revolution, cutting short the term of our mortal being.

I grieve not, that it passes. Let it pass. Let it speed its flight. Life is but the traveller's way, or the pilgrim's toil. It demands only our passing thoughts and affections, not our ultimate, fixed, firm reliance and attachment. It becomes us not to regret its passage, nor to mourn the loss of it, as if it were the extinction of all our hopes. Our only concern with the shortness of life, is, so to number our days as to apply our hearts unto wisdom. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it quickly for there is no work, nor wisdom nor device in the grave whither thou goest". That is to say, beyond this life, the proper work of life cannot be done; its wisdom is there to be recompensed, not exercised;

and there is no device that can save us from the inevitable consequences of our negligence, unfaithfulness, or folly.

Let it pass, then ; but let it pass in the ways of duty, in the exercise of wisdom, and the foresight of a watchful conscience. Let us mark its hasty progress. Let the descending shadows of every evening, not gloomily, but gently remind us, of its speedy and certain decline. Let it pass ; but let not the steps of time, be swifter than the steps of our obedience ; let not moments succeed more quickly, than generous and kind affections shall spring up in our hearts ; let us be diligent in proportion as the time is short ; let our life, brief as it is in duration, frail as it is in its tenure, be strong in its hold on virtue,—be long in the series of good deeds,—and long endure in the remembrance of the good and the just!

DISCOURSE XIII.

ON RELIGION, AS THE GREAT SENTIMENT OF LIFE.

I COR. XV. 19. IF IN THIS LIFE ONLY WE HAVE HOPE, WE
ARE OF ALL MEN MOST MISERABLE.

THERE is a nation in modern times, of which it is constantly said that it has no religion, that in this life only has it hope. One is continually assured, not by foreigners alone, but in that very country—I need not say that I speak of France—that the people there have no religion, that the religious sentiment has become nearly extinct among them.

Although there is, doubtless, some exaggeration in the statement, as would be very natural in a case so very extraordinary, and the rather as the representation of it, comes from a people who are fond of appearing an extraordinary and wonderful people, and of striking the world with astonishment; yet there is still so much truth in the representation, and it is a thing so unheard of in the history of all nations, whether Heathen, Mahometan, or Christian, that one is naturally led to reflect upon the problem which the case presents for our consideration. Can

a nation go on without religion? Can a people live devoid of every religious hope, without being of all people the most miserable? Can human nature bear such a state? This is the problem.

It is the more important to discuss this problem, because, the very spectacle of such a nation, has some tendency to unhinge the faith of the world. The thoughtless at least, the young perhaps, who are generally supposed to feel less than others, the necessity of this great principle, may be lead to say with themselves, "is not religion after all, an error, a delusion, a superstition, with which mankind will yet be able to dispense?" A part of my reply to this question I propose to draw especially from the experience of the young. For I think indeed, that, instead of this being an age, when men, and the young especially, can afford to dispense with the aid and guidance of religion, it is an age which is witnessing an extraordinary developement of sensibility, and is urging the need of piety beyond, perhaps beyond all former ages. The circumstances, as I conceive, which have led to this developement, are the diffusion of knowledge, and the new social relationships introduced by free principles. But my subject at present, does not permit me to enlarge upon these points.

Can the world, then, go on without religion? I will not enquire now whether human governments can go on. But can the human heart go on without religion? Can all its restless energies, its swelling passions, its overburthening affections, be borne without piety? Can it suffer changes, disappointments, bereavements, desolations—ay, or can it satisfactorily bear overwhelming joy, without religion? Can youth and manhood and age, can life and

death, be passed through, without that great principle which reigns over all the periods of life, which triumphs over death, and is enthroned in the immortality of faith, of virtue, of truth, and of God ?

I answer, with a confidence that the lapse of a hundred nations into Atheism, could not shake, that it is not possible : in the eye of reason and truth, that is to say, it is not possible for the world, for the human heart, for life, to go on without religion. Religion, naturally, fairly, rightly regarded, is the great sentiment of life : and this is the point which I shall now endeavor to illustrate.

What I mean by saying that religion is the great sentiment of life is this—that all the great and leading states of mind which this life originates or occasions in every reflecting person, demand the sentiment of religion for their support and safety. Religion, I am aware, is considered by many, as something standing by itself, and which a man may take as the companion of his journey, or not take, as he pleases ; and many persons, I know, calmly, some, it is possible, contemptuously, leave it to stand aside and by itself, as not worthy of their invitation, or not worthy, at any rate, of being earnestly sought by them. But when they thus leave it, I undertake to say, that they do not understand the great mental pilgrimage on which they are going. If all the teachings of nature were withdrawn, if Revelation were blotted out, if events did not teach ; yet the very experience of life, the natural developement of human feeling, the history of every mind which, as a mind, has any history, would urge it to embrace religion as an indispensable resort. There is thus, therefore, not only a kind of metaphysical necessity in the very nature of the mind, and a moral call in all its

situations, for religion ; but there is wrapped up within the very germs of all human experience, of all human feeling, joyous or sorrowful ; there is, attending the very development of all the natural affections, a want, a need inexpressible, of the power of that divine principle.

Let us trace this want, this need, in some of the different stages, through which the character usually passes. Let us see whether this great necessity does not press down upon every period of life, and even upon its commencement—yes, whether upon the very heart of youth, there are not already deep records of experience, that point it to this great reliance. I have in a former discourse, spoken of the disappointments of youth ; I now speak of its wants and dangers.

In youth then—that is to say, somewhere between the period of childhood and manhood—there is commonly, a striking development of sensibility and imagination. The passions, then, if not more powerful than at any other period, are at any rate more vivid, because their objects are new : and they are then most uncontrollable, because neither reason nor experience have attained to the maturity necessary to moderate and restrain them. The young have not lived long enough, to see how direful are the effects of unbridled inclination, how baseless are the fabrics of ambition, how liable to disappointment are all the hopes of this world. And therefore the sensibility of youth, is apt to possess a character of strong excitement and almost of intoxication. I never look upon one at such a period, whose quick and ardent feelings mantle in the cheek at every turn, and flash in the eye and thrill through the veins, and falter in the hurried speech, in every conversation ; yes, and have deeper tokens, in the gathering

paleness of the countenance, in speechless silence, and the tightening chords of almost suffocating motion—I never look upon such an one, all fresh and alive, and yet unused, to the might and mystery of the power that is working within—a being full of imagination too, living a life but half of realities, and full half of airy dreams; a being, whom a thousand things, afterwards to be regarded with a graver eye, now move to laughter or to tears; I never look upon such an one—how is it possible to do so?—without feeling that one thing is needful; and that is, the serenity of religion, the sobriety and steadiness of deep founded principle, the strong and lofty aim of sacred virtue.

But the sensibility of youth, is not always joyous nor enthusiastic. Long ere it loses its freshness or its fascination, it oftentimes meets with checks and difficulties; it has its early troubles and sorrows. Some disappointment in its unsuspecting friendships, some school-day jealousy or affliction, some jar upon the susceptible nerves or the unruly passions, from the treatment of kindred or friends or associates;—or, at a later period, some galling chain of dependence or poverty or painful restraint; or else, the no less painful sense of mediocrity, the feeling in the young heart that the prizes of ambition are all out of its reach, that praise and admiration and love all fall to the lot of others—some or other of these causes, I say, brings a cold blight over the warm and expanding affections of youth, and turns the bright elysium of life, for a season, into darkness and desolation. All this is not to be described as if it were a mere picture—just enough perhaps, but to be considered no otherwise than as a

matter of youthful feeling, soon to pass away and to leave no results. This state of mind has results. And the most common and dangerous is a fatal recklessness. The undisciplined and too often selfish heart says—"I do not care; I do not care what others say or think of me; I do not care how they treat me. Those who are loved and praised and fortunate, are no better than I am; the world is unjust; the world knows me not; and I care not if it never knows me. I will wrap myself in my own garment; let them call it the garment of pride or reserve—it matters not; I have feelings and my own breast shall be their depository." Perhaps this recklessness goes farther, and the misguided youth says, "I will plunge into pleasure; I will find me companions though they be bad ones; I will make my friends care for me in one way, if they will not in another;" or he says perhaps, "nobody cares for me, and therefore it is no matter what I do."

My young friends, have you ever known any of these various trials of youth? And, if you have, do you think that you can safely pass through them, with no better guidance than your own hasty and headstrong passions? Oh! believe it not. Passion is never a safe impulse; but passion soured, irritated and undisciplined, is least of all to be trusted. If in this life only you have hope, if no influence from afar take hold of your minds, if no aims stretching out to boundless and everlasting improvement strengthen and sustain you, if no holy conscience, no heavenly principle sets up its authority among your wayward impulses, you are indeed of all beings most to be pitied. Unhappy for you is all this ardor, this kindling fervor of emo-

tion, this throng of conflicting passions, this bright or brooding imagination, giving a false coloring and magnitude to every object; unhappy for you, and all the more unhappy, if you do not welcome the sure guidance, the strong control of principle, of piety, of prayer.

But let us advance to another stage of life and of feeling—to the maturity of life. And I shall venture to say that where the mind really unfolds with growing years; where it is not absorbed in worldly gains or pleasures, so as to be kept in a sort of perpetual childhood; where there is real susceptibility and reflection, there is apt to steal over us, without religion, a spirit of misanthropy and melancholy. I have often observed it, and without any wonder; for it seems to me, as if a thoughtful and feeling mind, without any trust in the great providence of God, without any communion of prayer with a Father in heaven, or any religious, any holy sympathy with its earthly brethren, or any cheering hope of their progress, must become reserved, distrustful, misanthropic, and often melancholy.

Youth, though often disappointed, is yet always looking forward; and it is looking forward with indefinite and unchecked anticipation. But in the progress of life, there comes a time when the mind looks backward as well as forward; when it learns to correct the anticipations of the future, by the experience of the past. It has run through the courses of acquisition, pleasure or ambition, and it knows what they are, and what they are worth. The attractions of hope^s have not, indeed, lost all their power, but they have lost a part of their charm.

Perhaps, even the disappointment of youth, though

it has more of passion and grief in it, is not so bitter and sad, as that of maturer life, when it says, "well, and this is all. If I should add millions to my store; if I should reap new honors, or gain new pleasures, it will only be what I have experienced before; I know what it is; I know it all. There is no more in this life; I know it all." Ah! how cold and cheerless is that period of human experience—how does the heart of a man die within him, as he stands thus in the very midst of his acquisitions—how do his very honors and attainments teach him to mourn—and to mourn without hope, if there is no spiritual hope! If the great moral objects of this life, and the immortal regions of another life, are not spread before him, then is he most miserable. Yes, I repeat, his very success, his good fortune brings him to this. There are untoward circumstances, I know; there are afflictions that may lead a man to religion; but what I now say, is, that the natural progress of every reflecting mind however prosperous its fortunes, that the inevitable development of the growing experience of life, unfolds, in the the very structure of every human soul, that great necessity—the necessity of religion.

This world is dark and must be dark, without the light of religion; even as the material orb would be dark without the light of Heaven to shine upon it. As if

"The bright Sun were extinguished, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless and pathless; and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;"

so would the soul, conscious of its own nature, be, without

the light of God's presence shining around it, without those truths that beam like the eternal stars from the depths of heaven, without those influences, invisible and far off, like the powers of gravitation, to hold it steadily in its orbit, and to carry it onward with unerring guidance, in its bright career. And no philosopher, no really intellectual being, ever broke from the bonds of all religious faith, without finding his course dreary, "blind and blackening" in the spiritual firmament. His soul becomes, in the expressive language of Scripture, "like a wandering star, or a cloud without water." No mean argument is this, indeed, for the great truths of religion. But whether it is so or not, it is a fact. I know indeed that many persons possessed of sense and talent in this world's affairs, do live without religion, and ordinarily without any painful consciousness of wanting it. But what do men of mere sense and talent in this world's affairs, know of the insatiable and illimitable desires of the mind? What—what by very definition, as the votaries of worldly good, are they pursuing? Why, it is some object about as far distant, in the bounded horizon of their vision, as that which the painted butterfly is pursuing—some flower, some bright thing a little before them; bright honor, or dazzling gold, or gilded pleasure. But let any mind awake to its real and sublime nature; let it feel the expanding, the indefinite reaching forth of those original and boundless thoughts which God has made it to feel; let it sound those depths, soar to those heights, compass those illimitable heavens of thought, through which it was made to range; and then let that mind tell me, if it can, that it wants no religion; that it wants no central principle of attraction, no infinite object of adoration and love and trust. Nay, if any mind,

whatever its pretensions, should tell me this, I should not hesitate in my own judgment, to pronounce its acquisitions shallow, or at any rate partial, or at the best, technical and scholastic. For it is not true, my brethren, that intellectual weakness most stands in need of religion, or is most fitted to feel the need of it; but it is intellectual strength. I hold no truth to be more certain than this,—that every mind, in proportion to its real developement and expansion, is dark, is disproportioned, and unhappy, without religion. If in this life alone it has hope, it is of all minds most miserable.

I have spoken of youth and manhood as developing the need of religion. Does age any less need it? Where can that want exist if not in the aged heart? It is not alone, that its pulses are faint and low; it is not alone, that so many of its once cherished objects have departed from it; it is not that the limbs are feeble, the eye dim and the ear dull of hearing; it is not that the aged frame is bent towards that earth into which it is soon to sink and find its last rest; but what is the position of an old man? Where does he stand? One life is passed through; one season of being is almost spent; youth has found, long since, the goal of its career; manhood, at length, is gone; and he stands—where—and upon what? What is it that spreads before him? Is it a region of clouds and shadows? Is all before him, dread darkness and vacuity—an eternal sleep—a boundless void? Thus would it be without religion, without faith! But how must he, who stands upon that shore of all visible being, from whence he can never turn back—how must he long for some sure word of promise, for some voice, that can tell him of eternal life, of eternal youth—of regions far away in the boundless universe of

God, where he may wander on and onward forever? Age, with faith, is but the beginning of life, the youth of immortality; the times and seasons of its being are yet before it; its gathered experience is but an education to prepare it for higher scenes and services: but age, without faith, is a wreck upon the shore of life, a ruin upon the beetling cliffs of time—tottering to its fall, and about to be engulfed, and lost forever!

I have thus attempted to show that religion is the great sentiment of each period of life. Let me now extend the same observation to those epochs in life, which are occasioned by changes in that material creation which surrounds us.

There are sentiments appropriate to the dying, and to the reviving year. What are they? How striking is the answer which is given in all literature and poetry? Men are able, no doubt, to walk through the round of the seasons, without much reflection; but the moment any sentiment is awakened, it is the sentiment of religion; it is a thoughtfulness about God's wisdom and beneficence, about life and death and eternity. Thus it is that every poet of the seasons—every poet of nature, is devout; devout in his meditations when he writes, if not devout in his habits always.

And what man, in thoughtful mood, can walk forth in the still and quiet season of Autumn, and tread upon the seared grass that is almost painfully audible to the serious emotions of his heart, and listen to the fall of the leaf that seems, idle as it is, as if it were the footstep of some predestined event, and hear the far echo of the hills and the solemn wind-dirge of the dying year; and not meditate in that hour—and not meditate upon things above the world

and above all its grosser cares and interests! "The dead, the loved, the lost" will come to him then—the world will sink like a phantom-shadow,—and eternity will be a presence; and heaven, through the serene depths of those opening skies, will be to him a vision.

But again, a change cometh. The seals of winter are broken; and lo! the green herb and the tender grass, and bird and blossom come forth; the clouds dissolve into softness, and open the azure depths beyond; and man goeth forth from imprisoning walls, and opens his bosom to the warmth and the breeze, and feels his frame expand with gladness and exultation. Then, what is he, if from the kindling joy of his heart arises no incense of gratitude. It is the hour of nature's, and ought to be of man's thanksgiving. The very stones would cry out—the green fields and the rejoicing hills would cry out against him, if he were not grateful. The sentiment of the spring-time is the sentiment of religious gratitude!

Let us look at other changes. There is a sentiment of the morning. The darkness is rolled away from the earth; the iron slumber of the world is broken; it is the daily resurrection-hour of rejoicing millions. God hath said again, "let there be light;" and over the mountain-tops and over the waves of ocean it comes, and streams in upon the waking creation. Each morning that signal-light, calling to action, is at thy window; duly it cometh, as with a message, saying, "awake, arise!" Thou wakest;—from dreamy slumbers, from helpless inactivity,—and what dost thou find? Hast thou lost any thing of thyself in that slumber of forgetfulness? Hath not all been kept for thee? Hath there not been a watch over thy sleep? Thou wakest; and each limb is filled

with life; each sense holds its station in thy wonderful frame; each faculty, each thought is in its place; no dark insanity, no dreary eclipse hath spread itself over thy soul. What shall the thoughts of that hour, be, but wondering and adoring thoughts? Well are a portion of our prayers called *matins*. Morning prayers—morning prayers—orisons in the first light of day, from the bended soul, if not from the bended knee—were not the morning desecrated and denied, if a part and portion of it were not prayer?

And there is a sentiment of the eventide—when the sun slowly sinks from our sight—when the shadows steal over the earth—when the shining hosts of the stars come forth—when other worlds and other regions of the universe, are unveiled in the infinitude of heaven. Then, to meditate, how reasonable—I had almost said how inevitable is it! How meet were it then, that in every house there should be a vesper-hymn! I have read of such a scene in a village, in some country—I think it was in Italy—where the traveller heard, as the day went down, and amidst the gathering shadows of the still evening, first from one dwelling and then from another, the voices of song—accompanied with simple instruments, flute and flageolet—it was the vesper hymn. How beautiful were it, in village or city, for dwelling thus to call to dwelling, saying, “great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty—just and true are thy ways—God of the morning! God of the evening! we praise thee; goodness and mercy hast thou caused to follow us all our days.”

Thus have I attempted to show that religion is the great sentiment of life. It is our life. Our life is bound

up with it, and in it ; and without it, life would be both miserable and ignoble.

I will only add in fine, that religion alone offers to us the hope of a future life, and that without this our present being is shorn of all its grandeur and hope.

Whether we look at our own death or at the death of others, this consideration, this necessity of a faith that takes hold of eternity, presses upon us. I know very well what the common and worldly consolation is. I know very well, the hackneyed proverb, that "time is the curer of grief;" but I know very well too, that no time can suppress the sigh that is given to the loved and lost. Time, indeed, lightens the constant pressure of grief rather than blunts its edge ; and still more than either, perhaps, does it smooth over the outward aspect of that suffering : but often when all is outwardly calm and even bright, does the conscious heart say—"I hear a voice you cannot hear ; I see a sign you cannot see ;" and it pays the sad and dear tribute of bereaved love. No, the memory of the beloved ones parts not from us, as its shadow passes from our countenance. And who is there, around whose path such memories linger, that will not say, "I thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," through him who is the revealed "resurrection and life ;" through him who said, "he that liveth and believeth in me, shall never die?" For now, blessed be God, we mourn not as those who have no hope. But surely, dying creatures as we are, and living in a dying world, if in this life only we had hope, we should of all beings, be most miserable !

In fine, my view of life is such, that if it were not for my faith and hope, I should very little care what became

of it. Let it be longer or shorter, it would but little matter, if all was to end when life ended ; if all my hopes and aspirations, and cherished joys, were to be buried with me for ever, in the tomb. Oh ! that life of insect cares and pursuits, and of insect brevity—the mind that God has given me could only cast a sad and despairing look upon it, and then dismiss it, as not worth a farther thought. But no such sad and shocking incongruity, is there, thanks be to God, in the well ordered course of our being. The harmonies that are all around us, in all animal, in all vegetable life—in light and shade, in mountain and valley, in ocean and stream, in the linked train of the seasons, in the moving and dread array of all the heavenly hosts of worlds—the harmonies of universal nature, but above all, the teachings of the Gospel, assure us that no such shocking incongruity and disorder are bound up in the frame of our nature.

No ; it is true ; that which we so much need to support us, is true ; *God doth look down upon our humble path with the eye of paternal wisdom and love ; this universe is full of spiritual influences to help us in the great conflict of life ; there is a world beyond in which we may assuredly trust.* The heart full of weighty interests and cares, of swelling hopes and aspirations, of thoughts too big for utterance, is not given us merely that we may bear it to the grave, and bury it there. From that sleeping dust shall rise the freed spirit, to endless life. Thanks—let us again say and for ever say—thanks be to God, who giveth us this victory of an assured hope, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

DISCOURSE XIV.

ON THE RELIGION OF LIFE.

ECCLESIASTES III. 11. HE HATH MADE EVERY THING
BEAUTIFUL IN ITS TIME.

IN my last discourse on human Life, I spoke of religion, as the great, appropriate and pervading sentiment of life. *The religion of life*—by which I mean a different thing—the religion, the sanctity, the real, spiritual consecration naturally and properly belonging to all the appointed occupations, cultivated arts, lawful amusements, and social bonds of life; this is the subject of my present discourse.

By most religious systems, this life—the life, that is, which the world is leading and has been leading through ages—is laid under a dark and fearful ban. “*No religion*”—is the summary phrase which is written upon almost its entire history. Though it is held by these very systems, that the world was made for religion—made that is to say, for the culture of religion in the hearts of its inhabitants—yet it is contended that this purpose has been almost entirely frustrated.

First, the heathen nations, by this theory, are cut off from all connection with real religion. Next, upon the mass of christian nations, as being unregenerate and utterly depraved, the same sentence is passed. I am not disposed, on this subject, to exact the full measure of inference from any mere theory. Men's actual views are often in advance of their creeds. But is it not very evident—as a third consideration—that the prevailing views of the world's life, very well agree with the prevailing creeds? Is it not the common feeling, that mankind in the mass—in the proportion of thousands to one—have failed to attain to any thing of true religion; to any, the least of that which fulfils the real and great design of the Creator? Is it not commonly felt that the mass of men's pursuits, of their occupations, of their pleasures, is completely severed from this great purpose? In labor, in merchandize, in the practice of law and of medicine, in literature, in sculpture, painting, poetry, music, is it not the constant doctrine or implication of the pulpit, that there is no religion, no spiritual virtue, nothing accordant with the Gospel of Christ? Men, amidst their pursuits, may *attain* to a divine life; but are not the pursuits themselves regarded, as having nothing, strictly speaking, to do with such a life—as having in them no elements of spiritual good—as having in them no tendency to advance religion and goodness in the world.

This certainly, upon the face of it, is a very extraordinary assumption. The pursuits in question, are—some of them necessary; others, useful; and all, natural; that is to say they are developments, and inev-

itable and predestined developments of the nature which God has given us. And yet it is maintained and believed, that they have no tendency to promote his great design in making the world, that they have nothing in them allied to his purpose, that, at the most, they are only compatible with it, and that the actual office which they discharge in the world, is to lead men away from it. The whole, heaven-ordained activity, occupation, care, ingenuity of human life, is at war with its great purpose. And if any one would seek the welfare of his soul, he is advised to leave all—the farmer, his plow—the merchant, his ships—the lawyer, his briefs—and the painter, his easel; and to go to a revival-meeting or a confessional, or to retire to his closet. I need not say that I am not here objecting to meditation—to distinct, thoughtful and solemn meditation,—as one of the means of piety and virtue; but I do protest against this ban and exclusion, which are thus virtually laid upon the beneficent and religious instrumentalities of a wise and gracious providence.

On the contrary, I maintain that every thing is beautiful in its time—in its place—in its appointed office; that every thing which man is put to do, naturally helps to work out his salvation; in other words, that if he obey the genuine principles of his calling, he will be a good man; and that it is only through disobedience to the heaven-appointed tasks, either by wandering into idle dissipation, or by violating their beneficent and lofty spirit, that he becomes a bad man. Yes, if man would yield himself to the great training of Providence in the appointed action of life, we should not

need churches nor ordinances ; though they might still be proper for the *expression* of religious homage and gratitude.

Let us then look at this action of life, and attempt to see what is involved in it, and whether it is all alien, as is commonly supposed, to the spirit of sacred truth and virtue.

I. And the first sphere of visible activity which presents itself, is labor—the business of life, as opposed to what is commonly called study. I have before spoken of the moral ministration of labor ; but let us, in connection with this subject, advert to it again.

My subject in this discourse is the religion of life ; and I now say that there is a religion of toil. It is not all drudgery—a mere stretching of the limbs and straining of the sinews to tasks. It has a meaning. It has an intent. A living heart pours life-blood into the toiling arm. Warm affections mingle with weary tasks. I say not how pure those affections are, or how much of imperfection may mix with them, but I say that they are of a class, held by all men to be venerable and dear ; that they partake of a kind of natural sanctity. They are, in other words, the home affections. The labor that spreads itself over tilled acres, all points for its centre, to the country farm-house. The labor that plies its task in busy cities, has the same central point, and thither it brings daily supplies. And when I see the weary hand bearing that nightly offering ; when I see the toiling days-man, carrying to his home the means of support and comfort ; that offering is sacred to my thought, as a sacrifice at a golden shrine. Alas ! many faults there are, amidst the toils

of life—many hasty and harsh words are spoken ; but why do those toils go on at all?—why are they not given up entirely—weary and hard and exasperating as they often are ? Because in that home, is sickness, or age, or protected though helping woman, to be provided for. Because that there, is helpless infancy or gentle childhood, that must not want.

Such are the labors of life ; and though it is true that mere selfishness, mere solitary need would prompt to irregular and occasional exertion, or would push some ambitious persons, of covetous desires, to continued and persevering effort ; yet I am persuaded, that the selfish impulses would never create that scene of labor, which we behold around us.

Let us next look at the studious professions.

And I must confess that I have often been struck with surprise that a physician could be an undevout man. His study—the human frame—is the most wonderful display of divine wisdom in the world, the most astonishing proof of contrivance, of providence. Fearfully and wonderfully is it made ; and if he who contemplates it, is not a reverent and heaven-adoring man, he is false to the very study that he calls his own. He reads a page, folded from the eyes of most men—a page of wondrous hieroglyphics—that hand-writing of nerves and sinews and arteries ; darkly he reads it, with a feeling enforced upon him that there is a wisdom above and beyond him ; and if he is not a religiously inquiring and humble man, it seems to me that he knows not what he reads. Then again, it is his office to visit scenes, where he is most especially taught the frailty of life, the impotence of man, and the need

of a divine helper ; where the strong man is bowed down by an invisible blow to debility, to delirium, to utter helplessness ; where the dying stretch out their hands to heaven for aid, and to immortality for a reliance ; where affliction smitten to the dust and stript of all earthly supports, plainly declares that no sufficient resource is left for it, but Almighty Goodness. I do not say, that there is any thing in the physician's calling which necessarily makes him a religious and good man ; but I do say that if he obeys the true spirit of his calling, he must be lead to the formation of such a character, as the inevitable result.

Turn next, to the vocation of the lawyer—and what is it ? It is to contribute his aid to the establishment and vindication of justice in the world. But what is justice ? It is rectitude, righteousness. It is the right, between man and man ; and as an absolute quality, it is the high attribute of God. The lawyer may fall below this aim and view of his vocation, but that is not the fault of his vocation. His vocation is most moral, most religious ; it connects him, most emphatically, with God ; he is the minister of Almighty justice. In the strictest construction of things, the clergyman is not more truly God's minister, than he is. I know that the prevailing view is a different one. I know that the world looks upon this profession, as altogether irreligious, or altogether un-religious at the best. To say that the lawyer however legitimately employed, is most religiously employed, sounds in most ears like mockery, I suppose. But let us look at his function, and let us put it in the most doubtful light. He goes up to the court of justice to plead the cause of his client. All the day long, he is engaged with examining

witnesses, sifting evidence, and wrangling, if you please, for points of evidence and construction and law. He may commit mistakes, no doubt. He may err, in temper or in judgment. But suppose that his leading aim, his wish is, to obtain justice. And it is a very supposable thing, even though he be on the wrong side. He goes into the case, and he goes up to the court, not knowing what the right is, what the evidence is. He strenuously handles and sifts the evidence, to help on towards the right conclusion. Or if you say, it is to help his view of the case; still his function ministers to the same thing. For the conclusion is not committed to him; it lies with the judge and the jury; his office is ministerial; and he is to put forward every fair point on his side, as his opponent will, on the other side, because these are the very means—nay, the indispensable means, for coming to a righteous decision. And I say, that if he does this fairly and honestly, with a feeling of true self-respect, honor and conscience; with a feeling that God's justice reigns in that high tribunal; then he is acting a religious part; he is leading, that day, a religious life. If righteousness, if justice is any part of religion, he is doing so. No matter whether during all that day, he has once appealed, in form or in terms, to his conscience or not; no matter whether he has once spoken of religion and of God, or not; if there has been the inward appeal, the inward purpose—the conscious intent and desire that justice, sacred justice should triumph, he has that day, lead a good and religious life: and certainly, he has been making a most essential contribution to that religion of life and of society—the cause of equity between man and man—of truth and righteousness in the world.

There are certain other pursuits of an intellectual character, which require to be noticed in this connection—those, I mean, of literature and the arts. And the question here, let it be borne in mind, is not whether these pursuits are always conducted upon the highest principles; but whether they are in their proper nature and in their justest and highest character, religious and good; whether between these functions and religion there is any natural affinity; whether or not, in their legitimate tendency, they are helping to work out the world's salvation from vice, and sin, and spiritual misery. And certainly, to him who is looking with any anxiety to the great moral end of providence, this is a very serious question. For in these forms—of literature and art—the highest genius of the world is usually revealed. The cost of time and money to which they put the world, is not a small consideration. The labored works of art and the means lavished to obtain them; the writing, printing, selling and reading of books; all this presents one of the grandest features of our modern civilization. But the cost of mental labor is more than this; it is of the very life-blood of the world. This great power *of communication with men*, is not only working, and putting in requisition much of the labor and time of the world; but it is often working painfully, and is wasting the noblest strength, in its strenuous toils. In silent and solitary places, genius is often found, consuming away in the fires which it has kindled. And now the question is—on what altars, are these priceless offerings laid?

Let it be considered then, in answer to this question, how few statues, paintings or books, have any bad design. Point me to one in an hundred—to one in a thousand or

ten thousand—that recommends vice. What then do they inculcate? Surely it is virtue, sanctity, the grandeur of the spiritual part of man. What do we see in these works? It is in sculpture, the fearful beauty of the god of Light, or the severe majesty of the Hebrew law-giver, or the solemn dignity of the Christ. It is in painting, some form of moral loveliness, some saint in the rapture of devotion, or a christian, constant, serene, forgiving, victorious in the agonies of martyrdom. It is, in writing—in fiction, in poetry, in the drama—some actor or sufferer, nobly sustaining himself amidst temptations, difficulties, conflicts and sorrows—holding on his bright career through clouds and storms, to the goal of virtue and of heaven! Of course, I do not say that there are no moral defects in these representations; but most certain it is, nevertheless, that the highest literature and art of every age, embody its highest spiritual ideal of excellence. And even when we descend from their higher manifestations and find them simply amusing, there is nothing in this that is *hostile* to religion. Men must have recreation; and literature and art furnish that which is most pure, innocent and refining. They are already drawing away multitudes, from coarser indulgences, and from places of low and vile resort. And the theatre, were it purged from certain offensive appendages, might be one of the most admirable ministrations conceivable, to the recreation and entertainment of the people. Nay, a great actor—as well as a great dramatist—in the legitimate walk of his art, may be a most effective and tremendous preacher of virtue to the people.

But, to go again to the main point—I must strenuously maintain, that books—to be of religious tendency—to be

ministers to the general piety and virtue—need not be books of sermons, nor books of pious exercises, nor books of prayers. These all have their great and good office to discharge ; but *whatever* inculcates pure sentiment—whatever touches the heart with the beauty of virtue and the blessedness of piety, is in accordance with religion ; and this is the Gospel of literature and art. Yes, and it is preached from many a wall, it is preached from many a book—ay, from many a poem and fiction and Review, and Newspaper ; and it would be a painful error, and a miserable narrowness, not to recognize these wide-spread agencies of heaven's providing—not to see and welcome these many-handed coadjutors, to the great and good cause. Christianity has in fact, poured a measure of its own spirit into these forms ; and not to recognize it there, is to deny its own specific character and claim. There are religious books indeed, which may be compared to the solid gold of Christianity ; but many of its fairest gems have their setting in literature and art ; and if it is a pitiable blindness, not to see its beautiful spirit even when it is surrounded by ignorance and poverty, what must it be not to recognize it, when it is set in the richest framework that human genius, imagination and art can devise for it ?

There is one of the arts of expression, which I have not mentioned—which sometimes seems to me a finer breathing-out of the soul than any other, and which certainly breathes a more immediate and inspiring tone into the heart of the world than any other—I mean music. Eloquent writing is great ; eloquent speaking is greater ; but an impromptu burst of song, or strain of music, like one of old Bethoven's voluntaries, I am inclined to say, is

something greater. And now when this wonderful power, spreads around its spell, almost like inspiration ; when, celebrating heroism, magnanimity, pity or pure love, it touches the heart with rapture and fills the eye with tears, is it to be accounted among things profane or irreligious ? Must it be heard in church, to be made a holy thing ? Must the words of its soul-thrilling utterance, be the technical words of religion—grace, godliness, righteousness—in order to mean anything divine ? No, the vocation of the really great singer, breathing inspirations of truth and tenderness into the mind, is as holy as the vocation of the great preacher. In our dwellings, and in concert-rooms, ay, and in opera-houses—so the theme be pure and great—there is *preaching*, as truly as in church walls.

My Brethren give me your patience—if I must suppose that what I am saying, needs it. Do but consider what the great arts of mental and moral communication, express. Are they not oftentimes, the very same qualities that you revere in religion ? Are goodness, pity, magnanimous self-sacrifice and heroic virtue, less divine, because they are expressed in literature, in painting or in song ? And when you are moved to admiration, to tears, at some great example of heroism or self-sacrifice—be it by music or dramatic representation,—and when the same thing moves you in preaching ; are you entirely to distinguish between the cases ; and to say that the one feeling is profane, and the other holy ?

Observe that I do not ask you to revere religion less, but to see and to welcome new, and perhaps before unthought of, instruments and agencies in the great field. You fear, perhaps, that they are not altogether pure.

Then, I say, cut off and cast away the bad part ; I plead not for that ; but none the less accept the good. Nay, and I might ask—is religious teaching itself, all pure—all right ? Indeed, I think that religion and religious teaching, have been as much perverted and abused as labor, literature or art.

It is every way most injurious and unjust to brand every thing as irreligious that is not specifically devoted to religion ; to deny and as it were to forbid, to work any good work, those who “ follow not after us.” Our Saviour rebuked his disciples in such a case ; saying forbid them not—“ he that is not against me, is for me.” It is a bigotry totally unworthy of the generous and glorious Gospel, to hold in utter distrust and desecration, all the beneficent activities of the world, all its kindly affections, all the high purposes and sentiments that live both in its physical and mental toils, because they do not come within the narrow pale of a technical religion ; because they are not embraced in the mystic secret of what is called *religious experience*. All men are experiencing more or less, what the christian is experiencing. If his experience is higher and more perfect, is that a reason why he shall disdain and reject every thing that is like it in others ? As well might the sage, the philosopher repudiate and scorn all the common sense and knowledge of the world. If he does so, we call him a bigoted and scholastic philosopher. And if the christian does so, we must call him a bigoted and mystic christian. And, let me add, that if he were a generous and lofty-minded christian, I cannot conceive what could be more distressing and mournful to him, than to hold all human existence, with the exception

of his little peculiarity, to be a dark and desolate waste—to see all beside, as a gloomy mass of ignorance, error, sin and sorrow. It is the reproduction, on christian ground, of the old Jewish exclusion and bigotry.

II. Let us now extend our view to another department of human life—recreation: and let us see whether we cannot embrace this within the great bond of religion; whether we cannot reclaim another lost territory to the highest service of man.

The isles of refreshment; the gardens and bowers of recreation; the play-grounds for sport; somewhere must they lie embosomed in this great world of labor; for man *cannot* always toil. Place for mirth and gaiety, and wit and laughter; somewhere must it be found; for God hath made our nature to develope these very things. Is not this sufficient to vindicate the claim of recreation to be part of a good and religious life?

But let us look at the matter in another light. Suppose the world of men were created—and created in full maturity—but yesterday: and suppose it to be a world of beings, religious, devout, and devoutly grateful and good. The first employment that engages it, as a matter of necessity and of evident appointment too, is labor. But after some days or weeks of toil, it becomes acquainted with a new fact. It finds that incessant toil is impracticable; that it is breaking down both mind and body; in fact that neither body nor mind was made for it. In short, the necessity of recreation becomes manifest. What then, under this view of the case, would men do? Social, and socially inclined, especially in their lighter engagements, would they not very naturally say—“let us devise games and

sports, let us have music and dancing; let us listen to amusing recitations or dramatic stories of life's gaiety or grandeur; and let us obey these tendencies and wants of our nature, in ever-kept, grateful veneration and love of Him who has made us." And if all this were followed out, in primeval innocence, with a religious devoutness and gratitude, I suppose that every objection to it, would be removed from the minds of the most scrupulous.

The objection then, lies against the abuse of these things. But what is the proper moral business of such an objection? Is it to extirpate the things in question? It cannot. Games, gaieties—sports, spectacles, there will be, as long as man have limbs or eyes or ears. It is no factitious choice which the world has made of its amusements. It chose them because it wanted them. The development here, is as natural as it is in the arts. You might as well talk of extirpating music and painting, as of driving the common amusements, out of the world. Shall the religious objection then, since it cannot destroy, proceed to vilify these amusements? What! vilify an ordinance of nature, a necessity of man, a thing that cannot be helped? Is this the wisdom of religion—to degrade what it cannot destroy; to make of that which it cannot prevent, the worst that can be made; to banish alike from its protection and remedy, that which it cannot banish from the world? There lies the garden of recreation, close by the field of labor! and they cannot be severed; and men must and will pass from one to the other; and is it the office of religion to curse that garden, to pronounce it unholy ground, and so to give it up to utter levity or license? Nay, can any thing be plainer than that it is the business of religion

to *reform* the amusements of the day? Reform, I believe, is the only measure that can be taken with the theatre; for that which has its root in the natural tastes, customs and literature of all civilized ages, is not likely to be eradicated. But how is any thing to be reformed? By invective, by opprobrium, by heaping contempt upon it! By casting it out from the pale of good influences, by withdrawing good men from all contact with it, by consigning it over to the irreligion, frivolity and self-indulgence of the world? Surely not. And therefore am I anxious to show that recreation must come within the plan of good life, and hence to show that it is not to be snatched as a forbidden pleasure; not to be distorted by the hand of reckless license; but to be welcomed, ay, and consecrated, by calm, conscientious, rational enjoyment.

The objection I am considering, is that the common and chosen recreations of the world, are abused. If they were pure and innocent, it would have nothing to say. But what is *not* abused? Is not business—is not religion itself abused? Are they therefore to be denounced and driven away from the sight of man? The objection carried out, would reduce the whole world to dead silence and inaction. But this cannot be tolerated. We must work; and we must do business; and we must relax into gaiety and sportiveness, when our work is done. Improvements may be introduced into each sphere of action, and have been all along, through ages; but the sphere must remain; and it must remain essentially the same. You can no more get men to amuse themselves in some entirely new manner, than you can get them to do business, or to draw deeds or to labor upon the arts, in some entirely new manner. I tell the ascetic religionist that there *will* be gaiety and

laughter—there *will* be assemblies and music and dancing—ay, and, as I think, cards and theatres, as long as the world stands. Whether *he* like it or not—whether *I* like it or not,—it cannot be helped.

Now there are abuses of these things. What are we to say of the abuses? “Let them crush down and destroy the things themselves”—do we say? But they cannot. Then let them be cut off. There is really nothing else to be done. Elevate, refine, purify the public amusements. Let religion recognize and restrain them. Let it not, as is too common, drive them to license and extravagance; but let it throw around them its gentle and holy bonds, to make them pure, cheerful, healthful—helpful to the great ends of life. What a blessed thing for the world, were it, if its amusements could thus be rescued, redeemed, and brought into the service of its virtue and piety! What a blessed thing for the weary world, for the youthful world, for the joyous world, if the steps of its recreation, trodden in cheerful innocence and devout gratitude, could be ever leading it to heaven!

I have now considered two great departments of life; labor, physical and mental—and recreation. My design has been, to rescue them from the common imputation of being necessarily or altogether worldly or irreligious; to resist the prevailing notion, that all true religion, all true spiritual goodness, is gathered up in certain and (so-called) sacred professions, peculiarities and places; to show that in all the heaven-ordained pursuits and conditions of life, there are elements of good; that the spirit of God is breathing its gracious influence through the world; that there is a religion of life, unrecognized in our ordinary religious systems, but real and true, and either worthy of our welcome and admiration; or when defective

or wrong, worthy of our endeavor to correct and improve it.

III. But, once more, there is a religion of society.

This topic, let me observe, is essentially distinct from those which I have already discussed. It is true that our labor and recreation are mostly social; but in the social bond, there is something more than the business or the amusement which takes advantage of it. It has a holiness, a grandeur, a sweetness of its own. The world, indeed, is encircled by that bond; And what is it? In business, there is something more than barter, exchange, price, payment; there is a sacred faith of man in man. When you know one in whose integrity, you repose perfect confidence; when you feel that he will not swerve from conscience for any temptation; *that* integrity, that conscience is the image of God to you; and when you believe in it, it is as generous and great an act, as if you believed in the rectitude of heaven. In gay assemblies for amusement again—not instruments of music, not rich apparel, not sumptuous entertainments, are the chief things; but the gushing and mingling affections of life. I know what is said, and may be truly said, of selfishness and pride and envy in these scenes; but I know too, that good affections go up to these gathering places, or they would be as desolate as the spoil-clad caves and dens of thieves and robbers. Look at two kind-hearted acquaintances meeting in those places, or meeting in the market or on the exchange; and see the warm pressure of the hand, the kindling of the eye, the suffusion of the whole countenance with heartfelt gladness; and tell me if there is not a *religion* between those hearts—a true love and worshipping, in each other, of the true and good. It is

not policy that spreads such a charm around that meeting, but the halo of bright and beautiful affection. It hangs, like the soft enfolding sky, over all the world, over all places where men meet, and toil or walk together—not over lover's bowers and marriage altars alone—not over the homes of purity and tenderness alone ; yet these are in the world—but over all tilled fields, and busy workshops, and dusty highways, and paved streets. There is not a trodden stone upon these side-walks, but it has been an altar for such offerings of mutual kindness. There is not a wooden pillar nor an iron railing, against which throbbing hearts have not leaned. True, there are other elements in the stream of life, that is flowing through these channels. But will any one dare to deny that *this* element is here and every where—honest, heartfelt, disinterested, inexpressible affection. If he dare, let him do so, and then confess that he is a brute or a fiend, and not a man. But if this element is here—is every where, what is it ?

To answer this question, let us ask, what is God ? And the Apostle answers, “ God is love.” And is not this, of which we have been speaking, love—true, pure love ? Deny it, and bear upon your head, the indignation of all mankind. But admit it ; and what do you admit ? That God's love is poured into human hearts. Yes, into human hearts ! Oh ! sad, sad—frail, erring, broken, are they often ; yet God's spirit is breathing through them—else were they despoiled, desolate, crushed, beyond recovery, beyond hope. It is that same spirit of love that enshrines the earth and enrobes the heavens with beauty ; and if there were not an eye of love to see it, a heart of

love to feel it, all nature would be the desolate abode of creatures as desolate.

I know full well, alas! that there are other things in life besides love. I know that in city streets, not far removed from us, are depths beneath depths of sorrow and sin; that in cellars beneath cellars, and in stories above stories, are crowded together poverty and wretchedness and filth and vileness. Oh! desolate and dreary abodes—where, through the long bright day, only want and toil and sorrow knock at all your gates—only blows of passion and shrieks of children, and cursings of drunkenness and oaths of the profane, measure out the heavy hours!—are there no hearts to bleed for you? Are there no energies of love to interpose for you? Shall the stream of glad and prosperous life flow so near you, and *never* come to cleanse out your impurities and heal your miseries? Nay, in that stream of glad and joyous life, I know that there are ingredients of evil—the very ingredients indeed that prevent a consummation so blessed. I know that amidst gay equipages, selfishness is borne; and that amidst luxurious entertainments pride is nursed and sensuality gorged; and that through fair and fair-seeming assemblies, envy steals, and hatred and revenge spread their wiles; and that many a bad passion casts its shade over the brightest atmosphere of social life. All this I know. I do not refuse to see the evil that is in life. But tell me not that all is evil. I still see God in the world. I see good amidst the evil. I see the hand of mercy often guiding the chariot of wealth to the abodes of poverty and sorrow. I see truth and simplicity amidst many wiles and sophistries. There is a habit of berating fashionable life, which is often founded more in ignorance than ill-will. Those

who know better, know that there is good every where. I see good hearts beneath gay robes—ay, and beneath tattered robes, too. I see love clasping the hand of love, amidst all the envyings and distortions of showy competition; and I see fidelity, piety, sympathy, holding the long night-watch, by the bed-side of a suffering neighbor, amidst all surrounding poverty and misery. God bless the kindly office, the pitying thought, the loving heart, wherever it is!—and it is every where!

Why, my Brethren, do I insist upon this? Why do I endeavor to spread life before you in a new light—in a light not recognized by most of our religious systems? I will endeavor in few words, to tell you.

I am made to be affected, in many respects by the consciousness of what is passing around me, but especially in my happiness and my improvement. I am more than an inhabitant of the world; I am a sympathizing member of the great human community. Its condition comes as a blessing, or weighs as a burthen, upon my single thought. It is a discouragement or an excitement, to all that is good and happy within me. If I dwell in this world as in a prison, if the higher faith, the religion of my being, compels me to regard it in this light, if all its employments are prison employments, mere penal tasks or drudgeries to keep its tenants out of mischief, if all its ingenious handicrafts are but prison arts and contrivances to while away the time, if all its relations are prison relations, relations of dislike or selfishness, or of compact and cunning in evil; if the world is such a place, it must be a gloomy and unholy place, a dark abode, a wilderness world: yes, though its walls were built of massive gold and

its dome were spread with sapphire and studded with diamond-stars, I must look upon it with sadness—I must look upon its inhabitants with coldness, distrust and disdain. It is a picture which I have drawn; but it is mainly a picture of the world as viewed by the prevailing religion of our time. Nay more; from this prison, it deems that thousands are daily carried to execution—plunged into a lake of fire—there to burn forever. And if the belief of its votaries actually came up to its creed, gaiety and joyousness in such a world, would be more misplaced and shocking a thousand times, than they would be in the gloomiest penitentiary that ever was builded. Is this fair and bright world—is God’s world—such a place? If it is, I am sure that it was not made for any rational and reflective happiness; but mountain to mountain, and continent, and age to age, should echo nothing but sighs and groans.

But if this world, instead of being a prison, is a school; if all its appointed tasks are teachings; if all its ordained employments are fit means for improvement, and all its proper amusements are the good recreations of virtuous toil and endeavor; if, however perverse and sinful men are, there is an element of good in all their lawful pursuits, and a diviner breathing in all their lawful affections; if the ground whereon they tread is holy ground; if there is a natural religion of life, answering, with however many a broken tone, to the religion of nature; if there is a beauty and glory of humanity, answering, with however many a mingled shade, to the loveliness of soft landscapes and embosoming hills and the overhanging glory of the deep,

blue heavens;—then all is changed. And it is changed not more for happiness than it is for virtue.

For then do men find that they may be virtuous, improving, religious, *in* their employments—that this is precisely what their employments were made for. Then will they find that all their social relations—friendship, love, family ties—were made to be holy. Then will they find that they may be religious, not by a kind of protest and resistance against their several vocations, but by conformity to their true spirit; that their vocations do not exclude religion but demand it for their own perfection; that they may be religious laborers, whether in field or factory—religious physicians and lawyers—religious sculptors, painters and musicians; that they may be religious in all the toils and amusements of life; that their life may be a religion; the broad earth, its altar—its incense, the very breath of life—and its fires kindled, ever kindled by the brightness of heaven.

DISCOURSE XV.

ON THE IDENTITY OF RELIGION WITH GOODNESS, AND
WITH A GOOD LIFE.

1 JOHN IV. 24. IF A MAN SAY, I LOVE GOD, AND HATETH HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR ; FOR HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HATH SEEN ; HOW CAN HE LOVE GOD WHOM HE HATH NOT SEEN ?

IF there is any mission for the true teacher to accomplish in this age, it is to identify religion with goodness ; to show that they are the same thing,—manifestations, that is to say, of the same principle—to show, in other words, and according to the Apostle, that no man is to be accounted a lover of God, who is not a lover of his brother. It is—I say again—to identify religion with morals, religion with virtue ; with justice, truth, integrity, honesty, generosity, disinterestedness—religion with the highest beauty and loveliness of character. This, I repeat, is the great mission, and message of the true teacher to-day. What it may be some other day—what transcendental thing may be

waiting to be taught, I do not know; but this, I conceive is the practical business of religious instruction now. Let me not be misunderstood, as if I were supposed to say that this or any other mere doctrine, were the *ultimate end* of preaching. *That* is, to make men holy. But how shall any preaching avail to make men holy, unless it do rightly and clearly teach them what it is to be holy? If they mistake here, all their labor to be religious, all their hearing of the word, Sabbath-keeping, praying, and striving, will be in vain. And therefore, I hold that to teach this, and especially to show that religion is not something else than a good heart, but is that very thing—this, I say, is the burden of the present time.

I use now an old prophetic phrase, and I may remark here, that every time has its burden. In the times of the Old Testament, the burden of teaching was, to assert the supremacy and spirituality of God, in opposition to Idolatry. In the Christian time, it was to set forth that universal and impartial, and that most real and true love which God has for his earthly creatures, in opposition to Jewish peculiarity and Pagan indifference and all human distrust—a love, declared by one who came from the bosom of the Father, sealed in his blood, and thus bringing nigh to God, a guilty, estranged, and unbelieving world. The burden of the Reformation time was to assert the freedom of religion; to bring it out from the bondage of human authority into the sanctuary of private judgment and sacred conscience. But now, religion having escaped from Pagan idolatry, and Jewish exclusion, and papal bondage, and survived many a controversy since, has encountered a deeper question concerning its

own nature. What especially is religion itself? This I say, is the great question of the present day. It underlies all our controversies. It is that which gives the main interest to every controversy. For whether the controversy be about forms or creeds, the vital question is whether this or that ritual or doctrine, ministers essentially to true religion; so that if a man embraces some other system, he is fatally deficient of the vital means of salvation. And this brings us to the question, what is true religion itself?

This question, as I have intimated, presses mainly upon a single point, which I will now state and argue as a contested point: viz. whether religion, in its essence, consists in a principle of rectitude, of goodness, in a simple and true love of the true and divine, or whether it consists in something else; or in other words—whether it consists in certain intelligible affections, or in something, to the mass of men, unknown and unintelligible.

This question craves some explanation, both that you may understand what it is, and may perceive that it is a question; and I must bespeak your patience.

In entering upon these points, let us consider, in the first place, what is the ground on which the general assertion in our text proceeds.

There is, then, but one true principle in the mind, and that is the love of the true, the right, the holy. There is but one character of the soul, to which God has given his approbation, and with which he has connected the certainty of happiness here and hereafter. There is something in the soul which is made the condition of its salvation; and that something is one thing, though it has many forms. It is sometimes called grace in the heart, some-

times holiness, righteousness, conformity to the character of God ; but the term for it, most familiar in popular use, is religion. The constant question is, when a man's spiritual safety or well-being is the point for consideration—when he is going to die, and men would know whether he is to be happy hereafter—has he got religion ? or has he been a religious man ? I must confess that I do not like this use of the term. I am accustomed to consider religion as reverence and love towards God ; and to consider it therefore, as only one part of rectitude or excellence. But you know that it commonly stands for the whole of that character which God requires of us. Now what I am saying is, that this character is, in principle, *one thing*. It is, being right ; and being right is but one thing. It has many forms ; but only one essence. It may be the love of God, and then it is piety. It may be the love of men, and then it is philanthropy. But the love of God, and the love of man as bearing his image, are in essence the same thing. Or to discriminate with regard to this second table of the law ; it may be a love of men's happiness, and then it is the very image of God's benevolence ; or it may be the love of holiness in men, of their goodness, justice, truth, virtue, and then it is a love of the same things that form, when infinitely exalted, the character of God. All these forms of excellence, if they cannot be resolved into one principle, are certainly parts of one great consciousness, the consciousness of right ; they at any rate have the strictest alliance ; they are inseparably bound together as parts of one whole ; the very nature of true excellence in one form, is a pledge for its existence in every other form. He who has the right principle in him, is a lover of God, and a lover of good men, and a lover

of all goodness and purity, and a laborer for the happiness of all around him. The tree is one, though the branches and the leaves and the blossoms, be many and various; all spring from one vital germ; so that the Apostle, in our text, will not allow it to be said, that a man is a lover of God, who does not love his brethren of the human family.

Now it may surprise you at first, to hear it asserted, that this apparently reasonable account of the matter, does not accord with the popular judgment. To this point of explanation therefore, I must invite your attention, lest I seem to fight as one that beateth the air.

It is true then, that it is admitted in general, that the christian, the object of God's favor here and hereafter must be a good man; a just, honest, pure, benevolent man. These admissions are general and vague. We must penetrate into this matter, with some more discriminating enquiry. What is it, specifically, that makes a man, spiritually a christian, and entitles him to hope for future happiness? The common answer is; it is religion, it is piety, it is grace in the heart, it is being converted, it is being in Christ, and being a new creature. These phrases I might comment upon, if I had time, and I might show that they have a very true and just meaning. But what is the meaning that they actually convey to most hearers? What is this inmost and saving principle of religion—this grace or godliness—this spirit of the regenerated man? Is it not something peculiar to the regenerate—not something *more* of goodness in them than in other men, but something different in them from goodness in others?—Is it not something possessed by them alone, unshared with the rest of the world, unknown, completely

unknown and in fact, inconceivable to the great body of mankind? Are not the saints—God's people as they are called—supposed to have some secret of experience wrapped up in them, with which the stranger intermeddleth not—of which the world knoweth nothing? I do not wish to have this so understood, if it is not true. But if it is true, it is too serious a point to be tampered with or treated with any fastidious delicacy: I say then plainly and earnestly, is it not true? If you ask most men around you what is that gracious state of the heart, which is produced by the act of regeneration, will they not say that they do not *know*? And all that they can say about it—provided they have any serious thoughts—will it not be this—that they hope they *shall* know some time or other. But they know what truth, kindness, honesty, self-denial, disinterestedness are. They know, or suppose that they know, what penitence, sorrow for doing wrong is. Gratitude to God, also—the love of God, they deem, is no enigma to them. They certainly have some idea of these qualities. I do not say *how much, by experience*, they know of all these things; but I say they have some idea of what these things mean. If then they are told, and if they believe, that all this does not reach to the true idea of religion, it follows that religion must be, in their account, some enigma or mystery—it is some inconceivable effect of divine grace, or moving of gracious affections in the heart; it must be something different from all that men are wont to call goodness, excellence, loveliness.

But to make this still plainer, if need be; what, let it be asked, are most men looking for and desiring, when they seek religion. In a Revival of religion, as it is termed, what is the anxious man seeking? Is it not something as

completely strange and foreign to his ordinary experience, as would be the effect of the mystery called Animal Magnetism? A man is declining into the vale of years, or he is lying upon the bed of death, and he wants religion—wants that something which will prepare him for a happy hereafter. He has got beyond the idea that the priest can save him, or that extreme unction can save him, or that any outward rite can save him. He knows that it must be something in his own soul. And now, what shall it be? What does he set himself to do, or to seek? What is the point about which his anxious desires are hovering? “Oh! that that *thing* could be wrought in me, on which all depends! I know not what it is; but I want it; I pray for it.” And this something that is to be done in him, is something that can be done in a moment! Can any thing be plainer then, than this which I am saying—that he is not looking to the increase and strengthening and perfection of truth, kindness, disinterestedness, humility, gratitude to God, to save him—not for the increase and strengthening of any thing that is already in him; but for the *lodgment* in him, of *something new* that will save him. He does not set himself, in seeking religion, about the cultivation of known affections, but about the attainment of unknown affections.

Look again for further proof, at the language of the popular religion, whether heard from the pulpit, or coming from the press. What is more common than to hear morality decried, and the most lovely virtue disparaged, in comparison with something called grace in the heart? Morality is allowed to be a very good thing for this world, but no preparation for the next; or it is insisted on as a consequence of grace, but is

considered as no part of grace itself; or if it is admitted that by an infusion of grace, morality may become a holy thing, still, by this supposition, the grace maintains its position as the distinct, peculiar and primal essence of virtue. Observe that I do not say that any body preaches against kindness, honesty and truth-telling, absolutely. Nay, they are insisted on. But in what character? Why, as evidences of that other thing, called religion or grace. They are not that thing, nor any part of it; but only evidences of it. And observe too that if it were only said, that much that is called morality and kindness, is not real morality or kindness; that the ordinary standard of virtue is too low and needs to be raised; to that discrimination, I should have nothing to object. But the point maintained is, that nothing that is called simple kindness or morality, ever comes or ever can, by any increase, come up to the character of saving virtue.

There is one further and decisive consideration which I am reluctant to mention, but which I will suggest, because it is, first of all, necessary that I should clearly make out the case, upon which my discourse proceeds. The Church has ever been accustomed to hold that the virtues of heretics are nothing-worth. Now suppose a case. Here is a body of men, called heretics: protestants they were once—Church of England men, puritans, presbyterians. No age has wanted the instance. Here is a body of men, I say, called heretics. To all human view, they are as amiable, affectionate and true-hearted; as honest, diligent and temperate, as any other people. They profess to reverence religion too; they build churches, meet to.

gether for worship ; and their worship seems as hearty and earnest as any other. By any standard of judging save that of theology, they appear to be as good and devout men as any other. Now what does the popular theology—what does the pulpit, say of them? Why this—briefly and summarily,—*that they have no religion*. They may be very good men, very amiable, kind, honest and true, and after their manner, devout ; but they have no religion. Is not the case clear? Must not religion be a secret in the bosom of these confident judges? *They* must know what it is : but others do not know and cannot find out. We must sit down in silence and despair ; for we can know nothing about it. Or if we say any thing, there is nothing for us but to say with Job, “no doubt, ye are the men, and wisdom shall die with you !” But this, at least, is clear ; whatever this religion is, of which they speak—whether it consist in a certain belief, or in some secretly imparted grace, it must be something different from all that men generally understand, by goodness and devotion.

In short the prevailing idea of religion, is, unquestionably, that it is some heavenly visitant to the soul ; some divine guest that takes up its abode there ; some essence or effluence, not merely proceeding from God as its cause—which it does—but partaking of unknown attributes ; something that comes into the soul from without, and is sustained there by a foreign influence ; something that is, at a certain time, created in the heart and is totally unlike any thing that was there before ; something that is ingrafted upon our nature and does not, in any sense, grow out of it ; something in fine,

that is put into us, and does not, in any sense, spring out of us—is not *originally* the result of any culture or care of ours—is not wrought out of any materials found in us—not reducible to any ordinary laws of cause and effect; but is the result of a special and supernatural working of divine power, brought to bear upon us. This doctrine, as I have latterly stated it, is undoubtedly modified by some of the New Schools of Theology that are rising around us; and this whole idea of religion is, doubtless, rejected by some orthodox persons; as it was completely rejected in the old English theology of Paley and Bishop Butler; but it is nevertheless very generally taught in this country, and it is the faith, or rather the fear and trouble of the multitude.

Nor do I know of any recent modification of the prevailing Theology, that materially affects the point now before us. When I say that, according to that theology, religion is not wrought out of any materials found in us, it may be thought that I do injustice to the views of some of its adherents. They hold perhaps that the necessary *powers are* within us; and simply maintain that they have never been rightly exercised, and that without a special impulse from above, they never will be. On this supposition, the moral faculties of our nature, stand like machinery, waiting for the stream of influence that is to move them. In the unregenerate nature, they have never been moved, or have never been *rightly* moved; and they never will be, by any power among them or inherent in them. That motion or that right motion when it comes, will be religion. But on *this* supposition, is not religion a

thing, still and equally unknown? Can the unregenerate man foresee—can he conjecture, what that *motion* will be? Can any body understand what it is—saving and excepting the converted man himself?

I suppose that this conclusion is incontrovertible; and I presume that almost every convert to the popular forms of religion, would be found to say; “I cannot tell you what it is that I have got—I cannot tell you what religion is: but I know by experience what it is; and that is enough for me.”

This view of religion, I propose to make the subject of some free discussion. It demands the most serious consideration; and I do not remember that it has received at any hand, the attention that it deserves.

I shall first state the opposite, and as I conceive, the true view of religion, and briefly show why it is true: and I shall then proceed to consider more at large, the consequences that must result and do result, from the prevailing, and as I conceive, the false view.

And here let me distinctly observe, that I am not about to consider these consequences as matters foreign and indifferent to ourselves. They belong to us indeed, as they concern the general state of religion in the world. But they concern us yet more nearly, as they enter more or less into the state of our own minds. No age can escape the influence of the past. The moral history of the world, is a stream, that is not to be cut off at a single point. In *us*, doubtless, are to be found, the relics of all past creeds, of all past errors.

But before I proceed to these consequences, I am

briefly to state and defend what I conceive to be the true view of religion, as a principle in the mind.

For statement then I say, in the first place, that all men know what God requires of them—what affections, what virtues, what graces, what emotions of penitence and piety; in the second place, that all men have a capacity for these affections and some exercise of them, however slight and transient; and in the third place, that what God requires, what constitutes the salvation of the soul, is the culture, strengthening, enlargement, predominance of these very affections; that he who makes that conscience and rectitude and self-denial, and penitence and sacred love of God which he already perceives and feels, or has felt in himself, however imperfectly—he who makes these affections the fixed, abiding, and victorious habits of his soul, is accepted with God, and must be happy in time and in eternity.

This is the statement; and for defence of this view of religion, I submit its own reasonableness; nay, and I contend for its absolute certainty as a matter of Scriptural interpretation.

First, its reasonableness. For if men, if all men do not know what religion is, they do not know what is required of them. To say that God demands that to be done in us and by us, of which we have no conception or no just conception, is to make a statement which carries with it its own refutation. To make a *mystery of a commandment*, is a solecism amounting to absolute self-contradiction. Again, we could not know what are the affections that are required of us, unless it were by some experience of them. It is philosophically impossible—it is, in the nature of things, impossible that we should. No words, no sym-

bols could teach us what moral or spiritual emotion is, unless we had in ourselves, some feeling of what it is; any more than they could teach a blind man what it is to see, or a deaf man what it is to hear. Excellence, holiness, justice, disinterestedness, love, are words which never could have any meaning to us, if the originals, the germs of those qualities were not within us. Let any person ask himself what he understands by love—the love of man or of God—and how he obtained the idea of that affection; and he will find that he understands it, because he feels it or has, sometime or other, felt it. Once more; I have said that these feelings of benevolence and piety, cultivated into the predominant habit of the soul, are the very virtues and graces that are required of us. And is not this obviously true? We all know by something of experience, what it is to love those around us; to wish them well; to be kindly affectioned and mercifully disposed towards them. And we all have had some transient emotions at least, of gratitude and love to the Infinite Father. Now if all these affections were to fill our hearts, and shine in our lives always, what would this be, but that character in which all true religion and happiness are bound up?

Thus reasonable is the ground which we are defending. But I have said also, that it is certain, from the principles that must govern us in the interpretation of Scripture. The Bible addresses itself to the world, and demands a certain character. In describing that character it adopts terms in common use. It tells us that we must be lovers of God, and lovers of men; that we must be gentle, forbearing and forgiving; true, pure, and faithful. Now if it does not mean by these words as to their radical sense,

what we all mean by them ; if it uses them in an altogether extraordinary and unintelligible manner, then, in the first place, it teaches nothing ; and next, it leads us into fatal error. The conclusion is inevitable. What the Bible presupposes to be a right knowledge of religion, *is* a right knowledge.

I am not denying that we are to grow in this knowledge, through experience ; and that, from our want of this enlightening experience, much is said to us in the Scriptures of our own blindness : much of the new light that will break in upon us, with the *full* experience of the power of the Gospel. But to a world totally blind, wrapped in total darkness, and having no conception of what light is, the Bible would not have spoken of light. The word stands for an idea. If the idea, and the just idea did not exist, the word would not be used.

There is then a light in the human soul, amidst all its darkness ; an inward light ; a divine light ; a light, which if it were increased instead of being dimmed, would shine brighter and brighter, even to the perfect day. Let any man have taken the best feeling that ever was in him—some feeling, however transient, of kindness to his fellow, or some emotion of reverence and gratitude to his Creator—let him have taken that feeling and all that class of feelings, and cultivated and carried it up to an abiding habit of mind, and he would have become a good and pious man. This change, from transient to habitual emotions of goodness and piety, is the very regeneration that is required of us. The being so changed would be “born again,” would be “a new creature ;” “old things with him would have passed away, and all things would have become new.”

Now, according to the common doctrine, instead of this slow, thorough, intelligible and practical change, we are to look for a new and unknown element to be introduced among our affections. A man feels that he must become a christian, that he must obtain that character on which all happiness, here and hereafter, depends. And now what does he do? Finding in himself an emotion of good-will, of affection for his neighbor, does he fasten upon that, and say, "this must I cherish and cultivate into a genuine philanthropy and a disinterested love?" Feeling the duty of being honest, does he say, "this practical conscience must I erect into a law?" Sensible, in some gracious hour, of the goodness of God or the worth of a Saviour, does he say, "let me keep and bear upon my heart, the reverent and sacred impression?" No, all this, the popular theology repudiates, and represents as a going about to establish our own righteousness. "No, it says, you must feel that you can do nothing yourself; you must cast yourself a helpless, despairing sinner upon the mercy of God; you must not look to the powers of a totally depraved nature to help you at all; you must cast yourself wholly upon Christ; you must look to the renewing power of the Holy Ghost, and to the creation in you of something totally different from any thing that is in you now."

The question between these two views of religion is certainly one of a very serious character; one on which momentous consequences depend. And it is a question too, which concerns not one or another form of sectarian faith alone, but the entire condition of Christianity in the world. The idea of religion on which I have dwelt so much in this discourse with a view to controvert it, has

penetrated the whole mass of religious opinion. No body of Christians has entirely escaped it; not even our own; though our characteristic position, as I conceive, at the present moment, is one of protest against it. I say at the present moment. We have gone through with the speculative controversy. It may be renewed, no doubt; but there will be hardly anything new to be said upon it. We have gone through, then, with the argument about the Trinity, the Atonement, Election, and such speculative matters; and we have come now to the greater question, what is religion itself? And what we say, is, that religion is a principle, deep-imbedded in the conscience and consciousness of all mankind, and that from these germs of it, which are to be found in human nature, it is to be cultivated and carried up to perfection. What is maintained on the contrary is that religion, the true and saving religion, is a principle of which human nature is completely ignorant; that to make a man a christian, is to implant in him a principle, entirely new, and before unknown. Whether it be called a principle, or a new mode of spiritual action—for some may prefer the latter description—it is the same thing in this respect. The man unregenerate, according to this teaching, can no more tell what he is to feel when made regenerate, than a man can anticipate what a shock of electricity will be, or what will be the effect upon his system of a new poison; or what would be the experience of a sixth sense.

The establishment of this point is so material in this whole discussion, that I shall occupy the few moments that remain to me, with the attempt to relieve the views I have offered, from all misapprehension.

Let it then be distinctly observed, in the first place,

that the question is not at all about the nature or necessity or degree of divine influence. Not, what power from above, is exerted to produce religion in the soul, but what the religion is, however produced; not what divine aid is given to human endeavor, but what is the nature and result of that endeavor; not what grace from God, but what grace in man, is—this is the question. Of course, we believe in general, that all true religion, in common with every thing else good, proceeds from God. And for myself, I firmly believe, that it pleases the Almighty, to give special assistance to the humble and prayerful efforts of his weak and tempted creatures; and this, not only when those efforts are resolutely commenced, but in every successive step of the religious course; not merely nor peculiarly in the hour of conversion, but equally in the whole process of the soul's sanctification. I know of no Scripture warrant for supposing that this divine influence is limited to any particular season, or is concentrated upon any particular exigency of the soul's experience.

In the next place, I do not say that the notion of religion as a mystery or an enigma, embraces or usurps the whole of the popular idea of religion. When I shall come to speak of the injurious consequences of this idea, I shall maintain that an enigma cannot be the object of any moral admiration, or love, or culture, or sensibility; and I may then be asked if I mean to say that there is no religious goodness or earnestness among those who embrace this idea. And to this, I answer beforehand and decidedly, "no, I do not mean to say this." If the idea were not modified nor qualified in any way, if no other ideas mixed themselves up

with that of a mystic religion, this would be the result. It is seldom that error practically stands alone. Still it is proper to single it out, and to consider it by itself. And I do maintain too, that this error predominates sufficiently to exert the most disastrous influence upon the religion of the whole christian world.

The whole of Christianity as it is commonly received, is, in my view, greatly perverted, corrupted and enfeebled by this error. Christianity is not regarded, as a clearer and more impressive exhibition of the long established, well known, eternal laws of man's spiritual welfare, but as the bringing in of an entirely new scheme of salvation. The common interpretation of it, instead of recognizing the liberal Apostolic doctrine, that the way of salvation is known to all men, that those not having the written law are a law to themselves, and that in every nation he that worships God and works righteousness, is accepted of him, holds in utter derogation and sovereign scorn, all heathen light and virtue. The prevailing idea is, that the Gospel is a certain device or contrivance of divine wisdom, to save men—not helping them in the way which they already perceive in their own consciousness, but superseding all such ways and laying them aside entirely—not opening and unfolding new lights and encouragements to that way, by revelations of God's paternal mercy and pledges of his forgiving love, but revealing a way altogether new.

Thus the Gospel itself is made a kind of mystic secret. I cannot allow a few of the more intelligent expounders of it to reply, as if that were sufficient, that *they* do not regard it in this light. I ask them to

consider what is the *general* impression conveyed by most preachers of Christianity. They may be offended when we say that vital religion is commonly represented, as a mystery, an enigma, to the mass of their hearers. But let us not dispute about words. They *do* represent it as something created in the heart, which was not there before—of which no element was there before—of which no man's previous experience ever gives him any information, any conception. If this is not a mystery to mankind, it would be difficult to tell what there is, that deserves the name. Suppose the same thing to be applied to men's *general knowledge*. Men *know* many things; but suppose it were asserted that in all their knowing there is not one particle of true knowledge, and that only here and there one, who has been specially and divinely enlightened, possesses any such knowledge. Would not such knowledge then, be a secret shared by a few, and kept from the rest of the world? Would it not be a profound mystery to the mass of mankind? Yes; and a mystery all the darker for the seeming light that surrounded it!

How much is there that passes in the bosom of society, unquestioned and almost unknown! It is this which prevents us from seeing the momentous fact and the character of the fact, which I have now been attempting to strip bare and to lay before you. It would seem that we least know that which is nearest to us, which is most familiar and most certain, which is mixed up most intimately with all present thought and usage, and with the life that we daily live. A thing must become history, it would seem, before we can fairly read it. This is commonly allowed to be true

of political affairs; but it is just as true of all human experience. Thus, if there had been a sect, among the old philosophers, which pretended to hold the exclusive possession of all science; if certain persons had stood up in the ancient time, and said, "that which other men call science, is all an illusion; we alone truly know any thing; all other men are but fools and idiots in this matter; they suppose themselves to know, but they know nothing; they use words, and make distinctions and write books, as if they knew, but they know nothing; they do not even know, what knowing is;" such a pretension we should not hesitate to characterize as a strange mixture of mysticism and arrogance. But the same assumption in regard to religion, is now put forth among ourselves; it is announced every week from the pulpit; it is constantly written in books; it enters into every argument about total depravity and regeneration and divine grace; and men seem totally insensible to its enormity; it is regarded as a mark of peculiar wisdom and sanctity; the men who take this ground, are the accredited christian teachers of multitudes; they speak as if the secret of the matter were in them, and as if they were perfectly entitled, in virtue of a certain divine illumination which they have received, to pronounce all other religious claims to be groundless and false; to say of all other men but the body of the elect, "they think they know what religion is; they talk about it; they make disquisitions and distinctions as if they knew, but they know nothing about it; they do not even know what true religious knowing is." And all the people say, amen. There is no rebuke; there is

no questioning; the light of coming ages has not yet shone upon this pretension; and the people say, it is all very right—very true.

I pray you, in fine, not to regard what I have now been saying as a sectarian remonstrance. Nay, and if it were so, it would not be likely to be half strong enough. There is a heavy indifference on this subject of religion that weighs down remonstrance, and will not let it rise as it ought. If certain ship-masters or merchants should say that they only understood navigation; if certain mechanics or manufacturers should assert that they only understood their art or their business; if certain lawyers or physicians should lay exclusive claim to the knowledge of law or medicine, there would be an outburst of indignation and scorn on every hand. "What presumption! what folly! these people are deranged!"—would be the exclamation. But men may make this claim in religion; a few persons comparatively in Christendom, may say, "we only have religion; we alone truly know what religion is;" and the indifference of society replies, "no matter; let them claim it; let them have it;" as if the matter were not worth disputing about. And if some one arouses himself to examine and to resist this claim, indifference still says, "this is but a paltry, sectarian dispute."

No, sirs, I answer, this is not a sectarian dispute. It is not a sectarian remonstrance that is demanded here; but the remonstrance of all human experience. Religion is the science of man's intrinsic and immortal welfare. What is a true knowledge, what is a true experience here, is a question of nothing less than infinite moment. All that a man is to enjoy or suffer for ever, depends upon the right, practical solution of this very question. Every

where else—in business, in science, in his profession—may a man mistake with comparative impunity. But if he mistakes here—if he does not know, and know by experience, what it is to be good and pure, what it is to love God and to be conformed to his image, he is, in spite of all that men or angels can do for him, a ruined creature.

Settle it then with yourselves, my Brethren, what true religion, true goodness, is. I will attempt in some further discourses, to lead you to the inferences that follow from this discussion. But it is so fruitful in obvious inferences, that I am willing for the present to leave it with you, for your reflections. But this I say now. Settle it with yourselves what true religion is. If it is a mystery, then leave no means untried to become acquainted with that mystery. If it is but the cultivation, the increase in you, of what you already know and feel to be right, then address yourselves to that work of self-culture, as men who know that more than fortunes and honors depend upon it—who know that the soul, that heaven, that eternity, depends upon it.

DISCOURSE XVI.

ON THE IDENTITY OF RELIGION WITH GOODNESS AND
WITH A GOOD LIFE.

1 JOHN IV. 20.—IF A MAN SAY, I LOVE GOD, AND HATETH HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR; FOR HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HATH SEEN; HOW CAN HE LOVE GOD WHOM HE HATH NOT SEEN?

I HAVE presented, in my last discourse, two views of religion, or of the supreme human excellence; and I have offered some brief, but as I conceive, decisive considerations, to show which is the right view. The one regards religion or the saving virtue, as a new creation in the soul; the other as the culture of what is already in the soul. The one contemplates conversion as the introduction of an entirely new element, or of an entirely new mode of action, into our nature; the other, as a strengthening, elevating and confirming of the conscience, the reverence and the love that are already a part of our nature. A simple comparison drawn from vegetable nature will show the difference. Here is a garden of plants. The rational gardener looks upon them all as having in them, the elements

of growth and perfection. His business is to cultivate them. To make the comparison more exact—he sees that these plants have lost their proper beauty and shapeliness, that they are distorted and dwarfed, and choked with weeds. But still the germs of improvement are in them, and his business is to cultivate them. But now what does the theological gardener say? “No, in not one of these plants, is to be found the germ of the right production. To obtain this, it is necessary to graft upon each one, a new principle of life.”

Now I have said, that, upon the theory in question, this new creation, this new element, this graft upon the stock of humanity, is, and must be to the mass of mankind, a mystery, an enigma, a profound secret. And is not this obviously true? Man, in a state of nature, it is constantly taught, has not one particle of the true saving excellence. How then should he know what it is? “Very true,” says the popular theorist; “I accept the conclusion; is it not *written*, the natural man receiveth not the things of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” That is to say, the popular theorist understands by the natural man, in this much quoted and much misunderstood passage, *human nature*. If he construed it to mean, the *sensual* man, I conceive that he would arrive at a just exposition. But that is not the point in question now. He does construe it to mean human nature; this is constantly done. Human nature being nothing but one mass of unmingled depravity—having never had one right motion or one right feeling, can, of course, have no knowledge of any such motion or feeling.

And to show that this is not a matter of doctrine only, but of experience too, let me spread before you a single

supposition of what often, doubtless takes place in fact. A man of generally fair and unexceptionable life, is lying upon his bed of death, and is visited and questioned, with a view to his spiritual condition. Suppose now he were to say, "I have had for some time past, though I never confessed it before, a certain, unusual, indescribable feeling in my heart on the subject of religion. It came upon me—for I remember it well—in such a month of such a year; it was a new feeling; I had never felt any thing like it before. Ever since, I have had a hope that I then experienced religion. Not that I trust myself, or any thing in myself; I cast all my burthen upon Christ; nothing but Christ—nothing but Christ, is the language upon my lips with which I would part from this world;" and would not this declaration, I ask, though conveying not one intelligible or definite idea to the most of those around him, he held to be a very satisfactory account of his preparation for futurity? But now suppose that he should express himself in a different manner, and should utter the thoughts of his heart thus. "I know that I am far from perfect, that I have, in many things, been very unfaithful; I see much to repent of, for which I hope and implore God's forgiveness. But I do trust that, for a number of years, I have been growing in goodness; that I have had a stronger and stronger control over my passions. Alas! I remember sad and mournful years, in which they had dominion over me; but I do trust that I did at length gain the victory; and that latterly, I have become, every year, more and more pure, kind, gentle, patient, disinterested, spiritual and devout. I feel that God's presence, in which, I am ever happiest, has been more abidingly with me; and in short I hope that the

foundations of true happiness, have been laid deep in my soul; and that, through God's mercy, of which I acknowledge the most adorable manifestation and the most blessed pledge in the Gospel, I shall be happy forever." And now I ask you—do you not think that this account, with many persons, would have lost just as much in satisfactoriness as it has gained in clearness? Would not some of the wise, the guides in Israel, go away, shaking their heads, and saying, they feared it would never do? "Too much talk about his own virtues!"—they would say—"too little about Christ!"—with an air itself mysterious in that solemn reference. And doubtless, if this man had talked more mystically about Christ, and grace, and the holy Spirit, it would have been far more satisfactory. And yet he has stated, and clearly stated, the essential grounds of all human welfare and hope.

How often in life—to take another instance—does a highly moral and excellent man say, "I hope I am not a bad man; I mean to do right; I trust I am not devoid of all kind and generous affections towards my fellow-men, or of all grateful feelings towards my Maker; but then I do not profess to have religion. I do not pretend that I am a christian in any degree." Let not my construction of this case, be mistaken. Doubtless in many such persons there are great defects; nay, and defects proceeding partly from the very error which I am combatting. For if I were to say to such persons, "yes, you have some good and pious affections in you, which God approves, and your only business is, to give the supremacy to these very affections which are already in you"—I should be thought

to have lulled his conscience, fostered his pride, and ruined his soul. I should be regarded as a worldly moralizer, a preacher of smooth things, a follower of the long doomed heresy of Pelagius. "No," it would be said, "there is no saving virtue in that man; there is nothing in him that can be strengthened, or refined or elevated or confirmed into holiness; there is no spark to be fanned into a flame, no germ to be reared into saving life and beauty; all these things are to be flung aside to make way for the reception of something altogether new—as new as light to the blind or as life to the dead. That something, when it comes, will be what he never knew before, never felt before, never before clearly saw or conceived of; and it is, undoubtedly, though that is an unusual way of describing it—it is, to depraved human nature, a mystery."

This unquestionable assumption of the popular religion, I shall now proceed freely to discuss in several points of view—in its bearing on the estimate and treatment of religion, on its culture, and on its essential vitality and power.

In the present discourse I shall consider its bearing on the estimate, and on the treatment of religion.

First, the general estimate of the nature, reasonableness and beauty of religion—what can it be, if religion is a mystery, an enigma, a thing unknown? We may feel *curiosity* about a mystery; and I have seen more than one person, seeking religion from this impulse—because they would know what it can be. This is uncommon doubtless; but taken in any view—can men be in love with a mystery? Can they feel any moral admiration for an enigma? Can their affec-

tions be strongly drawn to what is completely unknown? Can they feel even the rectitude of that, of which they have no appreciation—no idea? Certainly not; and in accordance with this view, is the old Calvinistic doctrine concerning the means of grace; which utterly denied the force of moral suasion, and held that there is no natural tendency in preaching to change the heart; that the connection between preaching and regeneration was as purely arbitrary as that between the voice of Ezekiel over the valley of dry bones and their resurrection to life.

But suppose this view of preaching be modified, and that a man *designs* to impress his hearers with the reasonableness and beauty of religion, and so to draw their hearts to it. What, let us ask him, can you do, upon the principle that religion is utterly foreign to human nature—an absolute secret to humanity? You have denied and rejected the only means of *rational* impression—some knowledge and experience in the hearers, of that about which you are speaking to them. You have disannulled the very laws and grounds of penitence; for how can men feel to blame for not possessing the knowledge of a secret? In fine, you may be a magician to men, upon this principle; but I do not perceive how you can be a rational preacher. You may say, “this, of which I speak to you, is something wonderful; try it; you have no idea what it will be to you; you will find—” you cannot say, you see—but, “you will find that it is something delightful and beautiful beyond all things.” And have we never witnessed a preaching which seemed to work upon the hearers, as it were, by a kind of art magic: solemn

and affecting tones, a preternatural air, a talking as of some secret in heaven ready to come right down into the hearts of the hearers if they will: an awful exhortation with them for their refusal; a mysterious influence drawn around the place; dark depths of woe here; a bright haze of splendor there; heaven above, hell beneath; and the sinner suspended between them by a parting cord! And how, oh! how, was he now to escape? Mark the answer—for if there ever was a mystery, here is one. By some stupendous change then and there to take place; not by rationally cultivating any good affections—not by solemnly resolving to do so—not at all by that kind of change; but by a change instant, immense, mysterious, incomprehensible—a change that would wrap up in that moment the destinies of eternity—that should gather up all the welfare or woe of the infinite ages of being, into the mysterious bosom of that awful moment!

Can such teaching as this, go to the silent depths of real and rational conviction? Did Jesus Christ teach in this manner? Think how natural, how moral, how simple, his teachings were. Think how he taught men their duty in every form, which the instant occasion, suggested. Think of his deep sobriety, of his solemn appeals to conscience rather than to imagination, to what was *in* man rather than what was out of him; and then answer me. Did the great Bible preachers, teach so? Behold the beauty of holiness, they say, behold the glory of the Lord; “know and see that it is an evil thing and bitter to depart” from them. “Come ye children and I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life and loveth

many days that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are upon such righteous ones, and his ears are open to their cry." All simple; all intelligible; all plain and level to the humblest apprehension; no talking of a mysterious secret here; no mysterious talking any way!

It is very difficult to speak the exact and undisputed truth upon any point, amidst the endless shapings and shadowings of language and opinion. I myself, who protest against making a secret of religion, may be found speaking of most men as very ignorant of religion; of the depths of the Gospel as yet to be sounded by them; of the preciousness of the great resource as yet to be felt—yet to be found out by them. But I am well understood, by those who are accustomed to hear me, not to mean any thing, which is radically a secret to humanity, but simply the increase and consummation in the soul, of that which it already knows and experiences. The change from transient and unstable, to habitual and abiding emotions of goodness and piety, is the most immense, the most important, the most glorious on earth; and it is one, of which those who are ignorant of it, cannot clearly foresee all the blessed fruits.

Again, it is very difficult to describe what is deemed a great error, without seeming to do it harshly. I would gladly avoid this imputation. God forbid that I should speak lightly of the preaching of good and earnest men. I must speak plainly of it. I must remonstrate against what I deem to be its errors. But

I do not forget that with all error there is a mixture of truth. No doubt, there are, in all pulpits, many appeals, however inconsistent with the prevailing theology, to what men naturally know and feel of the rectitude and beauty of religion. But from this mass of teaching, I single out one element which, I say, is not accordant with truth; which, I must say, is not only false, but fatal to all just appreciation of religion.

And does not the actual state of things show this to be the fact? With what eyes are men, in fact, looking upon a religion which holds itself to be a mystic secret in the bosom of a few? Do you not know that the entire literature and philosophy of the age, are in a state of revolt against it? Our literature has its ideals of character, its images of virtue and worth; it portrays the moral beauty that it admires; but is there one trace of this mystic religion in its delineations? Our philosophy, our moral philosophy especially, whose very business it is to decide what is right, calmly treads this religion under foot—does not consider its claims at all. And the cultivators of literature, of science and of art, with a multitude of thoughtful and intelligent men besides them—is it not a well-ascertained fact that they are remarkably indifferent to this kind of religion? Here and there one has fallen in with it; but the instance is rare. But if religion were presented to them as a broad and rational principle, we might expect the reverse to be the fact. Thoughtful men—cultivators of literature and art, are the very men whose minds are most conversant with images of moral beauty. Show them that all true moral beauty, is a part of religion; tell them that a christian, in the true sense, is a

man of principle, of truth and integrity, of kindness and modesty, of reverence and devotion to the Supreme Glory ; and they must feel that all this is interesting. But if religion is some mysterious property ingrafted into the soul, differing altogether from all that men are wont to call rectitude and beauty, must not all intellect and taste and all moral enthusiasm and all social generosity and love, shrink from it ? In truth I wonder that they are so patient as they are ; and nothing but indifference about the whole matter, can account for this patience. When the preacher rises in his pulpit and tells the congregation, that, excepting that grace which is found in a few, all their integrity and virtue, all their social love and gentleness, all their alms and prayers, have not in the sight of God, one particle of true goodness or worth ; nothing, I say, but profound apathy and unbelief can account for their listening to the sermon with any patience—with an instant's toleration of the crushing burthen of that doctrine. Or suppose this doctrine embodied into a character, and then how does it appear ? Suppose one person in a family, possessing this mystic grace—in no other respect, that any body can see, better than the rest—no more amiable nor gentle nor disinterested, no more just nor forbearing nor loving—and suppose this person to take the position of being the only one in that family that is approved of God, to hold all the rest as reprobate, and doomed to destruction—is it possible, I ask, to feel for that person in that character, any respect, or admiration or love ? Nay, I have known persons of the greatest defects of character and even of gross vices, to take this ground of superiority, in virtue of a certain inward grace which they conceive, has been applied to them. And I say not this for the sake

of opprobrium ; but because this ground is, in fact, a legitimate consequence of the doctrine that saving grace in the heart, is an entirely distinct and different thing from what men ordinarily call virtue and goodness.

But further ; what is the state of feeling towards religion among those who *accept* this doctrine ? In those strong holds of theology or of church institution, where this doctrine is entrenched, where it is preserved as a treasure sacred from all profane invasion, or held as a bulwark against what are called the inroads of insidious error—in these places, I say, what is the feeling ? If religion is not any known or felt sentiment or affection of human nature to be cultivated, but is a spell that comes upon the heart of one and another, and nobody can tell how or when it will come, I can conceive that there may be much fear and anxiety about it ; but how there should be much true freedom or genuine and generous love, I cannot conceive. I do not profess to have any very intimate acquaintance with the mind of such a congregation ; but if religion does not press as an incubus upon the minds of many there ; if it is not a bugbear to the young, and a mystery to the thoughtful, and a dull, dead weight upon the hearts of the uninitiated ; if, in its *votaries*, it is not ever swaying between the extremes of death-like coldness and visionary rapture ; if it is not a little pent-up hope of salvation, rather than a generous and quickening principle of culture ; if the fire in the secret shrine, does not wither the gentle and lofty virtues ; I must confess that I understand nothing of the tendencies of human nature. There may be much religiousness in such a state of things ; but much of this has existed in many a state, Heathen, Mahometan, Catholic and Protestant too, with-

out much of true religion. I do not say, that the churches consist generally of bad people ; many influences unite to form the character ; but I say that in so far as any churches hold their religion, to be some special grace implanted in them, and different from all that other men feel of goodness and piety, so far their assumption tends directly to make them neglect the cultivation of all true worth and nobleness of character. And I am not shaken in this position by the admission which I am willing to make, that there are probably more good men, in proportion, *in* the churches than *out* of them ; for profession itself, the eye of the world upon them, and the use of certain ordinances, are powerful influences. They are powerful, and yet they are not the loftiest influences. They restrain, more than they impel. And the very morality of an exclusive religion, is apt to wear features hard, stern, ungenial and unlovely.

I have said in the opening of my first discourse, that the great mission of the true teacher in this age is to establish the identity of religion and goodness. And the reason is, that by no other means can religion be really esteemed and loved. Feared it may be ; desired it may be ; but by no other means, I repeat, can it be truly and heartily esteemed and loved.

Now consider that religion stands before the world, with precisely this claim—the claim to be, above all other things revered and loved. Nay, it demands this love on pain of perdition for failure. Does the world respond to this claim ? Does public sentiment any where yield to it ? There *are* things that unite the moral suffrages of mankind—honesty, integrity, disinterestedness, pity for the sorrowful, true love, true sanctity, self-sacrifice, martyrdom

and among them and above them all, the character of Jesus Christ. Among these, does Calvinistic piety, hold any place? This is a fair and unexceptionable question in the sense in which I mean it. I am not speaking at all, of persons, I am speaking of an idea. Is the Calvinistic idea of piety—is it among the beautiful and venerable ideals and objects of the world's conscience—of the world's moral feeling? Surely not. But it will not do to say that this is because the world is so bad. For the character of our Saviour *is* among those objects! Bad as the world is, yet all sects and classes and communities—all infidels and Mahometans and heathen, have agreed, without one single solitary whisper of contradiction, that this character is a perfect example of true, divine excellence! Does the Calvinistic ideal of religion draw to it, any such testimony? Then what clearer evidence can there be, that it is wrong?

And if it be wrong; if it is an error; what terrible and awful mischiefs must follow in its train! Mankind required, as the supreme duty, to love that which all their natural sentiments oblige them to dislike, and none of their natural powers, in fact, enable them to understand! What peril must there be of their salvation in such a case! what a calamitous state of things must it be for their highest hopes! What confusion, what embroilment and distraction to all their moral convictions! Nothing else can account for that blind wandering of many souls after the true good, which we see; for that wild fanaticism, which has taken the place of sober and intelligent seeking; for that distracted running up and down, of men who know not what they are to get, nor how to get it, nor what, in any way, to do; and yet more, for that profound and dreadful apathy of many, who have concluded that they can do nothing,

who have given up all thoughts of life as the voyage of the soul, and have resigned themselves to wait for some chance wave of excitement to bear them to the wished-for haven.

Believe me, my friends, this is no abstract matter. It touches the vital ideas of human welfare. It concerns what is most practical, most momentous. In all congregations, in all townships and villages through the land, an image is held up of religion—an idea of what is the supreme excellence. It is regarded with doubt and fear and misgiving; not with love, or enthusiasm, or admiration. It is not fair loveliness or beauty; but a dark enigma. It is not the supreme excellence, but the supreme necessity. It is not intelligently sought, but blindly wished for. Alas! it is hard enough to get men to pursue the true excellence, when they are plainly told what it is. But here is a dread barrier on the very threshold, and they cannot proceed a single step. They can do nothing till they are converted; they know not what it is to be converted; and they wait for the initiative to come from heaven; not knowing, alas! that to be converted is, with heaven's help, to begin; to take the first determined step and the second, and thus to go onward; to begin upon the ground of what they actually know, and thus to go on to perfection. Religion—the beauty of the world—that which mingles as their pervading spirit with the glory of the heavens and the loveliness of nature—that which breathes in the affections of parents and children and in all the good affections of society—that which ascends in humble penitence and prayer to the throne of God—this is no mystic secret. It is to be good and kind, penitent and pure, temperate and self-denying, patient and prayerful; modest and

generous and loving, as thou knowest how to be—loving, in reverent thoughts of the good God, and in kind thoughts of all his children. It is plain—*not easy*—not in that sense natural; but natural in its accordance with all the loftiest sentiments of thy nature—easy in this, that nothing ever sat with such perfect peace and calm upon thy soul as that will. It is so plain, that he who runs, may read. It is the way in which fools need not err. “For what doth the Lord require of thee”—saith the prophet, indignant at the complaint of ignorance—“what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”

Let me now proceed in the next place, from the estimate to the treatment of religion. The topics indeed are closely connected; for the treatment of the subject will, of course, depend on the estimate formed of its character and merits. This consideration, it is evident, might carry us through the whole subject; but I shall not, at present, touch upon the ground of religious culture and religious earnestness, which I have reserved for separate discussion. In the remainder of this discourse, I shall confine myself to the *treatment* of religion; as a matter of investigation, and of institution, and as a matter to be approached in practical seeking. The space that remains to me will oblige me to do this very briefly; and indeed to touch upon one or two topics under these several heads, is all that I shall attempt.

Under the head of investigation, the subject of religious controversy presents itself.

Every one must be aware that religious controversy is distinguished by certain remarkable traits, from all other controversy. There has generally been a severity, a

bigotry, an exclusion and an obstinacy in it, not found in any other disputes. What has invested, with these strange and unseemly attributes, a subject of such tender, sublime and eternal interest? I conceive, that it is this—the idea that within the inmost bosom of religion, lies a secret—a something peculiar, distinct from all other qualities in the human character, and refusing to be judged of as other things are judged of—a secret wrapped about with the divine favor, and revealed only to a few. There is an unknown element in the case, and it is difficult to obtain a solution. The question is perplexed by it, as a question in chemistry would be, by the presence of some undetected substance. Or if the element is known to some, it is held to be unknown to others, and this assumption lays the amplest ground for bigotry and exclusion. If I know what religion is, and another man does not know, I am perfectly entitled, if I think proper, to reject his claim to it—to say that some defect of faith, or of ritual in him, forbids the possibility of his having it. Nothing is easier than on this basis, to form an exclusive sect; it is, in fact, the legitimate and the only legitimate basis of such a sect. I say the only legitimate basis; because, if every thing in this matter be fairly submitted to inquiry and decision—the vitality of religion as well as its creed and ritual; if all men can, by care and study, know what it is; if all men must know what it is, by the very law written on their hearts; then it is absurd for one party to lay claim to the sole knowledge and possession of it. Wrap it up in secrecy, and then, and then only, may you consistently wrap it up in exclusion.

Only think of an exclusive party in science or art. Think of such a sect, saying to all others, “we only

have the true love of science or art; we only have the true spirit of science or art;” and why would not their claim stand, for a moment? Because all other men of learning and skill would say, “we are as competent to judge of this matter as you are. There is no secret in knowledge. There is no exclusive key to wisdom. There is no hidden way to art. Prove that there is, and then it may be that the mystery is in your possession. But until you establish this point, your claim is absurd and insufferable, and not worth examination.”

Now the whole evil as well as the whole peculiarity of religious controversy, lies in this spirit of exclusion—in the assumption that opponents cannot be good men. Otherwise, controversy is a good thing. That is to say, honest and friendly discussion is good. The whole evil, I say, lies in the assumption of an exclusive knowledge of religion. Persecution proceeds upon no other ground. Men have been imprisoned, tortured, put to death, not merely because they erred, not simply because they differed from their brethren, but because that error, that difference, was supposed to involve the very salvation of the soul. Men have been punished, not as errorists simply, but as men irreligious and bad, and as making others so. I speak now of honest persecution. Its object has been the salvation of souls. Its doctrine has been; “painful as torture is, it is better than perdition; better fires on earth, than fires in hell.” But the persecuted brethren say, “we are not irreligious and bad men. We wish the truest good to ourselves and others; and though you oppose us, as you must, you ought not to hate, or torture or vilify us; we no more deserve it than you do.”

And what is the reply? "You know nothing about the matter. You suppose yourselves to be good and true, and to have favor with God and a good hope of heaven; but we know better; we *know* what true religion is, and we say that you are totally devoid of it." And this judgment, I repeat, can fairly proceed upon nothing but the notion that religion is a secret in the possession of the persecutors.

Let it be otherwise, as surely it ought to be, if any thing ought; let religion, the great sentiment, the great interest of humanity, be common ground, open and common to all; let men take their stand upon it, and say, as they say in other differences of opinion, "we all wish the same thing; we would all be happy, we would get to heaven; what else can we wish?" and do you not see how instantly religious disputes would take on a new character; how gentle and charitable and patient and tolerant they would become? But now, alas! the toleration of science, of art, nay, and of politics too, goes beyond the toleration of religion! Men do not say to their literary or political opposers, "ye are haters of science or art; ye hate the common country;" but in religion, they say: "ye are haters of God, and of good men, and of all that is truly good." Yes, the occasion for this tremendous exclusion, is found in religion—that which was ordained to be the bond of love, the bosom of confidence, the garner of souls into heaven; the theme of all grandeur and of all tenderness; the comforter of affliction, the loving nurse of all human virtues, the range of infinity, the reach to eternity, the example of the one meek and

lowly ; the authority, at once, and the pity of the heavenly Father !

The next subject for the application of the point I am considering, is religious institutions. Under this head, I must content myself, with briefly pointing out a single example. The example is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. The question I have to ask, is—why do so many sober, conscientious and truly religious persons, refrain from a participation in this rite ? And the answer with many, is doubtless to be found in the notion, that religion involves some secret, or the experience of some secret grace—something different from moral uprightness and religious gratitude—with which they are not acquainted. I do not say that this account embraces every case of neglect, but I say that it embraces many. I will suppose a person, conscious of a sincere intent to be in all things, a true and good man, conscious too of religious affections, and desirous of cultivating them—one, believing in Christ, believing that his life and his death are the most powerful known ministration to human sanctity and blessedness ; one, also, truly disposed to impress the spirit of Christ upon his own heart and persuaded that the meditations of the Communion season, would be a help and comfort to him ; and why now I ask, shall he not avail himself of that appointed means ? He is desirous of sacred culture. This is a means and he wishes to embrace it. Why does he not ? I am sure that I may answer for him, that he would do so, if he felt that he were qualified. But this is the difficulty ; he is afraid that there is some qualification, *unknown to him* ; and that he

shall commit a sin of rashness and presumption if he comes to the sacred ordinance.

My friends, it is all a mistake. You *do* know, in a greater or less measure, what christian virtue, what christian piety, is. You *can* know, whether you desire to cultivate this character. If you do, that very desire is the qualification. Means are for those who need them, not for those who need them not—for the imperfect, not for the perfect. The felt need of means, the sincere desire of means, is the qualification for them. If, being believers in Christianity, you also believe that our Communion meditations would help you, you should as such come to them, as you come to the prayers of the Sanctuary. And you should as freely come. The Lord's Supper is a service no more sacred than the service of prayer. Nothing can be more solemn than solemn prayer.

There is one more subject to be noticed under this head of treatment of religion—by far the most important of all—and that is religious seeking; the seeking, in other words, to establish in one's self that character, on which God's approbation and all true good, all true happiness, depend, and will forever depend. Momentous pursuit!—that for which man was made, and life, with all its ordinances, was given, and the Gospel, with all its means of grace and manifestations of mercy, was published to the world—that in which every man should be more vitally and practically interested than in every other pursuit on earth. Every thing else may a man seek and gain; the whole world may he gain, and after all lose this supreme interest. And yet to how many, alas! will this very statement which I am

making, appear technical, dry and uninteresting!—to how many more, irrelevant to *them*, foreign to their concerns, appropriate to other persons, but a matter with which they have nothing to do! A kind of demure assent they may yield to the importance of religion, but no vital faith; nothing of that which carries them with such vigor and decision, to the pursuit of property, pleasure and fame.

Now is there any difficulty in accounting for this deplorable condition of the general mind? Make religion a mystic secret, divest it of every attractive and holy charm, sever it from every thing that men already know and feel of goodness and love; tell them that they are totally depraved, totally destitute, totally ignorant; and they may “wonder and perish;” but can they rationally seek any thing? Men may be very depraved, they may be extremely deficient of the right affections, as they doubtless are; but if they saw the subject in the right light, they could not be indifferent. There could not be this heavy and benumbing cloud of apathy, spreading itself over the whole world. I have seen the most vicious men, intensely conscious, conscious with mingled anger and despair, that the course of virtue is the only happy course. And do you preach to the most selfish and corrupt of men, in this wise, saying, “nothing but purity, gentleness, love, disinterestedness, can make you happy—happy in yourself, in your family, or in society; and nothing but the love of God can make you happy amidst the strifes and griefs of this life and the solemn approaches to death;” and they know that what you say is true; they know that you are dealing with realities; and they cannot be

indifferent. They may be angry ; but anger is not indifference. But now, do you speak to them in a different tone and manner, and say, " you must get religion ; you must experience the grace of God, in order to be happy," and immediately their interest will subside to that state of artificial acquiescence and real apathy, which now characterizes the mass of our christian communities.

Nor is this, save for its extent, the most affecting view of the common mistake. There are real and anxious seekers. And how are they seeking? I have been pained to see such persons—often intelligent persons—blindly groping about as for the profoundest secret. They have no distinct idea of what it is they want, what they are to obtain, what they are to do. All that they seem to know, is, that it is something to be wrought in their souls, and something on which their salvation depends. They go about from one meeting to another, from one master in Israel, or from one Revival preacher, or from one experienced person to another, and say, " tell us what this thing is, that is to be done in us ; how did *you* feel when you were converted?—how was it?—how did the power of divine grace come upon you?—what was the change in that very moment when you passed from death to life?" Well, to such, may the apostolic teaching speak in this wise, " say not who shall go up into heaven, that is to bring Christ down ; or who shall go beyond the sea, to bring him near?—for the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou shouldst do it." In your own heart, in the simplest convictions of right and wrong, are the teachings that you want. This,

says the Apostle "is the word of salvation which we preach; that if thou wilt believe in thy heart, and confess with thy tongue that Jesus is the Christ, thou shalt be saved." That is, if thou wilt have a loving faith in Jesus Christ as thy Guide, Example and Saviour and carry that faith into open action, and endeavor to follow him, thou shalt be saved. In one word, if thou wilt be like Christ, if thou wilt imbibe his spirit and imitate his excellence, thou shalt be happy; thou shalt be blessed—blessed and happy forever. But the spirit, the loveliness of Christ, is no mystic secret. It is known and read of all men. It requires no mysterious initiation to instruct you in it. I do not object, of course, to seeking for light, or to seeking aid from men—from the wise and experienced; but I do object to your seeking from them any initial or mysterious knowledge of what religion is. Let you stand, alone, upon a desolate island, with the Gospel in your hands; and then and there, do thou read that sacred page, and pray over it, and strive patiently to bring your heart into accordance with it—to bring what is already in you—your love and trust—up to conformity with it; and you are in the way of salvation.

Oh! sad and lamentable perversion—that the greatest good in the universe, the very end of our being, the very point of all sublime human attainment, the very object for which rational and spiritual faculties were given us, should be a mystery: that the very light by which we must walk, must be utter darkness, and that all we can do is, to put out our hand and grope about in that darkness; that the very salvation, in which all the welfare of our souls is bound up, should be a dark enigma, and that all

we can do is to hope that we shall some time or other know what it is. No, says the Apostle, “the word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart that thou shouldst do it; *that* is the salvation which we preach.”

DISCOURSE XVII.

ON THE IDENTITY OF RELIGION WITH GOODNESS, AND
A GOOD LIFE.

I JOHN IV. 20. IF A MAN SAY, I LOVE GOD, AND HATETH HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR; FOR HE THAT LOVETH NOT HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HATH SEEN, HOW CAN HE LOVE GOD WHOM HE HATH NOT SEEN ?

FROM these words I propose to take up again the subject of my last discourse. I have shown that saving virtue, or whatever it be that is to save men, is commonly regarded, not as the increase or strengthening of any principle that is already in them, but as the implantation in them of a principle entirely new and before unknown. I have endeavored to make this apparent, by a statement in several forms of the actual views that prevail of religion and of obtaining religion. I have shown that with regard to religion or grace in the heart, the common feeling undoubtedly *is*, that it is a mystery—a thing which the people do not comprehend, and which they never expect to comprehend but by the experience of regeneration.

I may now observe, in addition, that all this clearly follows from the doctrine of total depravity. This doctrine asserts that in our natural humanity there is not one particle of true religion or of saving virtue. Of course, human nature knows nothing about it. The only way in which we can come at the knowledge of moral qualities, is by feeling them in ourselves. This is an unquestioned truth in philosophy. If we have no feeling of rectitude or of religion, we can have no knowledge of it. It follows therefore, from the doctrine of universal and total depravity, that to the mass of men, religion as an inward principle, must be a mystery, an enigma, a thing altogether incomprehensible.

This position—held by many christians, but rejected by not a few, and presenting, in my opinion, the most momentous point of controversy in the christian world—I have proposed to discuss with a freedom and seriousness proportioned to its immense importance.

With this view I proposed to consider its bearings on the estimate and treatment of religion, the culture of religion, and its essential vitality and power.

The first of these subjects I have already examined, and I now proceed to the second.

The next topic then, of which I was to speak, is religious culture, or what is commonly called growth in grace. I cannot dwell much upon this subject; but I must not pass it by entirely.

A mystery, a mystic secret in the heart, cannot be cultivated. A peculiar emotion, unlike all well-known and clearly defined emotions of goodness or veneration, cannot be cultivated. It may be revived from time to time; it may be kept alive in the heart by certain processes, and

they are likely to be very mechanical processes ; the heart, like an electric jar, may ever and anon be charged anew with the secret power ; but to such an idea of religion, *cultivation* is a word that does, in no sense, properly apply. To grow daily in kindness and gentleness, to be more and more true, honest, pure and conscientious, to cultivate a feeling of resignation to the Divine will and a sense of the Divine presence—all this is intelligible. But in proportion as the other idea of religion prevails, culture is out of the question. And on this principle I am persuaded, you will find many to say, that the hour of their conversion, the hour when they received that secret and mysterious grace into their heart, was the brightest hour of their religious experience. Look then at the religious progress of such an one. I do not say that all converts are such ; but suppose any one to be possessed with this idea of religion as altogether an imparted grace ; and how naturally will his chief effort be, to keep that grace alive within him ! And where then is culture ? And what will be his progress ? Will he be found to have been growing more generous and gentle, more candid and modest, more disinterested and self-denying, more devoted to good works, and more filled with the good spirit of God ? Will those who know him best, thus take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus, and say of him—“ he was very irascible and self-willed, twenty years ago ; but now he is very gentle and patient ; he was very selfish, but now he is very generous and self-forgetting—very close and penurious, but now he is very liberal and charitable—very restless and impatient, but now he is calm and seems to have a deep and immoveable foundation of happiness and peace—very proud and self-sufficient, but

now it seems as if God and heaven were in all his thoughts, and were all his support and reason." I hope that this change of character does take place in some converts; I would that it did in many; but I must say, that in so far as a certain idea of conversion prevails—the idea of a new and mysterious grace infused into the soul—it is altogether unfavorable to such a progress.

And yet so far has this idea infected all the religion of our times, that christianity seems nowhere to be that school of vigorous improvement which it was designed to be. Religion, if it is anything befitting our nature, is the very sphere of progress. All its means, ordinances and institutions have this in view, as their very end. But surely it is very obvious and very lamentable to observe, how much religious observance and effort there is, which goes entirely to waste—which does not advance the character at all. Think of our churches, our preaching, our Sabbaths—how little do they avail to make us better! How little do they seem to be thought of as seasons, means, schools of improvement! Must we not suspect that there is some error at the bottom of all this? And now suppose that men have got the notion that that something which is to prepare them for heaven is something entirely different from charity, honesty, disinterestedness, truth, self-government and the kindly love of one another, would not this be the very notion, to work that fatal mischief—the very notion to disarm conscience and rational conversion of all their power.

You will recollect that sometime since, a national ship belonging to the Imaum of Muscat, visited our shores. Its officers, who I believe were intelligent men, freely mingled with our citizens, and saw something of society

among us. And what do you think was their testimony concerning us? On the point now before us, it was this. They said that there is no religion among us. And what now, you will ask, was their own idea of religion? I answer, it was analagous to the very idea which I am controverting in this discourse. Religion with them was not the general improvement of the character—nothing of the kind; but a certain strictness, a certain devoutness, a particular *way* of attending to religion. Wherever these persons were found—at whatever feast or entertainment provided for them—when the hour of prayer, prescribed for Mussulmens, arrived, they courteously desired leave to retire to some private apartment, to engage in the prescribed devotions. They found not these things among us, and they said, “there is no religion in America.” But do you believe that these Arabian followers of the prophet, were better men than the christian people upon whom they passed this judgment? No; you say—without denying their sincerity—that they had wrapped up all religion in certain peculiarities; and you deny, and very justly deny, that this view of religion is either just, or useful. You say, on the contrary, that it is very dangerous; that it is unfriendly to the true improvement of the character; that according to this way of thinking, a man may be a very good Mussulman and a very bad man. And this is precisely what I say of that idea of religion among ourselves which wraps it up in peculiarity; which finds its essence in certain beliefs or in certain experiences, that are quite severed from general goodness and virtue. And I say, too, that according to this theory, a man may be a very good *christian* and yet a very bad man—may consider himself pious, when he is not even a

humane man—not generous, nor just, nor candid nor modest, nor forbearing nor kind; in short that he may be a man on whom falls that condemnation which the Apostle pronounces on him who says, “I love God, and hateth his brother.”

But now it may be said, that the doctrine which I have delivered, is a very dangerous doctrine. “To tell a man,” it may be said, “that there is some good in him on which he is to build; that religion consists essentially in the culture of what is already within him; that there are natural emotions of piety and goodness in him which he is to cultivate into a habit and a character; will not all this minister to self-complacency, sloth, negligence and procrastination?” Will not the man say—“well, I have some good in me, and I only need a little more, and I can attend to that, any time. I need not trouble myself; events perhaps will improve my character; and all will be well, without much effort or concern on my part. And especially, I need not go through this dreadful paroxysm of a conversion; I have nothing to do but to improve.”

I might answer that it is no new thing, for a good and true doctrine to be abused. I do not know but it is abused by some among us. Indeed I fear that it is. Let me proceed, at once then, to guard against this abuse; and to show, as I have proposed, that the doctrine which I advocate is one of essential vitality and power in religion.

Let us illustrate this by one or two comparisons. You wish to teach some man a science. Would you think it likely to awaken his zeal and earnestness, to begin by telling him, not only that he knows nothing about the science in question, but that he has no natural capacity for

understanding it ; that he has no elements in him of that knowledge in which you wish to instruct him ; but that he must first have some special and supernatural initiation from heaven into that knowledge, and then he may advance ; that till this is done, nothing is done, and that when this is done, all is done—all, that is to say, that is essential to his character as a man of science—all that is necessary to prepare him for a successful examination ? Would it further your object to instruct him in this way ? You wish to teach music to your pupil. You wish to arouse him to attend, and to labor for accomplishment. Would it be well, to tell him that he has no musical ear, and that he can do nothing till this is given him ? You desire to train a youth to high physical accomplishment, to the exercises of the gymnasium or the riding-school, to feats of strength or agility : a branch of education that deserves more attention than it is receiving among us. Would you avow to your pupil, that there is one preliminary step to be gained before you could proceed at all ; that he had no muscles, no aptitude ; and that, until these are given him, he can do nothing. Alas ! when I look at the wonderful feats of some public performers—magicians as they are called, and as they seem to the people—and when I know that all this is the result of careful and patient training, I cannot help saying, would christians exercise themselves in this way, to what might they not attain ? “ And these do it,” says the Apostle, “ for an earthly crown, but ye labor for a heavenly.” Alas !—I am compelled to say again—*every* school of learning, seems to be more successful than the christian school ! And why ?—let me ask. Have not all other schools their difficulties to surmount as well as the christian ? Why then

is it that this is so lame and inefficient, but because there is some radical error at the very foundation? Let us see christians laboring, ay and denying themselves, as men of science and art and skill do, and should we not witness some new result?

So I contend they would labor, or at the least, would be far more likely to labor, if they were put in the right way and were impressed with the right convictions. What is the way? What are the convictions? What does our doctrine say to men? What does it say to them with regard to conversion—to progress—and to preparation for heaven?

With regard to conversion, it says, “you must *begin* the work of self-culture; resolutely and decidedly you must enter upon the christian path. If that era of solemn determination has never come to you, then it *must* come, or you are a lost man. With a feeling as solemn, as profound, as absorbing, as ever possessed the heart of any convert to mysterious grace, you must begin. *He* may think that the saving work is done upon him in an instant; *you* must not think so. That is all an error proceeding from a false interpretation of certain figurative language of Scripture; such as “new birth,” “new creation”—figurative phrases which apply to the soul, only so far as the soul’s nature will admit; and it does not admit of an instant’s experience being the preparation for heaven. He who has received this instantaneous communication, may think that in that moment he has got a grace, a something—a something like a pass-word to heaven; but *you*, if you will have any reason in your religion, must not think so. If you think at all, you cannot think so. If

you imagine, you may imagine what you will. And truly, it is no moderate stretch of imagination that is here supposed. For if an instant's experience is enough to prepare the soul for heaven, I must wonder why a life was given for it. No, in one moment we can only begin. But that beginning must nevertheless be made. What is never begun, is never done. On that great resolve, rests the burden of all human hope. On that great bond is set the seal of eternity. If we have never made that bond with our souls to be true and pure; if we have never taken up that resolve, I see not how we can be christians. If all our impulses were good we might yield ourselves up to them. If there were no temptations, we should need no purpose. If there were a tide in the ocean of life that set right towards the desired haven, we might cast ourselves upon it and let it bear us at its will. But what would you expect, if a ship were loosened from yonder wharf, and without any course set, or any purpose to make a voyage, it were to take such fate as the winds and waves might send it? You know what its fate would be; to founder amidst the seas or to be wrecked on the shore; it would reach no haven. And so upon the great deep of life, a moral voyage is to be made; amidst winds and waves of passion, and through clouds and storms of temptation and difficulty, the course must be held; and it will not be held, if it is not firmly set. Certainly, no man will make the voyage, unless he is determined to make it. How many launch forth upon the ocean of life without any such determination; and their ship is swayed this way and that way, by unseen currents, and is carried far astray by smooth

tides and softly-breathing winds; but surely, unless a time comes, when the thoughtless mariner arouses himself, and directs his course and spreads his sails for the haven, he will never reach it!

I must lay this emphatic stress upon beginning; and I would that it might be a point of personal inquiry. I will use no intrusive liberty with your thoughts; but I would say, have you begun?—have you resolved!—for there is nothing on earth so much requiring a resolve. Let not this matter then, be wrapped in mystery. In clear reality, let it stand before us; in close contact, let it come to us. There is something wrong, of which the soul is conscious. The resolve required is this—to do it no more. There is some secret indulgence, some bosom sin. The resolve is, to tear that sin from the bosom, though it be dear as a right hand or a right eye. Some duty, or course of duties, is neglected; the resolve is to set about it, this day, this hour. In short, the resolve is, a great, strong, substantial purpose to do right in all things; it is to set up the standard of duty as that beneath which we will walk all our life through; to give our hearts without any reserve to God, to truth and sanctity and goodness.

This is what our doctrine says in regard to conversion. And now what does it say, on the subject of progress? Does the message which it delivers, minister to sloth, negligence, or procrastination? What does it say? Your life's work is growth in goodness and piety. It is a daily work, or, it is no work at all. Every day, you must advance. Practical religion is self-culture. God has given you a natural piety, and

a natural benevolence, as he has given you a natural reason. With one as with the other, your business is culture. The seed is in you, as the seed of the coming harvest is in the soil. Every thing depends on culture. Does it discourage the industry of the husbandman to tell him that the seed is provided, and planted in the earth?—that there is a germ that will grow if he will take care of it? Nay, that is the very reason why he will work. Or does he refuse to work, because it is necessary that God's sun and air quicken the soil? And why any more that God's spirit must shine and breathe upon his soul?

In this rational and generous self-culture, is the secret of spiritual strength. There is nothing which most men so much feel as the want of vitality and earnestness in their religion. Their talk about it is dull and mournful; their prayers are cold and reluctant; their interest is languid, their Sabbaths and their religious meetings in conference-rooms and school-houses, are heavy and sluggish!—And why is all this? Because—provided they are sincere—because their views of religion are irrational, mystical, essentially uninteresting: because the thing in question, is severed from the living fountains of all true emotion. Let me state it to you thus. You have a friend—a dear and lovely friend; and towards that being your affections are not dull and sluggish. But why is that friend dear and lovely? Because generous and noble-hearted, kind and gentle, full of disinterestedness and purity and truth? Then I tell you that your friendship is a part of religion. It is of the same nature as religion. It is no other than a portion of the beauty of the Divinity

that is shed forth in the heart of your friend. Again, you have an enthusiasm for all that is morally sublime and beautiful. The patriot that dies for his country; the martyr that calmly goes to the stake, when one word, one little word uttered, will give him life and fortune, and splendor, and he will not speak that false word; the patient and heroic sufferer amidst pain and calamity; the great sufferer when he breathed the prayer, Father forgive them—these, win admiration, draw tears from you perhaps, as you think of them. And again, I tell you that this is a part of religion. Once more you have an interest in this matter. Surely you would be happy. Uneasiness, destitution, self-inflicted pain are hard things to bear. But was ever a soul—full of the love of God, full of kindness and gentleness, full of serenity and trust—was ever such a soul essentially unhappy? How then can fainting and famishing creatures, gather in converse around this fountain of all healing and comfort, and not be thrilled with inexpressible emotion? Let me suggest one more thought. There is one great Being who is the first and chiefest object of religion—God! And God is every where. Can there be indifference where it is felt that God is. And he is every where. In thy crowded meeting, in thy lonely and retired walk, in the ever lovely, holy and beautiful nature that is spread around you, in the silent and star-lit dome of heaven, and beneath your humble roof, in all that fills it with comfort and joy and hope, ay, or touches it with disciplinary sorrow—in all, God is: the nearest, the holiest; the greatest, the kindest of beings; and can indifference live in that sublime and blessed presence?

Now what is religion? It is not merely to feel all this, at certain times and seasons, but it is to make it the reigning habit of our minds. To feel it, is comparatively easy; to form it into the very structure of our souls, is quite another thing. I cannot very well understand how any man should want the feeling; but I can very well understand, how he should want the character. For this it is precisely, that is the greatest and rarest of all human attainments. This it is, to have Christ formed within us, the hope of glory. Jesus, the blessed Master, lived that perfect life. In him each good affection of the great humanity, had its fullness, its permanence, its perfection. How reverend, how holy, how dear, how soul-entrancing, is that incarnate loveliness—God in him, God with us; the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person! Oh! could we be like him! all our ungoverned agitations, all our vain longings, all our distracting passions, all our needless griefs and pains, would die away from us; and we should be freed from the heavy, heavy burden of our sins! I almost fear, my friends, so to express myself; lest it should be construed into the hackneyed and whining lamentation of the pulpit, and should win no respect, no sympathy with you. No, it is with a manly grief, with an indignant sorrow and shame, that every one of us should lament, that he has not more unreservedly followed the great and glorious Master!

And let me add that this is no visionary nor impracticable undertaking. It is what we all can do, with God's help, if we will. It is what is bound upon us, by the simplest perceptions of rectitude in our own souls—bound

upon us by the very feelings of conscience and obligation which God has implanted within us.

Finally, it is what we must do, if we would attain to happiness here or hereafter. The hours are stealing on, when the veil of eternity shall part its awful folds, and the great and dread hereafter shall receive us. Solemn will be that hour! Lightly do we hear of its daily coming to one and another around us now; little do we think of what it was to them; but so will not be its coming—with lightness or with little thought—so will not be its coming to us. The gathering and swelling thoughts of that hour—no one can know but he who has felt it drawing nigh. Earth recedes; and earth's ambition, gain, pleasure, vanity, shrinks to nothing; and one thought spreads all around and fills the expanding horizon of eternity—am I ready?—have I lived so, as to meet this hour? And believe me, in no court of human theology, must that question be answered. No imaginary robe of another's righteousness.—I speak not now of God's mercy in Christ; that, we may be sure, will be all that mercy consistently can be—no mystic grace claiming superiority to all deeds of mercy and truth, no narrow, technical hope of salvation garnered up in the heart, will avail us there; but the all-deciding question will be—what were we? and what have we done? What were we, in the whole breadth and length of all our good or all our bad affections? That awful question we must answer for ourselves. No one shall be there to answer for us. No answer shall be given in there, but that which comes from every day and hour of our lives. For there is not a day nor an hour of our lives, but it contributes to make us better or worse; it has borne the stamp of our culture or carelessness, of

our fidelity or our neglect. And that stamp, which our life's experience sets upon our character, is—I speak not my own word, but God's word—that stamp is the very seal of retribution.

Does this seem, my friends, but a sad and stern conclusion of the matter ; not encouraging to our hopes, nor accordant with the mercy of the Gospel ? The Gospel ? Is it a system of evasions and subterfuges and palliatives, to ease off the strict demand of holiness ? No, let theology boast of such devices, and tell men that as they have sowed so shall they *not* reap ; but believe me, the Gospel is the last thing to break the everlasting bond that connects happiness with goodness, with purity. And who would have it otherwise ? Who *would* be happy, but on condition of being good, and in proportion as he is good ? What true man asks, that over his corrupt and guilty heart, while such, may be poured a flood of perfect bliss ? Our nature may be fallen and low ; but that flood would sweep away the last vestige of all its honor and worth. God never created a thing so vile as that would be. No, it is a noble being that he has given us, though alas ! it be marred and degraded ; and upon the eternal laws of that being, must we build up our welfare. It is a glorious privilege so to do ; to do what the noble Apostle spoke of as his own law and hope, when he said,—and be assured, that must be our law and hope—“ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me in that day ; and not to me only but to all who love his appearing.”

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DISCOURSE XVIII.

THE CALL OF HUMANITY AND THE ANSWER TO IT.

JOB XXIII. 3, 4 AND 5 vs. OH! THAT I KNEW WHERE I MIGHT FIND HIM; THAT I MIGHT COME EVEN TO HIS SEAT! I WOULD ORDER MY CAUSE BEFORE HIM, AND FILL MY MOUTH WITH ARGUMENTS. I WOULD KNOW THE WORDS WHICH HE WOULD ANSWER ME, AND UNDERSTAND WHAT HE WOULD SAY TO ME.

It is striking to observe, how large a part of the book of Job, and especially of Job's own meditation, is occupied with a consideration of the nature and character of the Supreme Being. The subject-matter of the book, is human calamity. The point proposed for solution, is the interpretation of that calamity. The immediate question—of very little interest now, perhaps, but one of urgent difficulty in a darker age—is, whether calamity is retributive; whether, in proportion as a man is afflicted, he is to be accounted a bad man. Job contends against this principle, and the controversy with his friends turns upon this point. But as I have already remarked, it is striking to observe how often his mind rises apparently quite above the controversy, to a sublime meditation on God. As if

feeling, that provided he could fix his trust there, he should be strong and triumphant, thither he continually resorts. With these loftier soarings, are mingled, it is true, passionate complaint and sad despondency and bitter reproaches against his friends, and painful questionings about the whole order of providence. It is indeed a touching picture of a mind in distress—with its sad fluctuations; its words of grief and haste bursting into the midst of its words of prayer; its soarings and sinkings; its passionate and familiar adjurations of heaven and earth to help it—and with the world of dark and undefined thoughts, which roll through it like waves of chaos: in short, it is a picture, whose truth can be realized only by experience.

But I was about to observe that this tendency of Job's mind to the Supreme, though it may seem to carry him, at times, up quite out of sight of the question in hand, is really a natural tendency, and that it naturally sprung from the circumstances in which he was placed. The human condition is, throughout, allied to a divine power; and the strong feeling of what this condition is, always leads us to that Power. The positive good and evil of this condition, therefore, have especially this tendency. This is implied in the proem or preface of the book of Job; which gives an account after the dramatic manner which characterizes the whole book, of the circumstances that lead to Job's trial. After a brief prefatory statement informing the reader who Job was, and what were his possessions, the scene is represented as opening in heaven. Among the sons of God, Satan presents himself—the Accuser, the Adversary. And when Job's virtue is the theme of commendation, the Accuser says, “doth Job

fear God for naught?—a grand Emir of the East—cradled in luxury—loaded with the benefits of heaven—doth he fear God for naught? Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath and he will curse thee to thy face!” It is done; and Job is stripped of his possessions, servants, children—all. And Job falls down upon the ground and worships; and says, “the Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

But again the Accuser says—thou hast not laid thine hand yet upon his person. Come yet nearer; “put forth thine hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.” Again it is done; and Job is smitten and overwhelmed with disease; and he sits down in ashes and scrapes himself with a potsherd—a pitiable and loathsome object. The faith of his wife too, gives way—of her who, above all, should have supported him then; but who, from the reverence and love which she felt for her husband, is least able to bear the sight of his misery. She *cannot* bear it: and partaking of the prevalent feelings of the age about outward prosperity, as the very measure and test of the Divine favor, she says, “dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God and die!” “Give up the strife; you have been a good man; you have helped and comforted many; and now you are reduced to this. Give up the strife; curse God and die!” And Job answered, “thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh!” What nature! We seem to *hear* that fireside conversation. What nature! and what delicacy, mingled with reproof! “Thou speakest not as my wife, but as one of the foolish, prating women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord,

and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips."

Then the three friends of Job came to him; and it is a beautiful trait of delicacy for those ancient times, that these friends, according to the representation, "sat down upon the ground with him seven days and seven nights, and *spake not a word unto him*; for they saw that his grief was great." When we recollect that all over the East, loud wailings and lamentations were the usual modes of testifying sympathy, we are lead to ask, whence came—whence, but from inspiration—this finer conception, befitting the utmost culture and delicacy of later times? "Seven days and seven nights they sat with him, and none of them spake a word to him." Of course, we are not to take this too literally. According to the Hebrew custom, they mourned with him seven days: that is, they were in his house, and they came, doubtless, and sat with him from time to time; but they entered into no large discourse with him; they saw that it was not the time for many words; they mourned in silence.

This I have said is a beautiful conception of what belongs to the most delicate and touching sympathy. There comes a time to speak, and so the friends of Job judged; though their speech proved less delicate and judicious than their silence. There comes a time to speak; there are circumstances which may make it desirable; there are easy and unforced modes of address which may make it grateful; there are cases where a thoughtful man may help his neighbor with his wisdom, or an affectionate man may comfort him, with sympathy; "a word fitly spoken," says the sacred proverbialist, "is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."

And yet after all, it seems to me that words can go but a little way, into the depths of affliction. The thoughts that struggle there in silence ; that go out into the silence of infinitude—into the silence of eternity—have no emblems. Thoughts enough, God knoweth, come there—such as no tongue ever uttered. And those thoughts do not so much want human sympathy, as they want higher help. I deny not the sweetness of that balm ; but I say that something higher is wanted. The sympathy of all good friends, too, we know that we have, without a word spoken. And moreover, the sympathy of all the world, though grateful, would not lighten the load, one feather's weight. Something else the mind wants—something to rest upon. There is a loneliness in deep sorrow, to which God only can draw near. Its prayer is emphatically "the prayer of a lonely heart." Alone, the mind is wrestling with the great problem of calamity, and the solution, it asks from the infinite providence of heaven. Did I not rightly say, then, that calamity directly leads us to God ; and that the tendency, so apparent in the mind of Job, to lift itself up to that exalted theme of contemplation, was natural ? And it is natural too, that the one book of affliction, given us in the holy record—the one book wholly devoted to that subject—is, throughout, and almost entirely, a meditation on God.

I wish to speak, in the present season of meditation, of this tendency of the mind, amidst the trials and distresses of life, to things superior to itself, and especially to the Supreme Being. It is not affliction of which I am to speak, but of that to which it leads. My theme is, the natural aspiration of humanity to things above and beyond it, and the revealings from above to that aspiration ;

it is in other words, the call of humanity and the answer to it. "I would order my cause before him," says Job, "I would know the words he would answer me."

There are many things in us, of which we are not distinctly conscious ; and it is one office of every great ministration to human nature, whether its vehicle be the pen, the pencil or the tongue, to waken that slumbering consciousness into life. And so do I think, that it is one office of the pulpit. That inmost consciousness—were it called forth from the dim cells in the soul, where it sleeps—how instantly would it turn to a waking and spiritual reality, that life, which is now to many, a state so dull and worldly, so uninteresting and unprofitable !

How it should be such to any, seems to me, I confess, a thing almost inconceivable. It may be because my life is, as I may say, professionally, a meditation upon themes of the most spiritual and quickening interest. Certainly, I do not lay any claim to superior purity, for seeming to myself to see things as they are. But surely, this life, instead of being anything negative or indifferent, instead of being anything dull and trivial, seems to me I was ready to say, as if it were bound up, with mystery, and agony, and rapture. Yes, rapture as well as agony—the rapture of love, of reciprocated affection, of hope, of joy, of prayer—and the agony of pain, of loss, of bereavement—and over all their strugglings, the dark cloud of mystery. If any one is unconscious of the intensity and awfulness of this life within him, I believe it is because he does not know what he is all the while feeling. Health and sickness, joy and sorrow, success and disappointment, life and death, are familiar words upon his lips, and he does not know to what depths they point within him. It

is just as a man may live unconscious that there is anything unusual about him, in this age of unprecedented excitement—in this very crisis of the world's story.

Indeed a man seems never to know what any thing means, till he has lost it ; and this, I suppose, is the reason, why losses—vanishings away of things—are among the teachings of this world of shadows. The substance indeed teacheth ; but the vacuity whence it has disappeared, yet more. Many an organ, many a nerve and fibre in our bodily frame, performs its silent part for years, and leaves us almost or quite unconscious of its value. But let there be the smallest injury, the slightest cut of a knife, which touches that organ or severs the fibre ; and then we find, though it be the point of our finger, that we want it continually ; then we discover its value ; then we learn, that the fine and invisible nerves that spread themselves all over this wonderful frame, are a significant hand-writing of divine wisdom. And thus it is, with the universal frame of things in life. One would think that the blessings of this world were sufficiently valued ; but after all, the full significancy of those words, property, ease, health—the wealth of meaning that lies in the fond epithets, parent, child, friend—we never know till they are taken away ; till in place of the bright, visible being, comes the awful and desolate shadow where nothing is—where we stretch out our hands in vain, and strain our eyes upon dark and dismal vacuity. Still, in that vacuity we do not *lose* the object that we loved ; it only becomes more real to us. Thus do blessings not only brighten when they depart, but are fixed in enduring reality ; and friendship itself, re

ceives its everlasting seal, beneath the cold impress of death.

I have said thus much for the sake of illustration—of suggestion—to show you that the imprint of things may be upon us, which we scarcely know; to intimate to you—what I believe—that a dim consciousness of infinite mystery and grandeur, lies beneath all this common place of life; yes, and to arouse even the most irreligious worldliness, by the awfulness and majesty that are around it. As I have seen a rude peasant from the Appenines, falling asleep at the foot of a pillar in one of the majestic Roman Churches; doubtless the choral symphonies yet fell soft upon his ear, and the gilded arches were yet dimly seen through the half-slumbering eye-lids; so, I think, it is often, with the repose and the very stupor of worldliness. It cannot quite lose the sense of where it is, and of what is above and around it.

The scene of its actual engagements may be small; the paths of its steps, beaten and familiar; the objects it handles, easily spanned, and quite worn out with daily uses. So it may be, and amidst such things, that we all live. So we live our little life; but heaven is above us; and eternity is before us, and behind us; and suns and stars are silent witnesses and watchers over us. Not to speak fancifully, of what is matter of fact—do you not always feel that you are enfolded by infinity?—infinite powers, infinite spaces—do they not lie all around you? Is not the dread arch of mystery, spread over you—and no voice ever pierced it? Is not eternity enthroned amidst yonder starry heights—and no utterance, no word ever came from those far-lying

and silent spaces? Oh! it is strange—to think of that awful majesty above, and then to think of what is beneath it; this little struggle of life—this poor day's conflict—this busy ant-hill of a city. Shut down the dome of heaven close upon it; let it crush and confine every thought to the present spot, to the present instant; and such would a city be. But now, how is it? Ascend the lonely watch-tower of evening meditation, and look forth and listen; and lo! the talk of the streets, the sounds of music and revelling, the stir and tread of a multitude, goeth up into the silent and all surrounding infinitude!

But is it the audible sound only, that goeth up? Oh! no; but amidst the stir and noise of visible life—from the inmost bosom of the visible man, there goeth up a call, a cry, an asking, unuttered, unutterable—an asking for revelation—saying in almost speechless agony—“Oh! break, dread arch of mystery!—tell us, ye stars, that roll above the waves of mortal trouble—speak! enthroned majesty of those awful heights—bow down your mysterious and reserved heavens and come near—tell us, what ye only know—tell us of the loved and lost—tell us what we are, and whither we are going!

Is not man such an one? Is he not encompassed with a dome of incomprehensible wonders? Is there not that, in him and about him; which should fill his life with majesty and sacredness? Is there not something of sublimity and sacredness thus borne down from heaven, into the heart of every man? Where is the being so base and abandoned but he hath some traits of that sacredness left upon him—something so

much in discordance perhaps with his general repute, that he hides it from all around him—some sanctuary in his soul, where no one may enter ; some sacred enclosure—where the memory of a child is, or the image of a venerated parent, or the echo of some sweet word of kindness that was once spoken to him—an echo, that shall never die away ?

Would man awake to the higher and better things that are in him, he would no longer feel, I repeat, that life to him is a negative, or superficial, or worldly existence. Evermore are his steps haunted with thoughts, far beyond their own range—which some have regarded, as the reminiscences of a pre-existent state. As a man who passeth a season in the sad and pleasant land of Italy, feels a majestic presence of sublime ages and histories with him, which, he does not always distinctly recognize, but which lend an indescribable interest to every field, and mountain and mouldering wall, and make life to be, all the while, more than mere life ; so it is with us all, in the beaten and worn track of this worldly pilgrimage. There is more here, than the world we live in ; it is not all of life to live. An unseen and infinite presence is here ; a sense of something greater than we possess ; a seeking, through all the void waste of life, for a good beyond it ; a crying out of the heart for interpretation ; a memory of the dead, which touches, ever and anon, some vibrating thread in this great tissue of mystery.

I cannot help thinking, that we all, not only have better intimations, but are capable of better things than we know ; that the pressure of some great emergency

would develop in us, powers, beyond the worldly bias of our spirits; and that, so heaven dealeth with us, from time to time, as to call forth those better things. Perhaps there is not a family so selfish in the world, but that if one in it were doomed to die—if tyranny demanded a victim, it would be utterly impossible for its members—parents and children—to choose out that victim; but that all and each one would say, “I will die, but I cannot choose.” Nay, in how many families—if that dire extremity had come—would one and another step forth, freed from the vile meshes of ordinary selfishness, and say, like the Roman father and son, “let the blow fall on me!” There are greater and better things in us all, than the world takes account of, or than *we* take note of, would we find them out. And it is one part of our spiritual culture to *find* these traits of greatness and power, to revive these faded impressions of generosity and goodness—the almost squandered bequests of God’s love and kindness to our souls,—and to yield ourselves to their guidance and control.

I am sensible that my discoursing now, has been somewhat desultory and vague. Perhaps, though I delight not in such discoursing generally, it has not been, in this instance, without a purpose. For the consciousness which I wish to address, is doubtless itself something, too shadowy and vague. But it is real, though indistinct. An unsatisfied asking is, for ever, in all human hearts. We know that the material crust of this earth does not limit our thoughts; that the common-place of life does not suffice us; that there are things in us, which go far beyond the range of our ordinary, earthly pursuits. De-

praved as we may be, these things are true. They are indeed signs that we are fallen : but they are signs too that all is not lost. They are significant revelations ; and they are admonitions no less powerful.

But now when our minds go out beyond the range of their visible action, what do they find ? We have spoken of the great call of humanity ; what is the answer ?

The first answer comes from the mind itself. When we descend into the depths of our own being, we find desires which nothing less than the infinite can satisfy, powers fitted for everlasting expansion—powers whose unfolding at every step, only awakens new and vaster cravings : and sorrows, which all the accumulated wealth and pleasure of the world can never, never soothe. If a man's life consisted in that which he possesseth, how intolerable would it be ! To be confined to what we have and what we are, is to be shut up in a dungeon, where we cannot breathe ! Is not this whole nature then itself a stupendous argument for something greater to come ? Is not this very consciousness deep in our souls, itself an answer ? When you look at the embryo bird in the shell, you know that it is made to burst that little prison. You see feet that are made to run, and wings, to fly. And as it pecks at the imprisoning shell, you see in that very impulse, the prophetic certainty that it is to come forth to light and air. And is the noblest being on earth alone to be for ever imprisoned—to perish in his prison ;—for ever to feel himself imprisoned—for ever to press against the barriers of his present knowledge and existence ; and never to go forth ? Are *man's* embryo powers alone—are *his* cravings and aspirations after

something higher, to be accounted no revealings, no prophecies of a loftier destiny?

And again; when we lift up our thoughts to the vast infinitude, what do we find? Order, holding its sublime reign among the countless revolving suns and systems; and light, fair and beautiful, covering all as with a garment. Look up to the height of heaven in some bright and smiling summer's day; behold the ethereal softness, the meteor of beauty that hangs over us; and does it not seem as if it were an enfolding gentleness—a silent, hushed breathing of unutterable love? Was ever a mother's eye, bent on her child, more sweet and gentle? Was ever a loving countenance, more full of ineffable meaning? "Oh! you sweet heavens!" hath many a poet said; and can he who made those heavens, sublime and beautiful, wish us any harm? Were *you* made lord of those heavens—could you hurl down unrecking sorrow and disaster upon the poor tremblers beneath you? God who hath breathed that pitying and generous thought into your heart, will not belie it in himself. My heart is to me a revelation, and heaven is to me a revelation of God's benignity. And when the voices of human want and sorrow go upward—as one has touchingly said, "like inarticulate cries, and sobbings of a dumb creature, which in the ear of heaven, are prayers"—I can no more doubt that they find gracious consideration and pity above, than if a voice of unearthly tenderness breathed from the sky, saying, "poor frail beings! borne on the bosom of imperfection, and laid upon the lap of sorrow—be patient and hopeful; ye are not neglected nor forgotten; the heaven above you, holds itself in majestic reserve, because ye cannot yet bear what it has to tell you—holds you in

solemn suspense, which death only may break ; be faithful unto death—be trustful for a while ; and all your lofty asking shall have answer, and all your patient sorrow shall find issue, in everlasting peace.”

But, once more, there is more than a voice ; there is a revelation, in nature, and especially in the mission of Jesus Christ, more touching than words.

I have said that there is no uttered speech, from all around us ; and yet have maintained that there is expression as clear and emphatic as speech ; and I now say, it is more expressive than speech. Let me observe here, that we are liable to lay quite an undue stress upon this mode of communication—upon speech ; simply because speech is the ordained and ordinary vehicle of converse between man and man. If men had communicated with one another by pantomime ; if forms, and not utterances had been the grand instruments of impression ; if human love had always been expressed only by a brighter glow of the countenance, and pity only by a softer shadowing upon its beauty, then had we better understood perhaps, the grand communication of nature. Then had the bright sky in the day-time, and the soft veil of evening, and all the shows of things, around the whole dome of heaven and amidst the splendor and beauty of the world—all these, I say, in the majesty of silence, had been a revelation, not only the clearest, but the most impressive that was possible. I say in the majesty of silence. For accustomed as we are to speech ; how much more powerful in some things, is silence ! How intolerable would it have been, if every day when it came, had audibly said, “ God is good ; ” and every evening when it stole upon us, had said, “ God is good ; ” and every cloud when it

rose, and every tree as it blossomed, and every plant as it sprung from the earth, had audibly said, "God is good!" No, the silence of nature is more impressive, would we understand it, than any speech could be; it expresses what no speech can utter. No bare word can tell what that bright sky meaneth; what the wealth of nature meaneth; what is the heart's own deep assurance, that God is good.

But yet more; in the express revelation that is given us, it is not the bare word spoken, that is most powerful; it is the character of interposing mercy that is spread all over the volume. It is the miracle; that causes nature to break the secret of an all-controlling power, in that awful pause and silence. It is the loving and living excellence of Jesus—that miracle of his life, more than all. The word is but an attestation to something done. Had it been done in silence—could all generations have *seen* Jesus living—Jesus suffering—and heaven opened—it had been enough. Words are but the testimony, that hath gone forth to all generations and all ages, of what hath been *done*. God *is* ever *doing* for us, what—be it said reverently—what he cannot speak. As a dear friend, can look the love, which he cannot utter; so do I read the face of nature; so do I read the record of God's interposing mercy. I feel myself embraced with a kindness, too tender and strong for utterance. It cannot *tell* me how dear to the Infinite love, my welfare, my purity, is. Only by means and ministrations, by blessings and trials, by dealings and pressures of its gracious hand upon me, can it make me know. So do I read the volume of life and nature; and so do I read the volume of revelation. I see in Jesus living—

in Jesus suffering—I see in the deep heart of his pain and patience, and love and pity, what no words can utter. I learn this not from any excellency of speech, but from the excellency of his living and suffering. Even in the human breast, the deepest things, are things which it can never utter. So it was in the heart of Jesus. So it is—I speak it reverently—in the nature of God, “For no ear hath ever heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them to us by his spirit; for the spirit—and the spirit alone—searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

ERRATA.

Page 24, 16th line from bottom, for "in," read is.

" 33, 7th line from bottom, for "varieties," read vanities

" 49, 2nd line from bottom, for "relationship," read relationships.

" 76, 12th line at top, for "possession," read possessions.

" 101, 1st line at top, for "turn," read term.

" 117, 11th line at top, for "a self-discipline," read self-discipline.

" 121, 10th line from bottom, for "Thomas, a Kempis," read Thomas a Kempis.



