

THE  
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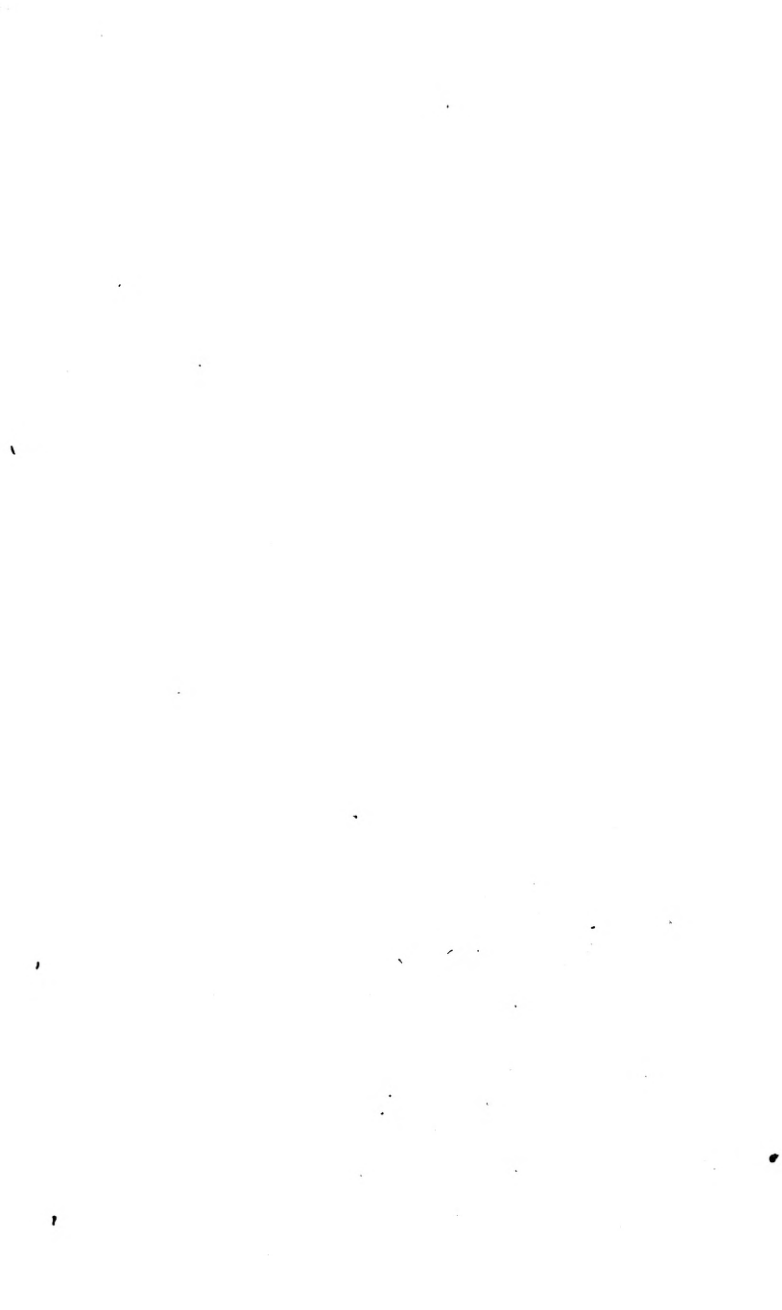
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THE  
RIGHT USE OF SPEECH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"THIS ONE THING I DO," AND "THE FORMATION OF  
CHRISTIAN BELIEF."

If it add nothing to your well-instructed knowledge, it may bring somewhat to your well-disposed remembrance: if either, I have my end, and you may endeavour.—  
QUARLES.

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## THE RIGHT USE OF SPEECH.

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THE common practice of recommending any moral quality of action independently of its relation to the Gospel scheme of reformation, is, in the writer's judgment, of doubtful value. Virtues, as they were called under the old philosophy, Christian graces, as in their fuller manifestation they are styled by the truer modern theory, are but the partial expression of a change of mental condition—a development in special directions of Christian faith and love. It was the fashion of the essayists of the last century to discourse freely and, for ourselves we must admit, wearisomely, concerning candor, sincerity, prudence, fortitude, and the like. We much question whether by the many labored tributes to these excellent qualities, though

rendered often in a chasteness of style and harmony of period and with a propriety of illustration unsurpassed in later days, and which still in a measure constitute the standard of good writing,—one reader has become even temporarily more sincere, patient, or truthful. As well might we trim and train the branch while we neglect the root, and neither dig about nor water the soil that covers it. The human philosophy of morals is the offspring of Christian truth. It cannot teach but by Gospel method, nor exist without Gospel nourishment. It is reserved to later times, to the more perfect application of the Christian theory—to the *regulative* advance of which alone it is capable, to discover the initiatory step in all moral training. No intellectual conviction of the value of moral excellence, no fastidious taste as to the unity and proportion of moral exhibition, no good desire or well directed purpose will of itself conduct moral education or accomplish moral reformation.

We find a confirmation of these sentiments in an address of Dr. Chalmers to the people of his parish of Kilmany. “I cannot but record the effect of

an actual though undesigned experiment which I prosecuted for upwards of twelve years among you. For the greater part of that time I could expatiate on the meanness of dishonesty, on the villany of falsehood, \* \* \* \* and could I upon the strength of these warm expostulations have got the thief to give up his stealing, and the evil speaker his censoriousness, I should have felt all the repose of one who had gotten his ultimate object. \* \* \* \* *I am not sensible that all the vehemence with which I urged the virtues and proprieties of social life, had the weight of a feather on the moral habits of my parishioners.*" He goes on to say in substance, that it was not till he became impressed with the utter alienation of all the heart's desires and affections from God, and took the Scriptural way of laying the method of reconciliation before his people, that he ever heard of the *subordinate reformations* which were the ultimate object of his earlier ministrations.

A popular author, discussing the art of essay writing, describes two opposed schools in Essay. The one argues for a specific proposition; the other places

before the reader the thoughts and sentiments of an individual mind. To the many gradations in which both modes are more or less exhibited, he gives the name of Mixed Essay. We are inclined to believe that in this class of writing the mixed essay would be generally more available for the estimate of truth, if the logical system of the one school, and the personality or subjective character of the other, could be brought, as it has scarcely yet been, into a well-adjusted balance. No attempt has been made in the following pages to conform to any such precedent, or to adhere to a formal method of discussion. The statement of the writer's views with regard to the mode of urging any portion of Christian duty, may however account for, and possibly justify, some seemingly wide departures from the strict line of argument. Truth, more especially religious truth, which indeed in its fullest sense comprehends all truth, is but a succession of links, and we cannot take up one without discerning and handling another. The enlightened philosopher, in pursuit of one class of facts, will not reject the occurrent signs that indicate or interpret

some new phenomenon. It is not invariably over the high road and beaten track that we arrive most surely at the end of our journey. If we but keep our special object in view, we may enter at will into shaded and unnoticed by-paths, refresh ourselves at springs hidden from ordinary wayfarers, and gather many a flower set in no human classification, but known and cared for by Him who arrayed it in all its beauty. With softened hearts and expanded minds, with new desire and elastic step, we shall go forward on our way, and, it may be, reach the end sooner than by a dull, listless plodding along a less diversified though shorter path. Human history, as also man's unwritten experience, combines with all material creation to furnish the philosophy we have need to learn—the lesson of wonderful adaptation in all physical and spiritual being, and thence of its Author's wisdom and benevolence. In natural as in moral science the most diverse and apparently opposing facts reveal similar principles. Laws that regulate the motions of the heavenly bodies, are traced also in the instinctive operations of the bee and the beaver; and the most wonderful mysteries of

animal life are shadowed forth in the origin and development of the plant.

The subject is offered to the consideration of the reader with the sentiment of an old author, altered in two or three words the better to express our feeling: "If I could light you but the least step towards the happiness you ayme at, how happy should I be! Goe forward on the right way, wherein, if my hand cannot lead you, my heart shall follow you; and where the weaknesse of my power shews defect, there the earnestness of my petition shall make supply."



## CHAPTER I.

### THE INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

LANGUAGE is to thought what life is to the body. This may be perfect in structure and in functional adaptation, but without the animate principle it is inert and useless. Without words thought perishes. Inadequate as it often proves, no other mode of expression can at all compare with speech. Countenance and gesture are vehicles of thought, but their capacity and scope are limited. The power of language is in proportion to the development of conception, or, to speak more simply, consists in the perfectness of the correspondence between the sign and thing signified. Singularly, there is an inverse working of language on the thought of which it is the creature. There is necessarily in

words an analysis and generalization of conceptions; and the more subtile the analysis, the more accurate the generalization, and the more perfect become the ratiocination and induction.

It is not possible, even in the case of a mind disciplined to careful observation of its trains of thought, to review the mental process of an hour without wondering at the variety, irrelativity, and even incongruity of its constituting conceptions. The laws of association,—resemblance, contrast, and contiguity, extend over so wide a sphere, that many even of such conceptions as are distinctly referable to them are lost from the series, beyond hope of recovery. When, as is often the case, the application of the law is too delicate for analysis, there is presented a mass of disconnected and unavailable conceptions. But so far as language can effect—itself the gathered product of thought since the creation—these scattered materials are collected and adapted. It is for speech to take and

apply of them what is suited to our own and others' needs. How much for intellectual discipline and for moral obligation is to be reserved—nay, how much is it wholly impossible to reproduce! Some one says, "Man is greatest by his unuttered things;" and we believe he is also by them meanest and worst, for the act never fully developes or measures the mental operation that occasioned it. The cultivation of the power of analysis and its increasing facility of application to our own thoughts, is then the intellectual result of that control over language which is commonly called government of the tongue. To language is given the influence over thought which Quintillian ascribes to the pen, when he urges the importance of revision and correction. "It is not without cause that the pen is deemed not least effective when it erases. Its office indeed is to add, remove, change. What is puffed up is to be compressed; what is humble to be elevated; the overrunning is to be bound

together, the unsystematized arranged, the excessive restrained, and solved questions set aside. For both things are to be condemned even though they please, and seized when they would escape.\*”

It will be readily perceived how extensive and important is the influence of a right use of speech on our purely intellectual operations. But it is a moral and religious influence which we chiefly propose to discuss. In presenting our views, we turn, as both in the formation and expression of opinion we would ever do, to the word of God, there to find example and precept for the duty which we urge upon the conscience of the reader.

\* De Emendatione, Lib. x. Cap. 4.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE EXAMPLE OF DAVID IN RESPECT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

“I WILL take heed to my ways,” said David, “that I sin not with my tongue:” and again, “I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.” The moral nature of this King of Israel was developed by most singular and opposite influences. Hence it presents to us such diverse aspects that we seem to behold in him two dissimilar individuals, or, at least, as in a Roman consul, the manifestation in the same man of a double and differing being.\* These contrasts are discernible not only in the record of his actions, but in that which he has himself left of his thoughts and

\* — in eodem homine duplicis ac diversissimi animi conspiceretur exemplum.

feelings. In those compositions full of gracious tempers, heavenly meditations, and intensest desires after holiness and God, we find in strange and rapid alternation exultant outpourings of his inward peace, and expressions of deepest self-humiliation and anguish of spirit. We observe his determination to wash his hands in innocency, and his boast that the Lord hath recompensed him according to his righteousness, and to the cleanness of his hands. But soon that confidence is changed into the penitence of “a broken and contrite heart;” for those hands are stained with the blood of an injured and innocent man, and the sinning monarch, like the humble disciple in after time, has need to seek more than a partial cleansing,—to be washed *thoroughly* from his iniquity, and to be purged from a pollution far more pervading and revolting than the ceremonial uncleanness of a Jewish leper. Again, his hot indignation against him that maketh deceit, worketh mischief, and telleth lies,

and his just reprehension of Doeg who loved “lying rather than to speak righteousness,” give place to the almost despairing and seemingly much needed petition: “Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.” At one period we mark him following hard after God, waiting on him all the day, and receiving in Divine guidance and teaching the blessing promised to the meek; at another, we find that he had sunk into the horrible pit and miry clay of transgression, his soul for the time being gathered with sinners, and his life with bloody men.

But from the particular form of human frailty in which he was determined not to indulge, David’s history indicates that he was singularly exempt. Under the persecution of Saul, the rebukes of Nathan and Gad—and that these were deserved does not affect unless to confirm the position, for men generally most angrily resent the merited censure—under the bold dealing of his

faithful Joab, the curses of Shimei, the taunts of the daughter of Saul, the rebellion of Absalom, the defection of Ahithophel and Hushai, he exhibits, as the occasion demands, a calm dignity, a patient, humble demeanor, and a penitent readiness to acknowledge his error and submit to the imposed penalty. We observe scarcely a token of what might seem a pardonable resentment, much less the breaking forth of his well-bridled lips into any retaliatory utterance. The announcement of Ahithophel's desertion, elicits only a prayer for the defeat of his counsel. Tolerating not only, but excusing the invective of Shimei, he makes this touching appeal to his indignant attendants: "Behold my son which came forth of my bowels seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him." And again, his "eyes ever toward the Lord" look to him with the trusting expectation that "may be the



Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.” In the matter of speech, as in all the “ways” of that early manhood during which he won the heart of Israel, we cannot resist the conclusion that he “behaved himself wisely,” and that “the Lord was with him” no less in the carrying out of this “purpose” of his soul, than in girding him with strength to battle, and subduing under him them that rose up against him. Perhaps it is not to be excepted to the usual moderation of his practice that he said *in his haste*, “All men are liars,” and again, “I am cut off from before thine eyes;” for singular experience had been appointed to him of human faithlessness and ingratitude, and of the mysterious and often apparently conflicting dealings of Providence.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE ON CHRISTIAN PROGRESS.

“So great a way,” remarks Matthew Henry, “*does keeping the tongue from evil go in religion, that ‘if any offend not in word, the same is a perfect man;’* and so little a way does religion go without this, that it is said respecting him who *bridles not his tongue, ‘his religion is vain.’*” Elsewhere, he presents the same thought in slightly varying form, remarking how *great* an attainment is this government of the tongue, since the man who secures it is a “perfect” man; and how *needful*, since without it all other religion is “vain.” If we may analyze our notion of Christian training, considering it without reference to the agency of the Holy Spirit, we should say it begins with self-

acquaintance and is carried on by Christian action. The heathen philosophers seem to us to have had the germ of this view when they pronounced their first maxim, "*Know thyself*;" and when they made moral rectitude to consist in *living according to nature*, understood by some, *nature in general*, or *the eternal fitness of things*, and by others, the *nature of man* in its most perfect model or conception. Applying the doctrine in his own mode, the Christian philosopher understands Christian rectitude to be in theory a conformity to the nature of man as it came from the Creator, complete in all physical, moral, and intellectual endowments—man in the image of God. But as by the introduction of sin into the world that standard could no longer exist, another was provided in the new if fainter type of Divine excellence which is displayed in the regenerate nature of man.

Self-acquaintance is not acquired as the child acquires the knowledge of the objects of per-

ception. Mutable alike in aspect and relation, self demands an ever new adjustment of focus, an ever prompt and pursuant attention. Even those natural traits of character which are in a sort permanent, are powerfully modified by continually supervening influences, and the self of one period is scarcely recognizable at another. The whole system of conceptions, reasonings, and consequent desires, will, and emotions, changes frequently in the formative processes of life; and he is a sagacious as well as honest seeker after self-knowledge who marks with accuracy the varying aspects of his own mental horizon, and discerns now in shadow, now in light, the undulating surface of the world, to himself so vast, of his own thought and emotion. Man's self-acquaintance is a series of observations, experiments, and we might add of mistakes and failures, except that these apparently negative results conduce also to the desired end. It is not possible, we believe, to secure or preserve such needful

knowledge of self without a habit of thoughtfulness, of introversion, as it is often called, without a watchfulness over the effect of all new outward influences, without a mental measuring line held ever ready in the hand. The attention so employed cannot be expended on objects which bear no relation to self-culture; and such a habit of mind precludes the expression of imperfect conceptions and of immature or undisciplined thought. Next to reliance on Divine grace, the most perfect aid to self-acquaintance is this watchfulness over the inner as well as the outer man, this frequent withdrawing of one from the companionship of the other, this survey, as from the hill-top of consciousness, of both internal economy and external conduct. Scarcely less careful should be the scrutiny to which the mental operations of others, so far as they can be traced, are subjected. The mature man may learn much wisdom from observing the usually natural and therefore true

conditions of the child's utterance. In many instances, the most inexplicable moral phenomena to him, are considered in wondering silence, and the stronger emotions, or rather those not subject to frequent excitement, remain without expression, often without any form of exhibition. Thus are gathered within the soul the seeds of after-thought which would perish scattered unskilfully and in unselected soil. A hasty, unthinking communication of the mysteries of his consciousness is more rare in the thoughtful child than in the man; and how serious an evil does it introduce into the moral being of the man! The dew, the blush, the down—illustrate as you will the simplicity and purity of many involuntary sentiments—is dried, faded, brushed away by this exposure to the glare of day and the touch of each passer-by. In all that pertains to Christian self-examination—that examination which is not simply the result of a few minutes or even hours of thought, nor merely an

interval employment of the mind, but its unremit-  
ted side-work, prosecuted through all occupations,  
in all scenes—how little is there which is suitable  
for expression! Could we invariably present to our  
fellow-man the ripe, instead of, as commonly, the  
immature fruits of our self-culture; could we from  
our inward searching bring forth without fail  
that hid treasure of practical wisdom which were  
available to human progress, there would be a  
reason and value in free expression and even in  
full self-revelation. But, as it is, those fruits are  
perfected only after long, careful, assiduous culti-  
vation; and we may not, in our digging for the  
pure gold, pause to discuss either the wearisome-  
ness of our toil or the prospect of reward. That  
which is good for moral instruction is best con-  
veyed by actions, which are as much the re-  
sult of thought as are words. Recent impressions,  
no matter how well defined, must bear the friction  
of other influences before they can be deemed in-

effaceable, or remain permanent signs in plastic and developing minds. Some Christian graces are only moderately dependent for their growth and vigor on intercourse with men. Others perish without such nurture as active, human, or social life perpetually affords. Bodily exercise in this sense often profiteth much. Humility towards God is the state of mind which ensues on a comparison of self with God and the standard of his law; and what has man to do with this portion of our Christian work? Humility with regard to man is still the same mental act—a comparison of self with a standard of human excellence—and still what have men to do with the personal result which is thus worked out? Long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, may be called silent virtues, and are displayed rather by what is left unsaid and undone.

Plainly, in this world, which is our sphere of action if only partially that of thought, a plan is



needed, a well ordered system by which we can best do good to man and glorify God. To form and maintain this scheme of life needs some such continuousness and earnestness of attention as the commander of a fleet, in dangerous seas, gives alike to the stormy sky and the tossed and straining barks which his watchfulness and skill alone can guide into the desired haven. To know self for the purpose of using self in the mode appointed by God—to use it by action and inaction, by silence and speech, in all intellectual operations, in all emotional excitements, to the end of his glory and the good of our fellow men—this is what is given us to do. We are, therefore, to walk with our God *softly*—carefully, considerately, reverently concerning him and the eternal truths which he has revealed. We are to walk as those who have an earnest purpose, who “seek a country,” not as those who saunter along in a pleasant path, intent only on repose and recreation. Neither a ready, frequent, noisy

mirth, nor the vain babblings that belong to the idiot or child, rather than to the man whose nature and destiny are so wonderfully mysterious and solemn, whose being extends to unknown modes of existence, and whose relations are chiefly to the Infinite and Divine; neither the wrangling of envy, the boasting of pride, nor the repining of discontent, can characterize the utterance of the Christian disciple who apprehends what is involved in his relation to the great Teacher. To learn fully, that he may see clearly, and communicate rightly, describes his duty and his mission; and his reward of successful working is in proportion to his perseverance of endeavor to obtain the knowledge and perform the will of God. The varying practice of Christians—the flickering and dimness of that light which should diffuse itself abroad as well as penetrate the dark corners of their own hearts, is, if we do not mistake, largely owing to a forsaking of the humility and docility

of discipleship, an aspiring to teach what is not fully learned, an incautious handling of weighty truths, and a rash utterance of thoughts unsystematized by prayer or study of the Scriptures. Words conveying some already current, approved train of thought, take the place of new inquiry, of continuous and laborious investigation into the inexhaustible storehouse of truth; and that which in its own sphere would be significant and valuable, becomes in other and unsuitable application incorrect and injurious. If progress in Christian knowledge and in self-culture is thus retarded by an imperfect apprehension and careless utterance of Scripture doctrine, no less do these diminish the efficiency of Christian effort. By thoughtful observation, by cautious comparison alone, do we gain any available acquaintance with our fellow men. It is only by an accurate, a *hair line* measuring, so to speak, of their impulses, motives, abilities, and of all forming influences, physical,

moral, social, and educational, so far as they can be discovered, that we form any estimate of the magnitude and resistance of that fabric of false opinions and sinful practice which we seek to overturn by the mighty lever of Christian teaching and example. From communion with our own souls and with God springs the self-acquaintance which humbles but to elevate, which reveals only to remove the corruption within, and refines a base and earthly mixture into the pure gold of a God-seeking, loving, and trusting spirit. From the same communion with self and with our Maker springs also a right judgment and compassionate consideration of others which discovers their need, stimulates to efforts after its supply, and cherishes the yearning to be in regard of our fellow men co-workers with God, and, in confirmation of the Saviour's test, to evince our love to him by a faithful and abiding love to one another.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE ON PERSONAL HAPPINESS.

Few virtues were in the ancient ethics more insisted on than patience, or, in its highest exercise, fortitude. In Roman speech, he only was *a man* who had strength or bravery, and this was displayed by both Greek and Roman models of human excellence, as much by endurance as by action. The good soldier, both in heathen and in Christian times, must “endure hardness,” as well as be valiant in conflict. The Lacedemonian and American Indian received a severe training in varied modes of bodily torture; and suffering of any sort had few terrors for those who in extremes of hunger and thirst, by burning brand, rack, and thong, had trained their flesh to an unwincing,

unquivering submission, and their spirits to an imperturbable composure. To suffer and be still, is the dictate of common sense, the counsel of human experience, and the teaching alike of philosophy and of Christianity. The precept of patience and the promise of its reward, run an unbroken thread through the history and the doctrine of Scripture. "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because Thou didst it,"—seems the practice of most of the holy men whose record has reached us, and is one of the first instincts of the renewed heart. Swift on the performance of the duty ensues the reward,—a reward not of the heart's desire, perhaps, but of inward healing, of calmness and confidence, of the peace that proceeds only from trust in God and submission to his will, and which is beyond question a peace which passeth all understanding. The unbelieving may cavil at the possibility of such a peace, or recklessly reject the hope of it; the fearful may shrink from appropriating the

fulness of its blessing; but there is a credible testimony that the gift divine is freely proffered, and a sure witness within, that it brings down to this cold and sad, this dark and empty world the glorious light of God's love, the heaven of never-ending fellowship with him and his Son Jesus Christ.

The affliction whether of body or mind, for which no immediate relief can be obtained, should be, if what we have urged has force, sparingly discussed with our fellow-men, and fully communicated only to God. From him the sufferer may receive a speedy relief—the undelayed bestowal, *According to your faith be it unto you*; and will receive, if it be rightly sought, the grace sufficient for a calm and even cheerful endurance. Abstract from the severer forms of affliction, blind, distrustful apprehension, undue or false sympathy, imperfect or groundless consolation, unsuitable comment, and exaggerated estimate, and you

diminish in no small measure their rigor. There are minor evils which suffer a like aggravation in the process of unrestrained or otherwise indiscreet communication. The surprises of ill temper, anger, or inordinate joy; the irregularities of the more ordinary mental states, produced not only by physical conditions, but largely by scarcely recognizable influences which do not come within range of our watchfulness, or under the rule of our self-discipline; the rash judgment, the inconsiderate action which has discouraged and mortified us by its unfortunate results, and lessened our reputation for prudence and sagacity; the smaller sins,—if any can be small—of continual besetment and almost unconscious allowance, which are sources of ever-recurring spiritual declension and humiliation,—*little foxes* which spoil our vines and hinder us from gathering the tender grapes of our long culture and earnest desire;—these and kindred causes occasion us a distress



in which we are restless with an uneasiness which sometimes exceeds that of graver troubles. Most men take refuge from such tormenting anxieties in vehement self-exculpation, in detailed narration of all circumstances that contributed to their temptation or failure, in complaints of their *luck*, their friends, their health, or their early teaching. They lay themselves open to the not always attentive, just, or kind observation of uncaring fellow-men, and intensify the effect of their one error by a weak, vague declamation in relation to it, which evinces small acquaintance with its real cause, and still less energy of purpose to guard against its recurrence. But it is better that with the dead past should be buried, so far as the tongue's office of revival is concerned, its mistakes, misfortunes, and sins. Better that into the inner place of the soul none but the Sanctifier and Comforter should enter! Restored by his healing, refreshed and gladdened by his presence, we shall be re-

newed in the spirit of our minds, shall mount in our Christian flight as on eagles' wings, shall walk and not faint in these earthly paths, aye, *run* and not be weary in the way of God's commandments.

But in urging the strict government of the tongue, we would not be understood to argue against the indulgence of a legitimate desire, or to object in any measure to the exercise and enjoyment of that sympathy, the accordance of which is no less an injunction of Scripture than the insatiable craving of our nature. Who can fully describe, how few can adequately estimate the preciousness, the solace, the culture, the spiritual sustenance of that rarely acquired treasure, *a friend!* We use not the word in its ordinary, still less, in its poetical and usually fanciful signification. We use it to denote the impersonation of some measure of the same truth and faithfulness, the same wisdom, patience, charitableness, and tenderness which characterized the best of friends

—Him who more than all others deserves the name. And if in the orderings of our heavenly Father the fulness of such blessing be denied,—if we never find or claim the heart which answereth to our heart, if the “electric chain wherewith we are quickly bound” kindle from our burning thought and emotion no spark within those who stand around us; still how sweet is the commonest fellow-feeling, how does the heart swell at the most ordinary tones of kindness, and how do the nerves thrill at the slightest pressure of the sympathizing hand! God, if we have read his word aright, made us not for himself alone, nor for ourselves, but for each other. Bear ye then one another’s burdens of sin, of sorrow, and of toil, and so fulfil not only the law of Christ, but the evident intention of your being:—“The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an helpmeet for him.” But beware lest you add to these burdens, lest you endeavor to

relieve yourself of your appointed portion, by transferring it in the form of complaint, exaggeration, recrimination, foreboding, or distrust. You think that you cannot bear your wounded spirit, and with singular inconsistency you tear open the bleeding gaps, and subjecting them to unskilful human handling, too often cause them to pour out afresh and in vain the current of your life. Rather sustain your infirmity with the blessed aid and healing that God imparts, and which is to be obtained by study of his word, and prayerful, submissive application of its teaching and promises.

Pious friends may, by their own fuller experience and riper self culture, stay us in the day of failing strength and courage; but their only available sources of consolation spring from the one great fountain whence we must draw for ourselves or thirst forever. And in their offered draughts there is too often the admixture of worldly cordials which are poison to the soul, even if they

yield a temporary cooling and alleviation. In the day of your weakness, “cease ye from man;” or if you lean on him, let it be but lightly, as on the reed which at any moment may fail under the pressure and pierce the hand that rests on it.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE CONSIDERED IN ITS RELATION TO THE DISCIPLINE OF AFFLICTION.

WE are not of those who hold that all suffering is, in a spiritual view, punitive. It may have no retrospective bearing, and be in the way of training and warning. Again, the laws of our being are other than moral, and the infraction of any one law incurs a penalty correspondent with the class to which it belongs. Physical penalties guard physical laws, and intellectual confusion is the result of want of accordance with ascertained laws of mind. Sin, it is true, pervades every part of our nature, and to no portion of that nature are its consequences confined. But we claim that much of the suffering which seems, in its universality and continuance, almost our normal condition, cannot

reasonably be viewed as the expression of God's indignation. Nor need we, by an unwarranted and strained interpretation of his orderings, add weight to burdens which already are heavier than, without his special aid, we are able to bear.

The benefit of that which the sense of sin—"the law of God written in our hearts," or the applied tests of Scripture pronounce to be *punitive* suffering, is mainly dependent on the mode in which it is endured. No advantage, or, at most, an extraneous and irrelevant one, accrues to the child from punishment, simply considered. It is only when the child recognizes the affection of the parent, the wisdom of his law, and the folly and danger of opposition to it, that the proposed end of punishment is gained, and the work of reformation commenced in the heart. Let us dwell awhile on the process which, from childhood under parental, and through manhood to old age, under social and divine law, we continually pass through,

till death frees us from a body of sin and a world of imperfection and corruption.

In the natural state of man, the objects of moral perception are unperceived and unarranged. The mind, inert from this ignorance or indifference and only stimulated by the false and flitting light of its own instincts, cannot struggle forward through a clogged and obscure pathway to the distant opening which reveals the space and brightness beyond. But when it is once brought by the agency of the Holy Spirit within the radiant circle of truth, all things assume to it their real position, and consequently their true proportion; and there arises a sense of ignorance and delusion which expands into a consciousness of sinful indifference to truth and right. Hence ensues a never ending conflict with that wilfully blind and perverse self, which has so long held the mastery, an agreement with the true law of being and internal confirmation of its justice, and a



readiness to undergo the penalty it imposes. By this willing submission and patient endurance, there are obtained a leisure time of the soul, a separation from the scene of its mad riot and tumult, a calm, careful examination of past acts and estimate of their consequences, which induces a disinclination to return to the darkness—the “mire and slime” of worldly and godless life, and a *turning of mind* from error to truth, and from sin to purity. By the blessing of the Enlightener, the soul is taught to discern the source of all truth and purity, and, from abstract and not always fully perceived qualities, to go on to the apprehension of a personal, living, eternal, and unchanging representation of their character and fulness. Thus it is led from sin to God; thus begins the work of submission; thus proceeds the work of knowledge and sanctification; thus is the creature’s weakness made perfect in the Creator’s strength.

If we have accurately represented this mental

change which is essential to all permanent outward reformation, we have also inferentially presented the duty of a careful use of all means which God has appointed to the end, and more definitely the use of the discipline of suffering for sin. The natural instinct is a shrinking from it, an impatience to escape from it, or to shorten the term of its endurance. The mouth vents the abundance of the heart in moanings and complaints, laments, at first naturally and not sinfully, the adverse and pain-inflicting agency, and finally gives utterance to railings against the conduct of others, the appointments of Providence, and of course to self-assertion and justification. Thus, we have the inverse working of the law of punitive discipline. Self is elevated, not abased, and rebellion and ingratitude hold with tumultuous and exhausting occupancy their dominion over the heart. Such is not always, perhaps not commonly, the primary state of the suffering sinner; but the brooding of the spirit

over the evil, the morbid and inconsistent discussion of its every particular, the self-exaltation to a pre-eminence in grief, to a claim to a victim and martyr-due commiseration, in time turn the mind from considering the origin of its distress, and from seeking the only provision for relief. We have touched on this subject while considering the influence of the government of the tongue on personal happiness; and as we find ourselves brought to the same point in pursuing our examination of its influence on spiritual discipline, we are constrained to conclude with a commentator on the passage, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," that "we have reason to praise God that the matter is so well contrived, that our reverence of him and obedience to him are as much our interest as they are our duty." The best comfort, the most perfect help and healing, is then the greatest faithfulness in thought, word, and deed to the service of God our Father. His law, "added because of trans-

gressions," is designed to bring us to Christ; and if we are thus brought, and obtain blessed faith in him, we need no more our "school-master," but are "the children of God." Plain, precious doctrine, profitable alike for our instruction and consolation! Infinitely precious Saviour, who hath brought this life in him by faith to light through the Gospel!

In whatever evil, therefore, we receive from God, especially in such as we deem the recompense for transgression, the resulting benefit is only secured by a careful viewing of our sinfulness and alienation from God, of his right to deal with us according to his own pleasure, and of our utter absence of any self-originating claim to his forbearance. Thus are formed the humility and patience which constitute the true dignity of man, and the knowledge is imparted both of his worth and meanness, his suffering and its remedy, his want and its supply. In our controversies with men, there is

ever an imperfect settlement, a residue of embittered feeling, of wounded pride, of uneasy recollection. But the account, if we may so speak, is squared in our transactions with God. Submission and repentance are the terms of pardon, and the grace bestowed is measureless in itself and boundless in its scope. If you have the spirit of the child of God, not only will you submit but rejoice, not after the natural man nor carnally, but after the spiritual mode we have endeavored to disclose to you. It is the rejoicing of the renewed man, and, by a beautiful reflex action, the more joy, the more strength. Here then, give wings to your spirit! Soar higher and higher yet! No fear of failing strength, of shadows of earthly darkness, for still purer, and freer, and brighter that atmosphere through which you rise to the source of light and joy! And as the bird, which has furnished our illustration, is ever singing in its heavenward flight, so let your life be a hymn of praise, a continual outburst of thanksgiving and love.

As we contemplate these blessed possibilities—nay, these often realized delights of Christian submission and trust, how do we, from our inmost souls, repel the alternative of a sullen murmuring, or of outspoken rebellion against the wise and merciful decrees of our Father in heaven! There are workers of iniquity who boast themselves, who utter and speak hard things; but “blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law!”

Brought to this point by our examination of the influence of the tongue on the temper of mind with which afflictive, including punitive, dispensations of Providence are to be received, we shall pause in the discussion to glance at the prospect which here outspreads itself,—to view the hope set beyond the suffering, the rest of forgiveness and reconciliation remaining to the toil-worn people of God, and, daring to refuse the admission of the Apostle, to plead that the grievous chastening of

our Father may even in the present time seem joyous if we bear in mind its intent,—“that we might be partakers of his holiness.” Glorious destiny! Immeasurable recompense for this life of darkness and trial! Can thought figure forth an excellence or bliss beyond? Can language express a nobler condition, a vaster inheritance? *Partakers of God's holiness!* Our minds stagger as they would reach that height. We veil our faces, unable to bear this ray of the divine effulgence. Still on this low earth, with this body of natural and spiritual death, we must prostrate ourselves and cry, Unclean, unclean! before with rapturous emotions of gratitude and love we can swell the chorus of the church on earth:—For thou only art holy, thou only art the Lord, thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father!

Reader, has the sin of your nature been revealed to you? Has no self-deception concerning it been

tolerated, no false excuse admitted? Have you gone with it to God and, sorrowfully showing it to him, have you asked that he would take it away on account of Jesus Christ who came into the world to save sinners? Do you believe, though you do not comprehend, that, as in symbol his blood-shedding could wash away an outward stain, so his life, his teaching, his both attesting and expiatory death are the means appointed for your deliverance from guilt and your conduct to heaven? If so, then the "gift by grace" has abounded to you, and your repentance is accepted, the pardon is granted, the strength promised, and the deliverance pledged. The gift is complete and absolute. No half-way measure, no imperfect consolation, no covering over of your guilt, no offer of a temporary reconciliation. God "giveth liberally,"—in the far more emphatic original, giveth *simply*—without reserve, without recall, without upbraiding. "All things are yours," if you will but accept



them, and—mark the climax—“ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s.” You are then to receive through Christ of the fulness of the Godhead! In expectation of this “unspeakable gift,” what remains but that you cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God? You have as ground of encouragement to persevere—“God is able to make all grace abound toward you;” and the fulfilment of his purpose as your obligation to a faithful service—“that ye, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”

## CHAPTER VI.

THE DUTY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE OBLIGATORY IN PUBLIC AS IN PRIVATE AFFLICTION, AND ESPECIALLY URGED ON THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

AN upheaving of the solid ground, a convulsion of the elements, a sweeping away of ancient landmarks, a darkening of the lights of heaven, and a pouring down on our devoted heads of the deluge of God's indignation, are now experienced in this once prosperous country. Late events in their rapid progress and startling character seem to belong to remote, chaotic periods of man's history rather than to the order, the civilization and diffusion of knowledge which belong to later times. Nor have we escaped the fierce passions, the lust of dominion, the occasionally brutal struggle for mastery which characterized semi-barbarous ages; as

if there had not been a dawning of light on their darkness, as if a multitude of the heavenly host had not proclaimed peace and good will to men, as if we had not beheld a Divine “example of suffering affliction and of patience,” and as if from a chosen follower of our meek and lowly Saviour there had not come the persuasive pleading: “Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger and clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you!” Oh the *clamor* of this war! Far above the hoarse tones of command, the cannon’s roar, the bursting of shells and many-shaped instruments of destruction; far above the shrieks and groans of the wounded and dying, and the combined din of battle, we hear a noise of tongues set on fire of hell, hissing, roaring in awful explosions of hatred and vengefulness. Are you who thus utter forth your rage civilized men, and

have some of you—alas for your Master's name!—called yourselves Christians? To our own ears has been borne the imprecation upon an enemy of destruction both in this life and in the next. You could not then leave your brother to the disposition of your common Father in heaven! It was not enough to doom him in your heart to a ruined life and hopeless death, but usurping the province of Divine justice and refusing that of ever accompanying Divine mercy, you would consign him to irretrievable woe! When once the glittering sword is whet, on whom, think you, shall fall its edge? “If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

But we come to a calmer discussion of this subject. We are deeply impressed with the need of arousing the Christian conscience of the whole land in regard to the prevalent abuses of speech. We are not without our opinions, sympathies, perhaps our prejudices. But into the question before us

they are not suffered to intrude. We are not now pleading to establish such principles of government, interpretations of national charters, or applications of precedent as may have recommended themselves to our adoption. We examine not now, our Northern and Southern brother! into the right of your cause. We neither dispute the statement of your grievances, nor question the correctness of your resulting conclusions. We are pleading that as one great brotherhood in a Christian land we stand together on the platform of religious obligation, if not of political concordance. If the writer mistakes not—and our view does not lack confirmation—there comes to us from political addresses, and commemorative orations, from the periodical press, and—must we say it?—to a large extent from the pulpit, a tone of denunciation which, considering our very recent union and our progress in the highest civilization, is not called forth by the circumstances of the conflict, and is utterly discordant with

the teachings of Christianity. We observe by these organs of public sentiment an immoderate setting forth of individual opinion and estimate of individual judgment; a rejection of long established safeguards of demeanor and intercourse; a use of epithets and terms, which in themselves contemptible, and at first, even to the ordinary mind, merely ludicrous, acquire an influence by iteration, and conduce largely to the relaxation of self-restraint, both in the formation and expression of belief. Ordinary conversation is but the reduced impress of public sentiment, exceeding its type in want of caution and accuracy, in vehemence and rancor, as personal passions and prejudices lash and urge each other into more inordinate development.

We have said that the conflict subsisting between two sections of the once united States, does not sufficiently account for this excitement of feeling and language. If you, reader, and ourselves, to whichso-

ever of the contending divisions we individually belong, could come together to review the past and discuss the probabilities of the future, our souls would be filled with terrified amazement at the rapid progress of events, would kindle in indignation against the destroyers of our prosperity, and melt also in sorrow for national suffering, and, we trust, for national sinfulness. If we could describe the complication of opposing interests and theories which has gradually brought about the separation ; if we could expose the ambition and corruption which stalk triumphant through all the land under the semblance of patriotism ; if we could calculate the millions of not only expended but squandered money, and number the heaped-up bodies of our slain, and the aching hearts of the bereaved ; if we could behold the desolation of wide tracts of country, of fertile estates and well loved homes, the rapid wasting of toil-acquired competence and closing of many avenues of employment, the

thronged hospitals of sick and wounded, the family separations and estrangements; if we could estimate public and private anxiety and apprehension, the lowered position and influence of our country in the congress of nations, the continually arising questions and subordinate interests which seem ever more hopelessly to divide us; and if, without unduly seeking to discover the future, we consider the probable heritage to our children of diminished fortunes, of a country impoverished by civil war and without settled government; if we bear in mind the moral deterioration which is one of the saddest results of the contest, the distraction of mind from Christian contemplations, the time taken from every elevating, enlightening, and benevolent pursuit, and expended not only in the exigent employments of the war, but in the innumerable connecting claims which hydra-headed have sprung up to devour many a well devised plan of financial, literary, or religious operation;—



if we sufficiently ponder these present, pressing, and undeniable evils, we shall conclude that the vial of God's wrath is now poured out upon our land. But long as is our enumeration, and potent as is the action of the agencies of this war, we repeat our assertion that they do not explain the bitterness and evil speaking which seem to us especially to characterize it. Hundreds of thousands among us have kindred and friends in the opposing sections; and can it be that the bond of relationship, citizenship, and of a common Christian faith, can be severed as in a day by struggling interests and jealousies, nay, by even wrong-doing and injustice? It is even so; and what beside unavoidable lamentation remains to the Christian patriot? In pestilence, famine, or foreign attack, he would submissively acknowledge the hand of God; and no less in this civil conflict is he bound to discern the Divine ordering, and, in the careful discharge of what he deems his duty, to exercise

self-watchfulness, moderation, and meekness. However men's mutual relations may vary, they never vary with God. His rule is universal and enduring; his law has been promulged for all time and all conditions, is laid down for the friend and the enemy, extends to every thought of the heart, casts down every self-exalting imagination, binds every member of the body, and bridles even the unruly and iniquitous tongue.

In regard to the duty which we have been considering in its application to the present condition of our country, there seems to have come from the pulpit an uncertain sound. With deep regret we have failed to gather from its teachings at large, the warning and instruction which it should have been foremost to proffer. Through her mouth-piece, the pulpit and religious press, the Church has made no proper vindication of her rights, no fearless assumption of her responsibilities. Indeed, we have begun to fear that in our long pro-

tracted period of internal tranquillity, no just view has become current of her relations to the State, which though riveted by no political fastening, unquestionably exist, and in no system of government can be wholly ignored. To define them, is to guard the State from lawlessness on the one hand and ecclesiastical assumption on the other, and the Church from arrogance and self-assertion, from secular contempt and civil oppression. It is to provide a system of checks and balances, which in its efficiency indicates its Divine origin, and therefore permanent adaptation. The Church is honorable in her two-fold office of exponent of God's will and of man's obligation. Her Founder shall gird his sword upon his thigh and ride prosperously, because of *truth, and meekness, and righteousness*; and shall not she be all glorious with the concentrated radiance of these principles of his rule and highest attainments of his willing subjects? We regard the Church as a partial type of

the Saviour, as, hypothetically, the impersonation of his teachings, as like himself commissioned, though only by his authority and to the letter of his instructions, to declare in all time to man the rule of life and way to heaven. If she be faithful to her trust, she will not shun to make manifest the whole revealed counsel of God, or to utter her convictions as to truth and right, derived, as they should be, from her infallible charter of instructions. Some of her disciples dictate to her that she put her hand on her mouth in times of national agitation or less momentous party strife, or that she give expression to but one class of truths; that her ministers, in the garments of consecration, avoiding the high ways of life, their shoes from off their feet on the holy ground of professional labor, should wait the end of all things in the restoration and consummation of heaven. We, ourselves, have loved to liken the Church to John the Baptist, crying in this wilder-

ness world, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord;" clothed not in the soft raiment of earthly luxury and preferment, but in the self-denying virtues of a messenger of Christ, girded ever for coming toil and endurance, and sustaining herself not by extravagant demands of large outlay and bestowal, but by that simple provision of inward grace which God by his power, which worketh mightily in true believers, shall abundantly and continually supply. In her greatest temporal prosperity she has often failed to maintain the singleness of her trust in the all-sufficient declaration, "I am with you alway." Leaning on an arm of flesh, which could not uphold her, she has fallen from her high estate. So manifest at times has been the worldly and contentious spirit, the love of wealth and power, the bigoted proscription of some who were fairly under her protection, and the zeal for conversion, not so much to Christianity as to a sect, that it might well be asked of her, Which of

the two masters is the one whom you serve? “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” And yet oftentimes in a period of trial, the Church has experienced, like her Founder, that though tempted sorely by Satan and beset by wild beasts of infidelity, fanaticism, and persecution, angels have ministered unto her, and the voice of that Spirit which conducted her into the desolate region has given sweet assurance of tender filial relation and Divine complacency.

It is the office of the Church, as it was that of John the Baptist, to announce a Saviour,—“Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,” and to declare her own mission,—“that he should be made manifest, therefore am I come.” \* \* \* \* But John walked elsewhere than in the wilderness. Within the circle of court splendor and influence he had seen a form of evil triumphant, and, clad in robes of royalty, stalk not only unrebuked, but legalized and honored

through the land. He contented himself with no assertion of general principles, no supposition of a case, no enunciation of a rule that could be applied or not at pleasure. Without any timid or tortuous approach to the subject, in form of direct address, in words that could not be fewer or simpler, he says to the king, "It is not lawful for thee to have her." He speaks with authority, and the conscience of Herod applies and confirms his decision. John, doubtless, had cautious friends among his disciples, who would argue that his mission was to announce the coming and work of Christ, and that in "baptizing and preaching" he could find ample employment of his time and powers; that it was needless to expose himself to the wrath of Herod, and useless; for had not the marriage been concluded, and might not questions exist as to the new relations and obligations that might arise from its illegal consummation? Some might urge that to wink at this already committed

evil, would ensure for the new doctrine which the coming Christ was to declare, a readier hearing and more hearty reception. Truly, friends in high places seemed wanting to the feeble band that was the seed of the church; and Herod, already *observing* John—the first point gained,—*fearing* him, because he knew John to be that which he would make others—a just man and an holy—Herod, already *hearing* him, aye, *hearing him gladly*, and *doing many things*—was not this Herod almost a Christian? In like case could minister's heart feel greater encouragement or anticipate happier results? Even to us, in the blaze of Gospel light, the course of the matter seems mysterious, and we are ready to conclude that but for this reproof of the speaker he had gained the soul of his hearer. How much more mysterious to those who came and took up the headless corpse, and, laying it in the tomb, seemed there also to bury the mighty truths John came to promulgate,



the long deferred prophetic fulfilment, and to quench in its darkness the light which had sprung up in "the region and shadow of death" in which for ages they had sat!

So far, then, as the history of John can convey them, are represented the character and mission of the Church. Primarily, she is to declare Christ's coming, teachings, and requirements. Secondly, in view of these great considerations, this "kingdom of heaven" now "at hand," she calls on man to repent, and, in his every condition and relation, to bring forth in the faithful discharge of his obligations "fruits meet for repentance." She is not infallible in her judgments, for she is not that light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," but was instituted to "bear witness of that light;" not arrogant of power nor boastful of influence, for her appeal is ever to One standing among you whom ye know not, "whose shoe latchet I am not worthy to unloose;" not

self-confident and relying, for on her banner—is she not militant with the world, the flesh, and the devil?—she has inscribed *One mightier than I*. But on every question that may touch man's eternal welfare—and what question touches it not?—she speaks as her Master would have spoken, in the spirit which was his, keeping back no truth, suppressing no claim, enforcing the one and urging the other with undeviating regard to Gospel faithfulness and Gospel love. Rulers, masters, parents, no less than subjects, slaves, and children, are commanded, warned, and guarded. As individuals form the body ecclesiastical, so shall individual belief find appropriate expression from the pulpit, and it may happen that that belief is unsound; but the advocacy of every opinion is to be held in its mode and extent subordinate to recognized supreme laws. No theories or measures of civil or ecclesiastical organizations have any inherent value or self-sustaining principle unless

they are framed in obedience to the Christian law and maintained and prosecuted in conformity to the Christian spirit. Each will demand the occasional surrender of will, the constantly, if not exactly distrustful, yet humble and docile exercise of judgment. In the history both of churches and of nations, there has been recorded "a marvellous work and a wonder," for the wisdom of their wise men has often signally perished, and the understanding of their prudent men been hid. And wherefore? Their fear toward Me is taught *by the precept of men*.

To a dispassionate observer of the action of the Church in relation to the contest between the States, we think it would appear that the Church throughout the land has, on the whole, exerted her influence to maintain rather than to moderate the vehement spirit in which it has very generally been prosecuted, and especially, for peculiar local reasons, in one section of the country. We have

already recounted the causes of this virulent animosity, and it will be acknowledged with due consideration of their influence, that some check to the frantic impulses of the more violent combatants is, and would always, in like contingencies, be needed. In the general disseverment of societies and cessation of intercourse, we deem it to have been not impracticable that the Church, though no longer in corporate form, should preserve her proper unity, and even with opposing action in relation to the national division, should still prominently hold forth the principles on which she was constituted, and which she is pledged to consider as forever obligatory. But her course, if we mistake not, has been a prompt and eager partisanship; and it has been maintained with an ever augmenting confidence and earnestness, which, in some of their manifestations, cannot be reconciled to the religion of the Bible.

We do not overlook the causes which have con-

duced to this result. Naturally, the spiritual teacher would feel strong devotion to the sectional views which on each side are supposed, for the most part conscientiously, to be vital not only to the existence of good government, but to the prosperity of the Church. We cannot justly ignore the influence of individual temperament, the strong sympathy of the pastoral clergy with the sentiments and interests of their people, the continual attrition of mutual discussion, and the impulse of the sensational daily press. We would not forget that high as is the standard for the character of the Church as a body, that standard affecting chiefly professional acts of her ministers, though it can be maintained only by their inward spirituality, can scarcely be applied to individual performance. Ministers as well as other men can claim, according to the Latin adage, that nothing human is removed from their sphere of thought and emotion, if, in their case, it be from that of their active par-

icipation. But we fail to find in the personal claims of patriotism, or in the more common and plausible plea--the duty of wielding aright the large influence of the Church, in the demands of sympathy, or the propriety of diffusing through church going hearers intelligent and just views of the pending difficulties;—we fail, we say, to find, even in these legitimate motives, justification for the language and action, in reference to the national crisis, of numbers of the clergy belonging to various denominations, and to Northern and Southern States. An error, it is true, was from the first committed by the community at large, which, but for the ready tolerance of the clergy, would have been a gross indignity to their body. It was not needful, considering their pre-existing local interests, nor admissible, in view of their profession, to institute an inquiry into their political opinions, or demand from them an account of their private utterances. The test question, if not always formally, has been actually

and rigidly applied to them. For an overt act which by either party can be construed as injurious to the State, the ecclesiastic, as any other man, is amenable to a civil tribunal. But on no ground can it be denied to him to offer in proper time and place, or to reserve, if deemed necessary to either personal or Christian interests, the expression of his sentiments on public affairs. With as much reason might we authoritatively investigate his views on social, literary, or non-essential religious questions, demand from him conformity to a humanly declared standard of dress, expenditure, and intercourse with men, or make him run the gauntlet of the ultra societies and novel practices which are the rank overgrowth of our spiritual vitality and liberty. Our ecclesiastical as well as our civil republicanism is somewhat over sturdy and vigorous ; or perhaps we should more correctly say, each has been forced into much monstrous and unfruitful development by injudicious tenders,

and in a hot bed of miscalled progress and reform, of impracticable theories, and impatience of legal, moral, and divine restraint. It has been an offence against the reverence due to the office, and in minor degree to the persons of the clergy, thus to draw them into the arena of conflict; and if the dust linger on the "holy garments," the reproach is in no small part with them who in effect "say to the seers, See not, and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things,"—the things which recommend themselves to our desires—"prophecy deceits."

We said the reproach has *in part* fallen upon the secular community. But "who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent?" Submitting at first with scarcely a show of resistance to the bold handling of their private judgment on non-professional matters, numbers of the clergy thus forsook their only tenable ground in the rush and conflict around them, and allowed



themselves to be dragged from the eminence whence throughout the length and breadth of the land, a voice might have gone forth and rung in every ear—not the sentiment of the American Church respecting the national disruption—but the blessed precepts of the Gospel. Influenced at first by timidity or by want of a proper estimate of their professional position and its privileges, and very often by unresisted personal feelings, they have since to a large extent moved forward eagerly on the path in which they have been set. Ministerial counsels and the religious press have been extreme, vehement, proscriptive. They have authoritatively questioned and reproved in their own body what was deemed a lack of zeal in advocating the sectional contest, or a manifesting of *sympathy* for opponents. Indeed, this word of sweet human meaning and gospel use has come somewhat into discredit in these days, and its application, to our thinking, been unduly restricted.

Why may not personal preference unite with “kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering” to recommend and promote, not illegal or unfair practice, but moderation and indulgence of sentiment and expression? Public opinion, first secular, then ecclesiastical, has called for what it terms *decided testimony* to the justice of the views and measures of the section; and from already mentioned causes, as the fear of lessened influence, personal obloquy, or earnest individual feeling, the minister, in his public utterances concerning the opposing party, has not been slow to comply with the command, “Cry aloud and spare not,” forgetting that the injunction was laid on one divinely inspired and directed in the case. Nor has the zeal of the clergy found its only vent in somewhat open mouthed declamation. Some have left the ecclesiastical for the military service. Many, in addition to such as, with special qualifications and no restraining ties of parish or family, might well deem themselves summoned to the post,

have attached themselves in their clerical capacity to the army, who have most deplorably failed to meet their grave responsibilities. A minister who, in peculiar circumstances, was solicited to take a command, replied that in considering the proposition he had sought a precedent for such a change, and that failing to find that Jewish priest or Levite had ever been enrolled among combatants, he must decline the appointment. Our heart is moved in Christian rejoicing for one who, strongly tempted to indulge a natural taste which a military training had developed, would ask counsel of the word of God, and abide by its decision. And yet, we could not but grieve that, at this period of the world, and with our advance in Christian knowledge, one who had been long in the ministry, should have to establish for the first time the grounds of his action on such an occasion; and that in the Gospel which he was commissioned to preach, he seemingly did not discover

ample enunciation of principles which would apply in the case. Had he searched for precedent the New, as he did the Old Testament, he would have found it. But the solitary Bible instance of a minister's bearing arms would scarcely have availed much in the premises. In that case, the spirit of oppugnation was not very vehement, the physical courage was deficient, for later it altogether failed the combatant, or, in common with most of his brethren of the present day, he had not attained to any special skill in the use of weapons, as the damage done by his sword was inconsiderable, and, but for the solemn surroundings of the scene, would have been ludicrous. Beside, the action and direction of the Saviour are not susceptible of misconstruction. They afford, with the command to lay aside the sword, a general and ever applicable warning, and the exact reparation of the injury by the restoring of the lost member to the doubtless wondering servant of the high priest. The ques-

tion of the right of self-defence stands alone, and is to be considered as established on natural, moral, and scripture principles. But we can reach no conclusion but that any other voluntary assumption of arms by a Christian minister is indefensible altogether by Christian teaching, and is inferentially prohibited by such a measure as the early separation of the apostles, by the interposition of the office of deacon, from even kindred secular employments.

Extempore public prayer has to a great extent expressed the party spirit, or we might more fairly say, the enthusiastic advocacy of sectional interests, which has characterized the general action of the Church. In a few melancholy instances it has been scarcely qualified in its pleading for the destruction of enemies. When, without such denunciation, it has been legitimately preferred for the prosperity and success of the so deemed righteous cause, it has often assumed a tone of dicta-

tion, and exhibited a self-assertion and unrestricted self-confidence, which at any time ill become ignorant and fallible men, and assuredly are irreverent and insane in a crisis like the present, when questions await solution, more complicate in form and momentous in import than any that have yet been proposed to the most accurate reasoning or sagacious statesmanship. In the ordinary and simpler entanglements of private or public affairs, we have ever reason to distrust our deceitful hearts, to beware of the false weights of prejudice and self-love in the balance of our mental appreciation of the justness of our cause. It would be well for us if in every determining process of thought, we would address ourselves to the Searcher of hearts, invoke his closest scrutiny, recite to him all past action, declare every purpose, and, like David, anticipate "good judgment and knowledge," *only* by believing his commandments. It would be well if with David we would from

time to time review the ground of our persuasion and the course of our conduct:—"If I have done this, if there be iniquity in my hands, if I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me;" and well, also, if our zeal for truth and right could, like David's, predominate over our yearnings for success and triumph:—"If I have done this—let the enemy persecute my soul and take it, yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honor in the dust." There is a simple and certain method of ensuring both intellectual soundness and moral rectitude; and the Psalmist gives it in few words: "*Through thy precepts* I get understanding; *therefore* I hate every false way."

The imprecatory Psalms, which have furnished the form at least of much of the denunciation of enemies which has found unhappily its expression in public prayer, have ever proved intangible to the writer's spiritual apprehension; and, like many now inexplicable facts and mysterious announcements,

will obtain to ourselves their proper significancy only in the great day of general revealing. We are aware that to this particular class of Psalms is attached by some a figurative meaning,—that the formidable and persecuting enemy is the great adversary of souls, who with his legions of allied combatants in the world and in the flesh, takes “crafty counsel” against the people of God, and “consults” against his “hidden ones;” and that the personal rancor of David typifies the Christian’s undying conflict with every form of evil, and his abiding separation from all workers of iniquity and contemners of God. Again, we have listened to the argument that David’s vehement indignation is sanctioned by the fact of his enemies being emphatically the enemies of God, and that his was therefore no ordinary hate and vengefulness, but consuming zeal for Divine honor and supremacy. Calvin, taking this view if we mistake not, for we have not now access to the passage, infers that with



such chastened and holy indignation, we may lawfully refresh ourselves by witnessing the punishment of evil doers; but that unassisted natural promptings and emotions will, in like case, be indulged only to a wrong and perverse end. To what point of achievement David had attained in the subduing of his personal animosities, and the internal substitution of the single motive of God's glory, it is needless to inquire, and would be from his history difficult to discover. For our practical deduction it is sufficient to note that, however just Calvin's view may be hypothetically, we cannot assure ourselves of such exemption from the infirmity of human principles of thought and action, as will enable us to conclude that we have the proper conscious witness of supreme love to God and desire for his glory, which would justify the language concerning enemies so abundantly used in the portion of the book of Psalms to which we have referred. Matthew Henry, who, in spite

of a habit of too lengthened discussion, of a wearying love of antithesis, and a somewhat puerile and unsuitable play upon words, and even, in one remembered instance, upon letters, is one of the most searching and apparently successful investigators of the spiritual meaning of the Psalms—with marked elevation of tone and felicity of expression, thus declares to us the sin of the unmodified condemnation of enemies which appeals to the Psalms for its justification: “Greater impiety can scarcely be imagined than to vent a devilish passion in the language of sacred writ, to kindle strife with coals snatched from God’s altar, and to call for fire from heaven with a tongue set on fire of hell.”

We have already intimated that the preaching of the American pulpit during the last two years has largely reflected the national excitement and division of sentiment. Sermons, if not wholly devoted to the subject of our disturbances, so

abound with relating allusions and illustrations, that we are scarcely able to rid ourselves of the impression that the speaker has folded his daily print only just before opening the Word of God to expound to inquiring and anxious souls the truth as it is in Jesus. On the days most appropriate to expressions of public sentiment—days of distinguished obituary commemoration, of fasting, and of thanksgiving, we are fain to content ourselves, or at least to restrain our restiveness, under the protracted and redundant national glorying or wailing, as the occasion and temperament of the speaker may dictate. But on the Sabbath,—the blessed Sabbath of no country and no sect,—shall Christians be denied the rest for which it was designed? Is it at the bidding of Christian ministers that we turn again to that world from whose toil and trouble we had for a brief season made our escape? Through all the weary six days, men have heard, thought, talked, planned, dreamed

even, of little else than the interest which, though involving what is stable and precious in worldly possessions, though enlisting what is magnanimous in sentiment, and self-sacrificing in action, is still an interest of time, an interest of earthly consideration, an interest which assails us in some form with almost every temptation of the heart and of the tongue, and which, addressing itself specially to our pride and self-confidence, draws us away from dependence on God, and substitutes the might of our hand to obtain for us the wished for victory. Worn with such toil of fruitless thought, with the conflict of passion and temptation, literally plagued all the day long and chastened every morning, longing, yea even fainting for the courts of the Lord, men have sought to return to the lost rest of their souls, and to recall, like David, amidst their distress the ever bountiful dealings of their God. Alas! the true mental entrance into the temple of praise and thanksgiving has been denied

by the very hand which should have thrown wide the gate and beckoned in the halting, weary, way-faring man. In Mohammedan countries, we are told, as the sound of a bell daily for a few minutes falls on the ear, the devout Mussulman, however engaged, even laden for a journey, prostrates himself for worship, and implores the benediction of Allah. We have longed that some such summons throughout our Christian land might constrain men to bring this national trouble, this heavy burden, and lying with it at the Master's feet, to find for a time sweet rest and refreshment for their souls. He, ministering at God's altar, who with placid, yea rejoicing mien, as though in holy communion and heartfelt pleading with the Spirit for stronger love and more fervent zeal himself had tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious,—he, who thus “taught in the way” should have led the torn, distracted mind to the source of soundness and peace,—he, who not only should have nerved the

soul for the conflict with earthly foes, if such he deemed his duty, but for the never-ending strife with far more formidable opponents to its prosperity,—he has oftentimes proved recreant to his trust, careless of souls, and unfaithful to God! In the darkness which has covered the land, we have reason to fear that a spirit of deep spiritual sleep has closed the eyes of both prophets and rulers. Spiritual foes have bent the bow and drawn the spear, but ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord! Through her ministers, her members, her services, the Church has suffered depreciation and violence. The stakes of our Zion have been removed and her cords broken. Her solemn instruments of music have toned forth on the Sabbath-day our jubilant national airs, instead of only joining in sweet accord the voices of worshipping assemblies to laud and magnify the God of heaven and earth. The Sab-

bath of which she is the watchful guardian, has been desecrated under the sanctity of her forms and by those ministering at her altars. Numbers of the clergy, pleading the emergency of the time, on that day have hurried from their pulpits to procure the latest public intelligence, and to discuss eagerly exciting and worldly topics with excited and worldly men. Christian professors have not refrained from the conversation and avocations of the week, and have attempted their justification by the sophistry, in this application, of the inseparable connection between their country's weal and their Christian faith. Few among us, we fear, have maintained our nearness to God, few have tasted the refreshing from his presence, the joy of that indwelling, which only the humble and contrite heart, the peaceful and loving spirit, can experience. We shrink from short-sighted limitations, from individual criticism, from censuring the hungry pickers of corn on the Sabbath

day ; but though we admit the existence and force of exceptional cases, and believe that the Sabbath was made for man in the highest, fullest, broadest intention, yet will we not let our liberty in some subordinate sense or rarely occurring case, destroy our allegiance to the law of God, and endanger our priceless and divinely conferred possession. If in times of like trial we cannot preserve the integrity of the Sabbath, how can we expect to maintain its influence and claim its benefit? Comes not now unto us with emphatic appeal the word of promise? “The sons of the stranger that join themselves to the Lord to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer—for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.”

We have marked with watchful eye and often



troubled spirit the progress of our national contest. But no connected anxiety for self or country has struck such root into our souls as the apprehension for the spiritual life of the Church of Christ. We believe that we do not overestimate the peril to which it is exposed. For every assertion we have made, there is from all parts of our land substantiating evidence which, we have ascertained even while writing these last pages, has also proved conclusive to other observers. Out of the abundance of our conviction, as out of the abundance of our love for the Church and our reverence for her ministers, our mouth has spoken this message of warning and entreaty. We have not presented the shrinkings of an over sensitive conscientiousness from the novel and stern encounters of the time, nor, as we believe, the unsubstantial visions and causeless terrors of an excited imagination. Still less have we designed a covert attack on any denomination or its repre-

sentatives in any part of our much loved and unhappy country. If then, Christian reader, our words seem earnest more than the occasion demands, bear with us, and search yourself into this matter. Visibly to us a change is passing over the church in our land. Yet do we take heart. It is an interest which more trustfully perhaps than all others can be committed to the keeping of God. Not alone individual or inferior considerations distinguish it, but such as pertain to the world of order and law—to the wider world and every where throbbing heart of humanity. If in relation to any temporal interest,—if we may so designate the preservation and prosperity of Christ's church on earth—we find assurances heaped upon assurances, warnings dealt out in every form of predicted temptation and contingent suffering, instances of former signal deliverance repeatedly and urgently adduced, persuasives to submission and trust lavished on hard, rebellious man, until

Divine condescension can go no farther, and we are fain to hide our faces in shame,—it is surely in reference to this. God's own people who accept his rule, and hold fast that which hath been delivered unto them, are now, as were the Jews, the subjects of his promise and the confident expectants of its fulfilment. The singular position of the American Republic, the absence of all sufficient ground for calculation as to its future, the character of the sins of which nation and church have been deeply guilty, the prospect of ultimate deliverance, and the merciful enlightening and restoration which most heartily we implore for all, in every portion of our Union, who through ignorance or evil-mindedness have divided and desolated this goodly heritage, are more fully conveyed than we have anywhere seen in the message of the prophet Isaiah to his own people :

“The vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed which men deliver

to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee : and he saith, I cannot ; for it is sealed : and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee : and he saith, I am not learned. Wherefore, the Lord saith, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men : therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder, for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid. \* \* In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord. \* \* \* They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.”

Christian fellow-countrymen! what more need we for our instruction and consolation? Let us be content, whether “learned” or “not learned”—whether high in place and power, familiar with the principles and application of law, and of political and military science, or treading in humble ignorance the now rugged path of our national experience, that the book of our destiny is sealed to us. Let us impress deeply on our minds, that in the midst of remarkable privileges, and with a fuller possession than exists in any other land of the forms and methods, the appliances and aids—the whole external, in short, of Christian instruction and practice, we have neglected to cultivate the spirit of humility, meekness, docility, self-watchfulness, and absolute dependence on the word of God, as the means of self-acquaintance and of direction in all our affairs. Let us view in the frustrating of many well planned schemes, and the disappointment of many a cherished hope, the

signally displayed dealing of our God who has thus caused to perish the results of what we had deemed unfailing calculation, in order, perhaps, that we may now call upon his name, and be stirred up to take hold of him, and in this returning and rest may find safety, and strength in this quietness and confidence. Let us keep down the risings of hatred and revenge, the promptings of our unrenewed, unsoftened nature in regard to those who have conscientiously differed from us or maliciously assailed us. To God can we leave the judgment concerning them. He is able to bring the terrible one to nought, to consume the scorner, to cut off all that watch for iniquity; and, we rejoice to think, as able to cause the heart of the rash to understand knowledge, and to pour out his Spirit from on high till the wilderness of our national desolation be once more a fruitful field, where judgment shall dwell and righteousness remain forever.

We have wandered not without design from the consideration of our main topic. It is our conviction that the decay throughout our country and the church of spiritual life is attributable, more than to any definite and tangible cause, to *the abuse of speech*. We have endeavored to trace how the evil has operated in its public and private developments, and to indicate the heart burnings, obstinate prejudice, and virulence of sentiment, which the constant irritation of ungoverned tongues has occasioned. A prevailing disregard for truth and accurate representation; an extravagant expression of attachment to one set of opinions which runs into vehement denunciation of the opposite, and into the sneers and taunts of low invective; the ceaseless, often aimless, profitless discussion of the whole subject, have disturbed our mental equilibrium, and incapacitated us for such apprehension of pending questions as their magnitude and singular complication demands. Our eyes are

shut that they cannot see, and our hearts, that they cannot understand.

Who among us will give ear to this? Who will hearken and hear for the time to come? We believe that to private Christians is committed, as well as to the appointed watchmen upon the walls, the care of the church. No rest must they give to their souls until, in their own persons and in the sphere of their influence, her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. Abiding in the study of the word of God, in fervent prayer, in never relaxed watchfulness over their processes of thought and every utterance of the tongue, in the exercise of a patient, meek, forgiving spirit, they shall find their own spiritual enlargement and supply; and by the united action of such faithful husbandmen, the church shall become a garden of the Lord, wherein shall be found "joy and gladness, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE RIGHT USE OF THE TONGUE.

Thus far in the examination of our topic we have viewed it in a negative rather than positive form. We have attempted to present the importance of governing the tongue, and to point out the abuses rather than the higher uses of speech. It remains for us to ask, For what objects other than the fulfilling of our physical requirements, and in what mode, is the tongue to be employed?

In such analysis as we have been able to conduct, we find that, strictly speaking, there is but one quality of speech. Truth is the only relation which it can be said to sustain, for language is but the representative of facts whether sensible or spiritual. Many other characteristics in common

parlance are attributed to it, as purity, reverence, humility, and their opposites, but these are qualities of the thought of which speech is the exponent. Truth, as regards language, is simply the correspondence of the word or sign with the thought or thing signified. Let us dwell for a moment on this greatest, noblest quality of all thought and action. Truth expresses the relation to what is, *i. e.*, to God himself and the constitution of his creation and government. That relation subsists in all modes and forms of being, and might be termed a perceived conformity to natural and moral appearances and laws. Beauty is such only because it is truth; not that truth constitutes beauty, but that beauty can not exist without conformity to a standard, which is truth in outline, in color, in motion, in relation. In all ideas and objects there exist a quality and relation, and truth is simply the developing of these. In moral action, it is the relation in thought, word, and

deed, to the Divine character and will as revealed in the Bible and partially conveyed in creation. Truth is the basis of our reverence to God, of our hopes of heaven, of our self-culture, and our best and imperishable affections. It is the end of all investigation, and is the consummation of all progress and happiness ; for it is in heaven the completed relation of the creature to the Creator, the assimilation and union of all spiritual being. Truth like faith, like every moral quality but charity or love, has no longer a name in heaven, for the relation becomes the standard, or rather, where all is truth, it ceases to be a standard, and universal unity precludes relation. Truth embraces all moral excellence. Honesty is one form or application of truth, benevolence, another. Gentleness and patience, humility and tender-heartedness—this last often considered only a natural endowment, but surely a grace also, to be cultivated and increased like any other,—taste, as applied to all literary or

artistic productions, to manner, dress, language, to all mental and physical culture and social intercourse,—all are modes of the application of truth, all are streams flowing in different directions from one full fountain. The analysis is not always readily made, but so far as we can conduct it, it has to our apprehension been unfailing. If truth then embraces all moral excellence, in its fullest development it constitutes the perfection of heaven. God is truth; and, did it not seem an approach to the pantheistic rant of the present day, we could almost exclaim, truth is God!—so fully does truth constitute, represent, define his being. God is love. But what were his love, his omniscience, his omnipresence, his omnipotence without truth. His justice is truth in action, his mercy, truth in application, his holiness, truth to his own nature so developed and expressed that created mind may behold and adore it forever. Blessed Truth! May the Spirit guide us into it, enable us to abide in it,

and through all eternity satisfy with it our now longing, and, perchance, darkened and despairing souls !

In ordinary human intercourse, the partial oral suppression of many facts and depending relations of our physical and social being, is the supervening necessity of a corrupted nature, and the guard of an order which cannot be maintained without it. In the early and sinless period of man's history, as the body required no covering, so language furnished no half-exhibited meaning. But when sin reigned in the body, a check to its promptings was demanded, if only for the integrity and perpetuity of the social compact. It was provided in the giving of the moral law. Subordinate restraints were by degrees supplied and adapted according to exigencies of climate, color, and degrees of civilization. Language passed through a like process of modification and development, and afforded another means of moral discipline. In its legitimate use,

as far as general social intercourse is concerned, the avenues to forbidden thoughts are closed. It must not reproduce the buried forms of prohibited conceptions. Thus were established the ordinary and now almost universal rules of propriety in conduct and language. They were of prime necessity in all social intercourse. With that proneness to excess which characterizes every humanly sustained arrangement, this purification of language has run into fastidiousness and perversion of fact; and, applied not only to a few simple conceptions, but to their complex and multiform derivatives, has become the false show of virtue and the opposer of truth. Manner and speech, rescued from license, come again under bonds to formal, vapid, heartless, and prescribed expression. Thought and emotion cannot pass the barriers of worldly conventionalism, and are inert, rigid, dead to their true and appointed exercise. And yet not without reason have these barriers been erected. There

exists a necessity for this factitious social order, for these outworks of defence to our personal feelings and practice—a necessity springing not from the absence, but from the presence of civilization and refinement. In the encounters of social life, we are not in these days often hurled to the ground by the bold and direct assault of reviling and railing accusation, of clamorous reproach and evil speaking. There is a disguised uncharitableness which like the “hinder end” of the spear shall smite under the fifth rib, and let out the life of tranquillity and content. There are poisoned arrows of sarcasm and detraction which graze some unprotected part, and straight the soundness of our good name and social confidence becomes an ever-rankling and putrefying sore of prejudice and distrust. That defence which modern science supplies against such sly attack is a panoply of self-concealment and withholding. “Je suis sur la defensive avec la société, et c’est ainsi qu’il faut

*être.*” But this caution, valuable as a protection, may so invest and envelop the man as to trammel every movement and paralyze that confidence in self and others, without which there is no free action, no continued effort, no generous strain of every energy, no Christian working, sympathy, or success. We propose no tolerance of grossness, bluntness, of harshness which assumes to be plain dealing; nor do we recommend what Lord Bacon calls the *discharging* of the mind in opposition to its *imparting*,—a practice not only unsafe and generally inexpedient, but enfeebling in its influence and wholly inimical to that personal training which cannot be otherwise than self-conducted. But we would urge that the spirit of Christianity be infused into every social arrangement; and, sustained by that Bible precept, “*whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God,*” we would declare to Christians the obligation to see to it that no artificial observance, no merely worldly code, however wise and effective



in its own sphere of operation, no personal fastidiousness or conventional refinement, shall be suffered to trench upon that Christian service, which, with its reward, is the end of our earthly being. Render unto the world those things which fairly, by the ordering of God, belong to it; but in so doing, make not the fearful mistake of withdrawing from him that tribute which in his Word he has declared to be his due. Let us state the matter more exactly. The Christian is not unscripturally to view himself out of Christ, and as yielding to him a portion of the fruits of his natural endowments and imparted grace. A partial devotion, even of the best, an offering of some choice possession, is after all a Jewish and legal notion. This self-denial, this stretching up to some self-erected standard, this stint here and liberty there, is but a poor understanding of Christian being and action. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." We have not yet at-

tained “unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: \* \* \* but *speaking the truth in love,*” —mark what honor is here given to the tongue— “may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, \* \* \* maketh increase \* \* \*.” There are many illustrations of the believer’s union to Christ, but this is a more precious figure which declares not union but unity. Sheep of whom he is Shepherd; coheirs by their adoption of the privileges of his Sonship; friends in contradistinction to servants; lively stones, “built up a spiritual house with him the living stone;”—in such variety of exhibition must Christians discern their nearness to Christ and his abiding love for his chosen ones. But to hold Christ as the Head from which all our body, “by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increaseth *with the increase of God*”—to be “complete in him;”

“rooted and built up in him;” to “walk” in him; to be “buried with him in baptism;” to be “quickened together with him,” who has not only blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, but has taken it “out of the way, nailing it to his cross,” so that it could in no manner be replaced on record; so that our offence might forever be cancelled in his free gift, and that as the worth of the sacrifice so might be the fulness of the remission—what a view have we here of the Christian’s life in Christ—the “life hid with Christ in God!” Do we ask what is the consistent and analogous consummation of such earthly privilege? “When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Joined to him here, you shall not be divided from him there. The Father in the Son, the Son in the Father, you in them, “changed into the same image,” “filled with all the fulness of God!” Not with these earthly eyes can we

steadfastly behold the glory of such a revealing, but not the less are these promises of God in Christ, Yea, and in him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us!

The rule of our speech, its highest end, its distinguishing and honorable mark, is furnished by the Apostle James,—*therewith bless we God*. In the ordinary sense of the words, this is the recognized duty and precious privilege of adoration and thanksgiving. It is to honor our Maker, to speak on earth the praise which from thousand times ten thousand heavenly tongues resounds now and evermore. Not the smallest part of Christian joy is in this blessing of God, which lifts us awhile over self, unites us in service to saints above, and conducts us into that Presence which we so long to abide in forever, but which we now so dimly perceive. There are seasons, as in unexpected deliverances; in similar relief obtained from some new view of truth, or of a once mysterious dealing which events have made

clear; in witnessing the peaceful death of the righteous; in observing the progress or happy result of plans of benevolence; above all, perhaps, in beholding the work of grace in the heart—the change from corruption and debasement to purity and holiness—there are, we say, seasons when there is no vent for our emotions but in prostration of body and soul in joyful acknowledgment—in ascriptions of praise and outpourings of thanksgiving. At such times we come near to our God, and seem to catch the tones and prolong the echo of angel voices. Then is there sweet communion with saints, and fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. These are prelibations of the fount of blessedness; soft airs from the atmosphere of heaven; strains of that seraphic melody which forever surrounds the throne; and visions of that enchanting scenery, which we would fain believe the redeemed shall behold in the new earth, and under the new and imperishable heaven!

But even this mode of blessing God would form but a portion of our enjoyment in such use of the tongue, as it would constitute but an imperfect performance of the prescribed duty. It is not alone in direct address that we are called upon to bless God. There is a generally practised reverence which is dictated by the prevalence of the Christian religion and the consequent refinements of civilization and education, and in a measure by the mysteries of the outer and inner world, and the depending questionings, fears, and hopes of man's nature. An open irreverence, repellent both to taste and common sense, and reckless of the spiritual truths which most men contemplate in awe, at least, if not with faith, incurs, more than most offences against good order and decency, public abhorrence and reprehension. It is true there is an irreverence as real, if not so patent; an irreverence veiled often in tasteful and even Christian forms of expression; an irreverence which

jars on the ear and grieves the heart of a true and loving disciple of Christ. There is often a careless or jocose application of sentiment, or of words and phrases which, if not strictly sacred, become consecrate from their frequent scriptural use and peculiar adaptation. There is often in public extempore prayer an excessive and inconsiderate use of the names of God. The untrained in this exercise fill the gaps of their petitions and give new impetus to their fluency, by needless and often inappropriate invocation; and the public speaker rounds his periods and solemnizes his sentiment by the same unwarranted introduction of the Divine name. Theologians, to our thinking, often forget the ground on which they stand, in stating too confidently the laws of God's nature and rules of his government. We are displeased with the expressions, God cannot do this, God will never decree or permit that. For ourselves, we discover but one semblance of warrant for

such language; and if the Apostle's declaration of Divine consistency—"He cannot deny himself," be understood to announce a limitation of Divine ability, it becomes an empty quibble, for it is but saying that his nature is what it is. We need less positiveness, less dogmatism, less leaning to the human understanding, in the treatment of theological questions. There is danger, it is true, of an ill-assured and trembling hold on truth; of such over-scrupulous and uncordial adoption of opinion, that whatever is solid and valuable escapes from the grasp, and is lost for all valuable application. But let us not rush as the horse into the battle field into the investigation of Divine truth. So doing, we shall but cast ourselves on the thick bosses of his buckler. "He giveth not account of any of his ways;" and if he reveal his "secret," it is not to those who question much concerning him, but to such as "fear" or reverence him. Let God be exalted in all our apprehension, in all our



investigation and utterance concerning him. We plead not that his name be incommunicable as the title Jehovah was held among the Jews. No! he is *our* God, and we may make mention of him as such and call upon his name. Let us use as we ought this precious privilege. We err also in another direction, and often from a conscientious motive. We employ, in using the name of God, every mode of designation but the one which directly presents him. We resort to circumlocution; we shrink from expressing the greatness of his being in one all comprehending term. We designate him by an attribute or manifestation, and habitually style him the Omniscient, the Creator, Providence. In certain connections such terms are appropriate. But apart from special application, we find the use of them, in common conversation or in pulpit address, an avoidance of our due but unwillingly assumed responsibility of *blessing God*,—a more cowardly than reverent with-

drawing from the creature's duty of humble but hearty acknowledgment of his Creator's rule and right. But all precept touching outward reverence is of no avail, unless its principle be firmly established in the heart. That principle is formed of Christian belief, of self-acquaintance, of constant, earnest, spiritual contemplation—perhaps more properly, of that supreme love to God which is the work alone of the Spirit, and the convincing evidence to the sinner himself of his changed relation, his pardon, and reconciliation. Such a reverence marks the man who habitually honors the name, the day, the word of God; who carefully watches over and zealously defends the bulwarks of Christianity; who vindicates the providence of God and loves his people; who has, even at the least, that concern for the cause and interests of his Lord that we are wont to manifest for some best loved earthly friend. How regardful are we of the person, the feelings, the reputation

of that friend! How do we ward off all rough handling, and withstand all abrupt approach! How keen our eye, how attent our ear, how ready our tongue, how nice our tact to discern the threatened attack, to anticipate the sentiment that may displease, the reference that shall wound! Is it less that we will do for God our Father, for God our elder Brother, our Teacher, our Master, our heavenly Friend? It is told of Robert Boyle that he never mentioned the name of God without a previous momentary pause. If we hesitate to make such apparent preparation for the introduction of the holy name, still, may there not be "an upward glancing" of the mental eye, a motion of reverence and love towards Him who understands our thought afar off, and who knoweth altogether every word of our tongue? Why are we willing to be so far from Him? It is not altogether the vision of heated enthusiasm, the morbid fancy of a recluse or aseetic, but in a measure the blessed

experience of the Christian that one may abide with Christ, walk with him in the way, sit with him at the feast as a loving disciple, and sleep pillowed on his bosom. Amidst the noise of tongues and the bustle of the crowd, in the rapid flow of thought and the exhilaration of lawful merriment within the social circle, in the hurry and excitement of travel, or in the quiet of the chamber of sickness, there shall come, if you seek it, the peaceful sense of his presence, the uplifting of your soul into a region of holy calm, where, safe and at rest, you gaze on worldly scenes with moderated interest and emotion. A benign countenance shall to your thought beam with complacency and tenderness; the eye which fixed on Peter brought him to his right mind and filled him with penitence, shall seem in its grave kindness to rest on you, to soften your grief, regulate your mirth, and elevate your soul. If thus you are ever mindful of Christ, shall not your

tongue bless him in ratifying his commands, in asserting your union to him, and confessing the purposed devotion of all that you have and are to his service? Will you not urge others to love this supremely lovely Saviour? will you not defend him against the aspersions of his open contemners, and denounce the faithlessness of his nominal adherents, no matter how honorable they may be in human estimation, how accomplished in mental endowments and culture, how adorned with the graces of person and manner, how endowed with keen sensibilities and earnest affections? Will you not cherish all that reveals Christ more perfectly, that extends his influence, that increases his honor? Will you be silent when such a theme demands your utterance? There is a wise, an effective, an appropriate silence; but there is also among Christians an "idle silence," for which they must give account in the day of reckoning for the use of intrusted talents. An

old proverb tells us, wisely only in some application, that *speech is silvern, but silence is golden*. Like many an adage, it sacrifices truth to terseness and laconism, or, at least, presents a half truth, often more mischievous than none.

Not many years have passed since there came, for a short season to our country on a gospel mission, one who, in our hearing, urged on Christians more zeal and boldness in the department of the Master's service which we have undertaken to consider. We partially recall his words, and entirely the thought which they conveyed with remarkable force and beauty. He had travelled in many lands, he had sojourned with the poor in their humble abodes, and with the great and rich in their splendid mansions. He had been a listener when topics were discussed with all the power of intellect and the charms of fancy. But how rarely in the gay or literary assemblage, or even in the familiar home life of the Christian, had he

heard the name more precious than any other name! Of all else Christians can speak. For other interests can they argue and prevail; but how little find they to say for their Saviour, how unwilling are they to “speak for Jesus!” The tones of the preacher still linger on our ear; still our heart thrills at his appeal; now, as then, roused by his most reasonable, if impassioned, pleading, there springs up within us the perchance self-confident and vain resolve—Though all should betray thee by their speech, or deny thee by their silence, yet will not I!

Speak then, fellow Christian, for Jesus. Speak of his character, his blessed purpose in coming into the world, of his infinite compassion and power to save. Hasten to speak for Jesus to your child, who, with asking eye uplifted to yours, waits at your side to learn the reason of things around him—the answer to the ever propounded question, Whence am I and whither am I going? Tell him

the story which with God's blessing shall be to his soul the well-spring of truth for time, the fountain of bliss for eternity. Speak for Jesus to you wretched wanderer from the ways of purity ; nor, wrapped in your unsullied garment of outward propriety and respectability, shrink from pollution of which the Holy Son of God could endure the contact, in order both to rebuke—with what a matchless grace!—the offence, and to deliver the offender from the scorn and persecution of no less guilty accusers. Speak for Jesus to the dying, and delay not with your scruples as to mode and occasion, for already the film of death glazes the eye, and the ear can catch little else than the only name given under heaven, whereby men can be saved. One confession of sin and of God's justice —“ we indeed justly ; for we receive the due reward of our deeds ;” one petition—“ Lord remember me ;” and heaven may shout forth its twofold joy over one repenting and home-returning soul!



And not alone to these, but speak for Jesus to them who think they have a name to live, and yet, by all Scripture tests, seem to you to be dead. Speak for him to the self-honoring and confident disciple; to the minister who has the worldliness not of wealth, or place, or power, of dress or fashion, or immoderate social intercourse, but the worldliness, alas! of religion—the worldliness of self-gratulation over a crowded, wealthy, and influential church; the worldliness of a name for talent and eloquence, or, more dangerous still, of a reputation for Christian attainment and devotedness; the worldliness of weight in ministerial councils, of scholarly accomplishment, of pastoral popularity; aye—even so far may the dying man who speaks to dying men forget his character and office—the worldliness of personal comeliness, of melodious voice, and graceful gesture.

Do you ask how you are to become thus earnest and bold in utterance; how, consistently with

established rules of social intercourse, you are thus persistently, pointedly, faithfully, to speak for and of your Saviour? We can only bid you learn what is meant by *love for souls*—an expression so common as to be often of small significancy, tacked to a description or petition, set forth prominently among spiritual technicalities. But if there be sometimes a counterfeit presentment, it but proves the existence of a real form and power. There may be, there *is* in the Christian a love for souls, an unquenchable desire to win them to Christ, to holiness, to heaven. There is a yearning that nothing will satisfy but continued effort to secure not only the salvation but the sanctification of the soul, a yearning to witness its progress in the divine life, the increase of its stature and the fulness of its development into “a perfect man.” Not only in the breast of the Apostle Paul did the longing arise “to impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end that ye may be es-

tablished.” His true successors in both office and devotedness, and those to whom also, in fact, if not in form, a dispensation of the gospel is committed, feel ever the weight of that necessity to gain both them that are without law, and them who nominally only are under the law of Christianity—by all means to save some. This anguish of desire—this “woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” how it pervades Paul’s writings! how it has filled the heart of many a disciple since, who, called to hold forth the word of life, has been in such ministry counted faithful to the trust committed to him—the trust of the glorious gospel of the blessed God! With such love for souls, whatever the obstacles of your temperament or training, whatever restraints may be dictated by the conventional wisdom which not unfrequently runs into spiritual folly, you cannot but give expression to your convictions and desires. If you lack wisdom as to mode and season of utterance,

God will liberally supply it to him that asketh. See the quality of the wisdom “that is from above;” how adapted to self-discipline,—“pure,” “gentle and easy to be entreated,” “without hypocrisy;” how effective for your purpose toward men,—“peaceable,” “full of mercy and good fruits,” “without partiality”! Endued with like knowledge, the “meekness of wisdom” will show itself forth with all the works of “a good conversation,” or general course of life; and, purifying you from earthly motive or aim, will kindle into intenser glow and ever radiating warmth the flame of your Christian zeal. Be on the watch for opportunity of useful speech; not after a precise and dogmatic fashion, not to obtain a reputation for learning and piety, not to indulge both your indolence and vanity by substituting words for often more effective action,—and you will have ample need to search yourself in this matter—not by foolish questions to “gender strifes,” but that you may convey gospel truth in

gospel plainness and meekness. Be on the watch, in all modes of kindly sympathy, in all forms of intellectual intercourse, to present the “sound doctrine” by which you may exhort and convince the gainsayers. Have you love and faith toward the Lord Jesus? Then is the blessed encouragement yours that “by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus,” there may be an *effectual* communication of your faith for the supply of the spiritual necessities of those around you. Some are altogether brutish in their ignorance and debasement, and your care for the body shall humanize and elevate the soul. Some are still babes in Christ, have “a little strength,” and require your judicious and constant feeding, first with the milk, then with the strong meat of the word. Some, perhaps your spiritual teachers, are in the vigorous manhood of their Christian life,—nay, are valiant and faithful Christian soldiers, encased in the “whole armour of God,” and ever

watchful and ready at their post. But one joint in the harness is weak, the fine edge of a weapon has become blunt, or the stalwart champion yields to a temporary faintness and discouragement. Go to his rescue from the wily foes who press on to his undoing. Supply his deficiency, sustain him in your arms, shout in his ear the battle cry of his all conquering Leader, animate him with news of Christian triumphs, and with the sure hope and promise of final victory.

If you have rightly understood and received the spirit of Christ's teachings, you cannot be impatient, harsh, reproachful, or uncharitable. You will feel something of his infinite pity at sight of the ruin and wretchedness around you, will learn somewhat of his "wonderful fashion" of communicating both knowledge and reproof. If all that you desire cannot be accomplished, and you find yourself hindered by your own poverty in natural endowments, in influence, in Christian graces, or by

strenuous outward opposition, still you must not sit useless in selfish silence and uncaring apathy. Cultivate yourself for your work. Cultivate your voice that its tones repel not your hearer in the very opening of your message. Cultivate your manner to simplicity—strange contradiction as this may seem, and impossible to effect but by gospel method—to humility, to gentleness, to kindness. Cultivate your taste in dress, expenditure, mode of living, in every outward expression of your inward self, not to exalt or recommend that self to fastidious and discerning observers, but to accomplish a more entire consecration, a more perfect glorifying of God by your body which is his. Form a due but never extravagant estimate of the value of the much prized embellishments of life, of its arts and graces, its conventionalities and refinements, its lesser moralities, and merely external training. Cultivate your mind by opening it to the beholding of all things around you, and by the study of the records

of the past ; cultivate it by this acquisition of all valuable knowledge, and yet by “habitually looking to a purpose beyond the mere increase of knowledge.” Cultivate your heart not to a sickly sentimentality, a morbid sensitiveness, but to such outgoings of tenderness as the Saviour displayed to the young man whom beholding he loved,—to such sympathy as filled his blessed eyes with tears as he witnessed the grief of the mourning sister of Lazarus, as he looked on the fair city, “the joy of the whole earth,” which his prophetic gaze beheld pillaged, desecrated, and destroyed. There is much discussion in this day, and, as it seems to us, little apprehension, of the business of education. Even those who adapt best their means to the proposed end, for the most part misconceive the end ; and neglecting the culture of the emotional for that of the intellectual nature, would exhibit in their workmanship an unnatural, ineffective, and repellent disproportion. Shall we essay to tell you what



education is? or, rather, shall we show it to you by a short illustration which you will find in the book of Proverbs, and which more than any definition presents to us the process we would describe?

“Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established :

“And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”

No raising of the structure is there without the “wisdom,” which is the knowledge of God, and man’s relations to him, the reference to him of the mysteries of creation and of the human heart, and an intelligent, willing submission to his rule. No foundation can establish the structure but “understanding,” which is the application of this wisdom to the common affairs and exigencies of life—a *Christian* discretion, prudence, docility, and sound judgment. Would that we could walk with you through those well stored chambers—those fair galleries, adorned with the products of human invention and indus-

try, and with far-surpassing divine gifts. See art and poetry revealing the glorious forms of truth's undying beauty, and finding their prototypes in the living aspect, in the beating heart of creation! Behold the many-colored and resplendent gems of discovered truth! All these things are yours, and you may at will delight yourself in these "precious and pleasant riches" of your Creator's bounty. And if there are eyes too dim, minds too "contracted by these walls of flesh," to perceive this matchless excellence, to accomplish this entire appropriation and wise use of all divine bestowments and human appliances, still, wonderful to disclose, there is in the source of all, in the revelation of Him whose care is over all his creatures, and who, if he seemeth to withhold, giveth yet more largely from other stores of his bounty—there is in the word of God truth which shall quicken into intellectual life, supply the lacking comprehension, warm the cold emotion, fill, refine, subdue the

whole man, suppress the earthly and exalt the heavenly nature. Do we rashly conclude that in an intellectual as well as spiritual sense there is a time, when, for all the higher purposes of knowledge, “ye need not that any man teach you,” but “the anointing which ye have received of Him \* \* \* teacheth you of all things, and is truth”? Not only the philosopher and poet who left his conviction on record, but the feeblest mind which applies itself rightly to the investigation of Scripture, will arrive at the conclusion that “in the Bible there is more that *finds me* than I have experienced in all other books put together. The words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being, and whatever finds me brings with it irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit.”

It is of the truths of this Bible that you are to speak—not in torrents of words, which stun as they fall on the ear, not either in the measured

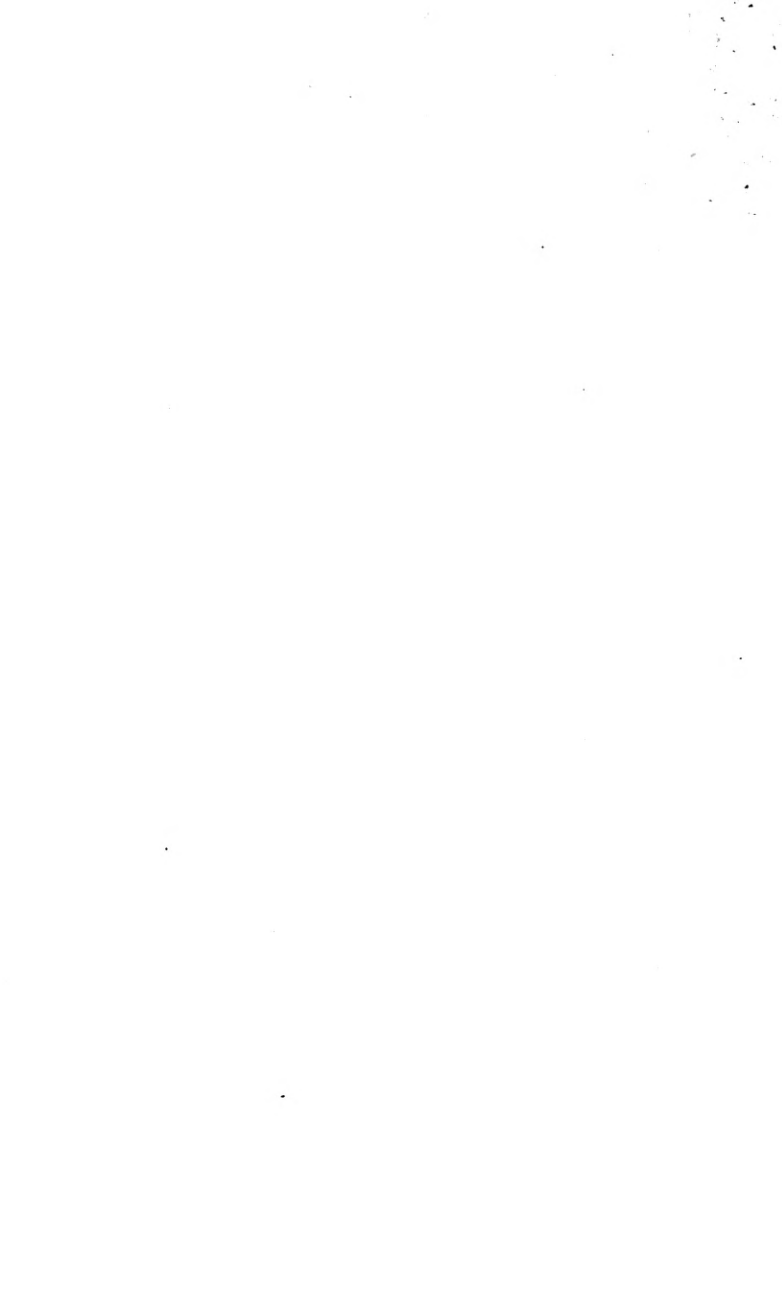
cadence of studied oratory, with fopperies of style and trickeries of manner, not in the technical language of the schools, not for the present tribute of admiring hearers, not in any form of both ignoble and hurtful vain-glory, but to *bless God* therein,—to use thereby your one or your ten talents, to honor your Creator, and declare him unto your fellow-men. Oh that the time might come, when freely, readily, naturally, yet with due reverence, we may, in intercourse with Christians at least, make mention of the name of God; when, without either the presence, or suspicion of the presence of affectation, hypocrisy, or self-seeking in any form, we may plead the authority and example of Christ, acknowledge our interest in him, and urge others to yield themselves to his claims; when the transition will be easy from earthly to heavenly considerations, from topics literary, scientific, national, social, and individual, to the great themes of Christian doctrine and practice! We said the

*transition*, but, viewed in the clearest light and fullest development, all temporal and eternal interests are one and indivisible. It is human shortsightedness which beholds the part, human unskillfulness which would divide what God has joined together.

If we have not altogether failed in our attempt, we have established the right use of speech as a means of intellectual and Christian discipline, and a scripturally-appointed mode of glorifying God. Let it not be deemed that in our effort to set forth prominently this agency we have over-estimated its value. Taking the word of God as our standard, we do not unduly magnify the office of the tongue. Suffer, then, reader, the application of our argument. To this government and use of the tongue, this *rendering of blessing*, you are called that you should inherit a blessing. Life and the good days, without which, humanly speak-

ing, life is scarcely to be desired, are indirectly promised to him who shall "refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile." As encouragement for the exercise of this self-discipline, we have in immediate connection the declaration that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers." Take, then, the first step in this matter. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." As men ask you a reason of the hope that is in you, be ready always, in word and deed, to give it with "meekness" toward them, and "fear" or reverence toward God. We close with the fervent petition for our readers and for ourselves, that whether we speak or whether we minister, God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

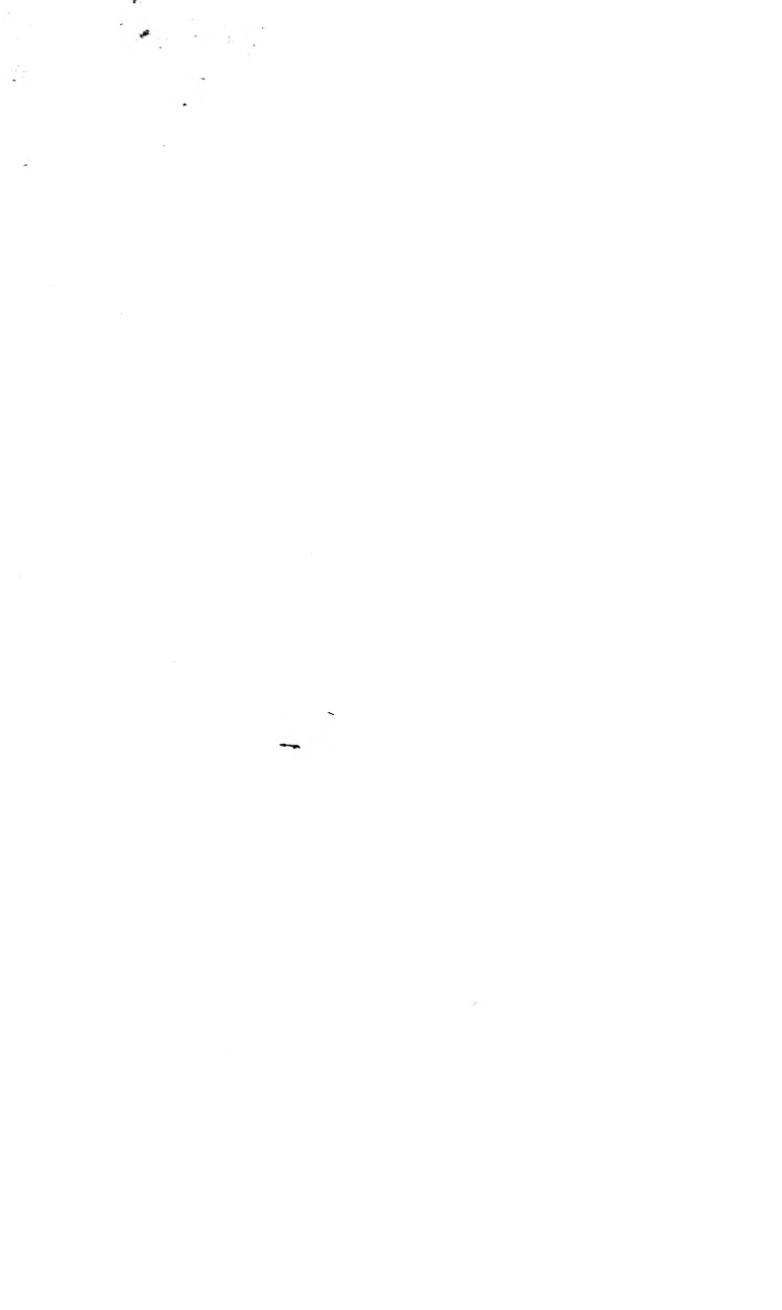












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