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Sam<sup>l</sup> Gurney



# LECTURES

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

✓ YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN EXETER HALL,

FROM NOVEMBER 1851, TO FEBRUARY 1852.



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## PREFACE.

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It is with unfeigned thankfulness to Almighty God, that the Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association avail themselves of the kind permission of the Ministers and Gentlemen who have taken part in the Seventh Course of Lectures to Young Men, to publish the valuable papers which they have severally contributed to this important service.

At the conclusion of a period of seven years, it becomes a grateful duty to record the fact that, by the gracious interposition of Divine Providence, the casualties by which human arrangements are often frustrated, have been so held in control, as that no one of the Lecturers, in each successive year, has been precluded from the fulfilment of his engagement; a mercy which can only be fully apprehended by those who know the painful anxiety and care which are involved in the conduct of these engagements

Perhaps in no other feature of the Society's history has the Saviour's sympathy in the efforts of His people been so signally evinced.

The following Lectures, accompanied as they have been by much blessed influence during their delivery, are sent forth in the humble prayer that they may be made effectual in the power of the Holy Ghost to the establishment of the faith of the children of God, the culture of an intelligent and vigorous piety, and to the apprehension, by those yet "out of the way," of the authority and claims of the Divine Redeemer.

The Committee greatly regret that the Rev. Thomas Binney has been prevented, by severe affliction, from effecting the proposed enlargement of his Lecture, "Is it possible to make the Best of both Worlds?" but as he has kindly expressed his intention to prepare it for publication, as a companion Volume to that on Sir T. Fowell Buxton, directly his health is restored, it has been thought desirable to proceed at once to the issue of the other Lectures.

T. HENRY TARLTON,  
HON. SECRETARY

*Young Men's Christian Association*  
*Library and Offices,*  
*7, Gresham Street, City.*  
*March 15, 1852.*

THE Young Men's Christian Association was established in the year 1844, with the view of uniting and directing the efforts of converted young men in the various departments of commercial life, for the spiritual welfare of their fellow young men, especially those residing in large houses of business, who could not be reached by the ordinary agencies of the Christian Church.

The following are the fundamental rules of the Society:—

I. That the object of the Association be the improvement of the spiritual and mental condition of Young Men.

II. That the agency employed for the attainment of this object, be that of the Members of the Association in the sphere of their daily calling, Devotional Meetings, Classes for Biblical Instruction and for Literary Improvement, the delivery of Lectures, the diffusion of Christian Literature, a Library for reference and circulation, and any other means in accordance with the Holy Scriptures.

III. That any person shall be eligible for membership who gives decided evidence of his conver-

sion to God. That he shall be proposed by a member of the Association at any of its meetings, and elected by the Committee, after a satisfactory inquiry as to his suitability.

Bible Classes are held every Sabbath Afternoon, at a quarter past Three, at 7, Gresham Street, City; 21A, Savile Row, Regent Street; 30, Theberton Street, Islington; 11, Newington Crescent, Surrey; 10, Church Street, (opposite the Grove,) Hackney; and at Portman House, New Church Street, Paddington; at which the attendance of Young Men is earnestly invited.

Donations of Funds to the Association, or of Books for the Library, will be received with much gratitude by the Treasurer, Geo. Hitchcock, Esq., 72, St. Paul's Churchyard, or by the Secretary, at the Office in Gresham Street.

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A LECTURE

BY THE

HON. AND REV. B. W. NOEL, A.M.,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

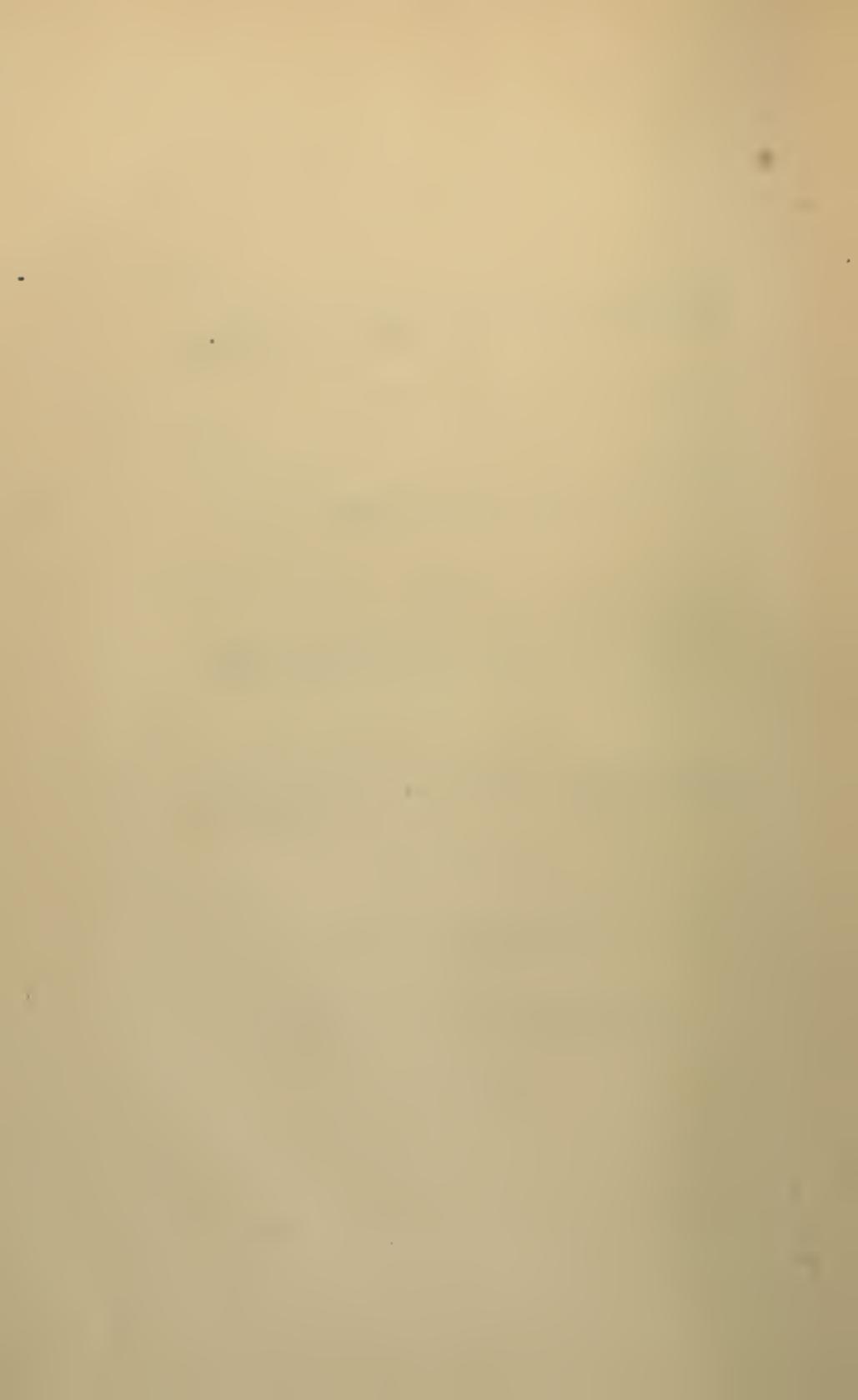
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN EXETER HALL,

NOVEMBER 11, 1851.

THE HON. ARTHUR KINNAIRD

IN THE CHAIR.



## PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL

### IN FRANCE.

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MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS,—I recall to my own mind with the greatest satisfaction, that I have to address this evening an association which has avowedly gathered together for the sake of doing good. Your own personal improvement is doubtless sought in that association; but you have, from the first, met together as desirous of securing the welfare of others as well as your own; at least, I may so address that part of this large assembly which belongs to the Young Men's Christian Association; and I trust that numbers besides of those whom I address share in the same principles. What sort of persons, my young friends, ought we to be, who profess to have been redeemed by such a price, and rescued from such a dismal end by a love which passes knowledge; who avowedly live under the holiest law ever promulgated to mankind, the first commandment of which is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;" who depend upon Almighty aid, never depended upon in vain; who have before us a pattern the highest that was ever given, and

that surrounded by innumerable other examples, so bright that they are all but models for our imitation; and who look forward as we do to a glorious inheritance, where we shall be perfect in wisdom and holiness? In our short pilgrimage, is it not reasonable that, with such aids and such responsibilities, we should seek by them to attain the highest excellence ourselves, and to communicate happiness to others as much as lies in our power? Walking yourselves with God in the exercise of faith in the Saviour, upon whom alone you rely for your present and eternal welfare, I trust, my young friends, that you will, with every additional advantage, endeavour to promote His glory, and the welfare of those around you. With good sense, with amiable temper, with unspotted integrity, with persevering zeal, endeavour, according to the avowed object of your association, to convert the careless, and bring those who now believe not, to trust in the Saviour in whom you rejoice. But while confessedly we should love best and labour most for those who are nearest to us, Christian charity does not allow us to terminate our efforts there; and I therefore feel that the address I am about to make to you this evening is in strict accordance with the principles which have united you together. I claim this evening a portion of your sympathies for France. I ask you this evening to become friends to our brethren who are labouring there in the same cause with yourselves. Of Belgium, in which a very promising work has already been begun, by a number of estimable Christian brethren, and to which God has been pleased to attach the seal of a remarkable blessing, I must be silent to-night. It would take

me too far, and I find the materials are already too ample, even respecting one portion of the religious question in France itself.

My object, then, this evening, is to enlist your sympathies on behalf of France. To me it seems that pride is as hateful in nations as in individuals; and boastfulness does not become us, whether with regard to ourselves, or the country to which we belong. And if France were a greater nation than England, as it is more numerous, and if its achievements were more brilliant than ours, I would be the first to acknowledge it, seeing that I think on every subject we ought to aim at that which is strictly true instead of welcoming only that which is self-flattering. But God has been so gracious to this country, that our humility is not taxed when we are called to express admiration for the achievements of other nations; and, without feeling that we are humbled in the comparison, we may admit with willingness, and take pleasure in commemorating the achievements of other nations in arts, or the proofs of their gallantry in war. Amongst the nations who are our rivals in what is great, I may select France as perhaps the foremost. It has a glorious territory. From the banks of the Rhine to the Pyrennees, from the British Channel to the mouth of the Rhone, it is a fertile, compact, noble territory, with which our England can scarcely compare. Its cornfields rival ours, and the groves of sweet chest nut and vineyards innumerable are spread by its bright and warm sun over millions of acres, when these products can hardly be reared in the most favoured spots in our land. Its Pyrennean and Alpine

frontiers make Ben Nevis and Snowdon cease to seem majestic ; and beautiful as the scenery is in various parts of our land, there is no river scenery here that can compare with that of the Doubs and of the Rhone. But it is not because its territory is fertile and extensive, its mountains lofty, or its scenery beautiful, that it claims our respect alone. Thirty-six or thirty-seven millions of people are at our doors, who were once feeble by the jealousies and differences between the provinces, but are now one mighty nation, united in the same language for the most part, with the same literature circulating everywhere, living under the same laws, and animated by the same spirit. This people have already challenged our regard by being our rivals in almost everything that is great. I must of course except Christian literature, because being, unhappily for themselves, Roman Catholics, their religious press is sterile in the last degree ; but in almost all the other subjects of literature, and in the prosecution of the sciences, they are our generous rivals. When I think of that nation, I never can forget to what great men it has given birth. It is the land of Buffon and of Cuvier ; it is the land of Descartes and La Place ; it is the land in which one department of mathematics has had its origin ; it is the country in which Ney was the bravest of the brave, and which was worthy to pour forth the martial followers of the great captain of the age. Napoleon, to whose sublime intelligence we must pay a rightful tribute, notwithstanding the selfishness which guided it, and the want of principle that marked his course, found in its soldiers men who were able to carry the eagles of France to almost

every capital in Europe except our own. If at last it failed, as it deserved to fail, in its audacious and unprincipled assault on Russia, it was not the bravery of Russian troops, nor the fierceness of its Cossacks which routed Napoleon and his army: it was done by climate—frost and famine alone brought that magnificent array to destruction. And if at length we conquered it, and won that great, that almost greatest of battles, Waterloo, let us remember it was when France alone had sustained a war with almost the whole of Europe, and was weakened by that enormous expenditure of men and money; and even then its army, gathered in haste, so well debated that bloody field with us, that if it was glorious to us to conquer, it was no shame to them to be defeated.

But it has had not only its great men, but its good. I will never forget, because he unhappily embarked in the impracticable and odious undertaking of destroying the only religion on earth that deserves the name, the splendid talents which God assigned to Voltaire; nor the impetuous eloquence and forcible character of Mirabeau, because his passions were not subdued by the fear of God; but I turn with greater pleasure to think of its good men. Amongst the Jansenists, Fenelon, Nicole, Arnauld, Pascal, and others, have given to France an imperishable glory. And amongst Protestants there have been higher names yet, names on which the generous heart delights to linger. Let us not forget that Calvin and Beza were both of France; and these great reformers were seconded by men scarcely inferior to themselves: the loyal and the brave Coligny, the devoted and the generous Sully, that prince of chivalry Duplessis Mornay—these,

with other brethren who at that time manifested the highest heroism, and many of them the truest piety, have given yet higher lustre to the history of France. Amongst modern evangelists, humbler names deserve to be recorded with equal honour. There have been few more zealous or more blessed than Oberlin and Pytt; and I rejoice to think that their spirit lives in their successors this day, and many of those brethren who are now labouring in the societies which I shall introduce to your notice, are men of exactly the same temper as these devoted servants of Christ who have departed.

But if France has its greatness, it also has its maladies. It is sick at heart. There are three great moral diseases that have fastened on its very vitals. I need scarcely say to you, that the first of these is the superstition of the Church of Rome. For centuries has it now been trampled upon by an ambitious priesthood, and has linked its own destinies with the support of that church which is the rival and the enemy of the Church of Christ. No words can exaggerate the mischief which its devotion to Romanism has caused to that land already. Let me remind you that its worship is in a foreign tongue, accompanied with puerile ceremonies; and in it it invokes not the Deity alone, but one whom it calls "the mother of God," with almost equal honours to those which are paid to the Redeemer himself; while it bows down to a wafer as to God. Remember, I do not exaggerate. Its own writers declare that the wafer is the body and blood, the soul and the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to that they bow down as to God. It has anathematized

the doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law, substituting for it that spurious gospel to the condemnation of which the apostle devoted his Epistle to the Galatians. Its sacraments are thoroughly anti-christian. Turning men away from the regeneration of man's heart by truth, through the agency of the Spirit, it makes its millions believe that children are regenerated by sprinkling water on their foreheads, and then fed and sustained with spiritual life by eating the wafer which they say is the body and blood, the soul and deity of Jesus Christ. Whereas in the glorious method of salvation God has revealed to us, each sinner has pardon and peace on believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, and, when penitent, may go to the throne of grace any moment, with the assurance that, through the intercession of his high priest, his forgiveness is secured, this church has taught the millions of France that unless they seek, by an entire exposition of all their feelings, absolution from their priest, a judicial absolution from him in the name of God, they have no prospect of pardon; and even then, and when the appointed rites of the church—extreme unction, which superstition teaches them to value—has done what the priestly office can do for their rescue, they are taught that the friends of Jesus Christ are then sentenced to an indefinite period of torment in a fiery prison, that they may be purified by torture from that corruption which Divine grace was unable to subdue. Under this misrepresentation of Christianity the nation has at this moment its religion enfeebled and repressed, in every direction; and thirty-five millions and a-half

out of the thirty-seven millions of France profess to be Roman Catholics.

But there is a second evil that has grown out of this first. All these peculiarities of their religion are, as we may see, at once calculated to alienate and repel thoughtful men. A priesthood that tyrannizes over the conscience, a church which is exclusive in the highest degree, a worship which may be justly termed idolatrous, sacraments which contradict the common sense of mankind, the necessity of confessing sins to a fellow-man as the only condition of pardon, the idea of fiery torture to be the end of those who have been redeemed and saved by Christ—this is so repulsive to men of thought, that numbers have been led to throw aside the religion which they have not the courage openly to renounce. But what has, perhaps, more than anything else achieved the separation of vast multitudes in that country from the Church of Rome, has been their doctrine that all belief must rest on the authority of the church. “En me disant,” said Rousseau, “croyez tout on m’empéchoit de rien croire.” And that which this acute sceptic professed, innumerable persons in secret have experienced. When the church says, “Believe all, or believe nothing,” it prompts inquiring men who are not acquainted with the Bible, to renounce all belief. The Roman Catholic priest says, “You must believe in transubstantiation or disbelieve the atonement, for the belief of the atonement rests on the authority of the church, and the belief in transubstantiation rests upon the same foundation: if you give up the foundation in the one case, you must renounce it in the

other ; and therefore, believe all, or believe nothing." Now, as their doctrines are unsustained by evidence, —revolting to human understanding,—it necessarily results, that numbers of persons, who are not serious enough to make their way to the Bible, and to ascertain what the truths of Christianity are, should reject both the false and the true, and, as Rousseau did, declare that they can believe nothing, because they are commanded to believe all. This scepticism, which has thus sprung out of superstition as its natural offspring, has been embittered in France by the fact that every such sceptic finds himself anathematized by the church, and by a priesthood whose importance as a political power in the state has led the Government in each successive reign to lend them its force and influence. Hence infidelity is not merely a calm, thoughtful renunciation, even of truth, but it is there a busy, impetuous passion of the heart, forming the whole multitude of sceptics into an army hostile to the whole multitude of the superstitious.

A third malady has befallen that land more recently. A retrograde policy in the Government, repressing the prosperity of the nation, has led numbers of those who are poor and destitute to view with dislike the institutions under which they live, and with which they think their pauperism is closely associated ; and those somewhat above them, but on the verge of the same poverty, have very naturally sympathized with their fellow workmen ; and both these classes, according to the natural selfishness of our nature in our corrupt state, and perhaps but partially instructed, have seen, or imagined that

they have seen, the remedy for their evils in speculations of which at least my deliberate opinion, after some examination, is this—that they are calculated to destroy prosperity, to repress industry, to banish capital from France, to pauperise and even famish the millions who seek their aid, to lead that great country into anarchy itself, and finally establish a ruthless military despotism. Its future is, therefore, very dark; and these three maladies—Romanism, scepticism and socialism—are brooding over this country as an interminable cloud.

Now, for these great mischiefs what is the remedy which we can see? There may be other palliatives, I doubt not. The common sense of mankind, the desire of preserving property, the intuitive sight of what is destructive or advantageous to our present interests, the necessity of order, may furnish in a civilized nation important palliatives and checks to the evils that most beset them. But I think it would be difficult to show that there is any cure for these great evils, possible,—any real and permanent cure,—except the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I say so, because the gospel extracts from each of these evils what is bad in it, and leaves to it all that is good. I say so, because the gospel, while it refutes and crushes superstition, only purifies, ennobles, and deepens the religion which is thus disenthralled. The Gospel alone offers to the sceptic that which he has been seeking—a religion of evidence, and a religion which is therefore worthy the understanding of thinking men. And the gospel, at the same time that it tends to destroy Romanism and to uproot scepticism,—as ultimately it will do,—

preserves all that is good in the creed of socialism, while it repudiates its ignorant speculations. The Gospel contains principles which secure for nations perfect civil and religious liberty; the Gospel claims for all men equality before God and before the law; and the Gospel teaches us that all men who love and fear God are really brethren. Those talismanic words, therefore—"liberty, equality, and fraternity," find their true meaning in, and are only to be realized by, the cordial acceptance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But if the Gospel is the remedy, by whose hands is it to be applied? It might seem at first that 1,500,000 Protestants spread over the area of France—unequally, it is true, but yet widely spread—would furnish an important army for the accomplishment of this great victory. But, unhappily, it is too notorious to be concealed, that many Protestants in France have fallen into such lethargy, lukewarmness, and even error, that they rather form a stumbling-block in the way of Catholics than attract them to the truth. They hate Romanism more than they love the Gospel; and more than they think of the great atonement which Christ has made for man, do they recall the massacre of St. Bartholomew and the war of the Cévennes. Thus embittered hatred is nourished from generation to generation between Protestants and Catholics; and even where the pastors of the National Reformed Church become earnest and benevolent, they have very little access to their Roman Catholic neighbours; and scarcely ever see, even when their preaching is faithful and powerful, Roman Catholics enter the doors

of their temples. A Society, however, has been formed amongst the Protestants of the National Reformed Church, which is indirectly calculated to accomplish a great good by lessening a principal evil. This central Protestant Society is established with a view to act upon the scattered Protestants themselves, and, by all the means which God may put at the disposal of the pious men who have formed it, to revive evangelical religion in the National Reformed Church itself. Now, as far as God may bless their exertions, this is calculated to remove a great scandal before the eyes of Catholic and infidel France. But yet, to act directly upon the Catholics, another agency was manifestly necessary,—an agency free from the trammels in which the National Reformed Church is acting, and an agency which should not add to the natural indisposition with which men receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that hereditary and conventional enmity which subsists between the champions of rival churches when they come into contact. Such an agency now has been called into existence by the providence of God.

I must here first mention to you the important efforts made by the British and Foreign Bible Society in France; they cannot be too much valued. Under their zealous, able, and devout agent, M. De Pressensé has this English Society been permitted to accomplish already a great work in France, the results of which can hardly be exaggerated. The issues of this Society in the year 1849-50 (for I have not at hand the last Report) amounted to 108,358 Bibles and Testaments; and since 1820, that Society has circulated 2,728,000 copies. Let me add, that of these,

almost all are parted with by sale. Of the 108,000 copies that were distributed last year, only 38 were given away: the rest were sold. The receipts that were paid into M. De Pressensé's hands were, by colporteurs, 49,471 fr., and by others, 24,237 fr. This distribution of the Scriptures is the more important, because it takes place in a country where there are no cheap Catholic editions, and where the people are to a great extent in absolute ignorance of the contents of the Bible, and even of the book itself. Eighty-one colporteurs last year were employed by the Society in selling these books throughout France. When a nation arrives at a certain stage of civilization and of liberty, it often happens that impediments to any good work are curiously overruled for its advancement. Not long since the Minister of the Interior, urged by the priests, issued a direction, which is sustained by no law in France—issued his fiat, that the colporteurs of the British and Foreign Bible Society should not be permitted any longer to sell their books. The principal Protestants of Paris remonstrated so warmly against this injustice, that it was modified; the minister declaring that the Catholic version of De Sacy might be sold, but the Protestant versions of Martin and Ostervald by no means. This seemed to be a hindrance in their way; but a moment's consideration shows how these colporteurs might derive important advantage from it. The Catholics, always taught by their priests to be suspicious of these books, would scarcely ever purchase a Protestant edition at all, but they always asked for this very version of De Sacy. Even that version was declared to be muti-

lated and corrupted by the Protestants, and numbers of them, believing this, refused to buy it. But now it has come before them with the authority of the Minister of the Interior, who, having examined this edition, gives his permit to each colporteur, so that, showing this, he can say, "You perceive that the version is pure, correct, and authorised;"—and thus it promotes the sale of the only version they are disposed to purchase.

But these colporteurs cannot prosecute their work without difficulties. You can easily understand that in a country marked by superstition on the one hand, and levity and irreligion on the other, a few zealous men passing amidst that population must be often vilified, misrepresented, and insulted. The colporteurs have to meet this as best they can; and, sustained by the grace of God, they do meet it with meekness, courage, and prudence. Let me mention one amongst what I might term the innumerable anecdotes with which the records of colportage abound, to illustrate how these good men prosecute their work. A colporteur having been exposed to much rain on his journey through the department of the Doubs, entered a town towards the evening. From his satchel he took out the two Bibles, and twenty-four Testaments, that he was carrying that day for sale, to examine whether they were spoiled by the wet; being in the public room of an inn in that little town. When he was placing his books on the table, three travellers came up to him and examined his books, upon which one of them exclaimed, "Oh! you are a heretic, are you?" and then began to revile him

and his books. The colporteur defended both his books and himself; and remonstrated with the traveller for his unprovoked attack. The dispute between these two combatants reached the ears of a merry party playing billiards in a neighbouring room. A crowd immediately poured through the door, and surrounded the disputants. The colporteur argued his case as well as he could, and cited from the book itself passages to justify his views of the gospel. Twenty-six of these Catholics took each a book to verify his citations, and were so convinced by his argument, and the texts he quoted, that they all, except the objector, came round to his side; and at the close of the conversation, he sold his two Bibles, and his twenty-four Testaments, to those twenty-six spectators.

Wherever these colporteurs distribute the Scriptures, they make way for the efforts of three other Societies, to which I wish particularly to call your attention this evening. These three societies are the Evangelical Society of France, the Evangelical Society of Geneva, and the Evangelical Society of Lyons. The last of these three, though by no means the least interesting, being formed by a Church, the history of which is most remarkable, is, however, smaller than the others, and the limits allowed to an address like this, force me to pass it over in silence, and to speak principally of the other two--the Society of France and the Society of Geneva. The objects of these three societies are exactly the same. I will read to you a short extract from the rules of the Evangelical Society of France, to show you what is the aim which they all have.

“The sole object of the Evangelical Society of France is to promulgate in France evangelical truths by all the means which God may place at its disposal. The object of the Evangelical Society of France being to promote the truths of the gospel in France, without denominational distinction, its agents will address themselves, in their public teaching and private conversation, to Frenchmen and foreigners resident in France, not in their character of Protestants or Catholics, but as immortal beings, each of whom has a soul to save, and can reach salvation only by conversion of heart to the gospel of Christ. The gospel which they preach is comprehended summarily in the following doctrines :—The fall of man, and his state of condemnation ; justification by faith ; the necessity of sanctification—in one word, salvation, as a work of grace and mercy of one only God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

These principles belong, I think I may say with no difference whatever, to the three societies, on behalf of which I wish to enlist your sympathies to-night. But however excellent the aims of a society may be, the principles may remain a dead letter, unless the directors of the society are animated by the same. I would, therefore, for a moment direct your attention to the claims which these societies have on our regard, with reference to their directors as well as their principles.

In looking at the list of the officers of the Paris society, I find the first name is that of M. Audebez, who is known in this country by many friends, and whose evangelical labours in France have been useful in so many departments—a devoted, cou-

rageous, and faithful evangelist and pastor at Paris. The second name is that of Frederick Monod, who for conscience' sake has renounced one of the most desirable positions in the National Reformed Church of France, and, with a large family, has reduced himself to absolute penury, having no income whatever on which to depend, rather than violate his conscientious conviction of what the circumstances of that church required him to do. The next is the excellent agent of the Bible Society, M. De Pressensè. The fourth, M. Bridel, one of the pastors of the Taitbout Chapel, which has been the light of Paris for many years, where the church is a living, disciplined, active church. The next name is that of M. Lutteroth, who is known, by some at least, as the active and liberal supporter of the paper called the *Semeur*, which has extracted homage even from Roman Catholics, and to which he has devoted his own able and industrious pen. The next on the list is the Count de Gasparin, who has written so eloquently and well on behalf of the Free Church of the Canton de Vaud; who has opposed the unhappy errors which have been advocated by one of the professors of Geneva; and who has joined Frederick Monod in his secession from the National Reformed Church, because, having no creed, it gave free access to the ministry to those who even deny the fundamental principles of the gospel of Christ. Of him I would especially mention this, that young as he was, his good sense, his talent for business, his tact, his energy, and eloquence, commanded the attention of the Chamber of Deputies under Louis-Philippe, of which he was a member;

and he alone in that chamber maintained, without the least concealment, the great doctrines of the gospel of Christ, and was the generous defender of every right of Protestantism. On the occasion of the discussion as to the right of selling the Scriptures throughout France, M. de Gasparin concluded an eloquent and impressive speech, which won that parliamentary battle, in these terms:—"I speak it with calm seriousness, because I express a determined resolution. If this (right of colportage) is not granted, if new hindrances are opposed to the exercise of a necessary right, I will take the satchel of the colporteur on my own back, and will myself meet your prohibitions and your processes of law." Their friends are men of the same character; they are an honour to France, and they deserve our highest confidence.

Next let me speak of the officers of the Evangelical Society of Geneva. That society rose out of circumstances which claim for them our respect. When the church of which Calvin was the light—the church which threw theological light over the darkness of Europe—fell itself into darkness, and the national pastors became Arian or Socinian, and, not content with that, the company of pastors forbade the free proclamation of the gospel to the ministers in association with them, Gausson and several other pastors of that church at once renounced position and income, and, making themselves free to preach the gospel of Christ to their own countrymen, they speedily formed, two years before the existence of the Evangelical Society of France, the Evangelical Society of Geneva. Their object was partly to

preach the gospel to their own countrymen, and they formed the church of the Oratoire. Another of their objects was to train up ministers in sound evangelical truth ; and they formed the school of theology, which God has prospered to this day. But as zealous men, however few and feeble, are never content with protecting themselves from error, but are anxious to diffuse the knowledge of the gospel, these Swiss brethren cast their eyes upon the neighbouring departments of France, plunged in profound superstition, and asked themselves whether they could not do something for France as well as for Geneva. Hence arose this Evangelical Society ; and at its head, as its president, is now the Count de St. George, who, himself a soldier, has written earnestly, and published letter after letter to his former comrades in arms, to call them to serve as the soldiers of the Lord Jesus. The second on the list is Merle D'Aubigné, the vice-president of that society, and well known for his "History of the Reformation." The third is M. Gaussen, who has published a work on the inspiration of the Scriptures, which is a permanent addition to our sacred literature. The fourth is M. Pilet, who is the eloquent and faithful pastor of the church of the Oratoire at Geneva. The next is M. La Harpe, the disinterested and able professor in the Ecole de Théologie. The next is M. Cordez, than whom a more faithful, humble, affectionate, and sincere follower of Jesus Christ, I do not know. Now, these men are in association with many others of the same stamp in Geneva ; and I ask you, whether these brethren do not likewise deserve your highest confidence in their proceedings ?

The means which these two societies employ for the prosecution of their work are at once simple, sensible, well-ordered, and effective. They either avail themselves of the labours of the colporteurs of the Bible Society in any of the departments of France ; or they send out as pioneers their own colporteurs to any neighbourhood where they have reason to think the gospel may be preached. When many copies of the Scriptures have been sold in this neighbourhood, and the people have conversed with the pious, intelligent colporteurs that are sent to them, there arises a curiosity in many to hear something more of the gospel ; and some heads of families invite the Society to send to them an evangelist,—one whose sole object is to preach the gospel to them. The evangelist is sent, and speedily gathers a congregation. When that congregation seems to be permanent, and not likely to be moved away by persecution or by caprice, then, after a while, the congregation invites the Society to send to them a pastor. A church is organized—a disciplined, living church ; and this church begins to diffuse the light of the gospel around them through the neighbourhood. Schools are speedily wanted for the children of the converts ; and those schools are followed by lending village libraries. The last improvement which has been adopted in their proceedings is the system of conferences. Neighbouring ministers and pastors meet together to compare their experience, and to promote each others' efficiency and strength.

These being the means which the societies employ, let me now mention briefly to you the extent

of their agency. I will merely read the figures, as I do not wish to delay upon this point. The agency of the Evangelical Society of France, as stated in its last Report, amounts to 26 ministers or pastors, 10 evangelists, 40 masters and mistresses, and 20 pupil teachers in their normal schools. The agency of the Evangelical Society of Geneva, in the last year, has been 11 ministers, 9 evangelists, 11 masters, 2 mistresses,—on the whole 33 labourers, who are spread through various departments in the west and in the east of their country.

These societies, which you perceive have already attained to a considerable magnitude, have now great opportunities of action. The law is clearly and strongly in their favour. The seventh article of the constitution of the Republic, as it at present exists, states: "Each one professes freely his religion, and receives from the State, for the exercise of his worship, an equal protection." Therefore, every person, of whatever religion he be, has a right to claim, not for his personal profession, but for the exercise of his worship, an equal protection from the State. This is so much recognized by the government, and so far respected, that the last article of the decree of 1848, on clubs, exempted religious meetings from its operation, thus: "The provisions restrictive of the right of meeting are not applicable to meetings which have for their exclusive object the exercise of any worship whatever." And the government, instructing the Prefects how to apply that law, expressly informed them that, "it does not at all interfere with meetings which have for their objects religious questions; and that the sole duty

of the Prefects, with regard to these assemblies, is to watch that they do not lose the character to which they pretend, and do not conceal dangerous meetings under a respectable name." The law, then, clearly gives to our brethren in France the right of preaching the gospel wherever they are invited. They may go into every commune, and, if the inhabitants wish, they may plant Protestant worship everywhere. At the same time, it rejoices us to hear that there is a considerable willingness, on the part of Catholics, and persons of religious habits, to listen to our brethren when they send evangelists to minister to them. On this point, let me read to you the statement of the last Report of the French Society:—

"We are fully authorized," that society reports, "to say to you, that the actual circumstances are peculiarly favourable in France for the propagation of the truths which regenerate and save. Everywhere we find populations disposed to hear the messengers of the gospel. Almost all the letters of the colporteurs (and we have had two hundred in our hands) point out very populous cantons where the arrival of Protestant ministers would instantly excite a pacific movement in favour of the gospel. In the year just passed, these happy dispositions have been developed and strengthened. The colporteurs have been more favourably received; more invitations have been given than ever before to Protestant preachers; and never have we been able to state, so much as this year, that the good seed has not been sown in vain."

I am sure you see, my friends, in these circumstances a loud call to action; and if I terminated the

evidence here, you would be persuaded that a good work is before our brethren in France: the law favouring, the population being not unwilling to listen.

If we had nothing to speak of but the distribution of the sacred books, we might expect that a great preparatory work would be done in a country where eighty-one pious men devote, either the whole, or a large part of the year, in distributing and selling these sacred volumes. Let me give to you only one among various facts, to show how useful the colportage is, even when evangelists and Protestant preachers are not sent. This last year, a Christian man, on a journey of business, came, on a Saturday evening, to a country village. The inn people were unwilling to listen to him, when, on the Sabbath morning, he began to speak to them of the gospel. Disheartened by their coldness, he walked out to seek some retired spot, where he might meditate and pray alone. His path led him to an orchard, near the door of a farm-house, and as he approached it he heard a voice reading. The door of the house—as often happens in summer—was open, and, placing himself not far from it, he heard a chapter of the Scriptures read in an audible voice. When the reading terminated, a general conversation ensued upon the contents of the chapter. He then presented himself to their view. The master of the house sat at the top of the table; a great Bible, printed by the Bible Society, was before him, and about fifteen persons, to whom he had been reading, were around him. When the stranger declared

that he was a friend of the Bible, and a disciple of Christ, he was at once received by these Roman Catholics with affection. Confidence was at once established between them, and they told him that the Bible had been bought about two years ago, from a stranger who came into that neighbourhood ; and that, since that time, that party had met every Sabbath to read it. And when this stranger asked the master of the house, " Did no one direct you thus to meet," he said, " Oh, yes ; I was directed by these words, ' Ask, and it shall be given to you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' This made me call my neighbours together ; and since that time we have been knocking at the door of heaven." Now, this was where no Protestant had ever been. You may see, then, that there may be multitudes of such little meetings of Catholics unknown to us, which are the result of that wide distribution of the Scriptures already. But when I mention to you that one society maintains 11 ministers, and another 26, you can see that these societies must have made a great advance towards the success they most looked for ; otherwise they could not be justified in the support of pastors where there were no churches and no congregations. In fact, the reception that they have had is remarkable in different parts of France. As my friend Mr. Kinnaird has stated, we have seen together, in those parts of France where there were no Protestants, where the whole population was Catholic, results which fully warrant us to conclude, with these societies, that large multitudes in France are willing to hear the gospel preached.

Some years ago, early in the history of the Society, I visited the towns of Châlons and Mâcon, and there saw congregations of Catholics, which had been gathered together by the evangelists of the Geneva Society. Later still, together with Mr. Kinnaird, and Mr. Burgess, and another friend, we visited the village of Mansle, in the department of the Charente. When M. Roussel first went to that town, there were no Protestants there; when we visited it, a chapel had been fitted up. The chapel was crowded five times during the three days which we were there, by the eager Catholics of the village, and of the neighbourhood, who came to listen to Protestant preachers. We went together to the city of Limoges; and beneath almost the shadow of the cathedral we saw a well-built temple raised where there had been no Protestants before; and that temple was crowded that evening by 600 or 700 persons, almost all men, and all previously Catholics, who listened to a heart-stirring sermon, preached by M. Roussel.

We visited the village of Thiat, and found that village life was not more inimical to the reception of the gospel, than the more cultivated life of the city. Nearly the whole of the population of Thiat were gathered together that evening, to listen to the preaching of the Gospel. We visited the town of Château Ponsat; this was in the Upper Vienne, in the Limousin, where we saw, unhappily, thousands of Catholics, who, on the occasion of the fête of a Roman Catholic saint, poured into the town, passed through the church, and kissed the wooden foot of a hateful wooden image; and then kissed

the tawdry robes of an odious-looking doll, by which they represented her whom they term the mother of God. When we saw these thousands kissing these hateful images, yet still, in another part of the town, we attended a large room, crowded with thoughtful worshippers, who listened to the simple exposition of the gospel. We also visited Sens. A short time ago, when M. Audebez went, there was scarcely a Protestant there; again we saw a temple; again we saw a gathered congregation. We then visited the village of Saint Maurice, in the neighbourhood of Sens, at which a very interesting work has been accomplished, of which I have not time to speak to-night; and where nearly the whole village has deserted the priest, and is now worshipping with its pastor, M. Laubscher.

But to show you the nature of this work, of which I have only mentioned the results very briefly, I will speak to you to-night only of two of those places where the Society of France and the Society of Geneva have been remarkably blessed, because the circumstances of these two places will illustrate what is doing in nearly all those places where pastors are established.

The department of Upper Vienne is in some places so romantic that it reminded us of Switzerland. In all it is eminently beautiful, though at the same time poor. The soil is poor; groves of the Spanish chestnut cover its undulating hills, and the base of its loftier mountains; the clearest streams wind through this beautiful department, and in a spot on which the eye delighted to rest, we saw the spire of a village church rising. As

we approached that scene in company with our friend M. Roussel, he said, "That is the church of Ville Favard; the village was Catholic lately, it is Protestant now." M. Roussel preached to them, exposed to various difficulties and vexations from the police. The people listened with eagerness; they saw the superiority of Protestantism; they renounced their connection with the Roman Catholic Church altogether. The parish church, which happened not to be Government property, but their own, was consecrated by them to Protestant worship: the wooden images of their saints were cut up to make their benches; at the place where they were accustomed to worship a picture of the Virgin Mary, we saw written on the wall, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus;" and where they used to worship the wafer god, with all their puerile ceremonies, there was written on the wall, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The altar was removed from its place, and was now in another part of the building, employed to receive the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper; and the pedestal of that table was the vase for holy water reversed. The whole people have renounced Romanism, and there is not now one single family who adheres to the new priest who has been sent among them. M. Lenoir, the faithful pastor established there, visits also all the neighbouring hamlets of the communes, and has little companies of persons gathering in their cottages to listen to the gospel of Christ. They come also sometimes from the neighbouring communes to hear the gospel preached. Their

schools are flourishing; their children are improved: their dissipation has ceased. They were remarkable for drunkenness and for debt; these evils have been diminished; and latterly rather a remarkable proof was given of the moral influence of their pastor. It is a poor country, and the young men go to seek employment and wages to many of the cities of France. They not only go to other provincial cities, but they go as far as Paris itself. In the winter these young men return to their families, and bring with them the habits and tastes of the capital. They thought that Ville Favard was rather a dull place without any of the amusements of the capital, and they proposed that on Sunday evenings, when the people had leisure and were not tired with work, they should have a series of balls. In different parts of the parish their influence prevailed, and the balls were agreed upon. The older people, if they did not quite approve, had not energy to resist, and the balls on the Sunday evenings were accordingly organized. M. Lenoir went to the first of these proposed meetings, reasoned with those who attended on the danger to them, the inconsistency with their profession, and the moral mischief that must ensue; and the whole party agreed to separate in consequence of his remonstrance.

He went to another, with the same success; and shortly, they were all abandoned—not another ball took place, and the population was more than before brought under religious influence. They have had from Roman Catholics themselves this praise extorted; they say, “Ville Favard was the last of the villages: it is now almost the first.” Such a village

must necessarily spread a useful light around. Neighbouring villages, consequently, now ask for the same instruction ; and lately, St. Hilary, a populous commune, invited the pastor, M. Lenoir, to come and preach to them. He complied with all the regulations prescribed by the law, and went at last, after repeated invitations, to that commune ; but the sub-prefect and his gendarmes, on the first occasion when M. Lenoir preached there, presented themselves at the close of the service, prohibited all their meetings, and then published a circular against the Protestants in all the neighbouring villages, prohibiting their attendance at such meetings. M. Lenoir had violated no law ; he was perfectly within his right, and therefore he went again to preach ; but this time the gendarmes were prepared for him, and, ere he began the service, arrested him, dragged him to prison, and there left him for the night. The next day, the Procureur brought the case before the court at Bellac, a neighbouring town. That court, after maturely examining the case, acquitted M. Lenoir, declared that it was simply a religious meeting, and that he was perfectly in his right. The Procureur appealed to the Court of Appeal at Limoges, and that court reversed the sentence of the inferior court, and fined M. Lenoir five francs, as having been guilty—I know not why—of some pretended infringement of the law. M. Lenoir has now appealed to the Supreme Court of Appeal, at Paris, and the result is not yet published. I mention this not merely to show that our brethren are exposed to vexatious opposition from the local authorities, while the law is in their

favour, but to call your attention to this fact, that wherever such opposition may exist, it may be trying for them to bear at the moment, but it issues in advantage to their cause. It first makes their right to be more solemnly recognized by the government itself. In every case in which this right of worship has been questioned, and the government has been appealed to, the government has vindicated the right, and affirmed it; and it will, doubtless, do so in the present instance. The people of France are, at least, an independent people, proud of their liberty, resolved to exercise their rights, determined to think for themselves; and the consequence is, that St. Hilary has asked the Society to send them an evangelist, to be permanently resident there. That evangelist, with a schoolmaster, will be soon sent, and the preaching of M. Lenoir, instead of being wholly abortive, issues in the establishment of permanent Protestant worship in that village of St. Hilaire. Not only so; a second commune has invited the Society to furnish them with an Evangelist, and Protestant worship will be established there shortly; and some of the inhabitants of a market town have been so excited by the injustice done to M. Lenoir, that they have immediately asked him to come and preach to them also. So that you see the work grows; and wherever, in any commune, the preaching is blessed of God, the commune becomes a centre of evangelization to all around.

One other instance only I will now bring before you, in some respects, I think, the most pleasing in all these operations of the Societies. I mentioned

the congregations at Châlons and Mâcon : they have existed for some years ; but, owing to circumstances I will not now detail, the work seldom prospers very much in large towns. There are too many influences combined against it ; especially a powerful clergy, and the rich inhabitants combined with them, very much frighten the poor inhabitants who would be disposed to listen. The congregations and the churches are, therefore, small in large towns. But in the neighbourhood of these towns villagers are found to listen, come considerable distances to hear, are more independent in their conduct, and invite the Protestant preachers. Thus, generally when the gospel is preached in a central place, there are many communes around, which soon invite the preacher to come to them. A populous commune near Mâcon and Châlons, has the name of Sornay. It is a small town with hamlets around it, and a considerable population. Eighteen years ago a colporteur, when he visited that parish, was disheartened by the cold and rude reception which he met, sat down by the wayside, oppressed in spirit, and there poured out his heart earnestly to God that he would enlighten and bless that place. Shortly after an evangelist was sent ; a congregation was gathered, and in 1845 the church had reached a certain consistency and magnitude. There was an infant school, a juvenile school, and an adult school established there then. In that year the pastor held several prayer-meetings to seek and obtain the blessing of God upon his labours, and the labours of the church. They were now become an exemplary people. It so happened that the hay-harvest of that year was peculiarly un-

favourable. A fine Sunday occurring in the midst of wet days, the whole Roman Catholic population of the place turned out to work and get in their hay. Not one member of the Protestant Church touched his hay that Sabbath. Instances were shown of the zeal of these poor people, peculiarly impressive. One widow, a converted Catholic, who in the days of her ignorance thought that she could not by any means obtain a livelihood unless she worked on the Sunday as well as on other days, renounced her work, though likely to lose her customers and supporters; but not long since she brought to the pastor eighty francs, which had been saved from her work, saying, "I desire to do something for the kingdom of God, and lament that I cannot do more." Sornay has continued to prosper since that day, but not without opposition. The Abbé Baujard, the curé of that place, wrote a severe pamphlet against them, containing many calumnious assertions. A part of this pamphlet he read to his people from the pulpit, and then distributed copies amongst the parishioners. The immediate result was, that that Sunday evening the congregation of the chapel became so great, that they were obliged to leave the doors open to let those who stood around and without, listen to the sermon. A neighbouring priest was so indignant at the palpable injustice of this attack upon them, that he offered the Society to publish in their defence if they wished. One Roman Catholic who was before timid, though he was convinced of the truth, said, when he heard that pamphlet of the curé, "Good! my last chain is broken!" and immediately joined the Protestant congregation.

The church had in the last year thirty-eight members and forty-eight candidates in the village itself; and in the annexes, that is, the hamlets around, twenty-two members and twenty candidates; so that by this time, in that village of Sornay, the church is composed of sixty members and sixty-eight candidates. The curé continues his opposition, the pastor his prayerful labours, and Roman Catholics continue to attend. Lately the congregation became so numerous, that all the school benches and house chairs were obliged to be brought in for the accommodation of the people.

I quote this case to show you again how, as in the case of Ville Favard, when the gospel is established in a Catholic village, it begins to spread. Bruailles is a village about four miles from Sornay. A member of the church, a young farm-servant, confessed Christ amongst his fellow-servants, was mocked by them, read the Bible to his neighbours, went from house to house utterly regardless of their ridicule or anger; and at length some of the inhabitants thought this so curious, that they invited the pastor, M. Charpiot, to come and visit them. Some brethren of the church at Sornay went instead of M. Charpiot. As they had not made their announcement to the Mayor, according to law, the pastor begged them not to go again. But the villagers met to read the Bible together. While they were assembled, and reading a chapter in the Acts, the Procureur of the Republic and the gendarmes entered and searched the house for newspapers, found nothing but Testaments, took down the names of twenty persons, threatened them, and forbade them to meet again. The immediate consequence

of that interference was, that a permanent evangelist was sent to that village: the people received him with open arms; crowds listened to him; and M. Charpiot, pastor of Sornay, has since held meetings there, and been received by the inhabitants with eagerness. Now besides the congregation that has been formed at Bruailles, there is another in the neighbourhood; 50 persons, as the consequence of that movement, listen to M. Louis Charpiot, the brother of the pastor, who is their evangelist, every Sabbath. A second place near Sornay, named Montpont, has received M. Nicollet as its evangelist; the Mayor has also cordially received him, and given testimony to the excellent conduct of the converts of the village. In a third village a Roman Catholic asked M. Nicollet to come to the village on a Sabbath evening. He went, and found two rooms full of villagers—above a hundred persons having assembled to listen to the preaching of the gospel. A Roman Catholic youth came to the school at Montpont, and spoke to his village friends about what he learned there; and they wished to hear M. Nicollet the evangelist. He, being invited, went, and about a hundred persons gathered to hear him. So that you see wherever in this way the Society succeeds in establishing congregations, it becomes a centre of evangelization to all around. Now when I remind you that one Society has twenty-six pastors, and another eleven, that they have many evangelists, and many masters and mistresses besides, you may see that God has set before them a great work, in his providence, utterly beyond their force to accomplish.

I would now briefly recapitulate what I have said, that I may ask your sympathy on behalf of these churches. For good or for evil, France must exercise a powerful influence upon Europe. France is now suffering under three great maladies—Romanism, Infidelity, and Socialism. The only remedy is the Gospel, and the only persons that can apply that remedy are the Protestant brethren there. Englishmen can no more labour in France to evangelize them, than French priests could act successfully in England. If they would meet disadvantages in promoting their superstition here, so would English evangelists in promoting the truth there. The French are too proud a people to be taught by strangers; and there is too sensitive a jealousy among them of the prosperity of England, to lead them to welcome English evangelists. Consequently, we can directly do nothing; but if our brethren there, who have the highest character, who are men of sense, and method, and order; who know exactly what the law permits and the national character invites them to; who act with prudence and prayer, are labouring amongst 35 millions, they reasonably, as it seems to me, demand our concurrence and our sympathy. And the time is peculiarly propitious. How do we know what awaits France in a future day? Should the Jesuit party prevail, it may be that the liberty of Protestant action will be greatly curtailed. Should the Socialist party prevail, they may blindly identify Protestant with Catholic zeal; and as they have a war to the death with the Catholic priesthood, they may equally oppose and impugn Protestant evangelism too. Now the time is favourable; how long it may last

we know not; and when our brethren there are few; when they have to contend with Protestant coldness and with Catholic superstition; when they are often vilified, misrepresented, and harassed; when they have few human supports to rely upon,—may they not, when they are doing their work with energy, faith, and self-denial, ask for our co-operation and sympathy? Let them feel that they have at their backs hundreds of thousands of real disciples of Jesus Christ here; let them feel that if we are shut up in our little island, we look upon the ocean as the highway of nations, and that our hearts are large enough for the world. There are two Societies engaged here for the support of these efforts on the Continent. They do nothing themselves, but they collect funds for each such evangelical effort there. The one is the Foreign Aid Society, which gathers the contributions of members of the Church of England; the other is the Evangelical Continental Society, which gathers similar contributions for these evangelical Societies abroad, from the Dissenting churches of this land. To one or other of these (both having the same benevolent object in view) let me ask you, my friends, to lend your support. Many of you are young, and I hope have a long, honourable, and useful career before you. What I ask you for is this—that while you think of Missions to the heathen, and while you properly prefer Missions at our own doors, and labour personally to do that which you may as loyal subjects of Jesus Christ—that you link your hearts to these excellent brethren of ours in France and Geneva, who are setting us good examples, and that,

if a great work should take place, you may be found amongst its best supporters. Remember, France is the very fortress of Rome. Carry that strong citadel, and you lay open all the defences of Romanism. Destroy Romanism in France, and it receives at least a blow from which it would not soon recover in Austria, in Spain, in Portugal, and in Italy itself. Now its zealous Missionaries are everywhere. The Lyons Missionary Society is as large as any of our Missionary Societies. If you ask, Who are the Missionaries in China? They are Frenchmen. Who visit India? They are Frenchmen. Who interfere with our Missions in Tahiti? They are Frenchmen. Who have replaced the Pope upon his throne, when the Italians expelled him? They were Frenchmen. France is the very fortress of Romanism; and if you attack that fortress and take it, you will inflict a blow on Romanism from which, probably, it will never, never revive. On the other hand, if France conquers that mischief by another, and Socialism and Infidelity combined, prevail over the Jesuit party, as it is possible they may, then again I say, there is in the ill-considered speculations of that party a world of mischief. France, under their influence, will become a volcano, which will not only reduce to chaos all their own society, but send its fiery showers over the world, kindling into a blaze all that is combustible in all the populations of Europe. The Protestant churches, as I have said, can do nothing, or next to nothing: they are far too cold; and in the midst of the moral tempest that is beginning to blow around their heads, you might as well look to some frozen Alp to arrest, in its lofty stillness, the

tempest raging around its granite, as you might look to the national churches in France to arrest the mischiefs of every kind that threaten their land. Our brethren, strong in the faith, and blessed of God, have begun the work which, if anything does it, must arrest these evils, and make France, with ourselves, free, moral, religious. Oh! if that victory were won, England and France together, free, moral, religious, might lead on the nations of the world in a peaceful progress of endless improvement.

Let me then ask you, my young friends, from this time to take an interest in France; and in after years, when that great result, if God blesses the labours of our brethren, may take place, may each one of you have the satisfaction of saying, "In that moral triumph I have had my part."

Italy.

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A LECTURE

BY

CHARLES BUXTON, Esq.,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN EXETER HALL,

NOVEMBER 18, 1851.

SAMUEL GURNEY, Esq.,

IN THE CHAIR.



## ITALY.

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MY FRIENDS,—I have had the good fortune at different times to spend two winters in Italy; so I thought that, instead of taking up any literary or scientific subject for my lecture here, it would be better for me to tell you, in a simple and unpretending way, of the things that made the most vivid impression upon my memory while travelling in that country, and especially while residing at Rome.

I shall not attempt to enter into any disquisitions on this vast topic; nor shall I venture even on the border of the broad field of Italian history; for the very good reason, that if I once began narrating the great events that have occurred there, I should not be able to stop till to-morrow morning. So all I can hope to do, is to make you, as it were, my fellow-travellers, and to sketch rapidly some of the things that catch the eye and the ear, as one passes through the land.

But I must begin by briefly making you acquainted with the personal appearance of the country. You know very well that the mountain chain of the Apennines runs the whole length of Italy, from north to south, like a huge backbone. The valleys and plains

that lie at the feet of these mountains are perfectly flat—flatter, I should say, even than my flat native country of Norfolk. But there is this little difference, that, while in Norfolk, as Lady Mary Wortley Montague said, all you could see was one blade of grass, and two rabbits fighting for it—and this is almost true of some of our wide and heathy plains—in Italy nothing can be more rich and beautiful than the plains, as I saw them last summer. The corn grows thick below; but all down the fields are planted trees, which shield the wheat from the too-powerful sun, and from tree to tree hang the vines, in festoons of luxuriant beauty; so that the earth below, and the air above, seem rich in the good gifts of God. On the slopes of the mountains, where the vines cannot grow, there are forests of olive trees, very generally with corn growing round their stems. The nightingale's voice was heard from every side, and my cockney heart was gladdened by the glorious sunshine and the azure blue of the sky.

But, in the south at least of Italy, one's gladness is sadly clouded by seeing the wretchedness, the squalor, the rags, the beggary of the peasants who cultivate those lovely plains. They live generally, not scattered in separate cottages, but in small towns; and these are very commonly perched on the top of some steep hill; so that you may see the husbandmen, after their day's work is done in the valleys, climbing perhaps two or three miles up to the town, and there they are crowded together in disgusting filth, discomfort, and disorder. Why do they not live in cottages, hard by their fields? Why? simply because, in old times of continual war and havoc,

a fortified or a steep hill was far safer; and in modern times they stand there still, because there is no change in Italy except for the worse; what their fathers did with a reason, they do without one.

The mountains are of a moderate height, and not of a very picturesque outline, but are made pleasing to the eye by the verdure that clothes them. At Carrara, in north Italy, the mountains are entirely composed of white marble; the surface, however, has been turned grey by time; but in the quarries, this grey outside has been blasted off; and as you walk along the deep, narrow glen, you see the brilliant white rocks gleaming against the blue sky, and the stream at your feet dashes along over a bed of marble, that sparkles like frosted snow.

One of the most curious of the natural phenomena of Italy is the blue Cave of Capri. Capri is a small rocky island, just opposite Naples, and at the foot of one of the perpendicular cliffs, which go sheer down into the sea, there is a very narrow slit—only a few inches broader than I am, and not more than three feet high from the surface of the water. This slit in the flat wall of cliff is all you see when you arrive in the steamer: but instantly the ship is surrounded by very small boats, each of which can barely hold three persons; and a frightful jabbering and quarrelling goes on among the boatmen till all the visitors are stowed away, one or two in each punt. The boatman makes you lie down flat at the bottom, and then paddles through the narrow and low slit I spoke of; but no sooner have you passed through this bunghole, if I may say so, than you find yourself in a barrel. You sit up in the boat, and find yourself

in a large cavern ; and the rocks, the water, nay, the very faces of the people in the boats, all seem to be of a resplendent blue colour. The effect is strangely beautiful ; for the blue is as bright and rich as that of a turquoise. The reason of this phenomenon I believe to be as follows :—You know that in light the blue ray is the one most easily reflected and refracted. Hence, when the sun's light pours down into the sea outside the cliff, the other rays pierce through, or become absorbed by the water ; but the blue rays get knocked about by the water, this way and that way, and a good many of them are driven up, through the narrow opening below the sea, into the cavern ; thus making every object within it look a deep unmixed blue.

Italy presents many other remarkable natural phenomena ; but of course the grand objects of interest in that country are not the works of nature, but the works of man,—and, above all, the Queen of the Seven Hills—the great city of Rome, to which our attention this evening must be almost confined. Certainly no place in the world can equal Rome in the combination of every species of interest. Twice has she acquired the most vast dominion over the human race : in former times, the dominion of force—in modern, that of superstition. Then, too, she is the great treasury of art ; she is unequalled in her wealth in sculpture, painting, and architecture ; and her antiquities stand unrivalled. More than this,—to the Christian, Rome must always be most interesting, from its associations with the apostle St. Paul, of whose voyage and journey hither, after his shipwreck at Melita, we have such a full account. He

then remained here for two years, as a prisoner, but in his own house, and preached, as it would seem, in the palace of Nero; and wrote the epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Hebrews. He returned again after some years, but was cast into prison, whence he wrote these noble lines to Timothy: "I am now ready to be offered; and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of glory." And soon afterwards he suffered martyrdom by command of the tyrant Nero.

The first thing the traveller does after reaching Rome, is to climb up to the top of a huge and hideous tower, which now stands where once stood the temple of Jove, on the Capitoline hill. Stretched out before and beneath it lies the Roman Forum, the scene of all the most heart-stirring events in the history of that wonderful people, who rose from a band of robbers to be lords of the whole world. There is the spot where Quintus Curtius jumped his horse into the gulf,—there the Romans carried off the Sabine women,—there sat the old senators in their curule chairs, awaiting death in solemn silence, while the Gauls ravaged the city with fire and sword,—there the cackling of the geese awoke the sentinel when the enemy was at the gate,—there too fell Cæsar, at the foot of Pompey's statue, which still exists,—there Mark Antony roused the people to avenge him,—there Cicero shook the senate with the thunders of his eloquence. Every corner of that once famous Forum teems with such remembrances as these; and beneath the tower on which we are standing, still may be seen the deep

and fearful dungeon, where, as tradition says, St Paul, and also St. Peter, awaited the crown of martyrdom.

The Forum is now a long, open, deserted market-place; and on each side, and scattered here and there, stand the beautiful columns of ruined temples—while superb triumphal arches span the road; and this is still in part composed of the very same blocks of iron basalt which were laid down nearly two thousand years ago, for the chariots of consuls and Cæsars to pass over.

At the end of the Forum rises an exquisite triumphal arch, not so massive as some others, but singularly interesting, for it was the one set up in honour of Titus, because of his conquest of Jerusalem; and the carvings upon it represent his triumphal return to Rome. There is Titus depicted, standing on his chariot, surrounded by his laurel-crowned soldiers—the captive Jews led along behind; and there is represented—and this is the only representation we have of it—the ark of God, with the seven-branched golden candlestick resting upon it, and the pot of manna.

Is it not striking, thus suddenly as it were to dive through the flood of recollections of Roman greatness, and catch this passing glimpse of the far away but celestial glories of the time, when God came forth as the leader of his people Israel, and fed them himself with food, and spake face to face with Moses?

Almost every part of Rome abounds in antiquities; the Custom-house is a magnificent temple, whose cornice is made of blocks of white marble, more

than twenty feet long. Wherever they dig down, some remnants are found of the days gone by. Last year, in clearing out a drain, the workmen lighted on a perfect and very beautiful statue of a gladiator. In pulling down an old wall, they found completely bricked up in a niche, an exquisite statue of Venus—perfect as on the day it left the sculptor's studio, nearly two thousand years ago. It is a sufficient indication of the prodigious wealth of Rome in antiquities, that you may walk miles and miles in the galleries of the Vatican museum, surrounded on all sides by such remains.

But we will turn now from the things that have been, to the things that are. The Rome of old had a prodigious influence upon the fate of the world—she spread her empire from the borders of Scotland to the plains of India; but she, and her might, and her glory have passed away—a broken statue, a ruined arch, a falling temple,—these are all that now remain of the former queen of the world. Let us leave “the dead past to bury its dead,” and let us see what are the things offered to the eye at this day in Rome, as the centre of papal Christendom.

Rome is full of wonders of all kinds; but the most wonderful thing of all is, to see how trifling and frivolous is that religion which has yet held such an empire over millions and millions and millions of immortal men. One feels amazed at the poorness and shallowness of human nature, that it should have chosen so heavy a yoke, and such fantastic trappings, in preference to the simple and easy yoke of true and pure Christianity. This is the principal impression left on the mind by watching the celebra-

tion of the mass, with the swarms of priests in gorgeous raiment—the chorister boys dressed in white to represent angels—the bowings, and sinkings, and risings, and curtseyings—the wavings of censers and tinkling of bells—the prayers chanted in an unknown tongue—the lighted candles and the tawdry artificial flowers with which the altar is laden, embowering waxen images of the Virgin and Child. How incomparably less solemn and less sublime than our own form of worship, where man stands in humble simplicity before his Maker and Lord!

Many, however, of the ceremonies at Rome are amusing enough, though puerile, and rather call for a half-pitying smile than for a frown of indignation. There is one that takes place every year, in the church of the Ara Cœli—a sort of child's religious fête. One of the chapels in the church is arranged to look like a stall, in which are placed wax figures, larger than life, of the Holy Family, and the beasts around them, and the shepherds come to worship. This is got up with great abundance of decoration and of wax tapers; and multitudes of people bring their children to adore the Bambino, the wax image of the Holy Child. But the most curious part of the ceremony is, that all day long there are a succession of children set up one at a time, on a pulpit, who deliver orations, which they have learnt by heart, in honour of the Bambino.

The wax baby, who appears in the scene, is very celebrated for working miracles, and when any one is ill, who can afford the expense, he sends for this figure, which is brought in all solemnity by a party of monks, and a nice little bill comes in the

next morning. The worst of it is, that the patient is just as apt to die that evening as if no baby had come at all.

A year or two ago, it is said, a tax was put upon bread at Rome, which excited great dissatisfaction. At last the wax baby lifted up his voice and spoke, uttering an awful injunction to the government to remove the tax. This created a great stir. A day or two after, the voice spoke again, whereupon the police sent to the monks, to say that no such miracle could possibly be allowed. Again, however, the baby spoke; but this last time, the head of the police sent word to the monks, who are dry nurses to the little doll, that if it said anything more, they should be turned out of their situation. Now it is remarkable that the miracle ceased from that very day!

One thing that always strikes the eye of travellers in foreign churches, is the number of votive pictures and figures which are hung up round the walls. When any one has been ill, or had an accident and has recovered, he often has a small painting made of the occurrence, whatever it was, or of himself in bed, and overhead is seen the Virgin Mary, with the holy Child in her arms, bringing him succour. Or if the injury has been local,—for instance, if the man's leg has been hurt, but got well again,—he will hang up a little wax image of a leg, in commemoration of his recovery. Some of these votive offerings are so rude and ridiculous, and the whole effect of a multitude of waxen arms, noses, legs, ears, &c., hung up on the church walls, is so strange, that at first one can hardly help laughing at them. But surely in the eye of Heaven there must be something

pleasing in these expressions of thankfulness for preservation and restoration, though in a mistaken form. Let not us Protestants be less ready to acknowledge God's mercy in what has befallen us.

Nothing more clearly shows the deep darkness of superstition into which the Roman Catholic Church has been plunged, than the offers of indulgence which it makes in return for the most ridiculous performances. A marble staircase is preserved at Rome, which is said to have been the one in the house of Pilate; and on certain festivals crowds of people may be seen clambering up it, on their hands and knees, by which they earn I don't know how many years' indulgence. So, too, there stands a cross in the Coliseum, with an inscription upon it, saying that whoever kisses it, and says his pater noster, shall receive three hundred days' indulgence. I inquired what was meant by this indulgence, and found that it meant that the man's soul would hereafter escape three hundred days of purgatory!

Of all the Italian religious ceremonies, the most impressive is a funeral. In walking through the streets, you hear the sound of a low and mournful chant, and in a minute or two up comes the strangest and most lugubrious procession you can imagine. The dead body is not put in a coffin, but lies upon an open bier, with the face uncovered; and before and behind there march perhaps twenty or thirty men, who are dressed from top to toe in long white robes, with a hood over their heads, in which slits are cut for the eyes and mouth. I can assure you that they look so like ghosts come up from the under world to carry their brother home with them,

that it is difficult at first not to feel quite dismayed by the sight. I happened at Trent to see a curious ceremony, in commemoration of an incident which is said to have taken place there many centuries ago. The tradition is, that Jews were in the habit of entrapping and eating for breakfast, as a relish with their bread and butter, young Christian children. One little boy had been caught and his throat cut; but some saint very unkindly came to his aid, and nothing could kill him; at last, in despair, the Jews threw him into a well, but he still kept lifting up his voice, till attention was drawn to it, and his persecutors were found out and punished, and the child died in a commonplace and comfortable manner. The ceremony I saw, represented the funeral of this child, and a small bier, with a wax figure of a little boy, was carried all round the town, followed by hundreds and hundreds of children, all dressed out in their prettiest clothes, and with garlands of flowers and ribands in their hand, and carrying banners, on which were pictures of the incidents of the story.

Italy, of course, abounds in relics; and it is surprising to see the profound faith of the people in their miraculous powers. I remember visiting a monastery at the foot of Mount Etna, which some years ago had a remarkable escape from a stream of lava, during an eruption of the burning mountain. The lava came to the convent door, but then suddenly changed its course, and left it unharmed. I asked one of the monks, who thought he spoke English, what the reason was. "Holi nell" was his reply. "Holi nell," said I, "what's that?" "Holi nell," said he. I could not divine what he meant, so I asked him

to explain himself in Italian; and I found that he attributed their deliverance to the miraculous intervention of a holy nail—a nail of the cross—which he said was laid up in their chapel

I think indolence has a good deal to do with their faith in the miraculous interposition of saints, and so forth,—they find it so far easier to call on Saint Somebody to help them, than to help themselves. Once a year there is a great driving of horses and cattle at Rome, to the Church of St. Anthony, where the priests sprinkle holy water over them, and give them their blessing. The people suppose that this insures the animals against disease and accident, though they might see the contrary with their own eyes, for the horses that limp up to the church, come limping down again, in spite of St. Anthony and his blessing.

But in all these petty phenomena of the Roman Catholic religion, you can trace its grand characteristic—the element which makes it so pernicious to the souls of men. I mean the tendency to put in the place of what is spiritual, and what can alone satisfy the heart and soul of man, that which can only please his eye, and ear, and senses. And one sees the same thing in matters of far greater moment—and in this most painfully of all—that while Jesus Christ in his human character, as a child on his mother's knee, or hanging on the cross, is certainly an object of general adoration, and so far well; yet,—and this is surely a most momentous evil—the idea of God the Father seems to be in a considerable degree shut out of the mind of the Roman Catholic, by the human images of the Virgin Mary, the saints,

and so forth, with which it is filled. Thus Christ seems to be placed on the throne of heaven, and the Virgin Mary to occupy his place, as mediator and intercessor for mankind. Thus, instead of praying to God the Father in the name of his Son, as he himself bids us, they very commonly pray to the Son in the name of the Virgin Mary. This is one of the prayers in use among them :—

“Most glorious Virgin Mary, chosen by the eternal counsels as mother of the Eternal Word, treasurer of the favours of heaven, and advocate of sinners, I, thy most unworthy servant, beseech thee, that thou wilt be my guide, my counsellor in this valley of tears, and that thou wilt obtain for me, from thy divine Son, the pardon of my sins, improvement of my life, care for my wants, a holy death, and life eternal. Amen.” In this prayer you see the office of mediator is referred to the Virgin Mary, instead of to Christ; while there is not the slightest allusion to God the Father of all.

Some of the things I have mentioned are but trifles. But the very fact of their being trifles makes them serious; for unhappily, this trifling, while it must tend to make shallow the religion of the lower classes, tends to deprive the educated classes of any religion at all. Many educated Roman Catholics will laugh at the follies of their own church as freely as possible: but then, what can they do? They may see that this is wrong; but their spiritual, and indeed their temporal governors also, have assumed the awful responsibility of preventing them from finding the right one. The dread and dislike of the Roman Catholic Church to the holy Word of God

has been often denied ; but no one can have travelled in Italy, without seeing a hundred proofs of it. I asked an Englishman, who had turned Roman Catholic, what was the fact : and he rather unwillingly told me, that he might not on any account read our translation ; and might not read even the Roman Catholic one, without express permission from his spiritual masters. Moreover, the Roman Catholic version usually has very copious notes ; so that it is in several volumes, and consequently a very expensive book. This in itself would place it far out of the reach of the mass of the population. I had a good deal of conversation with some Jesuits, at different times, and I found that their first aim was to undermine one's simple reliance on the Bible, so as to reduce it to the level of the traditions of the church ; in short, to put the word of man in the same place as the Word of the Creator of the world.

At the time of the Revolution of 1849, the Bible Society made great efforts to throw in a supply of several thousand Bibles, which were eagerly received by the people. When the Pope was restored, a commission was set on foot to eradicate this great evil : the commissioners visited every house where there was the least likelihood that a Bible could be found, and searched the rooms through and through, from the attics to the cellar, breaking open chests and drawers, in the hope of finding and destroying the Word of God ; and whenever a Bible was found to have been concealed, the owner of the house was fined or imprisoned, as I was told, in some cases, for one or two years, or even more.

At Florence likewise, the Bible Society made

great efforts, and with striking success. But there too the government has now set its face unflinchingly against that mischievous, hateful book, the Bible, and they are doing all they can to silence the voice of the Most High. Perhaps you have heard the name of Count Guicciardini; I made his acquaintance at Florence, and I never met a more pleasing, more sensible, sober-minded man. By the continual study of the Bible, he was led to renounce the errors of popery, and to become a most earnest Protestant; and he was the head of a body of men of similar opinions. During the Revolution of 1848-9, this was very well. These excellent people could get the Bible freely; they used to meet together almost daily, to read, and pray, and worship God, and their church increased rapidly. But when the Grand Duke was reinstated, he closed their church, banished and imprisoned two of their ministers, and made it penal for them merely to meet at each others' houses and read the Bible together. Count Guicciardini met one evening two or three friends, and their minds being full of religious feeling, they could not refrain from taking out their Bibles and reading a chapter; this was discovered, and they were imprisoned first, and then banished from their country, and heavily fined.

As an instance of the eagerness of many of the people to obtain the Bible, I may mention that I was told at Florence, that a Bible had been lent by one of Count Guicciardini's friends, to some one in a neighbouring village. It was to be returned in a week; but it did not come back for nearly a fortnight: and the excuse the person gave for his delay was, that

two or three young men of the village had been copying it night and day, so that when it was returned, they might still have the Word of God among them; and they could not finish their work by the appointed day. There is a large trade done at Florence, in caviare, made from the roe of the sturgeon; and just before I was at Florence, some Bibles were secretly imported at the bottom of the casks of caviare, where of course the custom-house officers never dreamt of looking for them. What a contrast is this to England, with a capital Bible to be had for tenpence in any bookseller's shop! But let us not forget that it is but a small thing to hear the Word, unless we have increase of grace to hear it meekly, and to receive it with pure affection, that we may bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

I made the acquaintance, while there, of a young Neapolitan Baron who had become converted from Popery by an earnest study of the Word of God; but this had forced him to fly from his country, and when I saw him he was in great distress, for the Neapolitan Government had actually seized upon his young brother, a lad of sixteen, and thrown him into prison, as they could not get hold of this heretic, as they called him, himself. After dwelling on these things, it is very gratifying to look round at our worthy chairman, and to see how in England a man may thrive, though he does cut his coat the wrong way, and say thee and thou, and hold many unorthodox and heretical doctrines. A portly heretic is the best sign of a good government. Yes—well—but do not boast too loudly. You know that at one time, in Charles II.'s reign, there were 3000

quakers in jail, merely because they differed from their countrymen in their way of worshipping God.

I have lightly sketched a few of the absurdities, and a few of the abominations, which meet the traveller's eye in Italy, as fruits of the Roman Catholic religion. And I think you will agree with a sentiment expressed by a very clever writer, John Sterling, who exclaims, in a letter from Rome, "How any man with clear head and honest heart, and capable of seeing realities, and distinguishing them from scenic falsehoods, should, after living in a Romanist country, and especially at Rome, be inclined to side with Leo against Luther, I cannot understand."

On the other hand, while we strongly condemn the system, we must not forget the law of love and forbearance towards those that unhappily still labour under it. After all, they are our Christian brethren, and many of them, we may confidently hope, are sheep, if not of the same fold, yet carried in the bosom of the same Shepherd as ourselves. I have known Roman Catholics, whose ardent love and earnest faith might put us Protestants to shame. I can assure you that I never felt myself more truly in the presence of the Spirit of love, gentleness, meekness, goodness, faith, than in the company of the French Sisters of Charity at Rome. And again and again, when travelling, have I been struck by the earnest devotion of the lower classes in the churches and cathedrals, and heartily wished that our poor could be trained to come to church in such numbers, and to worship with such heartiness as the working men and women abroad. We should therefore fear,

lest, with all their greater darkness, they should be found to have loved God better, and worshipped him more sincerely than ourselves, though we revel in the mid-day sunshine of eternal truth.

I have, I fear, occupied too much of our time this evening with this subject. I will now, therefore, turn to the political aspect of Rome.

My first visit to Italy was twelve years ago. My second was last winter. At the time I was there before, there seemed no hope that the Papal Government would ever move a finger in the way of reform. However, in 1846 the old Pope Gregory died, and was succeeded by Cardinal Ferretti, who soon created a prodigious ferment in the minds of men, by beginning what seemed to be a career of improvement. He first proclaimed an amnesty for political offences. The prisons poured forth numbers of those who had been condemned under Gregory, and many exiles returned, amidst the loud acclamations of their countrymen.

Then he set on foot commissions to inquire into the state of the law, and other matters. This excited vast hopes in the minds of his subjects: he was hailed wherever he went, as the darling of his people: nothing could exceed the joy and delight at Rome. But a cloud soon shadowed all this sunshine. It was said, that though reforms were loudly talked of, scarcely anything was done. The Government became terrified by the ferment of the popular mind, and tried to draw back, while every day more furious cries were heard for this and the other radical reform.

At length, the vehemence of popular feeling com-

pelled the Pope to grant a sort of Cabinet Council of Laymen, and finally, the arming of the civic guard.

In the midst of this excitement of the public mind at Rome, came one day the news of the Revolution in France; at the intelligence, Tuscany first, and then Naples, broke out into revolt. Then came news from Germany of the Revolution at Vienna—then came news that Milan had risen in insurrection, and driven out its German masters. From Venice came the same intelligence—then came the news that Italy was arming against the hated Austrians, and that the King of Sardinia had volunteered to lead the van.

Inconceivable excitement prevailed at Rome, as shock followed shock of the great political earthquake; and men embraced and wept in the streets with passionate joy at the brilliant day of freedom and deliverance from their foreign oppressors, and restored nationality which seemed to dawn before their eyes. Nothing could resist the tremendous force of public feeling. The Pope granted a parliament, and plunged into the war with Austria.

Then came the decline of all these glorious hopes. The Papal Government every day grew weaker, and the populace more wild. Rossi, the best of Italian statesmen, was murdered by the people. The Pope fled. Rome became a republic; and finally, after a gallant resistance from Garibaldi and his men, the Pope was forced again upon his unwilling subjects by the bayonets of the French.

Such had been the wave of events that had swept over Rome in the interval between my two visits. And with what result? The result had literally been **nothing**. A blank—nay, worse than nothing. When

I came back to Rome, I found no one reform—no one improvement—the same wretched misrule—the same lowering discontent—the same misery among the people.

You who live in this thronged and animated city, where all is life, movement, progress towards a better state, in mind, in politics, in religion, in trade, manufacture, and the cultivation of the soil—you can hardly imagine the state of mournful, stagnant nothingness, which exists in the Papal dominions.

I can assure you that these words but feebly express the feeling of decay, of decline, of death, which is ever present with one while in the Roman states. There is no movement: all things stand still. Stand still! no, nothing in nature can stand still; to stand still, whether in mind, or in soul, or in matter, is to tumble down. And so it is beneath the Papal sway. You go from town to town, and from village to village, and everywhere the spectacle is the same—palaces crumbling, walls falling, agriculture deplorable—trade dead and gone—the people, lazy, dirty, ragged scoundrels—the towns lifeless and squalid.

And is all this the work of man?—might it have been avoided had the Papal Government been good, instead of abominable? I say, most certainly it might; and the proof, the striking proof is, the contrast between the two adjoining states, Tuscany and Romagna. Tuscany has had the happiness, for eighty years, till within the last year or two, of being ruled by beneficent and open-minded princes; and it looks like a garden—the peasants clean and cheerful—the towns prosperous—trade and agri

culture flourishing. Now, from the accounts of Tuscany before the time of the Duke Leopold, it must have been about as miserable as the states of the Church. Yet what a contrast now!

The fact is simply this: that the Papal Government, instead of fostering the energies of the nation, and seeking to aid its progress in wealth and well-being, has set its face firmly the other way. The Popes, in their temporal rule, have been a parcel of silly, timid, old women, and they have been terrified by the least signs of life in the nation; so that their direct aim has been to discourage enterprise of every kind and sort. I was often told at Rome that, some years ago, a company of English petitioned to be allowed to drain the Pontine marshes, which are rich land, but excessively wet, and consequently most pestiferous to Rome, and to all the country round. There is no reason whatever why they should not be drained; it could be easily done, and would do great good and no harm: but no—the Pope refused. There was too much improvement in the scheme for his papal taste! When Sir Humphry Davy was at Rome, he spoke to the Pope about it, begging him to give the required permission. “Sir,” replied Gregory, “if God had wished these marshes to be drained, he would have drained them Himself!” The same Gregory XVI. would not allow banks to be formed, though such an important aid to trade; nor would he tolerate agricultural or industrial associations; and he publicly proclaimed his aversion to railroads, and not only proclaimed his aversion, but acted on it, by refusing to allow them to be made in his

dominions. It is hardly necessary to add, that the principle of "protection to native industry" is rampant at Rome—though, unluckily, there is no "native industry," but only "native idleness" to protect. Manufactures there are none—except, indeed, of artistic and ornamental wares, cameos and mosaics, and such things, which are bought by the foreigners who always crowd Rome in the winter; and the cultivation of the soil is in the lowest possible state—vast tracts of land lying almost desolate, which once teemed with human and vegetable life.

All authorities agree, that nothing can exceed the stupidity of the whole judicial system, except its scandalous corruption and cruelties. As a slight glimpse of some of the ridiculous provisions of the Roman law, I may mention, that when in Rome the first time, our Italian servant came running into the house one day, looking much agitated, and told us, that he had just seen a man step up behind a woman, and stab her to the heart with his stiletto, and then quietly walk off. "What!" said we, "and did not you try to stop him, or try to help the woman?" Oh, no; he had instantly run away, and so had all the other Italians present, among them two or three soldiers. And why? Why, because the law ordains, that whosoever is found nearest to a murdered body by the police, is to be taken up on suspicion of being the murderer; and to be taken up on suspicion is no light matter at Rome—for bail is a thing unknown—and suspected criminals often lie in prison for months and months, and sometimes for a year or more, before their trial comes on.

Trade at Rome is harassed to death by a multitude of absurd arrangements: by very high tariffs, by premiums, monopolies, and privileges. As an example of these last, the trade of refining sugar was sold by the government of the late Pope to a single firm—no other house might refine it—and yet this house could only produce one-tenth part of the quantity requisite for consumption. The remainder, therefore, had to come in from abroad, subject to a duty of 40 per cent.

The state of the Roman finances is as bad as bad can be. The taxes are extremely heavy, and levied in the very worst way,—in great measure on food, and the other necessaries of life. Till the death of the last Pope, and for aught I know at the present time, the treasury was managed by a cardinal, whose accounts, if accounts were kept at all, were never audited or inspected. It is a fact, that when the present Pope was apparently commencing his reforms, an attempt was made to ascertain the state of the national finances; but it was found, that during the ten previous years no accounts had been kept. At any rate, they were such a dire mass of confusion, that only one thing could possibly be discovered, viz. that the expenditure of the state had greatly exceeded its income; and this is the case at the present day.

It is not only by the taxes that the country is impoverished, but by the gigantic scale of its ecclesiastical establishments, into whose hands the greater part of the property of the country has fallen, and in whose hands it lies very idle and neglected, as corporation property usually does. I was informed, that in the Roman States alone there are seventy thou-

sand priests, besides a whole army of monks and nuns; and almost all the offices of state are filled with ecclesiastics.

Education is entirely in the hands of the Jesuits. A great point is made of subtle distinctions: such, for example, as the distinction between the worship of Jesus, of the Virgin Mary, and of the saints. The boys are taught that one is *latria*; another, *doulia*; a third, *idolia*; but which was which, and what these distinctions meant, seemed often a matter of great confusion. I however saw one large educational establishment, managed by French nuns, which seemed very good, as far at least as the tone and spirit of the institution went, and its outward order. There is only one infant school in Rome, the late Pope having resisted such an innovation. I suppose he thought the babies would rise in revolt, and put his soldiers to flight. The one that exists was, I believe, set on foot by the Princess Doria, who is an Englishwoman.

The censorship of the press is extremely severe and extremely bigoted. Nothing can see the light which indicates any boldness of thought in any direction whatever; and the consequence is, that five-sixths of the literature sold in the streets is the most utter trash,—lives of saints and martyrs who never lived, and stories of miracles which never were performed. At Naples all histories, of whatever kind, are forbidden to be sold!

But perhaps the worst feature of the Papal Government has been its police,—officious, but inefficient; meddling, worrying, tyrannical, yet an utterly feeble instrument in the prevention or detection of crime

In fact, in Rome and Naples the police are mere spies; and so universal is the espionage that prevails, that no Italian will dare to talk to you about politics or religion, if any other Italian be by. When discussing such questions with an Italian, he would get up again and again and go to the door, to see that no one,—the servant, for instance,—was listening behind it. I was dining one day at an hotel in the south of Italy, with two young Italian noblemen, when in the course of conversation one of them, a lad of nineteen or twenty, began talking lightly of the Pope, and saying he had not been to confession for three months before. At that moment we heard a movement outside the door, and it was curious to see the anxiety and agitation into which the young men were thrown, under the idea that possibly they had been overheard. The lad, though the most garrulous fellow in the world, was completely silenced. They kept looking at each other in real alarm, evidently not knowing whether the police might not be coming to seize them. The Italians naturally are a very intelligent, quick, acute people, with a keen sense of the beautiful in art, and inclined to intellectual pursuits; but the spiritual tyranny under which they have so long suffered, has effectually quenched the fire of the soul. No freedom of thought having been allowed, the least glimmer of independence of mind having invariably excited the displeasure of the government, the effect has of course been that they have grown, not indeed dull and stupid, for that Italians never could become, but silly and trifling. As they may not think and talk about politics, religion, science, or any other solid matters, why, they

have learnt to think and talk about nothing at all; and it is a painful but instructive spectacle to a stranger to see a large nation and its affairs carried on without any mind to impel and arrange them.

Seeing how in England, where all things are exposed to light and air; where any one may assail those in office as roundly as he pleases; where there is the daily press to drag abuses to light, and condemn them; where there is the House of Commons to act as their executioner,—and yet how many gross abuses have grown up to a prodigious size here, and still stand their ground,—we can easily fancy in what a deplorable state the laws and customs must be of a nation, where any improvement is looked upon with absolute horror. As an instance of this intense Toryism, when the French invaded Italy, at the end of the last century, they effected a complete and most admirable reform in the whole code of Roman law. In other words, they swept away all the elaborate and ponderous absurdities which had been accumulating for centuries and centuries into one huge conglomeration of humbug, and replaced it by the simple, clear, and sensible provisions of the Code Napoleon. This was felt to be a benefit of the greatest magnitude; but no sooner had the French dominion fallen, than the Pope restored the old laws and the old legal machinery, with all the incredible mischiefs which they caused; and the effect is, that justice is an article not to be had in Rome,—except for money.

Again; the first time I was in Rome, my father obtained leave to examine the state of the prisons. The Government professed the utmost eagerness to obtain information from him as to the abuses that

he found, and suggestions for improvement; and after receiving his report, they gave orders for all sorts of excellent reforms. This seemed very grand: the only fault of it was, that no sooner had my father left Rome than (as we afterwards heard) a private order was issued to quash all these changes, and rearrange everything in its old state of confusion. The whole thing had merely been a piece of papal "soft sawder," to give the Government a good name with the English.

I do not mean to say that the Popes never make reforms. Far from it. The Pope before the last was a great reformer: and I'll tell you what his improvements were. He put a stop to vaccination against the smallpox; he gave unlimited power to make entails on land; he made stringent game and fishery laws; he enjoined the use of the Latin language in the courts of law, so that the prisoners could not tell what the lawyers were saying. He forbade the Jews to hold any real property, and forced them to sell all they had, and revived sundry cruel and offensive usages concerning them. This is a true specimen of Papal Reforms.

The people feel most bitterly the state of thralldom and degradation in which they are held; and nothing but the physical force of Austria, and of France, keeps down an immediate outbreak. At Rome the Pope is detested. The people feel that he has acted the part of a traitor: having known so well what it was right to do, and actually begun in the right course; and yet now he uses the whole of his power in his own kingdom, and the whole of his influence elsewhere, to prevent anything like progress or improvement.

Nothing can have been more shameful more unprincipled, than the behaviour of the French: except in this one point, that their soldiers have been kept in excellent order and discipline. But when we remember their loud talk about fraternity with other nations, and then see what they have done at Rome, it is impossible to avoid a strong feeling of disgust. Not but that it might have been a very good thing to put down the revolutionary Government—not but that it might have been a very right thing to restore the Pope; but then, restoring him as they did, and maintaining him on his throne by sheer force, with an army of 8000 men, they were clearly bound, not to give up his unfortunate people to him tied hand and foot, but to insure to them, if not political power, yet at least every practicable reform and improvement. But instead of this reasonable and right course, they have not moved one finger to alleviate the wretched condition of the Pope's subjects, but have given him and his despicable Government full swing in their career of tyranny.

Where is all this to end? is the question that fills the mind, as we see this strange state of things, where every government does all it can to keep the people down, and in order thereto thwarts, bullies, and taxes them; where the grand aim of the people is to upset the Government; and where the latter is only kept on the back of the former, by the armed intervention of a foreign power. There cannot be a moment's question in the mind of any one who has travelled in Italy, that the instant the French and Austrian troops were taken away, there would be a general outbreak, and probably attended with far more violence than the one

in 1848. What inconceivable shortsightedness in the governors of that beautiful country, to make forcible reform their only maxim of government, instead of seeking to win the hearts of the people by a progressive, reforming, and paternal rule !

And now, my friends, one word, and I have done. The facts on which we have been dwelling to-night, whether dull or not in themselves, yet at least ought to bear fruit for us in one lesson. We pity the Italians for the darkness and stagnation in which their rulers keep them. We rejoice in our far greater privileges ; but then, if " we are not the children of the night, nor of darkness," the conclusion is, " Therefore, let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love."

A visit to Italy leaves a double impression on the mind. It makes one proud and glad of the light and freedom to which we are born, but it also makes one sorry and ashamed of the shabby growth of our character, in such an atmosphere and such a soil. It is painful to reflect, how little we use our great privileges ; for how large a part of our lives each one of us is indolent, feeble, and frivolous, as though enervated by an Italian sky, and cramped by the bondage of an Italian government. We are not, like them, stranded on a mudbank, in a waterlogged punt ; we are on board a vessel that bounds forward,

" With a wet sheet and a flowing sea,  
A wind that follows fast,  
And fills the white and rustling sail,  
And bends the gallant mast !"

But the question is, Are we at our posts ? Are we

doing our duty? We are free to think, free to speak, free to do, what we will; but are our free thoughts, and words, and actions, worth twopence after all? Here we have a thousand books, abounding in wisdom; but do we grow wise? We have churches, and chapels, and ministers, and Bibles; but do we grow good? We have endless channels open for our benevolence; but do we do good to others?

Let us not boast ourselves as *better off* than the Italian, unless we *are better* too. It is not by the husbandry bestowed on us that we shall be judged, but by the fruits we have borne; and feeble, weak, and useless as each of us is apt to feel, yet be sure, that even if our minds be engines of but one donkey-power, yet that one donkey-power was given us to be used; and only let it be used with vigour, and it will grind some good grist in the great mill of the world. It is in the power of each one of us, with God's blessing, and strenuous exertion, to become far better and far wiser than we are, and in some degree to help forward our fellow men, and advance the kingdom of our Lord. We may each aid in some degree the progress of knowledge, of civilization, and of religion, if we set ourselves heartily to work, in zeal, and prayer, bearing in mind that—

“Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our destined end and way;  
But to act, that each to-morrow  
Find us further than to-day.”

Divine Revelation: its Truth and  
Importance.

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A LECTURE

BY THE

REV. DR. BEAUMONT,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN EXETER HALL,

NOVEMBER 25, 1851.

GEORGE KEMP, Esq.,

IN THE CHAIR.



DIVINE REVELATION :  
ITS  
TRUTH AND IMPORTANCE.

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By Divine Revelation we mean the Word of God—the Scriptures at large. It has been alleged that the Christian faith enslaves men under the yoke of ignorance and superstition. And we are called to examine that faith—to inquire whether a book consisting of history, biography, geography, polity, laws, and jurisprudence,—whether a book having so many proverbs, maxims, and oracles—such flights of eloquence and poetry, such sublime theologies and pure moralities—tends to darken the mind. Can a book that contains all this truth and wisdom be said to enslave under the yoke of ignorance? Nor does it enslave men to the influence of superstition. Revelation does not require its votary to give up his conscience and understanding to the dogmas of priests and the dicta of the schools. It calls upon the most profound theologian and the most erudite philosopher to submit to its lessons, as well as the

meanest peasant and the humblest artisan. It flatters none—it despises none. It is characterized by expansion, nobility, and charity. It has to complain, that those who disdain its authority will not investigate its claims to their acceptance and submission.

Our divine faith, and ignorance, are altogether incompatible—light and darkness are not more so. The tyrants of mind were the first to declare against it, even as the birds of night fly the light of day. They admitted and declared that they must either destroy printing and the Bible, or they would destroy them.

The spots of the earth, the places round the globe where the arts have advanced most, and letters have flourished most; where industry has wrought most, and the people are most free,—are the very spots where the Bible has circulated and most obtained sway among the inhabitants.

The injunction to search the Scriptures given by Christ sweeps away the allegation, that revelation aggravates the error, the superstition, and the enthusiasm of mankind.

Let me adduce, on this occasion, a few historical notices of the revelation which we possess,—a brief account of the English translations or versions of the Bible, the Scriptures of our faith. A similar duty was discharged in connexion with the history of the leading events of the church in ancient times.

The Jewish Church acknowledged, in their great festivals, the propriety of keeping in remembrance the important incidents which had transpired concerning themselves, their religion, and their nation,

however long was the period since the events had passed away, which, by such festivals were commemorated. The plagues of Egypt, the deliverance of the Israelites, the drowning of Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea, the water struck from the rock, the angels' food from the clouds, the conflicts and victories which they experienced, their varied trials and triumphs, their travels and wonders, were all made to pass before the mind on such occasions. And we are but imitating the pattern set us by the church of old, in the inquiry which we are entertaining and prosecuting on this occasion.

I presume not to mark with exact historical accuracy the events connected with our present subject, or to mark the thousandth part of the remarkable interpositions which have attended it. The history of the church is one continued miracle: it is like the bush that was unconsumed in fire; and that of the Bible is similar also.

The original languages in which the Sacred Writings were given were Hebrew and Greek. Some minute differences there were in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, as Chaldee or Samaritan; but these were cognate languages. And the New Testament was in Greek. And hence, were the Bible only to be found in those languages in which it was at first given, it would be in a great measure a sealed book.

There were many versions of the Scriptures in the early centuries. Paper not being then manufactured, and printing unknown, copies of them were very highly prized. About the thirteenth or fourteenth century, the art of making paper arose, when great facility was given to the multiplication of

such copies. "Block-books" then came into use—a device by which engravings on blocks of wood, of representations of scriptural subjects and characters, were made, and thence were conveyed by printing to paper. Forty such plates were prepared, and united they formed the "poor man's Bible." The printing was applied to only one side of the paper.

Towards the close of the eighth century, the Venerable Bede translated the whole Scriptures into the Anglo-Saxon. He was the ornament of his age and country. Though confined to his bed through sickness, he followed his scriptural studies and labours with unceasing devotedness. He would sing anthems, and utter prayers that God would not leave His people orphans in this country. Sometimes he wept aloud, and his pupils who were present were similarly affected. When but one or two chapters remained for translation, he told the person who was writing, to write quickly; and when informed that the whole was finished, he requested to be taken to that part of the room in which he had made the translation, and there, engaged in fervent prayer and seraphic praise, he expired.

There have been four principal English versions of the Holy Bible. Wickliff's translation is one. He was born about 1324, and died in the year 1384. He was designated the morning star of the Reformation, having been the first person who questioned the jurisdiction of the Pope, and criticised the temporalities of the church. It is said that he was not perfectly acquainted with the Hebrew or the Greek, but translated the whole of the Bible from the Vulgate. But the book was interdicted. It was

ordered that whoever had Wickliff's version, or any of the books of it, should be held to be heretics to the church, enemies to the state, and traitors to the crown, and that they should forfeit all they possessed. Wickliff was visited with posthumous persecution; his bones were taken out of the grave, burned, and then scattered in the river.

Tindall's translation comes next to be mentioned. William Tindall was prompted by an intense desire to prepare and circulate the Scriptures in a language understood by the inhabitants of Great Britain. He published his version in Holland: knowing that his work would be obnoxious here, he went abroad, that he might not be molested in his great undertaking. Copies of his Bible were introduced into England. But Tunstall bought up the whole edition, in order to suppress it. By this means, however, Tindall published to the extent of three or four editions, before he died. By the malignant influence of Henry VIII. and his ministers, his persecutors seized Tindall near Brussels. He was imprisoned, and was burned; and when in the flames, he prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of the King of England.

Myles Coverdale's translation is also deserving of specific mention. He was esteemed much in his day, being approved by Edward VI., and presented to a living. But his version of the Scriptures was prohibited, it being pretended that reading it led to error and heresy. And yet the joy which the people manifested on obtaining it was unbounded. The Bible was now in their own tongue. Some bought it; others borrowed it; and they who were unable

to read it themselves, got others to read it to them. Some gave pledges, that they might have the use of a copy to read in turn with others.

A great variety of versions were produced after this time, of which we cannot here take notice.

We pass on to speak, for a moment, of the present authorized version, which was prepared in the reign of James. Fifty-four translators were employed in effecting it, seven of whom died before it was complete. Forty-seven were engaged in this work for three years, and they wrought in companies, one sitting in Cambridge, another in Oxford, and a third in Westminster. Each company had a portion of the Bible, which it translated. The translation made by one company was sent to the other companies. At length, after nearly three years of much labour, the whole was finished. And now, after long expectation and great desire, came forth the new translation of the Bible, by a select and competent number of divines appointed for that purpose, who not only examined the channels by the fountains, but also compared channels with channels. These, with Jacob, rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well of life; so that now even Rachel's weak women may freely come, both to drink themselves, and water the families of their flock at the same. This translation has been commended by the most pious and learned divines, and the most eminent Biblical scholars. The standard of the English language has been fixed by it. It may have some faults, some inaccuracies, but it is, in all substantial points, faithful and true, correct and pure.

And now let us proceed to consider some evidences

of the inspiration of the Scriptures. But perhaps some may be ready to say, Why should you labour to prove that they are inspired? for, if they are so, they can show it themselves, like light, which does not require that any one should argue and say, Here it is. I grant this most readily, in the case of all those who enjoy the blessing of eyesight. They do not need that any one should prove that there is light. But, supposing that some persons were blind, it would be proper to prove to such that light exists. Many, happily, know and feel that the Scriptures are inspired. But all have not this belief; and some even reject the Word of God, and condemn the counsel of the Most High. To them, an argument to prove that the Scriptures are of God, may be relevant, just as to the blind person it may be well to prove the reality, the value, the blessing of light. And, where there is this belief, it may be refreshed and strengthened.

To mention all the proofs that the Sacred Writings are inspired by God will not be attempted—it is too difficult to be accomplished in a single lecture. When light is broken into the various colours of the rainbow, it is the most pleasing and striking; but when they are blended together, and form the substance that we call light, they are most useful, for then they conceal themselves, and show every other object. Thus, the arguments for the inspiration of Scripture, taken singly, produce the most definite effect; yet, when we view them all together, the result is most beneficial and important. Their contemplation, as a whole, may be most convincing, and lead us to bind the Bible to our hearts with increasing

reverence and affection, as indeed the Book of God. But this is not an easy task, for where every one of the arguments in favour of the inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures is deserving of a distinct lecture, how shall we attempt to present the whole in one ?

Revelation includes the two parts of Sacred Scripture—the Old Testament and the New.

Concerning the Old Testament, it is said to have been written by Moses and the Prophets, and contains a certain number of books which were given to the Jews whilst they were the church of God, and the depositories of His revealed will,—for the advantage of the Jews was, that to them belonged the oracles of God. Now we know that they regarded the books of the Old Testament as having come from God, and that they retain them still in the same estimation ; and they would rather part with life than with any of them. Our Saviour, when upon earth, set the seal of inspiration upon the same books ; and it is worthy of remark, that when he reprov'd the Jews for corrupting religion in various ways, he still referred them to the Scriptures, as the books by which they were to be regulated, and according to which they would be judged at the last day. The canon of the Old Testament, then, contains all those books to which the Lord Jesus Christ, when upon earth, gave the seal of his sanction.

The canon of the New Testament consists of all those books that were delivered by the apostles, to whom Christ promised the Spirit, to teach them all things ; and John, the last of them, lived long enough to give the seal of his sanction to them all. And the early Christians gave their sanction to them

all, not rashly, but on sufficient evidence. They knew what books were inspired, and we know what books they accounted inspired, by the large extracts which their writings contain from them. So copiously did they quote in their own writings from those which were inspired, that if the Bible itself had been lost, we might in this way have recovered it.

But here it may be inquired, What is the inspiration which is claimed for these Scriptures? Without going into detail, and much less into any controversy, upon this subject, we say that by their inspiration is meant, that these books were all written under the superintendence or suggestion of the Holy Spirit,—under a superintendence or suggestion that secured the truth of every sentiment that is communicated; so that every command which they contain is of Divine authority, and so that every prediction, promise, and threatening, which they declare, shall be infallibly fulfilled.

In what way the writers of the Sacred Scriptures were influenced, we presume not to know. What know we, indeed, of the operations of God in nature, providence, or grace? The facts are all we know. The Scripture writers were inspired so as to insure the truth of everything they wrote. Of this we have abundant evidence.

The Sacred Scriptures contain that which could have been known only by Divine inspiration.

Some persons, I am aware, admit that the Scriptures are true, and yet deny them to be inspired; nay, they maintain that their writers do not say that they are inspired. But we have a host of

evidence against this assumption. When the Book opens, it takes us back to the birth of the creation, when time was beginning its march, and nature rose ; for who but the Creator could tell Moses how creation advanced during six measured days, before man was made at all,—what the Creator said and did successively from morning to evening during those six days ? It has been said, True, if this is a fact, it must be granted at once that the historian of it was inspired ; but may it not be mere imagination ? But this is impossible, for he that could have invented such a description would never have represented it as a history. The sublimity is too great for mortal reach. The command is superhuman, and the effect also : “Let there be light, and it was so.” He that was capable of this invention would never have represented the work to have employed Deity six days. He would rather have supposed the Almighty would have created the whole at once, or, if time were occupied, that it would have engaged a much longer space than six days. There is no accounting for this, but upon the fact that so it was. And tradition has universally preserved the memory of this fact of revelation, in the division of time into weeks. There is something in nature to account for the division of time into months, by the changes of the moon ; and for its division into years, by the revolution of the earth round the sun ; but there is nothing to account for the division of time into weeks except the fact of the creation.

But as this account of what is past proves that the books in which it is contained are inspired, so the description which it contains of the future does also.

A large part of the Old and New Testaments consists of prophecies of things, of persons, of events, delivered ages—hundreds and thousand of years—before they came forth and came to pass. Now, who but the Omniscient God could thus see the end from the beginning? Man knows not what shall be on the morrow; God knows all—past, present, and to come. Who can tell what shall come to pass from the commencement of time down to the latest consummation of all things, but He who is infinite and eternal?

The history of the Jews was given by anticipation; and it was not like any other history. No other nation resembled the Jewish nation, and so singular a chain of fortunes never met in any other; and yet all was foretold, and all that was foretold was fulfilled. Moses, thousands of years ago, described the lot of this people, even down to this hour.

But prophecy was most precise and abundant in declaring, beforehand, notices of the Saviour of men, the Lord Jesus Christ. The prophetic Scriptures foretell the singular glory of his person—his mysterious birth—the matchless works which he performed—the dolorous sufferings of his life—the awful glories of his death—and the complete triumph of his resurrection and ascension,—and this the writers predict, not at once, but, as it were, by little and little. One gave one stroke of the sketch, and he died; then another added another stroke, and he died; and so on, stroke after stroke, and line after line, were supplied by a succession of writers, occupying a succession of generations,

until, at length, a complete history of the Son of God is traced. And lo ! He in the fulness of time comes forth, and embodies in himself the whole—so that all things predicted of him, even the most minute, and most unlikely to be fulfilled, were all realised and accomplished. And these things are so written, as to lead to no other conclusion, than that the whole book containing them is inspired. The history of the creation imperceptibly slides into narratives, and proceeds onward and onward, by the same superintending and suggesting impulse. So, likewise, the prophecies are connected with passing events, or moral admonitions ; and thus, whilst you are listening to an inspired declaration of the future, you find yourself in the midst of a history or of a sermon : and so do the various parts associate and adhere, that you cannot tell where one part begins and another ends.

Let it now be remarked, as an evidence of their inspiration, that the sacred writers declared themselves to be inspired, and gave proofs that they were so—or rather, God set to his seal that they were inspired.

What effrontery it is in any persons to say, that the writers of the Scriptures did not declare that they were inspired ! Why, they continually say, “ Thus saith the Lord.” The Spirit of God moved them, and they wrote as they were moved. They make their communication as in the tone of Deity—with His authority. Not merely did Moses declare that he spake as from the Lord, when he recorded the history of the events of the creation, but he declared also, when he gave them precepts and com-

mandments, that God spake by him to them and to their seed after them. Moses declared that God had sent them a book, and that their life or death was in that book. When Moses said, "Thus saith the Lord," he gave proof of it. When on Sinai the Lord descended before a million of people, and shook the creation, and when they heard the voice of God, God called up Moses to himself into the mount, and he went up in the sight of the nation, and communed with God, and fasted forty days, and received from God the Book which he delivered unto the people. They had abundant evidence that Moses was inspired of Heaven; and if you think that he was not put to the proof, you are much mistaken. No man was so much rebuffed and tested as Moses. The Jews did not submit to the yoke which he imposed without a conviction that it was from the Lord. "If these men die the common death of all men, then hath the Lord not spoken by me." It was not without the strongest conviction that they were brought to yield. Signs and wonders were wrought to prove that the words spoken by Moses were true.

And when Christ came, men were to believe him for the very works' sake which he did; and "no man could do the works which he did, except God were with him." So the apostles said that they were inspired. They proved their words true: the miracles they wrought were God's setting his seal to their claim of inspiration.

And is it not an evidence of its inspiration also, that, though written by different hands, in various periods, and in various circumstances, the Book, instead of having the diversity and discrepancies

of various minds, bears indication throughout of one superintending Mind? Mahomet produced his Koran in a short time, and yet it has various incongruities and contradictions, though for all these he accounts by saying that the Almighty changed his mind! Now, the Sacred Scriptures were produced by thirty persons, who lived in different periods, some of them at a distance of near two thousand years from others; and they were of different nations and latitudes, some having lived in Arabia, some in Judea, some in Rome, and one in an island in the Mediterranean Sea. They were of different dispensations of religion, too,—the Patriarchal, the Jewish, and the Christian. Now, if so many men were employed, and at such wide intervals of time and place, in the preparation of a book, we might naturally expect great differences in their communications, and that one would contradict what another inculcated. But so far is it from this being the case, that the Scriptures realise the definition that has been given of beauty: they are “variety in harmony.” They are one uniform whole, though beginning at the creation and extending to the consummation of all things. They answer the question, How came we here, and what will become of us?—a question which every one is putting. They tell us how we were created, and therefore what we ought to be; and how we fell, and therefore what we are and ought not to be; and how we are redeemed, and therefore how we may escape what we deserve, and were otherwise doomed to be. And the same truth pervades the whole. Moses at the beginning of the creation, and John at the end of the Apocalypse, respond to each other.

The same God is revealed everywhere, possessed of the same glorious attributes, and publishing his will everywhere the same. The Scriptures tell us of a religion first given to man in his lapsed condition; and the religion that was vouchsafed at the end was necessarily involved in the first religion. The man that had never seen a full-blown rose could hardly have anticipated it from the small green bud; but the man that has seen the full-blown rose can understand the small green bud. The Jew understood not all that we have in Christianity, and yet the Christian was involved in the Jewish dispensation. The Epistle to the Hebrews is a grand key to the book of Leviticus, so that it is evident that one Mind inspired them both; and though they were written near two thousand years apart, it is clear they were given by that God who sees the end from the beginning, and who is without variableness or the shadow of turning—from eternity to eternity the same.

We have evidence of the inspiration of the Sacred Word in the fact that it contains knowledge that has never been surpassed, and that all the improvements of science labour in vain to go beyond the Bible. That the fashion of this world passeth away is a maxim which is as true in relation to mind as it is to dress. Modes and products of thinking change, as well as the food, the dress, the amusements of mankind. Books of philosophy which were valuable in ancient times, are now repudiated as puerile and contemptible; and systems of science patronised by renowned philosophers are thrown by as useless and ridiculous. Books of chemistry, written within the memory of men, have now become obsolete and

ludicrous. The notion of "the four elements," which was considered so certain and immoveable, is exploded by the modern discoveries of the gases. Geology, as a science, is but of yesterday, and has sprung up within our own memory,—a science that examines the earth's crust, tells us of what materials it is composed, what position they occupy, and what evidence they give of the revolutions to which the globe has been subjected. Well, thus we find that improvements have been advancing at a rapid rate. Bacon opened a new world in the philosophy of mind, and Newton a new world in the philosophy of matter, and Shakspeare a new world in the philosophy of the passions. Behold the changes that science has made, and now turn to the Bible, the oldest book in the world,—a book so old, that some parts of it were written four thousand years ago,—and you find it as fresh and applicable as ever, and as free from all indications of decay, decline, and mortality, as youth itself. Here is no story of the four elements; here is no legend of the earth resting on a tortoise, and the tortoise on the back of an elephant; here we have no exploded principles of chemistry—no crude and false geology—no incompatible chronology.

And the greatest men have bowed down before the majesty of the Book. Newton, to whom the proud despisers of the Word of God, even the wisest of them, are but as children before philosophers, acknowledged, with the utmost satisfaction, the inspiration of the Scriptures. Bacon, who opened new mines of mental wealth, revered the Word of God. Pascal, who had pre-eminent genius, so that no man

in France could believe him to be a fool, felt and proclaimed the Bible to be the Word of God. Luther, who opened the liberty of mind to modern ages, revered the Sacred Scriptures, and maintained before popes, and kings, and parliaments, their sufficiency, supremacy, and divinity. And the latest and most sober writers on geology, are struck with the evidence of the truth of the Bible, which the Mosaic account of the creation presents. And yet the writers of the Bible lived in different and widely distant periods, and in the ages that were simple and unlettered; but no giant strides of modern science or philosophy have thrown it into obscurity, or sunk it into inferiority. The Bible is still in advance of mankind; and no science, or letters, or philosophy, no march of mind or of knowledge, will ever go beyond it.

Besides, it is the only professed revelation that can stand the test of investigation. Imitation of revelation is not so easy as some imagine; hence we have had but few such attempts. And the imitations prove the genuineness of the only true one, just as examination of a piece of counterfeit coin proves the existence of good coin, current with the merchant. All genuine, true productions are the first; the base imitation follows after. So it is with the Sacred Book. It is older, as a revelation, by hundreds and thousands of years, than any other. Moses' writings are older than those of Homer, or than any of the writings of the Greeks. As to the Shasters, which profess now to be a revelation from God, though they did not do so originally,—they are much later, and they give no evidence of their production. Sir William Jones,

who understood well the language and literature of the East, believed them of later date, and says they give no proof of inspiration. The Koran of Mahomet is much later, being no earlier in its origin than the seventh century of the Christian era. These writings do not allow you to compare them with others, or to dispute about them at all. This is suspicious. For when two objects are to be compared, in order to an adjustment of their relative value, it is right to institute such comparison, especially when both prefer the same claims to infallibility and supremacy. So the Bible calls upon us to search it, to examine it, to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. The Sacred Writings claim to be investigated; you are to weigh scripture with scripture, fact with prophecy, assertions with proofs. See how the Book courts and sustains the fullest, most critical, most prolonged, most eagle-eyed investigation. And this shows the presumption, and folly, and wickedness of those who would impose pains and penalties on such persons as would search—that is, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest—the Scriptures for themselves.

Let it be observed, also, that this book, though given to be a perfect guide of faith and practice, and to be our only supreme and absolute rule, is a portable book, which may be handled by a child, and carried about with us as our *vade-mecum*, our all-sufficient and complete directory. The statutes of an empire are most voluminous and vast. Those of England form a ponderous library; and time was, when the judges, having occasion to carry many with them on circuit, used for that purpose to employ a caravan. But here is a book which contains everything that is necessary

to be applied to us; all things pertaining to our words, or thoughts, and our actions—pertaining even to our secret emotions—everything regarding the body and the soul, time and eternity, ourselves and others. What an amount of information and direction! and yet it is all contained in a book which may be carried by a child! It has been well said that in the Bible are rivulets in which a lamb may wade, and rivers in which an elephant may swim—simple lessons for a babe, and profound sayings for a philosopher. How sublime to have the whole will of God deposited in a book which we may carry in our bosoms! The brevity of the Scriptures is most remarkable. It was said by Horace, that whatever was preceptive should be short. “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,” is an example of the perspicuity and brevity by which the preceptive parts of Holy Writ are distinguished.

After you have studied the best human productions once, again, and a third time, you find that you have exhausted their sense, have extracted their beauties, have consumed their interest. But however often you search the Bible, you discover new beauties, find new meanings, and still you prosecute the search without flagging, wearisomeness, or tediousness.

It is worthy of remark, too, that although the most ancient of books, and originally given in different languages, yet the Bible is admirably suited to all tongues and all nations. They who know the variability of language, will feel the force of this argument for its inspiration. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, which was probably the mother-tongue of our race. The same language was

employed in the writing of the whole of the Old Testament, from the beginning to the end. Moses, the first writer of scripture, wrote in one language; and Malachi, the last, employed the same, though he wrote fifteen hundred years after Moses. Who could read a book written in our language fifteen hundred or a thousand years ago? Such a presiding care was exercised over this book! It was given to the people in their own tongue. No hieroglyphics veiled the will of God. All was readable, intelligible, applicable, and translateable.

The New Testament was given in the Greek tongue, which was the most extensive language then spoken or understood, and it was at that time the language of scholars. It was understood by logicians and philosophers, and was familiar to the acutest minds. At the same time it is to be remarked, that the Greek, the language in which the New Testament was given, was the most widely diffused. And we now have the whole Bible translated into our tongue, with the most entire accuracy, so that we are masters of its ideas. And is it not remarkable that it has fixed our tongue? For, though the translation was made three hundred years ago, how pure and excellent it is! There is no change in the language in these three centuries, such as to make another translation necessary. The same result has happened in the German tongue, the Bible given to that people by Luther having fixed their language. Carry the Bible then, and you carry literature. The Bible gives birth and nourishment to literature. It is, as it were, the grammar—the lexicon, to the human race; for no book is so translateable, or has been so often trans

lated, as the Bible. It suits all nations, all times, all languages.

What internal evidence of its inspiration there is arising from the effects of this book! Such is the peculiar glory of the book, that, like the glory of creation, it determines its Divine origin—it speaks for itself. Whosoever should find it on a road, without having any previous knowledge of it, would, upon giving it a candid reading, be forced to say, This is the book of God! What a tone of majesty it opens with! and what simplicity! It is Infinite Wisdom stooping to our necessity. No man can altogether resist it, unless his conscience has been hardened by a long course of infidelity and immorality. God is speaking to him here, and he feels it. The sanctity of the gospel affects man's heart. It is here that he comes into contact with God, and the secrets of man's soul are flashed upon him from the light of God's countenance. The Word of God is quick and powerful, being a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. How many are pierced with this arrow, winged from the Eternal, who find, as they read, that the Scriptures are laying their sins completely open to themselves! Here they learn their real character and true condition—their danger, and their way of escape—their malady, and their remedy. Here they come to find their consolations and their hopes, their duty and destiny, and are constantly becoming more convinced of the Divinity of the Bible by its effects upon themselves. This argument may not be felt by a systematic and avowed infidel, but to a rational, inquiring mind, to a sincere and humble Christian, it is of immense weight. That book that

dissects man's heart, and reflects as in a mirror his whole life—that book that tells him his sins and his dangers—that supplies to him the hopes of salvation, and leads him to the joys of pardon—that book, the belief of which transforms him till he is translated into the image of Christ—that book we must own to be Divine, who thus feel its energy. Other writings lose their efficacy because they lose their applicability; but this book gives forth the same effect now as formerly. Ancient divines boasted of its effects thus; they challenged the enemies of the book, saying, “Bring us a swearer, and with the words of this book we will convict and reclaim him; bring us a thief, and with these words we will reform him; bring us a lascivious man, and with the words of this book we will make him chaste.” They beheld these effects thus produced in numberless instances, and they confidently trusted to their giving birth to them again. So now, not only is the Word of God glorified in its effects on individuals about us, but on masses of men at large, and on nations of mankind abroad. Voyagers have confessed, that such a transformation has been produced by the Bible on islanders and people the most degraded and superstitious, that if they had not beheld it for themselves, they could not have believed it. The Bible is now proving its Divinity, like the voice of God in the creation at the beginning: that voice in the new creation is triumphantly glorious, and is echoing its tones of divinity among the wastes of the human family, saying, “Behold, I make all things new.”

Its special adaptation we might argue from the style and contents of the Sacred Volume, as a revela

tion from God to man. It would require a long discourse to give even a compend or summary of the praises of the Bible. But a rapid glance at the subject may suffice to convince us, that if the Bible had been a book of abstract reasoning, or philosophical speculation—had it contained the results of profound research, or been composed with the refinement of elaborate care, however accessible and attractive it might have been to the learned, it would not have been suited to the great body of the people—it would not have met the case of the poor. What a wonderful book! It is written with a simplicity, power, and pathos, which find their way to every heart. The sublimest truths are expressed in the plainest words. The most extraordinary events are narrated with the artlessness of the most perfect sincerity and truth. There is nothing forced, pompous, or unnatural. There is variety to suit all tastes. There is consistency to remove all doubts. The wayfaring man of the wilderness need not err in interpreting it. A very child may understand it. It is a parish school-book, and it is a college text-book. It is a mystery of beauty, wisdom, and power. It is emphatically the poor man's book. Though it has matter in it which a Newton turned from the contemplation of the starry heavens to ponder, and a Locke relinquished the subtleties of metaphysics to explain, and a Bacon lent the powers of his majestic and comprehensive intellect to apply; yet it is, above all others, a book for the children of toil, to be opened when the shadows of evening begin to fall, or even to be carried forth into the open field, and read beside the inactive plough. Look at the history of the Patri-

archs, the dramatic beauty of Job, the mingled sublimity and tenderness of the Psalms, the profound sense of Solomon, and the varied poetry of the Prophets. Look at the simple and affecting Gospels, with their graphic parables, the miracles and discourses of Jesus. Look at the Epistles—tender, doctrinal, and moral. And look at the Revelation, closing the wonderful series with visions of calamity, and triumph, and glory, under which the mind sinks burdened and oppressed. Yet, with this variety of unrivalled excellence, the crowning merit is, that of all books it is the best adapted to the poor. There is none that touches them so deeply, or impresses them so powerfully as this. For the poor the Bible was written.

And in very deed, this small volume—the simple truth contained in it, even as a most precious jewel in a casket—has been wonderfully honoured. No doubt it has not been acknowledged or honoured in the schools of philosophy. It has been contradicted and derided in a world which has forsaken God. But it made Saul of Tarsus an apostle, Mary Magdalene a saint, the thief on the cross an heir of Paradise, the swarthy Ethiopian a rejoicing Christian and multitudes of heathens heroic martyrs. It has done secretly and silently—as dew too subtle for the eye to detect—as electric fire too rapid in its course to admit of computation—what all the art, and skill, and energy of man could not in any one instance effect, or even distantly approach. It has revolutionised kingdoms. It has modelled laws. For years it may slumber on a shelf, like a piece of worthless matter, which no one cares for: but in

some unthought-of hour it will send forth a still small voice, which will shake the soul like thunder, and cause all its faculties to bow in prostration before it. It may be the theme of a learned fool's scorn and derision; and yet, before he is aware, it will turn upon that strong man, rend the refuge of his pride and delusion in pieces, and spoil him of his goods—his scepticism, his worldly-mindedness, his literature, and his boasted theories of an ungodly life. "God has magnified his Word above all his name."

Finally, I ask, May we not consider as a proof of its inspiration, that no book has been so attacked, and yet no book has so triumphed, as the Bible? Many books that bid fair for immortality have gone down to the gulf of oblivion; but what book was so likely to have perished as the Bible, had it been but human? The books that are most ancient were most likely to perish. And what book has had so fair a chance of being utterly swallowed in oblivion as the Bible, for what book is at once so old, and has been so much opposed? When first given to the Jews, it denounced the practices of all the surrounding nations, and predicted their suffering and destruction, and they therefore were at enmity with itself and its keepers. It has had to encounter perils not inconsiderable, from the guilty conduct of its false friends. They degenerated and apostatized, and were some of them cut off, but the Word of the Lord endured and prevailed. The temple was demolished, but the Bible was preserved. The nation was destroyed, and their holy mountains were left desolate; but the Scriptures were held fast. The Jews went into exile, but they took with them

into foreign lands, whither they were driven, the lively oracles, and there they pondered their sacred contents, and when they returned to their own land, carried back with them the sacred treasure. When Antiochus Epiphanes became their enemy, he laboured to destroy the Scriptures and those who adhered to them, but the persecutor died, and the Word of the Lord outlived all who rose up against it. And when, in later times, the Roman Emperors set themselves against the Lord's Anointed, they commanded that the sacred books should be given up, and that the Christians should not retain them on pain of death. The unrighteous edict was generally resisted, but some complied, and surrendered the Divine Word, and were therefore denominated *traditors*—a name significant of their having betrayed it. Popery set itself against the Bible, and from manuscript copies of it the letters were washed out, and monkish legends were inscribed in their place. But though in this way the destruction of many valuable scriptural copies was effected, sufficient were preserved unmutilated to secure the unadulterated Word of the living God from extinction. And when the art of printing was discovered, the first book printed was the Bible; and it has come to us, fresh and full, clear and perfect, and now no fear can be entertained that it will ever be marred or lost.

And what if infidels still vent their rage, and rave against the Bible, and even burn it? They fight against and hurt themselves; but in vain do they fret against Divine Truth. Copies are multiplying and circulating more and more, and wider and wider, and believers are increasing and still increase, and

the Word of God shall everywhere prevail; for "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:" and though the grass withereth and the flower fadeth, yet the Word of the Lord endureth for ever.

The Bible, I may say, in conclusion, is either true or false; but if it be false, it is the greatest enigma in the universe. Its information is so important and interesting, its doctrines so grand and sublime, and its morals so pure and beneficial, that if it be a cunningly devised fable, it must still for ever call forth the admiration of the wisest men on earth. When viewed in a connected chain, it possesses, as we have seen, internal evidences of a general design, and of an adaptation to all the various states, conditions, and relations in which mankind is found. It meets every case, and supplies every want. Admit it to be false, and yet push its principles to their utmost consequences in human experience, and you will have done the greatest possible good to human society, and enriched, and ornamented, and ennobled the human character in the greatest possible manner. The most successful experiment has long since put this beyond a rational doubt. There is no habit, however vicious, but what has been corrected by its principles; no temper so violent, but what has thereby been successfully chained; no conduct, however vile, but what the gospel has made the sinner ashamed of it. There is no duty to either God or man, friend or enemy, however difficult of accomplishment, but what the gospel affords both direction and help for its performance. There are no sufferings, however severe and painful,

but it affords abundant consolation in the midst of them. If we are entering on the journey of life, the Bible is our sure guide ; if we are launched amid the responsibilities and toils of life, it is our most valuable manual ; and if in the decline of life, it forms at once our staff and telescope ; and down to the latest moment of intelligent existence, it proves an unfailing source of the richest and most ample consolation.

Nor can such a book be false,—the production of artful and designing men. And, if it be true, how it magnifies into importance the human race ; and that it is true we have seen. It was never proved false—nor can be so. The ranks of infidelity will probably never produce more powerful champions against the truth than they have already produced ; and if so, we may safely conclude, that revelation has cleared the last dangerous rock ; and, freighted deep with the great salvation, and under a press of Divine influence, with all its sails set, she is speeding her rapid way to the ends of the earth. It has already mounted the pinions of the morning, and is flying to the remotest bounds of the habitable globe. The Bible has marched down the generations of men, with accumulating light and grandeur, and in triumph has led idolatry and infidelity captive ; and, in its train, left civilization, and a pure and undefiled religion, with all its inspiring satisfactions and hopes.

With what transcendent interest must we regard the inspired Book ! Men attach a high value to objects which have been instrumental in accomplishing great ends. Even the sword of a great soldier is laid

aside, and carefully preserved, as identified with the valour he displayed, and the victories he won. The rude instrument which assisted a famous navigator in ploughing his perilous way through unknown seas, is placed in some secret depository, to be brought forth on extraordinary occasions, for the admiration of visitors and guests. Now the Bible, as having in past times, in ages long gone by, been the instrument of great results, ought to be highly prized. But this is not all. If it has been instrumental for great results, not only in past times, and in the case of others, but as regards ourselves,—if, in addition to this general sacredness, as the instrument selected and honoured by the Saviour, it possesses the endearment of an instrument which, to an incalculable extent, has blessed and is blessing us, what limit should we set to the value which, like a glory, should enshrine it? Still more, if it be an instrument which, if multiplied and circulated, will be equally beneficial to our fellow-creatures, wherever found, or in whatever circumstances placed, what a mighty interest should attach to the work of its communication and diffusion! Here, in this blessed book, is a treasure no thought can reach; and here is a treasure whose value is equally great to all—to rich and poor, to Jew and Greek, to bond and free.

There is a general influence which this book may be said to exercise on the unregenerate world. It has wonderfully transformed the aspect and improved the institutions of society. Had it done nothing more than opened up new fields for charity, and prompted to the devising new means for the relief of wretchedness and poverty, the advantages resulting

from it would have been unspeakable. But it has refined the domestic affections; it has purified the tone of public morals; it has softened the sternness of legislation; and has given to liberty the dignity of a moral privilege. It has elevated the spirit of literature, and liberalized and graced all intellectual pursuits. The very infidel who scoffs at it, is, to a great extent, a debtor to it. Barbarous customs have been banished by it. It has fettered vice by new restraints; it has enforced and recommended virtue by new sanctions and motives.

And oh! it is a magnificent prospect which its predictions open up! Bibledom is now but a small section of the globe; and when we survey the vast regions whose people are living in darkness and in the shadow of death, it is felt to be a bold and elaborate effort of imagination to realise the universal diffusion of the truth. At home there are many towns and cities, with unexplored streets and unvisited lanes. On the continent of Europe there are populous countries where the Bible is little known; and even though known, is darkened and perverted by the glosses of the Romish Church, or the equally mischievous glosses of a false philosophy. On the shores of injured Africa there are many tribes immersed in the vileness of the most cruel superstition; so are there in the wilds of North America. In the southern part of that vast continent you have whole states and kingdoms abandoned to idolatry, ignorance, and vice; and all the more abandoned that the European is there, employing the power of civilization to maintain the kingdom of darkness, and perpetuate the ascendancy of sin. Turn to India. See the millions

who wander on the vast plains, debased and brutalised, without one ray of truth to cheer or to guide them. Look to China—itself a world!—its teeming millions; and over all the gloom of spiritual death. Then ask the question, Are all these to be visited with the light of the Bible? Are all to share in its beneficent influence? Yes. This little Book will go forth; a subduing power will emanate from its pages; the earth will be filled with its blessed truths. Jesus will be honoured and acknowledged by all. His cross will surmount ancient diadems and thrones; it will glitter above the domes of heathen temples, and be sculptured on the shrines of heathen gods. From the dawning east to the glowing west, one unanimous anthem will swell the praise of God and the Lamb. Jesus will then have said with power, to the north, “Give up.” To the south, “Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.” In this confidence I turn to the Bible, and say:—

“Thou art the eastern star that leads to Christ:  
Soon shall thy broad circle  
Reach round earth’s wide circumference,  
Revealing to all nations  
What the heavens but shadow forth—  
The glory of our Lord.”



The Philosophy of Prayer.

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A LECTURE

BY

THE REV. JOHN ALDIS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

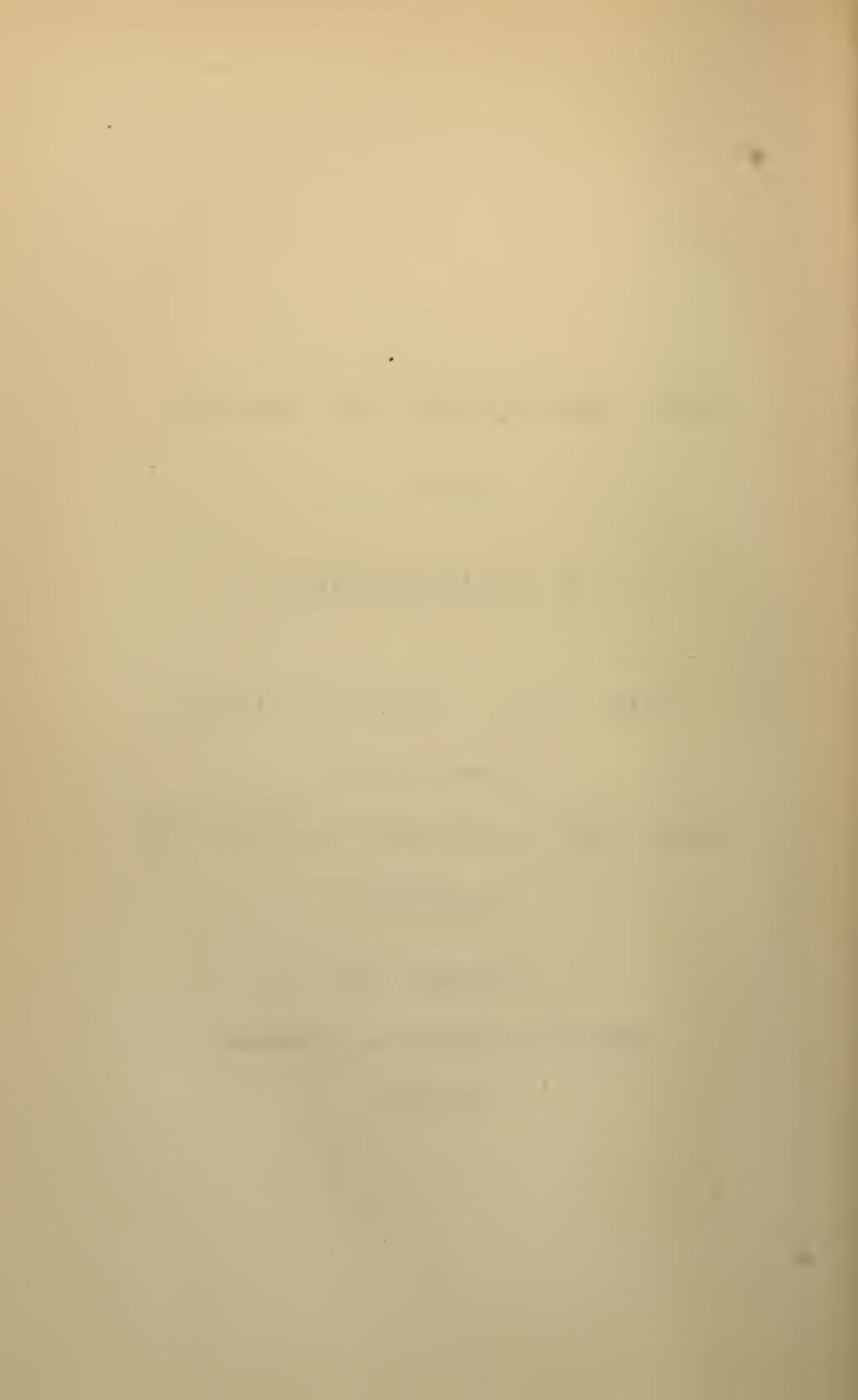
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN EXETER HALL,

DECEMBER 2. 1851

THOMAS CHALLIS, Esq., ALDERMAN,

IN THE CHAIR.



## THE PHILOSOPHY OF PRAYER.

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MY DEAR FRIENDS,—I have to address you to-night on the Philosophy of Prayer. I confess that I feel the title is somewhat too ambitious; some may perhaps object to it as inappropriate. I could find no designation that expressed my intention more fully or more accurately. This, however, is a matter of very secondary consequence, as the subject will unfold itself to us as we proceed; we will, therefore, address ourselves at once to the contemplation of it.

First of all, allow me to explain what it is I mean by prayer. Some understand by it the mere repetition of devotional forms,—it may be without thought and feeling,—either for the purpose of performing a penance, or accumulating merit, or discharging a religious duty. Others confound it with mere religious meditation. I regard it, and shall speak of it to-night, as the outgoing of the heart to God. It may be extemporaneous or in prepared forms, in eloquent or broken language, ejaculatory or continuous, uttered or unexpressed; but it never can be the basis of human merit and acceptance, must always be connected with thought and feeling, and constitutes the language of the filial

heart entreating blessings from Him who is the one glorious Father in heaven.

Prayer is essential to religion. All religions, so far as I know, have enjoined, and cherished, and exemplified it; it has ever been a most sacred duty, and a most exalted privilege. Certainly prayer is essential to Christianity. All its doctrines design to prepare the way for it; its Sacrifice and Intercessor procure our introduction to, and acceptance with the Most High. Its commands reiterate the injunction to pray; the first and mightiest impulse of its grace in the heart prompts men to devotion; its models of character, its ornaments, and its examples have been pre-eminent for devotion. In one word, without the breath of prayer, personal Christianity is an impossibility.

Prayer is distinctive of religion. The Bible contains numerous and important rules of human life and conduct, but they are matters of religion only as they are bathed in the element of devotion. So, too, it contains innumerable and important teachings concerning the Divine character and government, concerning the conduct, character, and destiny of man; but these are religious doctrines only as they are allied with the spirit of prayer. Apart from prayer these rules are mere moralities, these teachings mere philosophy. This, then, is the heart and home of the whole matter: if this is surrendered, everything is surrendered. Without prayer men may be moralists and philosophers; properly speaking, Christians they cannot be.

We affirm, further, that it is essential to prayer that he who offers it should expect to obtain the good

he seeks, and that he should obtain it. The first is necessary to prove its sincerity; the second is necessary to prove its efficacy. If no blessing is supplicated at the hands of God, in truth no prayer is offered; if no blessing is obtained, prayer then is a futility. It may seem to many superfluous to endeavour to illustrate and vindicate a point so universally known and acknowledged as this; but after all, the stress of the whole subject lies here; it is against this that infidelity directs all its attacks. Many will allow and vindicate devotional exercises, but the reason assigned is the beneficial influence they exert upon the mind of the man who offers them, while they deride as without foundation, and condemn as fanatical, the expectation that prayer will be, or the belief that prayer has been answered. That prayer, however, is answered, and that it is essential to prayer that we should believe that fact, is most clearly revealed in the Scriptures. It is one of the strong and universal marks of all the devout men of whom we read in the Bible. You perceive that, invariably, the cry comes up from the depths of their hearts: "Save me! Help me! Deliver me! Make haste! Hear me speedily!" It is laid down as a law from which there can be no appeal, and against which there can be no exception. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of him that diligently seeketh him." The Divine Teacher, who is at once the model and the authority of prayer, has set this before us as clearly as words can make it: "Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and

he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh the door shall be opened." If these words be doubted or denied, then I say there is nothing in the teaching of Jesus Christ concerning which we can be either confident or clear. That it is essential to prayer that it should be answered, and that he who offers it expects this result, is obvious from the nature of the case. Without such conviction prayer never could have obtained as an exercise in this world of ours. Examine the language of devotion in all countries and all ages, and you will find that it is everywhere pervaded, and penetrated, and filled with this one spirit. Prayer is indeed at once without meaning and without use if that conviction is destroyed. Nothing but such a conviction as that could ever have prompted men to pray ; nothing but the truth of that conviction can sustain or warrant the continuance in prayer. If this conviction be a mere delusion, then there is no alternative, either in reason or in righteousness, but that prayer should be abandoned. A lie is not less a lie because it may chance to please, or, though that were an impossibility, because it may chance to improve. Hence, as a matter of fact, men cease to pray when they cease to believe that prayer will be answered. They who cherish the conviction continue to pray ; they who cherish it most pray most frequently and most fervently. I do not speak of the mere offering up of forms of prayer, to which a man may be driven by the compunction of conscience, or bound by the force of habit, or allured by the hope of rearing to himself a monument of merit ; but I speak of prayer as I have defined it, and you will find that concern-

ing that prayer it may be said that it is a fact, that they who come to God do believe, as well as a principle, that they who come to God must believe, "that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Nevertheless, it is precisely against this point that infidels range all their artillery. They allow much else to pass unquestioned. They will sometimes eulogize the morals of the Bible and the character of Christ; they will even pronounce an eulogium on the excellence and sublimity of some of the doctrines of the Bible; but they deny the authority, and ridicule the efficacy of prayer. They will indeed admit that the repetition of devotional forms may be very desirable to arrest the attention of the thoughtless, and to refresh the memories of the dull; that it may be an excellent expedient to inculcate moral doctrines on the wayward, and to cheer the spirit of the desponding; nay, that to contemplate, adore, and praise, both the perfections and the works of the Great First Cause, may not only elevate, but refine even the educated and the virtuous; but to offer a prayer to God, and calmly and confidently to expect an answer thereto, is by far too much for their patience; they pity it as a poor degrading delusion, hate it as the most envenomed fanaticism. But that is the very point which to-night we wish to proclaim, and which we shall labour to defend.

There are, I grant, and we must all bear this in mind, limits within which, and, if I may so term them, conditions upon which, prayer is to be heard and answered. The objector to personal religion

forgets this, or wilfully puts it out of sight; consequently his representations of prayer are always exaggerated, and for the most part absolutely false. He says, for example: "One man will shut himself up in an ill-ventilated and pestiferous room, and pray for health; another will go to sea in a leaky vessel, and pray to be saved from drowning;" and having made his case, he exclaims, "How absurd and impious!" We echo the exclamation, and respond, "How absurd and impious!" But that that is a truthful representation of the Scripture doctrine of prayer, or of that which is held as such by the great majority of praying men, I utterly deny. We do not affirm that there are any miraculous effects connected with, or to be expected from prayer. That such miraculous effects were connected with prayer in primitive times we believe; but as that method was for a temporary purpose, having answered its end it has disappeared. That there are even now most extraordinary effects connected with the prayer of pre-eminent faith and holiness, is but too obvious to those who will reflect, although it may furnish a theme of ridicule and contempt to the thoughtless and indifferent. That, however, is not the reason or the rule of our faith and practice. We expect no miracles from prayer now. We go further, and say, we do not expect an answer to prayer so long as the appointed means for obtaining the desired end are neglected. He who commands us to pray commands us to labour; He who gives the blessing gives it in his own way, and that is in connexion with the use of the means. We go yet further still, and say, we expect nothing that

shall be in contravention to the letter of the Divine Word, or to the impulse of the Spirit of Divine Grace within; and if we do not ask for the Divine blessing in accordance with his will, there is no confidence that can sustain us. But this is the confidence that we have—that “if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.” We must ask in the spirit of holiness, for if “I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Faith in the promise, the Mediator, and the great Giver of all good, is essential to constitute the prayer that God approves. “Whatsoever ye shall ask, believing, it shall be done unto you.” And “whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” As no man can come unto the Father but by the Son, it is requisite that we should plead the Saviour’s name as the ground of our acceptance and the rule of hope. “Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” If, then, we do not ask in the right way and in the right spirit, nor seek the blessings in the way he has appointed, nor, in connexion with them all, seek to promote his glory, God has given us no promise, and we can challenge no response. Men may, under such circumstances, be disappointed; but though they are disappointed, God has given the pledge, within certain limits and under certain conditions; if those limits are transgressed and those conditions refused, God’s faithfulness remains, and the futility of prayer is not proved.

It is objected, indeed, that it is absurd to imagine that the wishes and the prayers of men can alter the purpose or sway the conduct of the Most High.

This objection seems to be thought conclusive : it is put forth with an air of confidence, and surveyed with a manifest feeling of triumph, which seem to say : " Now, then, your fanaticism is crushed." But it falls to the ground, because it assumes that which the praying man does not affirm. In the sense intended by the objector, prayer does not propose to alter the purpose or sway the conduct of the Most High. I know of no persons who assert the sovereignty and supremacy of the great Moral Governor more distinctly or more firmly than Evangelical Christians ; but what we affirm is, that to hear and to answer prayer is a part of the Divine purpose and plan, with which we fall in, and thus endeavour to honour ; and if the Great First Cause will have it so, who shall say Him nay ? And if he does, the objector seeks to contravene his purpose, not we. They might as well object to the anticipated results of industry and temperance. One man says, " I will secure abundance on the earth by cultivating it," or, " I will promote my health by the practice of temperance." Another rises, and says, " Health and food are the gifts of God, and he gives them as he will ; or they will come to man through the laws of nature, and every law of nature is fixed in its operation. How absurd in you to imagine that your puny efforts can sway the purpose or modify and constrain the benefactions of God !" The man simply replies : " It is God's plan of working to repay the labours of the field by a golden harvest, and to recompense the practice of temperance by the enjoyment of health ; and recognising his law and honouring it, I receive the good that I desire." And

the praying man says : " It is the plan of the Divine Governor to give to him that asketh ; I ask, and receive, and my joy is full."

It is objected further, that if the blessing can only come to us through the use of the means, and will always be in proportion alike to their character and extent, where is the efficacy of prayer ? If the boon would have reached you by the action of nature's laws, of what use has been your devotion ? how can you prove that it has prevailed ? I reply, The objection is essentially atheistic, and leads us much too far : for as many men, because all things in nature can be reduced to the abstractions of law and order, cause and effect, deny the existence of a God ; and as, because the bounties of Providence come to men as the recompense of their industry and skill, many deny the doctrine of Providence ; so, because of the intervention of second causes, men deny that prayer is answered. But I trust that Atheism has no place here. We are fully convinced of its absurdity, as well as abhorrent of its impiety. Well, precisely the same line of reason, and precisely the same tone of feeling, that leads a man to recognise the existence of God, notwithstanding the accumulation of nature's laws, and the existence of Providence, notwithstanding the manifest results of human industry and skill, will recognise the answer to prayer, notwithstanding the intervention of second causes too. Besides, the objection of which I am now speaking lies only against a part of the case. A vast variety of answers to supplication come to the individual, apart from the use of means, before the attempt to use them has been made, and after many

of them have failed. They have been found in skill to choose and grace to use the means for the purpose of accomplishing a given result, and in the determination of events, and the control of agents, to which the praying man had no access, and over which he had no influence. It is thus, then, that the Divine Providence interposes, filling the man's life with proof that his supplications have been answered, as clear and as direct to his understanding and his conscience as it is possible in this state of faith and trial he should ever have; while he finds this as a law, that prayer itself is one of the great means God has ordained and honoured for the bringing to the heart and life those blessings by which the heart is sanctified, and by which the life is saved.

Now, in opposition to these objections there are some general considerations which I would adduce.

From the nature of the case, however, they cannot demonstrate the fact, that prayer is answered, because, after all, as I shall show, or endeavour to show hereafter, that is simply a matter of fact, a question of personal experience. These observations, therefore, cannot prove that prayer is answered, but they will prove that it is reasonable to expect that it should be; they will prepare the mind to appreciate the testimony of fact, will confirm the mind in the realization of fact, by showing that that which is alleged to be matter of experience is co-ordinate with the laws of the Divine government, both in the individual man and in the whole state of society at large.

First. Prayer is a prime necessity of the human soul: it is demanded alike by the constitution and

the condition of man. The prostration of his body, and the upturning of his eye, are attitudes which nature teaches and supplies. His recognition of a Power above him, his sense of dependence and helplessness, the outgoing of his soul after the great, the holy, and the good, are all instincts of his nature which can never find their meaning or their use except in the exercise of devotion. The configuration of his body, the wants of his heart, the faculties of his mind, all attest that God made him for prayer. Hence it is a fact, that everywhere, except amongst the rare and anomalous products of infidelity, men do pray; often in ignorance, sometimes in delusion, I grant; but still they pray; while not unfrequently it happens that, after a long life of avowed and practical Atheism, the heart returns to this, in some season of affliction, or in the prospect of death, as the only centre of rest and the unfailing source of safety demanded by the instincts of the soul of man. It is a poor, drivelling philosophy which would attribute all this to education, to example, and to priestcraft. As wisely and as well might men attribute thought and conscience to literature and law. If God had not given the power of thought and conscience to men, literature and laws never could have given them; nay, these things themselves would never have existed: and if God had not made man for prayer likewise, all the priests in the world could never have taught him to pray; it would have been an utter impossibility. To prayer it is essential to expect that it should be answered, and that it actually should be answered. But God cannot have made man for delusion and falsehood; yet he has made him for

prayer; and I draw the conclusion, that the God who made man hears and answers prayer.

Secondly. Religion is essential to the safety and the progress of human society. The history of all nations demonstrates, that they have been virtuous and powerful just in the same proportion as their religion has been energetic and sincere; while they have been corrupt and powerless just as religion has been disowned or corrupted. The only great attempt that was ever made to govern a great nation without religion, issued in anarchy and crimes of which the world had never witnessed a parallel. The most irreligious people of Europe at the present day, in this, the time of their visitation and fear, confess that here lies their grand necessity. They mistake, indeed, concerning what true religion is. They foolishly imagine that it can be procured by money, and manufactured by hirelings; yet more absurdly do they imagine that that can hallow and control others, which they neither believe nor revere. Nevertheless, they make confession of this great truth, which the history of all nations demonstrates, that religion is essential to the social well-being of mankind. But of religion, the most essential element is prayer; of prayer, the most essential element is the expectation that blessings in answer to it shall come from heaven. Is it, then, the case, that God has left this as the sheet-anchor of the world's hope, which is a mere delusion, and has consigned the well-being of his creatures to that which is a palpable lie? Others may believe it if they can; I cannot.

Thirdly. The moral effect produced on the heart of the man who prays, demonstrates that prayer

must be answered. Many who object to prayer, as I have said, allow that the moral effect produced on the worshipper is very great and good. We allow it, too, we have seen abundant evidence of it; there is no such potent instrumentality for the formation of character. It may be said, without exaggeration, of the man who communes much with the Deity, as it was said of Moses, that he reflects the glory on which he has been permitted to gaze. In countless instances prayer has humbled the proud and calmed the furious; it has made the selfish generous, the cruel kind, the licentious holy, the wayward docile. We have seen these transformations with our own eyes; they have been too numerous and too striking to leave any room either for uncertainty or for doubt. But the prayer that works this result is always the prayer that believes a blessing comes in answer to it; nothing else could afford the requisite influence and the requisite plastic power. But if prayer be not answered by God, then it is an egregious falsehood, a cruel mockery of the dearest hopes and holiest aspirations of the human soul, a cheat on man's spiritual nature, a blasphemy against God in heaven, a lie with more than the solemnity of perjury. But can this great falsehood be the parent of improvement, this deep delusion the unending well-spring of the world's redemption? while every other lie debases and corrupts, does this, the greatest of them all, elevate and save?

But after all, as I have said, this is a question of fact, Does God answer prayer? If it be a matter of fact, no line of argument is needed to establish it; and certainly no objections, even were they much

more cogent than those which I have adduced—and I have adduced, so far as I know, those which are the most cogent—could disprove it as a matter of fact, to be believed, recognised, and acted upon, by the sons of men. There is, however, a great difficulty in producing the kind of evidence on which this conclusion rests. In its very nature, as we must see, and to a large extent, it must be private. Prayer is the language of the heart which seeks seclusion and solitude—does so in exactly the same proportion as it is earnest and sincere. It cannot parade either its efforts or its triumphs; it hears the voice of the great Benefactor say, “See thou tell no man.” It is, moreover, manifestly a gift of grace, not to be scanned by the senses nor analyzed by reason. Still the evidence produced is much more abundant than would be necessary to induce the thoughtful, though not praying man, to say, “I cannot dispute it, though I cannot comprehend it—beyond this I cannot go.” However, it is a fact, that “he that believeth hath the witness in himself.” No man can fully know that prayer is answered but the man who does earnestly pray. Nevertheless, those who have been pre-eminent for their devotion, and for securing the results of devotion, have, for the most part, been disinclined or unable to lay bare to the world their experience, and the evidence which that experience might supply upon the matter. As the greatest orators have never pretended to give the secret of their art, and the greatest inventors have been the last to set forth the methods of invention, simply because both were the gifts of nature, and better recognised in the use than in the analysis of **them**;

so those who have been mightiest in supplication, and most honoured with the results of prayer, have been the last to lay bare the secrets of their power, or parade the results of their spiritual triumph. A large amount, notwithstanding, has been written upon this subject, though very little directly and specifically to the point under consideration. Writers have left it nearly where they found it—scattered over a wide surface of literature, the production of holy and praying men, or shut up in secret in innumerable hearts, blessed with benefactions from on high.

As a matter of fact, further, it can only be tested by observation; and none are in a position to observe but those who pray. This, however, does not invalidate their evidence. They are competent to make the observation, and to proclaim it. They are worthy of credit; and if their evidence be rejected, it will prove, not the inadequacy of the testimony, but the disposition and temper of those who reject it. It is by just the same process as that I have named that the facts of science are set forth to the world. A few men make their observations, and publish the results of those observations; not one in ten thousand is in a position, or has the capacity, to verify them: nevertheless, all the world receive them, call them philosophy, and deck themselves out with these borrowed plumes as something of extraordinary grandeur. Many important facts in astronomy, and geology, and natural history have been proclaimed and believed all over Europe, after having been verified by the actual observation of not more than twenty men. I do not ask, by any means,

such an easy faith ; though I cannot help expressing surprise that natural things should be so readily believed with so little evidence, while spiritual things are so slowly believed, notwithstanding the abundant evidence with which they are accompanied. Our witnesses may be counted by millions, and are scattered over wide realms, and through long ages, while there is not one of you, nor one in this great city, who might not become an observer himself, if he would take the position, and cherish the spirit, and practise the duties of the New Testament.

After all, we entrench ourselves in this simple position,—that it is a matter of fact, experienced by multitudes, that God does answer prayer. It will not be expected that I should attempt to adduce that evidence in detail here; though it has occurred to me that it would be a very fitting and not unimportant matter to attend to and arrange. My only reason for not attempting it is, that to do it justice at all, it must be in larger quantity than the time of this evening would allow. It is the vastness and variety of the evidence, and that alone, that prevents an attempt to introduce even a small part of it now. That evidence, however, although, if it were collected, it might fill volumes, may be found abundantly scattered over the writings of good and praying men.

A few instances\* may be submitted as specimens of thousands which might be adduced, ranged under different heads. The first two refer to extraordinary cases, in which temporal blessings were sought and obtained.

\* These illustrations have been added since the delivery of the Lecture.

“An event in the life of Elijah, at Zarephath, is similar to one recorded of Luther, at Wittenberg. His friend, Myconius, lay on his death-bed, and wrote him a farewell letter. Luther, after reading the letter, immediately fell on his knees and began to pray. ‘O Lord, my God; no! thou must not yet take Myconius to thyself; thy cause will not prosper without him. Amen!’ And, after praying thus, he rose up, and wrote to his sick brother,—‘There is no cause for fear, dear Myconius; the Lord will not let me hear that thou art dead. You shall not, and must not die. Amen!’ These words made a powerful impression on the heart of the dying Myconius, and aroused him in such a manner, that the ulcer in his lungs discharged itself, and he recovered. ‘I wrote to you that it would be so,’ answered Luther to the letter which announced the recovery of his friend. Another little incident here occurs to me, which I can hardly withhold, on account of its simplicity and beauty. The mother of a little girl, only four years of age, had been for some time most dangerously ill. The physicians had given her up. When the little girl heard this, she went into an adjoining room, knelt down and said,—‘Dear Lord Jesus, oh, make my mother well again!’ and after she had thus prayed, she said, as though in God’s name, with as deep a voice as she could, ‘Yes, my dear child, I will do it gladly.’ This was the little girl’s amen. She rose up joyfully, ran to her mother’s bed, and said,—‘Mother, you will get well.’ And she recovered, and is in health to this day.”—KRUNMACHER.

“I knew a father at the west; he was a good man,

but had erroneous views respecting the prayer of faith; and his whole family of children were grown up, and not one of them converted. At length his son sickened, and seemed about to die. The father prayed, but the son grew worse, and seemed sinking into the grave without hope. The father prayed, till his anguish was unutterable. He went at last and prayed—(there seemed no prospect of his son's life)—but he poured out his soul as if he would not be denied, till at length he got an assurance that his son would not only live, but be converted; and not only this one, but his whole family would be converted to God. He came into the house, and told his family his son would not die. They were astonished at him. 'I tell you,' says he, 'he won't die! and no child of mine will ever die in his sins.' That man's children were all converted years ago."—FINNEY

Few things are more remarkable, or more important, than those visitations of Divine grace which form a kind of era in the history of individuals, districts and nations. The remote springs of this influence have often been found in the humble devotions of the secluded and unknown.

"Take a fact that was related in my hearing by a minister. He said, there lived in a retired part of the town an aged man, a blacksmith by trade, and of so stammering a tongue, that it was painful to hear him speak. On one Friday he was at work in his shop, alone; his mind became greatly exercised about the state of the church, and of the impenitent. His agony became so great, that he was induced to lay by his work, lock the shop door, and spend the afternoon in prayer.

“ He prevailed ; and on the Sabbath called on the minister, and desired him to appoint a conference meeting. After some hesitation, the minister consented, observing, however, that he feared but few would attend. He appointed it the same evening, at a large private house. When evening came, more assembled than could be accommodated in the house. All was silent for a time, till one sinner broke out in tears, and said, if any one could pray he begged him to pray for *him*. Another followed, and another, and still another, until it was found that persons from every quarter of the town were under deep conviction. And what was remarkable was, that they all dated their conviction at the hour when the old man was praying in his shop. A powerful revival followed. I could name multitudes of similar instances.”—FINNEY.

The connexion betwixt prayer and the revival of the power of religion may be further shown in one short extract from the writings of one who passed from amongst us but a few years ago, and who was as judicious as he was devout.

“ As to the extent of this work of God, I believe it is impossible to speak decidedly. The parish is situated in the suburbs of a city containing sixty thousand inhabitants. The work extended to individuals residing in all quarters of the town, and belonging to all ranks and denominations of the people. Many hundreds, under deep concern for their souls, have come from first to last to converse with the ministers; so that I am deeply persuaded the number of those who have received saving benefit is greater than any one will know till the judgment-

day. . . . I have always tried to mark down the circumstances of each awakened soul that has applied to me, and the number of them, from first to last, has been very great. During the summer of 1839, not fewer than from six hundred to seven hundred came to converse with the minister about their souls; and there were many more, equally concerned, who never came forward in this way. . . . I do not know of anything in the ministration of those who have occupied my pulpit that may with propriety be called peculiar. . . . They are, I believe, in general peculiarly given to secret prayer; and they have also been accustomed to have much united prayer when together, and especially before and after engaging in public service.”—REV. R. M. M’CHEYNE.

There are two scenes in the life of Luther, which are counterparts of each other. They are both extraordinary, but neither could have existed apart. The private prayer can alone account for the public victory.

‘In that hour of bitter anguish in which he drank of Christ’s cup, and which was for him a garden of Gethsemane, he flung himself on his face upon the ground, and uttered those broken cries, whose meaning would be inconceivable for us, did we not consider the depth of that anguish out of which they rose to God: ‘God Almighty! Eternal! how terrible is the world! how it gapes to swallow me up! and how little confidence I have in thee! . . . How weak is the flesh, and how strong is Satan! If it is in what is strong in the world’s thought I must put my trust, I am undone. . . . O God! O God! . . .

O thou my God! . . . Aid me against all the wisdom of the world! Do so; thou must do so, . . . Thou only . . . for it is not my work, but thine. I have here nothing to do; I have nothing to strive about with these great ones of the world. I too, would fain pass happy, tranquil days. But the cause is thine . . . and it is just and eternal. O Lord, be thou my aid—Faithful God! God unchanging! I rely on no man. It is in vain. All that is of man totters; all that proceeds from man fades away. O God! O God! hearest thou not? My God! art thou dead? No, thou canst not die. Thou but hidest thyself. Thou hast chosen me for this work. I know it. Then act, O God! Keep thee by my side, for the name of thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, who is my defence, my buckler, and my fortress.”

He hastened from that prayer to appear at the terrible Diet at Worms.

“ When he had ceased to speak, the Chancellor of Trier, orator to the Diet, said to him indignantly;— ‘ You have not replied to the question addressed to you. You are not here to cast doubts on what has been decided by councils. You are called on to give a clear and explicit answer. Will you, or will you not, retract?’ Luther instantly, and without hesitation, replied, ‘ Since your most serene majesty, and your high mightinesses, demand a clear, simple, and explicit answer of me, I will give it: I cannot submit my faith either to Pope or councils, since it is as clear as the day, that they have often fallen into error, and even into great contradictions with themselves. If, then, I am not convinced by testimonies

from Scripture, or by evident reasons, if I am not persuaded by the very passages I have cited, and if my conscience be not thus made captive by the word of God, *I can and will retract nothing*; for it is not safe for the Christian to speak against his conscience. Then casting a look round the assembly before which he stood, and which held his life in its hands: '*Here I am,*' he said, '*I can do no otherwise;*' God help me! Amen.'"—D'AUBIGNÉ.

A less striking anecdote of the energetic missionary, the Rev. W. Knibb, may illustrate how prayer for personal spiritual benefit should be offered, and what results it will secure. Few persons were ever more exposed to temptations of pride; in hardly any one was humility more beautifully displayed. It was sought and found where all may seek and find it too.

"On the morning of the 22nd of October, 1840, after the public breakfast at Bristol, as we left the school-room, I was walking near him, but did not know he saw me. Several persons, and some of the more wealthy rank, were pressing him to return with them to dinner or lunch, but he politely declined, saying, his time was so short, he must attend to business; and before I was aware, he took hold of me, and saying, 'Come, let you and me have a bit of bread and cheese together,' led me off to your house. You were in the shop, and he said, 'I may bring another, mayn't I?' You replied with one of your jokes, and said, 'Walk up, but I do not think you will find any one there yet.' The lunch was laid in the back parlour, and I went into the other to take off my bonnet. As I was returning, I heard him

speaking in a suppressed voice, and I seem to hear him now, so indelibly was every sound fixed in memory. I distinctly heard the following words:— Oh, my Father, suffer none of these things to draw me away from thee! Let not pride prevail. Keep, oh, keep me humble. Rather take me from that work which is so dear to me, than suffer me by vanity to disgrace thy cause. Let me never withdraw my heart from thee, to place it on the best of thy servants.' These words were uttered with an earnestness almost amounting to anguish. He ceased; and after a moment's pause, I entered. I seem to see him now. His hands covered his eyes, and tears were chasing each other down his cheeks. As soon as he heard me, he hastily wiped them away, and looking up, with a sweet smile, he said, 'Ah! my child! these things are hard to bear; it is more than I expected, and I tremble lest they should draw my soul from God. Pray for me, that this may never be the case.' After this, some remark in commendation of him, which had been overlooked, was mentioned to him, and he said, 'I wish people would praise me less, and pray for me more.'"—MEMOIR BY REV. J. H. HINTON.

For the most part, answers to prayer refer to matters of every day and familiar experience, which are not sufficiently striking to arrest the attention, or satisfy the curiosity, of those who are ever on the look-out for the supernatural, but which, nevertheless, speak to the heart and conscience of the devout most satisfactorily. A large number, however, of the answers to prayer are much more striking, because they have reference

to peculiar circumstances. You will find them connected with the lives of eminent Christians, and there is not one who addicts himself to this exercise who, in the course of a few years, is not furnished with evidence of this kind. We then point to all who pray: to the objector and the unbeliever we say, "Ask them." It is a matter of fact, and they say they have found it so. If it be replied, "They are knaves or fools," we can go no further. We will simply suggest that they are, at least, as virtuous and as intelligent as any other equal number of men, while they testify of that which comes within the range of their own experience, which they are competent at once to understand and to declare, and have no motive either to fabricate or to modify their testimony. We, however, feel neither shame nor apprehension in company with such men as Locke and Milton, Pascal and Luther, John and Paul. Let the objectors produce an equal number of equal men, who declare that they have prayed, and prayed sincerely, seriously, earnestly, humbly, perseveringly, year by year, and have found no reply: till then the evidence is all on our side, and none on theirs.

It is further a remarkable fact, that only those who do not pray object to the efficacy of prayer. I grant, indeed, that there are many who have renounced the habits of devotion; but have they ever exposed any collusion or spiritual jugglery when they have come forth from this band of freemasons, who are supposed to be held together by some mystic delusion—a secret which they themselves possess, and which all the world besides disbelieve and despise? I have never heard of any such revelations; I should like

to hear even the smallest particle of them. So far as I have observed, the men who have abandoned the forms of devotion were never much distinguished for a devotional spirit; or else they have bitterly bewailed, in seasons of reflection, those spiritual mercies of which unbelief and sin had robbed them; or at last they have returned to employ for their restoration and happiness the very instruments which they had laid aside. Those who pray are convinced that prayer is answered: those who continue to pray grow in that conviction; those who are most abounding and fervent in their supplication have that conviction most entirely, and display the results and proof of it most gloriously. Whom am I then to believe? Who are in a position to decide—the men who use the instrument, or those who never do? The prayerless can know nothing of the matter; while all praying men stand up as one man, and, as with a voice of thunder, say, “God does hear and answer prayer.”

Moreover, this conviction has been cherished, and this testimony has been borne, by men now for more than six thousand years. In widely different circumstances, with different modes of thought, and different forms of worship, they have all had this one distinction, that their heart has gone out to God in supplication; they have felt their want, and believed that God would help them; they have sought help, and they allege that they have found it. They have been contradicted, reviled, persecuted, but they have held fast to that conviction as to their dearest treasure, and have maintained that testimony as undoubted truth: they have had, however, nothing to sustain them but the bliss of the exercise, and the

confident assurance of the blessing which the exercise would ultimately bring. Surely, they would have found out their mistake long ere now, if their petitions had never been answered, if their cry had never reached the heavens, and had always proved unavailing. Surely, such long-continued and bitter disappointment would have quenched their ardour, and blighted their faith; and they must long ago have abandoned an exercise at once so delusive and so unprofitable. Most assuredly, the doctrine of prayer would have been exploded, and the exercise of prayer abandoned, long ere now, if it had been an empty lie: but it is not exploded as a doctrine, nor is it abandoned as a practice; the number is increasing of those who believe the doctrine and cherish the practice; and they all listen to the voices of the past, and hear the testimonies coming up from the depths of remotest ages: "Our fathers trusted in Thee; they trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them; they cried unto thee, and were delivered." "They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." And they echo back these voices, and confirm them:—

" He helped his saints in ancient days  
 Who trusted in his name;  
 And we can witness to his praise,  
 His love is still the same."

But after all, the results of believing prayer are patent to the whole world. The greatest wonders and the highest glories of humanity are not to be found where the world so eagerly seeks them now—in mere physical science or intellectual philosophy—but in the moral and spiritual development of the

human soul. Here is the world's lever, the impulse of its progress, and the element of its redemption. In the gifts of charity, the unfolding and confirmation of moral convictions, the triumphs of spiritual heroism—here, and here only, is the courage that dares to rebuke the world's follies and sins—here, and here only, are the doctrine and the example to show men a better way, and the influence to incline and enable them to pursue it. This is, this alone is the thing that looks on the world with compassion, lifts it up from degradation, raises it from the dust, and sets it upon the throne of honour. That moral power for the transformation and blessing of the world I everywhere identify with the existence and development of the spirit of prayer. I find it most in our own beloved land, in Holland, in the eastern part of the United States of North America; and I find it everywhere the immediate result and natural ally of that kind of religion which has this for its highest distinction and its warmest impulse—the belief that prayer, if offered to God, is and has been answered by him. Show me a people eminently distinguished for their moral elevation, and I will show a people amongst whom the spirit of prayer has been mighty, and prevailed. And show me that particular portion of the English community where the sterner, the nobler, the man-edifying, the God-glorifying virtues rally, and that shall be the very spot, the very point where this, the peculiar energetic spirit of believing prayer, has most fully developed itself. If Sodom is ever spared, you may rely upon it that some believing Abraham has interceded that it should not be destroyed; and if there is any

spiritual prosperity, it is because banded hearts have said,

“ My soul shall pray for Zion still,  
While life or breath remains.”

The breath of prayer is the dew of mercy, drawn upwards from believing hearts by the love of God, which condenses and returns again to refresh and fertilize the wilderness which does not know, much less acknowledge, its benefactor.

There are three or four brief considerations of a corroboratory nature, to which I will now refer, and then draw these observations to a close.

The matters of fact, to which we now allude, corroborate the doctrine, or the fact, to which I have referred, that prayer is answered in this way—by showing the intimate and the truthful connection betwixt the several parts of that evangelic system, by which the doctrine I have endeavoured to vindicate to-night is set forth and defended.

Observe, first, that prayer is inseparable from the evangelic life. The bard of Sheffield says—

“ Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,  
The Christian’s native air.”

We believe it. Man never has that spirit till he is quickened and renewed. He may have a laudable morality; he may be fondly attached even to religious services; but the spirit never agonizes in supplication till it is thoroughly convinced of sin, and utterly broken down in a sense of helplessness. While this is the first and surest sign of repentance, that the heart breathes itself out in prayer to God, gladdened angels recognise and proclaim this mark of the repentant prodigal,—“ Behold, he prays.”

These repentant ones may be very different in circumstances, in education, in natural endowments, in social habits; but they all betake themselves wondrously to this exercise of prayer, and that not because it is especially insisted upon by the religious teacher, still less because any model of it is ever given, or any specific regulations concerning it ever supplied. Many, many persons, at the hour of their conversion, have never witnessed an example of private prayer, and never read one line to regulate the exercise; but they all betake themselves to it as by an instinct of the spiritual nature, as the infant betakes itself to its mother's breast. This is explicable on the evangelic principle, "All thy people shall be taught of the Lord." I know of no other explanation that can be given. Admit that evangelic principle, and all I have been contending for to-night is admitted at once.

There is this second fact—that a most wonderful power in the exercise of devotion is possessed by different men. Like all the gifts of grace, it is regulated by a law of its own, and no man can understand the principle of its development, or the law of its moulding, but the man who studies the Bible, and enters heartily in private into the spirit and power of Christianity. It certainly does not depend on a splendid imagination, or vast learning, or natural eloquence, or lofty genius. Those who have this distinction, sometimes in the greatest measure, have it almost as their only distinction. The philosopher and the peasant, the mightiest monarch and the fettered slave, are here exactly on a level. Young children, untutored

artisans, just reclaimed prodigals, have displayed this sort of eloquence in prayer, which to believing hearts has often seemed like the music of heaven. This, too, like the case to which I have referred, is to be explained on the evangelic principle; it is perfectly inexplicable on any mere natural principle, or by reference to any laws of mere mental and moral philosophy, to which, at all events, it has been my felicity to turn.

Thirdly. The spirit of prayer is always measured by the spirit of holiness. I mention it as a fact; it is not an argument fit only for a theological discourse; it is capable of being tested as any other fact can be; and there is not one who has observed the matter at all but recognises that fact as most certain. Except a man is sanctified he cannot pray. I am not now speaking of forms of devotion, whether they be extemporaneous or prepared. A man may learn the one, and by mere impulse of eloquence utter the other, and yet have neither heart, part, nor lot in the matter. But I am speaking of that habit which sends the man, when no eye sees, and no ear hears, into the secrecy of his closet, there in all earnestness before God, shut up with his Maker, to pour out his soul before Him. I say, in that sense, a man cannot pray except he is sanctified. Even when he first turns to God, though the burden of sin crushes the conscience and the fear of perdition flashes upon the soul, still it is only by the influx of heaven's own light that he has discovered his sin at all, and learned to hate it; that he sighs for complete emancipation from its dominion, as well

as entire freedom from its curse; and day by day, as he does battle with temptation, crucifies his selfishness, denies his carnal appetites, and goes about doing good; he betakes himself to prayer as his heart's natural home, where his love breathes freely and his spirit is at rest. But, oh! let him sin wilfully, and then he cannot pray: his thoughts wander, his utterance is choked,—all is darkness above, and all is barrenness within. The experience of multitudes of young men in this great city of London will testify the truth of this, when they have sought their chambers on that night after their first visit to the haunts of sin, and the first perpetration of the evil deed. The sure, the worst result of sin is to drive the soul from its Maker. It has passed into a proverb amongst us, that Sin will make a man give over praying, or prayer will make a man give over sinning. I ask you to think on this as a matter of fact, and then let your reflections take wing. I ask you to appeal to your own conscience, to all that is in your intellectual and moral nature, whether it is conceivable that God should have associated this delusion, if it be such, with the highest possible and conceivable power for developing holiness in the soul of man. What! can that be a falsehood, which no man can take to, till his soul has been renewed? and is that a delusion which is precious and powerful with man just in the same proportion as he is holy, and is thus allied to the goodness which dwells in heaven? No man is good but by the grace of God; not a touch of holiness ever visits the tainted heart of the sinner but as it comes from Him; but prayer is the channel

through which the Divine purity is conveyed to man, the aliment on which it feeds, the passion in which it burns, and the ally to which it clings: and none but the Creator of my spirit, and the Fountain of truth, can have made it such. This is matter of fact, attested by observation and experience, as well as revelation; and when I meditate upon it, I find a moral demonstration in my heart and conscience, that the prayer which is offered in faith shall receive an answer from heaven.

I will not detain you much longer; but if you are not impatient, there is one other thought to which I will refer before my concluding observation. It is singular—and I wish all Christian men, of whatever denomination, would think about it—that it is just in this one thought, feeling, and practice of spiritual prayer, that the true unity of the church of God is to be found. Let men debate,—reason can never be at one. Let men think and acquire learning; every addition to their stock of knowledge, every new angle of thought, every fresh point of vision, will create new chances of division betwixt them and their neighbour; and the result will be, that the action of nature's laws makes it evident God never intended that there should be a unity founded simply on the operations of the mind. There is however, a deeper unity, which is founded in the basis of the conscience and of the heart; and it is here, and only here, that Christians do find themselves most thoroughly at one. I have been struck with it as a matter of fact, when looking on upon the operations of nature and grace combined in the hearts

and minds of those to whom I have had access, that so long as men have argued, though in the most Christian spirit, there has been no approximation; but as soon as they have fallen upon their knees, all points of difference seem to dissolve away. That is the unity that God always gives. For, find me a man who prays, in the spiritual and individual sense of the word, and all his errors, all his mistakes, as I take them, seem to be as nothing, and are swallowed up in that deeper tide of melody that runs through the utterance of the heart, when that heart pleads with God and pours itself out before the Great Unseen. Oh! this is the energy and bliss of prayer, this oneness in the outgoing of the soul, when all unite to call Him Father, and catch the light of his countenance as it falls upon them, and feel that they are almost in heaven, bathed in its spirit, lifted up with its elevation, gladdened with its joy, and sanctified by its power! Have you never felt it? Is it not a matter of experience? Is it all a dream? Is it not among the most settled convictions of your mind, because it has been the experience of your life? I know you will answer, Yes. This is your feeling, this is your conviction. It extends not merely to an assembly; it extends through the wide world. Meeting brethren of that spirit, and in that act of devotion, at the Cape, in India, in the islands of the South, amid the snows of Greenland, everywhere, however diversified may be their garb, their speech, laws, manners,—the oneness of heart overpowers everything, makes you forget all differences, and look upon them as unworthy of your concern.

It goes further—that same spirit stretches forth and takes hold upon all the faithful, in every country and age. A praying man can offer sacrifice with Abel, commune with Enoch, be a “preacher of righteousness” with Noah, go on pilgrimage with Abraham, repeat the penitential psalm with David, sing of the “Child born,” and “the Son given” with Isaiah, weep with Jeremiah over the ruins of Jerusalem, sit down with Peter, James, and John at the blessed communion, and enter with Paul into the ecstasies of his exclamation, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!” This mysterious outgoing of the heart reaches all by its influence, lays all under tribute by its magic spell, and finds the sublime and full reality of that oneness of the Christian church, which shall be seen in its last manifestations in heaven, and which is at once the solace and glory of our pilgrimage here.

I have but one observation more, and that is the concluding one. Some of you have not prayed. All of which I have spoken to night, except as you may have heard words in the Sabbath-school or around the domestic altar—all to which I have referred is to you a matter of mystery. And some of you who once did pray, oppressed by conscience, repelled by the look of an offended God, have ceased to pray. I speak to you, for my heart and yours are as one, and we are both for the judgment and eternity. I speak to you as a brother, as a friend; and I should regard all the results of this evening's exercise as “less than nothing and lighter than vanity” in comparison of this result—if my observations should

lead one of you to-night, on your bended knees, to renew or to commence the holiest duty that life can know. Remember! there is the promise,—you may build upon it; there is the Intercessor—you may plead his name; there is the promised grace to help your weakness, to dissipate your darkness, to give you strength and holy and believing importunity,—and that too shall not be withheld.

“ O Thou by whom we come to God,  
The Life, the Truth, the Way,  
The path of prayer thyself hast trod,—  
Lord, teach us how to pray.”

But many of you have prayed, and enjoyed these results. God says to you, “ Ye are my witnesses before the world.” In answer to your supplications, in answer to the supplications of others, you have found in the course of your life many proofs that God is faithful. Oh! let not the sneer of infidelity, which can do no harm except to him who indulges in it,—let it not for one moment chill your ardour, or repress the sincerity and fulness of your confession for God. You must confess here to night, as praying men, that you have had your answers often. When the cloud has hovered, you have prayed: it has been dissipated, and nothing but sunlight has been upon you. When terrible calamity has threatened you, you have prayed, and you have been snatched from destruction. When grief has crushed you, you have prayed: it has been removed, or you have been favoured with a wondrous spring of energy to bear it. And when you have thought of one most dear to you, and yearned for the salvation of

that soul, after many years, it may be, the salvation of that soul has been granted to your prayer. Has it not been so? I know there are many in this assembly who can answer, Yes. Nay, you have had returns to the supplications of others. Have you not noticed effects, strange effects, in the depths of man's spiritual and moral consciousness,—that, in seasons of darkness, words of life and power have fallen upon your ear, as if an angel had whispered them,—and in seasons of special peril, a warning and a drawing power has come over you? Why, when the heart has been depressed, and ready to faint, new life has come, like breezes from the eternal hills, or streams in the desert. You have found out afterwards—at least I have done so more than once—that at that very season some person, eminent for the power of devotion, was supplicating the needed blessing on your soul. Why should we doubt? Why should we despair? We carry in our hearts the best evidence; we shall carry it to the grave. Then bear your testimony for God; but bear your testimony meekly. Spiritual things are never wisely paraded; they cease to be spiritual things when invested with the robes of ostentation. Bear it meekly, then; for you have nothing to do but to commiserate those who do not pray: it is the greatest calamity, after all, of human life, to be shut out from God. Do it, then, in your Master's spirit, and your Master will love and bless you. And I pray God, who alone can make us wise and truly holy, to bless this and all your exercises, not merely to the expansion of the intellect, which, after all, is but a very secondary thing, and possessed in mightier

development by the arch-fiend ; but that your moral nature, your conscience, your spiritual life, your love to God, your pity for man, your disposition for well-doing in every sphere and of every kind, may grow, increase, swallow up all your faculties,—bathe in the fulness of heaven's life and power the whole sum of your humanity, that God may be glorified in you, whether it be by life or by death.



“Never man spake like this Man.”

A LECTURE

BY THE

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OF CHESTER; CHAPLAIN TO THE BISHOP OF MANCHESTER;  
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JOHN DEAN PAUL, Esq.,

AT THE CHAIR.



## “NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN.”

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“NEVER man spake like this man.” And who is this that spake as never man had spoken? The Holy Ghost on this wise gives the answer: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds; who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.” He, therefore, that heard him, heard the Father; he that saw him, saw the Father. Meet then, and of necessity it was, that he should speak as none beside had ever spoken. As a perfect man, “holy, harmless, separate from sinners,” his mind all truth, his heart all purity, it followed that there should be about his speech, his thought, his language, a sublime peculiarity; but when in that perfect man “dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” so that he was the “Word made flesh,” “God manifest in the flesh,” “Emmanuel, God with us,” surely it behoved that he should manifest in mind, in mien, and in expression, an incomparable individuality. Not that his words were more truly the words of God than those uttered

by the tongues or traced by the pens of prophets and apostles when they “spake” and wrote “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;” for every word of God is alike pure, alike infallible. Whether the Father speaks to us by earthly messengers, or by “the Messenger of the covenant, in whom his soul delighteth,” we are equally bound to recognise the accents, and submit to the authority of our Creator. The voice may be human, but the word is Divine.

Yet so real was the humanity of the voice, though in complete consistency with the divinity of the Revelation, that the holy writers retained their own distinctive styles, manifested their own moral and mental characteristics, whilst all they communicated was the mind of God. Hence Paul wrote not as did Peter, Peter wrote not as did James, Jeremiah sang not as did Isaiah, Isaiah sang not as did David; each is broadly distinguished from the rest. So have we heard a rich variety of wind instruments, ranging from the soft flute to the clanging trumpet, all one by one awaked to melody by the breath of some master-musician; and though the notes, the tunes, were wholly his, the tones, the sounds, were still their own. If, then, ordinary prophets gave unequivocal evidences of their unimpaired personality whilst writing under the power of an all-pervading inspiration; how much more might it have been anticipated that the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, would possess a style and manner all his own! It was intimated in prophecy that he should speak as none before had spoken, and none beside should speak. When the sweet singer of Israel, beholding the day

afar off, sang of his future Son and Lord, he exclaimed, “Grace is poured into thy lips.” And when Jesus came in the flesh, how clearly was this prediction fulfilled! Thus we find “that when he had ended his sayings” on the mountain-top, amid assembled multitudes, “the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” In like manner, when he had entered the synagogue at Nazareth, and had stood up to read, and there had been delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias, and he had read the sublimest prophecy touching himself, and then, having returned the book into the hand of the minister, had sat down and simply said, “This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears,”—“all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth;” or, as it in the Greek, “the words of grace,” of “surpassing beauty,” that “flowed majestically,” “issued forth in grandeur,” from his lips. Evidence of the same kind is specially furnished by the testimony on which my lecture is founded. Jesus, in the midst of his Divine ministrations, was suddenly surrounded by officers sent by the envious Pharisees and high priests, that they might take him and bring him to them. Rude and ruthless men, no doubt, were these officers: their minds familiarized with crime and cruelty, their hearts little susceptible of any finer sentiment or impression; yet such a spell did the lips of Jesus cast upon their souls, that, arrested and riveted, they could not so much as lift up a finger against him; and when they returned to those who had sent them, and it was demanded of them, “Wherefore have ye

not brought him?" their simple, natural, emphatic answer was, "Never man spake like this man." Most eloquent testimony! won from adversaries, wrung from the most unlikely lips. Be it ours to follow forth the illustration of this inviting theme: and may God vouchsafe his effectual blessing!

None ever spake with the simplicity, the ease, and the translucency with which Jesus of Nazareth spoke. Everything great is simple. Simplicity is one of the distinguishing attributes of greatness. The grandest things in nature are the simplest things in nature. What so grand, yet what so simple, as is light, which irradiates and beautifies all things? And in proportion as there is truth, pure, unmingled, unsullied truth in any being, there will be clearness, transparency, artlessness of manner and of character. What makes a child so inartificial and pellucid? The measure of truth which lingers in the child: so that a child is the most undisguised and unsophisticated thing in this deceitful and deceiving world. No marvel that He who acted as well as spake as never man acted or spoke, took up a little child in his arms, when he would teach us what we must become in order that we might receive the kingdom of God. It is the truthfulness and the trustfulness of a child, in which lies the secret of its simplicity. But the Lord Jesus being essentially the greatest in the universe, it followed that he must be essentially the simplest in the universe. The Lord Jesus being truth embodied—"light in whom is no darkness at all"—who could say, "I am the light of the world"—who was "that true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"—who was the Sun of Righteousness

which rose on this dark world “with healing in his wings;” it followed that he must be most clear in doctrine, and in language most luminous. As no physical light can vie in purity with the beams of the natural sun, so no spiritual light can compare with the beams from the Sun of Righteousness, which broke through that cloud of humanity, which softened, but could not quench the splendour beneath. Hence, throughout the thoughts, the teaching, the bearing, of Jesus Christ, what surpassing nativeness, artlessness, and ease! You never find signs of effort in the ideas of Christ—you never find in him the slightest trace of elaborate expression—you never detect the faintest indication of aiming at effect. His doctrine streamed forth as from an overflowing fountain. He did but open his lips, and rivers of living water gushed out. Apostles and prophets, though moved by the Holy Ghost, sometimes seemed to labour for expression, and to travail with the vastitude of the conceptions to which the Spirit constrained them to give utterance; but you never find it so with the Lord, who inspired and commissioned those messengers of his truth. He always utters his words of power and majesty with a calmness, a freedom, a spontaneousness all his own.

How varied and touching the illustrations we might adduce! Our time will allow us only to single out a few. Mark the mode in which he taught: how captivating its naturalness! As he was teaching on the mountain, the lilies grew magnificently at his feet; the birds of heaven were hovering over his head, when Jesus, pointing now at the flowers, and now at the birds, whilst admonishing his disciples

to cast all their care on their Father in heaven, said, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" Exquisite simplicity, and no less exquisite beauty of figure and language! Could anything be more convincing, or more easily understood? Again, would he teach his followers to confide in their Father's protection? Hearken to his words: "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." A child can lay hold of the argument, it is so plain; an archangel cannot conceive of any reasoning more demonstrative and unanswerable. And can there be imagined an image of such pathetic artlessness and power as that which he employed when he came near and beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." What picture ever could compare with this for simple graphic force? It brings the yearning compassion of the Redeemer

before us in a way that must reach the hardest heart. Nothing can exceed the naturalness of the method which Christ delighted to adopt in his gracious ministrations. He taught, not like the stilted philosophers of Greece and Rome, in abstract form and philosophic style; he loved to clothe his thoughts of matchless grandeur in the living guise which nature furnished, and to interweave them with the affections and incidents of ordinary life. Alike the Author of nature and of grace, he loved to make creation illustrate and expound revelation, and revelation throw a fresh lustre and loveliness over the face of creation. Thus he continually borrowed from the scenes and objects around him. When he would describe the august solemnities of the last day, and exemplify the separation between the righteous and the wicked, he compares it to the shepherd dividing the sheep from the goats; and again, to a net cast into the sea, and drawn to the shore, where the fish are separated, the good from the bad. When he would represent himself in his mystical union with his church, the root of all its vitality, the spring of all its fruitfulness, he said, as he passed along to the garden of agony, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . . I am the vine, ye are the branches.” According to the prophecy that had gone before on him, “he opened his mouth in parables.” And though a parable has a dark side, it has, at the same time, a light one. It is like the fiery, cloudy pillar which interposed between Israel and Egypt—to the Israelites all brightness, to

the Egyptians all darkness. So with the parables that Jesus spake; they were opaque to the sons of unbelief, transparent to the sons of faith; the plainest form of teaching to the simple soul, the most mysterious to the sophisticated and unbelieving. In this form of speech Jesus delighted. He seems to have appropriated the parable to himself. With the exception of that which Nathan addressed to David, we have nothing in Holy Scripture which at all resembles the parables of our Lord. His apostles never spoke or wrote such pictures in words. Throughout the book of the Acts of the Apostles you find no trace of the parable. The Redeemer would seem to have reserved it to himself as his own distinctive method of instruction, even as opening the eyes of one born blind would seem to have been chosen by him as the distinctive manifestation of his miraculous power. And need we remind you that his parables were all of them drawn from such scenes and objects as that the commonest people could most readily understand them? The shepherd with his flock, the fisherman with his net, the husbandman and his vine, the sower going forth to sow his seed, the reaper thrusting his sickle into the harvest, the woman searching for her lost piece of money — these are the artless images taken from every day life, which the Lord employed to symbolize his lessons of eternal wisdom. Such, and so familiar, from the lip Divine, was, to use the beautiful definition of a parable, attributed to a child, "the earthly story with a heavenly meaning."

There is about those earthly stories a truth to nature which even a child can feel. I well

remember a holy child who used, when little more than seven years old, to turn instinctively to the parable of the prodigal son, and read it with tears stealing down her cheeks. She entered into it with all her little soul ; and often, when her mother at her instance read it for her as she lay upon the couch of pain, her voice would falter, and her eye suffuse, as she exclaimed, whilst listening to that pathetic passage, “ When he was yet a great way off he saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him ;” “ Oh, mamma, how good God is ! how kind he is to a poor repenting sinner !” So thrillingly did the simplicity of the earthly story bring home the heavenly meaning to the heart of a child ! Yes, and on all occasions Jesus spake with a truthfulness, a genuineness, a translucency, manifest as the beams of the sun. Can any man come to the page of inspiration, who does not bring a proud and prejudiced mind, determined to disbelieve the Bible, because he has made it his interest to disbelieve it—can any one dwell upon the words which flowed from the lips of Christ, and for a moment doubt their sincerity, or imagine them to be the words of a deceiver ? Sooner far might he suppose that streams clearer than crystal issued forth from a polluted fountain, or that the rays of the noonday sun were shed abroad by darkness. From first to last the Saviour’s speech is like a diamond of the purest water—without shade, without speck, without flaw.

But if none ever spake with the guilelessness and simplicity, so none ever spake with the majesty, the grandeur, and the supremacy with which that lowly

stranger spake, whilst he sojourned amongst the children of men. He had, indeed, no form, nor comeliness, nor beauty, that the natural eye should desire him; "he was despised and rejected of men," a homeless pilgrim, who had not where to lay his head; and yet his style and tone, throughout his wondrous course, were such as could beseem none else but one who, amidst the weakness and infirmities of humanity, had the deep, the abiding, the unwavering consciousness, that in that humanity dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead. The style of Jesus was the style of a king, nay, the style of "the King of kings and Lord of lords;" a style which would have been blasphemy on any lip save the lip of Deity. This august tone of matchless majesty was sustained, from first to last, by the meek and lowly Son of man. Examine his first recorded discourse, that upon the mountain,—mark how he treats the law of God even as his own law. Harken how he says, with an authority that none but God had right to exercise, "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." "*I say unto you!*" On another occasion he said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." And again, in, if possible, loftier language still, he said to the gainsaying Jews, "If ye believe not that I *AM*, ye shall die in your sins." Whose language is this—whose this tone of supreme autoeracy? And yet there was no air of arrogance, no semblance of assumption in it all; there was no inflated effort to be great; all was the native style of

a disguised monarch, and that monarch the ruler of the universe. The thin garment of mortality could not conceal the fathomless secret that God "manifest in the flesh" was walking on the world he himself had made, speaking the language of those whom he had created, feeling their infirmities, mingling in their scenes, and sharing in their sorrows.

The sublimity with which Christ expressed himself is discernible in the manner in which he addressed those who sought him in their woes, or came to him as sinners. Listen to his language of surpassing grace and power to the contrite and oppressed: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Harken to his words of incomparable grandeur, as he drew near to the grave of Lazarus—words which have fallen on the ear of many a mourner, as he has accompanied the dust of a beloved friend to its long home, with unutterable power and impressiveness: "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?" "I know that thou believest it," we may say even to the sceptic, as Paul said to the wavering Agrippa,—the very words ought to command thy faith, they bespeak themselves the words of God.

With kindred sublimity spake he, when he said, "Verily, verily I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice,

and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Can we stand in doubt whose accents are these? can we mistake the voice of Deity? Hearken again how he speaks as the present God, exercising the inalienable prerogative of Divinity. They bring to him one sick of the palsy, borne of four; the crowd which throngs the house where he teaches, makes it impossible to approach him; they open the roof and lower with cords the couch on which the paralytic lies, into the presence of the Lord; Jesus regards the mute supplication of the act, and "seeing their faith, saith to the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." Well might the standers by, who knew not who it was that stood amongst them, say, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" Yes, none but the Almighty can possess that inalienable prerogative; he therefore who pretends to exercise that power, is a most daring blasphemer and usurper, whether he be pope, or priest, or presbyter. Reason itself tells us that none save he against whom the offence is committed, can remit the punishment of the offence. On this principle, the law of the land recognizes the power of pardoning as vested solely in the Crown, because the sovereign is the impersonation of supreme authority in the state: how much more, then, must the power of life and death eternal belong exclusively to Him who sways the sceptre and holds the balance of the universe! Yet Jesus claimed this power; and did he not vindicate the claim? He said to those who accused him in their hearts—and

mark the ease and majesty of his argument,—“Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, rise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he unto the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all.” What resistless demonstration! Would God have set his seal to the fearful blasphemy, that a man, a mere man, could grasp his sceptre and dispense the eternal destinies of his creatures? What grandeur in the language! What corresponding grandeur in the act!

Behold again a wondrous display of the same supremacy in the case of the penitent woman whom the self-righteous Pharisee would have spurned from Jesus' feet. He said unto her, “Woman, thy sins are forgiven.” And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, “Who is this, that forgiveth sins also?” But he vouchsafed no notice of their cavil, but sealed the blessing on her conscience, and said to her, “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” Once more, give ear to his words; in the hour of his deepest humiliation, when it seemed as if he who saved others, could not save himself; when the darkness which enshrouded him appeared to be a symbol of the darkness which overspread his human soul, as he cried with a loud voice, “My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?”—even then, he spoke pre-eminently as Lord of all; for one of the thieves, who were crucified with him, having turned to him in his agony, and prayed,

" Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!" Jesus said unto him, " Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Who is this, that on the cursed cross confers the gift of paradise, and snatches a brand from the very fire of hell, to plant it as a tree of righteousness in the garden above, " that it may be to him for a sign, for an everlasting memorial that shall not be cut off?" Did ever man speak like this man?

In working his miracles, there was about the manner and language of Jesus a majesty all his own. Prophets and apostles worked mighty wonders, but none wrought them as did Christ. They almost invariably in words, always in spirit, avowed that they did them by a power derived from above. " Why look ye so earnestly on us?" said Peter, when he had healed the impotent man at the gate of the temple, " as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? the name of Jesus, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know."

Such, in effect, was the testimony of all the servants of the Most High God. They declared that they derived all their power from the Lord Jesus. But mark how he himself performed his wonders. A poor leper came and worshipped him, saying: " Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying: " I will, be thou clean." The afflicted father of a demoniac child besought him for his son, and said, " If thou canst help us." Jesus said unto him: " If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." Believe in whom? In Jesus.

What! in a mere creature, according to the Socinian and the scorner, who cannot see the light because they are too wilful and prejudiced to see it. Yes, in Jesus: if thou canst believe in him, all things are possible; for omnipotence is latent in him; whosoever, therefore, lays hold of Jesus by faith, lays hold of Him that created and sustains the universe.

In like manner, how divinely spake he on the Sea of Galilee! He had lain fast asleep in the hinder part of the fishermen's vessel, with nothing save a pillow on which to rest his head; he had been so worn and wearied with his toils of mercy, that neither the rising storm nor the roaring billows could break his deep repose; but when at last his trembling followers awoke him and said: "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" he rose from his pillow, with all the majesty of God, and, with the voice that said, in creation's birthday, "Let there be light, and there was light," he now said to the winds and waves, "Peace, be still;" "and there was a great calm." Disguised as that voice was in the feebleness of human accent, the sea and the tempest knew their Creator, and obeyed his word. Well might the disciples exclaim, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?"

With kindred supremacy he spake at the grave of Lazarus: "Lazarus, come forth; and he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes." So at the gate of Nain he touched the bier which bore the body of the only son of the poor widow; he spake the word, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise; and he that was dead sat up and began to speak; and he delivered him to his mother." What

demonstrations of innate power that knew no limits! How clear that he had life in himself, and whom he would he quickened! In perfect keeping with this view of Jesus, is the calm confidence in his own infinite resources, which he always manifested. He never mistrusted his own power. When the multitude, which had followed him into the desert, were famishing, he said to his disciples, who would have had them dismissed, "They need not depart; give ye them to eat;" and they said, "Whence should a man buy bread for these in the wilderness? Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient, that each one of them should take a little." What said Jesus? "Make the men sit down." How majestic this quietude, this unfaltering self-reliance! And the men sat down, in number about five thousand; and then, with the sublime composure of conscious omnipotence, he took the five barley loaves and the two small fishes, and, "looking up to heaven, he gave thanks, and brake, and distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude; and likewise of the fishes, as much as they would." The silent miracle went on unperceived. As Jesus brake the bread, it multiplied. As he divided the fishes, they increased. Would he have ventured on that marvellous undertaking had he not been possessed of the fullest consciousness that he was the Creator?

With similar sovereignty and dignity he demeaned and expressed himself in working his first miracle at Cana of Galilee. His mother said to him, "They have no wine;" Jesus, foreseeing the idolatry of which she would be made the subject, would not act immediately on her suggestion, but said unto her,

“Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come.” As if to say, “Thou art indeed my mother after the flesh, and so far hast to do with me, but, as I am God, I stand alone, and no created being must intermeddle with my purpose and authority.” How then did he act and speak? With Divine greatness and dignity he said, “Fill the water-pots with water;” “and they filled them up to the brim.” Then he breathed no word to change the water; he simply said, “Draw out now, and bear to the ruler of the feast.” “He looked,” as some poet has beautifully expressed it,

“And, awed by power divine,  
The modest water blushed itself to wine.”

The volition of the Creator sufficed. Such are a few, and only a few, illustrations of the incomparable majesty with which Christ spoke; and had I no other proof that my Saviour is my God, than the power, the style, the divinity with which he spoke, I should need no further evidence. I would exclaim, with the convinced and adoring Thomas, “My Lord and my God!”

In fullest accordance with the sovereignty with which Jesus spake, were the intimacy with God, and the holy familiarity with things unseen and Divine, which characterized his speech. There is something about the manner in which our Lord spoke of the unseen world, of the Father, and of the things of the Father, which altogether distinguishes his teaching from all teaching beside. Prophets and apostles describe things unseen and eternal, as those who look up to them and behold them through a tele-

scope; Jesus of Nazareth describes them as one who looks from heaven, and stoops to tell us what he has seen with his own eye, and heard with his own ear; yea, rather, as one who is himself still in the midst of those invisible realities of which he is the beginning and the end.

I know not whether I can convey to your minds the impression which the perusal of what Christ says of the Father, of the Holy Ghost, and of the eternal world, produces on my own mind; but whenever I earnestly contemplate his delineations of the things of God, I perceive in them a freshness, a naturalness, a verisimilitude, which carries with it inevitable conviction that he who speaks must have seen, must have dwelt amidst, must have been most familiar with what he reveals. Mark one peculiarity in his disclosures;—nowhere else in the Scriptures have we the positive descriptions of heaven, which we have from the lips of the Lord of the unseen world. The representations of it by the inspired writers are chiefly negative: the Redeemer brought "life and immortality to light through the gospel;" drew aside the thick curtain which screened the spiritual world, and disclosed heaven in all its vividness, and hell in all its horror. Behold how he paints heaven:—"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you." What a picture in a sentence! What a realizing conception it gives the believer of his home! A many-mansioned house, one blessed family filling it, one Divine Father over it; unity in diversity, and diversity in unity!

Then again, what a glimpse he gives us of the holy angels, around the throne of the Almighty, of

their ministries and their glories, where he says, in reference to little children, “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I tell you their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” Is not this the language of one who speaks from actual vision?—of one who came down from heaven to tell us what is passing there? And what an insight does this short sentence afford us into the work and the dignity of angels!—their work, to watch over the lambs here in the wilderness,—their dignity, to behold their Father’s face, and to give an account of their tender charge!

In like manner does the blessed Redeemer discourse, if we may venture so to express ourselves, with a holy familiarity of and to the everlasting Father and the eternal Spirit; a familiarity which would be blasphemy from any tongue save his; yet, from his, it is the befitting language of “the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth,” who was in the bosom of the Father while he was upon earth, even the Son of man, who was in heaven. Speaking of the Father, he says, “I and my Father are one.” Speaking to the Father, he says, “Father, I will that where I am, there those whom thou hast given me may be also, that they may behold my glory, which I had with thee before the world began.” “I will,” is the style of a king; “I will,” therefore, used to God, must be the style of him who was Jehovah’s fellow, even whilst he obeyed his holy law; who, whilst the sword of the Father smote him as the shepherd of the flock, was yet the compeer of him to whom he offered up himself as the Lamb of God, to take away the sins of the world.

In the same tone did Christ express himself when he stood at the grave of Lazarus. He communed with the mighty God as one that was ever with him, ever the delight of his soul: "He lifted up his eyes and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me, and I *knew* that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stood by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me." Thus, whilst he walked amongst men as a poor despised wayfarer, he held converse with the Father as his co-equal, co-eternal Son.

No less peculiar is his language respecting the Holy Ghost. "If," said he, "I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." "He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." Did ever man speak like this man?

Another most striking characteristic of the teaching of Jesus was the boldness, the faithfulness, and the power with which he spoke. No countenance can they derive from the example of our great Model, who shun controversy, shrink from collision, and fear to wield the two-edged sword of the Spirit, so as to pierce even "to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow,"—piercing to save, and wounding to heal. Our Lord throughout his ministry was engaged in an unflinching and almost unceasing struggle with heresy, formalism, hypocrisy, infidelity, and every other shape of error and of evil. He did not shrink into the wilderness to escape the stormy wind and tempest; he sometimes

sought retirement for the purpose of communion with his Father; but it was that he might come forth anew “as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and as a giant that rejoiceth to run his race.” He hastened back to the field of conflict and victory, there still to meet and still to master his relentless foes.

The very discourses of Jesus, in which he brings forth his grandest doctrines, his deepest disclosures of divine truth, are the very discourses which were one incessant controversy, one sustained wrestling with the scribes and the pharisees, the gainsayers and the scorers. Neither did our Master ever recoil from branding sin and reprobating wicked men in language the most thrilling and terrific. Hearken to the fearful emphasis of his denunciations against the deceivers of men's souls: “Ye serpents,” “ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” What terrible words! What stern faithfulness! He sanctioned no peace with heresy and hypocrisy,—he never used silken phrases to cloak the truth,—he never blunted the edge of the sword, lest it should give pain: “Woe, woe, woe,” pealed from his gracious lips against the hypocritical scribes and pharisees, like successive claps of thunder, each louder, deeper, and more dread than that which went before.

Then with what a force and energy of conviction he spoke! He answered the inmost thoughts and reasonings of the heart. The ear of Omniscience needed not the utterance of the tongue, it caught the breathing of the soul. How he laid bare the recesses of the breast,—how he flashed

conviction on the most insensible! "Come," said one, "see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" Harken to him on another occasion: he sat in the temple, and the scribes and pharisees brought to him a woman charged with adultery, and, wishing to cloak their own hypocrisy under their pretended zeal against her, or rather, hoping to use her as a snare to entrap him, who spoke with a wisdom which none of his adversaries could gainsay or resist, they said unto him, "Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now, Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?" And Jesus stooped down, and wrote with his finger on the ground, as though he heard them not; so when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and, looking on them with an eye that, like a flame of fire, pierced their inmost thoughts, he said unto them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And again, "He stooped down and wrote on the ground; and they which heard it, being convicted in their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." What moral majesty! what demonstration! what irresistible conviction! Have we not here a foreshadowing of the judgment of the last day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest, and every mouth shall be stopped, and every tongue shall become dumb before the Judge of quick and dead?

But however unparalleled the severity and boldness with which our Lord sometimes spake, no less un

paralleled were the tenderness, the gentleness, and the meekness which usually distinguished his speech. How beautifully in him did seemingly antagonistic graces meet and blend! There were no flaws, no rents in his perfect character; it resembled his own robe, which was “without seam, woven from the top throughout.” Arrayed with all perfections, in Jesus the sternest denunciations of sin were accompanied with yearning compassion for sinners, and to the trembling and contrite he showed a tenderness the most touching and pathetic. The bruised reed he never brake; the smoking flax he never quenched. There are words and scenes of pathos in Christ’s ministry which have no parallel in the records of the universe. The man has no heart who can dwell upon them without emotion. Attend to one illustration. As he came near and beheld the city which was about to bathe her hands in his blood, he wept over her, and said: “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes.” Mark the agitation of the language. Jesus was not agitated by what throws into tumult the children of this world. When the people would have taken him by force to make him a king, he looked with serene contempt on the baubles for which the mighty ones of the earth hanker and battle; but when he comes to foretell the misery and desolation of Jerusalem, his words break forth from his breast in an agony of emotion. “If thou hadst known,—even thou,—at least in this thy day,—the things that belong to thy peace;—but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

Turn again, too, to that picture of matchless

pathos at which we have already glanced, as exemplifying the graphic simplicity of Christ's teaching,—the parable of the Prodigal Son. Has there ever been a picture, in words, which could for a moment compare with it in breathing tenderness? How it adumbrates "the pitifulness of the great mercy" of the mighty God! Lo! a father beholds his profligate, but now penitent child, afar off,—his bowels yearn towards him,—he runs and falls on his neck, and kisses him; he forestalls his confession: all anxiety to stanch his tears, he says: "Bring forth the best robe and put it upon him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." All comment would but dilute the essential pathos of this precious parable.

Let us pass to another scene, and hearken to the accents of our merciful High Priest. A woman, who was a sinner, her heart melted with contrition, and penetrated with gratitude, sought him out as he sat at the table of a proud self-righteous Pharisee, who thought he was honouring Christ by inviting him to his board, and who treated him with marked discourtesy. As he sat at meat, she came and stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with ointment. The disdainful Pharisee, when he saw it, spake within himself, saying, "If this man were a prophet he would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she

is a sinner.” Then Jesus, showing him instantly that he was a prophet, yea, and more than a prophet, for he heard the dark musings of the formalist's soul, answered and said unto him, “Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most. Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned unto the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.” For pathetic eloquence and sublime tenderness you can find nothing like this in all the writings in the world.

Nor let it be forgotten that there were times when that voice was like the voice of many waters, or the sound of mighty thunderings, even that voice whose words dropped thus softly on the bruised spirit, as the dew upon the new-mown grass, or as the rain distils upon the tender herb,—no drop so heavy as to crush the drooping flower;—no, he revived the prostrate soul,

and sent her away breathing the fragrance of joy, and peace, and praise. "Never man spake like this man."

Equally incomparable was the spirit of wisdom, soundness, and seriousness which seasoned the speech of Jesus. Numerous and various were the occasions on which he spoke,—sometimes in the face of enemies—sometimes in the midst of friends—sometimes at social boards—sometimes in the synagogue—sometimes in the thronging crowd—sometimes in the wilderness—sometimes in the closet—sometimes on the mountain top; yet in all the varieties of his instructions and expressions, you cannot detect one word on which you can fasten the slightest imputation of weakness, or folly, or frailty. We may challenge all the infidels and Socinians in the world to discover such a word. They dare not even make the attempt. They may fancy they find blemishes in Scripture; they may actually discern imperfections in the holiest saints whose history it gives, but I have never met with a writer who had the hardihood to try to arraign or traduce, either the character or the words of Jesus Christ. They might as well try to detect spots in the noontide sun, or to point out blemishes in the full-blown rose.

Two instances of the wisdom with which he discoursed must suffice. His enemies sought to catch him in his words. They said unto him, "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?" Shall we give or shall we not give? Jesus, perceiving their hypocrisy, said unto them, "Bring me a penny that I may see it; and they brought it. And he said unto them, Whose image and superscription is this? and they said unto him, Cæsar's. He answered and said unto

them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marvelled at him. They were silenced. He placed them at once on the horns of an inevitable dilemma. A single sentence from his lips sufficed to cut asunder their artful net, in which they had hoped to entangle him.

Take another example of the wisdom with which he argued. The chief priests, and the scribes and elders, came to him, and said unto him, "By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I will ask of you one question: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? Answer me." They found themselves at once shut up in a difficulty, from which they could not escape. For if they had said, "Of heaven," he would have said, "Why then did ye not believe him?" but if they had said, "Of men," they feared the people, for all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed. Thus, by a simple interrogation, he inclosed his crafty adversaries in a net, from which they could not extricate themselves. Always and everywhere the language of Christ was distinguished by a holy prudence, propriety, and solemnity. He never uttered a word which was trifling, irrelevant, unseasonable, unseemly, or carnal. His words bear the marks of celestial coinage. Throughout his conversation there is an artless grace, a serene solemnity, a chastened earnestness, which cannot but be felt by all who have an ear to hear, and a heart to understand. Well might he say, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

But to perfect the picture: never man spake with the beautiful consistency with which Christ Jesus spake. This was the crowning characteristic of all. Whether in a nation or in a government—whether in a church or in a minister—whether in a Christian family or in an individual believer—that which gives the finishing stroke to character is consistency. A man's life should be of one texture throughout; it must not be what Scripture calls "linsey-woolsey," the woollen and the linen thread woven together; let it be of one yarn throughout, woven in the loom of honesty and integrity. Let a man be to his dying hour what he was in his early days, except as his principles have expanded into maturity, and his character has mellowed in righteousness. "Onward, upward, heavenward," should be his watchword. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." But this gem of perfectness had its noblest display in the whole conduct and conversation of the Lord Jesus. Yet how marvelous, how unimaginable the character he had to sustain! It behooved that he should manifest himself to be at once perfect man and perfect God; or, as it is expressed in the Athanasian Creed, "Equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood; and yet not two, but one Christ," one undivided person. Oh! who could ever have preconceived this mystery, or having formed the preconception, could have drawn in keeping the picture of such a being? It would have been a miracle, next to the incarnation itself, for any impostor to have been able to body forth, in majestic consistency, the character and conversation of *Em-*

manuel. It was indispensable that he should never, on the one hand, utter language or demean himself so as to belie his humanity; nor, on the other, so as to compromise his divinity. To have done either would have been to bring into doubt the perfection of his person, and thus to have subverted the hope of the sinner. For had he not been truly man, how could he have suffered for us? Had he not been truly God, how could he have saved us by suffering? It behooved that there should be an offering in our nature, to make atonement for the sins of our nature; it behooved that the atonement so made should be made by one who could give infinite worth and efficacy to the offering, by taking our nature into union with the Divine. Take away this glorious truth, and you take away the key-stone from the arch of salvation—the foundation-stone from the Church of God—the sun from the firmament of the glorious Gospel. Christ is God, or he is no Saviour for me. Guilty and helpless, I can have no trust in him, and no hope through him, but in virtue of that glorious truth. “Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.”

Jesus always spake as befitted the Son of man; yet he no less spake as befitted the Son of God. Proofs of the co-existence of the two natures in Christ perpetually present themselves in most striking juxtaposition. Let us glance at a few instances—time requires that they should be very few—where the most emphatic and demonstrative evidences of his manhood were followed immediately by no less emphatic and demonstrative evidences of his Godhead. If, at the grave of Lazarus, he wept as mortal creatures weep—and there is not in the whole compass of the Scrip-

tures a sentence, though it consists but of two words, which conveys to a believing mind such a world of sympathy and solace as that little verse, "Jesus wept;"—if then it might have appeared that the humanity overshadowed the divinity, yet in a few moments the voice that had just groaned in human anguish, was heard saying, "Lazarus, come forth;" and he that was dead came forth. Is not this the Son of God? Is not this the Son of man?

Behold again, could there be a more pathetic, a more overwhelming manifestation of the reality of his manhood, than when, in the garden, he fell on his face, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, and his piercing prayer, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me?" Is not this in very deed a man? Surely he can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; he has tasted our sorrows; he has felt the very burden of our sins; he has felt the very wrath of his Father against sin; for both were laid upon him as our substitute, in that dread hour of his agony. But was the Godhead quenched amid the darkness? God forbid. In a little while he rose from the ground, his visage marred more than the sons of men, and he looked at the ruffian hands that came to lay hands upon him, and simply said, "Whom seek ye?" When forthwith, at that simple question, they fell to the ground. Thus, when the Sun of righteousness seemed utterly buried in the depth of that eclipse, there gleamed forth one bright beam, and in the twinkling of an eye it smote his enemies to the earth.

Again, in that hour and power of darkness, when

he hung on the cross, a spectacle to heaven, and earth, and hell, bleeding, fainting, lingering, dying, having saved others, yet seemingly unable to save himself,—was there, then, no demonstration that he was still the mighty God? Yes, for lo! a dying malefactor in his last agony, prays to his fellow-sufferer, “ Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Who could thus speak, but He that had the keys of heaven and hell, “ who shutteth and no man openeth, who openeth and no man shutteth?” Then the darkening heavens, the quaking earth, the rending rocks, the bursting graves, all echoed the centurion’s voice, “ Truly this was the Son of God.” Thus, therefore, from first to last, viewed in every light, never man spake like Jesus. None ever spake with such artlessness and simplicity; none ever spake with such majesty and supremacy; none ever spake with such intimacy of acquaintance with God, and such familiarity with the world unseen; none ever spake with such boldness and uncompromising fidelity; none ever spake with such touching tenderness and melting meekness; none ever spake with such weight, wisdom, and power; none ever spake so harmoniously and consistently as God and man, as man and God, in one perfect person co-existing

What, then! can any doubt that Jesus is the Son of God? The man who repudiates the Godhead of Christ, is more inconsistent than the man who repudiates the Bible altogether. Robert Hall branded such an one as an occupant of the half-way house

to infidelity. We should be warranted in saying that he would be more reasonable if he went the entire journey. For how can he hold that Jesus was not a blasphemer, if Jesus was not the Son of the living God? The Jews put him to death, because "that he, being man, made himself equal with God;" and they were justified in doing so on the Socinian principle; for if he was not what he avowed himself to be, the law of Moses condemned him to die the death; and therefore, every Socinian virtually sets his seal to the dark deed of the Jewish people. Let me not be thought to speak harshly or severely. I speak in love, if haply these misguided men may be led to cast aside the thick veil of prejudice which is upon their heart, and search the Bible for themselves, instead of taking it at second hand from the traditions of Socinianism—traditions worse than those of Rome. No man ever derived the figments of Socinius direct from the Bible. No man ever listened with honest and unbiased heart to the words of Him that spake as never man spake, and concluded that he was a mere man. We say it advisedly, whilst we say it boldly: It is not from the Bible men deduce their false views; they bring them to the Bible, to force them upon the holy book. They do not conform their views to the Scripture, but strive to conform the Scripture to their views, otherwise the truth would shine on them as the sun at noonday, and they could no more doubt that Jesus is the Son of God, than they can doubt the shining of the sun whilst basking in his beams and exulting in his splendour.

My younger friends, as you value your hope, your

peace, your salvation, hold fast this blessed truth. Infinite mystery! but, if possible, more infinite mercy! My God my brother! my brother my God! What a Saviour for sinners! Can he not save to the uttermost? Has he not suffered to the uttermost for guilty man? Fear not, trembling penitent, to come to his feet. His blood is the blood of God—it can cleanse from all sin; his Spirit is the Spirit of God—it can free from all bondage; his word is the Word of God—it can “build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

How truly is the Bible the word of God! The character of Jesus, the language of Jesus, the work of Jesus, stand out as the main pillar which upholds the temple of revelation, evincing it to be the temple of the living God. The whole structure might safely be allowed to rest on this one pillar, it would sustain the stupendous fabric. Yet, of the citadel of our faith we may say with holy boldness, “Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, that ye may tell it to the generations following.” The evidences of revelation are abundant—superabundant. What a mystery is it that men can withstand them! It is the “evil heart of unbelief” that makes the infidel. Infidelity is the child of the depraved heart, not of the unconvinced head. Study the internal evidence of Holy Scripture. I love to point young men to that witness which alone brought comfort and confidence to my own mind, when, as a young man, I was tossed amid metaphysical subtleties and vain janglings, during my career at Oxford.

—that which brought satisfaction and peace to the great Augustine, and to the mighty Luther,—the evidence which evolves on the earnest, simple, reverent, and prayerful student of God’s word, from the page of inspiration itself. External evidences cannot impart to a man that witness in himself, that demonstrative consciousness of the power of the truth, which the Bible, through the Holy Ghost, begets in the believer. Young men, lay aside every other book until you are satisfied that the Bible is the book of God, the power of God unto your salvation. I do assure you, valuable in their place as volumes on the evidences may be, valuable in their place as orthodox commentaries may be, valuable in their place as creeds, and catechisms, and formularies may be, I would rather that a man who is perplexed and in doubt should, for the time, lay them all on his shelf, and take the one Book, and spread it before God, and kneel down and say, “Lord, open thou mine eyes to see wondrous things out of thy law;” “Guide a poor bewildered wanderer; leave me not to perish in darkness and unbelief, but send me thy Holy Spirit, for Christ’s sake, to guide me into all truth.” Then let him search the Scriptures in that spirit, study them on his knees, and he will more surely come at last to solid conviction and assurance than if he had pored over all the critical volumes which learned labours have accumulated. Yes, youthful hearers, many a difficulty which we cannot solve on our feet, we can solve on our knees. Many a dark passage which we cannot light up with the tapers of human comment, we may light up by bringing it, as Hezekiah did his letter,

and spreading it beneath the clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness. Ask for truth from the Bible, and await your answer from the Bible. Wait till the lively oracles give forth their heavenly utterances, and they will carry conviction, and comfort, and confidence to your inmost soul. Thus will you be prepared to “count all things but loss for the gospel’s sake.” No man will die for the faith on the strength of mere external evidence; this must be done on the strength of the witness within. Should persecution again arise, it will not be the man who has merely received his Bible upon outward evidences, but the man who has received his inward evidences from the Bible, who will die for its truth. Cling, therefore, to the Book. Whatever may assail or betide you, still cling to the Book. Blessed be God, that amid the weltering ocean of human debate and controversy, vicissitude and revolution, there is one thing that stands unmoved—ancient but not aged, hoary but not decrepid—even the word of the living God; like its Author,—from everlasting, as disclosing his eternal counsels, to everlasting, as foreshadowing his eternal plans,—it is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”

There is much reason to infer from this book, that we are bordering on dark and stormy days. True it is, that hasty and impetuous interpretation of prophecy has been rebuked; for God will not let men dictate to him, or prescribe how he shall fulfil his purposes; he requires us to wait upon him—“He is his own interpreter, and he will make his counsel plain.” Contrary to rash expectations, gleams of light and hope, alternating with massive clouds and

shadows, have passed over the stage of the civilized world, like dissolving views, one melting into another, fleeting by while we are gazing, and that so swiftly, that we are kept in breathless uncertainty what will come next. Yet there is not the less cause for believing that we are verging fast upon times of such peril and trial, as have not been in our generation, perhaps not in any generation, since the world began. Assuredly, those awful musterings and combinings which we see upon the continent, the embodyings of intensely antagonistic principles, foreshadow that struggle between spiritual despotism on the one hand, and Protestant truth and liberty on the other, which may be delayed, but cannot be averted. The seed of convulsion is sown; who can tell what will be the harvest? It looks as if our favoured country were to be the battle-field in which the great struggle for Protestant liberty and the pure gospel is to take place. It looks as though all despotic and papal Europe were about to turn their wrath and their arms against privileged England, as the Thermopylæ of civil liberty, and the citadel of evangelical truth. Be it so: if only Britain be true to her Bible and her God,—if only she cast out of her camp the accursed thing, and have no fellowship with Antichrist,—if only she emblazon on the banner that waves over her temples and towers, not the cross, but the crucified, not the traditions of men, but the word of the living God,—if thus she stand forth in the evil day, faithful and fearless, let us have all the world against us and Christ for us, rather than all the world for us and Christ against us.

And now, my dear young friends, “ I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.” My lowly labour will not have been in vain in the Lord, if you should return to your homes, and retire to your closets, with the conviction more clear and strong in your understandings, and the impression more vital and vivid in your hearts than afore-time. “ Never man spake like the man Christ Jesus ”



William Tyndale, and the English Bible

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A LECTURE,

BY THE

REV W. L. THORNTON, A.M.,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN EXETER HALL,

DECEMBER 16, 1851.

THOMAS FARMER, Esq.,

IN THE CHAIR.



## WILLIAM TYNDALE, AND THE ENGLISH BIBLE.

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It has been truly and eloquently said, that the sun never sets on the English Bible. Such an expression appears to have been first used in flattering incense to Spain, during the day of her glory. It is, of course, no part of our design to review the history of that Peninsula, or to compare a former state of things with its more recent sorrows and humiliations; yet, did time permit, an inquiry of this kind, accurately pursued, would bring strong and warning lights to bear on our present subject. It is more relevant to observe, that the very same language has been often appropriated by Britain's sons—not without a feeling of exultation—to their own happy land. Nor ought the sentiment of patriotism to be quenched. A hasty French writer may call it mere “geographical egotism;” and, on the other hand, a class of sceptics may allege against our holy religion, that none of its precepts inculcate either private friendship or love of country. Little do these keen censors think that, in framing an ingenious objection, they are offering

the highest homage to Christianity. That matchless system silently hallows each generous affection, while it pursues its own nobler object—that of blessing mankind at large, and of uniting all the scattered tribes in one brotherhood. Granted, that there is enough to chasten our glorying, and to dim our triumph: but while Britain holds fast her Christian profession, her Protestantism, her evangelical institutions, her BIBLE, we will “rejoice” (yet with the “trembling” which a due sense of this responsibility must occasion) while we say, that the sun never sets on the British dominions. With far higher and purer joy, nevertheless, do we think of the unlimited diffusion of God’s most holy truth,—that “engrafted word, which is able to save the soul.”

The Bible has been carried by our voluntary exiles into every considerable haven of the world. Many of these are emulating the zeal of primitive Christians, who, when “scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen,” spread the tidings of the common salvation as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch. It is animating to bear in mind, that the inspired Word has been translated, in whole or in part, into 160 languages and dialects; and these representing the vast majority of the world’s population. And yet, remembering the high proportion of the entire human race speaking English, we cannot wonder that copies of the Holy Scripture in our own tongue surpass numerically those in all others taken together. We reckon the issues on this side the Atlantic, by TENS OF MILLIONS. And here, in the freedom of these pre-

liminary remarks, let me say—not with the aim of slighting *any* kindred agencies, but with a grateful sense of what is due to our leading institution—Honour to the British and Foreign Bible Society! There is never a moment in which God's own Word is not read by a multitude—in which those very syllables, dear to our earliest memory, are not pronounced by joyful lips—in which the Holy Spirit is not illustrating that page with His own matchless instructions, and writing it on hearts made by His grace willing and obedient. Must it not be added, if we rise “to the height of this” particular “argument,” that there is never a moment in which some, who “have purified” their “souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit,” are not exchanging the written Word for the open vision?

Into the question of *a universal language*—of one to serve, at least, for general communication among the learned—this is not the opportunity to enter. Many here present may remember that, more than twenty years ago, one or two elegant writers on the “Advancement of Society” maintained the affirmative. And, if dialects are most numerous in a savage state—if civilization, commerce, and an unchanging religion, contribute to give permanence to speech—if political greatness and influential literature, combined, promise the extensive adoption of a language—is it mere prejudice that prompts an opinion in favour of the English? Our tongue is free and unlimited, from the variety of its sources; and into it the riches of foreign learning are abundantly imported. Not that we

venture to prophesy—that were a perilous task; but, certainly, no rival claim can be urged. It is obvious to point to tens of British colonies, and to hundreds of Mission-stations occupied by labourers of the Anglo-Saxon race, whose patriotism survives their departure from our shores,—as well as to the great Republic of the West. In regard to this question, the ENGLISH BIBLE alone may be taken as representing no slight amount of probability.

Our particular subject reminds us that we owe *much* to Revelation. The sum who can compute?—In this train every real blessing comes. Right views of truth and of duty exert their influence only where Christianity has prevailed. *Hence* innumerable rays, which appear to stream from other sources, are reflected; just as truly as the moon draws her brightness from the central sun, and the western glow of evening tells that the great luminary has been there. When will history trace this connexion? and when will communities, as well as individuals, acknowledge the infinite debt?—Religion has explained the value of life, a principle graven on our tables of law in Christian countries. By teaching conquerors humanity, it has made power safe and enduring. It has refined our social pleasures. And, by awakening genius, by directing thought, by shedding forth a pure intellectual light, it has exalted our literature beyond all common conception. From this time let us remember—as often as we talk of Homer, Virgil, and “our greater Milton;” or mark the points in which “The Dying Christian to his Soul” excels the lines of Adrian, and the fine

fragment of Sappho—let us remember that the more recent of these poets drew much from the undefiled fountains of truth ; and while we honour *man*, let us revere and magnify God.

It is scarcely needful to remind you that the history of the Bible blends, in a remarkable degree, with that of Protestantism, of vital godliness, and of liberty. Most interesting is it, in particular, to remark the influence of Scripture-reading on the English Reformation. The Word of God was extensively read in the language of this island, long before Luther arose in Germany ; and it was honoured, in the arrangements of grace and providence, to be the main instrument in bringing about that auspicious change.

But let us go farther back.—From the beginning of the seventh century to the re-appearing of letters in the fourteenth, we are accustomed to reckon “the dark ages.” Even in these, however, a few glimmering lights, both eastern and western, may be traced. Among the latter, our subject will lead us to name Venerable Bede and King Alfred. Before the Reformation, be it just noted, art and learning had revived in Italy. *There*, in truth, was far less disposition to bow to the pontiff, than in the remoter states of western Europe. The British isles were especially yielding. While Milan was resisting the hierarch,—and Venice, as though feeling secure in her defence of rocks and Adriatic waves, was laughing at the impotent thunders that pealed from the Vatican, and maintaining commerce free ; vindicating civil rights, and humbling the warriors who came with crosier, sceptre, sword, and the Pope’s *irreversible*

blessing,—and while the poet of Florence was not only singing of Paradise, but writing against the assumed supremacy,—in a word, while cities all but under the shadow of Rome were fighting for liberty, these goodly lands of ours were submitting to the yoke of bondage. About this date, the pontiff's income from England was thrice as much as that of native royalty. For ages after the Conquest, as well as during the Anglo-Saxon period, we were bowing more obsequiously than many others to the Seven Hills. Monastics, who had very discriminating eyes, were choosing for themselves our loveliest and most fruitful spots; and St. Peter's successor, so called,—little thinking that, after a few centuries, we should be quoting his words in the hearing of indignant thousands,—said, “Truly, England is our garden of delight! It is an unexhausted well! and where so much abounds, much may be acquired.” Yet in Britain, as in Germany and Italy, the fourteenth century is marked by events full of hope. Some attention was already paid here to learning, especially to *sacred* learning. One example shall be cited, if not from Britain, yet from Ireland, a country to which we owe no little sympathy. *There* flourished, in the middle of the fourteenth century, a primate, FITZRALPH, who may be viewed as, in some sort, the forerunner of a more illustrious man, just now to be named. The testimony of Fitzralph is beautiful in the extreme:—

“The Lord had taught him,” he said, “and brought him out of the profound vanities of Aristotle's philosophy, to the Scriptures of God. To Thee,” he adds, “be praise, glory, thanksgiving, O Jesus most

holy, Jesus most powerful, Jesus most amiable,— who hast said, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life;’ a way without deviation, truth without a cloud, and life without end! For Thou the way hast shown me, Thou the truth hast taught me, and Thou the life hast promised me. A way Thou wast to me in exile; the truth Thou wast to me in counsel; and life Thou wilt be to me, in reward.”

Fitzralph died, but WYCLIFFE arose: Wycliffe, whose undying fame it is, that we trace to him the first instance, in modern Europe, of the entire Bible translated for the common people. “It is,” says the Annalist of the English Bible, “at least, the only one in the fourteenth century upon which we can now lay our hand, no continental nation having anything similar to produce.”

Leaving the Rector of Lutterworth in possession of this unfading wreath, we may for a little while deviate into some inquiry respecting earlier versions attempted within these islands. As much information as we are just now seeking may be found, in compend, in the Introduction to the *second Edition* of Mr. Bagster’s ENGLISH HEXAPLA.

It is clear from a famous passage in Tertullian, (*Adv. Judæos*, cap. 7,) that Christianity prevailed within these shores in the second century. The places which he describes as “inaccessible to the Romans,” but “subdued by Christ,” are probably the mountains of North Britain. An exception, as the proverb runs, proves the rule; and we know, in regard to the country at large, that language followed in the train of conquest, and ultimately spread beyond the last trophy of the great Roman power.

We may therefore conclude, at once, that Latin versions were used. After the Saxons had done much to reduce the land to Paganism, the light of truth revisited it in the sixth century; and, before the end of the seventh, the entire Heptarchy professed the faith. In various monasteries,—particularly at Iona, one of the Hebrides, and in Ireland,—copies of the Latin Scriptures were multiplied. There were, also, early attempts at Saxon versions. For, it is most important to observe, that *formal objections to vernacular translations belong to a later date*; and if we find no very general anxiety for such a boon, it may be supposed that comparatively few were able to read, and that the cultivated orders preferred the Latin, already hallowed by use. At all events, there appeared in the seventh century that metrical paraphrase of sacred history which is ascribed to Cædmon, Monk of Whitby. This was, clearly, no translation; unless we allow many a modern poem on scripture subjects to be such. Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne, produced a version of the Psalms about A.D. 700. Guthlac, the Saxon anchoret, claims to be mentioned also. But, passing by sundry metrical paraphrases, renderings of the Psalms and Daily Lessons, &c., we come down to the early part of the eighth century, and then find the illustrious BEDE—an untiring student, and a lover of all learning—executing the first regular translation from the New Testament of which we can speak particularly. His dying effort was put forth in dictating the last chapter of St. John's Gospel. When the scribe announced, "It is done," the reply of the expiring saint was, "Thou hast well

said: all is now finished. Lift me up, that, sitting where I have loved to pray, I may call upon my Father." And, with faltering voice attempting to sing, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost," he escaped from earth to finish the strain in heaven. Nay—never to finish it, but to take part in the new, the old, the everlasting "song of Moses the servant of God," and "of the Lamb."

Among Anglo-Saxon translators, every one has heard of King Alfred. It is the custom to extol the doings of princes, and to magnify their virtues into heroic proportions. But we have, at least, the Ten Commandments, and passages from three following chapters of Exodus, translated by this monarch, and prefixed to his body of laws. You do not desire, on this occasion, anything like a minute bibliography; and it shall suffice, therefore, to add, in the briefest terms, that at the close of the tenth century Ælfric professed to translate a large part of the Old Testament; that biblical studies were suspended by the Danish invasion; and that, unless we assign to the Anglo-Norman or early English dialect a version of the Gospels executed in the transition-state of our language, we can report little, beyond a few humble attempts in verse, of the times of the Conqueror and of nine succeeding kings. It is a little remarkable that thus, a second time, *metre* preceded literal translation. The first known portion of Scripture in English prose is the work of Rolle, hermit of Hampole; which belongs to the former part of the fourteenth century.

To return :—Wycliffe's was the grand idea of THE

WHOLE BIBLE, LITERALLY AND CONSECUTIVELY TRANSLATED, FOR THE WHOLE PEOPLE. Before a vigorous scrutiny, the Anglo-Saxon abridgments, selections, paraphrases, and partial versions, fade from the comparison. Not only were they fragmentary, but it is likely that their circulation was almost limited to privileged and learned classes. And after the Conquest, and the gradual change of language, there was less of Holy Scripture in the vernacular than had been in the Saxon days. The assertion directed against Wycliffe, that "*y<sup>e</sup> hole byble was long before his dayes by vertuous and wel lerned men translated into y<sup>e</sup> English tong,*" may be taken for a piece of ingenious declamation, by the eloquent author of "Utopia." It is not in keeping with other remarks from the same pen. Nor may we forget that, long before Sir Thomas More's "Dialogue" was written, it was *heresy* to read or know any part of the Scripture in English. Arundel's Constitutions of 1408, moreover, (which forbid, on pain of the greater excommunication, the reading of any version *made either in Wycliffe's time or since,*) allege no earlier and tolerated versions. The kindest construction is, that Sir Thomas might refer to the paraphrases, fragments of translation, &c., that preceded Wycliffe; or, perhaps, to some copies of Wycliffe's version before it was revised. But the forceful answer returned by that great man whose name stands at the head of this lecture, resolves the whole into More's "poetry."

Nothing less than the widest possible diffusion of God's Word could satisfy Wycliffe. In his just esteem, the Bible is the poor man's guide, and the book of the people. Wisely and reverently he believed it

to be adapted for "the wayfaring men, though fools,"—and not merely for an exclusive class. The Author of that book "knew what was in man." Nature and Providence, like Revelation, have their mysteries; but these perplex the great as well as the little. Meanwhile, the mountains and valleys, rivers and oceans, starry and planetary lamps on high,—in a word, all the glories of this vast frame,—yea, and a thousand arrangements of providential goodness,—are open to us all, and need no hierophant to explain them. God has given the meanest an eye to see, while the rejoicing firmament is full of light; and the same Divine munificence has not withheld a mind to understand the pure truth. They who contend that the Bible is too hard a book for the people, are fighting the battles of scepticism; and few well-read men will deny that the assaults of this school on the character of Revelation are, on every account, more mischievous than all the artillery of ancient or modern deists. Of such madness and impiety Wycliffe was innocent. To exhibit the parties in the memorable struggle, it is enough to cite the great complaint that was urged against the Reformer. This was, without any disguise, that *the Gospel-pearl was offered to laymen and women!* "And," continues Canon Knighton, in dirge-like note, "*that is now theirs for ever, which before was the special property of the Clergy and Doctors.*"

Of Wycliffe's first public appearance the date is 1360. Feeble, anxious, secluded, yet "not alone," he gave many years to his great work, which was finished about 1380. Several of the first European versions—Wycliffe's among them—were from the

Latin. Dark indeed, even as to matters of general learning, were those days; and things were tending toward that midnight in which priests gave out the very edifying statement, that *Greek and Hebrew were languages newly invented!* Yet Wycliffe's version was eagerly transcribed, and widely circulated. It was in vain to lament that "*by this means the Gospel was made vulgar.*" The light spread, and not a few became "*mighty in the Scriptures.*" Hail to the memory of our early English Reformer! Vain was the rage of a General Council against his dust, which had reposed for thirty years in deep sepulchral quiet; and vain the zeal which, after thirteen years more, exhumed that dust, and cast it into a tributary of the wide-flowing Severn. If the relics of the magnanimous Wycliffe were carried by the brook to the river, and by the river to the sea, and disparted beyond the calculation alike of friends and foes; it is not mere romance, on the part of Fuller, to account the distribution an emblem of the still wider spread of that truth for which Wycliffe had lived, and would have been willing to die.

The fifteenth century is marked by features of the deepest interest. PRINTING, it has been well said, seems to be "a providential hint that the knowledge of the true God is to be universal." Before the end of this same eventful century, the world opens, in its amplest realms, as if to receive the light just streaming forth. It is enough to name Columbus and Vasco de Gama. The progress of that art which we justly call inestimable, this is not the time to trace; but it falls within our scope to remark, (and we do

it with grateful joy,) that the Latin Bible was the *first* book printed with moveable metal types.

In the beginning of the next century appeared Lefevre, Zwingli, Luther, and he who now claims our more particular attention. Before proceeding, however, we will stay to cast one glance on Rome, and one on England.—The reigning pontiff from 1503 to 1513—Julius II.—may be estimated by means of a little anecdote. It is recorded, that when Michael Angelo inquired whether he would be represented in statuary with a *book* in his left hand, this militant successor of apostles candidly said, “No,—give me a *sword*, I am no scholar.” This Julius seems to have regarded England and Scotland as unwaveringly loyal to his throne; and he gave to their rulers, respectively, the styles of “Most Christian King,” and “Defender of the Faith.” His successor, Leo X., gave Wolsey a cardinal’s hat. How circumstances of European history inflamed the ambition of this English churchman, and of his young king Henry, we stay not to relate. Wolsey became Lord Chancellor,—the office being then clerical; and he had a long list of other dignities and emoluments, both English and foreign. Not a few Englishmen had resorted to the seats of learning in the brighter South of Europe; and Henry’s court was flatteringly described, by Erasmus, as superior to any academy of learning. Yet, among the men who adorned and amused it, there was none that thought of giving the message of an infinitely higher Court, in an availing form, to millions of subjects alienated indeed, yet pitied and redeemed. All seemed yet intensely

Romish, both at the seat of power, and in extensive tracts of the country. The diocese of Worcester was at this time great and rich, stretching from Kidderminster to the border of Somerset, and decked with many a "mitred abbey." Here rejoiced some of the most favoured and most unscrupulous among the ecclesiastics of the age. But hence, also, arose a man to give the people anew the word of life,—WILLIAM TYNDALE, to whom we owe the first translation of the New Testament from the Greek into our tongue. This great debt we have very inadequately acknowledged; and on this account, in particular, his name has been selected for this evening. The aim is to call fresh attention to a narrative in which Tyndale is unquestionably prominent; not by any means to pluck a single leaf from the chaplet which binds the temples of Coverdale, or of any other labourer in the same glorious cause.\*

Tyndale was born in Gloucestershire. The date is uncertain; some of our authorities naming 1477, and some 1485. It behoves us to mark Divine Providence in the means of his training. Opportunely for him, and for his country, much attention had now been directed to the learned languages; notwithstanding many an invective from the pulpit, and many a grave warning against Greek, lest it should turn the student into a heretic—and against Hebrew, lest it should make him a Jew! A

\* In addition to earlier bibliographers and martyrologists, our living authors—Offor, Anderson, &c.—are freely used. To the Annalist of the English Bible our debt is large indeed. This little sketch will not be put forth in vain, if it draw attention to his elaborate volumes.

precious story is told by Sir Thomas More, which you will allow me to repeat on that celebrated man's authority. It will provoke a smile, and may thus refresh drooping attention; but it is worth knowing for the illustration it casts on a period of our history:—"A lerned prieste," writes Sir Thomas, "thorow out all y<sup>e</sup> gospels scraped out *diabolus*, and wrote *Jesus Christus*, bycause he thought the deuyls name was not mete to stande in so good a place!"

Our future translator was brought up at St. Mary Magdalen's Hall, Oxford; whence he removed to Cambridge. Here, it is said, he became "well ripened in God's Word." That he was a diligent and successful student, many portions of our excellent authorised version—which are *his*, without alteration—will show. As early as his University days, there is reason to affirm, his mind was turned to subjects bearing on his future usefulness; but it was in Gloucestershire that his purposes were matured. He resided for some time, as private tutor, in the family of Sir John Walsh, at Little Sodbury Manor-house; devoting his Sundays, however, to preaching in various places, Bristol among the rest. At the knight's table, he often met the abbots, and other reverend dignitaries of the neighbourhood. "Then Tyndale," says our leading martyrologist, "as he was learned and well-practised in God's matters, so he spared not to show unto them, simply and plainly, his judgment; and when they at any time did vary from his opinion, he would show them in the Book, and lay before them the manifest places of the Scriptures, to confute their errors, and confirm

his sayings." By and by, however, Lady Walsh gave him to understand that, in her view, his remonstrances and argumentations were of little avail, as against "doctors" who might "dispend a hundred pounds," or even "two hundred," nay, (so closely did this course of logic approach demonstration,) "three hundred pounds!" The young tutor could not very well rejoin; but, ere long, the knight, and her ladyship too, held him in far other appreciation.

The opposition of the priests became stormy. It appears from the old chronicler, that their conferences were held in "ale-houses!" and these, hereafter, called forth from Tyndale a train of remark which none of us can follow without lively interest.—

"A thousand books had they lever (rather) to be put forth against their abominable doings and doctrine, than that the *Scripture* should come to light. For, as long as they may keep *that* down, they will so darken the right way with the mist of their sophistry, and so tangle them that either rebuke or despise their abominations, with arguments of philosophy, and with worldly similitudes and apparent reasons of natural wisdom; and with wresting the Scriptures unto their own purpose, clean contrary unto the process, order, and meaning of the text; and so delude them in descanting upon it with allegories, and amaze them, expounding it in *many* senses before the unlearned lay people, (when it hath but *one simple literal sense*, whose light the owls cannot abide,) that though thou feel in thine heart, and art sure, how that all is false that

they say, yet couldst thou not solve their subtle riddles.

“WHICH THING ONLY MOVED ME TO TRANSLATE THE NEW TESTAMENT.”—*Preface to the Five Books of Moses.*

That the writer of such sentences should be exposed to persecution, can excite no surprise. Early was he made aware of the storm that already loomed on him. It is somewhat remarkable that, “interwoven in one of his drawings,” we find “this prayer,”—cherubs holding the scroll on which it is written:—“*Defend me, O Lord, from all them that hate me.—W. T.*”\* Soon the priests, Tyndale among them, were summoned to appear before the Chancellor of the diocese. At this tribunal, he received nothing worse than abuse. But, a little time after, he was roused by the dictum of one of his numerous opponents, who, pressed by argument, said, “We were better to be without God’s laws, than the Pope’s!” This exclamation (alas, characteristic of the times!) drew forth those memorable words of indignant virtue—that utterance, worthy of the Sapphic eulogy, *more golden than gold*,—“I DEFY THE POPE, AND ALL HIS LAWS; AND IF GOD SPARE MY LIFE, ERE MANY YEARS, I WILL CAUSE A BOY THAT DRIVETH THE PLOUGH TO KNOW MORE OF THE SCRIPTURE THAN YOU DO!” (By the way, it may be noted—though in anticipation—that this pledge was *literally* redeemed when Tyndale, during his imprisonment, issued the New Testament in the provincial spelling of the West of England.) The author of such a statement was, of course, denounced as “a heretic in sophistry, a heretic in logic, and now, also,

\* *Offor.*

a heretic in divinity." He found it needful to withdraw from the diocese of Worcester, and innocently went to Tunstal, Bishop of London, dreaming that he should find, in the episcopal palace, a retreat in which he might pursue his sacred toil. Not so, however: his lordship's "house was full;" and Tyndale gained nothing by submitting a translation from Isocrates, except a testimony to his literary competency. More substantial hospitality was shown him by a worthy citizen, Humphrey Munmouth; and the translator preached, occasionally at least, at St. Dunstan's-in-the-West, Fleetstreet. But, too soon, he sorrowfully "understood," (as he calls back to mind, in the preface to the Pentateuch, already cited,) "not only that there was no room in my Lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it *in all England*."

While Wolsey and his minions were pursuing what they were bold enough to call the "quarrel of God," Tyndale went to the Continent. Without minutely following the detail of his indefatigable labours, let us here take a few notes. In two years he brought out a version of Matthew, one of Mark, and two of the entire New Testament. Interrupted at Cologne by the most wily and disreputable means, he hastened up the Rhine to Worms, A. D. 1525. The result was, that *two* editions appeared instead of one. These reached our shores early in 1526. The octavo has neither prologue nor glosses. "The Scripture without note or comment," was the ruling idea. "I assure you," said Tyndale, the very next year, to His Majesty's ambassador, "I assure you, if it

would stand with the king's most gracious pleasure to grant only *a bare text of the Scriptures to be put forth among his people*, I shall immediately make faithful promise never to write more." So, afterwards (namely, in 1533), said Fryth, the admirable friend of Tyndale, on English ground, to the Lord Chancellor More: "But this *hath been* offered you, is offered, and shall be offered. Grant that the Word of God—I mean *the text of Scripture*—may go abroad in our English tongue; *and my brother Wm. Tyndale and I have done, and will promise you to write no more*. If you will not grant *this* condition, then will we be doing while we have breath, and show, in few words, *that* the Scripture doth in many, and so, at the least, save some." And, once more, Vaughan, the envoy, says of Tyndale, that "water stood in his eyes" as he affirmed the same thing.

Multitudes hailed Tyndale's work; but his hypercritical censors found heresy in every error of the press, and in every *i* that wanted a dot! Two thousand of these *awful* blemishes were catalogued; and Tunstal expatiated on the enormity, at St. Paul's, with ridiculous earnestness. Yet that omniscient prelate could not find "any occasion against" the modest, learned, self-sacrificing Tyndale, except "Concerning the law of his God," and his zeal for a pure text of Scripture in the hands of the people. The offence was, to maintain the supremacy and sufficiency of the Bible: in one word, it was the unpardonable sin of *Protestantism*. Hail, early witness for our faith! Thy voice, breaking from the tomb of martyrs, commands our attention, and awakens us to profitable thought. The Bible is

enough. The refined gold needs no gilding. That simple truth confutes the *principles* from which ever-varying details of human error spring. It rebukes, by oracles that have descended from prescient wisdom, the follies that appear thousands of years after the canon is complete. It tears up by the root the wild efflorescence of a corrupt soil. It interprets Nature and Providence, meets the deepest wants of man, speaks to his heart, evokes thence a new response, and gains its crowning victory amid those ruins of the grave, and those deeper ruins of the fall, which nothing else can even profess to repair. "LORD, to whom shall we go? Thou"—yea, Thou alone—"hast the words of eternal life."

At the time to which these remarks have brought us, the power of Wolsey was in some degree waning. His guilty ambition had known no limit. By his sinuous policy, all Western Europe had been implicated. He had lectured and reprov'd the chair before which monarchs trembled. But now his exactions had tried the nation's patience to the uttermost. The surge was just overflowing the margin. The enemy of liberty and of equal laws, he quailed at the art of printing, and the prospect of a true "republic" of letters. Notions were flying abroad, which glared on him with more than spectral terrors. Not a few were audacious enough to think that prayers in the native speech might pierce heaven as well as Latin! nay, that men, unaided by the priests, might, as the saying was, "make their own way to heaven!" The spreading intelligence could not now be contracted within the bounds of Cardinal College. God "frustrated the tokens of the liars,

and made diviners mad." On the other hand, He prepared a people to show forth His praise. When the English New Testament arrived, in 1526, it was welcomed in London, in both universities, and in wide districts of the country. Opposition was thus quickened into new activity, and Bible-burning soon followed. Episcopal injunctions were added, and an order to search an entire province. But the fury of the oppressor was vain. The people read with growing avidity. Abroad, the press was still busy; and the meek translator was proceeding, slowly but surely, with the Old Testament.

Delightful it would be to trace the proof of Tyndale's evangelical orthodoxy, and manly style of explaining the truth; of his attachment to *the practical*, and his judgment—far in advance of his age; of his vigorous mind and devout heart, which repelled a hundred scholastic follies. But the merits of the expositor and the divine have been lost in the excelling glory of the translator.

Long before this date, it cannot be forgotten, manuscript portions of the Word in English had been carefully read. The secret and domestic use of these was a great offence, but the authorities could not put it down. It is, therefore, the less surprising that multitudes seemed quite prepared for Tyndale's volume. But now the possession of a copy of the New Testament was crime enough to attract a sentence of banishment. Codes of morality were reversed. Ignorance was sanctity; to read God's Word, a sin not to be endured! Many an humble Christian, nevertheless, kept the Holy Book, and read it through many times

Sir Thomas More was engaged to write Tyndale down; and, with this design, he published no fewer than seven treatises. The proud, restless, miserable Wolsey was also intent on seizing the friends of the "new learning" abroad. Some of More's expressions do not remind one of the amenities of literature. The title of his first controversial piece names the "*pestylent Sect of Luther and Tyndale, by the tone, bygone in Saxony, and by the tother, laboryd to be brought in to England.*" And in the subsequent "Confutation" he says, "I take it, that the worde of God vnwryten is of as greate authoryte, as certayn, and as sure, as ys hys worde wryten in the scripture; which poynt is so faste and sure, pytched vpon the rocke, our sauour Cryst hymself, that neither Luther, Tyndale, nor Huskyn, nor *all the hell-houndes that the deuyll hath in his kenell*, neuer hytherto could nor whyle god lyueth in heuen and the deuyll lyeth in hell neuer hereafter shall (*barke they, bawle they neuer so fast*) be able to wrest it out." Tyndale had already drawn the controversial pen, and he was not the man to let the public judgment now go by default. His reply to Sir Thomas was quickly in England. That author's vagueness of statement, and fallacies of equivocation, he showed himself well able to expose; as well as, here and there, to turn the "engine" of More's wit against the engineer. It appeared that the errors, which rhetoric multiplied into thousands, had dwindled into the general renderings of some six words! Tyndale had rendered *ecclesia* "congregation;" and had used "elder," "knowledge" or "acknowledge," "repentance," "favour," "love," in preference to *priest, confession, penance, grace,*

*charity*. "These things," says the respondent, with most tranquil confidence, "M. More knoweth well enough; for he understandeth the Greek, and he knew them, long ere I." The answer to More is powerful, solemn, decisive; often enlivened by fancy, and illuminated with views of gospel truth which break forth, amid the general darkness of the age, with alluring brightness. It deserves to be added, with special commendation, that the forces of controversy did not bear Tyndale into extravagance. He completely refuted the charge of disloyalty. Most willing to "render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's," but conscious of no fear but a sacred and magnanimous one, he reserved for God "the things that are God's."

The Chancellorship awaited More. Wolsey's fall is among the most monitory facts of English history. This man had long sighed for the triple crown; but he lost everything he held dear. Never did ambition's sun set in denser clouds. Some of the lords spiritual complained that the demand for changes was "for lack of *faith* only." But the rising spirit, impatient for victory, accelerated Wolsey's ruin. He who had made kingdoms tremble, and wrung tears from the sovereign pontiff, sat friendless and dismayed. More than regal magnificence sank at length into penury; and the eloquence that had ruled courts, and pronounced sentences from which there was no earthly appeal, dwindled into the melancholy request of a little earth for charity. Still, all seemed adverse to the truth. The new Chancellor, admired and applauded, joined the bishops in their fearful crusade. Let this man's history be studied by those

who think mental culture the sure emollient of "manners." Celebrated for genius, eloquence, and the spotless ermine, he imbibed a persecuting spirit from the fiercest of systems,—that system, to wit, which boasts of being *unchangeable*. It is surely needless to bear testimony against Romanism: we have, alas! but to believe her when she witnesses against herself. Sir Thomas was well disciplined in the lore of popery; quite ready to plead for church above Scripture, and the validity of sacraments ministered by the most polluted hands. The remonstrants, he said, "might lawfully be burned." "Grievous punishment" was his prescription—*verba ipsissima*—for "repressing" even inquiry; and he advised that the "sparkle" should be "well quenched, ere it was suffered to grow to over-great a fire."

But our translator, happily, for this season, was out of reach. He removed from place to place, and sent forth his publications from many a press. One cannot but rejoice to find Tunstal, in one signal instance, self-defeated. He had gone to Antwerp, resolving to buy Tyndale's books for the flames—to *buy* them, because the privileges of that city were intact, and these imposed on him certain very unwelcome limitations. He effected the purchase; but in the moment of success, and by its very means, the bishop was baffled. Tyndale was relieved from embarrassment; the design of *burning* the Bible roused public indignation; the New Testament was reprinted in far better style; and copies "came," as Foxe says, "thick and threefold, over into England."

John Tyndale, the translator's brother, and another merchant of this city, were seized in 1531. For the

acknowledged crime of circulating the New Testament, they were ignominiously paraded along the streets, and ordered to throw the books into "a great fire," kindled in "Chepe" (Cheapside); while heavy fines were also imposed, to the content of the "spirituality." As the violation of every dear and holy charity was in such case reckoned a part of religion, we find Bishop Stokesley punishing the merchant Tyndale "for sending *five marks* to his brother William, beyond the sea," and for having in possession certain letters from his brother!!

Now this country began to glare with martyr-fires. That some instances of vacillation occurred, can surprise no one: that they were so few, must awaken joy in every lover of God and man. Many a noble confessor honoured God, when brought before rulers and councils. Many a martyr, at his last gasp, emulated the gentleness of Stephen, praying that the murderers might find the mercy which they had not learned to show. Meanwhile, in 1532, the pursuit of Tyndale was renewed; and his devoted friend Fryth, who had come to England a little after the midsummer of that year, had the honour of sitting in the "stocks" at Reading,—an omen of greater things which he was about to suffer. Apprehended in Essex, this true disciple was very soon committed to the Tower of London. There he wrote himself, "John Fryth, the prisoner of Jesus Christ, at all times abiding His pleasure;" and by many other expressions signified his calm expectation of being called to "resist unto blood." In Tyndale's communications to his beloved disciple, we find such passages as the following:—

“I call God to record, against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God's Word against my conscience,” (as Sir T. More had insinuated,) “nor would this day, if all that is in the earth, whether it be pleasure, honour, or riches, might be given me.”—“I hope our redemption is nigh.”—“*Let Bilney be a warning to you. . . . Let not your body faint. He that endureth to the end shall be saved. If the pain be above your strength, remember—‘whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, I will give it you,’—and pray to your Father in that name, and He shall ease your pain or shorten it. The Lord of peace, of hope, and of faith, be with you! Amen. . . . Sir, your wife is well content with the will of God, and would not, for her sake, have the glory of God hindered.*”

A little later, Fryth might have escaped; but he could not consent to a questionable device. His crown of martyrdom was untarnished; and henceforth, it appears, “heretics” were taken out of episcopal hands. In the midst of all, the Word grew and mightily prevailed. Tyndale, in 1534, sent forth a second impression of Genesis, and a revised edition of the New Testament. In addition to other encouragements, there was a gleam of favour from Queen Anne Boleyn, of which an interesting memento is found in our national museum—a copy, presented to that queen, of the corrected New Testament, printed on vellum, illuminated, and bound in blue morocco.

At length the translator was apprehended, by guile, in Antwerp. For such a result he had long looked.

In his writings we find, among statements concerning the burning of the sacred Books, most distinct references to the probable burning of him who had penned them. From the friendly roof of Mr. Poyntz he was now hurried to the castle of Vilvorde. Every effort to procure his release was fruitless. Discussions with the polemical theologues of Louvain, the conversion to Christ of the gaoler and his family, and (best of all) the issuing of three editions of the New Testament, chequer and irradiate the tale of his imprisonment. He was bound, but the Word was not bound. He meekly suffered, that the truth might triumph.

Commutations and troubles on this side the North Sea, both at this and some later dates, tell of retribution. Nemesis, after throwing her fearful light over the pages of Greek tragedy, seems to find a real existence here. This remark we do not follow up, though we might plead a Southey's example. Jeremy Taylor admonishes us that "God's judgments are like the writing on the wall, which was a missive of anger from God upon Belshazzar: it came upon an errand of revenge, and yet was writ in so dark characters, that none could read it but a prophet." Facts, however, have a significance. The man who had preached the first sermon(!) at the burning of holy books, now accused of treason, was beheaded with frightful barbarity; and Sir Thomas More soon followed him to the grave by the same ignominious route, implicated in the very charge which he had moved to fix on Tyndale and his guiltless band. This tragedy, for ever disgraceful to its human author, has doubtless contributed to draw forth our popular eulogies of

More ; as suffering greatness, like beauty in tears, attracts an unreasoning sympathy.

Yet, all was overruled. An unseen Hand was guiding Cranmer, Cromwell, yea, and Henry too : for there is ONE who can control the inclinations of princes, as certainly as the eastern husbandman draws the streamlets of water over the thirsty land, "whithersoever he will." It is no concern of ours, most certainly, to qualify that terrible sentence of Sir James Mackintosh, that "Henry, perhaps, approached as nearly to the ideal standard of perfect wickedness, as the infirmities of human nature would allow." But we can smile at the vulgar artifice of attaching to the Reformation the dishonours of such a name ; as if the battles of the papacy had been always waged by immaculate hands !—We must hasten to say, that Coverdale's translation was completed in 1535 ; that Latimer, before the Convocation of 1536, referred to Tyndale, though without naming him ; and that other hopeful signs attended the cause for which the earlier translator was now "set forth," and "appointed to death," "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men."

The Government of Flanders, and our English authorities, seemed heedless of this prisoner's rescue ; and neither party can be considered innocent of his blood. But his work was done ; and he fell unspotted,—yet, falling, "overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of " his "testimony." On the 6th day of October, 1536, Tyndale was led forth. Having reached the fatal place, he was fastened to the stake. Then, after crying aloud, "LORD ! OPEN THE EYES OF THE KING OF ENGLAND,"

he was strangled, and his body was consumed to ashes.

“*The noble army of martyrs praise Thee.*” So the church on earth has sung for more than fourteen hundred years ; and the strain we repeat with solemn joy. It is our privilege, meantime, to unite with those, the most venerable of the dead, in blessing Him who gave them the victory. Those witnesses for God still live to adore Him. The voices that once ascended in praise from the forum, the dungeon, the solitudes of exile, the rack, the scaffold, or the stake, are now enriched with heavenly accents. But, while “the noble army of martyrs” laud and magnify the ever-blessed Name, they speak *to us* in appeals no less monitory than inspiriting. If we be recreant to the cause of Jesus, and of evangelical Protestantism, their sainted ghosts will remonstrate, “*Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*”

Here we might pause. But, without pretending to give integrity to the sketch,—a thing which our limits and other reasons put beyond our power,—let us, in the briefest manner, add a few supplementary notices of the English Bible.

Nine or ten editions of the sacred Book are assigned to the year of Tyndale’s martyrdom. The year 1537 is distinguished by the arrival of the entire Bible. Of the version brought out by Rogers, *two-thirds* belong to Tyndale ; who, in fact, gives the basis of all subsequent versions. In 1538 came forth the famous “Injunctions for the Clerge,” directing that a large Bible should be provided, and set up in every church, in order to its most free use ; for “*every*

person" was to be "expressly provoked, stirred, and exhorted to read the same." About the same time it was enjoined that, in every "cure," there should be "*one sermon every quarter of a year, at least.*" Yet, in the land which had been so neglected that this authoritative direction was needful, God's Word was received with joy. For its sake, old people learned to read; and even little boys (it is beautifully added in a contemporary document) flocked, among the rest, to hear portions of Holy Scripture read. Many clouds still darkened the scene; but now, and henceforth, the Bible was printed in *England*.

There is an anecdote, belonging to the year 1542, which shows how the old policy, adverse to popular instruction, was likely to linger to the last. The Convocation of that year was again discussing the translation of the New Testament; and the books were distributed among fifteen bishops, for revision. Among these was one, unwearied and unscrupulous in enmity to the nascent Reformation. *Gardiner* presented a list of one hundred and two Latin words, advising that, "for their genuine and native meaning, and for the *majesty* of the matter in them contained," they should "be retained in the English translation, or be fitly *Englished* with the least alteration." It will be readily conjectured that this list included such words as *ecclesia*, *pœnitentia*, *pontifex*, *sacramentum*, *simulacrum*, *confiteor*, *panis*, *episcopus*, *pascha*, *hostia*, &c. In *Gardiner's* view, it has been justly said, "there was something else than *majesty*" in several of these terms. "Witness," says old Fuller, "the word 'penance,' which, according to the vulgar sound, contrary to the original sense thereof, was a

magazine of will-worship, and brought in much gain to the priests, who were desirous to *keep* that word, because that word *kept* them."

Before Parliament interfered (in 1543) to oppose the good work, Tyndale's version had been sent forth under various names ; and, having been retained with little variation in all the English Bibles, it could not be reached by the hostile power. The interference came as—*lucus à non lucendo*—"An Act for the Advancement of true Religion." It was too late. "Three parts of the land," Cranmer's foes bitterly complained, "were become abominable heretics." In the late evening of Henry's reign persecution revived. Much of the vernacular learning was condemned. Some were put to death. Latimer and others were examined ; but that eminent man was left in the Tower for six slow years to come. The last tremulous efforts of the king were directed against the writings of Fryth, Tyndale, Wycliffe, &c., &c. But "the iniquity" of his persecuting advisers was "full ;" and himself was on the brink of the grave. Gardiner, and other myrmidons of the "old learning," were doomed to encounter various humiliations. "The proud" were to be "scattered in the imagination of their hearts." Norfolk, their ducal head, was marked for death : he barely escaped, by the decease, six hours before the appointed tragedy, of the monarch whose last act was an assent to his fate. Young Surrey had actually bled. And now the sovereign, to whom daily incense had been offered by all below, was summoned to a TRIBUNAL which tyrants cannot escape—to stand in the SEARCHING, INFINITE LIGHT, from which renewed spirits might shrink

The brief reign of the sixth Edward was "distinguished," observed Mr. Anderson, "as having no parallel in British history, with regard to the printing and publication of the sacred Scriptures in the language of the people." That of Mary, we all know, might be written in rubric. It may be just noted, however, that, except the special case of the amiable Lady Jane Grey and her consort, the effusion of blood commenced more than a year and a half after Mary assumed the sceptre; her entire reign being only for five years and four months. Hundreds of exiles, the nation's lights and ornaments, left our shores; and, within these bounds, hundreds sealed their testimony with blood. Yet, even in these awful days, which God mercifully shortened, there was a "congregation" that met in various parts of London, and occasionally on board ship in the Thames. A proclamation, made during this infamous reign, charged that "no man should either *pray for* or *speak to* the martyrs, or once say, 'God help them!'" But, when the fire was kindled around seven of them, Bentham, the pastor, boldly said, "*Almighty God, for Christ's sake strengthen them!*" With one voice the vast multitude answered, "*Amen! Amen!*" The officers, charged with the execrable task of enforcing the proclamation, knew not what to do. The seven martyrs triumphed in constancy; and one, clasping the stake with dying embrace, cried out, "Lord! I most humbly thank Thy Majesty that Thou hast called me from the state of death unto the light of Thy heavenly Word, and now unto the fellowship of Thy saints, that I may sing and say—Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts! And,

Lord, into thy hands I commit my spirit. Lord, bless these Thy people, and save them from idolatry.”—It is not a little startling to mark the changes which swept over this ecclesiastical realm at the close of Mary’s reign. Within the space of sixteen months, about the time of the queen’s demise, fourteen of the bishops were called into eternity.

Ere the year 1561 ended, the people had Tyndale and Coverdale, Cranmer and the Geneva version, all before them. Parker’s Bible appeared in the tenth year of Elizabeth. From 1560 to 1603, there appear to have been one hundred and thirty distinct issues of holy writ—an average of three annually, throughout the long and brilliant reign of that last of the Tudors.

James I., and the Authorized Version, which appeared in 1611, may well be the subject of another lecture; if, indeed, your Committee do not deem that chapter of bibliography pretty familiar to all of us.

A word in conclusion, and our evening’s duty is over. We have often heard of the fabulous Gorgons: it may not be quite so familiar to reflect that there is a *real* Gorgon—one, whose malign glance makes her admirers “as hard as a piece of the nether millstone.” This is *infidelity*. In our favoured land the evil has not been dominant. Our sceptics, from Lord Herbert to Paine, have been met on the field of argument: but, more than this—THE PEOPLE HAVE READ THE BIBLE. Multitudes here have tasted honey; and no infidel chemistry can beguile them to deny its sweetness. They are offering that cup of unearthly consolation to the world. Time was when Chrysostom finished a climax, on the spread of the truth from

the Ægean to the German Sea, by saying, "Britain possesses the Word of life!" Little—ah! little—did that erudite father imagine that, after the lapse of fourteen hundred years, Britain would be found *giving* that Word, in languages of which he never heard, to the remotest nations of the globe. Yet this is history, even now. Great is the glory, great are the obligations, of our country. Her facilities for spreading Christianity are unequalled. Her commerce opens a thousand doors, her science explores every land, and her skill is abrogating distance itself. Her white sails are swelling on every sea. Her conquests—in extent, if not in swiftness—have surpassed the flight of the Roman eagle, and the terrors of the Arabian scimitar. Who can tell how much of light or of shadow the YOUNG MEN here present may throw on her future story?

YOUNG MEN! your maternal country invokes you; and, more than this, your Redeemer speaks to your hearts. "Search the Scriptures." "Receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Abjure for ever the dreamy speculations which would bring *anything* into rivalry with inspired Scripture. Other pages may shine with borrowed and planetary radiance; but the sunlight is here. Let these matchless beams guide you to "Him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write." Behold, in JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED, "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." And, relying on His grace, resolve that the world shall be the better that you were born.

Ireland.

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A LECTURE

BY THE

REV. ROBERT BICKERSTETH, A.M.

RECTOR OF ST. GILES IN THE FIELDS LONDON

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

IN EXETER HALL

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R. C. L. BEVAN, Esq.

IN THE CHAIR.



## I R E L A N D.

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My theme is Ireland. The proposed subject needs to be more accurately defined; and therefore, let me state at once, that I am not about to discuss the politics, the history, the geography, the social condition, or the temporal grievances, whether real or imaginary, of that unhappy country; but I do intend, with God's blessing, to speak of the religious aspect of Ireland at the present moment, and to advance reasons for believing that a movement is now taking place which will issue in the emancipation of Ireland from the spiritual thralldrom by which she has long been degraded and impoverished.

The subject of Ireland ought to be one of intense interest to the people of this country; her unparalleled miseries, of such an aggravated and prolonged description, claim our heartfelt compassion. The many abortive attempts that have been made to rectify and to heal her social disorders; the wrongs which she has unquestionably had to endure; the severity of successive visitations by which, in the course of God's providence, she has been bitterly scourged;—all these circumstances combine to invest

with peculiar interest the investigation of whatsoever concerns her present condition, and above all, the dawning prospect of her extrication from calamity, and of her admission to the place which she ought to occupy in the scale of national prosperity and freedom. Upon mere selfish considerations, Englishmen ought to be alive to the promotion of whatever may advance the happiness of the sister country. The two countries are inseparably connected with each other. It is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Any attempt to divorce the union between the two is an act of treason to the sovereign of these realms. Such being the intimacy of the relation subsisting between the two countries, it must follow that the calamities of Ireland recoil upon England. All that tends to perpetuate her poverty, tends to impoverish ourselves. Whatever shall contribute to her advantage is second in importance only to what directly advances our own. Upon these considerations, then, were there no higher ones to be advanced, we would deprecate indifference to the subject of Ireland, and rather claim in its behalf a calm and dispassionate, an earnest and deliberate attention. To the mind, however, of an intelligent and reflecting Christian, there is opened up a topic of far higher and more solemn interest, by the investigation of the secret of Ireland's calamities—the cause of their continuance,—the means of their removal. In taking a moral survey of what is presented to our notice in that country, the feature which continually forces itself upon observation is the prevalence, over considerable portions of the country, of a system of religion

which we Protestants believe to be opposed to the Word of God, at variance with the Gospel of Christ, hostile to civil, intellectual, and spiritual freedom, and prejudicial in every sense, not less to the temporal than to the eternal welfare of mankind.

It so happens, that for a long period Popery has maintained a fearful ascendancy over a considerable portion of the whole of Ireland. I say over a considerable portion of the whole; and it is important to observe the distinction which that expression implies. There are parts of Ireland in which there lives, breathes, and freely expatiates, as pure a spirit of enlightened Protestantism as ever woke the echoes from these walls; and it is a remarkable fact, that these are the very parts of the country which stand in marked and vivid contrast to the remainder, by the peace and good order, the contentment and the industry, the enterprise and prosperity which characterise the people. Hence arises the natural inference, that, provided only the same spirit of Protestantism could be equally diffused throughout other portions of the land, we should find, as the result, an approximation at least to the same measure of social prosperity with which that spirit is elsewhere invariably accompanied. Before I conclude this address, I will give you satisfactory reasons for concluding that such would be the result: for the present, I merely throw it out as a suggestion worthy of consideration, that, even if we cannot all agree in the estimate of the spiritual importance which attaches to the movement that is now taking place in Ireland, the mere chance that this movement may be instrumenta

to the temporal amelioration of the country, ought to conciliate in its behalf the sympathy and the attentive consideration of all to whom the welfare of Ireland is in any measure or degree a topic of interest.

Public attention has of late been directed in a variety of ways to the work of reformation which is proceeding in Ireland: the leading journals of the metropolis have deemed it of sufficient importance to claim a space in their columns for minute and circumstantial detail, as well as for critical, and, let me add, in many instances, most valuable comment. The bishops of the Roman Catholic community have been thrown into an extraordinary state of excitement; they have even thought it expedient to organize an association for the purpose, in part, of meeting and withstanding the movement. The priests in Ireland are exasperated to a degree at the progress of a reformation, which neither bribe nor curse can check; unwittingly have they borne testimony to the advancement of the cause; and some of the most convincing documents to which I shall refer you to-night will be borrowed from the speeches, or the letters, of Romish priests in Ireland. Meanwhile, to give at once a concise and graphic description of the movement, I will borrow the words of an address, which has been lately issued to the Protestants of the empire by the Committee of the National Club. After alluding to the various agencies which, for half a century past, have been at work in Ireland for the advancement of Protestantism, the address proceeds to say, "But mankind, who will not wait, asked impatiently for the harvest, and seeing

none, they turned away. It was only seed time. At length the season came: the work had told; and already, at intervals, throughout the field appeared the whitening ears of the harvest. In two parts of Ireland, differing and distant, it has now shown itself—in the capital and in the wildest province—in Dublin and in the desolation of Connaught. *There* has sprung up, over half a county, in hamlets and cabins, the work of a marvellous reformation. It has embraced large districts, sweeping in whole communities, absorbing in its widening course a crowded and scattered population. It came not by a slow process, but at once: in a few years, or rather months; in a short part of one generation, overwhelming doubt, dislike, and resistance.

“Already crowded churches filled with eager audiences, school-houses crammed to the door by the children of the neighbourhood, attest the rapid progress of an awakened population: the priest wanders neglected to a chapel deserted by the flock; to greet the English pastor, or the Protestant bishop, crowds pour from the hamlets, shouts of joyful voices are heard along the valleys; bonfires blazing on the heights, attest their interest in a scriptural faith, and their welcome to its ministers. The example is at once contagious and diffusive; it affects the neighbourhood. It stirs up remoter districts. Already in the west, and in the centre of Ireland, the example is followed: in Limerick, Tipperary, and Carlow. The movement spreads to the eastern counties; it runs to Wexford. It is now in progress to the north. Drogheda feels it, Dublin is full of it; that dense fermenting mass that

has wrangled and fought for centuries, is stirred by a new impulse. The Protestant preacher addresses crowded audiences of Romanists, and the missionary has his home and time beset by inquiries, doubts, and discussions. This is the change now in progress in Ireland; not the work of to-day, not the fruits of one movement, not arising from a local or temporary excitement. It results from causes long in progress,—from efforts humbly undertaken, faithfully persevered in, which are at length bearing their fruits. But it will not stop: there is a greater hand in it than that of man. Statesmen have tried their handiwork in vain; a higher than man is now teaching us, that His plan and His word are the effectual means to reform individuals and to reform a nation.”

From the knowledge which I have been able to gain respecting this movement, from the personal observation which I have made in those quarters of Ireland where it is now proceeding, I have arrived at the settled conviction, that the whole work must be referred to a Divine agency. I believe that it can be accounted for upon no other consideration than this, that in the plan and purpose of the providence of God the time of Ireland's deliverance is at length approaching, and that in the marvellous results which are now before our eyes in that country, we must be blind to all the evidence of fact and analogy, not to trace as manifest an outpouring of God's own Spirit, as the annals of Christianity have ever presented. While, however, this is my firm conviction, so much so, that I believe no one can be alive to the real nature of the work, who does not trace in it the

operation of the Spirit of God, it is interesting and instructive to observe the several links in that chain of providential interpositions by which the movement has been brought to pass. It is the ordinary method, in the dealings of God, to employ subordinate instrumentalities to produce results whose authorship is most palpably Divine. Where the thing to be accomplished is clearly beyond the reach of human agency to effect, human instrumentality is, nevertheless, brought into requisition. It is important to notice this principle, because it will frequently serve as an index to define the path of duty. Now, I purpose, by the permission of the Committee of this Association, to enter upon some particulars respecting the history of the present reformation in Ireland, more particularly as that history is interwoven with the origin and the growth of a Society called "The Society for Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics." The narrative of the rise and progress of that Society, identified as it is with the present reformation in Ireland, is so replete with interest, that I shall be greatly mistaken if the cursory glance which I shall now take of its proceedings does not create an appetite amongst you to become more thoroughly conversant with its details. To preserve a connected order in the following address, I shall speak first of the circumstances which led to the formation of the Irish Church Mission Society. I shall notice, secondly, the principles by which it is governed; and I shall then, thirdly, endeavour to give you a rapid summary of the visible results to which its labours have been instrumental.

(I.) So long ago as the year 1844, it pleased God

to imprint upon the heart of an English clergyman\* a strong desire to do something for the spiritual welfare of the Romanists in Ireland. In early life, this clergyman had seen much of the practical working of Romanism, in various parts of the European continent. A long residence in Spain and in France, and shorter sojourns in Portugal and Belgium, had enabled him to become intimately acquainted with the operations of Romanism upon the human mind and heart. The knowledge thus acquired enabled him the more easily to detect the influence of the same system over the members of the Romish Church in Ireland. Unexpectedly led to visit Ireland, opportunities were singularly, and, we must add, most providentially afforded to him, for ascertaining the condition of the Roman Catholic population of Ireland, and for observing the appalling extent to which the mass of the people were enslaved by those whom they regarded as their spiritual guides. His heart was stirred within him to do something for communicating the gospel to them, with a view to disenfranchise them from the miserable bondage under which they were held. It was a long while before this eager desire assumed a definite shape, or could be turned to the prosecution of a fixed plan; still, the desire having been implanted, there it abode, still struggling for practical development. One thing contributed not a little to strengthen and to influence it. The great mass of the Romanists, it was observed, were left to themselves, unapproached by any attempt to point out to them their error, or to unfold before

\* The Rev. Alexander R. C. Dallas, Rector of Wonston, Andover-road, Hants.

them the truth of the Gospel. In saying this, I do not lose sight of the fact, that there was a Protestant Church in Ireland; there existed a body of clergymen, located in various parishes of the country, belonging to the Established Church of England and Ireland. Neither do I lose sight of the fact, that there existed also various communities of Christians, equally Protestant in tone and spirit with ourselves—equally opposed as we are to the doctrinal peculiarities of the Church of Rome, although not members of the same visible communion. Still less would I lose sight of the consideration, that there were various Societies organized for the promotion of Protestant faith, maintained wholly, or in part, by the Christian liberality of this country, labouring with more or less of efficiency in various localities, and actually rendered instrumental, through the Divine blessing, to snatch many of its unhappy victims from the snare of Romish apostacy. But, for all this, there was no adequate, uncompromising, bold, and aggressive movement upon the great mass of Romanism. The citadel was not openly and courageously attacked. The strong man armed, kept his palace, and his goods were in peace. It was too much the case in Ireland as it was in this country—Protestantism had well nigh gone to sleep, till the Pope did us the favour to issue the last Bull, which effectually roused us from slumber. The Protestant clergy were in the habit of virtually ignoring that part of the population, in their respective parishes, which was Romish. They had been driven, by many concurrent causes, to confine themselves, in general, to the ministration necessary for their stated flock,

till there had grown up a tacit consent that there was to be no aggression made upon the assumed claim of the Romish priest to those whom he called his flock. Thus, on the one hand, those whose ordination vows required of them to be "ready with all faithful diligence to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God's word," had so relaxed the interpretation of that obligation, as to think that the Romanist had no claim to their attention; and, upon the other hand, there was no existing Society which then made an open and aggressive attempt to dislodge the empire which, in evil times, Romanism had acquired over the mind and heart, the body and soul, of the masses of the Irish.

A man whose honest and deliberate conviction led him to regard Romanism as idolatry, and the creed of the Romanist as a pitiful caricature of the Gospel of Jesus, could not contemplate this state of things without having his soul filled with a righteous zeal to attempt somewhat for the honour of Christ, the promotion of his Gospel, and the rescue of the morally enslaved. But what should be the nature of the attempt? Upon what plan was he to proceed? What kind of organization was necessary? While questions such as these were revolving in his mind, it presently occurred to him, that some further acquaintance with the then existing state of mind and feeling amongst the Romanists in Ireland was absolutely needful. Were the Romanists as a body any more accessible than they had been here tofore? Were they, generally speaking, satisfied with the religion which they were taught? Were

they the willing captives of that huge system of spiritual bondage which enslaved them, or, were there any tokens of a desire to snap the fetters and be morally free? Some shrewd suspicion existed that there was a spirit of dissatisfaction amongst the Romanists, which made them ripe for a grand missionary effort. It was necessary, however, to be sure on this point. In order to arrive at some definite conclusion, a series of remarkable experiments were made, with the most satisfactory results. The experiments were of necessity then made secretly. There is no longer any ground for concealment. Amongst these experimental efforts to come at the true state of mind and feeling amongst the Romanists, one of the most remarkable was this:— It was determined to address a letter, by post, to the Roman Catholic tradesmen and farmers throughout the whole of Ireland, as far as their names and addresses could be procured. Almost incredible pains were taken to find out these; at length there were despatched from the General Post-office in London, 25,000 copies of letters entitled “A Voice from Heaven to Ireland.” These were addressed to different persons living in almost every town and village in Ireland. They were despatched so that they might be delivered the same day. They were addressed to none but Romanists. It followed that there was scarcely a town or village in Ireland in which, upon a certain day, the Romanists did not find themselves in possession of a letter by post: none knew from whence it came. In every instance it was the Romanist only who received the letter. If his next door neighbour was a Protestant, it was found that no

letter had come for him. If his neighbour three doors further on, were a Romanist, he had the letter. It was the same letter to all; written in plain and homely style, but adapted to catch attention and lead to inquiry. Along with every letter there was enfolded a hand-bill, containing texts of Scripture, selected with the special design to exhibit the freeness of the Gospel as strikingly opposed to the buy-and-sell system of Popery.

It would be difficult to describe the surprise, the curiosity, and, in some instances, the consternation, which this flight of letters, falling upon a naturally superstitious people, occasioned. The authorities at the Post-office were not a little astounded at the descent—like an avalanche—of letters at their office. At the Post-office in Dublin, for two nights and three days, all hands were at work, and extra hands were employed in stamping and despatching them. But, suffice it to say, the effect of these letters was narrowly watched, and the course which had been taken led to the manifestation of precisely that spirit of growing dissatisfaction at priestly power and tyranny, which had been imagined to exist. Upon three subsequent occasions flights of letters were similarly despatched, and with the same marked results.

At the same time, a still more practical experiment was in course of performance, with the view to discover the real state of mind and feeling on the part of the Romanist. It had been decided that a number of well-chosen agents should be selected to be sent into every part of Ireland, with special instructions to address themselves with simplicity and with boldness to the Roman Catholic farmers and shopkeepers.

Their mission was, *ostensibly*, to make inquiry respecting the potato blight; *secretly*, to obtain, by personal intercourse with Romanists, an accurate knowledge of their real state of feeling upon the subject of religion. For this purpose they were to assume a mysterious independence, answering all inquiries as to their motives and employers, by referring generally to the religious duty imposed upon every man to impart the religious knowledge he possesses to those who have it not. They were directed to make constant reports, entering minutely into details of facts, and stating the opinions expressed by those with whom they conversed. Eight of such agents were despatched upon this remarkable mission. They had their several routes accurately defined for them; they went by two and two, being commended, at their outset, to the grace of God, and followed by the earnest prayers of a band of the soul's remembrancers, who, having been informed of the effort that was to be made, agreed day by day to plead before the throne of mercy, that the wisdom of God might guide, his grace preserve, and his omnipotent arm protect them.\*

Now it is a remarkable fact that the journals and reports of these several agents, transmitted from all parts of Ireland, and collected independently of each other, invariably exhibited the same testimony, that in every quarter the power of the priesthood was mysteriously upon the decline—the people were weary of the bondage which oppressed and degraded

\* The reader who wishes for fuller information upon this most interesting experiment, is referred to "The Point of Hope in Ireland's present Crisis," by the Rev. Alexander Dallas. Nisbet, London.

them. The empire of Romanism was shaking, and there was a remarkable preparation—a Divine work—upon the minds of the Romanists, indicating that the way was open for the preaching to that class the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Doubtless, many causes had contributed, in their separate and combined operation, to produce this effect. Previous to the year 1846, the Roman Catholic population of Ireland, amounting to above seven millions, was, for the most part, sunk in the grossest ignorance and superstition. In the more remote districts, it was almost without a parallel even in heathen countries. Murder, drunkenness, idleness, sabbath-breaking, and excess of every kind, were continually practised. Holy wells were surrounded with crowds of votaries, fancying their patron saint would hear them, or cure the diseased and afflicted who had recourse to them; the bushes around many of them were covered with rags, as tokens of the cures still unperformed. Holy wafers, ashes, oil, candles, beads, crucifixes, and pictures were in constant devotional use; charms and scapulars were worn by thousands to keep them from harm when blessed by the priest. The people looked on *these* men as gods; they thought that salvation was altogether in their hands. Gradually, however, a great and important change has been going forward. The continued agitation fostered by Daniel O'Connell, especially towards the close of his career, in the years 1841, 1842, and 1843, habituated the people *to think and reason for themselves*: little did the political agitators—in many instances the mere puppets of the priesthood—dream, that in their

flaming harangues with which they incited the people to rebellion, they were nursing a freedom of thought, which, if once exercised on the province of religion, would operate to the breaking asunder of the fetters of spiritual tyranny.

Then, again, there was the famine, which broke the hearts of the people, evinced the noble generosity of England, and, in too many instances, the sordid rapacity of the Romish priests. The failure of the pretended miracles of the priests to arrest the potato-disease in 1846, considerably tended to weaken the reliance of the people upon them. The sprinkling of holy water and salt on the stalks in no wise checked the progress of the blight, and then the people began to boil with indignation against the men who, with "feigned words, through covetousness, had made merchandise of them." The continued effect of famine and pestilence developed events, which were calculated to destroy the feelings upon which the priest depended for his influence as well as his income. The refusal in many instances to administer the Romish sacrament of extreme unction, where the famine-stricken and impoverished relatives of the dying were unable to pay for the rite, contributed not a little to break the spell which the priest had formerly exercised. In all these ways did the Providence of God bring it to pass that the fortress of Romanism was gradually undermined, and the heart of the Irish people was opened to give a hundred thousand welcomes to the heralds of the gospel, proclaiming spiritual life and liberty, pardon, peace, and salvation, the gift of God, without money and without price, to every soul that believes on Jesus.

In making these various experimental efforts of which I have spoken, the clergyman already referred to was associated with some few Christians of like mind with himself, equally impressed with the importance of adopting some efficient measures for proclaiming the gospel to the Roman Catholics in Ireland. To their liberality, and principally to that of the late Mr. Durant, he was indebted for the funds which were necessary to carry out the experiments already detailed.

Having by these means ascertained that there was an opening for the proclamation of the gospel to the Romanists in Ireland, it was still a matter for deliberation, how or where to commence. At length, it was decided to begin in that part of all Ireland where it was supposed that Romanism had the most power and the strongest influence. A portion of Galway, a place called Castlekerke, on the shores of Lough Corrib, was selected as the first place for permanent missionary operations. There, under the sanction of the Bishop of Tuam, a Missionary was stationed. A mission-school was established, and the ordinances of Protestant worship were instituted. A Society in the meanwhile was formed and organized, to superintend and direct the whole plan of operations. The experiment, commenced at Castlekerke, was crowned with success, which far exceeded the previous expectation. The people evinced the utmost readiness to receive the tidings of the gospel. Numbers were speedily convinced of the wide difference between Popery and Christianity. They openly renounced Romanism; they became zealous converts to the faith of Christ and him

crucified, as the only Mediator and Saviour; through every kind of trial, persecution, and privation, they have remained stedfast to this day, and from thence—from that lone and lovely spot in the far west of Galway may be said to have originated the stream of light, which, in its onward course, has illumined the promontories of Connemara; entered with its enlivening ray, the darkest corners of Dublin; fringed with an edge of gold the dark clouds that have for so long loomed over the horizon of the sister-land, and given earnest that ere long, and the midnight darkness of Popery, with all her baneful influences, shall give place to the glorious effulgence of the gospel of Jesus, enriching every province, fertilizing every moral waste, and shedding its hallowing and ennobling influence into every cabin and hut, from the north to the south, from the east to the west, of that hitherto priest-ridden and enslaved, distracted and impoverished land.

(II.) The details upon which I have thus entered, furnish an outline of the commencement of the Reformation in Ireland, in connexion with the Irish Church Mission Society. Before enumerating some of the results which, through the Divine blessing, have crowned the efforts of that Society, I wish to state briefly, at this point, the main principles by which it is governed.

First and foremost amongst those principles stands this, that it is *a spiritual work in which we are engaged*. We will have nothing whatever to do with politics in any shape; we will neither intermeddle nor be entangled with them. The object that we have in view is the glory of God in the salvation of

perishing souls. We believe that the souls of the Romanists are imperilled by the creed they profess. We believe that it is our duty, having the Gospel ourselves, to communicate the knowledge of it to others. It is not for the advancement of any temporal end that we are organized as a Society. We are not, indeed insensible to the social calamities of our brethren in Ireland. We deplore them. We would gladly mitigate them; but our grand and distinctive object has to do with the soul and not the body; we pursue that object irrespective of any other; rejoicing all the while, however, in the assurance, that if by God's blessing we are made instrumental to elevate the poor Irish from moral degradation, we shall have gone a long way towards practically enriching them for time as well as for eternity.

Our second grand principle is this, that in dealing with our Romanist brethren, we will have no sort of compromise. It is not for the sake of giving unnecessary offence; it is not with the intention of willingly giving pain to the Romanist that we unflinchingly declare, we believe Popery to be Idolatry.

Such is the language, as I believe, of Scripture. Such is the language of our martyred Reformers, who bequeathed us, at the cost of their heart's best blood, the noble legacy of an unclasped Bible, and of a Protestantism whose distinguishing Article is this, "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it shall be believed as an

article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

Such is the language of the Protestant Constitution of these realms. The Sovereign of Great Britain and Ireland, by the very tenure by which the crown is held, declares that "the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary, or any other saint, and the sacrifice of the Mass, *as they are now used* in the Church of Rome, are superstitious and idolatrous."

Such is the language of the Westminster Confession, which declares that transubstantiation "overthroweth the nature of the sacrament, and hath been and is the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross idolatries."

Such is the language of the Heidelberg Catechism, which declares, that "the very foundation of the Mass is nothing else than an utter denial of that only sacrifice and passion of Christ Jesus, and an accursed idolatry."

Such is the language of Protestant and Reformed Churches all the world over, in which, whether or not you have uniformity of outward discipline, form, and ceremony, you have the true, fundamental, substantial unity of access by one Spirit, through one Mediator, to the Father.

And are we to hold such language as this,—are we to maintain that the creed of the Romanist is idolatrous—and then, after all, let our poor brother perish, because, forsooth, from fear of giving offence—if not from some guilty hankering after the morsel which is so palatable, though so destructive—we dare not tell him what we think? The Romanist

will not thank you for such charity as that. I believe that the Romanist, who looks into what we profess in our creeds, will appreciate the honesty which makes a man avow what he thinks, rather than be pleased with the skulking hypocrisy, and the flagrant inconsistency, and the cowardly selfishness, which, for fear of giving offence, would overlay with smooth speeches and flattering disguises the terrific gulf that lies between Popery and Christianity.

Let no man embrace the opinion that Popery is idolatry upon mere vague conjecture, or uncertain surmise. Look into it. Look into the practical working of it upon the mind of its professors. Look into its principles and its practice, its standards of devotion, and its forms of worship, and if you arrive at the conviction, as I think you must, that in her mode of worship—in the doctrines she inculcates—the ceremonies she prescribes—Rome is an idolatrous Church,—then, as you would not be guilty of treason to God's word—of dishonesty to your own convictions—of shameful cruelty to the Romanist—of connivance at what is hateful to God and destructive to men,—be not ashamed or afraid to avow the opinion you hold. It is miserable trifling with truth, it is a cowardly abandonment of duty, to hold that Romanism is idolatry, and then to soften down and extenuate, to clip and pare away the language in which we speak of it, till no one could guess that we really think it so bad. Perish the spurious charity—which would allow me to see that a ship has sprung a leak, and not shout aloud to the crew, when I have the power, to beware of the danger. Perish the mock charity which would let me know

that the house is on fire, while the occupier is slumbering in his bed, and for fear of giving him a fright, let him sleep on till the flame has enwrapped him. I have no sympathy with the charity which will let me see a fellow-creature imbibe poison, and for fear of marring his enjoyment for the moment, let him drink down what will destroy him. This is not true charity. This is the base and counterfeit coin—a sham of the original—a fraud and conspiracy against the sovereign whose impress it dares to assume.

The Society of which I speak does not act upon such a principle of false charity as this. We refuse all compromise; we spurn all concealment; we hate all disguise. We tell the Romanist in all love, but in all fidelity, what we think; and, charging upon his church the guilt of idolatry, we echo, without ceasing, the proclamation, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

Then there is a third principle which governs all our proceedings. We will have no interference by bribery, or any other means, with the rights of conscience. So jealous has the Irish Church Mission Society been upon this point, that it is a standing rule, from which its committee have never departed, to have no concern whatever with the administration of temporal relief. So all-important has it been deemed to maintain the spiritual character of the whole movement, and to avoid not only the reality, but even the appearance, of anything that might be construed into a temporal bribe to leave the Church of Rome, that they have most firmly, and without

wavering, resisted every overture which could possibly have the effect of compromising the Society in this respect. Of course, it will be said by the Romanist, that these conversions of which you hear are the result of bribery. We meet the assertion by an unqualified contradiction. There has been bribery to a great extent in Galway; but I avow that it has been on the part of the priest, to keep the people from becoming converts, and in no one instance on the part of the agents of the Irish Church Mission Society, to induce the Romanist to renounce Romanism.

(III.) I come, thirdly, to the results—the visible and appreciable results—which have followed from the labours of the Society in Ireland. When it was first organized, about three years ago, it was anticipated hopefully, by the founders of the association, that provided only the proposed plan was adequately supported by the Christian public, then, with God's blessing, in the space of ten years, some decided impression might be made upon Romanism. What has followed? Why, four years have not elapsed since that hope was expressed, and yet an impression has been made which has far exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the founders of the association, aroused the attention of the empire, and wrung from the Romish hierarchy the unwilling admission that their power in Ireland is fast approaching destruction. The reformation, which commenced in Galway, at Castlekerke, quickly gained ground in various parts over and around that place. Spite of every opposition on the part of Romish priests and those who were influenced by them, the preaching of the missionaries

was attended by crowds of eager listeners; the agents found ready access to the cabins of the Romanists, the school-houses became overcrowded by children and adults, thirsting for instruction out of God's word. A place called Oughterard was soon adopted as a second missionary station; agents of the Society were planted there; opposition was kindled, but it issued in the advancement of the truth. A remarkable judgment befel a priest in that place, who called upon the people to join him in cursing the converts, and said, that if they did not drive them away as the froth of the river, they would find that the judgment of God would come upon him or them. Two days afterwards he was struck with paralysis. His screams were terrific, and frightened the people yet more than his fearful imprecations. Considerable excitement was caused; but the effect of the missionary praying for him softened the hearts of many, and conciliated them by the marked contrast which they perceived between the *cursing* priest and the praying minister. Conversions rapidly succeeded each other. The spell of the priest was broken; the desire for spiritual freedom, then kindled for the first time for ages, was developed in the irresistible determination to shake off the bondage of Romanism. From thence the reformation proceeded right and left. Clifden, an important town, about thirty miles west of Castlekerke, soon became a central rallying place for an extensive district all around. January, 1848, witnessed the first operations of the missionaries in that quarter. In an almost incredibly short space of time, two hundred and fifty children were under regular weekly instruction in the Mission Schools.

The light which had dawned upon Clifden radiated to other villages on every side, till, ere long, the ray fell upon Sellerna, Cleggan, Salruc, Barratrough, Ballyconre, Ballynaboy, Duholla, and Derrygimla. All Connemara caught the glorious illumination. In each of these places Mission Schools were established, Protestant services were held, — slaves of Popery, being instructed in the truth of the gospel, rejoiced to shake off their bondage and embrace the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free. Within one year from the commencement of the work, 401 converts came forward to receive, at the hands of the Bishop of Tuam, the rite of confirmation: to a man have these converts remained staunch to the profession which they then made. Forty-six have died rejoicing in Christ Jesus. In September last, the Bishop of Tuam again held a tour of Confirmation in the same district, when 712 converts from Popery publicly avowed their renunciation of Popery, and their adhesion to the Protestant faith. In one union of parishes in West Galway, where, in 1840, there were not more than 500 Protestants, there are now between 5000 and 6000 converts. In the same district there are upwards of 3500 children in daily attendance in the Mission Schools. The erection of ten new churches for the accommodation of as many congregations of converts, has become imperatively needful. The Bishop of the diocese has issued an appeal for the necessary funds, and already some of the churches are in course of erecting. So decisive has been the progress of the work, we are able to affirm, that a tract of country, extending about fifty miles in length, from Galway to

Omey, and thirty miles in breadth, from Salruc to Inverin, which, five years ago, was essentially Popish and ecclesiastically desert, has now become characteristically convert and Protestant, dotted with churches and school-rooms, with a flock gathered and folded by pastors of the united church.

Nor is this great work of reformation confined to Galway. It is gradually advancing throughout various other extensive tracts of country. The flame which was kindled amid the rocky passes of Connemara, soon extended to the town of Galway itself; from thence it has reached Limerick, Belfast, Carlow, Kilkenny, Drogheda, Enniscorthy, and Wicklow, and it is even now lighting up at this moment some of the murkiest alleys in Dublin itself. Two thousand Romanists in that city are visited weekly by the agents of the Irish Church Mission Society. The lanes and courts of the metropolis are penetrated by these indefatigable pioneers of the Gospel. Every Tuesday evening there meets a class of inquiring Romanists in a large school-room, attached to St. Michan's Church, for the express purpose of comparing the doctrines of God's word with the dogmas of the Church of Rome.

These are no coloured representations. These are no exaggerated statements. I speak of what I have seen; I am giving you the facts which I have verified from my own observation. I have wandered through the desert wilds of Connemara. I have preached to the poor and wretched peasantry there, the truths of the everlasting Gospel, and I have watched with delighted amazement, the devouring eagerness with which they drank in the tidings of

the blessed story of peace. I have seen the hearty and spirit-catching enthusiasm with which they welcomed the appearance amongst them of the English Missionary. I have heard the young and the old,—men, women, and children,—wake the mountain echoes with their “Cead mille fealthe!” for the messengers who came from afar to disenthral them by the sword of the Spirit, from the chains which the fraud and cupidity of Rome had forged and fastened. I have examined the children in the crowded school-houses, where hundreds upon hundreds are packed into the narrowest compass, and never did I witness quicker intelligence, readier apprehension, or a more intimate acquaintance with the facts and the precepts, the promises and the distinguishing doctrines, of the Gospel. I have been present at the inquiring class in Dublin, when the avenues of approach were blocked up by the crowds, eager to gain admission to the overthronged room, in which the fortress of Romanism in that city is being undermined by the diligent search into the doctrine of God’s word.

But I will not ask you to take all this upon my testimony alone; nor will I ask you to take it upon the united testimony of missionaries and agents who are employed in the work; nor yet upon the testimony of many eye-witnesses, who have been at the trouble to go over for themselves, and ascertain the correctness of the reports which have been published. You shall have what you may think, if possible, still more unexceptionable testimony than this: hearken to the independent testimony which is borne to the work by the leading journal of

this metropolis :\* “ It seems pretty clear that something like a new reformation is taking place in the province of Connaught. We were unwilling hastily to give credence to the numerous statements which reached us on this subject, because we are well aware how readily mankind mistake their hopes for their accomplishment; upon what slight evidence such assertions are often made, and how easy it is for those unacquainted by practical experience with the Irish character to obtain information apparently trustworthy, but really concocted for the purpose of meeting the views which they are believed to entertain. . . . Still, however, due allowance having been made for all these things, quite enough remains to convince us that the Irish mind is at this moment undergoing a change of incalculable importance, and shaking off, at any rate in some degree, the fetters of its ancient faith. . . . In the missions of the Irish Protestant Church, which have achieved such signal success, we have a just and fair reprisal for the arrogant aggressions of the Pope. In answer to his bulls, they have published the Scriptures, and while he is threatening our crown and hierarchy, they sap the foundation of his power by disseminating the word of God among the people.”

Take the testimony of the “Dublin Evening Post,” a journal earnestly attached to the Romish Church :— “ We learn from unquestionable authority,—Catholic authority,—that the success of the proselytizers in almost every part of the country, and, we are told, in the metropolis also, is beyond all the worst misgivings could have dreamt of. There is not only no denying

\* From a Leader in the “Times” of Oct. 7, 1851.

these statements, but it would be an act of treachery to the best interests of the Catholic Church to conceal them, or even to pass the matter over, as a thing of no great moment; for there is no Catholic who does not regard the movement, if he is a sensible and sincere man, and not a brawler and a mountebank, with, we were going to say, dismay, but we shall substitute for the word, indignation."

The Romish Bishop of Clanfert, in a pastoral letter, dated July 25, 1850, writes, "It is known to you, brethren, that the most powerful agencies are at work to destroy the faith: at no former time have the declared and covert enemies of our holy religion been more active in their aggression." A priest, named Fitzgerald, speaking of the progress already made in the reformation, said at a tenant-league meeting, in August, 1851, "Our people are verging to destruction, our church to extinction, and the process is going on." Another priest of the name "James Maher, of Carlow," wrote to the "Freeman's Journal," in October, 1851, "The fanaticism of the Established Church will, unless resolutely and zealously withstood, drive Christianity from the shores of Ireland."

Such is the testimony, then, which comes pouring in from every quarter to confirm the existence of a movement, as the effect of which, through the might of the Spirit of God, Popery in Ireland will totter to its downfall, and the empire of truth will arise upon its ruins. I believe that a glorious era is breaking upon that long torn and distracted land. The darkness, which has for ages overshadowed the people, shall roll off, and Ireland shall be addressed in the

language of inspiration. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." The hatred of her people towards England, which it has been the wretched policy of the priests by all means in their power to foment and to perpetuate, shall give place to such strong affection as few hearts, except Irish hearts, can feel, for the country which at length gives her the gospel, and in doing so, shivers the fetters that have enslaved and debased her. Ireland has been made to drink of the cup of the Lord's anger. All the peaceful relations of society have been ruthlessly dislocated by the baneful influence of a corrupt faith. In turns, famine and the pestilence have been commissioned to go through the land, and depopulate and destroy. But I believe that she will at length come forth from the furnace of affliction, like metal which the heat has refined, to reflect in brighter lustre the golden beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

England owes a debt of tremendous responsibility to Ireland. I cannot forget that Ireland was once the palladium of learning, and the home of a pure faith; the historian Bede, the learned and intelligent Mosheim, and other distinguished writers, attest the fact, that Ireland was at one period the country in which literature and the arts flourished beneath the fostering wing of scriptural truth. Princes from foreign nations resorted thither to be enriched from her stores of literature. The persecuted fled to her borders for an asylum and a shelter. From her shores there issued bands of devoted missionaries with the torch of eternal truth in their hands, to illumine the dark places of the earth. For centuries

did the Irish Church exist as independent and purely Protestant as ourselves. She refused submission to the domineering claims of Rome, long after other churches had crouched before the Papacy. Henry the Second sold Ireland to the Pope. Ostensibly to ameliorate the condition of the country, but in reality to forward his own ambitious designs, he obtained, in the twelfth century, a bull from Pope Adrian, under cover of which the English invaded Ireland, and made her hitherto independent church tributary to Rome.\*

The policy that was pursued at the time of the Reformation, had the effect of riveting more firmly the power of Romanism, and of kindling a bitter aversion to England. An Act was passed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, to legalize the use of the Liturgy of the Church of England, in the Latin tongue, in cases where clergymen could not be procured to read it in English. Thus the people were deprived by Act of Parliament, of instruction in the language which the majority understood, and either the English language, or the equally unintelligible Latin, was substituted in its place. Can we marvel that the Church of Rome took advantage of this, and the Reformation so thrust upon the people made little way?

In more modern times, it has still been the policy of England to discourage Protestantism, and to countenance Popery in Ireland. Witness the refusal to afford a single grant in aid of Protestant schools

\* For fuller information on these points, see, "Ireland and her Church," by the Dean of Ardagh; Seeley's "Ireland in Past Times," "Hatchard," and "Mant's History," &c.

in Ireland in connexion with the Established Church. Witness the Maynooth grant, for educating a priesthood whose influence has always been for evil in proportion to its power. But I believe that all parties in the state will yet learn that the gospel of Christ is the only panacea for the calamities of the nation. Let Protestantism prevail, and you will have the fruits of civilization, industry, loyalty, and peace, exhibited in all their attractive loveliness and beauty. The evidence of this is daily apparent: of the hundreds of converts in the neighbourhood of Castlekerke, there has not been one convicted of any crime for the last three years. There is not a court day passes but there are trials for fighting, stealing, or misdemeanor, on the part of the Romanists. Nothing is more self-evident than the progress of civilization and industry amongst the converts: spinning, knitting, net-making, and other branches of industry, have followed in the train of the reformation. If there be those who cannot rise to the same appreciation of the magnitude of the work under its spiritual aspect, surely their sympathies may yet be aroused at beholding the practical benefits of a temporal kind with which it is attended.

But I anticipate a nobler appreciation of the movement, and a warmer sympathy towards it, from the members of the Young Men's Christian Association. You have learnt, my Christian brothers, to regard Popery with abhorrence, not so much for its deteriorating influence over mind and body, over nations and communities, as because of its Christ-dishonouring and soul-destroying tendencies. You look upon the doctrines of Romanism as doctrines utterly opposed

to the gospel of our salvation, and therefore, you will hail the intelligence of conversions from Popery, as tidings fraught with glorious issues to the honour of the Saviour. To you it will be joyful news, that Ireland is casting off the errors of Romanism, because therein do you discern the pledge, not only of her elevation to her due place by the side of England—a beautiful gem in the diadem of our gracious Queen—the pledge, not only of reviving peace and prosperity—the guarantee, not only of her loyalty to the crown of Great Britain, by reason of her deliverance from the guilt of a divided allegiance, but because you perceive in this renunciation of Popery, the accession of new trophies to the power of the gospel—to the might of God's own Spirit, and to the wonders of Redemption.

It is a marvellous coincidence, that the reformation should have broken forth at a period when Rome was advancing her pretensions with such daring effrontery in this country. It is a matter for joyful thanksgiving, that for every pervert she can count in England, we can count tens of hundreds of converts in Ireland. Preceding Lecturers have sought to enlist your sympathies for France and for Italy. I invoke them for Ireland. I ask the help of your prayers, and the contribution of your means, for the great work to which we are summoned by the call of Providence—the claims of national affinity—the magnitude of the interests at stake—the abundant promise of success. Christian young men, of this vast metropolis, I invite you to share in a nobler enterprise than ever kindled the fervour of military enthusiasm, or woke the fire of a soaring ambition. Ireland is thirst-

ing for the gospel of Jesus. Be it ours to say we will give her the gospel. Every one of you take part in the work. The battle struggle of the reformation is renewed on her borders. Of old, when Hannibal knocked at the gates of Rome, the senators of that city decreed to send their legions to Carthage and fight him there. Popery is knocking at this moment, with all her energies, at the heart of Protestant England. We will send the gospel to Ireland, and determine that for every inch we lose in England, we will gain a whole county there. Be it ours to rise in the spirit of Wickliffe, and Ridley, and Hooper, and Latimer, and Cranmer, with the Bible in our hands, the love of souls in our hearts—the warm impulses of patriotism, and still warmer zeal for Christianity urging us forward,—and determine, that, God helping, the oppressed shall be rescued, and the enslaved be set free.



Christianity in its relation to Sects  
and Denominations.

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A LECTURE

BY THE

REV. HENRY ALLON.

OF UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN EXETER HALL,

JANUARY 13, 1852.

CAPT. THE HON. FRANCIS MAUDE, R.N.

IN THE CHAIR.

It may perhaps be needful to state, in deprecation of any seeming presumption in the length of the following Lecture, that several paragraphs of it were omitted in the delivery, and that they are inserted here in their original connexion at the request of the Committee.

## CHRISTIANITY IN ITS RELATION TO SECTS AND DENOMINATIONS.

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It was a well-known formula of the late Sir Robert Peel, in introducing a discussion, that "one of three courses might be taken;" and it was doubtless the almost universal fact of the predicament that brought this formula so frequently to the lips of this profound and comprehensive statesman. Truth is always a medium, having its two extremes, and it is its property as such to maintain an immutable character and position; from its very nature it is what it is, and where it is; compromise or oscillation would make it something else—something that is not truth. Error may be multiform: truth has but one position and one shape. There is but one truth of things, and every departure from it is precisely, in the degree of it, falsehood.

Hence it necessarily happens to truth, that it is liable to be called in question from different quarters, and to be charged with diametrically opposite faults. Truth is at the centre of things; error occupies their entire circumference: from any and every point, therefore, an assault may be directed against it.

Precisely such has been the position of true Christianity. It stands between antipodal errors; and thus it has happened to it, to be charged from opposite sources, and with conflicting accusations; and sometimes it has happened, as in the matter that we are to consider to-night, that objectors even thus extreme have agreed in the substance of their charge.

On the one hand, at the zenith of the ecclesiastical horizon stands Romanism—the very incarnation of credulity and superstition;—a power palpable, definite, and terrible; material even to grossness in its religious embodiment, yet grasping influences the most spiritual, and diffusing them far beyond the circle of its own visible being;—a power that has grown amongst other religious powers, to colossal height and appalling dimensions, and that has come to be, far beyond them all, a kind of earthly omnipotence; that, ever “guiding its hand wittingly,” has laid hold of the mightiest influences of both the visible and the invisible worlds, and, consummately blending them, has subordinated them to its own venal purposes; that, digging deep into the unsanctified heart of humanity, has laid firm its foundations, and that, laying hold of its most powerful passions and interests, has silently and potently, for nearly twice a thousand years, piled up its mighty superstructure; that, by the rarest and most cunning alchemy has gathered to itself all the elements, and absorbed all the essences of human strength, availing itself with equal ease of the most contradictory qualities—of the piety of the ascetic, and of the sins of the profane; of the chivalry of the war-

rior, and of the lore of the learned ; of the abundance of the wealthy, and of the necessities of the poor ; of the *atelier* of the artist, and of the harp of the poet ; of the ambition that avowedly seeks all things for itself, and of the self-abnegation, that by a reverse process obeys the same promptings ;—a power that has been the vampire of the earth, emasculating every limb of its strength, save as it could convert it into its own instrument ; that, while leaving it its form and name, has contrived to suck out its energy and absorb its spirit ; that has won for its altar a place higher than the throne, and for its crucifix a supremacy over the globe.

A power, moreover, that has been malignant as it has been mighty ; that has opposed itself to the best forms of human good, and concentrated in itself the worst elements of human evil ; that, as a dominion, has combined in itself the worst exactions of human tyranny ; that, as a religion, has generated and nourished the most degrading superstitions ; that, as a morality, has adopted the most execrable principles and maxims ;—a power that has warred against human freedom, put dishonour upon all true manhood, corrupted human virtue, and pandered to man's basest lusts ; that, impiously usurping the place and prerogatives of Deity, has employed them to destroy virtue at its source, and religion in its rudiments, by transmuting their very essence, and abrogating their primal laws ; that, deeming its own aggrandisement an end to sanctify every means, has, like him from whose inspiration it came, and whose "synagogue" it is, chosen evil itself to "be its good," and has unscrupulously employed every prac-

ticable agency that could advance it,—craft to ensnare the simple, and pleasure to allure the sensual,—bribes to gain over the sordid, and penances and prayers to attract the devout,—heroic enterprise to enlist the brave, and ghostly terrors to awe the timid; that appeals alike successfully, and alike sinisterly, to the superstitious ignorance of men, and to their secular shrewdness,—to their philosophic wisdom, and to their pious aspirations; that enters, in the great temple of humanity, the outer court of social life, and destroys its freedom, and intelligence, and peace;—the inner court of the church, and fills it with secularity and pollution, making it “a den of thieves;” and even the sanctuary of the home, earth’s “holy of holies,” and fills it with distrust, and dislike, and discord, destroying its sanctity, and loosening its obligations, by the unhallowed intrusion of a spiritual presence, that is felt to be far other than a “ministering spirit” of heaven. It is a power that broods as does the pestilence, that contaminates as does the plague. It is the Sceeva amongst the incarnations of Christendom, the destroyer of both body and soul.

This fell power, that even to mention is thus to characterize—“transforming itself into an angel of light,” and assuming the name of the Christian and Catholic Church, determined to be such by its own arrogated infallibility, and manifested to the world, and maintained as one and indivisible,—assails, with all the moral force of its seeming unity, the diversified Protestantism that we profess.

On the other hand, at the nadir of the religious firmament stands Infidelity—a presence impalpable

and spiritual—felt rather than seen—without organization, or priesthood, or worship,—not so much a form of religious life as a negation of all religion, of everything that is,—going about the earth as a spiritual iconoclast, shivering every feebler weapon than that of truth, and destroying every lesser power; and sometimes seeming to make even Christianity itself stagger and fall back with terrible recoil. If Romanism be the torrid zone of the religious life, scepticism is its arctic region, where not so much as a solitary shrub or blade of grass flourishes amid the eternal snows. All is sterility and death. Or, if Romanism be the life of Christianity stimulated to fever, Infidelity is the same life reduced to paralysis.

It too, hardly less unscrupulous as to the weapons that it employs, and dreading the intelligent faith of Protestantism more than it does the mumbling superstition of Rome, borrows freely from the armoury of the latter; and a ribald Paine, or philosophic Hume, may often be seen fighting against the truth, side by side with a specious Wiseman and a credulous Newman.

A true religion, say they, especially if taught by a supernatural revelation, must necessarily be uniform; it will have its infallible creed, its undeviating ritual, and its indisputable government. Because, therefore, your Protestantism has not these, we deny it to be a religion at all.

Between these two extremes stands Protestantism, with its sects and denominations, maintaining its proper spiritual unity—a unity that, avoiding libertinism of sentiment on the one hand, refuses to

become a mechanical uniformity on the other—that, demanding agreement in the essence of Christian faith, permits individuality and circumstantial difference, in the mode of its expression.

This,—both Infidelity and Superstition,—failing alike to discriminate between the essence of Christian truth and its formal expression, its noumena and its phenomena,—have agreed to call in question, on account of its apparent want of unity, and to demand of it, ere its claims to be truth from God be recognized, that its diversities of opinion be ended, and that it present itself for acceptance, having not only one spirit, but one voice and one form.

The validity of this test it is our business to-night to examine. And we may proceed in either of two ways. We may polemically refute the specific objection itself, and demonstrate, one after another, the futility of all such arguments against the truth that we maintain.

Or, affirmatively, we may justify the position that as evangelical Protestants we maintain, and the diversities that such Protestantism permits, as the natural and inevitable condition of all truth, when committed to individual and intelligent men; leaving, therefore, and mainly by inference, the objection to fall to the ground of itself. And this latter method will have this advantage over the former, that while it effectually silences the specific objection that necessitates it, it also, by anticipation, refutes every other of its kind.

This method, then, we will adopt. We will affirm, and endeavour to justify, the diversities of Evangelical Protestantism. It will not only be far plea-

santer than a polemical contention, but it will enable the assertion of a principle that will stand in the place of a thousand specific arguments.

Let us, then, imagine ourselves mere disinterested students of church-history, spectators of the course and character of Christianity amongst men; and leaving for awhile the region of theological strife, and eschewing the urgency of its "meum" and "tuum," let us, as mere mental and moral philosophers, familiar with the principles of the human mind, and with the character of Christianity, as presenting itself to men for their acceptance,—endeavour to demonstrate the kind of unity natural and possible for it to establish in the hearts and minds of its recipients.

As a historical fact, therefore, with which we now, by supposition, for the first time become acquainted, an intellectual and moral phenomenon, actually existing amongst men, Christianity will present itself to us in this way. Nearly two thousand years ago, there appeared on the eastern margin of the Mediterranean Sea a humble peasant, the reputed son of a carpenter, who, for nearly thirty years, pursued the occupation of his father, in the obscure yet beautiful village of Nazareth, situated about half-way between the promontory of Carmel and the great Galilean lake, amongst the hills of Northern Palestine, which rise round it, and seclude it, like the edges of a nest.

The people amongst whom he was born were a people of most singular history, character, and expectations, a minute record of which has been handed down to us in the collection of old Hebrew Tracts, known in this western world under the designation

of the Old Testament. About forty years before his birth, their country, small in its dimensions and political importance, had been added by Pompey the Great to the overgrown empire of imperial Rome. They were a people who had very little in common with others. As a nation, they sustained the same social relationship to the nations around them that, as individuals, they now do to the communities in which they dwell. They were "amongst them, but not of them." And yet, except their misanthropy, and the marvellousness of their history, they do not seem to have had much to distinguish them amongst their neighbours. They were not so much a people that had done great things, as a people for whom great things had been done. They had no stupendous cities, like Nineveh, Babylon, Palmyra, or Rome; they had no vast commerce, like Carthage or Phœnicia; they had no seats of learning, like Athens or Alexandria; no national literature or science, like Greece or Egypt. All that they could boast of achievement, was miracle: and of learning or legislation, was limited to that wonderful old book of theirs, which they called "the Scriptures," and which they alleged to contain not only the past history of their race, but its future prophecy; not only their civil polity, but also their ecclesiastical and religious;—and all of Divine inspiration.

In the belief of having been especially selected and governed by Jehovah, as his peculiar people, they had kept themselves proudly secluded from all the nations about them; proselytes they would make, but proselytes they would never be made. They did not attempt the conversion of other nations

to Judaism: they simply did not refuse them if they came; but wherever they went they were intensely and uniformly Jews. In the height of their power they never attempted to enlarge their little territory, which they imagined to have been selected and defined for them by Jehovah himself. And when it became a Roman province, it maintained almost unaltered its ancient boundaries.

And the natural effect of this unsocial pride and superciliousness, was an unpopularity and hate, that left them in their misfortunes without sympathy, and in their necessities without help. And this, reacting upon their own disappointed hopes and mortified vanity, engendered in them passions and habits of the most selfish and malignant character, and so intense, that they have been the stereotype of centuries, and have constituted a new type of character, and have given to morals a new substantive, in the name of "Jew." Degenerating from the grand old Hebrew heroism of their judges and their kings, the nobility of their nation expired in the blaze of their Maccabæan glories, and they became of all people the most fallen and degraded, succumbing helplessly beneath the triple bondage of religious superstition, political serfdom, and social demoralization. Theirs was decrepitude without wisdom or virtue, impotently remembering the promise of its youth, and the possibilities of its manhood. One thought they entertained, more passionately clung to, and more fervently cherished, than every other. And this, alas! though holy and elevating in itself, had become, in their perversion of it, the nutriment of their unholy passions, the sinew of their exclusive preju

dices, and ultimately it proved the retributive cause of their national ruin and extermination. Their sacred books had told them, that, in the latter period of their history, a deliverer should appear, born in their midst, and of their kingly tribe—the “Messiah” or the Sent—who should establish an empire amongst them of surpassing splendour and power, that should endure to the latest ages, and ultimately absorb into itself all other powers and peoples of the earth.

Such were the people of Palestine, and such was their expectation, when this young peasant of Nazareth appeared amongst them—Jesus he was called—and by the peculiar virtues of his character, the supernatural splendour of his miracles, and the lofty tone of his teaching and claims, began to attract towards himself the attention and the hopes of the lower classes of Judea. His career, of course, I need not trace; it is narrated in the four tracts or pamphlets, familiar to you all, under the title of “the Four Gospels.” Suffice it to say, that by simply teaching amongst them, in this spirit and with these evidences, mixing with them in their common pursuits, sympathizing with their every-day interests, uniting with them in their synagogue and temple-worship, visiting them in their homes, and ministering to them in their necessities and sorrows, and everywhere leaving behind him memorials of his beneficence and love, he laid the foundations amongst them of that mighty system of religion which has since been known in the earth by the name of Christianity; a religion directly opposed in its genius and purpose to the features of their Judaism, that we have pointed out, inasmuch as it was

from the very first adapted and designed to become the religion of every nation and people upon the face of the earth; a religion, too, that singularly and significantly enough came to be known, not by the personal appellation, "Jesus," given to this man at his circumcision, but by the official designation, "Christ," given by the old Hebrew prophets to the deliverer whom they foretold (Christ, as you know, being the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah.") This system of religion, therefore, destined to extend itself so widely through the earth, and to exert in it such an influence, has come to be known not as "Jesuitism," from the name "Jesus"—(that, alas! by one of the strangest solecisms of appellation that human experience furnishes, has come to be the designation of a spirit and a system that are the moral antithesis of the religion of Christ, a "doctrine of devils," that, before Ignatius Loyola, had no prototype)—but as "Christianity," from the name "Christ." Gradually it spread itself, chiefly in a north-westerly direction, because there lay the chief masses of men, and the chief seats of enlightenment,—intellects to apprehend, and hearts to feel. On the old worn-out empires, and demoralized humanity of the south and the east, it made but little impression; through Asia Minor it took its course, the Grecian Archipelago, the Italian and European peninsulas; through Gaul, and Germany, and Britain; until this system of intellectual thoughts and spiritual things has come to be the mightiest power in our western world. And whatever may be thought of its religious character and claims, it demands, at least, our serious study, as having been for centuries,

and as being at this moment, the most potent and influential element in our social and religious experience. It has wholly remoulded our social life, permeated with its spirit our entire legislation and literature, and associated with itself the noblest thinkings, the loftiest hopes, the most reverential homage, and the most passionate devotion of our race.

Whatever, I say, men may think of Christianity, they cannot ignore its existence and its power. It is a great and astounding fact of our religious history, and, indeed, of our civilization; for beyond its horizon all is darkness and barbarism. It has spread as no other system ever did. It has lived where no other system could have survived; its energy has defied all repression,—its life all extinction. Wealth has tried to enervate it, and sensuality to debauch it; heresy to dislocate it, and bigotry to distort it; power to secularize it, and persecution to entomb it; but, with an inherent vitality that nothing could affect, it has survived and strengthened through them all; yea, just in proportion as its conditions have been gloomy, its achievements have been brilliant. Assault has only strengthened its power of resistance; persecution has served only to purify it; privation without has only deepened its spirituality within. It has seemed as if it could not die. Narcotic could not drug it, the sword could not kill it. Beneath all its corruptions, at a depth where violence could not reach, there has lain an inextinguishable life and spirituality, that has recovered it from every prostration, and brought it forth with a resurrection-triumph out of the depths of its deepest

grave. And never was it so wide-spread and so healthful, so aggressive and so potent as it is now. Make what deductions you will for its weaknesses and corruptions, account as you may for its prevalence and power, the fact cannot be gainsaid, that, at the moment that I am speaking, the thing called Christianity is the greatest living power in Europe, the most widely spread, the most deeply rooted, the most subtly and spiritually influential, of all things that move men's minds or hearts.

However it may have obtained its influence, no one can say that Christianity is but the belief of a few, that it is limited to priests and to churches, or to speculatists and philosophers. In churches it may be more ostensibly professed, by the clergy it may be more formally ministered, but it is really in the street as much as in the temple, in the legislature and the exchange as truly as in the theological school. Go where you will you cannot escape it. Its principle and doctrines constitute the fibrous system of European humanity. It supplies the equity and the mercifulness of legislation; it constitutes the basis and the purity of social morality; it sustains those institutions and sanctions which correct our sensuality and earthliness, and which keep the public mind familiar with the fact of a Divine revelation, and with the character of spiritual truths. Senators make laws by it, and judges administer them. Sovereigns do homage to it when they receive their crowns, and subjects recognise it when they render their obedience. It permeates our literature, and it sanctifies our home; it adjusts our temper to all the experiences of life, and imparts to us

peace and hope in the solemn hour of death. And were you to try to the uttermost, you could not empty your mind of its ideas, your heart of its impulses, nor your life—no, not for so much as a single hour—of its influences and principles.

Seeing then that Christianity is thus an undoubted and mighty fact, it becomes imperative upon all intelligent men to make themselves acquainted with its character and claims. What is this mighty thing that has thus established its dominion over us? As a religious system of moral principles, and precepts, and influences, to which we submit our minds and our hearts, it is of course capable of analysis,—we can look into its composition and character, examine the facts upon which it professes to be founded, the principles which flow out of these facts, and the practical obligations which naturally result from them. And this is strictly relevant to our present purpose; for to ascertain what Christianity really is, what is essential to it, and what is merely circumstantial, is the directest and most satisfactory way of ascertaining who are really Christians. And though in such a method the earlier steps of the demonstration may appear to be tardy, yet, these carefully taken, they may conduct us to our conclusion respecting the true unity of Christians, more naturally, irresistibly, and speedily, than any other method could. Do not think, therefore, that I am travelling out of the record, or unnecessarily detaining you by these preliminaries.

Where, then, shall we learn what Christianity really is? Where may we investigate the sources of this wondrous power, that has come in so large a degree

to possess itself, both of the homage of "the life that now is," and of the hopes of "the life that is to come."

Obviously, all that we can know of Christianity as a religious system, is to be found in the Christian books—the tracts which are bound up together under the designation of the "New Testament,"—books written by the companions and disciples of Christ, for the express purpose of telling the world what Christianity is. To the New Testament then we go—and could we go to it as to a book of which we had seen and heard nothing before—could we, that is, strip ourselves of the partialities of education, or the prejudices of moral distaste, forget all our knowledge of theological strifes, of creeds, and of churches, what a wonderful thing would it be for the first time to open the book, and to read the life of Christ and the letters of Paul! Even in the book itself we should see a beautiful type of our present conceptions of the Christian church. What a marvellous variety and individuality should we see in the twenty-seven tracts of which it consists—variety in manner and deportment, and yet harmony the most perfect in essential statement;—one class of writers historically portraying different aspects of the life of Christ—another in like manner delineating the *first* embodiment of his religion in Christian churches—a third, having Paul at their head, expounding different branches of Christian philosophy and ethics—and the whole wound up by a sublime prophecy of the future history and final destiny of the church.

And although there was demonstrably no collusion between them, save the collusion of a common faith

and purpose,—although they wrote, for the most part, ignorant of one another's labours, and probably without the slightest idea that their writings would ever be collected into a volume; and although there are diversities of manner in their writings, and often discrepancies in minute and non-essential statement—as indeed, without a miracle, there could not fail to be—yet how marvellously do they accord in all their main facts and doctrines, so that no single discrepancy, of what any one would call a primary matter, has ever been proved against them. Amid all their varieties, read them where and as you may, they impress upon you, vividly and indelibly, one great and uniform idea of Christ and his mission. He had, so to speak, daguerreotyped his image too vividly upon every mind and heart about him, for it ever to be mistaken by those who wrote of him.

In the New Testament, therefore, I may easily find the distinctive elements that constitute Christianity,—that objectively, in the book, constitute Christian theology,—that subjectively, in the life, constitute Christian religiousness.

That in a system of religion like that of Christ, there must be some facts or principles distinctive of it, and fundamental to it, separating it, and rendering it unlike all other religions and philosophies in the world, is a matter of necessity. There must be something essential to the being a Christian, without which I cannot claim to be an adherent of Christianity, and having which, I am entitled to all its distinctions and privileges. Christianity, no doubt, has much in common with natural morality—with Jewish theology—and even with Pagan religions

and philosophies;—but, besides all that it may have in common with these, it has necessarily something that is peculiar to itself—something that makes it Christianity, and not anything else. Hence its greatest teacher, next to Christ himself—a man of most generous and catholic soul—who gloried in “becoming all things to all men, if by any means he might save some,” and who had a heart overflowing with love for all the good, and with sympathy for all goodness wherever he might find it,—pliant to the Jew, and free with the Gentile,—at Athens a philosopher, and at Jerusalem a Pharisee,—even Paul, most vehemently contended for the inviolability of what he called “the Gospel.” “If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” So that, if we can determine what that distinctive thing was, that Paul preached, and that he calls the Gospel, we can determine what it is that is essential to Christianity; for it is obvious from the anathema, that no man who rejects *it* can properly be called a Christian.

Now it appears to me, that, in common with the other New Testament writers, he insisted upon two things, and upon two things only, as essential to a valid Christianity.

First, that a man should personally accept the death of Christ as a sacrifice or atonement for sin, whereby he, as a sinful man, may be legally accepted and reconciled to the just and holy God; that he should place his dependence, his hope of acceptance with God, not on the moral purity of his own character, or on his own keeping of God's law, but upon the obedience and death of Christ, as a propitiatory

sacrifice, whereby the great principle of law, which he has violated, is vindicated, and a "just God" is enabled to "justify the ungodly." "I declare unto you," says the apostle, "the gospel which I preached unto you, which ye also have received, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory that which I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain, *how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures.*"

We do not say, mark you, that it is essential that we receive any particular *theory* of the atonement, but only that we receive the *thing*: the distinction between mere belief and the New Testament idea of faith, is of the utmost importance here. It matters little how a man represent to himself the method or philosophy of the atonement,—the essential thing is, to recognise and depend upon the fact. About the doctrine we may differ, and still be Christians. In the reception of the fact, as our only hope of salvation, we must agree. The faith or trust of all who are saved is essentially one. The belief, or intellectual conception of the atonement, may vary with individual understandings. It is against the confounding of these two things,—*i.e.* belief in specific theological dogmas, and practical trust in the great fact of Christ's sacrificial death,—that the apostle James argues. The former he declares even devils to have: they "believe and tremble;" the latter, of course, they cannot have. The faith that saves, therefore, is not a belief in any doctrinal theories respecting the nature of Christ, either in his eternal generation or immaculate conception, or in any specific method of imputation; it is simply a practical trust in the

broad and popular fact, that "Christ has died for our sins." and that God will accept all who receive his death as the ground of their dependence.

Obviously, there are only two methods in which the subject of a moral probation can be acquitted at the bar of a righteous governor: either he must establish his perfect righteousness, or he must be provided with the penalty of transgression. As the moral ruler of the universe, God sits to administer law; and no *law* can acquit a man guilty of its violation. Seeing, then, that all are confessedly guilty, and that the penalty of such guilt is death, there needs the introduction of a new principle and provision into God's government, if the guilty are to escape the penalty that they have incurred. It is, therefore, the very essence of the gospel, to make known to those against whom this sentence is recorded, a voluntary and accepted substitute. By the wondrous substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though under no obligation to submit himself to the probationary law which himself had made for his creatures, yet graciously vindicated it by a perfect human obedience to it, and then bare its penalty as the substitute of the actual transgressor, God, as a righteous ruler, is able to proffer a pardon to all who will for Christ's sake accept it; which, obviously, he could not otherwise have done without dishonour to his law.

And the revelation, the announcement of this expedient, is fitly called "Gospel"—good news of salvation.

Hence, when a man, conscious of transgression and of his subjection to its penalty, inquires, "What

must I do to be saved?"—to escape the retribution that threatens me,—the gospel answer is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believes"—*i. e.* puts his trust in Christ—"shall be saved;" while he who does not trust in him, but trusts in something else,—“he that believeth not, shall be damned.”

And not only is this method of acceptance affirmed; every other is emphatically excluded; for it is also said, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." And in the epistle to the Galatians, the "other gospel," which the apostle anathematizes, is obviously the teaching of another way of acceptance with God. Hence, in his argument he makes such assertions as these: "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified;" "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." And concerning those who seek acceptance, through attempts at attaining to a perfect obedience or righteousness, he declares, that "Christ can profit them nothing;" that, so far as they are concerned, he "has died in vain;" they believe "another gospel, which is not another,"—*i. e.* is not a gospel at all, but a dangerous and destructive delusion.

This, then, I am compelled to regard as a fundamental constituent of Christianity, a principle or method of acceptance with God, that distinguishes it from all other systems of religion or moral philosophy; it sets forth the incarnate Son as the accepted and exclusive propitiation for human sin. There is nothing new in the practical morality of

the gospel, except in degree; and excepting this, and its associated and dependent truths, there is nothing new in its theology.

If, therefore, a man do not recognize the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ as the exclusive ground or his acceptance with God, in my apprehension of it, he rejects all that is peculiar to the gospel: he does not "come into the unity of faith" or trust, which is the characteristic of all believers; and even though he accept every thing else in the Christian system, he accepts only what it has in common with other systems. Whatever else of Christian theology a man may believe, if he do not depend for forgiveness upon the vicarious atonement of Christ, he refuses the very first demand of Christianity; he stumbles over the very threshold of the Christian temple. Whatever else, therefore, he may be, he cannot properly be called a Christian, just because he rejects the fundamental principle of the system.

The first great idea of all religions,—the first great step in all religious life is, "the forgiveness of sins;" the gospel, therefore, proposes *its* method of forgiveness; and if a man refuse it, he refuses to take the first step in Christian discipleship. He may admire the purity of Christian morality. He may have the utmost reverence for the Lord Jesus, as a wise and holy teacher; but he does not receive him **in** his distinctive character as a Saviour; and in no proper sense, therefore, can he call himself a Christian at all. A man is not a Jew, or a Mahometan, just because he admires the morality of their systems, or has a moral respect for Moses or Mahomet, but because he receives their distinctive doctrines.

A Mahometan differs from a Jew, not in such things as may be common to them both, but in such matters of faith and practice as may be peculiar. I am a socialist, or a chartist, not because of opinions which I hold in common with all reasonable politicians or lovers of freedom; but because of the opinions which I hold peculiar to a class. So I am a Christian, not because I admire much that is morally excellent in Christianity, but because I embrace what is peculiar to it.

This, therefore, I deem to be the first great criterion of a Christian, and consequently the first essential element or criterion of Christian unity. Whoever receives the atonement of Christ as his sole dependence for the forgiveness of his sins, thereby becomes a disciple of Christ. In Scripture phraseology, he is, in virtue of his faith, or practical trust in Christ, "united to Christ," and thereby he is essentially united to all who are in like manner reposing upon Christ. They are "branches" of the same vine, "members" of the same head, "lively stones" built upon the same foundation; they are accepted on the same basis, nurtured by the same aliment, pervaded by the same sympathies, and subject to the same dependence and government. No Christian man, therefore, can be severed from his fellow-believers, without thereby being severed from Christ. The member that is separated from the body, is also separated from the head; the branch that is severed from the other branches, is severed from the root. We may violate our Christian *union*, stand aloof, and refuse visible association with each other; but if we be true believers, we cannot violate

our spiritual *unity*. We are, and even in spite of ourselves we must be, "members one of another." And I do not know that the reception of any other part of the Christian system, as such, is essential to salvation. I do not think it is. I do not find any other requirement in Scripture. A man may believe, or disbelieve, or misbelieve, in anything or everything else. He may be as superstitious as a Roman Catholic, or as severe and puritanical as a Quaker. He may entertain any or all the theological notions that constitute sects or denominations; nay, he may incorrectly apprehend the philosophy or theology of the atonement itself; yet, if he personally and practically receive it as a revealed fact, a "propitiation that God has set forth," if in simple faith or trust he rest his hope of salvation upon it, he is essentially a Christian man. Where a man has this faith experimentally and spiritually in exercise—whatever else he has or has not, whatever church he belongs to, or does not belong to, whatever worship he performs, whatever discipline he practises—he is essentially one with Christ, and with all true Christians; a vital member of "the mystical body of Christ."\*

This, then, is one of the two things that the

\* The Lecturer will not be understood as undervaluing correct notions or doctrines, in any department of Christian teaching. Such is the vital connexion and interdependency of Christian truths, that the case supposed in the text, *i. e.*, of a man receiving the atonement aright, and rejecting all other, or any other important doctrine, is of rare occurrence, if it occur at all. On the contrary, both the history of the church and our own experience are full of instances in which the rejection of a secondary doctrine of Christianity has led to the rejection of the primary doctrine of the atonement. It does not always require the key-stone to be removed for the arch of truth to fall.

New Testament insists upon as essential to Christianity.

The second is, the possession of a Christ-like nature, a "unity of spirit," corresponding to this "unity of faith." Religion is essentially a moral thing, a thing of personal character and conduct. Not only, therefore, must the *guilt* of sin be taken away, before we can be accepted of God, but also the pollution and love of it. There must in the disciple of Christ be a moral purity, as well as a legal acquittal; a sanctification, as well as a justification. It is not enough to make us personally religious, that another should bear the penalty of sin which we had incurred; such vicarious substitution can obviously effect no change in a man's moral dispositions. It might leave us as far as ever from a moral fitness to serve God, and to hold communion with him. We might remain as full of impurities and evil passions as we were before.

The gospel, therefore, which contemplates as its ultimate purpose, not merely our restoration to God's favour, but our restoration to God's image, provides not only for the forgiveness of our acts of sin, but for the purifying of our sinful nature. It not only arrests sin in its consequence, it destroys it in its cause. A great moral change is wrought in every believing man when he becomes a disciple of Christ,—which it calls regeneration, or "renewal by the Holy Ghost,"—in virtue of which our moral affections are transferred from one class of objects to another. We cease to love that which is sinful, and come to love that which is holy; and thus we are, in a sense the most literal, "saved from our sins."

Hence the declaration of Christ, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." So the apostle Paul, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

This moral change, however, is indissolubly associated with legal forgiveness, and is separable only in idea, never in point of fact. A justified man is always a sanctified man; a man who has by faith sought the forgiveness of his sins, through the atonement of Christ, has necessarily come to hate the sin that he confesses, and to desire deliverance from it; otherwise there is no moral propriety nor consistency in his application. The Spirit of Christ, which awakened his solitudes, has necessarily changed his heart; for "no man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Spirit of God." And the basis of this sanctifying process is identical with that of the justifying process; it consists of the self-same elements: viz. the facts and doctrine involved in the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit always works within the sphere of Christ's mediatorial acts. He "sanctifies us by" these "truths," "takes of the things of Christ and shews them unto us."

Here again, therefore, we have a fundamental principle of identity in all Christian men. A Christian is necessarily Christ-like,—a partaker of the moral nature of Christ,—united to Christ in such a sense as to be one with him in moral principles and character. And the converse is true,—all who are such are necessarily Christians. And this common participation by Christians, of the moral character or nature of Christ, constitutes, of course,

a moral likeness to each other; just as all the descendants of the parent man, however diversified in their accidents, or all the branches of a parent stem,—are, in virtue of their common nature, essentially one with each other. All are men,—none of them angels or brutes; all are branches of the oak or vine, and not some of the one and some of the other. So it is with all Christians: whatever the accidents of their formal faith or character, radically they are like each other. So that, if a man be a Christian at all, he is, both in respect of a common dependence for justification and of a common spiritual character, essentially one with all other Christians. And so long as two real children of God exist upon this earth, there must exist between them an essential, infrangible unity,—a unity of saving dependence and moral character, that cannot be dissolved or affected by the will of man,—not even our own,—but is determined solely by our union to Christ. We cannot break the bond that unites us to each other, unless we break the bond that unites us to him.

These two, then,—dependence upon Christ's atonement for the forgiveness of sins, and participation of the spiritual nature of Christ, the one involving the other,—we take to be the fundamental things in Christianity, as taught in the Christian writings. Whoever, therefore, receives these,—whoever gives credible evidence of having appropriated the one, and participated the other,—I recognize as a Christian; and, whatever else he may believe or misbelieve, I should be prepared to admit him to the spiritual privileges of any Christian church or fellowship on earth.

But, on the other hand, whoever refuses to seek forgiveness through Christ, or manifests an unrenewed and unsanctified moral character,—whatever other excellences he may manifest, and whatever admiration I may have for them and for him,—I cannot call him a Christian, just because he rejects the only things that, in my estimation, the Christian Scriptures make distinctive or essential to the system.

Having thus, therefore, seen what essential Christianity is, and the degree to which identity of faith and character is indispensable, we may now, perhaps, intelligently look at the differences that exist amongst Christians, and endeavour to appreciate the degree in which they affect the credibility or the moral influence of the Christian system. In other words, we are prepared to discuss the nature, causes, and legitimate effects, of sectarian or denominational differences.

The objection taken, on the one hand by Infidelity to Christianity itself,—and on the other, by Romanism to Protestantism as a specific form of it, is, that, professing to be derived from one common and inspired source, it yet assumes an almost endless variety of developments; that, instead of all Christians agreeing in the reception and embodiment of the great teachings of the book, they differ most widely amongst themselves,—diverse, and even antagonistic modes of faith and worship being professedly derived from the same infallible source.

Now we do not undertake to justify all the extravagancies of denominational religionists,—many of them can neither be logically accounted for, nor

morally justified; much less would we palliate the mutual bitternesses, and recriminations, and waste of precious time and influence on party strifes. We have, probably, as severe, although not as indiscriminate things, to say about these, as our most strenuous opponents. That, however, which we are anxious to insist upon now is,—that these things have not a particle of force, as arguments, against either the validity or the character of our Christian faith; but that, on the contrary, when fairly represented, they lend an argumentative help to the other side; inasmuch as a system of religion which precluded the possibility of such differences, could not possibly lay claim, because of its inappropriateness to our nature and probation, to the character of a religion at all. It would destroy all moral liberty, all spontaneous affection, and therefore all moral virtue; it would be simply a philosophic necessity, precluding all exercise of reason, and all virtue of piety and of faith.

Now, whether we look at the aspects of Christianity chronologically or contemporaneously, we shall find that there are, and always have been, great diversities in its embodiments, and just for this reason,—that Christianity, a Divine religion, has, like its Divine Author, been incarnated in a human form, its doctrines are expressed in human speech, received by human hearts, and embodied in human actions. And hence, while the essence of Christianity never changes, its aspects do. The human form of the Lord Jesus Christ passed through all the successive stages of infancy, adolescence, and manhood; but the Divinity that it enshrined was immutable

through them all. And so it is with the identity of ordinary men through the successive changes of their growth, maturity, and decay;—so it is with society in the aggregate, and with every section of it, political, philosophical, or social, in particular: it “never continueth in one stay.” One of the most beautiful harmonies in this world of ours, is the combination in every department of it—of changing circumstance and permanent essence.

Thus, in the history of Christianity, you have a succession of stages and aspects, different forms of Christian embodiment and life; but through all one immutable essence. This argument, Dr. D’Aubigné has felicitously put in one of his admirable Essays.

First, there was the preparatory stage of the old dispensation. Then there was the initial and transition stage of Christ’s personal ministry. Then there was the completed economy of “the kingdom of heaven”—Christianity as the apostles left it.

And, tracing its history from the day of Pentecost, we may recognize a succession of eras and aspects of Christian life.

*First*, there was the simple impulsive spiritual life of the apostles and their immediate successors.

*Then*, there came the era of theological dogmas, in which definite doctrines were deduced and defined from the simple Christian facts which the apostles taught, of which Arius and Athanasius, Pelagius and Augustine, may be regarded as the representatives. A vastly different form of the Christian life from that of the apostles, but still identical in essence.

Then, there followed the scholastic era—the era of

dialectics and learned men—of universities and the schools, in which Christian dogmas were systematized and constituted a philosophy. Of this era, Anselm, and Abelard, and Peter Lombard, and Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus, may be regarded as the representatives.

Then, there was the era of the Reformation, in which the spiritual life of the first era, and the doctrinal dogmatism of the second, and the scholastic forms of the third, were all combined by the reformers, for the restoration of primitive religion.\*

The rise of Methodism, and the labours of Whitfield and Wesley, introduced a fifth era—the era in which we live—a kind of second Reformation, the characteristic features of which seem to be practical and aggressive religiousness: an aspect of the church very different from any that it has witnessed yet; that combines the vigorous life of the apostolic age, with the acquisitions and experience of every age since; that, having determined the principle, the doctrine, and the character of the church subjectively, seems bent upon realizing its utmost possibility, and winning the earth for its dominion.

All these varying aspects of the church enshrine the same essential Christianity. Nay, were not these successive experiences absolutely needful to make the ultimate embodiment of Christianity perfect? Each successive age gathers into it, and carries on to the next, all the good that preceded it. Ages are but the added layers or circles of the great tree of the church, that must grow until it fills the earth. The very diversities of the church's experience, and

\* D'Aubigné's Discourses and Essays.

even its contrarieties, contribute to its perfection ; just as the solar planets maintain their course through the exquisite balancing of opposing forces, the one driving them from the centre, the other attracting them towards it. So it has been with the progress of the church. It has received different formative elements, and been subjected to different formative influences, that ultimately it may be presented to its Lord "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Marvellous, indeed, it would have been, if the church alone had remained a stereotype amid the changing ages of everything else.

The famous maxim of Vincent Lirinensis, therefore, "*Quod semper ubique, et ab omnibus,*" is not a whit more applicable to the Romish Church before the Reformation, than it is to Protestant churches since. And we must designate it a piece of the most astounding impudence, that could hope for success only from its very audacity, for the Church of Rome, in the consciousness of its own past history, so to presume on our ignorance or credulity, as coolly to assume this dictum, as a triumphant criterion of its own apostolicity, and to apply it as a damnatory test of the churches of the Reformation. Whatever variations of Protestantism a Bossuet may demonstrate, we will undertake to surpass them with at least chronological variations of Romanism. Christianity presents no such contrast as between the Romanism of the ninth century and the Romanism of the nineteenth. So that even infallibility itself is subject to this imperfect law of progressive development.

And then, if we take contemporaneous Christianity, the same diversities present themselves; and in Romanism equally with Protestantism. Not more remote is Puritanism from Anglicanism, than is the Jansenist from the Jesuit,—Romanism in England from Romanism in Naples. The only real uniformity of Rome is in appellation and formularies; the practical result of which is, that while each diversity of Protestantism expresses itself by its proper symbol,—an honest index to all men of what it really is,—the equal diversities of Romanism have but one compulsory symbol, which is therefore a falsehood and a hypocrisy in every variety save one. And this must ever be the effect of a compulsory uniformity of external professions,—preventing the honest avowal of such diversities of opinion as must needs exist; it is in its aspect a hypocrisy, and in its utterance a lie. So that if truth could be obtained by the employment of a *tu quoque* argument of this kind, nothing would be easier in dealing with the church of Rome; but it is one thing to silence an objector, and another thing to convince him.

So far, indeed, from there being disproof of either Christianity in general, or Protestantism in particular, in the different forms or aspects which they assume, we affirm, that deducting what is rash in judgment and evil in temper, such differences are not only inevitable, but a positive blessing to Christianity on the whole.

Two reasons may here be adduced, why diversities of religious belief are inevitable.

1. The first is derived from the character and construction of the Bible, which does not *compei* our

belief in anything it teaches—not even in its own divinity. Take, for example, the evidence that establishes it. There are different ways of proving or substantiating a thing, suited respectively to the different constituents of our nature. One is addressed to the sensuous part of us; it is the evidence of the senses. We know that the thing is, because we are brought into material contact with it,—we hear it, see it, feel it, or taste it. Another is addressed to the *intellectual* part of us; it is either mathematical proof,—as we should demonstrate that twice three are six, or that the whole is greater than its part; or it is logical or syllogistical proof, in which we reason from an admitted premise to an inevitable conclusion. As, for example, All who lecture here should make themselves intelligible. I am lecturing here, I therefore ought to make myself intelligible.

Now, you cannot demonstrate any one of the truths of the Bible by either of these methods; you neither saw the facts that it records, nor can you demonstrate them by mathematics or logic.

There is, therefore, a third kind of proof, addressing itself to the moral part of our nature, called moral evidence, or the evidence of probability; and it is on this evidence that the truths of the Bible are established. It is the evidence that I rely upon in almost all my transactions with my fellow men—the evidence that induces me to believe what I read in history, or in the newspapers. I neither saw the thing, nor can I mathematically or logically demonstrate it; but, judging from all probabilities, I nevertheless believe the thing to be true. It is the

evidence of credible testimony, the only evidence that the nature of the case admits of. Hence man's responsibility for his belief; for the examination of such evidence requires moral honesty, and impartiality, and earnestness. So that, if a man go to the Bible full of prejudice or evil passion, he may examine it with what industry he may, he will not arrive at a right conclusion—he is morally unfitted for weighing its evidence.

Hence, you may see how a man who has impartially examined the great doctrine of the atonement, and received it, and has thus become a Christian, may yet be under the influence of a thousand personal and local prejudices,—prejudices of early education, of religious habit or association,—and thus come to have distinctive opinions and beliefs respecting the minor truths of the Christian system.

And then, besides the nature of its evidence, there is another characteristic of the Christian Scriptures, which increases the probability of such diversified opinions. They contain nothing like systematic theology—nothing in the form of a Christian creed, or catechism, or set of articles, or confession of faith, or liturgy, or rubric, or anything of the kind.\*

All other religious books do. The Old Testament of the Jews is most minute in these things; so are the Koran of Mahomet and the Shastras of the Hindoos. They are full of minute directions for prayers, and fasts, and almsgivings, &c. And this omission in Christianity is all the more singular, inasmuch

\* Archbishop Whateley's *Essays on the Peculiarities of the Christian Religion*, Essay vi.

as most of the New Testament writers had been brought up Jews, and were accustomed, therefore, to minute ritualism and prescription. But instead of these, even the fundamental doctrines of Christianity are incidentally rather than formally taught. And the reason doubtless is, that Christianity was designed by its Divine Author to be a universal religion. Men are not, therefore, restricted to one formula of belief or worship. He has simply conveyed to us its idea in the New Testament, leaving each recipient to embody them according to his individuality of constitution or of circumstance.

The evils of an opposite method might be abundantly illustrated, from the history of Creeds and Liturgies, and even of the Lord's Prayer: the one becoming a petrified orthodoxy, the other a superstitious charm.

Christianity is solely intent upon producing within us spiritual life, and it leaves that life to express itself according to the mental or social peculiarities of those receiving it. Hence it has no specific prescriptions,—how often we are to worship, or to pray, or to read the Scriptures, or to give alms;—it leaves the spiritual life within us to express these things as it may.

And so with Christian churches. We have not in the New Testament any account of so much as the formation of a single church. We do not read of Christ ever forming a church; nor did he leave a single recorded direction to his disciples for the formation of one; nor is there, throughout the New Testament, any statement respecting the conventional terms of church membership, the rules of

church discipline, or the forms of church worship :— we have nothing but spiritual principles, a spiritual life, insisted upon ; and those who possess it are left to associate themselves together, and to seek its promotion and expression, in such church forms as seem to them best adapted for it.\* And herein consists that exquisite balance of liberty and law, which, enabled solely by a cultivated morality, is the highest form of all government ; but which, whether in Church or State, your mere ritualist has neither conception of, nor confidence in. Hence again, the possibility and the necessary variety of church forms : that which in one age or circumstance would be a benefit, in another would be a hindrance. Hence the Divine wisdom manifested in Christian legislation ; designed to be a Catholic faith (not Roman, which is a limitation of Catholicism, but purely and absolutely Catholic,) it is a thing of principles rather than of precepts ; it combines with essential principles the utmost freedom and flexibility of application, so as to be fitted for all possible conditions of humanity.

2. The second reason for necessary diversities of Christian belief and practice, is to be found in the varieties of our own individuality, in the personal and indestructible idiosyncracies of men. As it is with the physical man, so it is with the intellectual. No two individuals are alike, no two individuals have precisely the same mental constitution. Mental im-

\* Neander's History of the Planting and Training of the Christian Church, book i. ch. 2. Mosheim, Cent. I. pt. ii. ch. 2. sect. 5. See also Waddington, *in loco*. Giesler's Eccl. Hist. vol. i. p. 88 (Clark's Ed.).

pression depends as much upon the receptive subject, as upon the presented object. No two persons, probably, have exactly the same image of a common object daguerreotyped upon the brain; it is subject to the various colourings and distortings of the medium of transmission in its passage through the eye. So it is with intellectual vision. No two persons receive, through the medium of their intellectual perception, exactly the same impression of a truth, just because their powers of observation and judgment are individually different. And in addition to this, we are unavoidably the subjects of a multitude of prepossessions that inevitably affect our judgment—prepossessions of natural inclination, education, habit, or circumstance.

To require, therefore, a uniformity of religious belief and worship in all men, is utterly to ignore all these diversities of mental structure and of local circumstance, and to demand that all judgments should be equally clear and impartial, or, if biassed at all, biassed exactly in the same direction, and to the same degree. A demand which, of course, were fatal to all honest conviction or virtue, requiring either that we should forego altogether the exercise of individual judgment, or act in constant violation of it.

Diversities of opinion, and therefore of association, are an insuperable necessity of our diversified individuality, if, that is, our judgment is to be honestly formed and honestly expressed. An external uniformity is possible, and an internal one is conceivable; but the sacrifice of all honesty in the one case, and of all reason in the other, are the tremendous price that must be paid for it. You may

have a uniformity of belief, but you must sacrifice all freedom of individual thought to get it ; you may have a uniformity of church order, but you must sacrifice for it all freedom of intelligent action. It is only in death or in despotism that you can have uniformity.

To certain orders of minds these diversities of opinion and independencies of action, whether in Church or State, are perplexing enough ; there is no burden heavier to some men than the responsibility of personal judgment and conduct. Hence they go about asking for some one to take charge of them, to give them opinions to think, and a path to pursue. Give us, say they to the priest or the autocrat, beliefs to entertain, prescribe for us a character to maintain, resolve for us principles into precepts or modes of embodiment, mark out and measure our duty for us, and release us from the terrible necessity of having all this to do for ourselves ; and thus they throw themselves into vicarious hands, upon which they can lean in their feebleness, and devolve responsibility in their indolence or fear. The formation and maintenance of individual judgments and characters, especially in religion, are amongst the most arduous, as they are the most imperative duties of our probation ; men, therefore, too indolent, or too effeminate for this, find an infinite relief in throwing themselves into the hands of an infallible church.

And the perplexity is equally sore to certain orders of religious teachers. A despotic priest is the necessary complement of a passive believer, and his despotism is as often the result of timidity as of tyranny. Unable to control individual opinions in

their independent formation and free expression, he is terrified at the thought of their existence. Unable to recognize the deep spiritual harmony that may lie beneath them, he sees no possibility for them but anarchy and moral ruin. He has no alternative, therefore, but to adopt "a short and easy method" with this troublesome progeny of living minds; he hands over the liberties of the church to the Pope, just as the timid politician hands over the liberties of the state to the autocrat. And in this way, sure enough, the perils of individual judgment are avoided—

*"Solitudinem faciunt pacem appellant."*

The condition of all life is activity, and if there be activity there will be diversity, just because in the subjects of the life there is individuality.

Hence there has always been the most uniformity in the church, when there has been the least life—the ratio of approximation to it has been precisely the ratio of imbecility. And so it will continue until all individuality is lost out of the world, and all minds are formed in a common mould.

Rightly regarded, therefore, the springing up around great truths of manful and differing judgments, is a hopeful sign in the Church; infinitely better is it than the dead or indifferent uniformity which the intolerant or timid crave; it is, at least, a sign of life—a proof of earnestness—and an earnest and means of ultimate approximation, inasmuch as it is a pledge that these truths will be keenly, and on all sides, examined,—the one party denying to the other all the accretions or misrepresentations

into which indolent uniformity would inevitably fall. Witness the monstrous church strata of the Rome of the middle ages, which had it almost all its own way. When men examine their principles, and, it may be, fight for them, the result is a more intelligent and earnest conviction—a more determined and strenuous fidelity. And the men who thus reason out their convictions, constitute—especially when they combine—an intellectual and moral power, that nothing can prevail against or destroy; each individual brings his personal intelligence, and conviction, and earnestness, and fidelity,—and the church thus constituted can set a world at defiance. Hence, it has ever been that Protestant churches have been inextinguishable. Not all the power of the old Roman empire could extinguish Christianity,—not all the power of the Roman church has ever, to this day, been able to extirpate the Waldenses, nor the Lollards, nor the Jansenists; nor can any dissenting church ever be thus extinguished,—for dissent, right or wrong, implies investigation and personal conviction, and the sympathy of co-operative minds.

Diversities of opinion, therefore, lead to the sectional strength of the church. And when there is, as there ever will be where there is liberty, as perfect a freedom accorded as is claimed,—and a respect and affection for those who differ from us, in virtue of their common Christian character,—the strength of each section of the church will be a contribution to the strength of the whole. Any given church, indeed, may be in error,—opposing opinions cannot both be true; but forcibly suppress or destroy it, and have neither virtue nor manhood,—you not only destroy

its circumstantial error, but you rob the church universal of the moral power of the common truth that it held in connexion with it

And this leads us to remark further, that the objection to Christianity or to Protestant forms of it, on the ground of its diversities of belief and worship, proceeds on the common fallacy of mistaking visible uniformity for spiritual unity.

Religion is essentially a thing of intellect and affection—a state of mind and heart. To essential religion, therefore, the term uniformity has, strictly speaking, no application. *Uniformity*—oneness of form—can be predicated only of outward material things—things that have shape. Hence, it can apply in religion only to outward acts and ceremonies,—in other words, to the outward expressions of inward religion, and not to inward religion itself.

*Unity*, on the other hand, is strictly a thing of thought and spirit,—it expresses oneness of mind and heart. You cannot speak of uniformity of religious feeling and character—only of religious action. When you would express the identity of these, you use the term unity. This, therefore, is the term always employed in the New Testament to denote and enjoin Christian agreement; the injunction is to be of one heart and mind,—never to agree in one mode of action,—the idea of uniformity is not to be found in the New Testament. The true unity of the church, therefore, is a much more simple, and radical, and spiritual thing, than any mere agreement in theological creeds or church rituals; and yet this is the agreement most assiduously sought, and most highly estimated by the timid and the superficial. Spiritual

unity is identity of fundamental spiritual character, and, as we have seen, this is perfectly consistent with diversified manifestations.

The great prepossession of human nature is in favour of uniformity. Granting, therefore, for argument's sake, the desirableness of it, we may here ask, Which is the most likely method of securing it—an outward law of ritual uniformity, or the inward law of spiritual unity? The Church of Rome seeks to secure uniformity by beginning at the circumference of religious life, and, working inwards, it seeks to secure spiritual unity by insisting upon ecclesiastical uniformity. Protestantism pursues a wiser and more radical method; it insists, primarily, upon spiritual unity,—identity of spiritual character—cordiality of spiritual affection; and then, permitting men to investigate truth for themselves—to form and express their own opinions—it subjects truth to opposing investigations—to reciprocal safeguards—giving the moral certainty, that nothing of falsehood will be left adhering to it; and that, therefore, even those who set out with opposing notions concerning it, will be left gathered round it in nearer proximity than by any other means. So that, if external uniformity be the *beau-ideal* and ultimate condition of the church, the best (and if it be to be anything but an hypocrisy and a sham), the only way to secure it, is through the unfettered investigation and discussions of individual judgments. Uniformity can never enter into the essence of Christian unity; it can only, even when the most intelligent and truthful, be the expression or symbol of it.

It is urged, however, that such external uniform-

ity is the highest moral power of a religion,—essential, indeed, to convince the infidel that it is a religion from God, authoritatively and unmistakeably revealed, and capable, therefore, of but one uniform expression. That uniformity of expression is not the necessary consequence of an indubitable revelation, we have already seen; not only hypothetically, but in point of actual fact, we have seen that the truths revealed in the Bible, are so revealed as to admit of infinite varieties of expression, according to the individual characters of those receiving them.

And we do not think that the moral evidence or power of Christianity would be a whit impaired by these individualities of expression, were Christians to be careful, amid their varieties of opinion, to maintain, as they ought, a oneness of brotherly affection and sympathy. There is a greater moral power in the affection that differing opinions cannot impair, than in any condition of Christian uniformity where affection is not tried.

The sceptic may indeed demand, as the condition of his credence, that Christians should be uniform in their apprehensions of Christianity; that all their logical differences and ritual peculiarities should cease, and that identity of faith and of worship should everywhere be established.

But would this remove the specific difficulty that he feels? Is this the precise hindrance that prevents his reception of Christianity? I trow not. Supposing now that all that he asks were accorded to him; supposing that there were but one Christian creed, and that universally subscribed; supposing

that there were but one Christian ritual, and that universally observed; supposing that all theological strifes were at an end, that denominational and sectarian differences were annihilated, and that all Christian men had but one belief and one worship; what would be the moral value of the evidence? Would he admit the argument to be conclusive, or a whit more cogent than it is now? Would he not rather be furnished with a new argument against Christianity? Would he not be the first to denounce the hypocrisy and hollowness of such uniformity, on the ground of its palpable unnaturalness? Would he not contend that it did violence to man's inalienable individuality, and that it never could have obtained, save as the result of a deep and designing policy? Would he not be the first to tell you that it was the result of craft and not of conviction, of truckling compromise, and not of honest agreement? He would understand it well enough, and appreciate it rightly enough; and he would find in it a tenfold stronger objection to Christianity, as a divine and spiritual kingdom of the truth, than he does now. The Church of Rome has approximated to this external uniformity; and what is the moral estimation in which it is held by the rejectors of Christianity? Is it not, more than any other form of Christianity, the object of their denunciation and scorn?

Depend upon it, that this mere outward unanimity would be a far less troublesome thing to him, than the vital, and, to him, unaccountable, spiritual unity that he sees now. How does the thing present itself to him now? Let him go to the homes,

and commune with the hearts, of any two of the most vehement and bitter controversialists that he can select. Let him study them, not in the heat of their contention, as he commonly does, but when their angry polemics are laid aside, and they turn from these accidents of Christianity about which they differ, to the recognition and expression of its essential principles; let him contemplate the common spiritual life that lies beneath these regions of notional belief and sectarian passion, and let him behold its natural and spontaneous expressions; let him listen to the utterances of their faith and prayer, hear their confessions of sin and acknowledgments of mercy, their pleadings of personal need and of Christian intercession, the outbursts of their love, the recognitions of their duty, the outgoings of their sympathy, and the anticipations of their hope; let him study the hymns and the prayers that express the experiences of their common spiritual life; let him follow their path through life, and behold their purity, and activity, and benevolence, and disinterestedness; and, to his amazement, he finds that beneath all the wrangling and smoke of their controversy, there lies a calm, and fundamental, and invariable Christian life, that can neither be mistaken nor denied. Paul may "withstand Peter to the face," and have "sharp contention" with Barnabas; Luther may hurl his anathemas at Calvin; Latimer may contend with Ridley; Whitfield may be wroth with Wesley; and, ignoring the radical unity, he may choose to instance the accidental difference; but well he knows that there is a thousand times more of real Christianity in what they

agreed in, than in what they differed about. As in the wildest storm, however the surface waves may hoarsely rage and tumultuously dash at each other, there is a profound and undisturbed harmony in the ocean depths,—quietly does it repose in the place prepared for it, obedient to the great law of gravitation, and calmly and invariably does it roll its mighty volume, obedient to the law of tidal attraction;—so, whatever storms may agitate its surface, the great tide of spiritual life rolls in perfectest unity and harmony, obedient to its great spiritual laws and attractions. And this, if he will be candid enough to acknowledge it, this is the infidel's true moral difficulty—the mystery that perplexes his logic and awes his spirit—that beneath the most inveterate polemics, and with men starting from the most opposite points, and brought up amid the most antagonistic circumstances, there should be an agreement and a character so profound and substantial. A mere uniformity he might account for as policy. A common character, in spite of such disputings, can come only from a common spiritual life.

Here, too, the argument from analogy might be urged.

There is no such thing as uniformity in the universe; its great idea is harmony, not uniformity. You find it not in nature—throughout it is a harmony of isolations. In the firmament above us there is no concentration or uniform diffusion of light. Sun, moon, and stars, are units of a countless variety of lucent and multitudinous orbs. "One star differeth from another in glory." On the surface of the earth there is an infinite variety of material arrangement and form. Mountains are not all

triangles,—continents parallelograms,—nor seas all circles. You may go into the forest, and shape, if you will, its noble trees into multitudinous obelisks and parabolas, and complacently imagine that you have reduced their riotous growth, and tutored their wicked wildness into something like decent uniformity; but the returning spring will laugh at your prudish labour, and, at the wooing of the vernal sun, wherever there is life there will be myriads of budding leaves and sprouting branches, spreading into the infinite diversity of form and foliage that so ravish and enchant the eye.

You have it not in humanity. “God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth.” He has made them, that is, partakers of one radical human nature, and thereby established amongst them a fundamental and essential unity, in no degree dependent upon themselves, but inherent in their very manhood. And yet you have no uniformity amongst men. You have innumerable diversities of age, and appearance, and character, and habit, and opinion. Neither are all men living in visible and brotherly association. Some never meet, and others are the direct antithesis of their fellows, in almost every pursuit and affection.

You have it not in science. The great facts of nature may be alike recognized; but how diversified men’s thinkings about them!

You have it not in philosophy. Who could even enumerate its schools and its controversies?

Neither have you it in infidelity. Agreeing in their rejection of the Bible, and in their hatred to Christianity, its disciples differ in almost everything else. They resemble each other in nothing

positive—only in their vehement negation—their “everlasting, No.”

Nor have you it in the Church of Rome. Its thin integument of a common ritual is too transparent to cover, and its cuckoo-cry of a one infallible church is insufficient to drown, its vehement strifes of theological opinion and interest, ranging between extremes, and maintained with a deadliness of rancour, such as Protestantism has never paralleled.

And if, notwithstanding such accidental diversities, all these things are fundamentally one, why should it not be so with religious denominations? Why should differences of opinion respecting the minor points of religious belief affect its essential truth, any more than the differences of philosophers affect the truth of science? If, as we have said, no two thinking men can look, even at the same truth, through exactly the same medium, or from the same standing-point, it is impossible that they should receive exactly the same impression from it, or be moulded into the same form by it. There is an inalienable individuality of the mind looking, as well as of the truth looked at. And no effort, therefore, that has for its object uniformity of belief, can possibly be successful, unless it can first reduce all individual minds to the same measure and temper. The only hypothesis on which such uniformity were possible would be the destruction of all individual thought—the disfranchisement of all right of private judgment.

Hence, all efforts to bring men within one ecclesiastical pale, and to impose upon them the reception of one common creed, must necessarily be futile.

It is as true of men's methods of making the

church one, as it is of their methods of salvation. The "wisdom of men is foolishness with God." And no chapter of church history is more painfully interesting than that which records the empirical treatment of the body ecclesiastic, in order to make it homogeneous or uniform. At one time unreasoning authority has been tried; at another, a timorous suppression of what were deemed adverse truths; at another, appeal has been made to selfish interests, and a hollow conformity has been solicited on politic grounds; then, again, recourse has been had by a dominant church to physical force, and inquisitors have hunted out conventicles, and driven their unhappy recusants to the church or to prison. Foremost amongst those who have adopted this latter method has been the Church of Rome. The scourge and the stake have been its chosen methods of making the church one. And it is a method that has been often, alas! but impotently imitated by those whose professed principles should have taught them better. The experiments of the Stuarts are not yet forgotten by us. And it is a method that has not quite lost favour yet; many of our Anglican priests, in their ludicrous and unmanly terror at an unfettered and uncanonical thought, would dragoon the church into a submissive conformity, and reduce us all to religious automatons; the only possible result of which is, as all history attests, persecution where it is possible, schism where it is not.

Such methods can obviously do no more than bring men into juxtaposition—they constitute an encircling rather than a cementing bond—an iron ring put round men to keep them from falling apart, rather

than a vital influence infused into them, to knit them together as members of one body.

True church unity is an inspiration of God, and not a manipulation of man; it cannot result from merely driving men together into one place, or clothing them in one garment, or teaching them to repeat one credo, or to intone one liturgy; but only from infusing into them a common spiritual life. Church unity grows—it is not made. As well might you attempt to make a man by bringing together a collection of arms and legs—or a tree, by a collection of branches and leaves. The church becomes one by “edifying itself together in love,” by “growing up together into Christ, the living head, in all things.”

Romanism tried the mechanical method, and the inevitable consequence followed. When the ecclesiastical girdle was too much tightened, or unwisely packed, it broke asunder, and the heterogeneous elements which, without natural adhesion or affinity, it had held together, flew off in a thousand directions, striking off fresh splinters in their violent disruption, and exasperating feeling and confounding confusion worse than before.

There is no unity in this, it is simply uniformity, and uniformity of the most superficial and treacherous kind; it makes no provision for welding hearts, but simply for harmonizing voices and adjusting actions. Its adoption, therefore, was a bungling mistake, and its issue in every instance a merited failure. Nay, there is a positive preventive of unity in the very idea of it; for does it not divide the church into tyrants and slaves? does it not array the prescribers of a faith against the prescribed? taking

away the just rights of the one, to confer them unjustly upon the other; denying all right of judgment to the one, and conferring an unauthorized infallibility upon the other. The assumption by any man, or by any body of men, under whatever pretence, of a right to make me think or believe as they do, or to make such belief a term of communion, is the essential principle of all persecution,—my manhood resents it. The soul that God has given me, and that he has made me responsible for, resents it. It sets up an idol for worship, and prepares a fiery furnace for all who refuse to bow down to it.

Christianity makes no such requirement of us; there are doubtless, as we have said, points of belief and of experience essential to it, without which a man cannot be a Christian; but beyond these, there is room for almost endless diversity. A perfect coincidence of religious opinion, indeed, were no more desirable than it is possible. It would contribute neither to the truthfulness of the church, nor to the glory of God.

That Paul neither required nor expected it, is evident from Rom. xiv., where he mentions the case of two persons or parties holding different opinions on matters of some magnitude, both members of the same church, and both regarded by him as sincere Christians, and he does not so much as exhort them to agreement of opinion, or deliver his own apostolic dictum on the point in dispute. On the contrary, he commends their conscientiousness, tells them to keep their respective opinions from all encroachment of their brethren, declares that they are amenable to God alone, rebukes them only for

permitting their differences of judgment to lessen their mutual affection, and exhorts them to "receive one another," even as they had been received by Christ.

Of course, there are moral limits to such differences; a man may permit his liberty of judgment to pass into licentiousness, and so overpass the boundary of Christian faith altogether. But even then his Master must judge him, and not I. All that I am entitled to say, is, that in my apprehension he has "denied the faith;" and all that a church having the same judgment can do, is to deny him its fellowship.

Of course, there is in Christianity an absolute truth in all things that it pronounces concerning, towards which all earnest men will seek to approximate, and from which no sincere and docile heart will wander far; there is but one truth in all things, and it is the great business of the Christian life to identify itself with it. Thus, Paul again urges the Philippians, who had differences of opinion amongst them,—“Let as many as be perfect be thus minded, and if in anything ye be otherwise minded” (or have differing opinions) “God will reveal even this unto you: nevertheless, whereunto we have attained, let us walk by the same rule and mind the same thing.”

They were to walk together as far as they could, for the purpose of learning to walk together farther.

While, therefore, differing opinions may and must exist in the church, yet earnest Christian men, always in the pursuit of truth, will necessarily be seeking to harmonize them: not by angry controversies, for but little agreement will come of these;

the spirit of division is not to be healed by troubling the Bethesda of the church, unless indeed it be by an angel that descends into it. "The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all." Men never scold one another into truth. The palpable growth of a Divine life,—a mind full of candour and a heart of love, and a devout and docile seeking of wisdom from Him "who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not," constitute the most effective Christian argumentation.

And just as Christian unity cannot be constituted by uniformity of doctrinal belief, so it does not depend upon a vast and universal church hierarchy, or upon a uniform system of church government and ritual: these are evidently not the Christian life, but its mere framework. And yet attempts have sometimes been made, even amongst Protestants, to realize this; to unite all denominations of Christian men in one common association, to do away with all the sects and sections of the church, to attain, in short, entire uniformity, if not of creed, yet of constitution and ritual. This idea of a universal church hierarchy is properly, however, that of Rome, and, as it would seem, of some of our Anglican priests. They mistake altogether the centre of unity; it is not with them the spiritual Christ, but the visible church; not Christianity, but, as it has been not infelicitously called, *churchianity*: and the result has been a perplexity in the ecclesiastical firmament, analogous to the Ptolemaic perplexity in the sidereal firmament. Just as Ptolemy, who made the earth the centre of his astronomical system, and the sun moon, and planets to revolve round it, was driven to

hypothesis upon hypothesis, from cycle to epicycle, to account for the anomalies that he saw; so the Romish Church has had to invent fiction after fiction, to get rid of the perplexities that its false centre caused it, and failing in this, it has ended in shutting up the New Testament altogether. And just as doggedly and as ignorantly as Primate Cullen told scientific Europe the other day, that the earth really was the planetary centre, and that all the rest of the solar system went round it; so the Church of Rome tells scriptural Protestantism that *it* is veritably the Christian centre, and that all the rest of the Christian system revolves round it.

And yet the Roman idea is a gorgeous one, grand even in its very arrogance; there is a kind of sublime audacity in the very idea of subverting the whole world, even its spiritual thoughts and faculties, to the dominion of a priest; of making subordinate to him all its resources of wealth, and intellect, and moral power; of making him, in short, a god upon the earth. Secular ambition never conceived an idea like this; it is the proud distinction of the mitred priest, of the boasted representative of the Galilean fisherman. Men have defied God, and denied God, but in no instance, save in him of the tiara, have they dared to usurp his power and to exercise his prerogative.

But had Christ purposed anything like this, he would surely have endeavoured to realize the conception himself, or at all events, have made provision for its realization by his followers. Whereas, in point of fact, we find them utterly innocent of the thought; wherever they went, they founded separate

and independent churches. They did not unite into anything like a national hierarchy even the churches of the same country. They formed a few Christian men into a society, placed over it a Christian teacher, and then left it to take care of its own religious life, and to administer its own religious affairs.

And then, as to Christian worship or ritual, the New Testament is almost wholly silent respecting it. Moses, in instituting the Jewish economy, provided minutely for every detail of worship and ceremony; but there is nothing of this kind in Christian legislation. Judaism was all precept; Christianity is all principle. Judaism was an external worship; Christianity is an internal life. And this precisely accords with the idea and purpose of the two dispensations; the minute prescription of the one was intended to limit and sequester it from all the world beside; the simpler principles of the other were designed to fit it for universal application: so that we do not find in the apostolic churches the least vestige of injunction respecting modes of government or of worship; they permitted the few principles of the Christian life to associate and express themselves in every variety of national or local peculiarity. The church in Jerusalem, for example, being "a church of the circumcision," would, doubtless, have in its worship many things different from that in Corinth which was a "church of the uncircumcision." And we find even the apostle to the Gentiles, while commending the one for its freedom from ceremonial bondage, yet accommodating himself to the ceremonial peculiarities of the other:—a marvellous contrast this by the bye, to his holiness of Rome and

to some representatives of modern Protestant prelacy. The unity of Christian men does not consist in things of this kind. As different church systems cannot destroy it, so neither can they constitute it. Men of vastly different church opinions—Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, or Quakers, may maintain all their distinctive peculiarities of church government and worship, and yet perfectly maintain and *exhibit* their Christian oneness, yea, exhibit it all the more luminously *because* they so differ. We do not need to wear the same dress, or to practise the same habits, or to eat and drink at the same time or with the same frequency, to prove that we are men in common ; so neither do we need to pray alike, or to move alike, to prove that we are Christians in common.

The real unity of Christian men consists neither in common opinions nor in common practices as such, but in a common spiritual character, and in brotherliness of heart and hand ; in a common spiritual relationship, and a common love—a love that manifests itself as only love can, not by laborious efforts to make itself visible by material association or automaton harmonies, but by making itself spiritually *felt*, by a silent, and loving, and diffusive temper and ministration pervading every action and attitude of our Christian life. A Christian man is a man full of Christian affections, having a deep and earnest and catholic spiritual life within him, in virtue of which, whatever his individual notions or habits, he is one with all other Christians.

It is true that differences of opinion are sometimes permitted to provoke unbrotherly feelings ; and men,

professors of a common discipleship, and partakers of a common salvation, are seen "ready to bite and devour one another;" and "froward authors, with disputes have torn the garment seamless as the firmament," and thus they often bring great scandal and disgrace upon the religion that they profess. In palliation of this, we have no disposition to offer a single word—to the degree in which it exists, let it suffer the reprehension that it deserves—we only deprecate its instance as an argument against either Christianity itself or its Protestant form; and that for two reasons:—

*First.* Because the actual differences amongst Christians, both in substance and in bitterness, have commonly been exaggerated by those who have so employed them. Christians have always a great deal more of common truth and feeling than of differentia. However loath they may be to meet, however bitter their controversies or severe their judgments, they all do confess one another to be brethren, and expect, somehow or other, through their common Saviour, to reach the common Father's house. I may expect it to be by the conversion of everybody else to my individual peculiarities—but somehow or other I do expect it—and even though my orthodoxy anathematize them, my heart confesses them. My love is more generous than my logic, ay, and more trustworthy too. Christians rarely go so far as to exclude one another from salvation. And this is fundamental Christian unity. They unconsciously confess that they are separated from one another, not so much by essential errors, as by circumstantial diversities. And,

*Secondly.* We remark, that even were it not so, were sectarian hatred and intolerance a thousand times more aggravated than they are, the blame is not to be attached to the principles that we hold, but to the manner in which we hold them, to that which Christianity seeks to correct—the depravity and selfishness of human nature. If we would judge Christianity, we must not go to the men who so inadequately realise it, but to its own authorized and acknowledged standards. We demand, both for Christianity and for its Protestant embodiment, that in all things they be judged by the Christian Scriptures. And amid their representations of the Christian church, we shall find that not ritual uniformity, but spiritual unity, is one of its essential characteristics. Its various professors and societies are represented as branches of one common stem, streams from one common fountain, members of one common body. The church, as the body, is represented as having a unity as essential as that of its Head. There can no more be two bodies to one head, than two heads to one body. And whenever it is spoken of, this idea of essential unity is carefully maintained, and all that militates against it is severely reprehended. “We being many, are one body;” “ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”

Yea, more than this, and *finally.* The New Testament insists, not only upon the *fact* of this unity, as constituting one of the essential characteristics of the church, but also upon the manifestation of it, as a high moral influence, and as, therefore, an indispensable Christian duty. Need I remind you of the sublime and unearthly prayer which, “on the night

in which he was betrayed," our blessed Lord poured out for the disciples who were about him, and for all who afterwards should "believe through their word." It was almost his last earthly intercession for them,— "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me,"—presenting as the type and pattern of his people's union the union that subsisted between the Father and himself—not their visible uniformity—that is impossible—but their mutual and ineffable love, as the model and measure of our brotherly affection. Something far higher and holier this, than any church framework—a union of soul and spirit.

Whatever, therefore of the manifestation of Christian unity Christian men may have attained to, this is what Christianity itself requires of its disciples, and by this requirement, and not by the bickerings and bitterness of its professors, it is to be judged.

And there is no more striking or hopeful thing to be observed among Christians at the present, than the form that their controversies are taking, and the spirit in which they are conducted, and the undisguised impatience which the best and wisest of them feel of sectarian strifes and janglings, and their intense and eager yearning for the fellowship of Christian brotherhood. Their "love rejoiceth" in their maintenance of truth. They no longer contend for metaphysical subtleties or for ecclesiastical quibbles, but only for great principles and for practical issues; and in contending even for these, more than in any previous period of the church, they "speak the truth in love"

And surely no duty is more obvious and imperative, than that Christian men should, as far as it is possible, make their unity manifest by palpable union. In other words, I, as a Christian man, should deem myself bound to receive, as a brother in Christ, every man who really is such.

Nothing, surely, can be a greater anomaly than the acknowledgment of essential unity, and the refusal of visible association. A common union to Christ is admitted, and yet union with each other is refused. "As if," says Robert Hall, "those whom he forms and actuates by his Spirit, and admits to communion with himself, were not sufficiently qualified for the communion of mortals."

No one, if I may here venture to express my own individual opinion, is entitled to demand, as a condition of Christian communion, that which Christ has not demanded as a condition of salvation. With what consistency can we refuse fellowship on earth to those with whom we anticipate holding fellowship in heaven? We take our stand upon this simple principle, that every individual, and every church, who holds Christ as the common Saviour and Head, is bound to receive as a Christian brother every man who does the same. The principle is of universal application; it applies to the reception of a Christian man by any particular church, and to the reception of any one church by all other churches. It is a principle that will produce a readiness to reciprocate all brotherly offices, and to co-operate in all Christian efforts, that will secure the fellowship, not only of individual Christian men, but of Christian ministers, and churches, and denominations, in all

the spiritual services and sacraments of the church. Surely there should be nothing in either the discipline or the creed of a Christian church, to prevent interchange of fraternal greetings, of ministerial service, and of communion at the Lord's table with all spiritual men. Why should we not be able to worship in each other's sanctuary, to preach in each other's pulpit, and to partake, around the table of the common Lord, of the "one bread" and of the one cup? Well may our disability to do this be to the world a stumbling-block, and to the infidel foolishness. We cannot be thus inconsistent, but we suffer for it; our palpable unity is evidence of the moral power and excellency of our faith, and we cannot fail in it, without, in the same degree, failing to convince the world that Jesus is the Christ.

As Christians, then, our practical lesson is to make it manifest to all around us that we are really one; to embody our spiritual unity in visible union whenever it is practicable. Not for the purpose of maintaining creeds; associations for making or maintaining orthodoxy have ever been the most prolific sources of error,—wherever in the church there have been creeds, there have been heresies,—on this simple principle, that a whole community is required to believe precisely in the same manner, and to interpret alike the same article, which is both intellectually and morally an impossibility; and if it were not, inasmuch as the creed to be subscribed is human, the opinion probably of but one man, full of prejudices and passions like ourselves, by requiring an entire community to believe it, you stereotype all its imperfections, its human idiosyncracies, and, it may be,

errors. Truth is always safest when thrown upon the mass of men, and left to their individual judgments.

Hence, the true preservers of truth in the church have never been its priests or its ministers, but always its laity. Let every individual church, and every individual man, regard the Bible as the sole rule of Christian faith, and his own judgment, aided and enlightened to the utmost possibility as the sole interpreter of it, and heresy can rarely become a chronic thing; for the wrong judgment of the one will be counteracted by the right judgment of another.

Not for determining truth, then, or for preserving it, are we to unite, but for applying its moral force, for demonstrating its spiritual unity, bearing witness to its moral excellency, and for diffusing it throughout the world.

And if there should be here any who are not believers in Christianity, and who have rested their objection to it, wholly or in part, upon the denominational or sectarian bitterness of its professors, let them remember, that Christianity is a far higher, and holier, and more spiritual and catholic thing, than any church embodiment of it that the world has yet seen. Do not blame *it* for the distempered feelings and lives of its professors, for the intolerance of Rome, or for the pride of Anglicanism, or for the bitterness of Dissent.

High and far above all these, Christianity hath its peaceful and blessed domain, in a region of heavenly purity and broadest charity. These are but the terrene clouds of the church's atmosphere, engen-

dered of the mists and impurities of men's dis-tempered passions. Like the calm, and peaceful, and eternal stars, Christianity, borrowing its light from the central "Sun of Righteousness," shines serenely in its heavenly firmament, shedding light and sweet influences upon the darkness and strife of human existence. It seeks simply to replenish men's hearts with spiritual life and blessedness. It permits them to think and to worship even as they will, so long as they recognize God as a Father, and accept Christ as a Saviour, and maintain and manifest a moral purity of life. It requires of us, simply, that we "love one another with a pure heart fervently," and that by this we "let all men see that we are Christ's disciples."

Study it, then, in the New Testament records, in the letters of the apostles, in the histories of the evangelists, in the teachings of Christ, and, above all, in the holy and heavenly purity of his life; and you will be constrained to confess it a Divine and blessed thing; not more gracious in its doctrines, and pure in its morality, that it is catholic in its inspirations, and inviolable in its bonds.



Alfred the Great.

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A LECTURE,

BY THE

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RECTOR OF ST. MARY'S, WHITECHAPEL, AND CANON RESIDENTIARY  
OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

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IN EXETER HALL,

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MARTIN FARQUHAR TUPPER, Esq., D.C.L., F.R.S.

IN THE CHAIR



## ALFRED THE GREAT.

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MY DEAR SIR, AND CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,—I cannot do better than begin my Lecture where your chairman left off, and take up the thread as he dropped it. In fact, I had some of the very points down which he has brought before us.

There are many who have received the name of "Great," but I hardly know one who deserves it but Alfred. He was not a great liar. Some men have achieved greatness by a gigantic breach of faith. He was not a great murderer, reckless of human life, —a slaughterer of millions. He was not like one man called great who laid the foundation of an infant city in the lives of 200,000 men—Peter the Great. He was not like another man, recently passed to his account, who gathered out of the villages of the Delta 200,000 persons, piled them like a living line along the banks of the canal which he wished to dig out, and left 40,000 of them dead, who, working in the energy of despair, had stabbed into the ground, the very children scooping out the earth, in order to get it finished in a few days—he was not like this Mehemet Ali, Pasha of Egypt. He was not one

who choked up a river with the dead of his army as they crossed it, causing a plague to spread over Europe, like one that has been alluded to, and whom many think to be great. He was not a vast robber like Alexander the Great, a man gathering the whole earth as a man gathers eggs, to use the striking language of the prophet Isaiah, and who at last, having come to an end of his conquests, cried like a great baby because he had no more worlds to conquer. I say, none of these men *deserve* the name of great, though they have all *had it*. They may be great saints in the world's calendar, but they are not great in an English, they are not great in a Christian, sense. But I trust to be able to show to-night that that illustrious man of whose history I have to give you a sketch, and of whose character I have to bring evidence in that sketch, truly deserves the name of great, both in a Christian and an English sense; and we may say, if in an English sense, thank God, in an honest and true sense. I shall try to prove that Alfred was great because he was good; that he was great because he lived for others; that he was great because he was a thousand years in advance of his age; that he was great because he did not rise alone, but, by the buoyancy of his mind and the upheaving power of his talent, raised a whole nation into greatness with him, and laid the foundations both of our commercial and our national greatness—of our religious greatness in one sense, and of our intellectual greatness in another. Now, if we can make out simply that he was great in any one of these points, we shall make out a better case for applying the name great to him than to any of those whom we have

mentioned. But we can prove, we trust, that he was great in all these points, and therefore that he was really and truly great, and that we, a thousand years after his death, have reason to bless God for Alfred the Great. And is it not joyful to remember, while we go over his history, that Alfred is not dead, because not only do his institutions live, but in a better sense he is not dead, for as he *lived* to God, we have no doubt whatever that he is *living* WITH God, and that he will come in glory with the kingly crown of God's saints upon his head, when the Saviour returns with all his saints?

You will at once understand, that it will be impossible for me, in the time allotted to one of these lectures, however much we may try to put on the hydraulic press, and force and compress our matter into the closest possible space, to give more than a sketch, though it may be a full one, of Alfred's life. We shall endeavour, by taking the main and important points of his life—the salient points—to show what his character was, and to put before you, if possible, the man. We desire to do this truly, not hiding his faults, but showing the man as he was; for faults he had, but they were, by God's grace, so overruled to the cure of those faults, that his early mistakes were made the means of his subsequent successes, as we shall find from history.

He was born at Wantage, in the year 849; his father, Ethelwolf; his mother, Osberga, a woman of piety and understanding, and one, doubtless, who prayed for her child. She is generally believed, however, to have died when he was very young, before he could know either a mother's value or a

mother's loss ; although there is reason to think that she lived long enough to sow the seed of eternal life in his heart. But though she was dead, were her prayers lost ? I believe not. I believe that after she had passed to her account, and her reward through grace, her prayers were laid up in store for her child, and came down upon him in blessing. Can we believe that a really pious mother's prayers are ever lost ? If there is anything more marked and prominent than another in the history of some of God's most remarkable saints, whose history he has chosen to lay bare to the world, it is that they owed, more or less, their religious impressions to their mother's prayers or their mother's teaching. His father soon married again, and Alfred was entrusted to the care of Swithin, of rain notoriety—the saint on whose day, it is said, if rain falls, it will fall for so many days afterwards ; it being merely a coincidence that at that particular time of the year in this latitude rain does continually fall. Swithin was really a pious man according to his age, and Alfred profited by his piety ; but he was not fit for literary instruction ; and this is proved from the fact that Alfred passed his childhood, and did not know his letters, nor know how to read. We may fairly conclude, that if Swithin had been a scholar, he would have communicated something of his learning to Alfred ; but you will learn from subsequent history that the clergy of that day were grossly ignorant, and probably Swithin was something like his own clergy.

When Alfred was only five years old, his father resolved to make him his successor, though he had three elder brothers. He sent him therefore to

Rome, with a train of nobles and attendants, where, it is said, the Pope anointed him king at his father's request. Two years afterwards, Ethelwolf himself went to Rome, and took Alfred with him. Now these two journeys—what he saw, and what he heard in his intercourse with wise and good men—must have contributed to expand Alfred's mind, to store his memory, and to call out his remarks and observations. All this illustrates what I only throw out for your own reflection and consideration; namely, the wonderful manner in which God prepares instruments for a peculiar work. How long before he himself was aware of the particular work in which he was to engage, may others have observed that there was an appearance of his being trained for something peculiar, by the peculiar dealings of God's providence towards him! This (*viz.* the preparation of God's instruments for their peculiar work) is one of the most interesting studies in the dealings of Divine providence with man. At this visit to Rome, it is related that Ethelwolf saw public penitents (persons who had committed sin for which they had to do public penitence) bound in chains; and he obtained of the Pope that no Englishman should ever be put into bonds for penance out of his own country. Now, we wish that all our great and powerful men—all our rulers—felt as strongly as Ethelwolf for the honour and credit of Englishmen, so as to make common cause with them. Though there were many things to be blamed in Cromwell—besides THE GREAT SIN, as we believe it to have been, and as the Church of England believes, which he committed—there is this one great and important point which it

would be well for every Protestant governor in England to imitate; namely, that where there was a distressed Englishman, where there was an oppressed Protestant, there Cromwell's hand was opened, his heart was opened, and his power used to deliver and to help that man. We do earnestly hope that the people of England, in making an united effort to teach the world that true Protestants are one, may accomplish not only something at home, but something for their brethren abroad in all parts of the world, by carrying out this very feeling which Anglo-Saxon Ethelwolf felt for his countrymen.

On his way through France, Ethelwolf sought and obtained Judith, the daughter of the French king, in marriage; and this was a providential alliance for Alfred. She was highly educated for that day, was a woman of piety, and one who took great and tender interest in her husband's children. She was one of those—I may say, perhaps—rare characters, a truly affectionate second wife, throwing herself into the feelings and into the wants of the children of the first wife. All Alfred's literary acquirements are to be traced to her. It is perhaps known to many of you, that her reading a book of Anglo-Saxon poetry—most likely the poems of Aldelm, or Ceadmon, was the cause of arousing in Alfred's mind the latent spark of genius. Reading one of these poems to her family—that is, the family of her husband by his first wife—she is said to have offered the book as a reward to whichever child should be able first to read it. Alfred thought that she could not be really in earnest, and he put the question to her, whether she really meant what she said, and on her replying,

with a smile, that the book should be given to him who should be enabled to read it first, he immediately set to work, and soon came to her to claim the book as his own.

I have already noticed the father's fondness for Alfred, and his intention of making him king. This circumstance roused the nobility—roused the leading bishop, Alstan, and Ethelbald, the eldest son of Ethelwolf, who joined in the rebellion against his father. The rebels were so far successful that they forced the king to divide the kingdom during his life-time; and two years after this division, having reigned with his son, he died, leaving his landed possessions (and this is worthy of remark) in equal proportions to all his children—a touching proof that Ethelwolf had learned to forgive, and that at all events Alfred inherited from his father the absence of vindictiveness. We trust that there was something more than merely natural disposition in Ethelwolf's dying act: we trust and hope that it was the act of one who, having had "much forgiven," had learned to "love" and to forgive "much."

Alfred having acquired the power to read the Anglo-Saxon language, had only learned what is the first step to knowledge—his ignorance. You invariably find that those who know little, and have not learned how small that little is, in comparison with what remains to be learned, are both conceited and satisfied. You find that those who are self-conceited are generally ignorant in proportion to their self-conceit. Those who have really learned, know how much remains to be learned, and how small in comparison with what remains is what they have already

learned. As a traveller who sees a mountain range in the distance, and having succeeded in climbing one small hill which has hidden the distant range beyond, finds, instead of its being the summit, it is just the lowest step of the ladder, from which he is enabled to see the towering hills in the far distance, almost lost in the clouds—so is it with the man who has really learned what the first steps of knowledge are intended to teach him—namely, that there remains far more for him to reach. Alfred learned this: he learned that he had only got a simple key that unlocked a very small proportion of the treasures of knowledge. He found that the greatest writers of his own nation—Bede and Alcuin—had written in Latin, and that greater treasures were hid in the Latin than in the Anglo-Saxon chest; but he had not the keys, and who was there to give these keys to him? There were no masters in all the kingdom of Wessex who could teach him the Latin tongue—not a single clergyman, not one of the ecclesiastical order, in the whole of his kingdom who knew Latin sufficiently well to teach him how to read it!

Meanwhile, being prepared, as we were observing, for the great work which God had intended him to do, Alfred was not merely to be the scholar; the labours of the chase employed him. He was incomparably successful in all manly exercises; and this salutary and needful part of his preparation for his future struggle, gives another hint of the marvellous way in which God secretly prepares his agents and his instruments for the work that they have to do. The scholar who was to raise his nation by his intellect and his industry, was also to be the warrior who

should save it by his success and by his courage ; therefore it was necessary that he should be trained both as the scholar and the warrior. The chase was the preparatory school for war, and education and reflection the preparatory school for his instruction as a teacher.

It is worthy of remark that he was afflicted from his very childhood with a sore and (as the medical knowledge of that day was very limited) an unintelligible disease—a disease perfectly mysterious to the men of that day, and even now we cannot accurately tell what the disease was. He was burned up by a low fever of a most unusual kind from his infancy, which, when it receded, was followed by another : it haunted him incessantly with tormenting agonies, never leaving him a day and seldom even an hour of ease. But it is still more to be remembered, that this latter affliction came upon him in answer to his own prayers. I mention it on the authority of Walter, in his “History of England on Christian Principles”—a most valuable book, which I can commend to the reading of all, and especially to Christian parents for their children. He states, on good authority, that Alfred, being aware, from what he knew of Scripture, and still more from what God had taught him by his Holy Spirit, of the peculiar dangers of youth, and the peculiar dangers of a royal youth, had offered up this prayer—that God would keep him, by whatever means, from youthful lusts ; so that, in afflicting him, He did not prevent him being useful to his fellow-men. There was a Christian prayer!—there was the prayer taught by the Spirit of God. The man feared *sin* more than he feared *pain*, and was

willing to have "a thorn in the flesh," so that only that thorn in the flesh might not prevent his being useful to his country.

When his brother Ethelred, who succeeded his other brother, Ethelbald, died of a wound he received at Merton, near Reading, Alfred was chosen king by the unanimous voice of the people. Now, when we hear of a man in these days being chosen king, we picture to ourselves a golden crown, with its jewellery and its glitter; we picture to ourselves ermine and velvet, splendid chains and ornaments—the long procession of attendant nobles, and all the gorgeous and brilliant array of an English coronation. But Alfred's crown, if there was a crown at all, was made of iron and lined with thorns; when, therefore, he accepted it, it was an act of the greatest self-denial. He gave up everything, or nearly everything, to which his natural tastes and his acquired tastes led him, for the good of those who were committed to his charge. When this offer was made him, he was newly married to one whom, from the glimpses we have of her, we believe to have been really worthy of Alfred; and that is saying as much almost as may be said of woman. She was the sharer of his joys and of his sorrows, the tender and sympathizing companion of his exile, one who was never separated from him in his troubles except when he left her for war, and one who was promptly and cheerfully obedient to all his lawful and kind wishes. Then, in the next place, he had acquired a taste, as we have seen, for high intellectual pursuits beyond his age; and as king, he would be thrown into contact with the coarse minds of savage soldiers, ignorant

clergy, and drunken nobles. Moreover, he was, as as we have said, a sufferer every day of his life, and his pains were sometimes so extreme as to be almost as much as his Christian patience could endure. Now, any one of these things would have been, under the circumstances, a sufficient reason for declining the crown. He hesitated, weighed the matter, looked at the duty; and as nothing like pleasure would lead to the acceptance, he felt that in taking the crown he was really denying himself and seeking the glory of his God and the good of his fellow-men; therefore he took the crown—this iron crown, this crown lined with thorns; and we believe that in this he evidenced a true and real greatness. There was no personal aggrandizement sought by it, there was no personal glory sought by it; he sought the good of those who were committed to him; and taking the crown in self-denial, he was enabled to carry on the work with the help of that God in whom he trusted. He was at this time but twenty-two years of age; and when we review the state of his country, we shall see clearly that it was *indeed* self-denial to take such a crown.

The Northmen, the original ancestors of those called Normans, had fully resolved to subjugate England. Swarm after swarm had poured in; and just as with the locusts, neither the fire, however powerful, neither the pit, however deep, can stop their onward course, so the victories and resistance of the Anglo-Saxons seemed only to kindle and to irritate the cupidity of these Northmen to take possession of the country. ALFRED'S FIRST BATTLE WAS UNSUCCESSFUL. Now, I wish you to bear in mind that we are study-

ing Alfred as a *Christian study*. I am speaking to the Young Men's *Christian Association*. God permitted his first battle to be unsuccessful. What a striking fact! Why was this? It was to bring the man out; for it is not success that brings out the man, that finds the skill and the resources that are latent in the mind of the soldier—IT IS DEFEAT. This unsuccessful battle of Alfred's was the ninth battle that had been fought that year in his little kingdom. Alfred, not having obtained confidence in his own resources, having yet to learn a lesson of humility, had to fall, in order that he might learn to rise, and not fall again: he therefore appears to have yielded, and made peace with these Northmen. They were glad of this peace, for it enabled them, thus bought off as they were from Alfred's kingdom, to overcome quietly the rest of the petty kingdoms, and take them in detail, because they were divided. What a warning to divided *Christian* bodies! Each little state that was not attacked, congratulated itself that it was not the sufferer, instead of feeling that its own turn would come next, and flying to the help of its fellow. The Northmen took the other Saxon nations in detail, and then they resolved to come back and crush at a blow Alfred's kingdom of Wessex. In Alfred's time, England was divided into various kingdoms; and if we want to know what the boundary of Alfred's kingdom was—which is an interesting thing to know, and very easy to remember—run your finger on the map along the boundary of the Thames, pass up the Lea till you come to Hertford, go along from Hertford to Bedford, and thence to the Channel,—all to the south of that boundary was Alfred's kingdom.

Thus driven into a corner, in this great emergency, Alfred brought out his first great idea. There are some who will blame a clergyman and a Christian for saying that that great idea was to go to war, and to go to war in a way new to Englishmen. But surely, we can prove distinctly from Scripture that the WAR OF DEFENCE—the war which leads a man to keep off the invaders of his country, and arm for his hearth and his home, for his wife and for his children, for his religion and for his liberty—to keep his nation from being ravaged by fire and sword—to preserve the temples of his God from being levelled in the dust, and his nation made slaves to a foreign yoke—that such a war of defence is not only justifiable on Christian principles, but is absolutely the clear and plain DUTY of every Christian man; and that the man who, with such perilous circumstances in the distance, shall fold his arms, and say, “If it is to come, it is to come, and I cannot keep it away,” is strangely blinded to the whole tenour of the Book of God. There are times when war brings peace; there are times when the death of a few may be the means of saving the lives of myriads; and surely, no one would deny, that when an English governor saw it his duty to march English armies against those marauders, the Pindarees of India, a nation of the fiercest robbers, who had ravaged whole villages, carrying away captive or destroying the women and children—when, I say, for the sake of protecting thousands and millions of unoffending persons, the Governor-General of India, seeing that he could not *change*, saw it his duty to *destroy* that hornets’ nest, painful as it was, and awful as it is at any time for man to rise against

man—who, I say, upon the authority of the blessed Book of God, and of the Gospel of peace, will deny that it was his clear, plain, and unmistakeable duty?

Now, Alfred, seeing that the north was pouring out its hordes, seeing the seas white with their sails, seeing month after month bring in swarms of these invaders, and feeling that when they had once landed on England, it was harder to meet them than it would be to prevent their landing, determined to man a few ships, and try what Englishmen could do with the Danes on their own element. God prospered him. Though he had no Anglo-Saxon sailors, and few who could stand the tilting and rocking of the sea, and though he was consequently obliged to man his ships with hired foreigners, yet that first germ of the British Royal Navy met the Danes and defeated them. We may look to Alfred, then, as the founder of that royal navy which has been the protector of England in a thousand dangers, and if a thousand dangers more were to come, would, under God, protect her still. For, while we never wish to forget how great a debt we owe to that great captain, the conqueror of the great oppressor—who is now, it may be, fast hastening to his grave—never forgetting how much European liberty and Christianity owe to him as the instrumental saviour of them—we never can forget that it was our *fleets* that struck the great blows at that power which would have crushed liberty and Christianity, if it could, under its iron hoof—that it was the fleets of England that enabled the armies of England to be victorious.

The Danes, having plundered and destroyed every other part of England, renewed their attacks on

Alfred's kingdom. They landed at Wareham, in Dorsetshire, under Gothrun, one of their great leaders, or thœgns; that title being similar to that of earls, or jarls. Alfred again offered them money. God had prospered him; but he had not yet learned the lesson to trust simply in God, and in those powers that God had given him; for a trust in the powers God has given us—to have our own resources in ourselves, is not wrong, but right; it is the germ of real greatness—it is to have what the Greeks call *αὐταρκεια*. Again, therefore, he bribed them. They were willing to swear upon their bracelets—that was *their* strongest oath; but Alfred thought that Christian relics would be more binding, and he got them to swear by these. But whether they swear by their bracelets, or by Christian relics, the character of the heathen is that of covenant-breakers—there is no faith in them. You always find that the public faith of a nation is the best thermometer of the real Christian spirit in the nation. The nation that will not break its faith, but will keep it, you may be perfectly assured has got much of the Christian spirit in it; whereas, the nation that lightly regards its word and its bond is imperfectly imbued with a Christian spirit. These men broke their word; they had given hostages—the best and bravest of their troops; they believed that these men's lives would be sacrificed if they broke their faith; but what were their *friends'* lives to them? They were got rid of as easily, if it served their turn, as if they had been foes. They broke their word; they burst from their intrenchments, murdered the Saxon soldiers at their posts, seized their horses, rode to

Exeter, and embarked on the Exe, a river that gives its name to the town. But here we have the royal navy again. Alfred's fleet was cruising round the southern coast; it was waiting for them on their return; and a storm, that is to say, the hand of God, began their defeat, which was finished by the fleet of Alfred. A hundred and twenty sail of Danes, a large fleet for that day, were captured or destroyed either by the elements or by the Saxon fleet. We may observe here, how often the hand of God has interposed for the salvation of England. We all know that the storm did more than even the English guns in the destruction of the great and so-called invincible Armada. And this is not the only instance. Those who are acquainted with English history, will know that in the time of Anne and of George III., large fleets were dispersed round our coast in a similar manner, and brought to nought by the hand of that God who has watched over his favoured—oh that she were *grateful!*—England.

Meanwhile Alfred had lost his self-control. He had given way to an irritable disposition. It was hard, we should say, not to do so, when he was in constant pain. We can understand, if we think for a moment, in what a painful position his superior knowledge and his elevated mind had placed him, surrounded as he was by ignorance and sensuality. But it is not because a man is superior in knowledge and mind that he is to show pride, or petulance, or contempt. Pity towards those who are ignorant is the right feeling of the rightly-balanced mind; its own knowledge only makes the mind that is in a proper healthy state, anxious to impart of that know

ledge to others. We have reason to believe that those who expected to share his confidence, because they were thought nearly on a level with him,—I mean his nobles,—instead of having his confidence, often found sternness and repulsiveness of manner; and those who did not immediately understand his wishes, and did not catch all his thoughts on the instant, were blamed for stupidity. It would seem as if that genius which came out afterwards was still latent to a certain degree, and that he still had to learn, in the school of humility, the way to soar. I have no doubt of this fact; I mention it on the authority of Asser, who tenderly loved him. Asser says: "The Lord permitted him to be very often wearied by his enemies, afflicted by adversity, and oppressed by the contempt of his people, and this in order that he might learn to know himself, and to govern himself thoroughly, in order that he might govern his kingdom." For remember, it is the principle of all government, whether of the master in the school, the pastor in the flock, or of the king in the state, that no one can govern others, who has not learned to govern that hardest and most rebellious of all petty kindoms—his own self.

Again the Danes, headed by Gothrun, invaded Wessex, from Gloucestershire. So rapid was their advance, that they nearly took Alfred prisoner, and he was compelled to flee in the disguise of a common soldier; and the place is still to be seen at the junction of the little river Thone with the Parret, in Somersetshire, where the swineherd, Denulf, gave him shelter. Sharon Turner, in his "History of the Anglo-Saxons," mentions. that Alfred having been

domesticated with this swineherd some time, and discerned in him the marks of superior ability and all the material of a noble character, advised him to give up feeding swine, and told him he might feed men some day. He afterwards sent him to school, and I think I am right in saying that this very Denulf, once the swineherd, afterwards became Denulf, Bishop of Winchester. A swineherd, taken from the lowest employment, by Alfred's discerning power was made overseer of the district of Winchester. Nothing is a more remarkable proof of real talent and genius than the intuitive discernment of kindred talent in others. If you observe the greatest men, you will find that this has been always one of their marked characteristics. Alfred was learning, in his retirement, what Moses had to learn in his forty years' banishment in the wilderness—self-control, and that men must be *led and drawn* to reform, not *DRIVEN*; and especially to that kind of reform which is the hardest of all, and to which I have alluded—*the reform of ourselves*; for we are all ready, when we hear a striking remark, to say, "That's excellent; I shall go home and reform my sister Betsy." The thing is, to go home and reform *ourselves*. "What does this teach *me* to do? What does this teach *me* to give up?" That is the hardest reform, the hardest part of reformation; and I do wish heartily that those who are blustering for reforms not wanted, would wait till they have accomplished that little reform first. Do not suppose for a moment, my dear friends, that we say one word against reform in any shape. *If a thing is wrong, let us get rid of it as fast as we can*; but I never yet could see the logic of the

argument, "The *top* of that pear-tree bough is decayed; *cut down the pear-tree.*"

The cruelty of the Danes, as such cruel actions often do, defeated itself. There is nothing so impolitic as to drive men to despair. The very worm, when trod on, will turn. The very mouse, when captured, has been known to bite through the finger of the man who held it, in the energy of despair. It was so with the Anglo-Saxons. They were driven into a corner; they knew that a dreadful and cruel death was before them if they did not conquer, and they felt that it was better to receive death in honourable battle, than to be cut down and cut to pieces by the Danish crooked swords. Therefore, some of the Saxon troops, who were encompassed by the Danish troops, headed by one of the most brutal Danish leaders, Ubbo, determined, in the energy of despair, to break through them to their leader. Just as did Botzaris, the Greek, at Missolonghi, with his three hundred men,—he divided his men into three troops, and said, "When you hear this bugle blow, find me in the Pasha's tent." He then posted them in three parts of the camp, where they waited till they should hear the bugle sound. He made his way in the disguise of an Albanian with despatches, passed the sentinels, reached the Pasha's tent—was about to enter, but being held back, lifted his horn to his mouth, and in a few moments nothing was to be heard but the crashing of falling tents, the groans of dying Turks, and the shouts of the conquering Greeks; and as they lifted their leader on their shoulders, he was shot through the heart. The like was done by the Anglo-Saxon leader and his men.

They broke into the tent of Ubbo, killed the brutal leader, and captured the Danish raven, the standard "Reaphan," woven by the daughters of Ragnar, to which the Danes looked with superstitious reverence. The flapping of the wings of this mystical raven would tell them whether they should succeed or not. Of course, when the raven was gone there was no flapping of the wings, and, therefore, no omen of success. This fact was communicated to Alfred, and it was told him that the people wished to have him once more at their head. This induced Alfred to make himself known. It was just before he did so that the circumstance occurred which is related by Sharon Turner, and by others who have searched Anglo-Saxon records—I mean the fact of his dividing his last loaf with a pilgrim. It is related that the king was bending over his book, when he heard a voice imploring help. He remembered the state of want in which he had himself reached that place of refuge, and he bade his wife see what store they had. She told him that their little store was reduced to one loaf, and reminded him that the party who had gone in quest of food might return empty and hungry. Mark the Christian answer. "Blessed be God for what we have," said the king; "give the poor Christian half the loaf, and doubt not that He who was able to feed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, can make the remaining half more than sufficient for all our wants." If that was not *practical Christianity*, I do not know what is. It is very easy to *talk* of giving away when we do not even miss, nor ever shall miss, what we give; but when we have only one loaf, or half a loaf, and trust

that God will multiply it, and share it with those who have none, *that* is real practical faith, the faith of the prophet, and the faith of the Christian : and this was Alfred's faith.

From such wanderers as these Alfred learned that his people would joyfully receive him. *They* had been learning a lesson as well as Alfred. When persons quarrel there are always two in the wrong. When Alfred and his people quarrelled, he was wrong in having been proud ; and, if his people had not also been proud, they would never have been angry with him for his being so. They had to learn that they wanted aid, and Alfred had learned how to give it ; and now that the head was put upon the body, we find that success came. He sent messengers, and called his subjects to meet him at a well-known spot called Egbert's-stone ; and when he showed himself, their long-banished king was received with shouts of joy. He came out from his school, having learnt that "before honour is humility," and that the way to rise is very often to have to fall. In this spirit of real humility, trusting in that God for victory in whom he had trusted for food, and having the confidence of his people, he defeated the Danes, pursued them to their camp at Bratton, and there, trying their own plan, determined to starve them down. There was no food in the Danish camp when the Saxon army beleaguered it. During this interval the Saxon troops amused themselves by cutting off the turf in the chalky hill-side, into the figure of a horse, the Saxon crest, which is still to be seen at Wantage. The Danes, I have said, were starved down. None of us Englishmen

think how much we owe to good food. We owe much of our national stamina to our good food, which God has provided for us; and that stamina enables our soldiers to go through the dangers and hardships to which they are exposed when they are without it. When the Danes were without food they found their pride begin to sink, and they even condescended to ask for mercy. They had never been known to *show* mercy. Ubbo, who was slain by Alfred in the battle of which I have spoken, never saw an Anglo-Saxon near him, even a woman or a child, without immediately slaughtering that person. There was only one little beautiful boy that was spared when the Abbey of Croyland was destroyed, when the monks were murdered in their sanctuary; and the man who spared him always warned him, "Go not near Ubbo, for he will surely slay you." That was the character of the Danes; they had never spared any except this child; yet they condescended to ask Alfred to spare them. We were reading, on Sunday last, in the Church of England service, that exquisitely touching passage of St. Paul (quoted by him from Proverbs), "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he is athirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head."

Alfred had learned that vengeance belongs to God, and that forgiveness belongs to the Christian. He had been gaining a victory over his passions, and he also saw, and eventually found, that mercy was true policy. He kept himself in perfect command; and remember, in the flush of victory over an enemy that has ravaged your land and murdered those

belonging to you, to deal moderately, temperately, justly, and kindly, is no easy matter. There is an excitement about battle and victory, a momentum that forces a man on, even after the cause that put him in motion has ceased to exist. Alfred would not do anything which the spirit of revenge would have suggested; he would not give such hard terms as would make the men break them. He at once frankly gave them all their lives. He required that they should not give up any part of their conquests except his hereditary dominions; he encouraged them to settle in England and cultivate the soil, requiring them, as conditions of his giving them their lives and liberty, to quit their heathen rites and embrace Christianity. He so far wrought upon Gothrun—no doubt it was at first an outward change only, but afterwards it was probably accompanied by something deeper—as to induce him to submit to the ordinance of baptism. He was baptized in the name of Athelstane; and Alfred himself stood godfather to this conquered man—conquered more by his kindness even than by his armies. God fulfilled in this case his own promise and assurance. Alfred's generosity, courage, skill, and kindness, wrought upon the hard heart of Gothrun; and it is recorded of him, to his infinite credit, that while the Danes, as a nation, were covenant-breakers, this man, Athelstane, never broke his covenant, never violated his faith to his friend and benefactor, but did all he could to help him in his reforms, and to benefit the people committed to his charge. Thus was a victory gained, first over himself, and then over his enemy.

Having thus brought the subject to that point

where we find Alfred not to have *bought* success, but to have *wrought* it, and obtained it by his own courage and skill, let me for a short time direct your attention to the internal state of Anglo-Saxon England.

First, the clergy were grossly ignorant. I will read you Alfred's own words—"There were very few on this side of the Humber who could understand their daily prayer in English, or who knew what their Latin forms meant in English, or could translate anything written in Latin. I think there were not many even beyond the Humber. There were so few in all, that I cannot recollect a single instance south of the Thames, when I took the kingdom." Now, not to know Latin, you remember, was not to know the Scriptures, for they were only found in Latin at that time; there was no English translation; or if they were to be found in any other language, it was in the Greek and Hebrew, which were far more removed from the reach of those that were in power than even the Latin. The monks were only better farmers, more ingenious artisans, or more clever architects; but as for the knowledge of those Scriptures which are able to make men "wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus," they were supremely ignorant. Alfred having found rest determined to use it. He induced Gothrun (or Athelstane, as we must call him by his Anglo-Saxon name,) to join him in the forming of better laws. The first of their joint laws is a striking index, that shows Alfred's mind and character,—it was one for the *due observance of the Sabbath-day*. I say, this was the mark of a really

Christian mind, as well as that of an enlightened legislator. How great is the debt that the ungodly of England owe to those saints and "Methodists," as they would call them, who, by their own observance of the Sabbath-day as a day of rest, and by the maintenance of it as the right of man, have preserved it to those who had otherwise been robbed of it! When we see upon the walls, copied from an infidel paper, "The mawworms again!"—meaning those who love God's day, are anxious to observe it,—to prevent, as far as possible, the rich from degrading it, and to keep it as the privilege of the poor man,—when we see such things as these abroad, we comfort ourselves with the knowledge that we are benefiting the very men who oppose us, when we maintain it as the duty, the obligation, and the interest of man to observe a day of rest. We feel that no human *reason* could have INVENTED this. Remember, we have signs, and planets, and heavenly movements, dividing time into months, and days, and years; but tell me what those natural movements are which could have invented a seventh day for a day of rest. It must have come, as we believe it did, from the beneficent and benevolent Being who, having made man, and known what is in man, and known man's wants, made the Sabbath for man, because he had constituted man to want the Sabbath. Not more than fifteen years ago, if I remember rightly, when the workmen in the French royal dockyard were made to work seven days in the week. it was found that the work they performed in seven days was not more than would have been done in six, if they had had a day of rest; so that on *economical* principles alone they had the

seventh day given them, in order to save to the government the seventh day's pay. There was given to the whole world in that fact, one of the most wonderful and unsought-for proofs, that God has made man's physical constitution, his body, such that he cannot go on without rest. You remember, too, that the great physician, Dr. Farre, gave evidence before the House of Commons, that there is in the human body a waste of strength more than is made up by every night's rest—an accruing waste of a seventh, which must be made up by a seventh's day's rest. God has thus so accurately balanced his ordinance to our need, that man without his Sabbath would come inevitably to a premature grave. Alfred, then, by insisting upon the due observance of the Sabbath, showed himself not only an honest, straightforward Christian, but an enlightened politician and legislator.

*His next act was to maintain the clergy.* He felt that a clergy in poverty would invariably be contemptible. Men may talk as they will about making a dead level, and reducing all ministers of the gospel to a certain minimum amount of stipend. We do verily believe that it would be the means of rendering the clergy contemptible, in some measure, amongst those who would despise them for their poverty. Wherever the clergy have been poor and illiterate, they have been contemned. Alfred saw that it would be politic to maintain them in simple independence, so that that they should not fear that their words should deprive them of their bread, so that they might be as plain and faithful to the *thane* as to the commonest man, telling them of their faults.

and pointing out to them their duty. He showed, therefore, I conceive, an enlightened policy. Julian the apostate, one of the craftiest and most successful enemies the Christian Church ever had, when he began his system of degrading the church of Christ, commenced by degrading the clergy, keeping them from knowledge, and from power to maintain their position in the world.

Alfred's next act was *to render even-handed justice to Saxon and Dane*, so that they might live together as brethren—that the Danish subject should be treated as the Anglo-Saxon, and the Anglo-Saxon subject as the Danish. We feel that we owe much, under God's providence, to this infusion of Danish blood. There is not a nation in the world that has yet been able to stand before the Anglo-Saxon race. It is not a single metal, like the Roman iron; but it is the fusion of a vast number of strong metals into one mass, forming a character that nothing can resist. We have the Roman iron as well as the British buoyancy; the Danish wild piratical courage turned into the commercial enterprise of the sailor and navigator; and the Anglo-Saxon firmness. We have all these points mixed and melted down to form the Anglo-Saxon character; therefore, when Alfred wisely desired to mix them and make them amalgamate, he was unconsciously helping on towards the forming of the future character of England.

But Alfred began immediately to *improve himself*. He felt that, if *he was to raise, he must rise*; if he was to raise a nation with him, he must have a buoyant and upward power, that would make him carry that weight. He was far more learned at that time than

any of his nobles ; and he made his learning, not a pillow to lie down and sleep upon, but a stage to get a step higher by. He did not wish to rest. He wished to train his people to be somewhat like himself ; therefore he sought out competent teachers for himself. He found very few ; but among them were Asser, a Welshman ; John, the monk, an Irishman ; and Grimbalduis, a Fleming. Asser says, it was the king's custom to have books read before him day and night, amidst all his afflictions of body and mind. He divided the day into three parts : eight hours for business, eight for study and prayer, and eight for sleep and refreshment. He led a life of constant self-denial and suffering. You all know that he was the inventor of horn lanterns, by which the gusts that came into his palace (which was no better than a modern barn) were kept off, so that the candles could burn regularly. His officers came on by courses, and brought him a list every month. Everything was done in order. Method was one of the characteristics of this great mind. His revenue was divided into two equal parts—one applied to state purposes, and the other to charity. That applied to the state was divided thus : one part for his household, one to support strangers from abroad, and a third for workmen to carry on improvements. The other half, devoted to charity, was divided thus : one part to the needy, a second to support the monastery of Athelney and the nunnery of Shaftesbury, a third to schools for the young gentry, and a fourth for presents to foreign and English churches and clergy. Alfred was the founder of one of our great English universities ; and this connexion of Oxford with Alfred is

interesting to me, as having been a fellow of that very college which derives its name from its special association with Alfred—I mean the college of the King's Hall, commonly called Brasenose, more correctly Brasen Heuse, or brewing house—the college of the King's Hall, or brewing house. It is a college tradition, still kept alive among us, by the fact of a certain quantity of ale being offered as a gift on a particular day, that the college was originally connected with Alfred's own establishment.

Alfred was desirous to make his people acquainted with the Scriptures in their own tongue, or portions of them. You know Alfred is sometimes claimed as a Romanist. Do you think that Romanists generally like to give the Scriptures in their own tongue? If Alfred wished to teach his people to read in their own tongue the wonderful works of God, whatever men may call him, he was at heart thoroughly a Protestant; for that is one of the great distinctive features of Protestantism or Bible Christianity. He made the Ten Commandments a part of the law of the land. Not knowing Hebrew, but only Latin, he did not know that he had been robbed by the Church of Rome of one commandment. In Alfred's copy, which we have—and the Church of Rome cannot erase this from the page of history—the third commandment stands the second, and the tenth is rendered thus: "Make thou not gods of gold or silver." Suppose that a man were taken into any one of the many *thousand* churches of the Church of England, in each of which, by law, the commandments must be written over the communion tables, and we said to him, "If you were allowed to blot out one of these

commandments, which should it be?" his answer would be regulated by his particular sin. If he were a man given to slandering, he would probably wish to remove the commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour;" if he were a man wishing what was not his own, a discontented man, he would wish the tenth blotted out, and so on. And if a man wished to take out the commandment about idolatry, what should I conclude? That he was an idolater. When, therefore, the Church of Rome blots out the commandment forbidding idolatry, why is it? Because, whatever they may say, their conscience and that commandment cannot stand together.

Mark another proof of Alfred's being in advance of the age—HE ABOLISHED SLAVERY. He was a fellow-worker with the cause of Clarkson, Wilberforce, Buxton, and that noble army of friends of the slave. He felt their Christian love of liberty, their hatred of oppression, their determination that none should gauge, and span, and buy the muscles and the bones of man, a thousand years ago. He saw that slavery was inconsistent with Christianity; and that it is impossible for a man to be a truly enlightened Christian, and yet hold that he may put his fellow-man in bonds. I only wish our dear brethren on the other side of the great water would mark and keep the roughly this principle of Alfred's. In his day, too, a corrupt judge invariably suffered death; and, as you may suppose, there was not *much* corruption.

One of his wisest political arrangements—one that remains to this day—was the *division of the land into hundreds and tithings*. The admirable prin-

ciple which Alfred laid hold of, and that showed his marvellous sagacity, was this—he made every family in the hundred answerable for every other. Men are not very sorry to break their neighbours' things by accident if they have not to pay for them; but, if they have to pay for them, they take care of their neighbours' things. Alfred made every family in the tithing answerable for everything that was done wrong in that tithing; *they* were to find out the man and bring him into court to be punished, or else pay for whatever mischief he had done. And what was the natural result of this arrangement? If there was any very bad character in the tithing, an idle, drunken fellow, doing nothing but mischief, he would go to such a house, and the owner would say, "We cannot have you here; we cannot be answerable for your breakages; you must go somewhere else." He would go to the next house, and there be told the same thing: and thus he would be passed on, till he was passed out. Now we say, that the man who laid hold of this simple principle—a principle applicable to every man's feelings (and the great seat of feeling often is a man's pocket)—was no common man. It may be questioned indeed, if we only looked to *facts*, where the heart really lies—the practice of many moderns seems to show that it is in the pocket.

Another of his arrangements remains to this day—**TRIAL BY JURY**. I cannot help thinking that Alfred borrowed that from the Bible. I cannot help feeling that God himself has endorsed the principle contained in that arrangement; for, when He would select witnesses of his Son's resurrection—the great central fact on which rests our whole faith—how many

did he select? Twelve. And, in order to prove that there was no collusion, one of these twelve jurors was removed and another put in his place—the very practice commonly adopted if foul play is suspected. I cannot help thinking, therefore, that the study of the Scriptures had put this remarkable principle into Alfred's mind, and that we have it through him but from the Word of God. That may be only a conjecture; the fact, however, we clearly have.

Alfred having formed his fleet, manned it, and exercised it. He always went out with it—his weak health did not keep him from rough practice. But he felt that his fleet was not to be always fighting. He therefore sent it out on exploratory voyages. He was the *first English navigator*, as well as the founder of the royal navy. Archangel was discovered by that fleet, and Dantzic on the Vistula. But more than this, Alfred was a Christian missionary; he was a Catholic Christian in the best sense. The true Protestant is the only Catholic. I never will allow the word catholic to those who if they are in one place “Roman,” cannot be everywhere “Catholic.” The true Catholic is he whose heart is open to love “all those that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,”—HE is the real Christian universalist,—HE is the true and only Catholic. Alfred had read that the apostle Thomas had preached the gospel in India, founded a church there, and had converted many thousands to the faith. He was determined to see whether these Christians were living; and he despatched a Saxon bishop, and several others, with presents.

Think of the determination of these Anglo-Saxons; think how they must have caught the spirit of their

king, to make a voyage to India. They reached the coast of India, delivered their presents, and brought back from the Christians of St. Thomas (who were again brought to light by Dr. Buchanan in the beginning of this century), presents from them as marks of reciprocal love from those distant Christians to their Anglo-Saxon brother.

Alfred was only sovereign of the lesser half of England; his subjects were fewer in number than the population of Yorkshire, and more ignorant than the poorest peasantry in the worst parts of Ireland. Let me now sum up, and show briefly the results of his rule. He BEGAN his kingdom with enemies in the very heart of it, and those of the fiercest kind; with his clergy grossly ignorant, with his nobles fearfully depraved, and his population following the example of their betters, if we may call them so—without statesmen to second his views—all his resources destroyed, his health broken, his manners unpopular. And how did he END it? Alfred was called by the people “England’s darling;” that was the common name by which an affectionate and grateful people called this noble, this truly “GREAT” king. He came to his death after a last struggle against the Danes. Hastings, the well-known tyrant of the sea, having almost conquered France, landed in Kent. For three years the war continued, Alfred showing the utmost coolness, skill, and judgment: dividing the invaders; then cutting them off in detail one after another—separating them by rapid marches; then falling back and destroying or dispersing them off; then marching again, and cutting them off again, till he had reduced them to extremity. Hastings resorted

to trickery. He sent Alfred his children, pretending that he wished them to be baptized, in order that he might get away. Alfred sent them back with honour; but Hastings had fled meanwhile. He was reinforced by the Danes of East Anglia, and Northumbria, from the northern part of England. These marched down, but Alfred always contrived to follow and defeat them. Hastings was again brought into a corner; and his wife and children fell into Alfred's hands. He treated them with honour, and sent them back in safety. But Hastings was not capable of being softened, like Gothrun; and he remained an enemy to the end. Alfred's last act against the enemy was characteristic of the man. The enemy had sailed up the little river Lea—then much broader than it is now. At that time the mouth of the Thames was at Greenwich. Battersea and Chelsea were real seas; they were overflowed with water. Finsbury was Fens-bury; and from thence to Clapton was one great marsh, and a dense forest beyond: only a small part of London, the knoll on which the ancient city stood, was above water. The Danish fleet sailed up the Lea. Alfred immediately took up a position between them and the Londoners, to protect the latter while they were gathering in their corn; and, in order to prevent the Danes from getting away, he cut down large trees, pointed them into piles, and drove them into the bed of the river, and then dug a channel by which he turned off the Lea, and left the ships high and dry, so that they could not get away. The Danes left the camp, and were heard of next at the mouth of the Severn. At last they quitted England; and soon afterwards Alfred was called to his

rest, and we do not doubt, through grace, to his reward. A plague, which generally followed an invasion of the Danes, caused by the deficiency or the unwholesomeness of the food, ravaged his land; and by that plague Alfred died at the young age (for him) of fifty-one. BUT HE DID NOT DIE YOUNG. "A child may die a hundred years old," if he has *done* much, *believed* much, and *loved* much, during his short lifetime. Life is not to be reckoned by YEARS, but by WORKS. A man that works the whole of his time for God and for his fellow-man cannot die young. Alfred died, as we may say, "in a good old age," though he was but fifty-one.

Now, mark what he had accomplished, and then I will finish. 1. He had made himself a learned scholar. 2. He had exercised himself into a successful warrior. 3. He had brought skill, and talent, and power, against brute force, for his country. 4. He had become an accomplished politician. 5. He had laid the foundation of the English royal navy. 6. Founded the internal policy of England. 7. Laid the foundation of its commerce. 8. Educated its clergy. 9. Founded the first of its universities, and begun its schools. But the great crowning point of all was, that he was a real, a true, and a humble Christian. We see him in his youth praying for power against youthful lusts. We find him corrected for his faults—one of the greatest marks of God's dealings with his own children. We find that sin repented of produced *humility*; the consciousness of his own corruption, *charity*; the knowledge of the book of God, *truth*; the experience of God's faithfulness, *trust*; the nearness of eternity,

the *economy of time*—teaching him to gather up those precious little brilliants which *we* call minutes, but which, if rightly used, are turned into “mountains of light” in the Christian’s heavenly diadem. He desired that all his people should have the word of God in their own language. Though he had a heart for England, the largeness of his heart was only bounded by the world. He had a heart to love every man who bore the form of that Redeemer who loved him and died for him.

I ask you, beloved brethren, whether this man, whose life I have endeavoured feebly to sketch, is not entitled, if there be no other man on earth entitled, to the name of “Great”?

Young Christian, “Go, and,” according to the measure of thy power and the circle of thy opportunity, “do likewise.”

“Behold a pupil of the monkish gown,  
 The pious *Alfred*, king to justice dear!  
 Lord of the harp and liberating spear;  
 Mirror of princes! Indigent Renown  
 Might range the starry ether for a crown  
 Equal to his deserts, who like the year  
 Pours forth his bounty, like the day doth cheer,  
 And awes like night with mercy-tempered frown.  
 Ease from this noble miser of his time  
 No moment steals; pain narrows not his cares.  
 Though small his kingdom as a spark or gem,  
 Of *Alfred* boasts remote Jerusalem;  
 And Christian India, through her wide-spread clime,  
 In sacred converse, gifts with *Alfred* shares.”

WORDSWORTH

The Christian Character, in its Connexion  
with Secular Pursuits.

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A LECTURE

BY THE

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AND MINISTER OF CHRIST'S CHAPEL, ST. JOHN'S WOOD.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN EXETER HALL,

JANUARY 27, 1852.

ROGER CUNLIFFE, Esq.,

IN THE CHAIR.



## THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER, IN ITS CON- NEXION WITH SECULAR PURSUITS.

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It is no small privilege, and involves no light responsibility, to be permitted to have a share in the promotion of an end so great and good as that in which, under God, this Institution is concerned. With a heart much engaged on behalf of the young, and especially of young men whose prospects in life call them to encounter the dangers of metropolitan society, I accept the privilege which your invitation has afforded me; and now stand among you for the purpose of exercising it. And if what I have to advance may fall short of my conception of the importance of the subject allotted to me, yet I trust the cause we have in hand may in no wise be hindered.

You must all be aware of some disadvantage attending an attempt to discuss, in a single lecture of convenient length, a great subject, which, if viewed in its full dimensions, would call forth a wide reach of thought, and a voluminous amount of detail and illustration. Premising this, I shall do my best to present you with a fair and ample outline, leaving much of the filling up to your own thoughtful intelligence.

Between many things opposite in their nature, we are enabled to trace connexions and relations; and therefore it seems not strange that we speak of the Christian character in its connexion with secular pursuits—than which, no two things can possibly be more opposite. Such a connexion undoubtedly exists; but it has its limitations. There are two classes of secular pursuits:—those which are, from their very nature, contrary to the will of God, and on that account not only sinful and dangerous, but destructive; and those which are, in every sense, lawful and plainly adapted by God himself to man in his present state of activity and intelligence. With the former we have nothing to do, but to denounce them. Between them and the Christian character there is no connexion. These are manifestly repugnant, the one to the other. I need not particularize in order to show you the distinction. The natural conscience of every man can at any moment point out where the line of distinction lies, and no Christian will knowingly overstep that line. He will suffer loss if he does, as the effect of confounding evil and good, and of blending darkness with light. The latter class of secular pursuits, with which we are now concerned, includes everything upon which we can ask and scripturally expect the blessing of God, and as constituting the business of active and intelligent life,—art, science, commerce, merchandize, scholarship,—the stimulants of industry and the sweeteners of toil. The pages of an encyclopædia alone can give the catalogue of those varied pursuits to which we refer, and which are at once connected with the vigour of our intellect, or the energy of our bodies.

or the affections of our hearts—or with all together. The annals of mankind, at least their best and brightest pages, are filled with the records of such pursuits—with the achievements of industry—with the developed powers of intelligence—with the successes which have ripened, and the disappointments which have chastened, the affections of the heart.

Now, whatever may by and by appear to be the substance of the true and genuine Christian character, the simplest idea we can form of it in the light of Holy Scripture, warrants a declaration, at the very outset, that it cannot be formed and developed in solitude—in the seclusion of the cloister, or in any other mode of entire separation from the stirring interests and pursuits of daily life. The experiment has been tried, and has signally failed. Erroneous notions of its very nature gave countenance to the experiment; and Rome herself—a still living witness, and an unwilling one, practically proclaims the failure. Solitude and society—repose and activity—strength generated in retirement—energy matured by antagonism—wisdom expanded by experience—and grace gathered in large increase on the fields of temptation and trial, must combine in order to the full formation and just development of the Christian character. The seed of it is heavenly; but it is sown in a soil that is earthy. It is a Divine creation, and bears on it the impress of its origin, as really and as manifestly as do the earth and the heavens. And, as the particular structures of animal, vegetable, and mineral tribes, indicate purposes in the Eternal Mind in reference to their creation, office, and perpetuated existence, so does the Christian character, as por-

trayed in the Bible, and as exemplified by Christian consistency. No man, who duly contemplates its true portraiture, can fail to observe that it is intended and formed for activity—for activity in a definite sphere, and (for the present) in an atmosphere at once, and in every sense, opposed to its own essential quality. This world is that sphere; and the spirit of this world is the atmosphere. Christian character, then, in its sphere, and surrounded by this atmosphere, is a *power*, and not a beautiful abstraction; and it is a power *manifest*, and not latent; *active*, and not quiescent. As a power, it gathers force from resistance. As a power in manifestation, it is daily shining forth in greater clearness. As a power essentially active, its spring and its grasp are quickened and nerved by exercise—in subordination to the operation of God the Holy Ghost, from whom its vitality, its power, and its activity, yea, all that makes it what it is, has been drawn.

A contemplative life no doubt has its charms; and a life of spiritual contemplation, at first sight, seems bright with promise; but it gains no victories,—it wins no laurels,—it leads no adversaries captive. It opens no field for such achievements. It may bring us to gaze into the heavens, as with a powerful telescope; but it cannot bear us up to walk gloriously amid the pathways of the stars—to the inner chamber of the everlasting Father. A contemplative existence may cherish a sentiment, but cannot embody the active reality of a truth believed;—may luxuriate in the philosophy and in the poetry of Christianity, but cannot develop its fibre, its sinew, and its muscle. Now, the true Christian is a wrestler,

and must strive; he is a warrior, and must fight; he is a traveller, and must press forward; a racer, and must win the crown; he is a trader with goodly talents confided to him, and must negotiate; he is a witness for God, and must bear his testimony; he is a light in the world, and must shine; he is salt on the earth, and must diffuse his savour; he is Christ's freeman, and must be dealing blows against surrounding captivities; he is the son of a King, and must be furthering the interests and glory of the kingdom of which he is an heir; he is alive from the dead, and must give proof of the power of Christ's resurrection-life within him. Here, at every glance, is presented, most distinctly, the idea of power, manifestation, and therefore, of activity; and surely, the cloister affords not the field on which it may be embodied, or the objects and interests on which it may tell. Hence, then, if the Christian character is to be seen in its true light, and to be felt in the exercise of its proper influence, it must be in connexion with secular pursuits. And hence, also, the importance—the practical importance of the subject now in hand;—the sense of which should be greatly enhanced by a due consideration of the ultimate end for which the Christian character is to be formed and developed,—an end worthy of God for its sublimity, and which cannot be defeated by the winding up of time and the concernments of time, but will be permanent in the permanence of eternity, when secular pursuits, and the hopes and fears, affections and interests involved in them, shall have passed away for ever.

From these general and preliminary remarks you

may be prepared to expect, that I should endeavour to set before you the Christian character, as seen in its proper sphere of existence while the things of time continue; and point out how its allotted atmosphere of secular pursuit may be equally influential, either to the help or the hindrance of its development, very much in accordance with the use or the abuse which may be made of it. For certain it is, and experience establishes the certainty, that secular pursuits, unsanctified to their highest end, do seriously retard the soul's upward progress; while the very same pursuits, used piously and wisely, as means to an end, do, under God, and as part of a divine economy, serve to further the soul's weightiest interests, and to work out the development of which the true Christian character is susceptible: in regard to which we may trace an analogy, by remembering that the wholesomest food, unwisely used, generates disease which kills; and mighty poisons, tempered in the administration, are under God the harbingers of health and vigour.

It is necessary that our minds should be distinctly impressed with the truth, that Christianity is not one of many religions, and adopted by us as being, on the whole, the best of all,—the most rational, practical, convenient, and suitable. Were it so, then the Mussulman, the Hindoo, and the wildest savage tribes, practising obscene rites and cherishing extravagant superstitions, might take a like ground, and equally assert a preference, for reasons similar to ours. Religion is one thing, and not many things; and Christianity is that one thing. Religion is *religation*,—a re-binding power. It is the link where-

by God and a believing sinner, once in a state of ruinous separation from God, are re-bound together for eternity. God manifest in human flesh,—in humiliation,—in suffering,—in triumph, is the substance of that link. Christ himself, then, is religion. From him, therefore, all of religion that is personal and practical in us radiates, as from a centre. Out of him, in like manner, Christianity, as a system of applicable truth, germinates as from a seed. Religion experienced, then, is *Christ in us*; and Christ in us is re-ligation, or a re-binding us together with and into God. Such an experience is salvation; and has in it the elements of a glory that shall be illustrious in its immortality.

Religion, regarded as a system of unmixed, because of revealed truth, and of truth in its highest order and relation, is not, like one of the fixed sciences,—ours, when its elementary principles are understood, its problems solved, and its practical philosophy fathomed. All this may happen, and still we may be irreligious,—that is, not re-bound into God, under the power of a new allegiance. For to have the amplest knowledge of what religion is, is not, in itself, and in any sense, to *be religious*, or in a state of religion. A man may be thoroughly possessed of the powers of arithmetical science, but, if he has no possessions upon which the operations of arithmetic may tell, the fullest knowledge of the power of an infinite multiple can never make him rich;—but let him possess that which is capable of multiplication and increase, then his arithmetical certainties will enable him to determine to a nicety, the actual cube of his wealth.

I make these almost self-evident remarks, because in these days a desire for religious *knowledge* is certainly on the increase, and intelligent minds are not ashamed to confess that they are interested in the pursuit of it; out of which may grow up,—perhaps is already growing up, a danger of resting in the *knowledge*, without going up to the experience of the *power* of truths known; which if they are to be worth anything, must be allowed to sway and govern the whole man,—commencing with the regeneration of his fallen and depraved nature, and progressing till he shall have thereby reached the true altitude of his relation as a child of God, and become endowed with a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

You will now plainly understand what I mean, when I say that Christianity, as a system of revealed truth, unfolding to our view a remedy provided by God himself for the sin of man—a fallen, guilty, and apostate creature—must, whenever applied to the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost (and by no inferior power can it be applied, however excellent the means to the end),—such a system *must impress a character*; that is, he to whom it is so applied must take the form of it, being cast in it as in a mould. A mould expresses the design and intention of the master mind that formed it; and the substance brought to it obeys the design and the intention, both of which have power over the substance. The hardy iron yields to the fire; the sturdy brass gives way in the furnace; they both flow in a stream of submissiveness, till the mould confirms and fixes their obedience, which at length stands forth confessed in

the grace and loveliness of the statue, that all but speaks, and breathes, and moves.

If Christ is revealed to us, as the express image of the Father's person,\*—the image of the invisible God; † if it is the revealed purpose of God that every true believer shall be conformed to the image of his Son, ‡—that there shall be a putting off of the old man with his deeds, and a putting on of the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him; § if the purpose of God involves nothing less than that all true believers come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: || if believers are planted in the likeness of Christ's death—planted *together* with him, to the end that they may also be in the likeness of his resurrection; ¶ and if we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord,\*\*—what, I ask, do such and such-like statements of holy writ mean, if not that, by the Holy Spirit's application of Divine truth to the heart, a character, a definite, living, Divine character is thereby to be impressed, of which Christ is to be the mould, even as the Eternal Father is the mould of Christ? And what else does the apostle to the Galatians mean, when he says—"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until *Christ be formed in you*"?

\* Heb. i. 3; 2 Cor. iv. 4.

† Rom. viii. 29.

‡ Eph. iv. 13.

§ Rom. vi. 5.

† Col. i. 15.

§ Col. iii. 9, 10.

\*\* 2 Cor. iii. 18

Now character, in this sense, implies *quality*, and not external likeness merely—as a statue may bear a resemblance to a living man, while destitute of the qualities, powers, and faculties of a living man. It follows, then, that he on whom the Holy Ghost has impressed such a character, through the sanctified belief of the truth, must have in him the mind which was also in Christ Jesus; or, in other words, must have the Spirit of Christ, without which he is none of his. I do not say, *may* have, but *must* have. It is inseparable from the impressment of the character. And this is but another way of stating the great doctrines of regeneration and sanctification; and another way of expressing the necessity for both. If they are wanting, knowledge alone, however accurate and however ample, will not supply the deficiency. The work of the Holy Ghost has not been wrought in the soul. There is no character impressed. Moral excellences will be but like pleasant flowers blossoming over a tomb; while the mind, stored with the fulness of truth, will be only like voices from the tomb, proclaiming the dominion of corruption that is there.

Briefly speaking, I shall make myself intelligible, if I assert that the quality of the Christian character consists in the possession of a twofold power,—power to choose, to delight in, and to follow out the known will of God;—power to discern, to reject, and to resist all that is opposed to the known will of God; while to the exercise of the power, love to God as the supreme affection will supply the resistless motive. But the force of the power, and the strength of the motive, will manifestly depend upon the de-

gree of development which the character has experienced. Still the germ both of the power and of the motive is already in the renewed heart. The new-born babe possesses all the elements of the fully developed man; so does the new-born child of God—the babe in Christ, possess the elements of that glorious being who, as the trophy and fruit of the resurrection, shall ere long be throned above the archangel.

The Christian character, then, is of a lofty kindred;—so lofty, that if we could divest our minds, in respect to it, of the idea both of progress and antagonism, we might be inclined to think that its only proper sphere is heaven, and its fitting atmosphere the presence of God the Father, and of the Lamb. Such is, indeed, its destiny,—but its course is to be run; its hardships are to be endured, and its conflicts are to be met;—and that too, in this present state of existence, amidst the things which are seen and which are temporal; and surrounded by influences of an unfriendly kind, swayed very much, for a time, through a Divine permission, by the god of this world. All this may be quite inexplicable upon any ordinary principle to the natural mind of man, who, when nursing an exotic plant, seeks for it a native temperature by artificial means, and provides for it a soil so suitable as to prevent its pining, under a sensitive longing for a better. Upon God's principle of procedure, then, a true Christian character under development is not out of its place while in the world. It is exactly in its right place—the place in which it may thrive best;—the only place in which it can thrive and expand to that ripe maturity which

shall fit it for transplantation to the gardens of Paradise. It is not, then, a thing incidental, but necessary ; because we believe, that in the economy of God there is a positive connexion—(lying indeed far beyond our searching, as to the actual point of connexion,) between the secular pursuits of ordinary life, and the right development of the Christian character ; a connexion which calls out the ascertained powers which constitute its quality, and prepares them for the influence of the motive that shall give them both activity and force. There are flowers whose fragrance is exhaled through pressure. Some of the sweetest sounds of music are the product of percussion ; and the noblest statue is the visible response which the marble makes to the blows of the mallet and the chisel. There is a wide and minute analogy, easily traceable, to show that opposite influences are aids both to production and development ;—else, why should the noble forest-oak be destined to bear the woodman's weapon at its keenest, ere it can set forth the loveliness of the carver's genius, or become the solid roof-tree of a lordly mansion ; or why should the living tomb—the mailed encasement of the chrysalis, interpose between the velvet-tinted caterpillar that crawls, and the bright-winged butterfly, robed like a princess, that fulfils its short mission in the regions of the sun ?

Let no young man,—let not any man, assume or assert that he is placed at a disadvantage, when, amidst the busiest stir of secular pursuits, he is called on to feel, to maintain, and to exhibit among men and before God, the power and the gracefulness

of a lofty spirituality. Would he be wiser than God, and change his place? Would he attempt to work out his high destiny by means inferior to those which are divinely appointed, because his own fallible judgment discerns not at once their fitness? To be earthly-minded amidst earthly things is natural to man, simply as man, and while destitute of the elements of the Christian character. But to be spiritually-minded amidst the opposing carnalities of this lower world is just to obey the new instinct of a renovated nature: and every achievement of the spiritual mind is an advantage taken, and actually drawn forth from antagonist powers. Where were success if there were no hindrance? And would the trumpet-blast of victory be ever blown, were there no battle-field with its legions marshalled in the deadly array of opposition? Even the poor mariner on a stormy sea knows how to take advantage of a cross wind; and the stern billows that mutter of danger, and bellow forth the threatenings of death, are the sturdy arms that bear him onward in his course; while the howling winds that strain his mast and split his canvas, are the winged messengers of God to speed his progress. He knows their meaning. He deals with them with a sagacious and practised spirit; and when they are at their wildest height—he looks heavenward for a sign, and tells his younger messmate that both wind and waves shall at night-fall sing their choral lullaby to soothe his slumbers, or beguile the solitude of his watch-hour.

What follows, then? Why, that a monarch on his throne,—a peer in the power of his nobility,—a legislator in the senate,—a merchant on the exchange,—

a lawyer in the forum,—a trader in his warehouse,—a student at his books,—a clerk in the counting-house,—a shopman behind the counter,—a porter bearing his burthens,—a sweeper in the streets,—the vender of a lucifer match—may, for aught of actual *hindrance* from his calling, be as firm in his faith, as lofty in his piety, as spotless in his life, as he whose days are given exclusively to spiritual pursuits,—the active, devoted, consistent minister of Christ at home, or the self-denying missionary who bears the message of redeeming love to heathen races in distant lands, and exemplifies the Christian character in the transparency of a blameless life. There is not, in any one of the lawful pursuits of daily life, anything that is of *necessity*, an insurmountable hindrance to the growth of a true spirituality.

Where the elements of the true Christian character exist, and assume their proper activity up to the power of activity already possessed, they compel a corresponding diminution of the power of secular things. Christian biography supplies us with instances of the truth of what I say. Was Paul less pious because he wrought for his bread—labouring at a craft? Was Newton less holy because he toiled amidst the stars? Was Wilberforce less devoted because he mingled with the worldly in the conflicts of policy and debate? Was Thornton far off from God, because he strove amidst merchandize, and came off a gainer? Call to mind the rest of the Christian worthies of England, and see how many of them—(not divines)—were men of enterprise, of industry and toil; then glance over the field of

active life in the present day, and add to them the names of good and yet busy men—of whom we all know some—men of faith, men of prayer, men of love—Bible-men—getting good and doing good day by day—widening their circle of influence as they go; carrying Christ with them and in them, and showing his excellence and loveliness to those who knew him not before. Are they faint in business, because strong in the Lord? Are they feeble in Christ, because earnest in lawful pursuit? Is not their true description—“not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”? Look into domestic circles—most of them the homes of active men;—call to mind the instances you know of godly consistency in faith and practice—faith which overcometh the world, and practice which adorns it—and ample will be the proof afforded that secular pursuits do not, *of necessity*, give a death-blow to spirituality. And if further proof were needful, might we not call up as witnesses the living facts of your own and kindred institutions—here in the very heart of England, and ramifying themselves in the provinces;—societies for the purpose of extending the influences of religion among the youthful; for promoting Christian Missions at home and abroad; and for shortening (as they greatly need) the hours of business, that suitable time may be secured for supplying the wants of the intellect, and the cravings of the soul? By whom, under God, were these societies called into existence; and by whom is their increase sought, and their activity promoted, in faith, in prayer, and in love? By young men. And I will venture to say, there are not to be

found among them or their adherents a score who are not engaged throughout the live-long day amidst the pressures of secular occupation. They have not been driven into these holy-intentioned combinations by their seniors, however they may have been aided; but they have taken their stand, with a high motive, on the ground for which I am arguing; and results are proving, and will I trust go on to prove, to the satisfaction of all, that it is no fallacy. Are other proofs desired? Let us look around us, and summon up the vast array of our Sunday-school teachers, in the metropolis, and in every city, town, and village. Who are they? What are they? For the most part, young people in the morning of life; most of them woven in with the woof of secular interests; and not a few struggling hard for honourable maintenance, with perhaps a widowed mother dependent on their industry and love; or a feeble sister, or a sick brother, or an orphaned family, of which they may be the eldest, the counsellors, and the stay. Without over-rating the actual spirituality to be found amidst those who are thus engaged in promoting the spiritual progress of society, and without more than a glancing reference to our Missionary, Bible, and other Christian Societies, and the collectors, who everywhere are aiding their funds, I am content—(are not you?)—with the proof, so far as it goes, that the lawful pursuit of secular affairs, does not, *of necessity*, hinder the growth of spirituality, or the true development of the Christian character—its brightest graces, or its loveliest and holiest affections.

But though it is satisfactory to see such a point as

this fairly and easily established beyond dispute, yet we must not be content with it, but proceed further, and show that secular pursuits, used as God would have us use them, are indeed aids to the development of the Christian character.

I have already stated, as a general proposition, that opposing influences aid the development of power already in possession, by calling forth its activity. This is a proposition universally true; and it circumstantially fails, only when one power is, from its nature, so dominant as entirely to overpower and crush the other. Now, we do not look for such a failure, when the power of secular pursuits is set against the power of the true Christian character; because there is no proof, but the contrary, of God having ever purposed that the power of secular pursuits, however vast, should be dominant over the power of the Christian character in its course of development. If it were so, what becomes of every exhortation to personal holiness which we find, uttered in every tone and with every variety of example and illustration, in the word of truth? For what is holiness, but the product of the development of the Christian character, according to the purpose of God, triumphant at every step of its progress over the spirit of this world, and the influence of those pursuits in which the child of God, while an inhabitant of this lower world, must of necessity be engaged? The power of secular pursuits, therefore, is not a power mightier than the power of a genuine Christianity, which is God in Christ, enthroned in the heart of man. To contend otherwise, would be, practically, to contend that the god of this world is

mightier than the God whose sovereignty is supreme in the heart where he dwells. The general proposition, then, is true, in regard to the case we have in hand; and I, therefore, proceed upon it as established.

And here, on starting afresh, let me remark that the atmosphere of secular pursuits does not, cannot, and was never intended to originate the Christian character in the heart of man. To eat bread in the sweat of his brow (which is the figure or type of all human industry), was just the concomitant of man's departure from his allegiance to God. It marks man's fallen condition; but it develops his natural powers; and the products of industry, of enterprise, and skill,—all that make us marvel while beholding the progress of society about us, for good or evil, or for both,—simply supply the proof, that out of ruins God is raising up a wondrous structure. But if the atmosphere of secular pursuits does not, and cannot, originate the Christian character, yet I would have you steadily bear in mind, as a truth never to be lost sight of, that it is out of that very atmosphere the Christian character rises like a star, and amidst the glooms, and fogs, and damps, and mists that surround it, shines on till its setting. And why is this? May we humbly venture a reason? Is it not because in the purpose of God, this earth, the scene of man's fall and degradation, is the allotted platform on which he is to hear, believe, and rejoice in a revelation of mercy and love;—the starting-point of his "excelsior," on which he is destined, if at all, to win Christ, and the life and immortality which He has brought to light by his gospel; and with the dignity

of a renewed and sanctified being, illustrious in holiness, "show forth the praises (or virtues) of Him who hath called him out of darkness into his marvellous light;" \* and all this as introductory to the full fruiting of the resurrection triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ—when "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places shall be made known by the Church (Christ's glorious body), the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord?" †

It is, therefore, in the midst of secular pursuits of some kind, lawful or unlawful—ay, sometimes,—often in the very darkest highways and byways of sinful practice and indulgence, that the grace of God unto eternal life first encounters the rebel—unmasks him to himself—shows him the hell of his own heart, and the hell towards which he is plunging in the dark; and in the gloom of the one, or the glare of the other, sets up the cross of the Redeemer full in view—and tells him, by the utterance of the Spirit, audible to the inner man: "He that believeth is not condemned;" "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" "This is the record that God hath given to us, eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Yes; it is in the atmosphere of secular pursuits, that the first impression of better things is taken—that the first salt tears of a godly sorrow are shed—the first reaching forth to the cross is made—the first taste of the peace which passeth all understanding is experienced;—it is there that the first prospect of salvation to be enjoyed, and heaven's glories to be won, shines into the dark soul like a beam of light from

\* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

† Eph. iii. 8—11.

the presence-chamber of the eternal God. And what is all this? It is the origin—God's gracious commencement of the Christian character of a sinner—a worldly man, a slave to the god of this world. Brought safely into Christ,—and what does he become?—An heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. In Christ he is a new creature;—old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. His tendency is upward,—heavenward. *He has a character*; and now it is to be developed in holiness, and in the manifested power of holiness; and every fibre of that power is of grace, and therefore of God. The holiest saint in heaven—the most blessed child of God now on earth, awaiting his translation, had this beginning—such a development, and no other; and it was amidst the secular pursuits of the world that the light of truth first streamed down into his soul.

Then, I ask,—May not advantage be taken of all lawful secular pursuits; and, like the wild horse of the desert, may they not be broken, and trained, and tempered to our service, so that instead of hindering by abuse, they may help us forward, by a sanctified use, amidst all that is arduous in the Christian course? Let us see; for it is an inquiry of no small importance. If we bear in mind as Christians, that advantage *may* be taken of secular pursuits; if we see enough from the general argument to convince us that God intends such advantage should be taken,—inasmuch as he has placed us, both sinners and believers, in the midst of them; and if those who have made progress in the Christian life, from St. Paul downwards, have all turned them to advantage,

then the case is plain, and should minister to us every possible encouragement.

Now, if secular pursuits and their results are erroneously regarded as the *end* of human desire and activity, and not simply as matters incidental to our present state and mode of existence, they make up, indeed, the substance or substantiality of man's existence. His hopes, his fears—all his affections are centred in them. Out of them he finds nothing. Beyond them he seeks nothing. How should he? He is bounded by a very limited horizon; he is of the earth, earthy: for so to regard them, pertains to the natural, the unconverted man, in whom the Christian character is not formed;—on whom the initial workings of Divine grace have wrought out no effect. He is of a piece with his pursuits. They reflect themselves, the one upon the other; so that what the pursuits of the natural man are, such is he. But, supposing the Christian character to have *commenced*, in that fact we look at once for the advantage to be made of secular pursuits; for in it there is both motive and power;—motive to project a Christian progress; and power to convert the resistances of secular pursuits into so many springs, acting in the right direction, so as, under God, to result in our so passing through things temporal, as finally not to lose the things eternal; or, in other words, using the world as not abusing it. By passing through things temporal certainly is not meant passing out of them, so as to avoid their contact; any more than by using the world, is meant letting it alone. The passing through things temporal means, at least, the being mixed up in them without disadvantage; and is not

advantage, moreover, implied? The using of the world means, at least, employing it to an end; and the not abusing implies the employing it to a right end,—the very opposite of that which would be consequent on the abuse.

Now if it be true, as I have stated, that the unconverted man, destitute of Christian character, is of a piece with his pursuits, it is no less true that the secular pursuits of the spiritual man come to be of a piece with himself. And how does this happen? He throws his spirituality into them; and engages in them, in so far as they are lawful in the sight of God (and he will make no choice of any other), with a simple desire that thereby God may be glorified, remembering the apostolic rule in that behalf, and assured that it applies to Christians in the midst of their secular pursuits; for if there be existing in them a genuine spirituality, God is glorified by the fact, and will be glorified by its progress and final result. The spirit of the rule is, that whatsoever a Christian does, as a member of the human family,—whether parent or child, whether master or servant, whether husband or wife, whether buyer or seller, whether manufacturer or consumer, he shall seek one end—the exemplification of the supremacy or the Divine will, with which his own will has been brought by grace to harmonize; and every act of patient well-doing in the face of temptations to the contrary; every act of self-denial in the midst of the cravings of self-indulgence; every instance of blameless integrity armed against the surrounding corruptions; every going forth of Christian love to the invasion of the regions of selfishness; every

onward bound that the heart makes in full consciousness of a high destiny; every assertion of the superiority of a spiritual dependence over the objects of an earthly dependence, goes to make up the swelling chord,—the choral utterance of the renewed heart, which proclaims the harmony of the creature's will with the will of the beneficent, the loving, the redeeming Creator. And therein is at once seen the advantage which the spiritual not only gains over, but gathers from, and distils out of, the secular; — an advantage which proves the power of a “wonder-working alchemy which draineth elixir out of poisons.”

But, to come still closer to the matter in hand, let it be borne in mind, that while secular pursuits, such as a true Christian may lawfully be engaged in, and the temporal interests involved in them, have, in their direct influence, a tendency to keep the soul down, in a degree proportioned to the absorption of mind, and the bestowal of time which they demand; yet we may fairly calculate upon a rebound from their direct influence, if the spirituality be worth anything. And then, if success follow in the train of secular pursuit, the spiritual mind makes up its daily account, beginning with the inquiry,—What have I gained, as a man striving among men? So much. What is the probable duration of benefit, should such results continue? Five, ten, twenty years; perhaps even more; and with a beneficial reversion to those who may survive, and who are very near and dear to me. But, the possible duration of benefit? Twenty-four hours,—ay, less than that may terminate it; and there may be no rever-

sion. What have I gained in the way of actual product from secular pursuits, as an immortal being, redeemed from sin, and death, and hell, and pressing on towards a heavenly inheritance and an unfading crown? In the way of direct product,—nothing; absolutely nothing. But still, I am a gainer. I have gained a deepened conviction, that these pursuits are not the end of a Christian man's existence; and must fail, as such, if so relied on. And this conviction impels me to a more steady and determined pursuit of the things and interests that are spiritual.

But suppose disappointment, and not success, to follow in the train of secular pursuit,—why, in that case the effect wrought on the spiritual mind is the same in kind, but vastly augmented; because other elements are mingled with it. There is the anxiety, the chagrin, the humiliation consequent upon disappointment; and should we not expect, if the Christian character is bearing consistent fruit, that this very result would be likely to make its possessor more fruitful in patience, more humble in his dependence on God's love, and more independent of worldly success? And would it not deepen the assurance, that to build anything upon the hope of success would be just to build upon the sand? Let such assurance be deepened to the utmost, so that it establishes its influence over a Christian man's moral being, and the undeniable consequence is, that all his building will be on one sure foundation, which is Christ; and the structure, as it grows, will ever be pointing and teaching heavenward. Here then we perceive the *indirect* influence of secular pursuits upon the Christian character. And from this view of the matter

we may gather the consoling and sustaining certainty, that while with Christian determination we are stemming the opposing current of secular pursuits, the direct tendency of which is to keep us down and make us worldly; and while thus securing and making good our rebound,—we are enlisting the indirect influences on our side, compelling them into our service, and making them at once a point of elevation on this earth, from which we may gaze with advantage around us and above us;—around, till we penetrate beyond the world's horizon-bound;—above, till heaven's glories begin to brighten on us. Do we need examples? Let us study Job,—connecting the end with the beginning of his history, and valuing the intermediate at its proper worth. Let us contrast Solomon the preacher with Solomon the prince, as a gifted lecturer on a former occasion enabled us to do; and let us remember, that it was from such an elevation as I have described that they formed their estimate of the best things, and from which their brightest hopes took wing and mounted upwards.

However powerful may be the downward influence of secular pursuits, when acting directly, and without any counteracting influence, on the nature of man as it is, yet no thoughtful and reflective person can long doubt that, when engaged in by a spiritual mind, and with ends and intents such as the spiritual mind prescribes for itself, they really give occasions and present opportunities for the exercise of Christian graces—for the exhibition of moral virtues: nor will many be disposed to deny that they are the foil which set off the lustre of both.

The richest gems have their appropriate setting. The diamond, whose value might be a monarch's ransom, blazes not in the mine. The jewelry of the heavens becomes lustrous when set in the night-gloom. The Christian, in like manner, is best seen, and best understood, when called out on the contrasting back-ground of secular occupation. He may chant litanies and breathe psalmody in unison with the diapason of heaven's orchestra;—his heart may harmonize with the utterances of the lip;—his soul may brighten over the page of a Divine inspiration; and visions of grandeur, of glory and greatness, coming down with the Spirit's unction, may pass over the retina of a spiritual perception;—his tongue, with seraphic fervour, may tell forth truths which have their record in the experience of his renewed heart;—but this is not the *whole* of the Christian of the Bible. A dial may be perfect in structure; but to know its value, we must watch the movement of the hands on the dial-plate. We must know that they move to one great end,—the end proposed by the artist; and that they move, not by some occult power of magnetism, but in obedience to laws that are interwoven with the internal mechanism itself, so as to have become part and parcel of its very existence. Between the dial and the Christian there is an analogy which cannot be mistaken; and is it a needless refinement of idea to say, that it is the mind, the spirit, the intention of the mechanist, that has imparted to the inert metals the power of motion — of motion to a definite end — of motion to an intended and prescribed result; and, therefore, that the obedience exhibited on the dial-plate is the

manifestation of the potency of inward principles, according to the mind of the mechanist?

Every pursuit of a Christian, while on earth, that is not exclusively a spiritual exercise, secretly or openly engaged in and performed, must of necessity be secular. The family circle, the wide ranges of social intercourse, the interests of business in their various forms, the competitions in art, the strivings in the field of philosophy, the achievements of industry—these and such-like are the scenes and the occasions which call out the Christian, and exhibit the movement of the hands upon the dial-plate. In all of them, the Christian seeks to move in obedience to a governing power which he knows to be active within him; and every movement, well made, brings with it an increase in the power of obeying, and in the inclination to obey. There is a spiritual habitude in the Christian character, just as habitude of some kind is traceable in every variety of human activity; and the growth of a *spiritual* habitude is indeed the true development of the Christian character, because it is a proof, as well as the result, of the inward Spirit's growing potency. Let a Christian man have faith in his own Christianity, as well as faith in that mighty and gracious One from whom he has derived it, and in every lawful pursuit of life he will find an opportunity and an occasion for making his Christianity tell, and a motive that will constrain him to embrace the opportunity, and to secure the occasion, and turn it to account. It is the want of faith in our Christianity keeping pace with faith acting towards God in Christ, that presents so much of that stunted Christianity which

rises but little beyond the moral stature of the well-conditioned man of the world;—it is the want of faith in its reality, its power, and its destiny.

Those Christian graces, the exercise of which lies between the believing soul and God, cannot possibly be extinguished by the atmosphere in which they are to be exercised, so long as the Christian keeps thoroughly alive to a sense of the relation in which he stands to God, and maintains the assurance that such relation is the product of His grace, and has been made sure both by promise and covenant. In the stir of secular pursuit, there is not the smallest necessity that this relation or its foundations should be overlooked. The sober Christian knows there is every reason why the deepest sense of their reality should be cherished and regarded. And therefore, if we speak of those graces under the well-known (but not always understood,) terms of faith, and hope, and love, and know them to be habitually exercised by the Christian in his daily walk with God, we expect that they should be carried into the pathways of secular pursuit, and that they will hallow to a spiritual end those very objects, interests, and influences which in themselves are of the earth, earthy; just as sweet perfumes, poured into and imbibed by an earthen vessel, make it redolent of fragrance foreign to itself—a lump of clay from the pit, modelled into beauty by the potter.

And can we say less than this of those other graces of the Christian character, the exercise of which, though lying like the rest, directly between God and man, come out, and are rendered visible in the daily intercourse of social life? The ground on which they

are to be exercised is secular. The world's elements, with which they are to mingle, are all secular; and it is only the exercise and the effect of the exercise that are not secular. The exercise is a spiritual exercise; the effect is a spiritual effect;—the exercise, therefore, tends to the growth and expansion of spiritual-mindedness. For, let it be remembered, that if secular pursuits are they which directly and manifestly develop the carnal mind to its full maturity, where no Christian character intervenes, they also indirectly aid the development of the spiritual mind, even though the carnal be interposing. In the one case, they bring into play all the evil that is indigenous in man's fallen nature; but are equally capable, in the other, of drawing out into their due expansion those better elements which are the web and the woof of the Christian character—of the new man, who is born of the Spirit. It is not a matter of conjecture, but of fact; for, is it not the salt of spiritual-mindedness, powerfully diffused by God's people in the midst of us—is it not the weight of Christian character, made to tell even on men who are not Christian, that keeps the turbid current of secular pursuits free from that total stagnation in a pool of corruption, which else would seem to be inevitable, where the only competitions would be those of evil with evil, and the triumph would be of the greater over the lesser evil?

The most elevated principles that ever governed a Christian man, and the loveliest affections that ever glowed in his bosom, have motives to activity at every turn of active life, and in every relation included in the social compact True Christian character always

seeks a vent ; and, like a fluid, or an aroma, it goes forth when the vent is found. It must be found among secular pursuits, and in the midst of human relations—all secular. Thus, craft, and fraud, and over-reaching, disfigure the secular pursuits of the carnal man ; but they call up the lofty integrity of the spiritual, when he comes in contact with them. It must be so ; or the spiritual man must meet like with like, and take common ground with the carnal, which Christian principle forbids. He obeys a principle—and cannot. In every instance, then, he is a gainer on the side of spirituality. He has made the best of an occasion. He is met, it may be, with pride, audacity, and insolence ; but he opposes meekness, gentleness, and forbearance. He is a victor, if not absolutely and at once over his *opponent*, yet over that which is carnal in *himself* ; and is likewise a gainer on the side of spirituality. He who engages largely in secular pursuits must expect that the ambitious, the jealous, the irascible, will sometimes jostle with him in the highways and thoroughfares of life. His temper will be tried ; his feelings will be wounded ; his sense of right will be shocked. But in his heart is a love which moves out beyond the domestic circle where his best affections centre ; and its droppings reach these—his coarse and carnal antagonists. Nay, more than this, they unite in one gentle stream of love, that goes far to the softening of asperities, and the healing of the waters of bitterness into which they flow. Did not the Apostle thoroughly understand this when he penned that memorable precept, “ If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink ; for, in so doing,

thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good?" Where else, but in the atmosphere of this world, and amidst secular pursuits, among men as men, could the Christian find such a vent as this, through which his Christianity might exhale its fragrance and develop its power? These examples may suffice; and I would only add—that it is not possible to imagine a position in which a Christian may be placed, in his intercourse with the world, that would not call for the exercise of some Christian grace—the assertion of the power of some indestructible rectitude both of principle and of conduct. Be it what it may—let the call be responded to, and advantage on the side of spirituality must be the ever certain result; for the Christian mingles not in the world single-handed and alone; he has the countenance and support of men like minded and like-principled; and, more than this—he goes forth armed with coat-armour that is weapon-proof; waited on by those bright ones who minister to the heirs of salvation; breathed on by the Spirit called down by the prayerful exercises of the secret chamber, and undergirded by the everlasting arms. The illustrious example of his Divine Master stands out in high relief before him from the background of the world's carnalities. On Him he fixes the gaze of an imitative spirituality; and, looking forth beyond the shell of his own poor humanity, he longs, and strives, and waits for the time when the corruptible shall put on incorruption; when he shall be made like the lofty object of his imitation, and see Him as he is.

Now, if all that is called Christianity were to take

this stand, and be content with nothing less, what a living commentary would it be on the eternal truths of the Bible! What a paramount influence would it exercise over the hues and habitudes of social life! What a change would it bring over the aspect of secular pursuits! Such Christianity, indeed, exists; but it is not common. And some persons, surveying the state of things around us, might be inclined to say, that it puts a negative upon the argument which has been advanced.

Such a remark, no doubt, has weight with those who form their estimate of the Christian character only from the very imperfectly reflected aspect of it which general society presents; but not with those who go at once to the Bible for its true portraiture, and thence learn that it is a Divine reality—the world's denizen, but its antagonist—standing on a heavenly foundation, and striving for masteries that shall be wreathed with immortality, and rainbowed with imperishable glories. I have all along been referring to what the Christian character is, in direct reference to the position in which it is placed in this world; and that is the only way in which to regard it. It is not an exotic shut up in a hot-house. It must meet the outer air, and all the changes of the moral atmosphere around it. It must make external influences bend to it, and not accommodate itself to them. There are plants as well as trees whose roots and fibres penetrate the limestone rock, and invade the granite. The obstinate gives way to the tender. The limestone and the granite are *inanimate*. The rooty fibre which insinuates, or drives itself like a wedge, has life,—*vegetative life*; and therein lies its power.

So, it is the power of a spiritual life, within that constitutes the force of the true Christian character. Every precept to be found in the Word of God is an appeal to the power of spiritual life, in those who possess it: and every response to the appeal brings with it a manifestation of the power—not in repose, but in exercise, and in result. If the apostle (as a sample of restrictive precepts), after referring to the principles and practices of the ungodly, says—“Be not ye therefore partakers with them; for ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light”—his appeal is to the power of the spiritual life, calling up resistance against what is carnal and worldly; a resistance that shall prevail, if the Christian means to have it so. If, amidst abundant calls to personal holiness, the precept is—“Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”—his appeal is to the power of the spiritual life, calling up its activity, its energy, its patience, its self-denial. If the precept be—“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand”—his appeal is again to the power of the spiritual life—calling up its stoutness and its valour, with a note of preparation for the Christian to gird himself with omnipotence, for a conflict in which he *may* be more than conqueror, if he *will*. And thus must we estimate the Christian character, if we would really see how it may not only overcome the hindrances by enduring the friction of secular pursuits, but turn them to a manifest and undeniable advantage; just as the hero of a hundred well-fought fields has found

his sagacity deepened, and his valour braced, and his prowess extended, till his name has become identified with victory—by the booming of every cannon—the shrill note of every trumpet—the furling of the banner when the last blow is struck—the crouching of the craven—the sealed treaty of advantageous peace, in the silence of which the world looks on in awe, marvelling at mortal man and the laurels he has won. But still, it cannot be denied that the too common influence of secular pursuits is quite the other way; that they do hinder when they might be overcome;—that they are often successful opponents, when they might be led at our chariot wheels, and made to toil in fetters for our advantage. And it is against this that I would solemnly warn you.

There never was a time in the world's history, when the currents of secular pursuit flowed so broadly, so deeply, and with so dangerous an impetus as now:—never a time when the vortex of secularity boiled so destructively:—never a time when more noble vessels went down the rapids, strewing the shores with ghastly wreckage. The Christian man, and the man of the world, launch their barks alike on the same waters; but their freightage differs. They meet the same winds, and feel the same tides; but the hand on the helm varies. If the man of the world spreads all his canvas, the Christian man must not reef any. If the mast of the man of the world cracks, that of the Christian man must bend like a reed, or it will be shivered. This is no time for slothful spirits or weary hands. The man of business who unduly pauses is outstripped by his untiring competitors, and the bankrupt-list records

its increase. The sounds of stir and bustle invade every ear in the places of concourse, and are echoed within the quieter walls of home; they follow whoever invite them; they often intrude on those who would repel them. In the hours of retired prayer and communion with God, they seek admittance. In the house of God they are not always silent. And when God's word is sounding in our ears, the world's sounds come down on us, like notes of discord in sweet music. The parent, anxious for the temporal welfare of his children kneeling by his side, does not always banish the thought of the coming week's hopes and fears, and active strivings; and thus the human heart's tenderness makes way for the world's entanglements; and deep affections are often our misleaders. With some,—with many, the struggle of life is hard; and the bud of spirituality gets nipped by the north blasts of necessity. Heaven must be won; but things needful for the present claim to be won first. A firm standing for eternity must be secured; but there is an inferior standing that must not be overlooked or disregarded; and it seems to lie in the foreground—hope marking its boundaries. The ant-hill of life is covered with its millions—going—coming—retreating—advancing; some bearing burdens; others giving directions; and each has his something, which is in danger of becoming his everything. Each intent upon his own, looks too indifferently on others; and base passions expand, till the most excellent gift of charity falters, or passes by with a wan smile—powerless. Hours of business are prolonged, that another grain may be added to the sand-hill of

acquisition that has no foundation. The shopman sickens in body and soul; the artisan strives till the gaslight blinds him; the pale needle-woman — that slenderest and most shadowy of slaves — feels her bony fingers stiffen while wrestling against death for an extra farthing to sustain a life that has lost its spring, its motive, and its end — cheated of its spirituality. The world is a vast slave-driver, under whose whip the million toil like criminals; and where there is no spirituality, their fetters break only on the grave's brink, when the time for true liberty, the loftiest and the best, has glided quite away. The grave swallows its victims, but Mammon's car rolls on. Hell enlarges itself, as the god of this world makes his triumphs sure. From death beds are heard cries of despair, thickening over the recollection of Mammon served and God neglected; but the world's rush is too rapid for such sounds to reach the careless. Intellect is stimulated, but God moves not in it. Enterprise stands tip-toe, but looks not heavenward. Greediness of gain grasps, but feels not that its hand holds only shadows. Pleasure comes onward, like a gaudy harlot, and singing like a syren, for those whose hearts are not fast with God, and who seek relief in the poison-cup of her fascinations. Go through the streets of this metropolis after night-fall, — now, at the very moment while the world's din is almost mingling with the voice that addresses you, and ask, What are the stirring thousands doing, and what place in their hearts is the great end of human existence occupying? And how does the fact answer for itself? Alas, as to the majority of these immortal ones, — “Without hope,

and without God in the world!" Young men of London,—young men of England,—these are a few faintly sketched lineaments of the influences that are around you, and against which your spirituality (if you have it) must make head. From them you cannot escape, but against them you may prevail: for greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. You cannot unmake the world, but you may help to mend it. You may neutralize its power over you by augmenting your own. Like the Indian, you may pipe to the serpent, when you have extracted its fangs. You may go through the world's battle-fields, like one with a charmed life, so that you have on you the whole armour of God, and the sword of the Spirit in your hand. But, still, they who are soldiers of the cross must bear themselves bravely, giving no quarter, and seeking none. A band of Christian young men leading the van, is a sight on which angels look down rejoicingly. Triumphs which sparkle on the page of history are dim when seen in contrast with those which may be won in the strength of the Lord of hosts. There was a young shepherd, standing among the hosts of Israel arrayed for battle against the Philistines,—a stripling,—ruddy and well-favoured. The pulse of valour was in his heart; the glance of defiance in his eye; the voice of triumph on his lip. He stood ungirded before the mighty man of war, whose spear-staff was like a weaver's beam; not a nerve shook; not one vision of fear crossed his path. He was confident in the strength that was on his side, and his cause he knew was righteous. The stone was chosen—was poised—was hurled. It struck its mark, winged

with gory death. Yes; David overcame with a sling and with a stone. And why was this? There is but one answer: The Lord of hosts was with him; the God of Jacob was his refuge!

The spirituality that is to meet the world as a champion, and win victories for eternity, must be expansive and growing. If it is to be a lever, to lift off the crushing weight of secularity, its fulcrum must be the faithfulness of God. If it is to be a winged spirit, forcing the soul upwards from the thralldom of an ever-pressing carnality, its pinions must be braced by the promises which, in Christ, are yea and amen. If it is to be an alchemist, transmuting all to celestial gold, its science must be drawn from the Eternal Word. Spirituality of sentiment will not do. The poesy of spirituality will all fail. The spirituality which the world does not condemn will only disappoint. Nothing will do but that which enabled the Apostle to affirm—"I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me;" and again,—“I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course.” And such spirituality cannot be attained to, or maintained, except the judgment, the heart, the affections, are thoroughly enlisted on the side of the things which are not seen, and which are eternal. Once this has been effected by the Holy Spirit's work in a converted heart, the first step of successful progress is made; and the Christian character, in the use of means divinely appointed and adapted, will go on to its true development,—its lofty culmination, and bring glory to Him whose sole “workmanship” it is. Let the Christian young men of England thus take their stand, and we seniors,

who soon must be crossing the Jordan flood, will lay down our heads, in the assurance that a goodly army will be raised to fight the Lord's battle; that a spiritual embankment, made substantial by their faith and godly consistency, will at least check the overflowing of the carnality of a coming age, and urge on the certain triumphs of eternal truth.

Still, when our best hopes are at the brightest, we cannot but tremble with sad forebodings and fore-castings, when we think of the multitudes of young men in the metropolis and in the provinces, who go forth into the atmosphere of secular pursuits unprepared for danger, and into the whirlpool of competition without one sign of spiritual principle deposited in the heart. And yet, among them are to be found those who have been followed from the very dawn of life by a Christian father's watchfulness, and a mother's ceaseless prayers, perhaps an elder brother's strong example of self-dedication to God. But though thus fenced about, if sound principle be not established in the heart, who shall say how soon the slight barriers of an amiable morality may be broken down? how soon a wreck may be made of that young man, who else might be reaching heavenward with the world beneath his feet?

He who would be safe must be prompt to mark, as well as quick to discern, the aspects of danger—even in things lawful in themselves. The lawfulness of our pursuits does not render them less dangerous in their indirect influence. Pursuits that are unlawful do, to the perception of a healthy conscience, present the signature of danger. They give warning against themselves. But the danger that lurks in pursuits

that are lawful, is too commonly disguised by those who are engaged in them; and it often happens that the serpent-folds of secularity, pressing too closely, give the first intimations of peril, when they have too successfully asserted their constraining power. It is one thing to say to a free man, "Maintain your freedom;" but quite another to urge a fettered slave to regain what he has lost by unwise surrender. The free man has his powers at command. The slave weeps within his fetters, and quails. And the worst slavery of all,—the basest and most degrading, is that which is imposed on his vassals by the god of this world. True nobility of soul cannot exist where it prevails; and no man marches heavenward while the world's chain is riveted on his soul. And *need* it be? Would God have it so? Is there any *fatality* on the side of such a disaster? If the will be free on God's side, and on the side of a true spirituality,—*made free* by the liberty which Christ has achieved for, and bestowed on it,—who, what power, what influence on earth or in hell shall enslave the soul, and drag it down from its lofty position, and wrench the charter of emancipation from its grasp? Let the *will* be free,—let the mind of Christ be directing it, and God becomes at once the centre of its gravitation;—it obeys *that law*, knowing no other centre.

Much of my ministerial life has passed in affectionate and familiar intercourse with young men, hemmed in by secular pursuits. I know how they think and feel. I know most of their besetments and trials, and some of their dangers. But also I have had experience of their triumphs in Christ

Jesus. I can look back upon years spent by me as the vicar of a large manufacturing town, and call to mind not a few who, amidst the snares of secularity, took their stand on God's side, and are adorning their profession; and I can number six who, with only the prospects of a laborious secular life before them, not only took up the cross and followed Christ, but humbly obeyed God's gracious call to the sacred office of the ministry; three of whom are now devoted and successful clergymen in England, and three are missionaries, ordained of God, as I believe, to bear the precious gospel of salvation to the heathen. One of them is at his post; the other two will soon leave their native land, wafted by prayers and blessings, and guided as I trust by the good Spirit of our God.

All who are on Christ's side cannot expect to be thus honoured,—that is, honoured in this manner. But honoured they will be. Let them be faithful to Him who hath called them, and that is to be honourable; and when earth's dignities shall have all faded, their honour shall be amaranthine. They are of a royal lineage; they are the children of the King of kings; their elder brother is Jesus! He is with them! In the flood, in the flame, amidst snares, He is with them;—and in the blessedness of eternity will be His presence,—*with* them, and *in* them. Like God's blessed ones, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in Babylon, they may be sorely pressed. The god of this world may set up his golden image, and cry to them, "Bow down and worship;" yet they will have but one answer going forth from every heart and every lip,—“ We cannot ;

we will not. The Lord is our God ; and him only will we serve."

Let the furnace be heated.

Well,—heat it: and what then? Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us. What is the marvel recorded in the history? God's three faithful ones were cast bound into the furnace. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in astonishment and haste, said to his counsellors, Did we not cast *three men, bound*, into the midst of the fire? True O king. He said, Lo! I see *four men, loose*, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God. Jehovah-Jesus was with them. He was the fourth. Such then is the presence that shall sustain and defend the true children of the kingdom, whatever may befall. *Light* is upon their path. *Omnipotence* undergirds them. *Love* gently tends them. *Glory* overhangs them. And if they are wise and would secure their crown, they must remember what is written by the Spirit's pen, dipped in God's changeless truth,—

“A faithful man shall abound with blessings ; but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent.” Prov. xxviii. 20

Lord Byron.

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A LECTURE

BY THE

REV. GEORGE GILFILLAN, M.A.

OF DUNDEE.

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION,

IN EXETER HALL,

FEBRUARY 3, 1852.

WILBRAHAM TAYLOR, Esq.,

IN THE CHAIR.



## LORD BYRON.

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It has been said that there are only two proper ways of treating the character of Lord Byron,—the monody or the impeachment. I humbly suggest, on the contrary, that there is a third and a more excellent way, and that this lies in a style of criticism which shall combine the qualities of both, and express that sorrowful and admiring condemnation without which no Christian, at least, can approach any such great guilty corpse, any such mass of ruined mind, any such combination of strength and weakness, wisdom and folly, as we find in the genius, character, and story of Lord George Gordon Byron.

My purpose in the following address is not so much to analyze Byron's genius, as it is, first, to glance over the leading events of his life; and secondly, to ask and answer certain questions bearing upon the moral and religious tendency of his works. His life has, I believe, never fully been related, nor ever fully *can*. It was from beginning to end a miserable and guilty mistake, a blunder as well as a crime.

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It is reported that the materials for his biography were first of all submitted to the late Dr. Mac Ginn, and that he, though by no means a squeamish man, refused to write it, shrinking back disgusted at the quantity of falsehood, treachery, heartlessness, malignity, and pollution which they revealed. The same materials were handed over to Mr. Moore, and from them he constructed an image of his hero, bearing, I suspect, as correct a resemblance to his character as the pictures and busts which abound do to his face,—a biography in which his merits are blazoned, his virtues exaggerated, and his faults and falsehoods too often covered under a kindly veil of asterisks. That veil it were not difficult here and there to uplift, but the task were invidious, and the result rather monstrous than satisfactory. I profess only here to recapitulate the facts in his history which are notorious.

Like Mirabeau, Byron was the offspring of a fierce and ancient race, and, like him, inherited a stream of wild dark blood, which had run down through generations of semi-maniacs, till in him it was connected with talents as wondrous as it was hot. He was an only son, and was proud of this, as he was of every other thing pertaining to himself, except his lame foot. He was fond of remarking, that mice and all sorts of common creatures are amazingly prolific, while the tiger of the night and the lion of the desert are sparing of their high-strung progeny. You all remember the feeling with which he alludes, in one of his notes, to the tradition in reference to a bridge at Aberdeen, which was doomed to fall,—

“ Wi’ a wife’s ae son, and a mear’s ae foal ! ”

And how he used to hang over its one arch, and the deep black salmon stream below, with a mixture of childish terror and delight. Some years ago, we stood for an hour on that melancholy bridge, and although the scene around was severely grand, the river swollen, the wind howling amongst the leafless trees, the sea in the distance ; and although the walk where Hall and MacIntosh were wont to melt down hours to moments in high converse was in sight, it was somehow or other the figure of the wild lame boy leaning over the parapet that filled our fancy ; and the chief fascination of the spot seemed to breathe from the genius of Byron.

He was born at London, on the 22nd of January, 1788. His father, unfortunately, was a rake, and his mother, still more unfortunately, was a fool. One of his schoolfellows once said to her son : " Byron, your mother is a fool ;" and he answered gloomily : " I know it." Full of pride and self-will, ignorant although possessed of a vigorous mind, subject to fits of rage which bordered on insanity, she might be said to mingle, like a dark tributary, with the rough torrent of his ancestral blood. Soon after birth he was removed to Aberdeen, where he continued till nine years of age. There, spoiled at home, between undue indulgence and indiscreet correction on the part of his mother, he distinguished himself at school by his irregular diligence, and out of doors by his vehement temper and passionate love of sport. During his holidays he once and again was permitted to visit the upper part of Strathdee, a region that has since received a new interest to every true British heart, as the residence of royalty, and which

may now be said to shine in the double lustre of genius and of virtue. "There," says Moore, "the dark summit of Loch-na-gar stood before the eye of its future poet;" and there many a time and oft,—

"His young footsteps in infancy wandered;  
 His cap was the bonnet, his cloak was the plaid;  
 O'er chieftains departed his memory pondered,  
 As daily he strode through the pine-covered glade.  
 Nor sought he his home till the day's dying glory  
 Gave place to the rays of the bright Polar star,—  
 For fancy was cheered by traditional story,  
 Disclosed by the natives of dark Loch-na-gar."

During this period and afterwards we are told that the Bible was a part of his daily reading, although it is not probable that its lessons were enforced by maternal solicitude, and although it is certain that they were not sealed by the powerful influence of maternal example. But to his residence in Scotland he continued to look back with the fondest interest; longed in the palaces of Italy for a glimpse of the blue mountains of Morven; heard amid the dreams of Greece the rustle of the heather of Caledonia, and in his own words—

"Scotched, not killed, the Scotchman in his blood,  
 And loved the land of mountain and of flood."

When ten years of age, he succeeded to the title of Lord Byron, and was shortly after transferred to Harrow-on-the-hill. A change of scene and circumstances, so unforeseen and so rapid, would have been hazardous to any boy, but was doubly so to one of Byron's ardent mind and previous habits. He in-

dulged accordingly in every sort of extravagance,—boated, fought, foot-balled, swam, and shot at marks, instead of learning his tasks; formed fierce friendships and fiercer enmities; and gave altogether so little promise of his future eminence, that while Sir George Sinclair was generally dux, the author of “Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage” was generally booby in his class. You all know the story of his first love; how he loved Mary Chaworth, as he seems to have loved no one else in all his life; how she refused him; and how he has immortalized the proud misery of his disappointment in the beautiful verses entitled “The Dream.” You are equally familiar, I presume, with the history of his first publication. This occurred after he had passed from an unprofitable sojourn in Cambridge University to reside in Newstead Abbey, and was still under age. The title of the little book was “Hours of Idleness;” and really, considering the innumerable dissipations amid which it was composed, as well as the age of the writer, it is a very creditable production, and many of its verses would still be admitted into our weekly periodicals. As it was, the *Edinburgh Review*,—then in its pride and power, whose praise was thought immortality, whose silence was oblivion, and whose scorn was instant perdition to a new book—pounced upon it and tried to tear it to pieces. *It* yielded to the talons, but its author did not. He was of sterner stuff than to be long moved by the attack of reviewers. He felt it, indeed, to a feverish degree; but the fever soon issued in perspiration, the perspiration was poetry, and the over boiling man was relieved. The review, although written by a noble lord, whose

genius and eccentricities are well known throughout the whole world, was really a very poor affair; and the poet always maintained, that *he* could have written a much cleverer attack on himself. He took his revenge in a keen satire, which proved at once the injustice of the critique and the ripening genius of the bard. Then, newly of age, and yet already mortified in spirit and jaded in frame; having "quaffed his cup too quickly, and found the dregs were worm-wood;" an *old young man*—rejected by two mistresses, Love and Fame, and sick of a third—Pleasure, the melancholy, yet defiant Byron, set out on his travels in search of oblivion. Romantic were the regions he traversed—Portugal, with its orange groves; Spain, with its vast plains and aerial summits; Greece, with its sunny heaven and sudden storms, its isles of enchanted idleness, its bright seas, its plains, which are all poems, and its hills, every one of which seems a monument over the grave of freedom; its Marathon among the mountains, and its Thermopylæ by the sea; and Albania, with its "wild men and wild usages," its gloomy deserts, its dangerous defiles, and its "thunder hills of fear," bending over Chimari—all these he saw and admired, and sung as he saw them, and recorded on the spot his admiration in burning words;—and yet all these seem to have failed to touch his spirit with one true trembling of joy; they ministered enthusiasm, but not peace; and even the forgetfulness he sought forgot to come at his bidding, or to answer their spell. Alas! "how can your wanderer escape from his own shadow!" And with Byron the shadow was the large shadow of an early evening; and like

too many wanderers, he sought merely escape *from* it, and not escape *out of it*, into the arms of a supernatural Friend, of a living God, and a loving Father.

Back he came, worn and weary, but still continuing to thirst for some satisfaction from the world, which bitter experience must again convince him it had not in its power to bestow. He had jotted down, as I said, some of his impressions of the wonderful scenes he saw, in the Spenserian stanza. These jottings were written without thought of publication. They were the mere effluence or exudation of his intellect or his tormented feelings, and were certain, therefore, to be sincere. Hence sprung the first two cantos of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage," which at once raised him to the summit of renown. "He awoke," he said, "one morning, and found himself famous." This was, perhaps, the greatest calamity he ever encountered. God, in the language of the Psalms, gave him what he sought, but sent leanness unto his soul. He became involved instantly in a round of dissipation, from which his better nature must have revolted, which shook the energies of his constitution, and materially impaired the force and freshness of his genius. Then came his marriage, with its mysterious history, and the howl of public ignominy which assailed him when his wife left him again alone. And, certainly, at this crisis, he displayed a vigour and determination of character, which have seldom been paralleled. With his roof-tree shaken over his head; his affairs involved in the most distressing confusion; his friends standing aloof; the cry of the press and the public up, like that of a wilderness of wolves, against him; with madness

throbbing in his brain, and suicide knocking at his door,—his pride and his fury upheld him, till, like a lion retreating, with face to his foes, he had put first the ocean, and then the Alps, between him and England. Then came his war with the world, with its institutions, its fashions, its opinions, its creeds, with everything except, alas! its sins; and for nearly eight years men stood wondering and panic-struck, as this human volcano threw out volume after volume of smoke and flame and lurid light upon the nations. It was, however, an unequal warfare—the war of the maniac, who sets his word against that of the species; and its principal effect lay in indurating his own heart, degrading his own name, sapping his own constitution, polluting his own genius, and preparing himself as the easy victim of an early grave; for, parallel with the fierce and rapid series of the works which issued from his strong spirit—works surpassing far his former productions, alike in genius and in evil tendency, there ran a train of personal excesses, at which humanity must blush and Christianity weep. But we dare not say that eternal silence ought to wrap these in a veil of oblivion. This is not possible; and even if it were, it is not desirable. We cannot forget the sins of transcendent genius, if we would; and we ought not, if we could. Why are such errors permitted by Providence, except that they may be remembered as warnings and beacons to all after time? and that they may teach with trumpet tongue the lesson that gifts are not graces; that genius is but a fallible guide alike to its possessor and to others; and that the greater the power, the more flagrant and dangerous become its abuse

and desecration. It is for this reason, and this reason alone, that we would have the fearful sins of a Byron "graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever."

This could not last long. His constitution had never been robust, and it now visibly tottered; his brain, too, had been overwrought, and showed symptoms of premature decay. He was haunted by a constant dread of becoming mad. His temper was thoroughly corroded with the stream of bitterness which had long coursed through it; his heart was burnt out; his vanity was deeply mortified by his waning popularity; he felt, above all—most terrible feeling to him—his *youth slipping away*; and under all this he had no religious hope or belief to cheer and support him. What remained between him and that grave which he knew was not very far off?—knew it, for he had said drearily, years before, in one of his letters, "I begin to have quite an *old sort of feel*." There seemed but two alternatives—either that he should return to England, and, abandoning poetry for a season, resume his duties as a landlord and senator, or that he should go to Greece. He resolved on the latter, as much, I suspect, from pride and despair, as inclination. It was the resolution of the poor ruined profligate, who, as a last resource, enlists in the army. "Better," thought Byron, "die a soldier's death, than perish of my own passions. In Greece I gathered the materials of my early glory, and in Greece I shall die." You have seen the flame, which has consumed a palace or a street, ere it consents to sink into ashes, making, as it were, a last effort—lifting up its lurid tongue,

collecting all its remaining might into one brief and passionate and convulsive blaze ; then, rising above itself, and glaring, as in triumph, for a moment over the ruin it has made ; and then, falling down in darkness. So Byron, who had arisen in splendour, and in splendour lived, must, he resolved, in yet more terrible glory die.

Prodigious expectations were entertained by many at home of Byron's Grecian expedition. He was to redeem himself. He was to save Greece, and then return from it like a morning star of freedom to the western world. *He* was less sanguine in his expectations : he left Italy for Greece with great reluctance. Shrinking, as he did, with horror from undertaking any journey on a Friday, it was yet, owing to circumstances which seem absolute fatality, on that luckless day that he set sail upon his "last pilgrimage." Storms surrounded him on his passage ;—storms of another kind—the storms of the passions and dissensions of a barbarous people—waited for him on the shore ; and amid a furious tempest blowing without, and the dimness of fever's anguish within, this unhappy man, on the 9th of April, 1824, crying out, "I shall go to sleep now," surrendered his spirit into the hands of his Creator.

He had said himself—

" Oh, God ! it is a fearful thing,  
 To see the human soul take wing  
 In any shape, in any mood ;—  
 I 've seen it rushing forth in blood,—  
 I 've seen it, on the breaking ocean,  
 Strive with a strange convulsive motion,—

I've seen the sick and ghastly bed  
Of sin delirious with its dread.  
But these were horrors—*this was woe!*”

Yes, woe is the proper feeling for standing at the bedside of a dying Byron. Blame, too, we will have immediately and strongly to express; but, as we seek to realise the actual scene at Missolonghi, grief is uppermost in our hearts, and our condemnation is for a season dried up in irrepressible tears. “For,” says Macaulay, “he was so young, so gifted, and had been so unhappy.” He was dying, too, in a strange land, among barbarians, with no wife to tend his couch, no daughter to wipe the death-sweat from his pale and noble brow, with hardly a countryman of his own to receive his last sigh, or to cover his burning eyes with the veil of death. Severe were the moralist who at such a spectacle would not weep, and savage the theologian who would dare to pronounce dogmatically on the fate and future of him who lay all helpless, and silent, and quenched on that premature death-bed of glory and of shame.

But such pity and such tears have their limits. And after they are modified or passed, there will arise certain stern questions which no pity can suppress, and no tears can melt away. Such questions are the following:—What was Byron's purpose, and in what relation did he stand to the age? What, secondly, are the general moral and spiritual characteristics of his works? What effects, thirdly, have sprung already from his writings and his example? What, fourthly, may be their probable results and destiny in the

future? And what lessons, in fine, may young men derive from the whole subject?

I would first ask at him the simple question, "What do you mean?" A simple question truly, and significant as well, and not always very easy to answer. It is generally, however, our duty to ask it; and we have, I think, a good right to expect a reply. If a man come and make us a speech, we have a right to see his object as well as to understand his language. If a man administer to us a reproof, or salute us with a sudden blow, we have a double right to turn round and ask "Why?" And much more must this be true if one assume an oracular attitude, and claim something of the dignity of a prophetic mission. Now here, I think, is one of Byron's fatal defects. He has come to us in all those three attitudes—as a teacher—as a reprover—as a professed prophet to the period; and yet, in reality, he has no object to gain, and no lesson to teach. What was his object? Not to preach the duty of universal despair, or to inculcate the propriety of universal simultaneous suicide; else why did he *not* set the example himself, and why *did* he profess such trust in schemes of political amelioration, and die engaged in a revolutionary war? Nor was it systematically to teach, or systematically to impugn, any system of religion; for if one thing be certain about him, it is that he had no settled convictions on the subject of religion at all. Nor was it, nor could it be *merely* to display his own powers and passions in imposing aspects. The truth is, that purpose was altogether wanting in his character; and this partly accounts for the wreck he became, and for the misery—a

misery which was wonderful, passing the woe of man—which sat down upon his spirit. Many accounts have been given of his grief. Macaulay says he was a spoiled child; another cries—

“The thought that he was greater than his kind  
Had struck, methinks, his eagle-spirit blind,  
By gazing at its own exceeding light.”

But the plain prose and English of it lay in his union of intensity of power with the want of intensity of purpose. Life was not with him an earnest single-eyed effort, nor was it, nor could it be, a *mere display*. He could not help shining—he would not struggle; but was unable to find—as who can?—satisfaction in shining without struggle. And hence, ill at ease with himself, aimless, and hopeless, he turned to bay against society, man, and his Maker. And hence, amid all that he has *said* to the world—and said so eloquently, and said so mournfully, and said amid such wide, and silent, and profound attention,—he has *told* it little save his own sad story. In reference to the age, again, he stood in the most awkward and helpless condition. He was neither before it nor behind it, nor fully up to it. He sneered at our advancement, and yet lent money, and ultimately lost his life, in seeking to promote it. He spoke with uniform contempt of the masterpieces of modern English poetry, and as uniformly imitated them. He often ridiculed and reviled revealed religion, and yet read the Bible more faithfully than many professed believers—became an almost Christian when he heard of a lady having prayed for

him—made up in superstition what he wanted in faith—had, as we said, a devout horror at beginning his poems, undertaking his journeys, or paring his nails on a Friday; and had he lived, would probably have ended like the “Giaour,” as “Brother Byron,” with hair shirt, a jet-black rosary, shaven head, (he began *this* operation, I suppose, when he used to shave the hair off his temples, to make his brow seem loftier than it was!) and iron-spiked girdle, in some Achaian or Armenian convent. He habitually trampled on, and seems sometimes to have really despised the opinion of the public, and yet in some points was so sensitive, that, according to Ebenezer Elliott, “he would have gone into hysterics had a tailor laughed at him.” And although, when the *Edinburgh Review* sought to crush him like a worm, he rose from the heel a fiery-flying dragon; yet to the assaults of the meaner members of the press he was pervious all over, and allowed Lilliputian arrows which were beneath his laughter, to rouse his rage.

In one respect, I grant, Byron was the spirit of the age. He was the representative of its wants, its weakness, its discontents, its dark unrest, but not of its aspirations, its widening charity, and its hopeful tendencies. His voice was the deep, vague moan of the world's dream—his writhing anguish the last struggle of its troubled slumber; it is now beginning to awake, and “as a dream when one awakeneth,” it is despising his image. He stood before the world, high, helpless, and alone, and all the helpless and the hopeless rallied around, to constitute him first magistrate over a city in flames,—supreme ruler over a ruined and blasted realm. In one thing he was

certainly a prophet: namely, a prophet of evil. As misery was the secret sting of his inspiration, it became the invariable matter of all his song. In some of his poems you have misery contemplating; in others, misery weeping aloud; in others, misery revolving and reproducing the past; in others, misery bursting the confines of the world, as if in search of a wider hell than that in which it felt itself environed; in others, misery stopping to turn and rend its real or imaginary foes; and in others, misery breaking out into hollow, hopeless, and heartless laughter (what a terrible thing is the *laugh* of the unhappy!). But in all you have misery; and whether he returns the old thunder in a voice of kindred power and majesty, or sings an evening song with the grasshopper at his feet, smiles the smile of bitterness or sheds the tears of anger, his voice still speaks of desolation, mourning, and woe; the vocabulary of grief is unequal to the demands of his melancholy genius; and never, never more, till this scene of tears and sighs be ended, shall we meet with a more authentic and profound expounder of the wretchedness of man.

Hence arose in his poetry an unequalled, but unenviable dominion, over the darker passions. He rode, if I may use the expression, in a chariot drawn by those horses, described in the visions of the Apocalypse, "whose heads were as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths issued smoke, and fire, and brimstone." And supreme is his management of those dreadful couriers. Wherever human nature is fiercest and gloomiest; wherever furnace-bosoms have been heated seven times hotter

by the unrestrained passions, and the torrid suns of the East or South; wherever man verges upon the animal or the fiend; wherever misanthropes have folded their arms, and taken their desperate attitude; wherever devours the "worm that cannot sleep, and never dies"—there the muse of Byron finds its subjects and its haunts. Driven from a home in his country, he finds it in the mansions of all unhappy hearts, which open gloomily, and admit him as their tenant and their bard. To escape from one's self is the desire of many—of all the miserable—of those who plunge into the vortex of any dissipation, or indulge in any delicious dream; but it is the singularity of this man, that he uniformly escapes from himself into something worse and more miserable. His being transmigrates into a darker and more demoniac shape; he becomes an epicure even in wretchedness. He has supped full of ordinary miseries, and must create and exhaust poisons of mightier potency, which never grew on the poppy, nor hardened in the mine. What infinite pity, that a being so gifted, and that might have been so noble, should find it necessary perpetually to evade himself! Hence, his works abound, more than those of any other author, with texts for misanthropes, and mottoes for the mouths of suicides.

"Years all winters"—

what a gasp is that! and how characteristic of him to whose soul summer had not come, and spring had for ever faded! And in all that strange, wicked poem—"Don Juan"—in which you see a man less

writing than resigning his soul to his reader, and where the stanzas drop upon you, like the leaves "of the autumnal tree," in a shower of withered gold—there is nothing so affecting and so instructive as the following, written when he was thirty years of age:—

"No more! no more! oh, never more on me,  
 The freshness of the heart can fall like dew,  
 Which out of all the lovely things we see  
 Extracts emotions beautiful and new,  
 Hived in our bosoms, like the bag o' the bee.  
 Think'st thou the honey with those objects grew?  
 Alas! 't was not in them, but in thy power,  
 To double even the sweetness of a flower."

But what, secondly, are the general moral and spiritual characteristics of his works? Now here we grant, that his poems do not contain, as some suppose, any systematic attempt either to sap morality, or to undermine faith. System, whether good or bad, did not belong to his nature. He was the creature of impulse and of whim. He was a grown and ill-conditioned child. At times he believed and trembled; at other times he broke out into wild and short-lived blasphemy or ribaldry. Now he laughed at virtue, and anon painted the remorse of vice as few besides him have done. If he has written "Don Juan," he has also written "Parisina," "The Giaour," and "Manfred." Still, the general spirit of his writings is not healthy. Even when he grieves for sin, his feeling is rather remorse than repentance; and when he exposes the hollowness of society, it is more in anger than in sorrow. He is not weaned from the world, but only wearied of it. He sits like Jonah

under his withered gourd, and says, "I do well to be angry, even unto death;" but it is in mere spite and disappointment. His misanthropy is in part affected—it has not the depth, rancour, or terrible sincerity of Swift's, nor is it chastened down by Christianity, like Foster's, into a beautiful moonlight melancholy. It has been well compared to the spleen of the schoolboy, who has got a plain cake instead of a plum one. His attitude to Christianity is, I have said, extremely uncertain. He is willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike. It is rather doubt than disbelief he entertains to it, and rather a personal grudge than either. He wished it untrue, but could not wholly persuade himself that it was. "Calling on him one day," says Captain Medwyn, "we found him dull, silent, and sombre. At length he said, 'Here is a little book somebody has sent me, about Christianity, which has made me very uncomfortable—the reasoning seems very strong, the proofs are very staggering.'" And yet his works abound in expressions of a most pernicious description—blood-red stones of blasphemy, which some of our youth have culled and wreathed into a necklace of ruin around themselves; insults to our faith, the more intolerable that his own was totally unsettled, and that thus he had no right to speak, far less to rave upon the subject. "Cain," his finest poem, is the only one in which there is any approach to a systematic onset on religion. The object of that poem is not, as it ought to have been, to show the madness of all selfish struggle with the laws of the universe, but to intimate the poet's belief that these laws are cruel and unjust. Milton wrote his great poem to

justify the ways of God to man. Byron's aim seems to be to justify the ways of man to God. The pleading is powerful, but hopeless. It is the wave on the ridge of the cataract, praying not to be carried on, and hurried over. Equally vain is it to resist those austere and awful laws by which moments of sin expand into centuries of punishment. Yet this was Byron's own life-long struggle, and which, like those who "fight their battles o'er again" in sleep, he renewed again and again in every dream of his imagination.

The effect of Byron's poetry has undoubtedly been great, and as undoubtedly been very destructive. Besides the number of its individual victims, it has circulated a general infection through the public mind, and contributed to that fearful dissolution of thought and morals which characterizes our age. It has effected, in a minor degree in this country, what the literature of desperation has done in France. It is answerable not only for an immense quantity of bad poetry cast in its model,—and this, mark you, is no little evil, as readers and critics can testify,—but for a vast amount of loose, floating immorality of thought, feeling, and conduct. It has promoted the notion that genius and vice are cognate—as though garbage were angel's food: a notion essentially atheistic,—that if pushed to its consequences, would unsettle the foundations of the throne of God, blight the prospects of humanity, destroy either our horror at vice or our reverence for genius—but which a thousand facts, as well as certain broad principles, demonstrate to be a lie.

The future destiny of his writings seems not very problematical. I was astonished, some time ago, to find an eminent foreigner, in the preface to a little work of George Sand's, speaking of Lord Byron and of that notorious writer as the two morning stars of a coming era. Surely it must be a dark day which they are to introduce—a mad and miserable Millennium which they prognosticate. Even already there are certain indications that the power and popularity of Byron's poems are waning. Much of their interest was derived from his singular character and personal history. The romantic tissue of his story; the glorious backgrounds he chose for his tragic attitudes,—Switzerland and Italy; his beauty, his very lameness; the odd yet unludicrous combinations he formed of Vulcan and Apollo, of Hercules Furens and a Satyr, of favourite and football of destiny; the cloak of mystery which he now carefully threw over, and now pettishly dropped from his character; the difficulty of either thoroughly hating or loving or laughing at him;—the unique and many-sided puzzle he thus made, had the effect of maddening the public and of mystifying his critics. This now is over. That strange life is lived; that knot, too hard and twisted for man, is away elsewhere to be solved. That heart, so differently reported of by different operators, has undergone the stern analysis of death. His works have emerged from that fluctuating and lurid shadow of himself, which seemed to haunt and guard them, and have been subjected to free and fearless criticism. The result is, that the young taste of the age has turned from the fierce and unhealthy potion of Byron's poetic cup to the sweeter

and deeper draughts which the genius of Wordsworth and Coleridge supplies. The Satanic school is extinct; or, if it exists, it is only in the coarse imitations of certain writers, who imagine that to spice poetry with infidelity will make it sell; and who snatch a precarious and morbid inspiration from unhallowed themes—from the experiences of crime and infamy in the present, or from the records of suicide and libertinism in the past. These are the ragged and departing skirts of that Byronic storm which passed over our literature, and they tell that its thunders are dead, its lightnings cold, its red rain exhausted; and that, with all its beams unshorn, the old sun of song, the song of the wise and ancient masters, the Spensers, the Miltons, and the Cowpers, whose genius was hallowed to God, and baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, is again about to shine forth upon the world.

Many lessons might be deduced from this rapid review of Byron's life and character. I might infer from it, for example, that the noblest powers are merely destructive when disjoined from earnest purpose and Christian consecration. Here was an energy of mind (one of his friends used to call him "the Byronic energy") that might have consumed the evils of half the world, and that merely burnt itself into a far-seen beacon. Here was a chief of men, who might, with power equal to Kossuth himself, have led the nations in the battle of freedom—and who only led himself, through a dishonoured life, to an early grave. Here was one who, towering above his kind, seemed to claim kindred, or to de-

mand a contest, with angels—but who was hurled down like Vulcan, and at the close of his summer day, “fell from the zenith like a falling star.” Here is one who, having with less excuse enacted, on a loftier stage, the part of our Scottish Burns, deserves a similar epitaph:—

“The poor inhabitant below  
 Was quick to learn and strong to know;  
 And keenly felt the social glow  
 And softer flame;  
 But thoughtless follies laid him low,  
 And stained his name!”

“Peace to his memory!” does any one cry? Yes, peace; but let it be peace accompanied with protest against his errors; with condemnation of the spirit of his works, and with a voice of warning to those who even still may be disposed to imitate or to canonize a man who rather *fell through* the age as a furious passing stranger, than left on it the impression of genuine greatness any more than that of moral worth. We may learn from Byron’s history, next, the potential power of poetry,—what it can do for evil, and what, if sublimed and sanctified, it might do for good. He found in it a two-edged sword, although he wielded it with the arm of a Lucifer. But why should not our Gabriels grasp a similar weapon, and use it in the battles of the Lord? The age has long despised, very foolishly I think, poetry; and even some of its mightiest minds are not using or cultivating the poetic gift that is in them, as an organ of human progress and regeneration. If I mistake not, it will be otherwise by-and-by; many circumstances seem to prove that some

great poetic orb is nearing the verge of our horizon ; some one who, uniting Byron's energy, Shelley's enthusiasm, and Milton's Christianity, shall loose in thunder and in music a poetry on the world worthy of this "wondrous mother age," flowing out of the very profounds of our nature, whence alone can come "the greatest birth of time,"—that high poetry, for which all other arts and all science, Newton's "Cosmos" even, and Bacon's "Organon," are but the scaffoldage and temporary steps.

I infer again the importance of a settled belief. The want of this was the great vacuum, the source of the eternal cry, "Give—Give!" in Byron's heart. It is true that ours is a transition period, and that it is more difficult now to acquire or to preserve a definite creed. And hence a yearning uncertainty with many ; and hence with others a half-belief, which does not, it has been said, "either rightly believe or disbelieve the very devil." And hence the power exerted by some writers who, whether intentionally or not, flatter and confirm this miserable *quasi* belief ; who speak of certainty not as difficult, but as impossible ; who have abandoned the standard of religious faith—I mean the Scriptures—and are dragging thousands after them, like passive driftwood, into unknown and dangerous waters ; and who, while often abusing or mourning over Byron, have taken up unwittingly very nearly the same attitude with him,—that, namely, of gnashing defiance at the things that are, instead of loudly proclaiming the things that might be, and far less of resolutely attempting to strengthen the things that yet remain. I yield to no man in admiration of the

genius, or belief in the honesty, of some of the writers to whom I refer ; but I must say, that their work is a thankless one, a hopeless one, and that, besides, it seems now nearly over. Their giant shadow has not passed, but it is passing from the disc of the public mind. The gospel of negations has had its day ; and the youth of the age must be preparing to elaborate for themselves, or to receive at the hand of others, a better, a more positive, a more hopeful, a more practical—in one word, a Christian philosophy.

I infer, finally, the necessity of earnest contest against those Infidel tendencies of the day, which Byron has so much contributed to strengthen. That Dark Power is coming up the breadth of the earth for what seems a final attack upon the bulwarks of our faith. Its fury is as great, as its time is short. We may take up the warning cry of him who saw the Apocalypse: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."\* There is flowing up against us a current of doubt deeper than ever swelled before ; strong in learning, crested with genius—a current not to be despised ; not merely to be abused, but to be skilfully shunned or to be bravely met. It reminds us of the Maelström. There rolls, you know, in the Northern Seas, such a whirlpool. Let the strongest ships, or the largest leviathans of the deep, approach near it, and they are sucked in, at first slowly, gently, imperceptibly, but by-and-by, with tremendous speed and with irresistible violence ; and they go down, and they

\* Rev. xii. 12.

perish amid its waters. Such a whirlpool is Infidelity, and such the danger of those who approach too nearly to the edge of its abyss.

Or, where it cannot be altogether shunned, let it be bravely encountered. And here I cry aloud for a display of devoted earnestness on the part of Christian Young Men. Your adversaries are in earnest, and oh! shall not ye? They have drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard; and shall ye allow your steel to rust in its sheath? A Christian void of earnestness—with what comparison shall I compare him? He is like one of a collection of stuffed birds, where you find the dove, the raven, the nightingale, and the eagle; but the dove cannot coo, the raven cannot croak, the nightingale cannot sing, and the eagle cannot soar. Or he may be compared to a galvanized corpse—there is motion in the limbs, but there is no lustre in the eye, no bloom on the cheek; it smiles, but it is cold; it moves, but it is dead. Or I may compare him to one of those wax-work figures you often see: Peel, O'Connell, Wordsworth, and Brougham are all in the collection; but Peel cannot govern, O'Connell cannot agitate, Wordsworth cannot dream, and Brougham cannot *talk*. Such miserable mimicries of humanity are professing Christians without earnestness.

This, believe it, is no world for triflers. We live in an earnest universe. We are surrounded on all sides by earnest objects and beings. The Earth is in earnest as it pursues its path around the Sun. The Sun is in earnest as he pours abroad his tide of everlasting day. The Stars are in earnest as they shine down in such still intensity upon a

slumbering world. Angels are in earnest as they pursue their high ministrations. Devils themselves are in earnest, in terrible, red-hot earnest, as they seek to counteract the schemes of Almighty God. God is in earnest, as He carries on His wondrous plans. And oh! shall we trifle or idle or sin away our life, surrounded though we be by such great exemplars, and called though we be by a Name which pledges us to an earnestness longer than life, and deeper than death? No!

“Life is real, life is earnest,  
And the grave is not its goal;  
‘Dust thou art, to dust returnest,’  
Was not spoken of the soul.

“Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,  
Is our being’s end or way;  
But to live that each to-morrow  
Finds us farther than to-day.

“Trust no future, howe’er pleasant,  
Let the dead Past bury its dead;  
Act, act in the living Present,  
Heart within and God o’erhead.

“Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time.

“Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing  
Learn to labour and to wait.”

On you, Young Men, how much depends, and on your earnest efforts in the good cause! Young Men

are either the flower, the sinew, and the glory of a land, or they are its disgrace. If they be pure, pious, eager for knowledge, humble, active, and true-hearted, happier is their country than if its every babe were born a Byron. But if, on the contrary, they be proud, self-willed, unsettled in principles and in life, "lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God,"—woe to that land, of which, meant to be the honour, they have become the shame! Let others say, "Give us the legislators of a land," or "Give us the philosophers of a land." We would rather say, "Give us the Young Men of a land." Imbue them with Christian principle; bathe them in the waters of Christian purity; warm them at the flame of Christian earnestness; and gird around them the girde of Christian devotedness; and you may allow, in a great measure, philosophers and legislators to retire from the stage, to play at marbles with boys, or to retire into convents with children of a larger growth. And in order that Young Men may fulfil the high vocation, and bear the awful burdens now so visibly laid upon them, let them write this upon their tablets and upon their hearts in indelible characters:—"While admiring Byron's genius, and not altogether neglecting his works, let us shun his example as we would do the gates of hell; let us beware of his misanthropical and selfish spirit; let us practise the duties he neglected; avoid the vices he indulged; aim at the firm conviction he failed, because he *sought not*, to attain; live as he did *not* live; and then, God willing, we may hope to die as he, unhappily, did *not* die." And thus, if, in his own language, may remain

“with him the grief,” with us there shall abide for ever—

“The moral of his strain.”

My lecture should now close. But, ere I close, I am tempted once more to allude to an object which has somehow been bending over my head and colouring my fancy during all its progress—I mean the dark summit of Loch-na-gar. I remember, with a small party of friends, climbing that lofty mountain some years ago. As we ascended, a mist, as if of deliberate purpose, seemed slowly and scornfully to cover the hill, till we found, on reaching the summit, that the prospect was denied us. It was a thrilling moment. What, though darkness was all around? It was the very atmosphere that suited the scene. It was “dark Loch-na-gar.” And how fine we felt it to climb its cairn—to lift a stone from it, to be in after-time a memorial of our journey to hear the song which made it famous, sung in its own proud drawing-room, with those great fog curtains floating around—to pass along the brink of its precipices—to snatch a fearful joy as we leant over, and hung down, and saw from beneath a gleam of snow shining in its hollows and columns, or rather perpendicular seas of mist, streaming up upon the wind—

“Like foam from the roused ocean of deep hell,”

tinged here and there, too, on their tops, by rays of sunshine—the farewell beams of the dying day. We had stood upon many hills in sunshine and in shade, in mist and thunder; but never had before such a sense of the terrible grandeur and beauty of this

lower universe. It was not merely the loftiness of the mountain, nor its bold outline, nor its savage loneliness, nor its mist-loving precipices, which moved us; but there were associations, too, which crowned it with a "peculiar diadem"—it was identified with the image of a poet who, amid his many fearful errors, has had the power of investing all his career, yea, every corner which his fierce foot ever touched, or his genius ever sung, with profound and melancholy interest. We saw the name of Byron written in the cloud characters above us. We saw his genius sadly smiling in those gleams of stray sunshine which gilded the darkness they could not dispel. We found an emblem of his passions in that flying rack, and of his character in those lowering precipices. We seemed to hear the wail of his restless spirit in the wild sob of the wind, fainting and struggling up under its burden of darkness. Nay, we could fancy the savage hill a colossal image of his character, as well as a monument to his name. Like Loch-na-gar, his genius was sharply and terribly defined. Like it, he yields in magnitude and round completeness to many—in abrupt and passionate projection of his own shadow over the world of literature, to none. The genius of convulsion, a dire attraction dwells around him, which leads many to hang over, and some to leap down his precipices. Volcanic as he is, the coldness of wintry selfishness, too, often collects in the hollows of his verse. He loved, like his hill, the cloud and the thick darkness, and came "veiling all the lightnings of his song" in earth-sprung sorrows. Like Byron, beside Scott and Wordsworth, does this monarch of Strathdee stand

near his brother giants to the west—Ben-Mac Dhui and Ben-y-Boord, less lofty, but more fiercely eloquent in its rugged outline; projecting its cliffs like quenched batteries against earth and heaven, with the cold of snow in its heart, and with a coronet of mist around its gloomy brow. And, should any of my audience who have not hitherto visited that romantic district, direct their steps thitherward, let them not forget to turn aside and see this solitary, but suggestive spot;—let them there read in mountain cypher the moral of Byron's story; see in that blackened mass an emblem of his moral desolation, and trace the stream of his poetry, in its light and darkness, its bitterness and its brilliance,—to this smitten rock in the wilderness—to the cliffs of Loch-na-gar.





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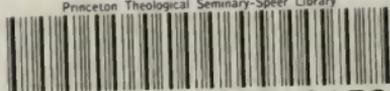
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