N. H. Treadway,
Washington, D. C.
1st May. 1867.

Engraved from a Pastel

REV. BUDD FITCH.

late Pastor of the

First Independent Christian Church

at Richmond, Virginia

SERMONS

BY

REV. J. B. PITKIN,

(Unitarian or Universalist)

LATE PASTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT CHRISTIAN CHURCH

IN

RICHMOND, VA.

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY REV. S. G. BULFINCH.

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MEMOIR.

'T is much to find a lovely human spirit;
To keep it in its loveliness, is more;
But hardest and most excellent of all
To win again that which had gone astray.

Herder.

The instruction imparted by biography is of two kinds, partaking respectively the character of warning, and that of encouragement. In the life of John B. Pitkin, we may find lessons of each description. His course was a peculiar one. It may teach the young and romantic, should these pages meet the eyes of any such, to avoid those dangers under which he nearly sunk. It may show the necessity of restraining, in early life, not only the passions, but the too exuberant fancy. It may present a warning to those who act as spiritual directors of others, to temper with gentleness the occasional severity of their official duty,

and, like their blessed Master, 'not to break the bruised reed.'

But other and more cheering lessons are afforded by the life of this young divine. We see him, for a time overborne by misfortune, censure, and a consciousness of error, yet not relinquishing the hope of better things, working his way upward to the light, and at length attaining and for years occupying the station of a faithful, successful, and respected minister of the Gospel; wearing out his powers in the discharge of duty, and yielding his spirit at length tranquilly to God, with entire confidence in his accepting mercy. From this the advanced Christian may learn never to despair for others; and the young struggler with temptation may acquire the more important lesson, never to despair of himself, and never to distrust the providence of God. Such has been the instruction which many pious minds have drawn from the histories of John Newton and of Thomas Scott. Had the subject of this memoir been permitted to attain their advanced age, it is hazarding little to say that he would probably have equalled them in intellectual reputation and matured piety.

John Budd Pitkin was born on the 24th of January, 1802, in the village of Great Barrington, Berkshire County, Massachusetts. Mervin Pitkin, his father,

was a native of East Hartford, Connecticut. The family, of which there are many branches in that section, trace their origin to the Pitcairnes of Warwood Castle, Northumberland, England, of the fourteenth century.

The subject of our memoir was left fatherless at a very early age. His constitution was delicate, and his mind imaginative from the first. Even as a boy, he was fond of solitary walks; and whenever a thunderstorm came on, his animation amounted even to wildness. His conduct at such a time, as described by his mother, reminds us of a well known incident in the boyhood of Schiller, who once, while his friends were anxiously searching for him, was mounted in a tree, drenched with rain, but absorbed in admiration of the lightning.

At the age of eleven, Pitkin first exhibited a deep religious impression. It was produced by the death of a young female acquaintance, who employed what was almost her last breath in gentle exhortations to him. 'He reached home in the evening,' says his mother, 'mute and pensive. During several weeks he appeared unusually silent and abstracted, and if possible more tender in every expression. After having lingered near me one day, in a manner that foretokened some important communication, he at length tremblingly

broke silence, while with interest and surprise I listened to the confession of a fault committed many years before. He had presented an article of mine to a boy, not deeming it of value, and when summoned to account had reported that the boy kept looking at the toy and asking for it, and eventually carrried it off. This fault it seems, upon a scrutinizing review of life, appeared the only blot on the leaves of eleven years, and when acknowledged, a cloud was visibly dissipated. After a silence of several weeks spent in retirement and rambles, he communicated the ebullitions of his mind first to his grandmother, by giving to her perusal his journal, about twenty pages of which breathed deep solicitude for his spiritual state. His reading at this time was chiefly confined to Scott's Bible, while his conversations and writing testified to the rapidity of his mental acquirements.'

His attendance at religious meetings, whenever an opportunity presented, soon attracted notice. His pastor, the Rev. Elijah Wheeler, naturally observed his course with interest; and by his advice, young Pitkin at the age of thirteen, became a communicant in the congregational church. Custom has, in most communities, associated with this act of 'joining the church' a degree of responsibleness to which the unformed character of a boy of thirteen should hardly

be exposed; and we may be permitted, seeing what could not then be seen, to lament the well-meant advice of the good clergyman.

This connection with the church gave to young Pitkin an opportunity of developing too rapidly and too publicly, his uncommon powers. He was soon distinguished and commended as a speaker in juvenile religious meetings. He showed however a decided and proper aversion to public exhibitions of his fluency in prayer. 'He always maintained,' says his mother, 'that the closet was the spot where extempore prayer should be made; and though gifted in that exercise, (a trite term) in 1833 he expressed an intention, should his people concur, of introducing a form similar to the Episcopal one, into the Independent church of Richmond, of which he was the pastor.'

At the age of fourteen, by the advice and aid of the Rev. Mr Wheeler, he entered as a beneficiary in Phillips Academy, Andover, with reference to an engagemeet in the ministry. He was admitted, in consideration of the advancement he had made, a year earlier than was customary in ordinary cases. The following Rules, composed at this time, may testify to the earnestness of purpose with which he entered on the work of preparation for the ministry.

'REGULATIONS OF CONDUCT.

1st. Will engage in no frivolous or vain conversation at any time.

2d. Will never speak without thinking of my words beforehand.

3d. Will endeavor to preserve myself from passion as much as possible, but should I ever be overtaken by passion, will do nothing until I have counted 20.

4th. Will never be absent from prayers in the family, and in our rooms, unless when absolute necessity requires.

5th. Will never pass a day without reading one chapter at least in the Bible, unless in particular cases.

6th. Will never pass an hour while awake, without sending up a desire towards heaven.

7th. Whenever harassed by temptation will resort to prayer.

8th. Will never pass a day without engaging in secret prayer three times, unless in particular cases.

9th. Will arise at five in the morning, and retire at eleven.

10th. While others are engaged in prayer, will endeavor to preserve my thoughts from wandering.

11th. Will walk, on the average of three quarters of a mile for every hour I study, or do some exercise in proportion.

12th. Every morning will read this paper. And by

divine assistance promise to conduct agreeable to these rules. JOHN B. PITKIN.

Andover, Phillips Academy, Oct. 2d, 1817.'

The above copy of a paper which its author intended for no eye but his own, has not been inserted here without some hesitation. But the subsequent events of Pitkin's life render it of importance to preserve such a testimonial of the purity of his youthful aspirations.

After a few months, he returned from Andover, exhausted with study, and threatened with consumption. A year was spent in the recovery of his health, at the conclusion of which, he entered the academy in Lenox, Mass. He had spent but a few months there however, when he returned under circumstances of the most remarkable character. His mind has been already described, as from childhood, unusually imaginative. He had never enjoyed an opportunity of acquiring that manliness of character which the instruction and example of a father alone can impart. His romantic tendency had been heightened by the two early notoriety which he acquired in consequence of his joining the church; and by a course of reading in which the life and works of Henry Kirke White appear to have held the foremost place. These, which might have administered the most suitable nutriment to a better

regulated mind, were to him the source of an excitement which clouded his moral sense, and led him away from the path of duty. With his mind filled with wild schemes of literary ambition, and weakened by the disease from which his body was just recovering, he formed and executed a plan for the deception of his friends, in order that he might procure their consent to his leaving home, to make his fortune, obtain an education of the best kind, and rise to literary eminence. His plan succeeded in blinding his friends, who, astonished as they were at the wonderful fiction he imposed upon them, never suspected falsehood in the hitherto exemplary young student. And thus at sixteen, under circumstances which may palliate though they cannot excuse the offence, he committed an act whose consequences infused bitterness into all his remaining life.

It is needless to enter into the particulars of the story by which he obtained the consent of his relatives to his departure. A physician of the neighborhood conveyed him in his carriage to the next town, from which he was to take the stage for New York. This gentleman, whose profession qualified him to notice the indications of mental disease, returned home in some agitation. His first words were, in effect, 'This is all a delusion, a fiction! Budd Pitkin is certainly crazy; I

never once suspected but that it must be truth, until I turned to leave him, and then a conviction rushed on my mind, like a flood of light, that it was all a delusion. The fact is, the boy is crazy, and I think it not at all unlikely that Kirke White has been a powerful instrument in infatuating and bewildering him. He has now started to go to England and act the scenes over again. I credited the story not because there was one rational or probable thing about it, but because Budd Pitkin had told it, and I would have looked for deception as soon in a minister as in him.'

The surviving parent of Mr Pitkin coincides with the opinion thus expressed, in regard to her son's state of intellect at the time referred to. There are many grades of comparative sanity and insanity; and we often find ourselves at a loss to determine the precise mental condition of an individual. Such a case was the one now before us. Some indications shortly after his return leave no doubt of the fact that his mind was not in a state of perfect health. And when the judgment was overclouded, there were not wanting motives to lead him astray. He wished to relieve his friends from the expense of his support; he wished to see the world; and his excited imagination presented brilliant hopes of celebrity and fortune. But neither plausible motives, nor excited imagination can make falsehood right. Pit-

kin did wrong; and bitterly did he find cause to repent it.

Ten or eleven weeks after he had left his home, a letter was received from him, mailed in New Jersey. It bore more evident marks than had yet appeared, of a disordered mind. He gave however, an account, consistent with his previous fictitious narrative, of the disappointment of his hopes. He soon after returned home. His friends judiciously made no inquiries, and he gave no information to them as to what had occurred during the interval.

But his absence and his return had not passed unnoticed in the village; and the curiosity of the neighbors soon discovered that something was not right. It appeared that an investigation of the case was about to be made in the church of which the youth was a member. To avoid this was in his state of mind, considered indispensable; and he was sent from home in company with his grandmother, Mrs Budd, who had adopted him as her son. They spent a few weeks together at Sandy Hill, N. Y. where some of their relations resided. Thence Pitkin proceeded to Canada, where to use again the words of his mother, 'the mysterious hand of Providence conducted him to the bosom of a kind protector, hitherto unknown; and here he remained in the vicinity of Montreal, pursuing the study of French

as an amusement, and leisurely rambling about, for the space of a year; while his anxious grandmother, through an uninterrupted correspondence, watched him at a distance.' The friend referred to above, was Dr Robert Ducette, a Catholic gentleman, of Three Rivers, L. C., from whom the young traveller received proofs of the most paternal kindness. To that kindness was probably owing, under God, his entire restoration to mental health. His letters, which at first were filled with numberless visionary plans, became rational; and when, after a year's absence, he returned to his home, he had been prepared by Providence to undergo the burden soon to be laid upon him.

On his return from Canada, he entered an academy at Aurora, N. Y. He had been already suspended from the communion of the church in Great Barrington; and as his residence now became known, a letter was addressed to him, requiring him to return and submit himself to the discipline of the church. This letter, by singular inadvertence, was sent to him unsealed. He replied by an earnest request for permission to make his confession by letter. This was refused; and he proceeded to Barrington to submit himself to the judgment of his brethren.

A church meeting was held, at his request, at which he read the charges made against him. 'These char-

ges,' in the language of the Church Record, 'he said he admitted, and many considerations might be mentioned as an apology, yet he would not plead them as an apology,—that he viewed them as wrong and as sins, for which he repented, and asked the church to forgive him.' He declined however, entering into particulars in relation to the past. An elderly member of the church was so much irritated at his silence, that he advanced a step towards him, and shook his clenched fist at him, with insulting words. No reply was made by the young man, and the church took no notice of this breach of order.

It is painful to record such incidents as this; but duty, alike to the dead and to the living, require it of us. Shortly after the death of Mr Pitkin, a prosecution was commenced in the church against his widowed and desolate parent, the gravest charge of which was 'bearing false witness against the church.' Mrs Pitkin had complained of the treatment which her son had received; and this complaint was construed into an offence. That lady has been excommunicated on the above mentioned charge, and others of less importance. The author of this memoir cannot therefore, with justice to Mrs Pitkin, suppress the statement of those facts, which formed the ground of her complaint.

The acknowledgment made by young Pitkin at the

first church meeting not proving satisfactory, a second was held, at which he presented them in a more explicit form. The question was now put, 'Will the church receive the confession of John Budd Pitkin, and remove his suspension?' Ten persons voted in the affirmative,—one only in the negative.

It was now determined that a confession should be prepared by Pitkin himself, and read in church on the following sabbath; and the members expressed their readiness to be satisfied with such a confession as might meet the approbation of the minister. The confession was accordingly read. It contained the acknowledgment which was required; but the young writer, at this time only nineteen, had introduced some fine language, and some moral reflections which he thought appropriate, but which some of the church regarded as changing his act of penance into an exhibition of his rhetorical powers. The church refused to receive the confession as satisfactory; but on the next sabbath, a new and less ornate one was read by the pastor, to which the young man assented by standing up in his pew.

He was thus restored to the communion of the church; but the transactions that had occurred had wounded him deeply, and he again left home, believing that he had enemies in Barrington, from whose designs

he could only escape by concealing the place of his residence. He found employment as a teacher in Maryland, and only returned to Barrington, after an absence of two years, at the earnest wish of his grandmother, whose health was rapidly declining. After her decease he remained several months in his native town, and removed thence to Sandy Hill, N. Y. His purpose was to teach penmanship; but being well provided with money for his present wants, he remained for a season comparatively unemployed, in the enjoyment of agreeable society, but in danger of contracting habits which would have been most fatal to him. It was before those decided movements had been made in the great cause of Temperance, which have diminished so much the danger of youth, by pointing them to the sure safeguard, total abstinence. But Pitkin was designed for better things; and an exertion of church discipline was now perhaps the means of saving him from impending ruin. A complaint was made against him by the Pastor of the church at Sandy Hill, to that at Barrington, of which he was still a member; he 'returned to Barrington,' says his mother, 'and, as I have learned on this trial, met the committee, acknowledged his errors, and gave ample satisfaction. Three months subsequent, he attended the academy in Stockbridge, Mass. Here he resumed his

studies with vigor, and as I have been informed by Professor Averill of Schenectady, a room-mate at the time, and others, secured the love of all around him in a very high degree. But as might be expected, out of all these wanderings and unmoorings, had grown the evil of a roving mind. He left the academy with the intention, I presume, of returning to it after a season of writing schools,—mounted his sulkey, and I saw him no more for seven years, and then met him in Philadelphia, whither he had come from Richmond, Va., at the call of his dying brother. During this long space, I received very few letters from him, and these were cautiously mailed where he was just going to leave. At this time he assured me, and in deep sorrow for the anguish he had most necessarily inflicted, that the course he had adopted was the only one of safety; that he was perfectly aware of the fact, though unable clearly to trace its coilings, that for two or three years after he left Barrington, he was pursued by some hostile hand from that church; thwarting all his purposes; and not until he had eluded their chase, could he hope to accomplish any thing to any purpose.'

It appeared upon the trial of Mrs Pitkin, that her son's impressions were correct, respecting the vigilance with which his steps had been traced. Not less than twenty letters had passed between the Rev. Mr B—,

the successor of Mr Wheeler, and various persons in other places, in relation to J. B. Pitkin. The idea however, entertained by him, that these letters originated in hostile feelings, was doubtless incorrect.

We have thus taken, we trust, an impartial view of the early history of Mr Pitkin. We have seen the fairest promise of childhood almost blighted by the very care that was taken to foster it too rapidly. His early connection with the church, his romantic course of reading, the admiration excited by his youthful piety and talents, all conspired to intoxicate his brain, and unfit him for that steady advancement in knowledge and goodness, whose fruits are precious in proportion to the length of time required to ripen them. This undue excitement renders tasteless to him the ordinary occupations of his age; he is seized with a desire of wandering, which displays itself at first in an expedition as blameable in its means as it was wild in its object. When he returned from this excursion, had he received only the judicious treatment of a kind family circle, the evil, already diminished by disappointment, might have been remedied. But the errors of the boy are met with an array of public inquisition and censure that might have broken the spirit of a man. His friends are compelled, unless they would see him brought up to endure a trial which he is altogether

unfit to bear, to send him forth to wander again; and when after a year's absence, he returns, he is subjected to searching curiosity, to cruel insult, and to the degradation of a public confession. This sends him forth again, almost heart-broken. He wanders hither and thither. His moral principles are beginning to be undermined, though here a kind Providence interposes for his rescue; and we willingly accord due praise to the exertions of the church in Barrington as the instrument of that interposition. But the habit of wandering seems to have become confirmed. He parts again from home, and from his supposed enemies. Finally his religious principles are beginning to give way; for we learn that about this time, he was led to entertain doubts with respect to the truth of Christianity. Such is the history, as far as we have yet traced it, of John Budd Pitkin; a history full of instruction, but in which it would seem that few steps were wanting to mark the downward course of the once promising boy to mental and moral ruin.

That Providence, in whose care the Christian trusts, though always operating, seldom perceptibly reveals itself. But sometimes it appears so distinctly, that we cannot but acknowledge the ruling hand. Was it a blind chance, which at this dangerous period of Pitkin's life, led him to an acquaintance with a more liberal

system of Christianity, and thus drew him gently back to the path of religion, and of steady and honorable exertion? We think not. We trace here the working of a higher power.

The situation and engagements of the author of this memoir have prevented him from obtaining as full information respecting all parts of Mr Pitkin's life as might be desirable; and it is of the period from 1824 to 1829, that he possesses least information. It was during this interval that Mr Pitkin became acquainted with the doctrines of the Universalist denomination, and resolved to prepare himself for the ministry in that connection. His sentiments on the subject of a future state coincided at this time, with those since distinguished by the name of Restorationist. Mrs Pitkin writes, 'In 1829 I received intelligence from a friend journeying in Maine, that J. B. Pitkin was residing in that state, much respected and beloved,—was engaged in the study of Hebrew, with other requisite studies for the ministry. In 1830 I was informed by letters from different sources, that he was preaching the Gospel in that state.' It was his intention to avail himself of the facilities afforded in the Divinity School at Cambridge, for the completion of the studies which he had successfully pursued in private; but from this purpose he was diverted by a summons to a field of

labor which appeared to require his efforts. A society had been formed in Richmond, Virginia, under the name of 'Unitarian Universalist,' and Mr Pitkin was requested to officiate with them for a time. His labors at Richmond commenced in the autumn of 1830.

In the commencement of the following year, he was deprived by death of a younger and beloved brother, Francis Mervin Pitkin, one of those youths whose genius seems to be developed with preternatural rapidity and beauty, only that it may the sooner fade. The following extract of a letter, written to his mother on this occasion, will show the 'peace in believing,' which our wanderer had now found.

'Richmond, January 31, 1831.

'My dear mother,—I have just received your letter, containing the most afflicting intelligence of my poor brother's death. In the midst of wrath, God remembers mercy. The cup of bitterness is not all unmingled. It gives me a satisfaction which I cannot express, that he gave evidence to your mind, of a saving change. Had the nature of his disease been such as to have precluded a manifestation of such evidence, with your views of God's dealings with his creatures, you must have been rendered wretched in the extreme. To me it is a source of unspeakable joy, that in the trying hour of death, the love of God to a world of sin-

ners, was *so far* manifested to him, as to give him hope for *himself*, and reconciliation to the divine will. I indulge, it is true, a *broader* hope; but it rejoices me to have any of my fellow creatures feel an assurance of our heavenly Father's love, through any means. Yes; my brother, I doubt not, is now rejoicing in heaven, chanting the praises of that Redeemer, who was the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. O what a blessing in the hour of affliction is faith in a Savior! Without the light of the Gospel what a region of darkness, what a shadow of death is this world! We, my mother, are now left alone, as it were, in the world. God only knows how long our lives will be spared; but at farthest, we shall soon follow our beloved Francis, as I trust, to the kingdom of unfading glory. Let us not then be cast down by the chastising rod. Let us remember that it is our heavenly Father that inflicts it. Let us strive to improve our hearts and our lives, to love God more, and to benefit his creatures around us by an increasing faithfulness in discharging the duties of life. It is the sentiment of Christianity as well as of Philosophy that "whatever is, is right." '

The following letter, written about a year after the date of the preceding, is interesting as presenting his

views at the time on some important doctrinal points; and not less so from its exhibition of a Christian spirit toward that church from which he conceived himself to have sustained very harsh and unjustifiable treatment.

'Richmond, Jan. 12th, 1832.

'Dear mother,— I have just received, and perused with interest, your well filled sheet. I have but one fault to find with it, and that is indeed one altogether too frequent in your letters—*an apology for your faithfulness.* You know I am capable of taking nothing unkindly that bears all the marks of having come fresh from a mother's love. Even if I esteem some of your sentiments erroneous, and some of your fears groundless, I know how duly to appreciate the motive that inspires their expression, and imparts to them a frank, undisguised coloring. There,—I am just dropping a tear over the thought I have inscribed.

'Your remarks upon Unitarianism, I think, are unjust. You are not acquainted with that class of Christians, whose very name is such a thing of dread to you. I am a Unitarian, and at the same time that I declare this, I feel assured, could you and Mr B—* and I, have an opportunity of conversing at length on the Trinitarian question, we should all discover, that no

* The minister of the church in Great Barrington.

such wide breach of opinion exists between us, as has been pictured to your imagination. The truth is, Christians are denouncing each other, on ridiculously trifling matters. I do not pretend to determine the precise nature of Christ. He is neither to be exalted nor degraded by a mere title or name. His *mediatorial character and offices* are what we are chiefly to be concerned about. I believe in his preexistence, and in the transcendant glory, and vast power, with which the Father has endowed him; and at the same time, I feel bound to believe his testimony, when he so often declares his entire dependence for all he is, or has, on the Father, and when his express language is "The Father is greater than I." But why should we wrangle in regard to his definite nature, so long as he assures us, that "no man knoweth the Son, but the Father"? Here let us rest the matter, and hush the tumult of sectarian dissensions, about things of which we can know nothing; and let us devote our attention to those things, which do come plainly within the grasp of our knowledge and comprehension. Let us diligently study the Gospel, and strive to imbibe the spirit, and copy the example of our precious Savior. Let us do these things, and we need have no fears of being condemned for following the honest dictates of our understandings. I trust you will not believe, my dear mother,

that it is in the commonplace cant of religious professions, that I say, Christ is every thing to me, "my light, my guide, my all." If we would read our bibles enough, and pray enough, we should be just as good Christians as we need to be. I do not wish to alter your faith in regard to Christian doctrine. Harsh doctrines may be so counterbalanced in the mind by other consoling ones, as to leave their advocates much ground for enjoyment. I would only say therefore, "As ye have received Christ, so walk ye in him." But I could wish that your mind might so far break away from the narrow walls of a particular sect or system, as to look with a more charitable eye on other denominations. There are very bad people, and at the same time, most excellent, devout professors, in all Christian orders. As to the observations of Mrs ——, on her practical experience of Universalism, I do not doubt she spoke as an honest woman. Much depends on the kind of preaching she heard, and the description of authors she read. I do not know that you are aware of the existence of two separate denominations of believers in universal salvation. The members of the one, we call Ultra-Universalists; those of the other are denominated Universal Restorationists. The former deny punishment beyond this life; and though there are honorable exceptions, too many of their preachers, and too many of their books,

inculcate various sentiments which Restorationists look upon with deep disgust. There is a very broad distinction betwixt these two orders; and I now request you never to speak of me as a *Universalist*, but as a *Restorationist*, or what indeed I prefer, *Unitarian*. In Winchester's Dialogues, which I have sent by Mr ——, you will find, in the main, my own opinions and those of Restorationists generally. Winchester is generally admitted to have been a true Christian, even by his opposers. You will do me the favor to read this little work attentively, not that I expect or wish you to avow or embrace the peculiar sentiments of the author, but that you may see how misapprehended those sentiments are, and how little difference, after all, there is betwixt your views of religion, and those of your affectionate son, J. B. P.

'P. S.—I am heartily rejoiced to learn that your church does not countenance the ambitious projects of the high Presbyterians. Much of the asperity of my former remarks has arisen from the contrary supposition. Let the scheme of a "union of church and state," never pollute that church, and under a sense of all my wrongs, I will love and respect it still. Give my most cordial respects to Mr B—, and tell him I should be happy to receive a letter from one, though superficially, and under unpropitious circumstances, acquaint-

ed with me, yet for whom the representations of an endeared mother have won special esteem.

'I have said that I do not wish you to alter your faith as to Christian doctrine. I have not said this because I deem my peculiar views unimportant. If I thought so, I should not struggle against so much opposition to promulgate them. But at your time of life, opinions long cherished, have in general become so fixed in the mind, so interwoven with all the associations of thought and feeling, that it costs more to root them out, than it comes to; that is, provided they are not of a very malignant class of errors. And I feel that though you are impressed with some false views, yet you entertain the substantials of true Christianity. And if you should ever see cause to change some of your opinions, be very careful how you court the disesteem and persecution of your weaker brethren, through the avowal of the alteration. Church bigotry is more cruel than the grave; and you, in your advanced years and declining health, are not called upon to face its storms. Besides, I should be very sorry to see unnecessary dissensions spring up in a church, where unanimity and even a tolerable share of light, had prevailed. The case is altogether different with me. I am a young man, and have courage, and the general requisites of moral power, to brave the fury of sectarian

malevolence. I know that many branches of the Christian church are grossly corrupt; and it is my duty to add my little mite of aid in the work of reformation. I see many false views among my own supporters, as well as in other denominations; and I am able to exert a far more efficient energy in penetrating their minds, and bringing them to Christian truth, feeling, and practice, than the minister of any other order. I have witnessed some of the most striking conversions from infidelity through the instrumentality of my labors. Clear away a little rubbish with which tradition has encumbered the Gospel, and the strongest weapons of the infidel are blunted, his shield of error wrested from him, and his breast laid open to the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Our Savior gives a rule, by which our faith may be successfully tested; 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God,' that is, the practical effects, which we discover our faith is producing in us, will test its purity.—You must recollect that Restorationists believe in the necessity of faith, repentance, the work of the spirit, and the whole process of regeneration, just as fully as you do. No order can help some of its preachers and members from carrying things to extremes, either to hurtful fanaticism and bigotry, or on the other hand, to cold indifference to what constitutes the life and soul of true religion.'

In February, 1833, Mr Pitkin was ordained as Pastor of the church in Richmond by the Rev. Mr Whitman of the Unitarian, and the Rev. Mr Skinner of the Universalist, connection. The name of his church had before this been changed, in accordance with his views, to the more appropriate, because less sectarian designation, of 'The Independent Christian Church.' Mr Pitkin thought, (with, we trust, many others) that *individuals* might properly assume for themselves, names descriptive of their peculiar opinions, but that they ought not to designate the *Churches* of Christ by these sectarian appellations.

In the summer following his ordination, Mr Pitkin visited Barrington, after an absence of nine years. On the third day from his arrival, he received a letter from the Pastor of the Congregational church, informing him that he was excommunicated. There is generally at the present day, among clergymen of the most different sentiments, a courtesy which self-respect dictates, no less than christian charity, and which might have suggested to the Pastor of the church in Barrington, that Mr Pitkin, now an ordained minister, was no longer a fit subject for the exercise of his authority. Mr Pitkin made no answer to the letter, and took no notice of it, beyond his own family circle. He was received by some of his fellow-townsmen with great kindness, and

was invited to address them from the pulpit of the Episcopalian church. He consented, remarking to his mother that he should have hesitated to do so if the minister of the Congregational church had treated him with courtesy; but that he felt himself now released from all restraint on his account. His discourse however, was of a practical character, nor did he exert himself to make converts to his opinions in his native village. His moderation however, was not appreciated. Shortly after he had left Barrington, the clergyman of the Congregational church discoursed from the text, Proverbs xxix. 1, 'He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.' The sermon was regarded by many who heard it, as aimed directly at Mr Pitkin; and contained expressions deeply wounding to the feelings of his friends.

Mr Pitkin's health had been for some time in a feeble state, and as early as 1831, he had entertained thoughts of seeking a climate warmer than that of Richmond. In the autumn of 1834, he wrote to the Unitarian clergymen at Charleston and Augusta, for information respecting the climate, and the probability of finding employment, should his health permit him to preach. From both he received letters, encouraging his contemplated journey; and from the Rev. Mr Gil-

man of Charleston, a kind invitation to his house. It was not however, till the twentieth of January, 1835, that he arrived in Charleston after having endured some of the coldest weather of a remarkably cold winter. Mr Gilman was absent at the time, and his pulpit was filled by the author of this memoir; but Mr Pitkin was immediately welcomed, and every attention paid which his shattered health required, by the lady of his absent friend, and the members of her family circle. It was however but too obvious that human aid could be of little avail. It had been Mr Pitkin's intention to sail from Charleston to the south of Europe, or to Madeira; but no opportunity presenting itself of a suitable description, he left Charleston on the twenty-fourth of January for St. Augustine, E. F. The vessel in which he sailed had an unpleasant voyage. He reached his destination about the last of January; and on the ninth of the following month closed in that city, his earthly course.

While in Charleston, Mr Pitkin became more fully aware than he had previously been, of the approach of death; and he exhibited the calmness of a Christian, whose thoughts have too long been familiar with that great change, to be alarmed when it draws near. The writer of this notice was frequently with him at that time. On one occasion, when he had been con-

sulting to what port he should sail, Mr Pitkin observed that it was of little consequence; that his lot was already cast. Some topics of encouragement being suggested, he answered, 'I am not depressed. I think the continuance of my life very doubtful,—more than doubtful, but this does not depress me. I should like indeed, if it were God's will, to live a little longer, and preach Unitarianism, but I feel prepared for either event.' He then spoke of the value of his sentiments to him, and his earnest wish for their diffusion. The inquiry was made, whether he found that those sentiments sustained him in the prospect of death. 'Yes,' he said, 'they have supported me hitherto, and I have no doubt my death will be triumphant.' Among his directions to the writer at this time, was one which he cannot forbear to fulfill, though in so doing he may weaken that tie which connected Mr Pitkin with some of his brethren, who were undoubtedly worthy of his cordial regard. Mr Pitkin requested that it might be distinctly made known, that his views of the future state differed from those of the Universalist connection, even from the doctrine held by Restorationists. It was his conviction that the human mind, created free to choose between good and evil, would retain that freedom hereafter;—that as some resist all means of good here, so in the future

state some will resist all the means employed by divine love and justice for their correction and restoration to happiness, and continue obstinately impenitent. Such depraved spirits must at length become so miserable, that annihilation will be mercy to them : and in mercy, he believed, God will blot them out of existence. This final destruction of the hopelessly impenitent, he regarded as indicated in Scripture under the name of the 'second death.' With the exception of those thus annihilated, he believed that the human race would at length be restored to purity, and raised to everlasting glory. Upon a friend's remarking, that he had been led to similar conclusions, but entertained them merely as an allowable speculation on a subject not clearly revealed, he observed that he viewed the subject much more confidently, and appealed particularly to the expressions in Revelations xx. xxi. in relation to the second death. He spoke of the great moral influence which the preaching of this doctrine must have ; and said that he regarded it as more likely to be effectual for the reformation of offenders than any other conception of the future state which has ever been presented.

In the inquiries into which we have been led in consequence of the above statement of Mr Pitkin, we have been enabled to trace in some degree the growth of

this opinion in his mind. A venerable member of his society in Richmond, recalls the conversation in which an idea of this description was expressed by himself, and commented on by Mr Pitkin as something new to him. His friends in Barrington mention that once while among them in 1833, he spoke of the annihilation of the utterly and hopelessly impenitent, as something within the range of speculation; but it is not remembered that he had ever expressed a full belief in this doctrine in his sermons or otherwise. His opinion on this subject was therefore, evidently one of gradual formation, and on which he had only recently arrived at full conviction. To one who regards this belief as substantially correct, it constitutes an important step in the advancement of Mr Pitkin's mind nearer to that perfect light which he now enjoys; — and the great majority, who will still differ from him, may recognise in this modification of his sentiments, the operation of an inquiring and independent mind.

During his short stay in Charleston, Mr Pitkin received many kind attentions from individuals on whom he had no claim but those of a fellow man and a sufferer. One gentleman, himself a stranger, who had visited the south for scientific purposes, equalled the hospitable citizens of Charleston in his exertions. The invalid showed himself deeply sensible of every

kindness. In St. Augustine too, he found friends in strangers, at a time when their assistance was more than ever necessary to him, from his own feeble condition, and from the number of sick, and the consequent difficulty of procuring good accommodations. He was furnished by his Charleston friends with letters to an eminent physician, who bestowed on him unwearied and gratuitous attention, and to a gentleman of Boston who passed the winter in St. Augustine with his family. No kindness could exceed that shown by this estimable family to the dying man. We trust we shall be pardoned by them for inserting the following extracts of a letter from Mrs F— to the mother of the deceased.

'Near the last of January, Dr P— presented us with a letter, introducing your son to our kindly attentions. Mr F— called on him with the Doctor,—invited him to come and see us, and tried to cheer him up. Finding that he did not come, I went with Mr F—, a day or two afterwards, to visit him myself and see if I could do any thing for his comfort.' 'He told me that there was a lady from Philadelphia boarding there, Mrs B—, who was the guardian angel of the house.' 'I asked him if it fatigued him to talk; he said, No; it gave him pleasure to have somebody to talk with.' 'He spoke of the Unitarian persuasion

with great enthusiasm, and in discourse of it, his brow and eyes lit up with smiles, and the sweetest expression I ever saw. The next day the cold weather set in with great severity, and continued for several days. On Monday the ninth of February, Dr P— called and requested Mr F— to go with him to see Mr Pitkin, who he thought could not live over twenty-four hours. He requested Mr F— to inform him of the near approach of his speedy dissolution. It was a painful task, but they deemed it a sacred duty, as he might have arrangements to make or directions to give, that might be of serious importance to those he loved. As they spoke their fears he slightly changed color, but bore the information with great calmness and composure.' 'He consented to have a nurse. The Doctor and Mr F— went immediately out to seek for one. After being gone half an hour without any success, Mr F— requested me to go over and stay with him until they returned, as he was afraid that he might die alone before they should be able to procure a nurse.' 'I told him, I had come to stay with him, to take care of him. He looked at me a moment,—pronounced my name,—they were the last words he ever spoke. He took no further notice of anything. I sent for Mrs B—. She and I remained with him about two hours, when he expired, just as the Doctor and Mr F— ar-

rived with the nurse. He was buried the next day, all the strangers attending his funeral.' 'I have reason to think he retained his senses unto the last, and that whenever he was able, his spirit was in fervent prayer. Never did I feel more pity for any human being. To see him alone, helpless, stretched upon the bed of death, far from the kindly sympathy of his people, his kindred and his home, indebted to the compassion of strangers for those attentions which the heart of a tender parent so fondly bestows! He appeared to be very patient, and perfectly resigned. I never understood that he breathed a murmur, or made the slightest complaint,—but clasping his hands upon his breast, yielded up his soul to Him who gave it, and expired without a sigh. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!'

Thus then died John B. Pitkin,—too early, it may seem to us, for the cause in which he had engaged,—too early, it may seem to us, for that reputation which would have attended his talents and exertions; but not too early for the lesson he has left, of the rescuing, purifying and ennobling power of Liberal Christianity. To that system he owed much, and his labors in its advancement were in proportion. They were not confined to his own church in Richmond. He had col-

lected a congregation in Powhatan, Virginia, and had preached occasionally in other parts of that state. He had also afforded valuable aid to the Rev. Mr Skinner of Baltimore, in the religious paper edited by that gentleman. Besides his miscellaneous productions in prose and verse, which appeared in that and other papers, he had published some occasional discourses, two of which—on the Fourth of July, and on True and False Religion,—are reprinted in the present volume. But the most important of his publications is the Discourse in answer to the Rev. Daniel Baker, an essay of the most able kind, on the Doctrine of the Two Natures in Christ. The great length of this production has necessarily excluded it from the present volume.

Mr Pitkin confided to the writer of this memoir the care of his manuscripts; and it was the wish of his surviving parent and other friends, that a selection from them should be given to the public. The task thus imposed was by no means an easy one; and on a recent journey to the north, the writer visited Barrington with the full intention of relieving himself from a charge which would necessarily make heavy demands upon his leisure. But he found the mother of the deceased at that very moment undergoing a formal trial before an ecclesiastical court on charges of heresy,

slander, and breach of covenant vows. The grounds of accusation were, that she had sympathised with her son,—had complained of the treatment he had received,—and had ceased to worship in the church from whose pulpit she had heard him publicly anathematized. The writer discovered that the early history of the deceased was called up again from the repose of years. He could not, under such circumstances, decline to plead the cause of the dead, and to do what lay in his power, to soothe the wounded feelings of the living.

In the selection and preparation of the following sermons, he has encountered great difficulty from the loose state in which Mr Pitkin's papers were left, and which all the care previously bestowed on them by other friends, had but partially succeeded in remedying. He has taken without scruple that liberty which is absolutely necessary to be used under such circumstances, the liberty of omission ; and in a few instances, he has divided an unwieldly sentence, or reconstructed an ungrammatical one. Allusions to those doctrines with respect to which the sentiments of Mr Pitkin had changed before his death, have been generally omitted. One powerful sermon on Universal Salvation has been inserted, however, as a specimen of his preaching on that subject.

The writer was assured by a lady in Richmond, of different sentiments from Mr Pitkin, and personally a stranger to him, that the intelligence of his death was received with sorrow by many who differed from him most widely in opinion,—that he lived there universally respected, and died universally regretted. A similar testimony was borne to his worth in letters to his bereaved mother, from many of those who had known and loved him, both of his own, and of other religious sentiments. 'Deeply,' writes one of his parishioners, 'oh how deeply we deplore his loss, both as a friend and as a Pastor. Long will his memory be cherished in this city, by all who knew him. May we all aim to be good like him, that our end may be like his, peaceful and happy.' Nor were these tributes of affection and sympathy confined to Richmond. A number of gentlemen who had attended his ministry in Powhatan, united in a similar expression of their deep regard for their late friend, and in condolence with his afflicted relative. We close this memoir by the insertion of the following lines, which appeared soon after his decease, in one of the papers of Richmond, and which, beside their intrinsic beauty, are valuable as the testimony of one whose views of religion differed from his own.

LINES, ON THE DEATH OF THE REV. J. B. PITKIN,

BY AN ORTHODOX FRIEND.

He has fallen in youth like a frost-smitten flower,
  And low in the grave they have laid him;
And the pitying bird from her amaranth bower,
  A sweet, soft requiem hath play'd him.

No loved mother was near to pillow his head
  On the breast where first he slumbered;
And no sister's warm tear o'er the couch was shed
  Of him whose hours were numbered.

But faces unknown are now pressing around
  The couch of the young, the dying;
Ah! and soon o'er the stranger's grassy mound,
  Will the soft south winds be sighing.

They have buried him far from the place of his birth,
  And stranger eyes are now weeping
O'er the newly raised mound of fresh green earth,
  Where the smitten one is sleeping.

No more, no more shall his blue waters weave
  Their songs in his ear, or the beauty
Of his own green hills on a calm summer's eve,
  Wake his smile, affection's duty.

For he slumbers afar in a sunnier clime,
  Where flowers are ever blowing,
Where the luscious blue grape and the yellow lime
  Their mingled fragrance are throwing.

But his spirit rests in a far better land,
  In pavilions of light above,
'Mongst the gifted ones of that holy band
  Who have tasted that 'God is Love.'

SERMON I.

CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

1 Cor. i. 23, 24. 'But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.'

These words were addressed by the Apostle to his Christian brethren residing in the city of Corinth. That city, we are informed by history, was a place of great commercial enterprise and prosperity, renowned for its wealth and luxury, and unfortunately no less noted for the extreme licentiousness of its manners. It abounded in libraries, schools, and sophists, and was distinguished for the effeminacy of its literature. From the epistles of St Paul as well as from other sources, we learn that the Christian church planted there, became early infected with the moral dissoluteness by which it was surrounded. Jealousies, animosities, strifes and divisions sprung up among its members; the

spirit of party was engendered, and began to grow into great virulence and rancor. Gross immoralities were tolerated, so that even the sacred festival of the Lord's Supper was not unfrequently signalized by drunkenness and other most debauching excess. It was with deep sorrow that Paul learned this growing degeneracy of his brethren, and to expose and correct the wickedness of this state of things among them, appears to be the prominent design of the first epistle to the Corinthians. The chapter containing my text opens with the customary salutations, and then the author goes on to impress it upon his brethren, that in the Christian religion they all have but one master, Christ; and that it was entirely repugnant to the spirit of Christianity for its disciples to split into parties and to follow different teachers, as it was customary for the heathen to do in their schools of philosophy. He says, 'Now, I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me, of you my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or, were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' Thus this great Apostle goes on to reason with, and reprove his erring brethren, in the truly Christian temper and spirit.

How firm, plain, and earnest is his manner, yet how kind and affectionate. We discover no arrogance, no bitterness, no sneer, no denunciation. We see nothing but a manifestation of Christian love and tenderness for his deluded and wandering converts. Yet if ever a preacher of the gospel had reason to be angry at the waywardness of his flock, or a right to denounce them, St Paul had in the instance before us. He had toiled and labored for the conversion of his countrymen, and of theG reeks. He had been wearied with journeying, and exposed to manifold perils on their account, he had fronted reproach, and even braved death itself to save them; and what a wretched return they had made! They despised his plainness of speech; they quarrelled and disputed among themselves; they formed parties and had their leaders; they abused a holy ordinance; they were caught by the glare of affected eloquence and subtle sophistry;—in a word, the Apostle's hopes had been disappointed, and his earnest labors unsuccessful. His converts showed gross ingratitude, and scorned and insulted him. Here was enough to move his indignation, to call forth any rebuke, to make him deal in terrors and threaten punishment. But is there anything of this visible? No, not a word. He admonishes and exhorts,—he beseeches and prays,—he calls them his brethren again and again. He thanks God for the measure of grace bestowed upon them,—he prays that peace from the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ may be unto them. He is grieved but not angry; plain but not harsh; full of warning but free from threats.

He points out their errors, he speaks of their sins, but he does not call down wrath and vengeance upon them; —he does not talk of exclusion and excommunication; he does not assert the prerogative of God, and sit in final judgment upon these despisers of the cross, and condemn them to endless perdition. But with the love, prudence, and zeal of an affectionate pastor, he endeavors to call the wandering flock home again to the fold of Jesus.

Here in this conduct of Paul, my hearers, is a lesson for us;—here is a rebuke for us, when, frail and fallible as we are, we denounce and cast off those, whose consciences and honest study of scripture compel them to reject our opinions. Here is a reproach for us, when we deal harshly with the weaknesses and follies of our fellowmen, and especially when we presume boldly to anticipate the decisions of the last day, when we dare to predict the issue of any brother's trial at the bar of God, and this too, for mere opinion. Let us imitate then the example of Paul and of his blessed Master, Jesus, in avoiding intolerance, and exclusiveness. Let us seek, enforce, and defend the truth, but always with love and good will; and leave the issues of life and death with God, who knows the heart, who is perfectly acquainted with all the peculiar motives which influence, and circumstances which surround each individual, who sees the causes of error, and who has made man accountable to Himself alone. To these ends may He who is wisdom, guide us to the truth, that the truth may sanctify and make us free.

In further discoursing from my text, it will be my object, first, to exhibit what is implied by preaching Christ Crucified; secondly, to show why Christ the crucified was a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, and how to believers he is the power of God and the wisdom of God; and thirdly, to ascertain who are now preachers of Christ Crucified. You perceive that the subject is a broad and an important one. May I discuss it with a full sense of my responsibility, and may you give it that attention, patience, and seriousness, which become immortal and accountable beings.

What then is implied by preaching Christ Crucified? or as it might be rendered Christ the Crucified. To preach Christ is to preach the religion he has established. The name of an author was commonly used among the ancient Jews, as indeed it is among us, to express the teaching he inculcated. Thus, 'Moses,' it is declared, was 'read in the synagogue every sabbath day,' that is, the law of Moses was so read; so we say of a student, 'He is thoroughly acquainted with Blackstone,' meaning not that he is acquainted with the person of that author, but with the commentaries which he wrote. To preach Christ, then, is to preach the gospel. Paul uses these phrases as synonymous. Thus he says, 'Christ sent me to preach the gospel,' and, 'but we preach Christ crucified.' These terms are evidently employed to express one and the same thing. Therefore to answer our present inquiry, we have only to ascertain what is the preaching of the gospel. The

literal meaning of the word translated gospel, is good news and glad tidings. It was applied not merely to any one single doctrine, but to the whole revelation of Jesus, inasmuch as that revelation was to be the means of man's salvation from ignorance, error, sin and consequent misery; and therefore was to men glad tidings of great joy. Whatever, then, Christ and his apostles taught by Divine direction, composes the gospel. To notice all they taught would require a volume, but we may easily review such a portion of their instructions, as will satisfy us what was the general tenor of their preaching. We are told, Matth. iv. 23, that Jesus went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, and what Jesus taught and preached is the teaching and preaching of the gospel. In Matth. vi. we are furnished with a pretty full report of one of the Savior's most important sermons,—the sermon on the mount. What doctrines and what truths are therein inculcated? To recapitulate some of the topics, Jesus insists upon purity of heart,—humility of spirit,—meekness,—mercy,—forgiveness of injuries,—chastity even in thought,—abstinence from profanity,—love of enemies,—unostentatious charity,—trust in Divine Providence,—caution in judging of others,—the vanity of loud professions,—and the necessity of holy conduct. These are his topics, when he blesses the pure in heart, promises the kingdom to the poor in spirit, gives his benediction to the merciful, exhorts men to let their light so shine that others may see their good works, and God be glorified,—bids them leave the gift before the altar and go

and be reconciled to their brother,—says to them, 'swear not at all,' urges them to do good to those who hate and persecute them,—enjoins them not to give alms before men, to pray in secret, to fast inwardly, to lay up treasures in heaven,—to consider the lilies of the field, to judge not that they may not be judged;—in one word to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. These were the truths of his religion, the precepts of Christianity, which he delivered to the multitude from the mount. This was his first sermon, in Galilee, and is to be regarded as an introduction to the whole course of his public teaching, as embodying a luminous summary of the whole Gospel. In this discourse he first appeared as a public teacher. It contains his earliest proclamation of the terms of salvation. Now does he utter a syllable about man's inability to serve God or to do a holy act? Does he say a word about natural depravity, and orignal sin? Does he refer most distantly to the popular doctrine of the atonement? No, he does not. He appeals to men as free and able to repent and reform. He bids them strive, and hunger and thirst after righteousness. He leaves the hope of salvation upon no mysterious influence of his sufferings, but upon the possession of right principles, right affections and right conduct. Such was the preaching of the gospel, such the doctrine as it came from his lips, which unto them that receive it is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

We learn then from this discourse, not that to preach

unintelligible mysteries, but to preach plain morality, and piety, and providence, and prayer, is to preach the gospel. Again, we are informed in Matth. x. 7, that Jesus sent forth his twelve disciples, saying, 'as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' What and where is this kingdom of heaven, or of God? 'The kingdom of God is within you,' 'for the kingdom of God is not meat or drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy, in a holy spirit.' 'Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. In commanding his disciples then to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, he in effect commanded them to declare the establishment of the gospel dispensation as consisting of moral goodness. In his last conversation with his disciples you find our Lord insisting chiefly upon goodness of heart and life, upon piety and morality, upon love and obedience. 'If ye love me, keep my commandments.' 'These things I command you, that ye love one another. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.' Here again we see that Christian preaching is the preaching of good works, is the inculcating of holiness of heart and life. But we need not continue this reference to particular passages.

Take up your bibles and carefully review the teaching of Jesus, and you will find that all the essential truths contained in them may be summed up under the following articles.

1st, The spiritual nature and parental character of the Almighty. 'God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' 'When ye pray, say, Our Father who art in heaven.'

2d, Love of God and love of man. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.'

3d, The necessity of obedience or goodness. 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.'

4th, The immortality of the soul. 'Whosoever believeth in me shall never die.'

5th, A state of righteous retributions. 'Then will he reward every man according to his works.'

These are the main truths, the fundamentals of christianity, which are able to make us wise unto salvation.

After the death of our Lord, we are provided with reports of several discourses from his apostles.

In the second of Acts, we find Peter in his first sermon, alluding to the advent, instructions and crucifixion of Jesus, but saying not one word about the trinity, vicarious sufferings, endless misery, nor any such matter. His object seems to be to prove to the Jews that God had made that same Jesus whom they crucified, the true Messiah. He dealt in no mysteries, but simply exhorted his hearers, saying, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.' Beneath this plain, intelligible and practical sermon, three thousand were converted from Judaism to Christianity.

We find Paul on Mars' Hill preaching God, as the Universal Father of man, preaching repentance, and the resurrection, and the judgment. But he drops not one word of the trinity, of a mysterious atonement, nor of the eternity of punishment.

Once more, what sort of preaching was that which reached the heart of Felix and excited his fear. Paul 'reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,' and 'Felix trembled.'

So in the epistles, Paul exhorts his Roman brethren to 'prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God,' by not being conformed to this world, but rather by presenting their bodies 'a living sacrifice,' and by leading lives of righteousness.

To his Corinthian brethren he represents charity as above faith, hope, and all knowledge.

To Timothy he declares, that 'the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and a good conscience and faith unfeigned.'

To Titus he says, 'This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm *constantly*, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain *good works*. These things are good and profitable unto men.' Thus might I go on, and remind you of many similar passages. But this, I trust, is not necessary. You perceive from the practice of the Savior and of his apostles, what it is to preach the gospel, to preach Christ the crucified. It is to preach the whole Christian system, the entire theory and practice of true religion.

It is to preach the character of God as a Father, and the nature of man as an accountable and immortal being. It is to preach the Messiahship of Jesus. It is to preach his precepts, and his example. It is to preach the need of piety and prayer. It is to call men to repentance and reformation; and to beseech them to abstain from vice, to cherish virtue and to seek the highest good. It is to point out the use of life and all its relations.

It is to unfold the truth which Christ toiled and suffered and died to introduce into the world; to give that truth power over the heart and conscience, so as to render it effectual in saving men from sin and misery. It is to quicken man's spiritual nature, to teach him his capacity and duty; to make him regard himself as a child of God, and an heir of everlasting life. It is to bring out things new and old,—to use all knowledge and every argument, to exhort and entreat men to love and obey their Maker, to receive and follow their Savior. All this, and whatever else is in harmony with this, is preaching the gospel; is preaching Christ crucified.

We come, secondly, to inquire, how the preaching of Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

I feel it incumbent on me to exhibit this portion of my subject in as clear a light as my short limits will permit. For I anticipate the demand, if to preach

Christ 'Crucified,' is merely to hold forth such plain truths as those we have just enumerated, how was it a stumbling block to the Jews? and still more, how were such elevated sentiments foolishness to the philosophical Greeks? Does it not seem from such language that there were mysteries unintelligible to the carnal understanding connected with the preaching of the cross? Was it not the doctrine of a mysterious trinity, of a mysterious atonement, of vicarious sufferings, that caused the Jews to stumble at, and the Greek to regard as foolishness, the preaching of the crucified Redeemer? These questions, so much insisted on by our orthodox brethren, may be, we believe, satisfactorily answered, and the whole language of my text made clear and intelligible, by having recourse to several well known and important facts. The Jews, it is certain, expected that the promised Messiah would be a temporal Prince, and a mighty Conqueror; that he would rescue their nation from its bondage to the Romans, and plant in Judea the standard of a proud and permanent dominion. This impression was deeply fixed, and intertwined with all their views of the predicted Christ. A knowledge of this fact furnishes us with a key to many passages in the New Testament.

The minds of our Savior's immediate disciples clung to this erroneous expectation with wonderful tenacity. It is even thought by some commentators that lingering traits of it are discoverable in the epistles; that ideas attached to the nature of Christ's first coming are there transferred to that second appearance

of the Savior, for which the apostles evidently looked. Notwithstanding Jesus so expressly assured his disciples, that his kingdom was not of this world, but within the soul, yet they seemed to cling with invincible prejudice to the hope fastened upon them in childhood, and thus firmly linked with all their strongest impressions, that the Messiah would yet come forth as the temporal king of the Jews, and deliver them from foreign despotism, and establish them in unprecedented national triumph and political glory.

This state of mind is exhibited in the conversation with the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. They were astonished that Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet so mighty in deed and word, should have been condemned to death and crucified. 'But we *trusted*,' said they, 'that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel.' They were sadly disappointed. With the death of their master, their fondest hopes seemed to perish. Another evidence of this state of feeling occurs in Acts i., where his followers asked so anxiously, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' Here then is one important fact of the nature of the Jewish expectations concerning the promised Messiah, to account for the declaration in our text that the crucified Christ was to the Jews a stumbling block. The same fact has continued to be a stumbling block to the great mass of the same people from the apostles' time even to the present day.

I will lay before you another fact, which I deem of no less importance. And that is the horror with which

the Jews were accustomed to regard crucifixion. This was not originally a Jewish, but a Roman mode of punishment, and one by which they executed their slaves, and malefactors guilty of the vilest crimes. The Romans upon their conquest of Judea introduced it among the Jews, in whose eyes it was far more ignominious than the death of the gallows is in our eyes. We at this day are unable to enter fully into the feelings of a Jew who stood on Calvary, and saw the being who claimed to be the long-expected Son of God, the Redeemer, the king, the hope and glory of Israel, permitting himself to be nailed betwixt a couple of thieves to the cross! With us, the cross is associated with all our most holy feelings and choicest hopes. The blood of him whom we have from infancy been taught to venerate above all Beings that ever appeared on our globe, has hallowed in our view the very name of the instrument upon which it was shed. Instead of looking upon the death of the cross as ignominious, we should shudder at it as a profanation of what was most sacred, were it now proposed to make it the punishment of criminals. To us it appears that such a death would only be meet for the holiest saint. But such were not the common feelings of men when Paul addressed the Corinthians. The case was not so when he declared 'I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ'—It was not so, when he gloried in the cross.

We, I repeat, are unable to conceive of the horror and the disgust which crucifixion excited in the mind of a Jew. Were we to substitute the gallows in the place

of the cross,—should we look upon crucifixion as we now look upon hanging, we might have some faint conception of his feelings; but even then we should want his deep hatred of those foreign oppressors who introduced this dread punishment among his countrymen; we should want all these to make our sympathetic horror perfect. I dwell upon this point, for it seems to me of vast moment. All Christians confess that the Apostles lay great stress upon the death and blood of Christ. All agree that these are mentioned in the epistles, with remarkable frequency and emphasis. The great object is, to ascertain the reason of this.—Some think that this language teaches a mysterious doctrine, the belief of which is 'the one thing needful' to salvation. Some think that a mysterious influence went forth from the death and blood of Christ to appease an offended God, and thus open the only door of salvation. But I ask you, my candid hearers, whether the strongest instance of this language is not explained by the considerations which I have just presented? Put yourselves in an Apostle's place. See every expectation disappointed. Behold HIM the theme of prophets, the worker of miracles,—behold HIM who, it was every moment thought, would arise in his might, and gather his hosts, and go forth to battle, and to victory, behold HIM nailed like the vilest felon, to the accursed tree, the sport of a rude soldiery, the object of bitter insult, —behold all this, and then say if it is surprising that it should make a deep impression upon the Apostle's soul, if it should be a strong and a prominent point in

his writings, introduced often, and introduced with emphasis? Can you wonder that he should choose the cross, and speak of the cross, as the emblem of Christianity? Can you wonder that he should often associate the manner of Christ's death with the mention of his name? Can you be surprised that he spoke of him emphatically in our text, not only as the Christ, that is, the Messiah, but as the crucified Christ, as the crucified Messiah? I think not. I think that he who, by the exercise of a strong imagination, by freeing himself from prejudice, enters into the Apostle's feelings, will need no other solution of his earnest and strong words.

You perceive then, I trust, a satisfactory reason of an allusion to Christ's crucifixion in our text. The words preceding it are, 'For the Jews require a sign,' alluding no doubt to the demand made of Jesus that he should give some visible manifestation from the heavens, —or else that he should give some particular sign which they supposed would indicate the true Messiah.—'And the Greeks seek after wisdom,' alluding to their schools of philosophy, and their sophists. 'But we preach Christ crucified, or the crucified Messiah, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness'—that is, we preach as the true Messiah him who died on the cross, which unto the Jews is a stumbling block, since it is repugnant to their strong prejudices, and previous notions about the Redeemer—unto the Greeks foolishness, because, accustomed as they are to seeing pomp, splendor and rank connected with religion, to look for wisdom among their sages and in their

academies, the idea that the humble Jesus, belonging to a despised race, should in his simplicity and ignominious death, be a teacher of divine truth, expressly commissioned and sent by the Deity for that purpose, seemed to them a most ridiculous absurdity. 'But unto them who are called,' converted to a belief in the gospel, 'both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God,' Christ, a manifestation of the power and wisdom of God.

Let us now, for the sake of distinctness, take a brief review of what we have presented from the text. Divisions it seems occurred in the churches which Paul had established in the city of Corinth. Looseness and licentiousness were becoming common. The artificial eloquence of the sophists was preferred to the simplicity of the gospel. The Apostle's authority was diminished, and the truth in danger. St Paul becomes acquainted with all this, and addresses a serious and affectionate letter to his brethren, to recover them from their strifes, apostacy, and general moral degradation. He urges them to cease from disputes, and to become one in Christ. He tells them that quarrels are contrary to the spirit of the gospel. He assures them that the wisdom of the world is not the wisdom of God. He states that however it may be a stumbling-block to the Jews, or foolishness to the Greeks, because the one expected a temporal prince, a royal deliverer, and the other found pleasure in sophistry and curious speculation, and attached ideas of splendor and learning to teachers of truth, still Christ, who was crucified like a

malefactor, is the true Messiah, and his instructions, to those who look fairly at the evidence for the divinity of his mission, and listen with humility and docility to his words, are the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Such are the topics and such the arguments of the Apostle. His meaning is clear and simple. You have only to attend to the circumstances under which he wrote, only to apply those principles of interpretation which are dictated by common sense, and all perplexing difficulty vanishes. There is no mysterious doctrine couched beneath his phraseology. By the works, words and death of Christ, truth is communicated, and truth is confirmed; he who believes this truth and gives it influence and power over his heart and life, will be redeemed from sin and saved from misery.

Upon the closing topic proposed for this discourse, I have time to say but little, although it is one which invites much remark.

Who now preach Christ crucified? I answer not by pointing to any one religious sect, nor to any one class of individuals; but I answer, all who study to unfold and spread incorrupt Christianity; all who strive to reform sinners; all who promote moral goodness, love, and charity; all who lead men to that fountain of living water which Christ has opened;—all who keep the human mind free and active, the human heart warm and holy; all who acknowledge the right of private judgment; who defend the truth as they understand it, but yet do not venture to denounce any broth-

er as a heretic, or consign him to everlasting perdition for his opinions.

And where are these preachers to be found? Only in the pulpit? No, we are all preachers, my brethren; it may be of truth and goodness, it may be of error and of vice. By our lives, our daily walk and conversation do we preach. The father and mother preach to their children,—friend preaches to friend,—every man who exerts a moral influence, and that is every man who breathes, preaches. O, let us see to it then that we preach truth, preach the gospel, preach Christ crucified. Let us see that no human creed, the work of men's hands, but rather the word of God, is our guide. Let us see that the cause of no religious party merely, but that the cause of humanity has our strength. Let us study and pray, watch and labor, that we may live and die apostles of the truth. Let us deal in no denunciations. But let us promote practical godliness; that doing thus, we may at last exclaim with Paul, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me at that day.'

PRAYER.

We thank thee, Heavenly Father, for the gift of thy son Jesus. We bless thee, that qualified and commissioned by thee, he has brought down to us from heaven every instruction which is necessary to improve and comfort us here, and guide us thither. We bless thee, that he has rent the cloud that hung betwixt heaven and earth, and poured upon the eyes of men so much of the effulgence that illuminates thine everlasting throne; and that thus he has translated the wandering sons of a benighted world from the regions of darkness into the kingdom of spiritual light. We bless thee, that, through thy appointed messenger, we are called upon to know thee the only true God, and to know thee as our Father who lovest us, providest for us, invitest us to reform from our errors and sins, and bestowest upon us thine everlasting grace, when we forsake the path of the prodigal, and retrace our ways, and return to our heavenly Father's house. We adore thee, that through Jesus we learn the way that conducts to thee, to thy pardoning mercy and to everlasting bliss. He has shown us the way, he has gone forth upon it before us, has impressed it with his venerable footsteps; he has cut away incumbrances and made it clear and smooth for us. He has confirmed the truth of all that

he uttered by his stainless life, by the wonderful works which he did, by his meek and holy death, and by his wonderful resurrection, and by the subsequent fulfillment of his predictions. He has raised walls of evidence around the authority of his mission, and the truth of his religion, which no human sophistry can undermine, and no human power can overthrow. We bless thee that he has thus sheltered his followers from every fear of deception. O may his doctrine be ever dear to us as divine truth. May it be our guide in life and our hope and consolation in death. Turn our eyes to the Savior's example, in whose mouth was no guile, whose life was unsullied by a single blot, who went about doing good, instructing the ignorant, reclaiming the erring, comforting the sorrowful, and relieving the wretched; whose words were unadulterated truth and wisdom, and whose deeds were the expression of the most generous compassion, of the most exalted philanthropy and the sublimest virtue. O God, what a splendid pattern of the excellence to which our nature may and ought to attain, is thus presented to us in the example of thy Son! O may we be faithful in our endeavors at copying it, in being truly harmless and undefiled like him, and thus by imitating his excellencies may we be fitted to follow him into his everlasting kingdom in the regions of unmixed perfection and imperishable glory. In his name we present to thee all our petitions, and in accordance with his directions we address thee—'Our Father who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will

be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.'

SERMON II.

THE NEW YEAR.

Eccles. iii. 1. 'To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.'

The uncertainty of life, the swiftness with which it pursues its journey, and the nearness of the goal towards which it tends, are subjects of frequent thought and trite remark among mankind. The rapid, constant, and varied course of the waters pursuing their passage to the ocean, is a fit emblem of the earthly career of man. Go to some retired valley among the hills, and you find the little fountain springing forth upon the surface of the earth, and launching forth into a current struggling with encumbrances which choke and agitate its young and feeble career. In that little spring, now sparkling in the sunbeam that has wandered through the shade that surrounds it, now sleeping in the silent dell, now agitated by some rising pebble, and

struggling through some sedgy passage, is a fit representation of infancy. Next comes in all its dancing glee, the brook of laughing, joyous boyhood;—then the broader stream of youth, now bright in the rays of the morning, winding through smooth and verdant landscapes into the more sober scenes of middle life, where its course is checkered by every variety of soil and of season, sometimes indeed presenting a calm, unruffled surface, but oftener, swelling into fury against opposing rocks, or dashing headlong down fearful cataracts; wailing in the tumult of the winds, and discolored with the uncomely earths that are forced from all quarters into its bosom. And finally in a course which you hardly know whether to call ocean or river, you find the emblem of extreme old age,—half life, half death, gradually losing itself in a measureless, and all-absorbing world of waters. Thus, in a few days, even the longest life measures its uneven course, and is lost in the universe of the departed. In the passing new-year's day, my friends, we come by one of those regular memorials, one of those mile-stones which are set up at stated distances to inform us how far we have travelled on our road to the grave.

Let us pause a little to read the inscription, and by a train of judicious considerations upon it, perchance we may become more sober, more correct, more diligent and better guided travellers, for the remaining part of our journey.

'To every thing,' says the wise man, in our text, 'there is a season, and a time to every purpose under

the heaven.' Let us regard this first Sunday of the new-born year as a suitable season for reflection, for gratitude to our Creator, for virtuous resolutions, and for commencing a course of more careful living, and of more active beneficence.

Standing as we are close by the tomb of another buried year, it becomes us as rational creatures not to lose ourselves so far in the gaieties of the season as to exclude from our thoughts those serious reflections, which the truths that surround us are fitted to awaken in our breasts.

Let us consider for what purpose life was given us. Let us reflect whether we have made that use of our past lives, which it might have been expected that rational and accountable and immortal beings would make of them.

What has been the influence of our thoughts, words and deeds upon our own souls and upon the feelings and morals of others? What has been the prevailing tendency of our secret meditations upon ourselves, and of our conversation and example upon those around us?

Let us begin with serious considerations of the duties which are connected with our respective stations in life. We are placed in this world, my respected hearers, to learn truth, duty and happiness. Our present state may be regarded as a school in which by various methods the elementary principles of an immortal being are taught us, in which it is our appointment to learn the alphabet of heaven, the first rudiments of

eternal wisdom and virtue. All the dispensations of providence, our prosperity, our adversity, our trials, our comforts, our hopes, our fears, our joys, our sorrows, our health, our sickness, our strength, our infirmities, our avocations of business, our enjoyments of pleasure, all in fine, that surrounds us, and all that happens to us, are so many agents to bring our various faculties into exercise, to keep them from inaction, and gradually to advance them towards that perfection of which they are capable, and for which they are destined. The judicious instructor, in his most ingenious devices to excite the emulation of his pupils, and to invest their minds with knowledge, is but a faint imitation of that great Teacher, whose school is a universe of rational and immortal creatures. We are here to learn our obligations of love, of reverence and of gratitude towards God, the duties of purity of heart, and of moderation in regard to ourselves and of compassion and equity towards our neighbor. If we were to make a right use of the various influences that are constantly acting upon us,we should make constant and rapid proficiency in that science which alone can fit us to become partakers of the employments and joys of the future world. We are placed in this state of existence not only to receive lessons in wisdom and goodness, but to act upon them; not only to study virtue in theory, but to be governed by it in practice. We have all of us duties, most imperious duties to perform. No one of us is so humble that he may not do much good, or on the contrary, that he may not be the occa-

sion of much harm. In every calling, in every grade of life, how many useful precepts may an individual instil in the minds of those around him, how many good ideas may he advance, how many things may he say that shall serve to check vice, and encourage virtue, that shall lead his associates to be more conscientious, more prudent, more benevolent, more useful and more happy members of society. And how many things may he do to lessen the sum of human woe, to relieve distress, and to shed the radiance of a pure and a commanding example around him. By being temperate, correct, prudent, diligent and beneficent, how much influence will he not exert upon those around him to conform themselves to his feelings and habits.

And on the other hand, what an amount of harm may a single individual do. How many loose principles may he not scatter among his companions; how many false ideas may he not circulate among those who will become the echoes of his baneful sentiments, diffusing them through a broader and yet broader class of beings. And what a blighting energy may not his example exert upon those around him. How many things may he not say to dislodge and to weaken in the minds of his associates that grand pillar of secret virtue and public morals, a sense of responsibility to the Supreme Being.

How many unchaste and unhallowed propensities may his discourse awaken. How many conscientious scruples may not a witty jest remove. What a disre-

gard for God, good men, and good things, may not one satirical remark occasion. And what barrier to licentiousness may not be thrown down, in the minds especially of the young, by the loose conversation and immoral conduct of one bad man, especially if he be possessed of some shrewdness of observation, some brilliancy of wit, some fascination of manner, and more especially if with all his vices he contrives to be successful in the world. Thus in every sphere of life each individual renders the world the better or the worse for his living in it. We can scarcely conceive of a neutral character in this respect. We can hardly imagine one whose conversation and life is entirely indifferent in its influence on the general weal.

Such being the important position each one of us, my hearers, is appointed to occupy on the stage of society, it becomes us to use the present season as a fit time for reflection upon the manner in which we have hitherto conducted ourselves. It is meet that we should soberly scrutinize the plan we have followed, the principles by which we have been regulated, the motives by which we have been actuated, and the general bearing of our thoughts, words and deeds. I begin with our thoughts. It is impossible, I admit, to prevent frivolous, vain and impure ideas from occasionally obtruding themselves upon our minds; but it is not impossible to avoid encouraging, indulging and cherishing them. It is no crime to have a wrong thought come up before us, for we cannot help it; but it is a crime to harbor and foster it, for *that* we *can*

avoid doing. A single evil thought, if indulged, gives rise to a multitude of thoughts of a like character, and thus in time the whole intellect and heart may be overrun with a retinue of the most depraved conceptions and sentiments. An evil thought is often the parent of an evil word. And how much is often done by a single word! Thoughts and words give rise to actions; and what a world of iniquity is often produced by one bad action! If we will give ourselves a little time for reflection, our own thoughtlessness in regard to our conduct will surprise ourselves. If we will reflect, that one immoral remark or vicious example may unhinge in but a single mind only one virtuous sentiment; but yet that the overthrow of one check to vice may be the cause of yet another, and another, until a whole mind becomes lost in degradation,—if we will still further reflect that this corrupted individual will exert an influence to deprave yet others, and so on, till the moral pestilence has spread through a community, that follow the multitude to do evil; if we will yet further consider, that the evil influence is not limited to a single generation, but may descend from fathers to children through a long period of successors; if, I say, we will thus but view ourselves in the true relations in which we stand to our fellow men, how immensely important must it appear to us that we carefully weigh the tendency of all our thoughts, words and deeds!—how important that we strive to keep our hearts pure, our conversation clean, and our example spotless! How accountable must we be, for the numerous mis-

chiefs that arise from our wrong-doings, and what a broad harvest of felicity shall we not reap from even our slightest endeavors to promote the cause of human virtue and happiness!

The law of God is exceeding broad, extending even to secret desires nourished in our hearts. Now let us bring ourselves fairly before the tribunal of conscience, let us ask ourselves, if we have come near in our past lives to a conformity to this law. Alas! alas! we are weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Have we not been loose in the restraining of evil thoughts, in the cherishing of impure desires? Have we not thus corrupted ourselves, depraved our imagination and debased our natures, and by these means, formed confirmed habits of secret sin, and rendered it more and more difficult for us to command our passions and appetites? Have we been cautious about our words? Have we not sometimes uttered sentiments which perhaps have caused some mind already wavering betwixt virtue and vice, to become decidedly vicious?

Have we not occasionally exhibited examples before those who look up to us with confidence, of a nature to weaken their moral sense, to make them think some wrong act less odious than they had been accustomed to regard it, or induce them to place less value upon some virtuous practice than they ought? Have we fulfilled our duty to ourselves, to our families, to our friends, to our enemies, to our neighbors, our superiors, our inferiors, our equals, to our country and our God, in such a manner, that we can come off clear and ac-

quitted from the judgment seat of our own unbribed breasts?—My dear companions and friends, I fear, not. I fear that all of us, when tried in the impartial balance, will be found to be wofully wanting. What then have we to do? Shall we bow in humility and deep contrition at the footstool of sovereign grace, and confess ourselves sinners, and supplicate for mercy? Yes, we must do all this, but we must do more. We must furnish a test that we are sincere in all this show of repentance. In a word, we must reform.

Let us then, lastly, use the present occasion as a season for reformation. Let us reform, in the first place, our *plan* of life; let us adopt more strict and orderly rules for the arrangement of our behavior; let us assume a higher standard of excellence, and fortify our minds by virtuous resolutions. And let us be careful not to stop at the gate of a well-meaning purpose; no, but let us summon up every power to induce a thorough practical reform. But we will enter more into detail. I wish not merely to bring an indistinct, flattering exhibition of goodness before your minds. No; our virtues and our faults are not ideal; they are tangible shapes, which the mind can and ought to fasten upon. I begin then with our duty towards our Creator.

Such, indeed, are all the duties which God requires of us, and which are to be performed with a sacred regard to his authority. Now have we been influenced by such a regard? Has it often been a question which we have proposed to ourselves, 'Is this what God requires of me? Will it be acceptable to him? Has

he not forbidden that? If I do it shall I not sin against Heaven? Can I, dare I ask the blessing of God upon this undertaking? And if I dare not, shall I dare to engage in it? In the trying moments of secret temptation, have we duly considered that the All-seeing eye is upon us, that our Maker will surely bring us to an account, that we are responsible to him for the improvement we make of all our advantages? When we have been blessed by prosperity, have we looked up in gratitude to God? When we have passed through scenes of adversity, have we recognized his correcting hand? When dangers have stared us in the face, have we supplicated the divine guidance and protection, and reposed in trust on his Almighty arm? Have we striven to cultivate a spirit of resignedness to the divine will, have we endeavored to say from our hearts, not my will but thine be done? When we have surveyed the beauties of nature and the bounties of providence, have our souls been excited to a devout reverence, and a glowing love to the benevolent Author of all our benefits? If we have failed in either or all of these respects, let us resolve from this instant to correct our faults, and let us implore the assistance of our heavenly Father to aid us to live in his fear. Let us commence a system of reading every day some portion of his word, of meditating upon his truth, of sending up our prayers to the throne of his grace, of referring all events to his providence, and of living as continually under his penetrating eye. Thus shall we gradually form habits of piety; thus shall we constantly become more

careful guardians of our thoughts, our feelings and our conduct; thus shall we become more confirmed in our religious sentiments, more conscientious, more calm and composed in our contemplation of all events, wiser and better and happier. Do not lightly pass over these solemn suggestions. An enlarged and enlightened piety is the noblest ornament of our nature. In proportion as it is neglected, the soul becomes absorbed in sensuality, and descends towards the level of the brute. I would not for all this world have the heart of that man who can treat the sacred sanctions of religion with scorn and contempt. Let us this day remember our faults as relates to our religious duties and strive to correct them.

Let us now turn our attention to our moral habits. And think you we shall find nothing there to correct? How are we managing our worldly matters in general? Are we engaged in some regular and honest occupation? Are we pursuing it with all that industry and prudence which are required of us?

Have we some definite and laudable object in life before us, and are we faithfully directing all our endeavors in pursuit of it? If so, we are, in this important respect, good citizens, and are laying the most substantial foundations of prosperity, contentment, and cheerfulness. Men talk of pleasures as if they were excluded from the ordinary rounds of business; but the truth is, our pleasure ought to be in attending to our regular affairs. Man is never so truly happy as when his attention and powers are actively and successfully

engaged in the prosecution of some worthy and honorable calling. I care not how wealthy a man may be, he has no moral right to be idle. If he is so, he offends against God, society, and his own felicity. And as to the lazy poor, who, while blessed with health and capacity, are contented to live in servile dependence upon the bounties of their friends, or the general charity of the world, few objects are more deservedly contemptible. How is it, my friends, with us? Are we providing, to the best of our abilities, in an honest way, for our subsistence, for the support of those who are dependent on us, and for the general well-being of the community in which we live? If we are not, let us now begin a thorough reformation. Is any one rich? I do not mean, has he an immense fortune, but is he in circumstances of something more than ordinary affluence, or has he a competency? Let him ask himself if he has been as liberal in promoting objects of general advantage, if he has displayed as much public spirit, and if he has been as generous in relieving the sufferings of afflicted humanity, as his circumstances will justify. Let him weigh this matter fairly as he would in the case of another person; let him cast aside all the sophistry with which interest is in the habit of addressing her votaries, and then soberly put the question before himself, has he used his property as bountifully in deeds of charity as it is likely at the hour of death, or the day of judgment, he may wish he had done. If his conscience answers him No, it is high time he should reform.

Are any living in habits of extravagance, which do not allow them the means of doing as much good as they ought, and more especially which are not justified by their incomes? If they would escape embarrassment, ruin, and temptation to fraudulent practises, let them at once retrench their expenses, and introduce a more orderly arrangement in their affairs. I know there are many persons of good intentions, who yet suffer themselves to be led away from the practice of that economy which they are sensible, justice to their creditors, and justice to their families and to their own reputation and peace, imperiously demand of them, through a fear of being called parsimonious, or from a dread of sinking in the fashionable world. But to what does all this bustle and pomp of what is termed fashionable life amount? One hour of calm enjoyment by your own fireside, with your smiling family around, is worth more than all the ostentatious displays which you will meet with in expensive circles during your whole lives.

I would not indeed that an unsocial spirit should be spread abroad. No; it is well, at proper times and seasons to meet with our friends and neighbors, either in greater or less numbers as our circumstances may render proper. But I call upon you, men of competence, to interpose the authority of your example in doing away this wretched system of frequent and costly entertainments, now so injuriously prevailing amongst us. You cannot be blind to their ruinous effects. How

many, particularly among females are made the victims of protracted diseases and of premature death!

But the evil does not stop here. A fashion is established whose influence more or less pervades all classes. The rich man gives frequent and splendid entertainments. His neighbor with less means thinks himself bound to follow his example; and thus this miserable imitation of artificial splendor travels on, dazzling and luring to bankruptcy. I call then upon you, rich men, to banish from your houses this wretched custom; and in all respects to set before the world examples of prudence and economy. I call upon you in particular, because you can afford to be economical. I say you can afford retrenchment; that is, you have no occasion to fear that your retrenchments will be attributed to necessity; while perchance your poorer neighbor dreads to excite the suspicion that he is poor.

Are you afraid of being called miserly? Show that you are not by your charities, not by your dissipations; by your public spirit, not by useless squanderings. This is a time of pecuniary depression resulting from more causes than the removal of bank deposites. It is a time of ruinous expenditure. Our country is strangely and fearfully departing from its ancient simplicity. An age of fearful luxury has arrived. As good citizens, as prudent fathers and mothers, as sons and daughters, you will do what you can to arrest its progress, and push back its power. I have called upon the rich to begin the work of reform; I call upon every class of men to do likewise. A heedless man-

ner of incurring expenses, and of running headlong into debt, is one of the greatest evils among us. Let each one take care not to live beyond his means, not to expend on anticipated profits, not to decorate his house or his person, at the cost of others. Let those of us who are in debt, use every vigilance and exertion to rid ourselves of that sore evil, as speedily as possible.

What ought you to care for the opinion of those who indeed will ride in your carriage, or admire your furniture, or applaud the style of your apparel, or praise your dinners, or express a hearty relish of your wine, but who, if you are in distress will not give a dollar to relieve you, nay, who will envy you for a display above their means, laugh at you for the very luxuries of which they partake, and ridicule you the moment they suspect you are attempting to hide the scantiness of your resources, behind a short-lived extravagance. Let us all duly consider these things, and if we are indulging in any habits of living which may lead us into perplexity or temptation, or which render us incapable of increasing the sum of human happiness as much as we otherwise might, let us from this day commence with ourselves a radical system of reform.

Is any one pursuing a dishonorable and unlawful occupation, an occupation in no wise necessary, and which can add nothing to the public good, but whose whole influence goes to deprave morals, to increase the burden of human distress, let him weigh well the part he is acting. If he has no respect for the opinion of the virtuous world, if he has confidence to brave the

glance of merited abhorrence, yet let him know and feel that there is a God in heaven, that will bring him to judgment for all the evils which result from the course he has taken. He may flourish for awhile like a green bay tree, but let him beware of the end; let him beware lest even in this world the withering hand of retribution shall be laid upon him; let him take heed lest the day of calamity overtake him; let him beware of the horrors of an outraged conscience, and of the appalling reflections of a guilty death-bed, and of miseries yet more inexpressibly dreadful beyond it. O let him reform, and by an upright course secure again the favor of the good and the pardoning mercy and the approving smile of gracious Heaven. To him let the reflections of this day be the occasion of a timely reform.

Are any of us addicted to intemperate habits? I have no authority to set metes and bounds as to what my neighbor ought to eat or drink. Every one must be his own judge as to what is necessary or unnecessary, proper or improper for him. No; but I call that man intemperate who either in eating or drinking, goes to such an excess as to disincline him to business, or to injure his health or estate, or in any way to unfit him for the most constant and successful use of his faculties, either of body or mind; or who is encouraging a growing habit of a dangerous character, and which the more it is indulged in, the more difficult it will be found to overcome. I call such a man intemperate: and if any

of us are of this description, the present is the best time for reformation.

Is any one of us leaning to habits of gaming? I beg of him to examine the origin of the passion that gives rise to this habit, and considerately and conscientiously to reflect upon the multiplied evils attending its indulgence. I am speaking in no terms of harsh reproach, or of unfeeling censure. No, my dear friends, you know well that the wish is the furthest from my heart, to harrow up the feelings of any one, or give him one unnecessay pang. But as a preacher of the gospel, it becomes my duty to lay before you the nature and consequences of vice. I stand before you as a dying man addressing dying men, whose greatest possible interest it is to have just impressions in regard to right and wrong. Hear me then, as you would hear not a biting censurer but a faithful friend. The passion for gaming is grossly base in its origin. For whence does it spring but from a sordid love of gain, which is willing to take the money of another, without rendering an equivalent? It is called a passion for amusement, but it is falsely so called.

Are we immoderate in our devotion to pleasure? We are called upon to check the evil, and to regulate our lives by more orderly and useful rules. If we have associated with evil company, it is now time to remember that evil communications corrupt good manners, and to break off without a moment's delay, our companionship in the haunts of dissipation and revelry.

Has any of us been unjust in his dealings? He is

bound, not only to make a full stop in fraudulent practices, but to the best of his means to make restitution. If he does not, let him be fully persuaded that the judgments of heaven in some shape or other, in this world or in the next, will be visited upon him with awful retribution.

Has any one borne false witness against his neighbor? Let him go straightway, to do all in his power to correct the evil impressions he has made.

Is any one a busy-body in other men's matters, an exciter of strifes in families and neighborhoods, a tale-bearer, a brawler, or in any way a fomenter of jealousies, of feuds and quarrels? Now is his time for effecting reformation.

Let us for the future be watchful over our feelings and conduct. Let us study to discover the weakest points in our character. Every person has some peculiarly easy besetting sin. Every one has some weak side. By examining ourselves, we shall be more thoroughly aware where and how we are most readily and successfully attacked; and so be prepared the more effectually to guard ourselves against temptation. If indolence, or a violent temper, or a peevish disposition, or pride, or vanity, or avarice, or prodigality, or envy, or revenge, or neglect of the bible, or of prayer to God, or of public worship, or of a due observance of the sabbath, or profanity, or lewdness, or intemperance in eating or drinking, or gaming, is our peculiar vice, let us at once set ourselves to correct that single fault first of all.

In view of our own faults, we should learn to practise charity towards the failings of our fellow men. Instead of spending our time and breath in calumniating others, in raking up their missteps in life, and pouring bitter and censorious remarks upon them, we should take care of our own hearts and conduct and characters, and leave God to be the judge of our neighbors. Sensible of our own frailties, we should be inclined to pity and forgive those of our erring fellow-creatures. Finally, a remembrance of our faults should lead us to the most probable means of correcting them; should lead us to study the bible, and to reflect upon its teachings; to hearken to the counsels of friendly admonition and reproof; to regard the opinions of the good and reputable among our fellow-men;—to respect the general opinion of society, and to listen most scrupulously to the plainest and simplest dictates of the monitor within the breast.

SERMON III.

DIVINE JUSTICE NOT INCONSISTENT WITH DIVINE LOVE.

John. iv. 8. 'God is love.'

'God is love,' is the solemn utterance of revelation; and nature from all her complicated avenues and chambers, pours forth a clear and loud echo to this cheering voice from heaven. My Christian friends, collect your thoughts, and centre them all on the Supreme Being. Reflect that from all eternity he must have been infinitely happy, standing in no need, for the mere purpose of his own felicity, of inferior agents. Reflect that long before this earth was moulded into form and hung up to pursue its revolutions in the immensity of space, the Creator existed, supplied with unbounded sources of enjoyment from the contemplation of his own intrinsic and immutable glories. And what principle but love, what but an all-comprehensive desire for the happiness of animated and sentient beings, could have

prompted him to step forth, from the habitations of eternity, in the awful majesty of creative power, and with one fiat of omnipotence, call into existence a universe? We behold the earth we inhabit, spread out a broad and glowing canvass every where exhibiting the pencillings of love. We behold the sun travelling his journey of ages, and the moon walking in her brightness, and the everlasting orbs, 'the poetry of heaven;' and from all this splendid exhibition, we hear the anthem of praise which nature sings to her God. In the capacity of man, in the constitution of inferior creatures, in the whole apparatus of creation, we find proofs that the finger of the Supreme Architect was moved by love.

Thus God manifests his love in the works of creation. An exhibition of the same principle is made in the providential care he extends over his creatures. Love too is clearly seen in the requisitions of his law. If we inquire into the nature of his commandments, we shall find that they all proceed from a disposition to render men happy; happy as individuals and happy as communities. God's glory or enjoyment is not to be increased by the raptures of heaven, nor to be diminished by the blasphemies of earth or hell. No; but he has pointed out to man a path of duty as the only path to happiness. He has forbidden him such indulgences alone as are destructive to his dignity and best enjoyments.

God would make men happy, and to this end he commands them to be virtuous; he would save men from abusing the highest endowment of their natures—

their moral freedom, and from the evil consequences necessarily connected with wrong doing, and to this end he forbids sin.

The love of God is manifested also in his chastisements; and this is the point in the field of topics which my text spreads before me, to which I design in the present discourse to direct my chief attention; because I believe no subject is more generally misapprehended than that of God's justice.

Nothing is more common among theologians than to hold forth the justice of God as at war with his mercy; but it is impossible that two discordant attributes should exist in the divine mind. I regard the doctrine which represents divine justice as an attribute contrary to his mercy and consequently demanding the endless sin and misery of his creatures when they have once sinned, as one of the worst doctrines that ever crept into and disfigured the church of Christ. I mean this as no imputation upon the minds or the hearts of its numerous advocates. The best of men and the most enlightened communities are, as the history of the world shows us, subject to very gross mistakes.

The doctrine in question is plainly inconsistent with itself, and pernicious in its consequences. It is inconsistent with itself, for it declares two natures in the Deity. This notion, if pursued, forms the direct road to Atheism. For it is just as consistent to suppose the existence of two Gods, the one friendly, and the other inimical, as to suppose the existence of two natures or attributes in the Supreme Being, the one diametrically

opposite to the other. It is just as consistent to suppose the existence of twenty, or two hundred, or two thousand Gods, or first causes, as to suppose that of two. And it is just as reasonable to deny the being of God altogether, as it is to suppose such a plurality of Gods.

This doctrine is inconsistent, for it represents God as *requiring* for the satisfaction of his justice, that, when the sinner has once disobeyed his law, he shall continue in *eternal* disobedience to that law, as if the law could be honored by affixing to it a penalty consisting in nothing less than the endless rebellion of the offender against it. The law of God requires holiness of the creature, and prohibits sin; and as one means of deterring men from sin, it holds out a punishment proportionate to the guilt of each transgression; but if we suppose that the same law which requires man not to sin, requires also that when man has once *sinned*, he shall as an unavoidable consequence be compelled to be forever a sinner, it is plain that we suppose the law to require everlasting disobedience. To say that men when they have once sinned may be permitted to continue for a long period or even to all eternity to abuse their moral agency, is one thing—and a subject whose examination does not come within the scope of our present remarks; but to say, that God Almighty is possessed of an attribute which will be satisfied with nothing less than the eternal sin of a being who has once transgressed his law, is quite another thing, the absurdity of which we are at present exhibiting. You

will still farther perceive the inconsistency of this doctrine, when you reflect that, according to it, the justice of God is in perfect harmony with what has ever been regarded as the will and chief desire of the Arch-fiend. Our orthodox brethren admit that it forms the chief design, the great end to the accomplishment of which the subtle adversary directs all his energies, to render men eternally hostile to their Maker. Now if we suppose that divine justice demands the same thing, we make Satan not only will but act, as far as his power with regard to mankind extends, in exact conformity to one of the divine attributes ; or in other words, we make Satan divinely just with regard to man. Such, my hearers, is the real character of a doctrine whose deformity has been concealed by the gloss of language, by the solemn and holy words, *Divine justice*, and which has been rendered a prominent article in the faith of many very sensible and pious Christians. I have called this doctrine pernicious in its consequences, and it is eminently so. For its most direct tendency is to destroy our confidence in and our affection towards our heavenly Father. If a man is taught to believe that his heavenly Father has one attribute which coincides with the will and aim of his worst enemy, Satan, concerning him, it will doubtless be the aim of that enemy to keep this attribute most constantly in the creature's mind, when he thinks of his Creator. And so that God can appear to us as an enemy, it matters very little in what plausible expressions his hostility toward us is clothed. Whether it is called tyranny, malevolence,

or cruelty, or whether it wears the smoother name of divine justice, the effect is the same, to excite and nourish a jealous, fearful, apprehensive and rancorous spirit toward the fountain of all love. And hence the opposition which sinners manifest towards God, though attributed altogether to a carnal nature, is very often attributable to the wrong views which are presented from the pulpit to their minds. This doctrine is pernicious, inasmuch as it is the source of much infidelity.

There are and always have been many who have discovered its absurdity, and supposing it to be taught in the bible, they have concluded that the bible must be a deception. I well recollect a remark which a very intelligent infidel once made to me, long before I had come to my present conclusions in regard to scriptural truth. Said he, 'There is much that is valuable in these Scriptures. There is too, I am aware, a vast deal of historical evidence which weighs heavily in favor of the Christian religion, and I would believe in it if I could. But if the bible contains such doctrines as election and reprobation, trinity, and infinite sin and misery, as our preachers, who ought to understand it, say it does, the intrinsic evidence against its being a revelation from God is greater than any historical evidence can be in its favor.'

I object to the doctrine in question still further, because it exerts a baneful influence on the conduct of men in the social relations of life. It is in the nature of man to imitate the God he worships, to practise in accordance with those principles which he supposes to

constitute infinite perfection. Nay, according to Christianity it is our duty to do so. We are expressly commanded to be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect; that is, to assimilate our principles of action to his, to form our moral character after the model presented to us of his. We are exhorted to be pure as he is pure, holy as he is holy, merciful as he is merciful, to be followers of him as dear children; by all of which it is evident that we are required to be, in proportion to our capacities, in all respects like him. Now if we believe that God has an attribute contrary to his goodness or mercy, it is the natural influence of such a belief to cause us to plant and cherish in ourselves a temper and disposition contrary to humanity. We may treat our fellow-creatures with scorn, detraction and contempt, if they happen to oppose our views or interests; we may exercise towards them the most barbarous and unrelenting vindictiveness, and yet imagine that we are even more merciful towards them than God is, and flatter ourselves that we are imitating his justice and doing him service. The experience of many ages shows that the danger of which I am speaking is no wild chimera. The Apostle Paul was actuated by just such principles, in his persecution of the primitive Christians. No man ever had better reason to exclaim, 'By the grace of God I am what I am,' than this distinguished Apostle; for before his conversion by the grace of God, there perhaps never lived a more sincere yet murderous, blood-thirsty bigot.

Our forefathers of the Christian church believed that

divine justice demanded the endless punishment of heretics and sinners. They believed that God loved his friends and exercised an implacable hatred of his enemies; and hence they concluded that they ought to love their friends and hate their enemies, that it was their duty to hate those whom they supposed God hated.

Thus they flattered themselves that they were imitating God, in proportion to their degree of power, by consigning to the horror of the dungeon, the rack, the gibbet, and the burning stake, those who would not, within a certain limited time, believe and act as they supposed God required them to believe and act. When the new England puritans hung the quakers and whipped and banished the baptists, their reasoning no doubt was that these persons were errorists, that they were unbelievers in the true faith, and therefore enemies to God and to the cause of the Redeemer; that God therefore hated them, therefore they his servants ought to hate them; that God would banish them forever from his presence, that therefore they ought to banish them from theirs; that God would scourge them with everlasting vengeance, that therefore they ought to scourge them too; that God would consign them to eternal death, therefore they ought to do their best in imitating him, by executing on them the severest penalty in their power, that of temporal death. Let it not be said, that the cruelty to which I allude resulted from the ignorance and general barbarity of the times, and not from a particular article of faith. I tell you, my friends, that the superstitions which have been

thrown around religion, that false views of God have done more than all other causes to barbarize men's minds. I tell you that the single tenet of endless misery, in the form in which it is usually presented, has been the chief parent of persecution. Persecution is its legitimate offspring. If a man believes that doctrine, is it not the most natural thing in the world for him to reason thus? 'Here is a heretic, who is leading men into error, thwarting the interest of God's people, and destroying souls; am I not bound, then, to do all in my power to thwart and ruin him? Is it not better that a few heretics should be murdered than that they should be permitted to ruin so many souls? I question not this was the reasoning of John Calvin, a murderer, though I hope a pardoned one, when he caused the benevolent, accomplished and unfortunate Servetus to be burned to death. Are all then who embraced the doctrines of Calvin persecutors? By no means. Among them I can find some of the best men in the world. But how happens this? Because they act inconsistently with their creed. Because they are not so bad as according to their doctrines they ought to be. Because, in practice, common sense and all the benevolent principles which the God of nature has implanted in the human soul, come to falsify the errors of an understanding bewildered by theory; because they imbibe the spirit of a liberalizing atmosphere around them; because a host of generous influences from other sources than their creed have worked their way into their minds, and counteracted the native tendency

of their doctrine, and nullified the power it is constitutionally formed to exert over their feelings and conduct. I am assailing doctrines, not men; the moral tendency of error, not the actual practice of all its professors. I know there are good men in all denominations; and I respect and love the good man of a bad doctrine, far more than I do the bad professor of a good one. It is in the spirit of the broadest charity alone, that I feel bound to oppose wrong views, and vindicate the honor of God and the truth which through Jesus he has revealed to us. We would hurt the feelings of no man; but if the feelings of any one are so falsely delicate as to be wounded when we are endeavoring to convince him that his Father in heaven and ours is a better Being than according to his creed he appears to be, we cannot help it. Must I not feel it my indispensable duty, let it bring upon me what reproach it may, to show the absurdity and evil of a doctrine, which has filled the most sincere and devout Christians with tormenting apprehensions of their best Friend and Benefactor, which has sent reason staggering from her throne in the heads of thousands, which has substituted, here a cold, selfish exclusiveness and bigotry in the place of a glowing and expansive charity; which has excited there a feverish and fitful fanaticism in the room of a calm, rational, contemplative and practical piety; which has kindled the fires of ten thousand faggots in the place of the steady ardor and thrilling love of the Savior; and which has thus spread darkness upon the simple doctrines, and reproachful

blots upon the pure cause of the Redeemer, and formed stumbling blocks over which too many great minds have fallen into the gulf of scepticism and infidelity? O, say not that the evils of which I am speaking are the mere creatures of a wandering imagination; say not that they are light or uncommon. The voice of human woe comes from every side to our ears in tones too deep and strong to be lightly heeded. The church, split up as it is into such a host of factions, is astonishingly corrupt, and must and will be purified. The gates of hell have been opened upon it, but will never prevail against it. The morning star of a brighter sky is arising over it, and the sun of righteousness will yet exhibit himself in his original, cloudless splendor.

Having gone much further than the limits I had set to myself, in consideration of false ideas of divine justice, I feel the necessity of advancing to what seem more consistent and correct views of that important subject. Justice in God, then, so far from being at war with his mercy and love, is in reality a form of this central perfection of the Deity.

All the severity of God's justice towards his children is only the severity of parental love. All the rational distinction there is between our idea of divine justice and our idea of divine mercy, arises from our not being fully acquainted with what God has promised. As far as our knowledge of what God has promised extends, so far we know his justice requires him to perform. God's eternal justice, or truth, is only a particular modification of his eternal love. It is for the

good of the universe that he should perform his promises, or in other words, that he should act according to what he has revealed of his nature. If we look or hope for any blessing beyond what we know God has absolutely promised, our idea of his giving that blessing is the idea which we express by the word mercy. Yet the mercy is not a display of a nature contrary to the divine justice, it is only a higher display of the same nature.

When we are taught by revelation that what we call a mercy, was actually promised to us in Jesus Christ before the world began, we adopt the language of the Psalmist,—'Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' Not that they were ever really separated or distinct from each other in God, but separated and distinct in our ideas, until the gospel discovers to us that mercy and truth or justice are one in God. Then we can join with those who stand on the sea of glass mingled with fire, having the harps of God, saying, 'Just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints.'

We are accused of dwelling so entirely upon the love of God, that we cast a sense of his justice and of his more fearful attributes into the shade. Now the fact is, we believe that God is love, and that his justice is one of the most efficient agents through which he manifests his love and accomplishes its aims. In other words, we regard the justice of the Supreme Being not as at war against, but as existing in complete harmony with his mercy. The parent who

loves his child with true and prudent affection, is always just towards him. It would argue weakness in him, not a regard for the welfare of his child, were he to encourage him in wrong doing, through the want of judicious chastisement.

He would be both unmerciful and unjust towards his offspring, were he to suffer them to ensure their own ruin through his neglect of suitable correction. Now of God we believe, that all the misery, whether in this or the future state, which he has caused to be connected with sin, is the result of his parental love and of his design to exhibit to the sinner the evil of sin, and the value of holiness, and thus to reclaim him in a way consistent with his free-agency, from transgression. Thus you perceive God is love in the strongest expression of his justice; that he chastises for our benefit.

Finally, the love of God is wonderfully manifested in the whole economy of redemption. Christianity is a system of love. Its dearest and brightest illustrations are expressed in figurative allusions to the strongest ties which bind human hearts together, to the endearing relations of domestic joys. According to its representations the rational world is one great family of brothers and sisters, of whom God is the Father, and Jesus the elder and guardian brother. Thus we are exhorted to address God as 'Our Father who art in heaven;' thus Jesus is called the first-born among many brethren; thus he is represented as saying to his Father and our Father, his God and our God, 'I will declare thy name unto my brethren, and in the

midst of the congregation will I sing praises unto thee.' His mission is spoken of as the direct emanation of the Father's love to the world; 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.' He is held forth as the purest image of his Father's perfections. And all that he has done for mankind is the effect of love. An apostle, speaking of the affection of this our elder brother, says, 'who loved us and gave himself for us.' Yes; it was love which brought him into our world of sorrow and woe; it was love which warmed his heart with pity for sinners; it was love which engaged him to oppose the false religion of his times, and all the black designs of the wicked. It was love which caused him to submit to the revilings and various persecutions of infuriated men, and to seek the salvation, even in his dying prayers, of his enemies, rioting as they were in malevolence and cruelty. It was love which fired his soul with a divine zeal to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, granting liberty to captives, and opening the prison doors to them who are bound. It was love which caused him to endure the cross for us, and despise the shame. It was love stronger than death, which triumphed in his dying moment, crying 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

My brethren, we have glanced at some of the important displays of God's benevolence in creation and providence, in the commands and promises, prohibitions and threatenings of his law, in the corrections of his justice and in the mission of his son Jesus. What is

the practical use to be made of the reflections in which we have indulged? They should inspire us with sentiments of filial piety. They should excite in our hearts answering emotions of reverence, gratitude and love to God. If our Creator has fitted us for happiness, if he has surrounded us in his works with ample stores of comfort, we should exercise all that wisdom and temperance which is necessary to the proper enjoyment of them. If God has given us a law which directs us in the paths of peace, we should studiously learn and steadfastly practise in accordance with its teachings. If he has warned us against disobedience, and has laid before us its ruinous consequences, let us beware how we transgress, how we abuse the moral freedom with which he has endowed us. O my friends, sin is no trifle. It wars against the highest dignity of our souls, and stirs up the dregs of bitterness in our cup. I would not for the world utter a honied word to sweeten its intoxicating draught. I would not for the world lift up a curtain of human sophistry to darken the counsels of Almighty God, to hide from the eyes of my fellow sinners the terrors of his law. The thick veil which hangs over eternity, this poor mortal arm is indeed unable to lift up, so fully as to discover what duration or what degree of wrath the God of heaven, in his disciplinary goodness, may find it necessary to inflict upon that soul which in this world has been false to itself. But in holding up this lamp of inspiration, by the light which flashes from it over the gulf of the future, I discover this awful truth; ev-

ery man shall be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body. And let the firm conviction of this be enough to deter us from wickedness. Let it excite us without delay to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Our faith, if rightly understood, will be seen to be the very last one in the world to encourage men in transgression. If we sin, my brethren, we sin against the convictions of the most clear and certain truth, against the light of vast mercy and grace, against the pleadings of nature and scripture, of reason and conscience, of duty and interest, of justice and love. I know of no man so bad as he who wilfully persists in violating the commands of a Being whom he believes to be his best friend, his kindest benefactor. I know of no man so wretched and contemptible as he who heeds not the precepts of a Savior who has died to rescue him. O, if there is one sin in the universe which cries with a stronger appeal than another to heaven for just and fearful retribution, it is the cold, thankless, mean, dastardly, soul-withering sin persisted in against the light of God's universal benevolence.

O, let it never be said of us, that we have climbed up the pillar of promise to the very gate of heaven, only to show to the world how courageously we can dive from it into the polluted depths of habitual vice. Let us remember that if we sin, we sin against great light and boundless love; let us be admonished that if we wilfully lay our hand to a foul deed, we may be touching a chord of misery which shall vibrate through a vast period of our existence. To what direful consequences

does the Almighty in this world sometimes suffer a single sin to lead! How many a magazine of woe has been kindled by the momentary wickedness which the sorrows of years were unable to quench! Let us then walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith we are called. Wherein we have erred, let us reform. Let us walk as children of the light, in the love of God, in the imitation of his perfections, in the keeping of his commandments. We may all know our duty. It is compressed into a single sentence: 'Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.'

My friends of this society, let me exhort you to live together in correct practices and brotherly love. Let no discords or dissensions spring up in our little family. I have been absent from you a much longer period than I had intended; but such has been my health that I returned as soon as I thought I could be useful to you. God is now blessing me with the prospect of much better health than I have enjoyed for a long season, and if we unite our endeavors as we ought to do, our cause will flourish and prevail. In the Northern States, our prospects are wonderfully encouraging. The North is giving up, the South will not long keep back. Truth will finally triumph over prejudice. The petty spirit of sectarian jealousy and wrath and rivalry we must expect to encounter; but if we are true to ourselves, to the world around us, to our Savior and our God, we shall not be overthrown.

Brethren, I trust all the circumstances which for

three years have marked the course of my humble labors among you, will leave you no ground of distrust, when I tell you, my whole heart is in the cause of this church, within whose walls I have been consecrated to the service of a faith which merits any and every sacrifice. And I have to thank you for the numerous tokens of friendship and esteem, which I have received at your hands, through many embarrassments which inexperience, ill health, and other causes have thrown in my way. Upon the recommencement of services in this house, let me express a hope that the spirit of a yet deeper zeal may be kindled in our hearts, and animate us in diffusing the principles of universal charity and love, that all our transactions may be so conducted as to render the 'walls' of our church 'salvation, and its gates praise.'

SERMON IV.

ON TRUE AND FALSE RELIGION.

James i. 26, 27. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

When we are told, says a certain writer, that a man is religious, we still inquire, what are his morals? In however taunting a spirit this remark may have been made, the most pious Christian must admit, that it possesses a mournful degree of justice, as well as wit. Indeed, the sentiment has obtained a surprising currency in the world, that religion is rather a substitute for a moral life, than genuine morality itself,—that instead of its consisting purely in the love and practice of virtue, it is rather to be esteemed as a something to make amends for aberrations from duty.

To a mind animated with just and generous sentiments, it is a sorrowful thought, that in all ages of our race, and among the various denominations of men, this broad distinction between religion and practical

excellence has been so extensively entertained. In each quarter of the globe, and in every period in which we can trace the history of human beings, they have exhibited a predominant propensity, to render homage, by one means or another, to a presiding divinity. And though various opinions have sprung up concerning the nature, dispositions, and requirements of the supreme object of adoration, though sects have been multiplied, though numerous institutions have been formed and esteemed sacred, though many opposite forms of worship have been adopted, though worshippers have manifested the most immovable tenacity to their respective sects, institutions, rites and ceremonies, and though dissensions have thence arisen, to diffuse over society animosities of the most direful character, to arm intolerance with the sword of persecution, and to desolate the world with rivers of blood, yet amidst all these conflicts of opinion, feeling and practice, in respect to *one conclusion*, a great harmony of sentiment has, most unfortunately, prevailed: this conclusion is, *that the Deity is to be chiefly honored by services quite distinct from the steady pursuit of a blameless life.*

In the human soul, we discover a combination of properties, which forcibly dispose it to religious contemplations. Hence man has been called a religious animal. There is that within him, which elevates his soul to higher objects of trust and veneration, than the whole universe of matter affords, that which fixes deeply in his mind a sense of his own weakness and de-

pendence, and inclines him to lean on an intelligence and power superior to his own—that which causes him to shudder at the prospect of annihilation, and prompts his thoughts to break away from the limits of the present scene, and explore new regions of being in remote futurity—that which awakens in his breast a consciousness of virtues and of sins, and inspires him with hopes and expectations of reward, 'a fearful looking for of' just retributions.

I look upon human nature as having, in its original constitution, the germ of a principle productive of all these effects, a principle more expansive and energetic, and when rightly cultivated and directed, possessed of a more sovereign power to dignify and bless, than all other endowments; but in its perversion, as having fearful capacities to degrade and wither all that is fair, and manly, and generous, and noble, in the soul. This principle I call the religious one. It is plainly formed to spend its whole strength in urging man up to lofty and virtuous attainments; but it has to struggle against a headlong tide of opposing and desolating influences, and is often strangled, and drowned, and left a formless mass of corruption by the fury of the torrents that boil up, and roll onward from the fountains of lust and passion. Man finds in his animal nature gross principles, which are incessantly striving for mastery over the higher dictates of his judgment, and the more amiable feelings of his heart. He is continually called to listen to the mandates of 'a law in his members warring against the law of' his 'mind.'

'He is in a strait betwixt two.' He loves to gratify his passions, and yet he dreads the consequence. He hugs vice, and yet trembles at vengeance. He looks on sin, lighted with a smile, but beholds heaven darkened by a frown. What has he to do—restrain his guilty appetites, or meet the wrath which awaits their indulgence? He dislikes to do either, and seeks a remedy. He wants something that will prove an accommodation between him and his God—something that will allow him to pursue his vicious inclinations, and yet avert the wrath of an insulted Deity—in a word, something that will answer in the room of virtue. Hence, glittering spires from consecrated edifices have towered towards heaven. Hence, altars have been reared, and the blood of sacrificial victims has smoked on their fires. Hence, men have made vows, and penances, and pilgrimages. Hence, sad looks and merry ones, feasting and fasting, imploring and blessing, laughing and crying, singing and sighing, groaning and shouting, kneeling and dancing, have all, at one time or another, been practised, and called serving God; and thus rational beings have so far perverted their faculties, as vainly to dream they were carrying on a successful barter with the Divinity, to pay him off in all this wretched trumpery of heartless observances, for the continual violation, through the indulgence of their unhallowed propensities, of the moral order of his universe.

Man must and will have some religion or other; and since the practice of the true is attended by what

he deems so many costly restraints upon his desires, he is prone to search out for himself, as a substitute, some baser principle of veneration, and to employ his powers in some service, that may at once serve to hush the tumult of his conscience and to secure him the approbation of the world—that in his own eyes, and in the sight of others, will give him the *appearance* of being truly religious, without subjecting him to the trouble of becoming *really* so. It ought not then to be deemed any disparagement to true religion, that an agent, whose proper office it is to maintain perpetual conflict with the corrupt dispositions of human nature, and which every where so strongly asserts its claims to deference and respect, should, through our false views of happiness, and eagerness for enjoyment, be frequently supplanted by principles of a gross and spurious character.—Silver and gold are valuable metals, and they are rendered no less so from the fact, that fraudulent avarice has often succeeded in producing from less precious materials close resemblances to them. The very worth which is attached to a genuine currency, proves the occasion of the numerous impositions that are practised through counterfeits. Let not then, my Christian audience, the deplorable prevalence of false and hurtful views of God and duty, serve in any measure to close up your minds against the reception of such as are true and beneficial.

Having thus lingered unusually, though perhaps not unpardonably long, about the threshold of my subject, and taken a general survey of its premises, I shall now

proceed to a more particular illustration of the sentiments embodied in my text, by endeavoring to make a proper distinction betwixt what constitutes the soul and essence of 'pure religion and undefiled,' and those deceptive appearances that are sometimes mistaken for it.

I begin by observing, that the abstract doctrines we profess, form no test of the purity of our practical religion. While on the one hand, in many respects we may believe well, and yet generally practise ill, so, on the other, the influence of pernicious errors may be so counterbalanced in the mind, by opposite good principles, as to render the harboring of them consistent with great correctness of heart and life. And hence it is, that while false religion is often nourished and exhibited in regions and under circumstances the most favorable to the production of the true, that which is acceptable to God and salutary to the human soul is not confined to any special spot of earth, or within the limits of any particular religious denomination, but is cherished and manifested, as I maintain, not only among the several orders which bear the Christian name, but even far beyond the boundaries of the whole community, who acknowledge the New Testament as the standard of their faith. The pure religion spoken of in my text is plainly synonymous with virtue, in the broadest and best sense we can attach to that word. By virtue, I mean a just perception in the understanding of what is truly excellent; such a prevailing disposition of the heart as leads us to love that

which is right, and to abhor what is wrong; and, what follows as a necessary consequence, the habitual practice of an outward demeanor in harmony with a judgment thus correct, and a heart thus pure. Virtue, so defined, forms the complete standard of true religion. To this standard, in its perfection, we cannot suppose any mortal ever to have attained. Imperfection must, in the nature of things, characterize every being but God.

Among mankind, the most highly cultivated intellects are by no means free from misapprehensions concerning truth; hearts the most amiable are still liable to improper desires, and lives the best regulated are yet defective. We may properly call a man truly religious, just in proportion as in his sentiments and conduct he approaches to perfect virtue; and he is this, whether his advances in wisdom and goodness have been prompted and directed by the influence of one mode of instruction, or that of another. Whether he was born a Jew or a Gentile, of Catholic or Protestant parents; whether he has been guided to knowledge and duty by the discoveries of philosophy, by the maxims of Confucius, by the truths that are blended with the fables of the Koran, by some feeble and scattered rays of light that glimmer through the darkness of Pagan superstitions, by the broad glare of instruction that beams from the sacred pages of Moses, and the holy bards of Judea; or whether he has been blessed with the still broader glory of the star of Bethlehem; under whatever circumstances of birth, or beneath

whatever influences of education, his Creator has been pleased to place him, so that he improves the best advantages he enjoys—so that his understanding makes progress in truth—so that he cultivates and exhibits benevolent feelings, and so that he is possessed of uprightness of life, he honors the nature that God has bestowed on him, and is doubtless regarded by his Maker with approbation and love. This sentiment is plainly in accordance with the teachings of scripture. Says Paul, 'For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained therein, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.'

In the expression of these sentiments, let me be neither misunderstood nor misrepresented. The remarks I have just made, are by no means designed to convey the impression, that it is a matter of no consequence what a man believes; that it is of light moment what system of religious teaching he adopts; that it is just as well to be in faith a Jew, a Mohamedan, a Pagan, or an Atheist, as to be a firm, sincere believer in the Christian Religion—God knows, I harbor no such sentiment. I know of no nobler gift which he could have granted to the immortal minds of his rational creatures, than the revelation he has made through his Son. But the written word, though the clearest, is not the

only declaration of himself, with which the Creator has furnished his intelligent offspring. He has impressed deep and bold inscriptions of his being, his attributes and will, all over the splendid page of the material universe; and he has endowed man in every land, with a greater or less capacity, to understand and copy that excellence which he sees so abundantly displayed in his Maker's works around him. He has interwoven even the coarsest textures of the human soul with the nicest threads of humane and generous feeling. Virtues of the most admirable cast are often discoverable in minds obscured by gross barbarity. Among nations wanting all the refinements of civilized life, we may find striking exhibitions of the most noble and estimable qualities. And who but the veriest bigot, can doubt that the poor savage, whose benevolent feelings, breaking away from the limits of his own kindred and people, prompt the exercise of a rough but honest hospitality to the fatigued stranger, and even so far gain a mastery over the principles of retaliation, which so many circumstances contribute to nourish within him, as to cause him to render good for evil, to guide his *enemy* to his hut, and when thirsty, give him drink; when famishing, bread; when defenceless, protection; when lost, guidance to his own land—I say, who can for a moment doubt, that this untutored child of nature, in the practical manifestation of such workings of the heart, renders a service far more acceptable to God, than all the pompous parade of external worship, often practised in decorated temples? I believe, indeed,

that that holy energy which awakens and gives strength to the religious principle in man, is an all-pervading spirit, uncloistered within the confines of any sect or system, bounding its operations by no creed, rank or denomination of men, but communicating itself to the human mind, under a thousand different circumstances, and through a great variety of channels, finding in every country, and under various forms of worship, hearts honest and sincere, and animating them with juster perceptions of excellence and bolder purposes of duty. Yet though the divine spirit is thus diffusive, though God has no where left man without manifestations of himself, and incitements to goodness, still it is evident that ends are to be accomplished in the soul, just in proportion to the adaptedness of means for their execution, and that one system of instruction may be an agent of vastly more power than aught else, to work into the mind, to fertilize it with benign influences, to plant it with deep and vigorous principles, and so convert it into a fruitful field for the constant residence and husbandry of truth and conscience.

Christianity, if I rightly apprehend it, presents a system of this strong and generous character. The delineations it gives of the Supreme Being—of the spirituality of his nature—of his paternal plan of government—of his inflexible justice—of his infinite compassion, mercy and grace—of the unchangeableness of his dispositions, purposes and conduct; the soft and amiable, yet firm and manly spirit it breathes—the patient endurance of evils it enjoins—the willingness it

goes to establish, to meet tribulations, and to seek even martyrdom, rather than to warp or violate conscience—the general purity and devotedness to virtue of heart and life, it enforces—the example it furnishes in the person of the Savior—the assurances it gives of immortality—in short, its whole power to stimulate to action the most potent energies of our moral nature—to produce freedom of thought—to awaken fear, caution and prudence—to inspire hope, gratitude and love, through the diversified views it affords, of the divine pleasure, and of man's duty, interests and prospects—the success with which it has condensed the most comprehensive and useful teachings within a small compass, thus demanding no tedious investigations of detail, but fitting its most important truths to the ready comprehension of all, and by single and concentrated efforts, throwing before the mind a profusion of moral light;—the whole plan of operation it thus pursues, in regard to ends and means, gives to the gospel an unspeakable superiority, as a benign and efficient agent to act on men's minds, over the whole train of influences that have been summoned and disciplined in the citadels of infidel philosophy, or marshalled on the plains of fabulous theology.

In speaking in such terms of the character and tendency of Christianity, I have made no parade of heartless sounds. I have uttered what I fully believe and solemnly feel. Under the force of such impressions, I can conceive of no schemes too vast, and of no labors too severe, to extend and perpetuate the pure, unadul-

terated influence of the Christian religion. Yet much as we ought to prize the blessings of the New Testament, we are not to imagine that those who enjoy its benefits are the exclusive objects of the Universal Father's favorable regard, or that genuine goodness is restricted to them. No, we are bound to award honor, esteem and charity, to the virtues of the conscientious Mohammedan, Pagan or Jew; while the mere profession of the name of Christ, unaccompanied by a temper and practice in conformity to his, entitles no one to credit in the sight of God or man. We are to love and venerate integrity and purity of heart and life, as the peculiar features of our Maker's image in the human soul, wherever we meet with them, whether in Jew or Gentile, more than any outward profession of religion; and we are to esteem the Christian religion above every other religious system, because, of all the means of spiritual improvement which God has bestowed on man, we find it the most promotive of virtue.

We are to honor Christ, because he honors the Father, in striving to advance the perfection of his noblest work—the immortal soul; and we are to express our reverence for the Savior, by conforming to his precepts, and copying his example. But we may be boisterous in vocal praise to 'God and the Lamb;' we may 'weary echo' with the loud repetitions of Lord, Lord —we may call ourselves by the holiest name, and unite with the purest communities of Christians, and yet suffer all our faith to evaporate in words and ap-

pearances. We may adhere with great pertinacity to the letter of the Gospel, and yet be uninfluenced by the amiable spirit of its Divine Author, and so after all be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, seeming 'to be religious,' but deceiving our own hearts, and possessing a religion altogether vain. And even while our knees are planted before an altar of homage, and while the sacred name of the Lord Jesus Christ is on our lips, and words of supplication to Jehovah are breaking forth from our tongues, expressing great pity and imploring mercy for the benighted heathen, we ought to beware lest, in the sight of the heart-searching God, we are viewed as far less the children of the kingdom of heaven, than many a poor, ignorant, but sincere and well meaning son of nature, who is ignorantly, yet devoutly offering the best religious service he knows of, in a sacrifice to a senseless idol.

These reflections lead me to remark, in the second place, that those expressions of uncommon zeal and earnestness, which we occasionally witness among religious sectarians, to impress the minds of others with their own peculiar tenets, are frequently attended by no evidence that they are the effects of 'religion pure and undefiled.' Men may be very zealous, and very sincere too in their zeal to promote either a good or a bad cause. It does not go a step, to prove the goodness of a cause, that it has a large body of partizans, or that those partizans secure to themselves great power, and employ it with untiring assiduity in extending their mutual interests. If it proved any such thing,

the kind of proof might be successfully adduced in support of the pretensions of more than half the religious orders under heaven; since hosts have rallied around the respective standards of a great number of sects, and have been animated by the most irrepressible earnestness to procure for their opinions general pect and veneration. The Pharisees of our Savior's time were, according to their own professions, the only *orthodox* religionists in the world; yet it is plain, that among some truth, they embraced and propogated many gross and pernicious errors. Jesus frankly informed them, that they 'made the commandment of God of none effect' by their 'tradition.' Yet they 'compassed sea and land to make one proselyte.' Now this proves that they were exceedingly zealous in their sort of religion, but it does not prove that religion to have been pure and undefiled;—it shows what great exertions they made to push forward their cause, but it does not show that cause to have been a good one; for immediately after our Savior had spoken of their great efforts to make a proselyte, he declares, 'and when ye have made him, he is two fold more the child of hell than yourselves.'

What people, let me ask, discover a more rigid tenacity to their peculiar doctrines and institutions, than do the Mohammedans? Who esteem themselves more *orthodox*, or express a more feeling concern for the souls of their fellow-men? Who express more joy at the conversion of an unbeliever to their faith, or who exhibit a stronger panic of dread and horror in antici-

pation of the awful wrath which, they suppose, awaits such as dare refuse assent to the pretensions of the prophet and Omar? Take for instance the following account, given by Major Denham in his 'African Travels,' of an interview betwixt a few Mohammedans and a party of English travellers:—'When the *true believers*, as they styled themselves, saw that the English travellers were not of their faith, Boo Khaloom, an Arabian leader, told the people that the English were unfortunate; that they did not believe in *the book*, (*the Koran*); that they had a book of their own, (*the Bible*), which did not speak of Mohammed; and that, blind as they were, they believed in it! This account was received by a general groan! One Malem Chadily, however, did not content himself with groaning; he exclaimed, "turn! turn! say God is God, and Mohammed is his prophet!—Wash, and become clean, and paradise is open to you. Without this, what can save you from an eternal fire? Nothing: O, while sitting in the third heaven, I shall see you in the midst of the flames, crying out to your friend Barca Gana and myself, *friend give me a drop of water*, but the gulf will be between us, and it will be too late. The Malem's tears flowed in abundance, during this harangue, and every body appeared affected by his eloquence.' I dismiss this narration, with a single remark: we are forcibly reminded by it, of the deep and permanent convictions, which education may fasten on the human mind, in favor of the most abominable superstitions.

Among the numerous denominations of Christians, no one, perhaps, has given evidence of such unquenchable enthusiasm and untiring zeal, as the order of the Jesuits. This enterprising body flourished for a considerable part of two centuries, in which period they contrived to make their power felt over a great part of the globe. Their whole policy was founded in an intimate acquaintance with human nature. They knew how to find access to the predominant passions of the heart. They could aid political ambition, in its acquisitions of power; they could weave the garland of literary fame, to deck the brow of the aspiring student; to avarice they could offer means for accumulating wealth; they could inspire hopes from their smiles, and fears from their frowns, in every grade and class of the community, from the monarch in his palace to the peasant in his hovel. They shut themselves up in no monasteries, but freely mingled in the several associations of active life. They could accommodate themselves to all manners and habits; with the bigot, they could affect bigotry; with the liberalist, they could reason down the peculiarities of their creed into a show of liberality of sentiment. They secured the influence of the females, and had power to forward or hinder various matrimonial alliances. They animated the wife to enlist to their schemes the favor of the husband, and the mother to plant a reverence for their opinions and persons among the earliest and therefore most durable impressions of her children. They sought and obtained an almost entire dominion over the education

of youth; their teachers conducted the most humble schools, and presided over the most distinguished seminaries of learning. The works of their authors, from the ponderous tome down to the little pamphlet, were circulated in all directions; their priests were often those who had been selected from the most obscure and indigent families, and educated by the charity of the order; and thus, a steadfast adherence to their opinions and rules was secured from numbers of the clergy, by the double tie of prejudices firmly riveted, by a long and restricted course of education, and an abiding consciousness of dependence.

Under the specious pretext of 'advancing the Redeemer's kingdom,' instead of their own aggrandizement, vast stores of wealth were procured from various sources, and deposited in their coffers. The spirit of exclusiveness animated the whole range of their proceedings. Their denunciations were lavished on heretics, and no artifice passed untried, which promised the downfall of whatever opposed their designs. Their power over men's minds and destinies fell short of scarcely any thing but omnipotence. All Europe trembled beneath the stately tread of their gigantic influence, while the feet of their missionaries impressed the shores of remote regions. Even the untutored native of the American wilderness, was taught to bow at the nod, and cower at the frown of the stern supporters of 'the holy mother church.' Such were the Jesuits, among whom were many prodigies of learning, and, no doubt, many sincere, well-meaning christians, but who

as an order, I believe it will be generally agreed, at least among Protestants, formed the most aspiring, energetic, corrupt and dangerous assemblage of men, that ever disgraced the sacred name of Jesus. They attained to the climax of wickedness, and met a just retribution in a rapid and violent overthrow; and the very name of their sect floats on the memories of mankind as a thing of pollution, while their history remains as a perpetual warning to the minister of the altar, of the judgment which hangs over him who dares profane the meek and beneficent spirit of Christianity, by lighting in its temple the 'strange fire' of unhallowed self-advancement and party intolerance; and to the guardians of the state it preaches a faithful exhortation, to bar out from the policy of government, the sacrilegious intrusions of ecclesiastical intrigue.

My design in advancing the considerations I have here brought to view, is totally misapprehended, if I am understood to offer any disparagement to a truly pious engagedness and perseverance. Zeal cannot be too much prized and commended, when it proceeds from a really benevolent motive, when it is directed to the furthering of a worthy object, and when it is regulated, in all its operations, by knowledge, prudence and discretion.

'It is good,' says the apostle, 'to be zealously affected, always, in a *good* thing.' But again he speaks of a 'zeal not according to knowledge.' The conclusion I wish my remarks to leave on your minds, my friends, is, that we cannot be too active in doing good.

We are not to mistake the mere spirit of excitement, which occasionally animates an ambitious sect to advance its peculiar interests, for the tranquil and steady operations of that meek, unostentatious and unrestricted charity, which forms the essence of 'religion pure and undefiled.'

I pass on to remark, that the cultivation of a desponding tone of feeling in the mind, and the exhibition of a formal sanctity and gloom, in the outward demeanor, not only do not constitute true religion itself, but are no favorable indications of it. I speak thus, because 'disfigured faces' and sad countenances' were especially alluded to by our Lord, as the peculiar marks of hypocrites; because, too, the general observation of mankind goes to establish the propriety of his hints, and because I feel that religion has suffered great misapprehension and injury from the solitary and gloomy dress she has so frequently been made to assume. We have not to visit the abodes of monastic seclusion, to find devotion habited in a studied dress of mournfulness. No, in the promiscuous intercourse of social life we discover with what success an association can train its members to a peculiarity of movement and appearance—to the deep-drawn sigh—to the slow, hollow utterance—or, when rapid and foaming, to fearful and terrific notes and cadences, to a distended visage, and to a uniform air of solemnity, dejectedness and sorrow. It is true, religion presents solemn truths, and goes to inspire deep feeling; but deep religious feeling has more appropriate expressions

than a *sour* look, a formal air, a sighing utterance, or a canting phraseology. Its proper manifestation is the cheerful performance of the several duties religion prescribes. I would by no means encourage a trifling levity of thought, feeling or deportment; I would only discountenance the idea, that religion is necessarily accompanied by any thing unsocial or forbidding; and we ought always to be suspicious of the depth of a man's understanding, or of the purity of his intentions, when we discover that he would attach to himself importance and respect, by the mere solemnity of his outward carriage.

The experience of mankind will show, that the most grave and formal are in general very far from being the wisest or best men. The owl wears the deepest gravity of visage, and utters the most desponding note of perhaps any of the feathered tribe, but has never been valued for profoundness or benefit. The more cheerful songsters of the grove have a power to awaken sensations far more thrilling and generous. If *any* man should be cheerful, it is he who confides in the Supreme Being, and who through virtue excludes from his breast an upbraiding conscience.

I observe, in the fourth place, that a man may seem to be religious, and 'deceive his own heart,' in the practice of a religion that 'is vain,' by mistaking the rigid observance of rites, ceremonies, and various outward forms of worship, or animated tones of feeling, for the practice of true religion. I have no idea that the heathen are a more pious people than the believers in

Christianity; but it is certain that the most zealous Christians fall far behind the devotees of Moslem faith, or the poor victims of Hindoo superstition, in devotedness to prayers and sacrifices, and various expressions of religious homage. It is no little commendation to the gospel system, that its founder has sanctioned so few external ordinances; that, unimpeded by a load of burdensome ceremonies, it carries its whole weight directly to the heart, and strikes at once on the springs of moral action. Still, in Christian communities, a most undue respect is often paid to a few formal acts of religious service.

I know of nothing more common among us, than to hear an individual distinguished from others, as a really pious man, whose sole claim to such a character rests on the facts of his having related a certain routine of feelings, which a grave body who assumed to be good judges of the operations of the holy spirit, agreed to call genuine conversion,—of his having been baptized —become a communicant at the Lord's table, and of his occasionally reading scripture, and offering up a prayer in presence of his family or in a religious meeting; while if we become intimately acquainted with him, we may find that he is neither enlightened by Christian truth, nor merciful to the poor, nor even just in his ordinary dealings with his fellow men. Yet this man thinks himself vastly more acceptable to God, than his less ostentatious neighbor, who makes not half his professions, but is uniformly a compassionate, charitable, and strictly upright member of society. The one

passes in the world for a *religious* man; and though his brethren of the church are sometimes forced to admit that he seems somewhat too *worldly minded*, that, *practically*, he does not appear to be quite so good a Christian as he might be, still they maintain he relates a very *satisfactory experience*, and they have *great charity for him*, expressing little or no doubt but that *he knows what religion is*, and so will finally *get to heaven*; while the other is called *a mere moralist*, who indulges the silly conceit that the most efficient means of gaining the approbation of his Maker, is to do good to his creatures: and professing Christians, though they allow that, so far as the trifling matter of morality, of good works is concerned, he certainly merits esteem, are fain to look fearful for his eternal destiny, and to express pity that so good a man, through want of accordance with them in relation to some prescribed dogmas of faith, should render himself constantly obnoxious to the terrible vengeance of a vindictive God. People who think and talk thus at random, ought to be reminded that no train of inward sensations deserves a moment's respect, unless it becomes productive of outward morality; that outward ceremonies are of no value, only so far as they point and incite the heart to just exercises; that the scriptures are of no more consequence to us than the columns of a newspaper, except in proportion as we apprehend their meaning, receive their instructions, and are thereby induced to live agreeably to their precepts; that though daily acts of religious devotion, when properly appreciated and

rightly practised, are most prolific sources of good order in our hearts and in our houses, yet mere songs of praise and *words* of prayer are as idle as the senseless breeze, any farther than they serve to promote our advances in practical virtue; that no sentiments can be essentially defective, which are consistent with uniform uprightness of conduct; that the only just rule for judging the tree, is by its fruit; that as to faith, 'his cannot be wrong, whose life is in the right.'

Thus, my friends, have I labored in the preceding remarks, to separate truth from error; to discard false views, and to bring to light just ones, in regard to a most important subject; in a word, to discover what are the real, and what the illusory tests of vital holiness. We have seen that many things pass in the world for true religion, but that appearances are not always realities; that many things are called true religion, but that names are not things, nor, in every case, just representatives of things.

Let me conclude this discourse, by giving a summary answer to the questions, what is true religion—wherein does it consist—how is it manifested. I reply, briefly, that it is a principle of knowledge, of feeling, and of habitual practice—a principle residing in the rational understanding, and consisting in a right apprehension of the relations in which we stand, and the consequent duties we owe to God and our fellow beings—a principle, imbuing the affections with a love of what is right, and a just abhorrence of what is wrong—a principle animating the will with high and fixed

purposes of adherence to unsophisticated conscience—a principle of charity, justice, beneficence and purity, breaking forth from the heart into a vigorous outward practice, and exhibiting the strong and amiable characteristics ascribed to it in the concluding verse of my text—'Pure religion and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.'

Our duties, then, are plain and practicable. To render ourselves acceptable to our Creator, we have but rightly to employ the means he has set before us for improving our minds in the knowledge of his being, attributes and will, and thence to gain clear ideas of our own duties, interests and prospects, to watch over our hearts and lives, and as far as in us lies, to preserve them from impurity, and sedulously to use our best endeavors for promoting the general welfare of mankind. God has given us high intellectual endowments, and we are bound to make a free and diligent use of them in searching after truth; but we are to do this without looking with a scornful eye on our brother, who in the exercise of *his* faculties has come to different conclusions from our own. We are to recollect that, however much the sentiments of others are at variance with ours, they can be no more so than ours are at variance with theirs. We are to be zealous and active in advancing the cause of truth, without becoming bigots to a party or exhibiting ostentation of righteousness. We are to be seriously impressed with a just sense of

our responsibilities, and of the proper character and present and future consequences of human conduct, without sinking into distrust of the supreme goodness, or cultivating an unamiable mournfulness of feeling, or assuming an air of sanctimonious austerity; we are to exercise ardent love to God and man, without degrading ourselves by a feverish, unsalutary fanaticism; we are to observe with respectful attention whatever religious ordinances the New Testament prescribes, without becoming cold formalists. In the blended light of reason and the Scriptures, we are to distinguish between the operations of the spirit of God and the empty illusions of an excited imagination. We are to strive to cherish in our breasts the spirit that was in Christ, but to banish the spirit of religious sectarianism, bigotry and frenzy. We are to have a due respect for our own welfare, without infringing on the rights of our neighbors—and we are to serve our fellow men, without neglecting what is due to ourselves. We are to use the world as not abusing it. We are to be industrious and frugal and prudent, without becoming avaricious, sordid or mean. We are to strive for eminence in our several employments, without indulging a crafty, intriguing, soul-polluting ambition. We are cheerfully to taste the various innocent enjoyments of life, without suffering ourselves to be vitiated by sensuality. We are to be compassionate and beneficent towards the poor, the sick and the friendless—to spread fuel on the cold hearth—bread on the naked board—clothes over the shivering body. In a word, if we will

be Christians, we must copy the stainless example of Christ, the history of whose life is abbreviated into a single sentence, 'Jesus went about doing good.' It is thus we are to apprehend and practise 'pure religion and undefiled.' Devoid of mystery, comprehensible and plain are God's requirements, presenting a path so clearly marked, that the way-faring man, though a fool, need not err therein.—'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.'

SERMON V.

RESIGNATION.

John xviii. 11. 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?'

At a period like the present, when a fell destroyer,* arrayed in horrors of a most fearful cast, is striding over the earth, and covering its path with desolation; when it has impressed its foot in the shores of our own land, and is at this moment rioting in the distresses of our countrymen, when all eyes are turned to the direction it is pursuing, and catching at every rumor that speaks of its ravages and that seems to betoken a nearer approach to our own thresholds; when public consternation is aroused to a high pitch, and when religion is perhaps in too great a measure engaged in ministering fresh impulse to a state of feeling every way calculated to predispose the community to the disease from which it prays to be delivered—at such a time, as a humble ambassador of the gospel of peace, I have thought I could not render a better service to my hearers than to call their minds to the

* The Asiatic Cholera.

consideration of a subject, which embodies within itself all that moral improvement which, as rational beings, we ought to derive from seasons of peculiar general calamity—I mean the subject of Christian resignation. It is this sentiment which is couched in the most strong and touching terms in the words of my text: 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?' There is not in all revelation a more faithful delineation of a meek and quiet and resigned temper than we find in the words before us.

He who uttered them has claims upon our attention, which no other person can urge. It is he to whom all kings must bow, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion. In the ordinary occurrences of life we look up to great characters for examples. Here we have a model in whom dwelt the spirit without measure; here is one anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, one who could indeed suffer, but was sinless, and who from the union of the two qualifications was most perfectly fitted to be our holy example. It is this 'man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' whose voice we now hear in the pathetic question before us: 'The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?'

In illustration of the subject before us, I propose, 1st, to treat of the true character of Christian resignation; 2dly, to show whereon it is founded; and 3dly, to illustrate and enforce its proper practical effects.

I. What then is that temper of mind which we denominate Christian Resignation? How shall we describe

the several qualities which go to compose it? What words can correctly define it? It is not what frequently passes under the name of philanthropy. The name as it is often, perhaps generally received, is by far too cold. It expresses not the efficiency which religion ascribes to her maxims; for in truth, it possesses no efficiency. It proposes remedies indeed for the ills of life, but unhappily they are often as bad as the disease they are designed to remove. In proportion as stoical philosophy would bestow comfort, it would repress feeling; and thus, in its effort to make us something more than men, it would first make us something less.

Resignation is not insensibility. It does not imply that men should be careless or unconcerned. No; they should be sensible of the hand of God in his providences, and acknowledge it. As directed in the scriptural exhortation,—'Know that I am God;' that is, be sensible that my hand is in this thing, that this calamity is in accordance with my purposes and brought about through the operation of the immutable laws which I have established for the government of the universe. Job said, 'The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' So Eli said,—'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' Men should be sensible too that there is a just cause in themselves why they should be afflicted—as David said,—'Is there not a cause?' People are exceeding prone to run into one or the other of these two extremes—either to manifest an undue fright and terror, to faint and to sink under the

afflicting hand of God, or to neglect, to overlook it. Christian resignation is not that torpor of the faculties and powers, that apathy of the mental system which makes such a figure in the doctrines of the stoics. Had the sages of antiquity understood the morality of the Gospel, had they known the true dignity of man, they would have escaped many absurd maxims and preposterous conclusions. The feeling and conduct which revelation enjoins upon the afflicted, is not well expressed by the word fortitude, especially in the loose sense in which this word is generally used. This supposed virtue is often the result of shame and pride, which lead us to avoid complaint under the ills of life, because we conceive that such conduct detracts from the native dignity of man. But if a sense of this dignity composed the only basis of true resignation, we should not have seen it, as in the text, referred to the Supreme Being, as its cause and support; nor should we have found infidelity itself giving it this decided superiority, when allowing that 'Socrates suffered like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ like a God.' We wrong ourselves much when we make a false estimate of our powers of endurance, and rest with sanguine expectation upon the proofs which we will give of a steady and uncomplaining mind. There are cases where to know our own weakness is our greatest strength, where to aspire to heavenly aid is to arm ourselves with the whole armor of God. It is by no means requisite that we should bear the trials of life with a sullen, insensible state of mind; nor that we

should call to our assistance allies that have but too frequently proved unfaithful in the greatest extremities, and given us occasion to lament that our confidence was misplaced. It is enough that we endure with patience, with the aid of divine strength; enough that we breast the storm of calamity with a tranquil and complacent disposition, from the consideration that an all-wise and benevolent power directs the blast which now beats furiously against us. Religion forms a proper balance of the sensibilities and affections of the heart. It counterpoises the feelings, and allots to all the affections their proper range, and directs them to their appropriate objects. Where this is not the case, resignation is not real, is not evangelical. You are not commanded to stifle or eradicate the sensibilities of your nature. These sensibilities were never so illustriously exercised, never exhibited in so mild and amiable a form, as in him whom you are to copy as the highest model of resignation. He could feel, he could suffer, he could plead,—'If it be possible let this cup pass from me.' Religion would not that outrage and violence should be committed upon human nature. But when nature faints, when she is ready to retire from the conflict, when the exclamation, 'My flesh and my heart fail me,' trembles upon her lips; it is then that reason, grasping the holy truths of revelation, becomes invigorated, and, anticipating the victory, humbly breathes this devout sentiment,—'I can do all things, through Christ who strengtheneth me.' 'I am afflicted, but not in despair; cast down, but not de-

stroyed.' Resignation is nothing other than an entire acquiescence in the will of God in all things, and especially in adverse dispensations of providence. It is a cordial submission of the will of man to the will of God. You will mistake me, my friends, by supposing that I consider a resigned temper as a passive state of the soul. I have endeavored in part to guard against this misconception; and I now urge the argument, that the mind is never more active than in resignation. Prayer, faith, hope, watchfulness, indicate mental exercise, and suppose an engagedness of every power of the soul. Merely to receive a resigned disposition is not all that is necessary; when obtained, it must be preserved and nurtured with incessant care. To do both the one and the other requires mental action. Besides, we have to consider the things which constitute this disposition. Confidence enters into its character. But to confide and trust in another presupposes a knowledge of him in whom we confide, and knowledge is the result of reflection, comparison and study. A blind confidence holds no nearer relation to religion, than that composure which we call indifference, or that resignation which we have denominated insensibility. The climax of the Christian character is completed by a combination of graces, among which knowledge is exceedingly conspicuous. 'I know in whom I have believed,' is the appropriate motto of the resigned heart.

II. These reflections lead us to show, in the second place, on what resignation is founded. The existence,

acknowledged attributes, and revealed promises of God, are the sources from which alone this heavenly temper can spring. In proportion as our knowledge of them is correct and thorough, so is our resignation well grounded and firm. If fickle chance or blind fate is the only God, if he presides over the destinies of the universe, if we fall into annihilation at death, if, like the poor foundling, we are left ignorant of our origin, if all hope sinks in the tomb, then indeed we have but a poor means of consoling ourselves under affliction, of shielding our hearts from terror, of preserving our composure amid the storm of private or public calamity. Or if we believe in a God of untiring cruelty and unforgiving vengeance, who builds his glory and the happiness of his favorites upon the sufferings of millions of his creatures, what consolation have we when disaster and death stare us in the face? For ourselves, whatever we may profess, how can we be certain that we are among the number who are destined to enjoy the everlasting smiles of heaven? Satan, we are told, is capable of transforming himself into an angel of light; and the human heart, we know, is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; how then can we rationally have any thing like a full assurance that we shall escape that wrath which is prepared for countless myriads of our race? The best Christians tell us of their fears in regard to their own good estate; but a doubt whether we are every instant liable to sink into everlasting flames, is no trifling matter.

But if we are ever so well assured of our own safety,

what assurance can we have for numbers of our relatives and friends, for parents, for children, for brothers and sisters, for husbands or wives, for objects endeared to us by ten thousand ties, when they are snatched away from us without leaving behind them the least evidence, according to the current orthodoxy of our day, that they had secured an interest in Christ. O deliver me from such consolation as is presented by the pride of philosophy, or by a creed of endless wrath.

I love to believe with the poet, 'that beauty immortal awakes from the tomb.' I thank my Creator, that he neither permits a cold philosophy, which would terminate my existence with the grave, nor the fear of never-ending misery to disturb my peace. Why tremble, why despair, because we must walk through the valley of the shadow of death? Can any part of the creation of God be indifferent to him—out of his control or care? Can man, man whom he created in his own image, ever cease to be the object of his love? If so, why did he give him a mind which could glance through the long vista of time, and extend its flight to the seats of never-ending felicity? Why have we this ardent hope, amounting to almost positive belief, that we shall again rejoin those friends who have been separated from us here, and in the abodes of heaven enjoy their society with that never-ending pleasure, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived? Is this reason, or truth, or is it fiction? If there is a Creator of all things, which I think no man of common sense can doubt, will he create virtu-

ous hopes, holy expectations, a longing after immortality, on purpose to disappoint and annihilate them? To believe this is to impeach his wisdom and goodness. Is it not improbable that an all-wise, good and all-powerful Being should create an intelligent, thinking, sensitive being like man, and then so constitute him that his existence shall be a curse to him? Yet this must be the case, if we eventually suffer more than we enjoy.

The experience of every day, the vast scenery of nature, and the luminous pages of inspiration unite in teaching us that God is good. His goodness too is over all. No being however insignificant but enjoys the smiles, experiences the blessings and partakes the mercy of propitious heaven. The Lord is good unto all and his tender mercies are over all his works. We cannot go where universal love smiles not around; where heaven is not crowning with good the whole created intelligence, where abides a solitary soul destitute of a pledge of Jehovah's love.

If we retrace the devious walks of life, we shall see that the arms of divine mercy have encircled, and the bosom of divine goodness has borne us from the first moment of our existence, and that our wants have been supplied by the munificent hand of God. If we look to the heavens, we behold expressions of boundless goodness. They perpetually exhibit the most perfect wisdom and matchless glory. Every part bears the sacred impression of its Maker's love. Every rising and setting sun, and every twinkling star that adorns the evening sky is convincing evidence of God's

mindfulness for man, and a demonstration of his regard for the well-being of his creatures. If we turn to the Bible, we there learn the benevolence of its Author. It speaks in accordance with the works of creation, and the bounties of nature. Their voices are one and the same, in testifying that God alone is all-wise, all-powerful, and supremely good. All teach that he is love, that the compassion and kindness of a father, the tenderness and affection of a mother are but faint emblems to illustrate his goodness. All teach that God is our Father; that he beholds us with tender compassion and love; that he supports and upholds us by his power, provides for us by his bounty, and watches over us with constant attention and care; that his loving kindnesses are daily renewed to us, and his mercies never fail; that he doth not willingly grieve and afflict the children of men; that he will not be always wroth, for the spirits should fail before him and the souls that he hath made; that his anger endureth for a moment, and that in his loving favor is life; that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; that he is good and his mercy endureth forever; that he loves us better than any earthly parent can love his children; yea, that even though a mother should forget her sucking child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb, yet he will not forget us, that he should not have compassion on us. It is a knowledge of this character in God, it is a sense that in him exists an infinite wisdom that knows what is best for his creatures, it is a sense of this goodness

that is always in every dispensation seeking the greatest ultimate good of his universe, it is a sense of that almighty power that controls all events in accordance with the dictates of a wisdom that never errs and a benevolence that never fails;—it is a sense of the existence of this character and of this attribute in the Deity, that lays the foundation of our resignation to his will.

With such views of God may we not ever be ready to exclaim, even in seasons of the greatest terror and bitterest adversity, with our blessed Lord, The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? The sentiment here expressed will bear reiterated remark, without incurring the charge of making useless repetition. What an artless pathos, what an undesigned eloquence lives and glows in every word! In particular, with what inimitable delicacy and with what beautiful simplicity is the thought introduced and expressed which refers the bitter cup of affliction to the hand of Almighty goodness—'The cup which my Father hath given me.' Have you known, have you considered in hours of despondency, when the waves and billows of sorrow were rolling over you, whose agency has cast you into the deep waters? If not, know that your Father and your God hath done this; and that, when the floods lifted up their voice, he was present, establishing limits to the surge, and declaring —'when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee.' Has the cup of sorrow been put into your hand, and have you hesitated or repined? Then learn

that your heavenly Father mingles the wormwood and the gall; that therefore the draught is not noxious; it has a mixture of mercy, and if it be not food, it is medicine which will produce the most salutary effects. Learn then the duty of Christian Resignation, by referring all to the greatest and best of beings, by throwing every care and anxiety upon him who careth for you.

When man had sinned, when the stars had fallen from the religious firmament, when the mind which was created in the divine image had become darkened, depraved, its moral beauty and worth hidden by corruption and wickedness; when all human prospects were dark as eternal night; when death, which to the bewildered imagination swept away every fond delight, pleasing hope, and tender comfort, presented aspects appalling and terriffic, and darkness brooded over the prospects of futurity; when no ray of light dawned on the night of the grave, and no lingering spirit whispered the intelligence of eternal life and glory; then God, in consequence of the free and unpurchased love he bore to man, made provision for sending his Son divinely qualified to unbosom the divine nature, show us what is good, chase the darkness from the human intellect, and unfold to the mental vision the glories and realities of that world, where the purified spirits of mankind shall unite in ascribing to him glory and honor and power. Let it, then, be imprinted upon our minds, let it be deeply written on our hearts, that God is our Father, and a God of consolation.

May we never be so unwise as to doubt that, whether in prosperity or calamity, Thou wilt ever exercise a fatherly kindness towards us. God of mercy, may we never, never be left to believe that thou wilt forget or forsake thine offspring or cast them forever from thine affection. Let us ever ascribe whatever good we receive, light we enjoy, or hope we cherish, to the goodness of our Creator, and let us in all events and under all circumstances trust in the Lord and do good. Yes, fathers and mothers whose children are locked in the arms of death—children whose parents sleep in the darkness of the tomb—widowed husbands and wives whose companions have mouldered to dust, are invited to look to the goodness of God, and rejoice that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.

SERMON VI.

ON COPYING THE CHARACTER OF GOD, OUR FATHER.

Matth. v. 48. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

In accommodation to human conceptions, the Supreme Being is often in the sacred writings portrayed in the likeness of human characters. The titles, King, Judge, and other appellations of offices and attributes common among men, are applied to God. Though such modes of describing him are necessarily imperfect, yet they are doubtless the best which the nature of the case will allow of for conveying to men's minds vivid and touching impressions of the Deity. But of all the characters in which the Creator is held forth to the veneration and love of his creatures, no one is so full and interesting as that employed by our Savior in the text, the character of a Father. The mind is at once directed to all those tender and endearing scenes which are wont to transpire beneath the paternal roof. The

smile of parental complacency, the earnest look of deep affection, the plans of parental wisdom, the allotments of parental prudence, the judicious precepts of a father's law, the restrictions of parental authority, and the force of parental example, all rush upon our thoughts and feelings at the mention of that endearing word, Father. A character thus associated with our earliest recollections, and twined around our hearts by the closest ties, must be well understood and thoroughly comprehended by us. We all know what affections and duties are embraced in the relationship between the parent and child. We all feel what is the proper character of a father. We can all readily conceive what is implied in the expressions, a good father, a perfect father. Christianity then with great propriety avails itself of this figure, as a singularly appropriate one under which to impress on our minds just representations of God and win our hearts to his love and service. It is as a guide for our imitation that Jesus places before us the Supreme Being in the paternal character. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' In an humble attempt to bring forth the important sentiment couched beneath this short and simple sentence, and lay its vast import comprehensively before you, it will be my object, first, to illustrate the Paternal character of God; and secondly, to show that this character lies at the foundation of man's spiritual perfection.

I. I am first to illustrate the paternal character of God. Why in the Christian scriptures is God represented to us in the similitude of a Father?

I reply, first, God is appropriately called our Father, because he is to all of us the giver of life and the former of our bodies, and the communicator to us of a spiritual nature bearing a likeness to his own and created after his own image. Thus it is declared, that God made man after his own likeness, that he breathed into him the breath of life, that he made him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor. Thus Paul, recognizing the Almighty as the universal Father, says, he hath made of one blood all nations of men, and that we are the offspring of God, that he is the Father of our spirits to whom we ought to be in subjection. God then is our Father by creation.

He is, secondly, our Father by preserving us in being. The tender infant, if thrown off from the parent's arms uncherished, would not more certainly perish than would every human being were the continual agencies of divine power for one moment withdrawn. It is the Lord, 'who' (in the language of scripture) 'holdeth our souls in life, who suffereth not our feet to be moved, who giveth his angels charge concerning us, to keep us in all our ways, who hath delivered our souls from death, our eyes from tears and our feet from falling.'

He is then our Father by preservation, by fully exercising towards us an office of which the protection of an earthly parent in regard to its child is a faint image.

Thirdly, God displays to us the character of a Father in the allotments of his providence. A wise and

affectionate earthly Father consults the best good of his whole family. He never plots the ruin of a portion of his children to manifest his own power, to shed glory upon his justice, or in any way to aggrandize himself. He never places one child in a situation which he is certain will ensure his ruin, to benefit another child for whom he has conceived a strong partiality. No; he makes his glory to consist in advancing the interests of his family, and he conducts himself toward all of his children in accordance with the dictates of impartial love. He may lay out indeed very different courses of life to them, and be various in the distribution of his favors, according to the ages, constitutions, capacities and dispositions of his children. But in all his allotments he is guided by an aim to promote the greatest possible amount of ultimate good to every member of his family. In a word, a good father is an impartial father. The common feelings of mankind lead them to reproach, neglect or cruelty towards a child, or any exhibition of parental partiality—God is impartial in his allotments. He has indeed given different capacities and assigned different stations to men; but the whole plan of his government, when regarded in reference to final results, must be consistent with the declaration—'He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.' I know opinions at war with this sentiment have prevailed. I know it has been said that God consigns millions of his creatures to eternal woe to promote his own glory. But how can we believe in, still more, how can we honor

a Being who has a glory dependent on the ceaseless sufferings of millions and millions of creatures whom from unoffending nonenity he has brought into existence?

God then exhibits the character of a Father in the allotments of his providence.

Fourthly, God exhibits the parental character in the requirements and prohibitions of his laws. It is the part of a good earthly Father to require of his children nothing but what it is in their power to obey, and nothing but what he sees it will be for their true interest to perform. He would have them treat him with becoming respect and submission. He would forbid them to do what he saw was productive of mischief to themselves. He would have them conduct uprightly toward one another, and live in harmony together. Now if you will examine the law of God, you will discover that it is based on similar principles. Of our duty toward him this is the sum—'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' Now this is all reasonable and just. It is for our highest glory and happiness to love what is infinitely good, and to serve the Author of our being and the dispenser of all our blessings. He requires of us temperance, moderation, sobriety.

To obey him in these respects is manifestly for our own benefit, for the good of our health, property, respectability, self-respect, peace of mind and general welfare; and to disobey him in these respects, the experience or observation of every day will teach us is

essentially to injure ourselves. He requires us, as it concerns our duty to our fellow men, to do justly, to show mercy, to follow peace with all men, every one to mind his own business, and not intermeddle with that of others, to conduct as good neighbors and as good citizens, to be subject to the powers that be, and to pray for those in authority.

In fine, the sum of our relative duties is to do to others as we would that they should do to us, as we ought to wish and expect a conscientious good man in like circumstances to do to us.

Now to shape our conduct in conformity to these principles is doubtless for our best good in this world as well as in the next, for our happiness and prosperity as individuals, and for our welfare and peace as a community; and the whole observation of life will admonish us of the injury and misery produced by a course of conduct in opposition to these precepts.

God then exhibits the parental character in the requirements and prohibitions of his law.

Fifthly, God exhibits the paternal character in his rewards and punishments. A good earthly father is impartial in rewarding the good and punishing the evil done by his children. He does not give one child an immense estate as the reward of a slight degree of merit, overlooking altogether his faults, and at the same time disinheriting and consigning to ruin another child, for a few faults, overlooking all his virtues. No; but he is equal and impartial in respect to the distributions of his justice. Now if you will leave hu-

man creeds out of the question, and take the Bible for your standard, you will find that the Father of us all acts on precisely the same principles. There we are taught that whatsoever a man sows that shall he reap; that every seed shall have its own body; that he will give to *every one* according to his ways and the fruit of his doings; that God is no respecter of persons; and that the wisdom from above is without partiality. From these and a multitude of other corresponding passages we learn that every man, whether converted or unconverted, is to be rewarded according to his ways; that misery is the natural product of sin, and happiness that of virtue, just as the stalk and fruit and blossom are the product of the seed. From such representations we do not learn that one sinner, though cut off in the bloom of youth, without having been regenerated, will be consigned, as the fruit of fifteen or twenty years of sin, to a whole eternity of inexpressible tortures, whilst another sinner, who has grown gray in the vilest wickedness, by a tardy repentance is recompensed with an exemption from all suffering, and the enjoyment of a whole eternity of bliss. No; but with God every man is to be rewarded according to his deeds.

God then exhibits the parental character in the distribution of rewards and punishments.

Our subject leads us to discover, in the last place, that God is paternal in his examples. We all know and feel that it is the part of a good earthly father so to conduct himself in the view of his children as to fur-

nish them in his own example with a correct pattern to imitate. The remark is trite, that example goes farther than precept. We all startle at the absurdity of a parent's correcting his children for indulgences of the passions of which he is himself notoriously guilty. We could not honor such a father. We should feel that he was wanting in one of the most essential characteristics of a good parent. Now if we should discover that the supreme Being carried on a system of conduct in direct opposition to what he requires of his creatures, it would be a source of infinite regret. The discovery must destroy all our confidence in him, all our veneration for him. If, whilst he was forbidding anger and severely punishing revenge, cruelty and all the exercises of malevolent feelings in his creatures, it should be found that he was continually exercising the same passions, it would be impossible for us to love and venerate him. We should condemn ourselves were we to be guilty of such inconsistency, and we are always sure to hate in another that for which we reproach ourselves. We learn however from our text and from the connection in which it stands, as well as from many other scriptures, that Jehovah presents himself as a perfect pattern for our imitation. We are there commanded to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us; and pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us, that we may be the children of our Father who is in heaven. We are exhorted to be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. By all of which it is plain that God is the

standard of perfection which we in all respects are required to imitate.

Now if God has any enemy whom he does not love, any curser whom he does not bless, then it is plain we not only have a right to hate our enemies, but that we are required to do so, in order to be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect, in order to imitate and resemble him. To suppose the contrary would be to suppose that the Deity was contradicting himself.

God must be all that he requires his creatures to be; he possesses no disposition which he condemns in his creatures; he does no act which he would disallow in them. It is evident that God loves and blesses his enemies, for he requires us to do so. If then he brings evils upon transgressors, it is because he knows that they have rendered these evils the only effectual means of correcting them. And thus God blesses both his friends and his enemies, even when he afflicts them with those evils which his wisdom discovers will be for their ultimate good. God then is in all respects a safe pattern for our imitation, and therefore perfectly parental in his examples.

II. Such is the hasty delineation I have been able to set before you, my courteous audience, in illustration of the paternal character of God. Leaving this topic, I proceed to show in a very concise manner, that correct views of this character in our Creator lie at the foundation of man's spiritual perfection. They lie at the foundation of piety. In order to love and honor God, man must be able to discover in him such principles

only as demand his affection and respect. Were he to ascribe to God feelings of which he himself would be ashamed, purposes which his conscience would condemn in himself, conduct which would fill his soul with remorse, it is a plain case that he could not honor him. He might indeed be induced by fear to pay outward homage, lip-service, but not heart-service. He might through fear of an all-devouring vengeance make himself believe that he loved a being whom in his dealings with his fellow men he would blush to imitate. But the fact that he, in the management of his household concerns and in his intercourse with his neighbors, does not act on the principles he ascribes to God, proves that he does not honor those principles, and therefore that he does not honor the being to whom he attributes them. If he paid sincere worship, he would shape his own conduct after the conduct of the being he professes to worship. All men understand what is good and lovely in a father's character. It is easy to admire and love what is good and lovely. All men understand what is deserving of condemnation in a father's character.

It were horrid, it were unspeakably odious for men by any bribes or any terrors to be so overawed as to fall down and worship the principle of evil. Bad as men are, it is not in their nature to esteem such a principle. Corrupt men esteem the virtuous. From the heart to honor a bad being, however great his power, or gorgeous his pomp and titles, is an utter impossibility; and if it were a possibility it would be a crime.

But not only is a correct impression of God's paternal character the source of all love and true worship, but also of all salutary fear. 'The fear of the Lord,' we are told, 'is the beginning of wisdom;' and again, 'The fear of the Lord is to hate iniquity.'—This is the only fear by which we can honor God. We are all sensible of the vast difference there is in the character and influence of that fear which a conscientious child has to disobey a wise and good father's law, and thereby draw down upon himself his just displeasure; and the wretched fear of a cringing, eye-serving slave, whose only dread is of the master's lash, whose great care is to keep clear, not of disobedience, but of detection and stripes. The fear of the one is virtuous and ennobling, that of the other is base and degrading. I apprehend there is altogether too much in the common representations of the Divine character to produce this servile, soul-debasing fear. Horrid pictures of the Deity, high-wrought scenes of divine wrath and human suffering may scare the sinner, but can never effect a radical change in the moral character of his affection. No sinner ever loved God till he was brought to regard him as his Father and Friend. All the details of religious experience go to establish the propriety of this remark.

I would have men fear God. I would have them fear above every thing to draw down upon themselves the frown of his retributive justice. But I would have that fear to be the hatred of iniquity, the fear of dishonoring

their own natures, of warring against God's goodness, the fear of the child, and not that of the slave.

Correct views of the paternal character of God are important to our morality. Let me know the God of a man's affections, and I will readily unfold to you the general character of his feelings and conduct towards his fellow men. To commune with goodness serves to make the heart good and the life lovely. To associate in our minds principles of evil with the object of Supreme adoration serves to freeze up the heart, and render the life malignant, stern and persecuting. In heathen lands, you will find the worshippers of unchaste divinities, themselves debauched—of revengeful monsters, themselves cruel—of unmerciful tyrants, themselves despotic. Similar effects in Christian countries result from false views of the Creator. The religious bigot is nearly always with his fellow men unrelenting and oppressive. The more our conceptions of God are purified, the more pure will become our hearts. The more we love and worship what is amiable, kind, compassionate, benevolent and lovely in him, the more shall we be like him; the more we commune with such perfection, the more perfect will our own hearts and lives be gradually rendered. And thus the nearer shall we advance to a compliance with the exhortation of our Divine Master, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' Let it then, my friends, be the great end produced by all our religious reflections, to render us in moral character like our Father in heaven, to induce us to be what we ad-

mire in God, to feel what we approve in him, to forsake what he condemns, and to follow what he enjoins. Thus shall we most effectually secure the true enjoyment of this life, and fit ourselves for a purer holiness, and a more substantial bliss in the world to come.

SERMON VII.

ON THE PROPER MANNER OF PREACHING.

Matth. v. 2. 'And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying'—

With these few and simple words, the Evangelist introduces that memorable sermon of our Savior, delivered to an assembled multitude from the mount. I have selected it as a suitable motto for some general views of the true ends and proper manner of Christian teaching.

Why did Christ teach, and why has he left a commission to others to teach in his name? What is the leading aim of promulgating and enforcing the Christian religion?

To these interrogatories I reply, in the first place, that the proper object of Christian teaching is to make men wiser; to instruct and inform them in relation to the most interesting and momentous subjects.

Christ came to a world darkened by ignorance, error and sin, to shed abroad the light of religious truth, to teach man the being, the perfections and the will of God, to show what relations he sustains to his crea-

tures, and in what relation they stand to him, to inform them of the services which he requires of them, to instruct them in piety and morality, to convince them of their immortality and responsibleness for their conduct to a higher tribunal than that of man, to exhibit before them the rewards of goodness and the recompense of wrong-doing, to show them what secret thoughts they may indulge and what they must discard, what affections they must form and foster and what dispositions they must reject, what rule of conduct they must follow and what precepts and examples of men they must abandon. By thus enlightening their understandings, he came to make men better, to improve their moral virtue, to incite them to piety towards God, and to justice and benevolence towards man. And thus by rendering men wiser and better, Jesus came to make them happier; happier in this world, and happier in the next. Yes, the Gospel in its true character is an agent to promote the felicity of man.

By the views it brings to the soul of the universal Father, of his wisdom, goodness, power and watchful providence, it is a minister of consolation to cheer us and support our drooping spirits, amid the various ills that are connected with our present being. By implanting and nourishing in our hearts the soft and amiable virtues, and eradicating from them malevolent tempers and feelings, Christianity spreads light and sunshine, calmness and tranquillity over the soul that is open to her heavenly influences. By teaching us that our true happiness lies within our own breasts,

that it consists in what we are, rather than in what we have, and that the purification of our souls is of more consequence than all outward goods, she enables us to diminish or dismiss many corroding anxieties, to support with firmness many outward calamities. She enables us, so far as we improve her practical instructions, to encounter danger and to meet even the terrors of death without dismay. Finally, by inducing us to cultivate inward purity and its consequent happiness on earth, she renders us fitted for the immaculate purity and unalloyed felicity of a future and an eternal world.

These are the great objects for which Christianity was given; to improve the moral conduct of mankind, to make them wiser and better and happier, and thus to fit them for the right use and enjoyment of this world and for the imperishable perfection of the next. And are not these objects of sufficient magnitude to justify a special revelation from God? Were they not worthy of the divine mission and labors and miracles, teachings and example and suffering of Jesus? The human soul is the noblest work of God on earth. It is the image of himself, for God is a soul, a mind, a moral intelligence, the spirit of the material universe, bearing a relation to and directing by his will all the operations of outward nature, in a manner not unlike the power which the immaterial will of man exerts over the motions of the body in which it resides. Vast and complicated arrangements of divine wisdom and power are manifested in bringing matter from its simple elements and grosser

combinations into its most symmetrical or useful forms. But what is the whole universe of matter—what are all the pearls of the deep, the ores and jewels and diamonds of the mine, the majesty of mountains, the beauty of valleys, the grandeur of the ocean, the magnificence of the sun and the moon and all the stars of heaven—what is the value of them all in comparison with that of a single immortal mind, of a thinking, rational, moral intelligence, that in one instant, by the slightest exertion of its incomprehensible powers, can send its thoughts with more rapidity than lightning, through all the regions of visible nature, that can live in the past and in the future, that can elevate its contemplations from earth to heaven, and bind its affections and hopes and expectations to the throne of God, and that is destined to outlive the ruins of worlds and to triumph over the conquests of time? What in nature is to compare in grandeur and importance with mind? And is not the production of this incomprehensible and glorious object the greatest of all miracles?

Ought we not to believe that the perfection of this most splendid of all God's works on earth should be the great end to which every thing else around is made to conspire? Yes, the real value of every thing around us is to be measured by the influence it exerts to promote the perfection of our souls, to increase the sum of our knowledge, our goodness and our happiness. All the beauties of nature, all the conveniences of life, all our civil and social institutions are to be valued precisely as they contribute to these ends. Just so it is

with religion; it benefits us just so far as it makes us wise and good and happy. That form of religion which is best adapted to the promotion of these ends is the best. No other moral agent is capable of exercising so powerful a control over the views, feelings, conduct and enjoyments of man as religion. None in the healthful use of its influence can do him so much good; none in its perversion can render him so narrow-minded, depraved and wretched. The history of human nature furnishes too full a testimony to the truth of this remark to require for it farther illustration. True religion, like a wise, benevolent and strong man, puts forth a wonderful energy to defend and bless, while false religion, like a mad giant, employs its strength in demolishing whatever is fair in its path.

Religion, as a matter of rational instruction and of moral culture, is entirely peculiar to Christianity. Other religions have had their rites, their solemnities and festivals. Their professors have built temples and reared altars and offered sacrifices, and allured the multitude by pomp and artificial parade, and dismayed them by terror.

But the Bible alone furnishes a religious system adapted to inform the human understanding, to purify the heart, and properly to regulate the life. At the time of our Savior's coming, the original religion of Moses and the prophets, which at best, as Paul assures us, was an imperfect dispensation, had become so corrupted that our Lord declared to the Jews—'Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect

by your traditions.' The religious spirit among the Jews was at that time perhaps worse than that of the surrounding heathen nations; and in what barbarism, superstition and vice the great mass of the Gentile population were sunk, the historic page gives us but too mournful a representation. Upon the introduction of Christianity, a great change for the better was immediately produced. In the first ages of its propagation, wherever it went, it travelled as a friendly reformer, elevating the intelligence, correcting the morals, enlivening the prospects and ameliorating the general condition of individuals and of society at large. Idolatry, superstition, idle ceremonies, gross vices, idleness and avarice were to a remarkable degree banished, and the great body of the primitive Christians were pious, simple in their faith and worship, industrious, contented, thankful, peaceable, generous, pure and benevolent. All this you will find to be strictly true, by consulting even the history of Gibbon, who certainly cannot be suspected of any undue attachment to the gospel, and whose authority on this subject is not to be looked upon with suspicion. And even the corruptions which from various sources have since crept into the Christian community have never been able wholly to nullify the beneficial influence of several of its leading principles; so that Christianity in its worst forms I regard as far better than any system of religion beside it. The nearer we can bring it back to its primitive simplicity and purity, the more visible will be its blessings.

But I find myself hurrying down a current of remark

quite too desultory for my present purpose. I have said that the great ends of Christian teaching were to make men wiser, and better and happier. I proceed to show in what manner the gospel must be taught in order most effectually to secure these ends.

It must be taught in a rational manner. The bulwarks of reason must be thrown up around the Christian cause. It was from behind such ramparts that it was so successfully defended in primitive times. Thus Paul is said to have reasoned from the scriptures. It was his reasoning of temperance, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come, that made even Felix tremble. Indeed, his writings present a full display of the most serious and impressive reasoning. Energetic argument was his strong hold. In our times, when nearly all subjects are undergoing the scrutiny of keen and searching eyes, we are not to rest the authority of religion upon mere assertion. We must find more solid grounds on which to build our faith, than mere assumption. Religious teaching to be effectual must be religious reasoning.

I would that I could put forth a voice that should ring impressively over the whole Christian community of the United States, to force this solemn truth upon their ears, that in this age and in this country something else is demanded by the interests of religion than mere declamation, than intimidating exhortings, than the glowing picturings of a heated imagination. These modes of address may indeed, for a season, fire the multitude; they may alarm weak and tender minds; they

may produce frightful out-pourings of burning passions; they may spread madness over the feelings of the young and the delicate; they may do now exactly what they did in the Apostles' time, lead children and silly women captive. But they will not produce a firm and durable benefit. They will not open the blind eyes of scepticism; they will not enable our converts to meet the sophistry of infidels; they will not overcome the doubts and prejudices of thinking minds.

I know it is an easy matter to produce a fervid, temporary excitement of public feeling on any subject. I know that an impudent ranter in politics often succeeds with the rabble, while the calm statesman is cried into silence; and I know that things of a like character not unfrequently happen in matters of religion. But I know too, that in this day of light such triumphs must be temporary. If we would fix permanent conviction, we must employ intelligible and irresistible truth. What is required of the advocate at the bar? Dare he venture his cause with a learned bench and an intelligent jury, upon his mere assertions, upon the earnestness of his entreaties, or upon the flowers of rhetoric with which he maintains it? No; he must reason. He must bring forth arguments to show that the balance of right and of law lies on his side of the question, or, let him assert with never so much impudence or intreat with never so much ardor,—he stands before the eye of judicial scrutiny as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. In the senate, or in the popular assembly, no lasting, valuable inclination is

to be given to the opinions of the intelligent, unless the orator brings up reason for the part he takes.

In the various departments of science, mere assertion and rant are not tolerated. The physician is required to give reasons for favoring this or that theory; the philosopher is required to give his reasons for the doctrines he avows. In all these cases mere appeals to feeling will not do.

Tears will not wash away opposing arguments, nor will screams nor sepulchral tones force conviction, nor will grave looks nor an earnest manner win faith.

And shall we consent to the importance of reason on all ordinary subjects of life, and yet in what concerns the welfare of our immortal souls are we called upon to surrender up that great pilot, and give ourselves to be the sport of every wind of passion that comes blustering upon us? Is reason imparted to us as the noblest capacity of the soul, to be our guide in every thing else, whilst in this most momentous of all concerns, that which affects our eternal destiny, we are to throw its admonitions aside, and trust to casual impulses of feeling? O no, my friends, we ought not to rest our views of any important truth upon the mere word of any man. Jesus, it is true, spoke with authority, but it was the authority of evidence. The wonderful works which he did before the people, were the grounds on which he claimed their belief in him. It is true that the Christian preacher ought to speak with authority, but not with his own, nor yet with that of the particular sect to which he belongs. No, but

with the authority of his master, Christ. But he must give reasons to prove that Christ authorizes what he teaches, before he can lay claim to our belief in it.

The gospel then should be preached in a rational manner. The evidences on which the authority of our religion rests should be often stated frankly and candidly. The several doctrines of the gospel should be reasoned upon. Their harmony with common sense and with each other should be shown; objections should be fairly removed; one passage of scripture should be honestly compared with others, and our decision concerning its meaning should be made up in reference to its accordance with reason and the general strain of scripture. By these means the divine authority of the gospel will be more solidly and satisfactorily established in men's minds. Doubts and difficulties will be gradually removed; Christian faith will become more firmly grounded in the understanding; and thus be enabled to put forth a more even, orderly and energetic influence over the heart and life. Christian hope will be more confidently relied on as an anchor to the soul sure and steadfast, and thus human knowledge and virtue and happiness will gradually be advanced, by teaching the gospel, toward that eternal perfection which constitutes the glory of the kingdom of God.

The gospel should be preached honestly. He who takes it upon him to deliver its great messages to men, should sacrifice every other motive and feeling to a sincere regard for the truth. He should strive to dis-

enthral himself from the entanglements of early impressions, from the biasses of education and the prejudices of party, and come to the work of seeking truth at the feet of Jesus with a mind thoroughly open to conviction. He should revere no opinion merely because it is old. He should fear none merely because to him it is new. He should recollect that the very worst errors in religion are old, and that almost every thing which is now held as important truth has been at one time or another cried down as an innovation upon something which preceded it. He should remember that every discovery in the arts and sciences upon its first propagation was an innovation. He should reflect that the institution of our own government was at war with the political opinions of nearly all the greatest statesmen in the world, and was regarded as a most daring innovation. He should remember that the doctrines of the reformation were at open hostility with the opinions and sentiments which had prevailed over Christendom for ages. And he should recollect that Jesus himself was the greatest of all innovators, and that the cry against the Apostles was, 'These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also.' With such facts before him, he should throw off the influence of human authority, and submit himself only to one master, Christ. He should not begin with a creed ready formed, and then go on with a resolute determination to mould the Bible exactly to suit its pattern. He should not seek only those passages which appear to favor his preconceived views, and pass

inattentively over what is in direct contradiction to them. No; the honest preacher will examine the Bible as a whole. Its broad and general spirit will form the rule of his faith. He will compare one passage with another, and one portion with another. He will discover that some parts are of local and others of general application; that some parts relate to customs and manners peculiar to the age in which the several sacred writers lived, and that others are applicable to the people of all ages. He will discover that the same words in different places are employed to express different meanings; he will see that in many passages the signification is to be determined by the connection in which they stand, and in reference to the nature of the subject of which they are treating. He will see the impropriety of building upon a few isolated texts a system opposed by the common sense and the general tone of the scriptures. He will not think of giving an interpretation to a few texts which would contradict the language of the many texts. But in commenting upon the Bible he would exercise the same justice that he does in interpreting the meaning of any other book. If in the works of any writer he should find a few sentences, the meaning of which is veiled in some obscurity, he would not think himself doing justice to the author, to interpret these few passages in a manner to war with the general doctrines and clear illustrations of the work.

Thus he would, like the ancient Apostle, reason from the scriptures as a plain, unsophisticated man, and by

such means he would obtain consistent, clear and settled views of their general scope and spirit, and be enabled to present to his hearers every thing contained in them which is at all essential to their instruction, to their virtue, to their happiness,—in a word to their salvation.

What he believes he will express; he will not handle the word of God deceitfully. He will not ask himself whether it is politic, whether it will have a good tendency to preach this doctrine or that. So that he is assured it is true, he will be also assured that God has revealed no truth for the purpose of having it concealed; that God has revealed no truth which it will be injurious to his creatures to know and understand. This is what I call honest preaching.

The Gospel to be effectual must be preached boldly. Its enemies are to be confronted in a bold, manly, yet decorous manner. If the Christian preacher would defend his religion against the assaults of infidelity, he is not to resort to that low ribaldry and indecency with which he is occasionally assailed. He is not to resort to coarse revilings and vulgar wit, but he is to maintain his ground with Christian forbearance, meekness and gentleness. He is not to pour denunciation and outcry against men whom he may regard as sadly immersed in error, or even in vice. Still there is a wide distinction betwixt Christian courtesy and a cowardly, tame and temporising spirit. The Christian pulpit is no place for a half Christian and a half infidel. There is no such thing as an honest compromising of Christian

truth with the speculations of its adversaries. The minister who attempts this betrays his trust. Christianity is either every thing that it professes to be, or it is one of the blackest impositions that ever was palmed upon the world. It purports to be a revelation from God of the most important truths. It is either all this or it is nothing worth. It is on this ground that its power over men's hearts and consciencies lies. Herein consist its sanctions. Truth has been taught, duty has been explained and enforced, and even the soul's immortality has been argued for, by a multitude of men in all ages and countries. One philosopher has argued up a system and another has argued it down; and all was mere fallible human opinion. But Christianity comes to us claiming to be a message from God, communicating truths of the most intense importance. Its authority should therefore be set forth in the boldest and clearest terms. Not only so; its several doctrines should be exhibited in their true character and proper energy. The theory of our religion is to be explained and applied, not as the conjectures and opinions of mere men, but as the authorized doctrine of God. All we have to do on this score, is to show that Christ taught such and such doctrines, and to illustrate them by whatever we may gather from the light of nature. Such propositions relating to the gospel as are subjects of different opinions, such as we find not easily solved, we should discuss in a self-diffident style. As far as we are able to come to consistent conclusions respecting them, we should

show our opinion, and leave our hearers the same liberty of forming and showing theirs. But the most essential doctrines of the New Testament, after all, are recognized by Christians of all sects. That there is one God, to whom we are all accountable, and that Jesus was sent by him to be the Savior of the world; that we are required to forsake our sins, to cultivate habits of inward holiness, to be pure in heart, to exercise piety towards God, faith in Jesus Christ, and benevolence towards our fellow-men; and that we are to be rewarded according to our deeds, and to be raised from death, and exist forever beyond the grave, are all momentous truths of the gospel, and plain to every reader of it, and are abundantly sufficient, if we will live accordingly, for our acceptance with God. These doctrines in a special manner should be boldly insisted on, not as human speculations which may be either true or false, not as matters whose authority rests upon logical skill, not as what upon the whole seems to form a system more likely to be true than that of the Epicureans or Stoics, not as doctrines which if they should turn out to be false can do us no harm to believe, not as subjects which true or false are of a nature to make men better by their believing them;—No, they are to be urged upon men's hearts as infallible truth delivered from the God of heaven. This is what I call bold preaching. And if the Gospel is not defended and preached in this manner, I would not give a straw for all the benefits it will exert on men's hearts and lives. If it is not so urged, faith will be faint and dy-

ing, interest in the Christian cause will decay. No strong action of religious principle will be exhibited, no supporting hope will be cherished. We are able and disposed to reform from sin, to resist and overcome temptations, and rise above our doubts and fears in regard to our immortal destiny, just so far as we are thoroughly convinced that the Gospel is a declaration from God. And to produce such a conviction will be the unwavering aim of every Christian preacher, who is true to the cause he has undertaken to defend.

The Gospel should be preached plainly. Plain truths should be brought forward, and in a plain dress. It is one of the peculiar characteristics of the Christian religion, that the most exalted lessons of moral wisdom are brought down to the comprehension of the most humble capacities. Before the coming of Christ, the halls of wealth and learning, the academies of science, and the courts of princes were the chief theatres in which philosophy, arrayed in splendor, exhibited her speculations and truths. Moral science and moral culture were for the most part confined to the higher classes of the community. The ancient world could boast of a few prodigies of intellectual research and of philosophical refinement; but the great mass of the people were degraded by the most incredible ignorance and depravity. But when Christ came, he gave it as a proof of his mission that the poor had the gospel preached to them. Christianity is wonderfully adapted to the level of ordinary minds. It is not the number of its doctrines, but their importance; it is not the ele-

gance with which they are in the New Testament displayed, but it is the authority by which they are sealed, that constitutes the great glory of our religion. Men who have not the talents nor time to wade through the ponderous tomes which burthen the shelves of metaphysical learning to find out truth and duty, in the New Testament meet with a few leading principles of religion, intelligible to every understanding, and to be depended upon as the certain truth of God, as a sure guide to faith, duty and heaven.

How sadly, then, do we pervert the design of the gospel, when, in professing to teach it, our discourses are replete with a multitude of doubtful disputations, and nice distinctions, and hair-splitting definitions, and curious speculations, which may indeed display our learning or ingenuity, but which have no influence to make any man's heart purer, or his life better! And how ineffectual must be that preaching which is clothed in language above the comprehension of the hearers, or ornamented with artificial decorations that serve to captivate the fancy, without levelling truth at the heart.

By these remarks I do not mean that a preacher's language should be coarse and vulgar, but I do mean that it should be made up of words in common use, words, the meaning of which almost every one understands.

Nor do I mean that the graces of composition are in any respect to be overlooked, or the flights of the imagination to be despised and neglected. On the contrary, the preacher wrongs the community when in his

addresses he sets before them examples of bad taste and careless execution. The more regular is the plan, and the more compact is the reasoning, and the more bold and strong are the figures of a public discourse, the more effect it will produce, the deeper will it drive truth into men's hearts, and the more durably engrave it on their memories. But that flimsy, power-wanting preaching, whose chief commendation is that it is graceful and flowery and pretty, is perfectly unsuited to the dignity and great ends of religious teaching. If we wish to make men think, and make them feel beneath our preaching, we must give our subject its appropriate armor, of a plain, intelligible, direct style of address.

It is one thing to compose a pretty song, and it is quite another thing to bring forth a strong and convincing sermon. For a preacher to weave together a tissue of amusing conceits, and fanciful thoughts, and pleasant words and phrases and sentences, as a drapery in which to exhibit the momentous subjects of the gospel, is as inappropriate as it would be for an artist to represent a Goliath or a Hercules attired in the muslin and gauze and laces of a fashionable belle.

There is a plain, intelligible, and yet an eloquent, convincing and impressive style and manner, which forms the only appropriate vehicle to convey great truths to men's hearts. Such is the style and manner which the Christian preacher should strive to form, cultivate and exhibit.

The gospel should be taught in a liberal and charita-

ble spirit. The subject of religion is one of so vast and complicated a nature, and the structure of men's minds is so various, their capacity so different, and the train of influences which has been in the habit of acting upon them so diversified, that an exact uniformity in religious belief is not to be expected. Nor is such a uniformity needed, nor does it any where exist. You can scarcely find two intelligent members of any church whose opinions in all respects perfectly harmonize. Men will disagree upon nearly all important subjects; and why should a uniformity of opinion, which is scarcely seen to exist upon any other subject, be expected in relation to every point embraced in so large a book as the Bible?

No fallible mortal has a right to prescribe bounds for his neighbor's faith. If any one does so he wars against the whole tone and spirit of Christianity; for that is a liberal and charitable system; for that addresses him in this emphatic language—'Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.' We ought to reflect that our neighbor has no more interest to embrace error than ourselves; that we are fallible as well as he; that howmuchsoever he dares to differ from our opinions, he differs no more broadly and importantly from us than we take the liberty of differing from him. We ought to be willing to allow him the same privilege for determining *his* faith for *himself*, that we take in deciding *our* faith for *ourselves*. We ought moreover to reflect that there are evidently good as well as bad men in

almost every sect and community, and we ought to place more esteem and reliance on our neighbor's habitual practice, than on his professions of faith.

This charitable temper is to be preserved not merely towards members of different denominations of professing Christians, but also towards avowed infidels. No man believes more firmly in the truth of Christianity than I do. No body of Christians have done and are doing more, both by their preaching and publications, to defend the gospel from attacks than Unitarians. None prize its truths more highly; none lament the infidelity of others more deeply; but this I say, we have no right to abuse and vilify and hold up to the community as a monster the man who tells us honestly that he does not believe in Christianity. We are to respect him no less as a man, we are to treat him no less kindly on account of his want of faith. If he is practically an honest, moral man, he is entitled to our respect and esteem, friendship and charity. And by so conducting ourselves towards him we shall be far more likely to incline his feelings and lead his mind to more favorable views of our blessed religion, than we shall by showing him that our faith serves to make us arrogant, narrow-minded, uncharitable, reproachful, slanderous and persecuting. Preachers are forever provoking, by unjustifiable attacks, the very worst passions of man against them, and then they are mournfully uttering their lamentations over the obstinacy and rebellious spirit of unbelievers. The only successful and authorized weapons of the Christian

warfare are cool, dispassionate arguments, persuasion, meekness, kindness and charity. We are bound to respect, to love, confide in and treat affectionately our fellow-men, just in proportion as in their dealings and general outward department they are upright, correct; and however much in error as to their speculative religious opinion we may regard them, and however anxiously we may desire that they come to what we esteem juster conclusions, we are not harshly to judge and censure them. We are to leave the whole matter to God who knows their hearts, who understands the peculiar structure of their minds, who is well acquainted with the whole train of influences which have operated to bias their judgments, and who will recompence them according to their merits.

Under the influence of such Christian principles, the faithful preacher will encourage in his hearers a liberal and charitable tone of feeling towards their fellow-men. If he fails to do this, he fails to fulfill a most important portion of his duty. If he takes an opposite course, his ministry is a curse and a scourge. It is the easiest thing in the world for a preacher to impart a bitter, censorious, uncharitable and exclusive spirit to his hearers. We see by numberless examples around us that the most benevolent and amiable hearts can, by the artifices of an illiberal preacher, be so soured as to exercise and display the most rancorous sectarian malevolence. I know not with what eyes a minister of Christ can survey the teachings and temper and whole example of his divine master, and yet

justify himself in diffusing among those whose confidence he has won, this horrid, denouncing, persecuting spirit.

I have said that Christian preaching should be liberal and charitable. I proceed to say that it should be practical. If we would benefit society, if we would fulfill the main purposes of the gospel, we must preach morality. By morality I do not mean that we are only required to abstain from what would draw upon us the censure of the community in which we live, or subject us to the rigors of human laws; no, I mean Christian morality, the doing of good works because it is right that we should do them, and the abstaining from iniquity because it is wrong to practise it. By morality I mean a broad, comprehensive virtue which will make us just as correct in secret as in public, which will prevent us from doing in the darkness of midnight what we should not dare to do in the open blaze of noonday; a morality, that comprehends the whole sum of duties which we owe to God, to ourselves and to our fellow-men.

In this broad sense of the expression, Christian preaching should be essentially, decidedly and chiefly moral preaching. The great truths of the gospel should be devoutly, affectionately and earnestly inculcated and enforced. The love of God, the reasonableness of his requirements; the authority, example and sufferings of Jesus, the hideousness of sin, the beauty of virtue, the interests of this life, and the retributions of the future world, should all be solemnly and serious-

ly appealed to, in inducing men to forsake iniquity and turn to God and live in conformity to his will.

I have thus exhibited in a summary form, what I regard as the true end and the proper manner of Christian teaching. And God grant that all of us may receive the truth in the love of it, and be habitual doers as well as occasional hearers of the word. May we so apply ourselves to the teachings of Christ as daily to become, beneath their influence, wiser and better and happier, and thus be fitted for the right use and enjoyment of this world, and prepared for the felicities of heaven.

SERMON VIII.

THE DUTY OF MERCY.

Matth. v. 7. 'Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.'

I propose this morning, Christian friends, to treat of that portion of our Lord's sermon on the mount, which relates to the duty of mercy. It will be my object, in the first place, to exhibit a broad view of the nature and operations of this Christian virtue; secondly, to treat of the blessing pronounced upon it; and, thirdly, to give a few hints upon the most effectual manner of cultivating it. I am first to exhibit a broad view of the nature and operations of the virtue commended in the text.

What then is Christian mercy? and how is it manifested?

Christian mercy is the exercise of kindness towards those who are in any respect in an evil or unhappy condition. It displays itself in a tender sympathy for the several objects of compassion, and by doing what is in our power to mitigate or remove the evils under which they labor. It is a broad and comprehensive virtue, which, in a world of weakness, imperfection and

suffering like this, has an ample field to range in. Every individual of the human family in some way or other stands in need of mercy from his fellow-creatures, and every one is called upon by many occasions to practise it towards others.

It is to be manifested in our treatment of the brute creation. Man is made the lord of the animal tribes, not to abuse his dominion over them. He that needlessly sets foot upon a worm, violates a solemn duty. Children should be early cautioned against every species of cruelty. Parents and guardians who are accustomed to see them indulging a cruel disposition towards animals, without reproving them, ought to reflect that they are acting towards those under their charge a very negligent, unmerciful and reprehensible part. They are suffering by such negligence the seeds of inhumanity to obtain root and acquire growth in the bosoms of their children, that may spring forth and ripen into great insensibility and cruelty in after life. The man too, who overworks the laboring animals, or inflicts on them unnecessary pain, is guilty of a great sin. He too that amuses himself with the suffering of the brute creation, in inhuman sports, violates the duty of mercy and will assuredly be called by his God to an account for the act. We should be merciful then towards the brute creation.

We are required to be merciful towards our fellow-creatures under a great variety of circumstances. All ill-natured or thoughtless remarks upon any natural deformity of person, such as are of

a nature to draw ridicule on the important subject of them, are opposed to the duty of mercy, and indeed are impious reflections upon the Creator, who has given to each of us just such a face and form as it pleased him to bestow.

Beauty is an accident for which its possessor can claim no merit, and the want of it imputes no fault. For this reason, it may be urged, an individual should not suffer his feelings to be painfully excited on account of any judgment which is passed upon such of his properties as his own agency had no concern in producing. However true this may be, we know that men cannot avoid regarding their external properties as parts of themselves, and that they are in many cases almost as painfully affected by the expression of an unfavorable opinion concerning these, as they are by being charged with immoral practices.

When our knowledge is thrown into the shade by the superior attainments of another person, and our standing in the community cast into the back-ground by his pre-eminence above us, we are liable to be affected by the mean passion of envy, and to commence the work of depreciating his merits. It requires vast labor to approach very nearly to perfection in any art or science, but no industry is requisite to discover the want of it in others. There is no great difficulty in knowing that our fellow-man falls short of the excellence to which he aspires, though it might be very difficult for us to do as well as he. It is easier to perceive defects in others than to correct them in our-

selves. It is far easier to rear in our minds a standard of perfection, and to depreciate the attainments of all who do not attain to it, than to reach it ourselve; sand hence it is, that we so frequently hear that painter called a mere dauber, or that poet a mere rhymer, this mechanic a bungler, that orator a declaimer. And we are even prone to pronounce upon the most splendid exhibitions of genius and labor, that in many respects they certainly merit praise, yet that in many points they are still so obnoxious, in the eye of a nice critic, to censure.

In the next place, we are called upon to practise mercy towards others in respect to their infirmities of understanding. Not only actual idiocy, and unequivocal insanity, but also those partial disorders of the mind which often render individuals miserable in themselves and troublesome to those around them, demand the exercise of our tenderness, compassion and sympathetic efforts, to sooth e and relieve the unfortunate subjects of them. Still farther, such persons as are laboring under no derangement of their mental faculties, but who yet fall somewhat below the ordinary level of intellectual capacity, such as betray uncommon weakness of perception or dullness of apprehension, are proper objects of tenderness from those whom nature has endued with quicker and sounder understandings. The same is true of those who betray a want of prudence and discretion in the transaction of their ordinary affairs, or who manifest a very defective sense of propriety and judgment in their conversation. Such

persons are the proper subjects of Christian mercy from those on whom nature has conferred brighter endowments of mind. To treat the errors and mistakes into which they fall, or the imprudence or weakness into which they are betrayed, with sarcasm and ridicule, discovers in him who does so, the want of a good head and a feeling heart. The sensible and merciful man will endeavor, on the other hand, in the most kind and affectionate manner to accommodate himself to their weaknesses, to rectify their errors, to correct their mistaken apprehensions, and to save their feelings from all avoidable mortification.

Again, it is the part of a Christian who has been blessed with superior opportunities for acquiring information, and who thereby possesses enlarged stores of knowledge, to treat with great candor and affection those whose means of obtaining instruction have been fewer, and whose acquirements are consequently more limited. Of all sorts of ostentation, a pedantic display of learning is the most contemptible. Of all sorts of vain glory, that which is manifested in a boasting triumph over the want of information in others is the most unjustifiable. Learning is valuable, just so far as it enables us to be useful to ourselves and to our fellow men. The mere possession of it is no criterion of merit. Many very stupid, as well as many very bad men are yet learned; whilst many intelligent and good persons, labor under the inconveniences of very limited possessions of knowledge. You have heard of instructed brutes. I have seen men who were called

learned, and who were really possessed of astonishing funds of information on a great variety of subjects, but who nevertheless had talent scarcely above that of these animals, and whose acquirements were of nearly as little use to society. Such men have scarcely any other claim to our esteem for their learning than that they have been industrious. We can say of them that their time might have been worse employed, that their lives might have been more reasonably spent. The truly wise man will regard all the acquisitions of his mind as of no further importance than as they improve his heart and capacitate him for more extended usefulness.

He will never suffer himself to be bloated into vanity, self-conceit and arrogance. He will value modesty and charity as the chief gems in the coronet of wisdom. He will look upon an unassuming, affable and condescending spirit as the most convincing evidence of a great mind. He will make every allowance for the absurd opinions and incorrect remarks of the ignorant; and he will strive to communicate such instruction as he shall feel it proper to impart, in a manner the best adapted to render it acceptable and efficacious.

My hearers, we have all, I suppose, conversed with men whose great aim it seemed to be to convince us how exceedingly wise they were, and how astonishingly ignorant and weak we were; and on the other hand, we have been called upon to admire the good nature and eminent skill of others, who would give us a vast deal of information in such a manner that the

idea that they conceived themselves in any wise superior to us would never enter our minds. Now it is a merciful disposition, in one of high acquirements, that produces this modest, unassuming, unoppressive and inoffensive demeanor. It is the part of the merciful man, so to let the light of his mind shine upon others that, like the ray of the sun, it shall fall upon men with a soft, cheering and invigorating influence.

Another branch of the duty commanded in our text is, that we should be exceedingly cautious, candid and charitable in forming our opinion, and more especially in expressing our judgments concerning the talents and acquirements of others. We ought to reflect that in human nature there is a great diversity of gifts; that whilst one person may display himself to great advantage in one department, he may be quite inefficient in another, and that whilst one man may betray weakness in one respect, he may evince much strength in some other respect. We ought to be aware that every man, however great in certain spheres, has yet his weak side. And we ought not therefore when we discover in our fellow-man a few deficiencies, though they should even be important ones, hastily to conclude that he is alike deficient in every thing.

We often meet with persons manifestly out of place, following avocations for which nature never designed them, pursuing with heartlessness callings in no wise adapted to the bent of their dispositions, and continually thwarted in their aims, because they do not aim at the right things; sinking into despondency, because they

have not devoted their attention to that sphere of life for which they are constitutionally fitted.

Though doubtless the greater part of mankind, in a very tolerable degree, can succeed in almost any business they undertake, if they will be as attentive and industrious as they ought to be; yet I doubt not there are many instances in which persons are so plainly misplaced in life, that we ought to look with great charity and pity upon their mismanagements and failures.

Another occasion for the exercise of Christian mercy, is made by the errors of opinion into which we believe our fellow-men to have fallen. Different minds are constantly manifesting on a variety of subjects numerous differences of judgment and conclusions. On no subjects are these differences so apt to swell into heated disputes and bitter animosities, as on those of politics and religion. And it is deeply to be mourned that, in the party strifes which flow from these conflicting views of doctrines and measures, a most unmerciful spirit is so frequently manifested.

We ought to reflect upon the great number of circumstances which operate to incline men's opinions to favor this or that view of a subject;—that we are fallible as well as he who differs from us;—that he differs no more widely from us, than we do from him; and that if he is in a very egregious error, he may be as honest, well-meaning and sincere in it, as we are in the indulgence of what we esteem true opinions. Our neighbor may advocate with great warmth a system of principles and measures in relation to the policy of government,

which we think at war with the true interests of the commonwealth; and yet we are not hastily to conclude that he is at heart an enemy to his country. We ought to be slow in attributing bad motives to him, so long as we can conceive that he may possibly be actuated by good ones. While in a proper manner we oppose his sentiments, we ought to be personally charitable towards him.

Our neighbor may avow with great zeal and earnestness religious principles and a course of sectarian policy which we regard as extremely erroneous, absurd and pernicious; and yet we are not hastily to conclude that he is at heart an enemy to the interests of religion.

We are to recollect that God has given no one of us a right to decide for the faith of another, or to extend control over his conscience. If we feel certain that he is in error, he may feel equally certain that we are mistaken. Or if he does not show himself quite so positive that we are in the wrong, perhaps it arises from his superior degree of candor, self-diffidence, and modesty. If we are anxious to bring him to juster views, harsh censure, opprobrious epithets, and unqualified condemnation are not among the most likely means to effect our object.

The exhibition of a kind, affectionate and merciful treatment towards him, will do far more to win his confidence and enlist his feelings in what we regard as truth. And if he remains ever so obstinately attached to what we esteem his errors, we are to leave his case with God. We are not to manifest an illiberal, un-

christian spirit, because we think others embrace erroneous opinions. Especially we are not to misrepresent their doctrines, still less to abuse their motives and vilify their characters. To do so is to violate the duty of mercy.

We are called upon to practise the duty commended in our text toward the unhappy defects of temper which we occasionally observe in others. We often meet with persons so whimsical and peevish, that unless we are peculiarly on our guard, we shall suffer their inequalities and faults of temper, to bring up like evils in us. But surely it is not the part of a wise man to allow his own temper to be ruffled by the inequalities of his neighbor's.

We are called upon for the practice of mercy in our treatment of others in respect to their conduct. As to acts of decided and open immorality, it would be unmerciful to the interests of society to pass them over without condemnation. We have no right to encourage men in flagrant violations of virtue. We war against our duty to ourselves, our families, our neighbors, our Savior and our God, when we smile complacently upon crime, when we flatter men in their vices. In doing so, an awful example is set before the rising generation. But still there is such a thing as an overstrained severity, such a thing as unmerciful censure towards those even who have transgressed some of the fundamental principles of social order.

In forming our opinions of men's wrong actions, we should always take into consideration and give due

weight to all the palliating circumstances which we can believe to have been connected with them. We should make proper allowance for the frailties of human nature. We are not to suppose because a man has done one bad thing, that he must necessarily be abandoned to habitual and general vice. We are not to condemn a man for a total want of moral principle, because in some respects he shows a want of it. We are not readily to attribute a bad motive to an apparently good action, nor are we to condemn even a bad action as proceeding from the very worst motive of which we can conceive. We are not to show great anxiety to make known our neighbor's shame, still less to exaggerate it, and spread it abroad in the worst possible point of light. We are not to indulge in bitter sarcasms and spiteful reproaches upon his improper conduct.

The divine command is, 'Thou shalt not hate thy neighbor in thy heart, thou shalt, in any wise, reprove thy brother and not suffer sin upon him.' If his fault has not come to the general knowledge of the world, it is your duty to go to him in private, and admonish him of his sin 'between thee and him,' and do all in your power in the most kind and affectionate manner to reclaim him, to save him from disgrace and from persisting in an evil course. If his offence is of a public character, while you cannot express approbation of it, you are not to load it with exaggerated representations of depravity, but, on the contrary, if you are a merciful man, you will bring up every circumstance which leads

to the most charitable view of the case. Thus remembering that we all have our faults, we should be merciful in regard to those of others. We should bear in mind the words of our Savior and his apostle, 'He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone,' and 'He that thinketh he standeth, let him take heed lest he fall.'

Finally, we are called upon for the practice of mercy towards the poor, the sick and afflicted. In a world so full of calamity, and in times so pressing with disaster as the present, you need not look abroad for objects which require sympathy and aid. How many are sinking under infirmities, how many are confined in dungeon gloom, 'shut from the common air and common use of their own limbs,' how many are pining beneath the gradual wastings of nature, how many are writhing on beds of sickness in the most excruciating agonies—how many are suffering for the common necessaries of life. How many a lone mother is cut to the heart at the cries of her children for bread. And these are the distresses of your brethren, my Christian friends. Turn not, as you hope for the mercy of heaven, a deaf ear to their sufferings. Pass them not by unnoticed. Imitate the good Samaritan, rather than the insensible Levite or the unpitying priest. Remember that pure religion and undefiled before God, is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction. Believe the assertion of your Savior, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Of all luxuries, prefer the luxury of doing good, the sweet satisfaction arising from a consciousness of being an agent of Al-

mighty God in alleviating the sufferings, supplying the wants, preventing the dangers, and increasing the comforts and enjoyments of your fellow-men, and thus be able to exclaim with the good man of old, 'When the ear heard me then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness and it clothed me; my judgment was a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the fatherless, and the cause which I knew not I searched out.'

PRAYER.

O God, on every side of us we behold the evidences of thy benignity and love, of thy readiness to bless and forgive rather than to cause grief and inflict punishment. Thine infinite goodness is the broad basis of thine infinite greatness. The shadow of thy mercy rests upon all thy works. O teach us to be practical adorers of thee, teach us to express our admiration of thy perfections, by cultivating in our own bosoms and manifesting in our lives those excellences which we discover and rejoice in, in thee. Render us kind, compassionate, charitable, merciful and bountiful like thee.

Thou hast invested man with capacities above those of all the other inhabitants of the earth. Thou hast made him the lord of this lower world. May none of us abuse our dominion over the inferior animals. May we treat the helpless brute which thou hast subjected to our control, with kindness and mercy. May we not be guilty of inflicting unnecessary pain upon the humble animal that toils for us, or looks up to us, as in conscious dependence for subsistence and compassionate care. And in regard to our fellow-creatures of the human family, since thou hast seen fit to distribute among them various allotments and stations in life, and a diversity of capacities according as thou hast discovered that the greatest amount of individual happiness and of the general welfare might be best promoted,—may each of us exercise that mercy and candor and

gentleness which is due to all. Save the master from abusing his power over the servant; save the parent from tyranny towards his child; save the husband from coldness and cruelty towards the tender and more defenceless partner of his bosom; save the man of wealth from oppressing the poor; save the man of public office from misusing the influence and power which belong to his station; save the wise man from taking undue advantage of the ignorance, errors, or follies of his less informed or less gifted neighbor; save the cool, dispassionate man from triumphing over the defects of a warm, hasty temper in others; save us all from an uncharitable judgment of our fellow-men; save the politician from misrepresenting and vilifying his opponent; save the religionist from a narrow, sectarian spirit; save the man of good character from all avoidable harshness and severity of opinion and conduct towards his erring fellow-men. Save us all from the poisonous breath and the deadly pang of detraction and slander. Save us all from being busy bodies in other men's matters. May each one of us earn his own bread honestly and eat it in quietness. May we study the things that make for peace. May we not be weary in well doing. And in each of the several relations of life may we be careful to do as little harm as possible, and all the good in our power. So may we live together as one great household of brethren and sisters, acknowledging thee as our Father, and Jesus as our elder brother and Lord, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the laws of Christ.

SERMON IX.

THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

Romans ix. 14—24. 'What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, and that he might make known the riches of glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?'

Perhaps no portion of the holy scriptures has been perverted to a more unholy use than that contained in the words I have just read. The expressions of Paul in the text and context, have been eagerly seized and laid down to form a base on which to rear a theological hypothesis of partial, restricted mercy, and infinite, inexorable wrath. They have been used as a pedestal

to support a giant system whose influence has been felt through all Christendom, and whose energies have been employed in surrounding the throne of Omnipotence with horror, and the lot of man with woe and despair. I mean the system of sovereign, partial election and endless reprobation.

To this system, I frankly confess myself utterly opposed; and as I would confront its abettors at the threshold of their own arguments, I have taken hold of a passage of sacred writ which they suppose to be at the foundation of their creed, and I trust I shall be able to wrest from them what they have used as a main prop of their faith, and present it as the plain support of the doctrine of sovereign mercy manifesting its true character in effecting the salvation of mankind. I wish to preface my examination of the wide and important subject laid before me in my text, by this single remark. I have no intention to inflict a wound on the feelings of any sincere Christian in this assembly, of whatever order he may be a member. I know men are prone to think themselves the objects of animadversion, when only their opinions are attacked; and yet it is very illiberal thus to think. I can conceive a person may be a great enemy to some of my doctrines, and yet a sincere friend to me. Opinions when laid before the public, become public property, which every member of the community ought to be allowed to examine without censure. It is not with men but with their principles that we have to do. An error in faith is not necessarily productive of error in practice. Its

pernicious influence may be modified and counteracted by opposing influences resulting from sound principles being combined with it. A man's character is not to be decided upon by some peculiar sentiments he adopts. I have known many very good people who were exceedingly tenacious of some gross tenets of religious faith. I have known, on the other hand, some bad people advance sound opinions. I am conscious of teaching many truths, but I do not claim on that account to be esteemed a true Christian. No; my fellow-men are to form their judgments concerning the doctrines I inculcate from the consistency or want of consistency with reason and scripture, which those doctrines exhibit, and not from the tenor of my conduct; and they are to read my worth or want of worth not in my doctrines, but in my life. What I would that others should do to me in this respect, I do to them. I measure my estimation of my fellow-men not from what truths or errors I judge they hold, but from the spirit they manifest, from the lives they lead; not from what peculiar dogmas they profess to believe, but from what actions they perform. Split up into various sects and sentiments as Christendom is, Christian ministers of all denominations cannot too frequently urge their hearers to the practice of mutual forbearance and charity. It is the easiest thing in the world for a religious teacher to spread among his adherents embittered feeling towards the professors of sentiments at variance with theirs, and thus to scatter the wild-fires of dissension and animosity among mankind, and kindle

flames of malevolence and persecution. But, O my God, I know not what condemnation teachers who do thus, are bringing on their own souls as well as those of their hearers.

I do entreat of you, my dear Christian friends, of whatever order you may be, not to construe any thing I shall utter in this discourse, as proceeding from personal disrespect or a want of Christian charity. You take the liberty of advancing objections to our views, we do not blame you for this; nor should you censure us for making our objections against your sentiments. I should have but a poor opinion of you were you to withhold what you believe to be important truth; and I should have a poor opinion of myself, and you ought to have a poor opinion of me, should I, as a Christian minister, keep back from a frank and honest avowal of those views of Christian doctrine which I entertain.

Having thus striven to guard my own breast and the breasts of my hearers against those unkind and illiberal feelings which discussions of controverted religious tenets are but too apt to arouse, I solicit your attention, my friendly hearers, to an humble illustration of the import of my text. Its manifest doctrine is this, that God, as sovereign ruler of the universe, does see fit to elect a certain portion of his creatures from among the rest, to stand in a peculiar relation to himself, to possess peculiar endowments, to enjoy peculiar advantages, and to answer peculiar purposes.

This is so evidently the doctrine of scripture and reason, that it stands in no need of direct proof. The

only difference that can arise concerning it may be summed up in the three following questions: first, what are the grounds of God's election? Second, what influence does this election exert on the elect? Third, what consequences arise from it to the non-elect? An answer to these three inquiries will form the substance of the present discourse.

I. My first inquiry is, What are the grounds of God's election of a part of mankind to peculiar relations, endowments and offices? To this question I am prepared to give but one answer, viz. the absolute, independent, sovereign grace and good pleasure of the Almighty. This is the plain doctrine of the scriptures, and is confirmed by human reason, noticing the every-day operations of divine providence. That men are elected independently of their own works, is a doctrine of scripture. The Apostle plainly asserts it in the chapter which contains my text. Speaking of Esau and Jacob, he says, 'For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth,'—these words express as fully as language can express, that Jacob was chosen by the Almighty to be the inheritor of peculiar blessings;—that his being thus elected was an act of divine sovereignty, and not the consequence of good or evil done by him; that Esau was not so chosen, that his not being so elected was also an act of the divine sovereignty, and not the consequence of good or evil done by him. The children of Israel were an elect nation, the chosen

people of God; yet Moses says to them, 'Understand therefore, that Jehovah thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people.' Samuel referred to its having pleased Jehovah to make them his people. Ezekiel, (chapter xx.) plainly declares the greatness of their iniquity, and that the Lord chose them and wrought for them, notwithstanding all their sins, for his name's sake.

This same doctrine of election independent of human merits, is supported by uniform experience. We see persons all around us possessing advantages which they have had no hand in procuring; while we see others destitute of like advantages, not from any fault of their own. One is born in a palace, the inheritor of a kingdom, while the other is born in a hovel, the child of want, perhaps of infamy and disgrace. One man comes into the world to be the idol of wealthy and influential friends, deriving prosperity as a gift instead of an acquisition, while another is doomed by circumstances beyond his control, to struggle against the current of the most untoward events. What is thus true of individuals is no less so of communities. One people receive their being in a climate the most salubrious, in a land the most fertile, under a government the most benign, beneath the influence of institutions, civil, literary and religious, the most salutary; while another people by the circumstances of their birth are unavoidably excluded from the enjoyment of such privileges. One generation of men are born to the possession of

great political tranquillity, moral light and general national welfare, while another generation in the same country are thrown into existence, as it were, in the midst of political convulsions, at a period when the community is distracted by civil dissensions, and the whole face of society marred by carnage and desolation.

Thus we perceive, both from the declarations of God's word and from the dictates of common experience, that some men, independently of their own merits, are made the subjects of advantages denied to other men. Now this feature of the divine government I call sovereign election; that is, the unmerited bestowment by one means or another of certain favors on one person or class of persons, from which others without any fault of their own are excluded. Now the question comes up, does this distribution of blessings render the divine government obnoxious to just censure? Does it argue that the Creator is a partial being, a respecter of persons, or in the words of our text, 'Is there unrighteousness with God?' The true answer to these questions must necessarily be satisfactory or unsatisfactory to our minds, just so far as we obtain or fail to obtain just ideas of the final object to be accomplished by this varied distribution of favors.

II. This leads us to our second inquiry; What consequences are to result to mankind as a whole from the election of a part?

Now the scriptural doctrine of election is, that the elect are chosen and qualified for certain purposes to promote the good of the world. Christ was the first

elect or chosen of God to be the Savior of the world. 'Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth. I have put my spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.' 'And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.' A being chosen and qualified of God to be the Savior of the world, he took human nature for his body, thus becoming the 'Head of every man.'

The nation of the Jews too, were in an early age elected to become the channel through which divine knowledge might be conveyed to the world. Abraham was elected to be the father of a nation peculiarly distinguished for spiritual privileges. Now what is the revealed object of this election? The blessing of the whole world. For it is declared that in Abraham and his seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. When the Jewish dispensation finally came to a close, the Messiah, for ages predicted by the mouths of the prophets, came and fulfilled by his own death and resurrection, the darker teaching of the law. He came to his own, but his own received him not. The sceptre then departed from Judah, and the law-giver from between his feet. The Jews as a nation were rejected. The gospel was proclaimed, and a remnant of the house of Israel were chosen, who, together with a select number of Gentiles, were elected for believers. They were chosen out of the world, and duly qualified to be lights in the world, to enlighten the Gentiles. Paul styles himself a servant of God and an Apostle of Je-

sus Christ according to the faith of God's elect. 'And shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry unto him day and night?' 'If it were possible, they should deceive the very elect.' Now, by these and numerous phrases of a similar character, the band of believers in the early ages of Christianity is evidently intended. The Jewish church being a church of ordinances and ceremonies to shadow forth the more glorious dispensation of the gospel, was distinguished by the mark of circumcision. The elect believers in the gospel received the inward seal of faith. The name Israel is given to believers, because they bear the same faith which Jacob had when he prevailed with the angel, and had his name changed from Jacob to Israel. Among this elect company of early Christian believers, was a remnant of the ancient covenant people, while the rest of the nation were abandoned to blindness of mind and hardness of heart. Hence we see the propriety of St Paul's declaration—'They are not all Israel that are of Israel.' Under the former dispensation, the Jews were elected to teach divine truth through the types and shadows of the law. Under that of the gospel, a visible church of believers was chosen out of the world, or elected, to enforce faith and repentance. The seed of Abraham was elected, that through it all the families of the earth might be blessed. A similar purpose is declared to be the object of the election of believers. Thus Christ uses the expression—'That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, I in them and thou in me, that

they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know'—'and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.' And to this agree the words of the prophet, as it is written, 'After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is thrown down, and will build again the ruins thereof, and set it up that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles on whom my name is called, saith the Lord who doeth all these things.'

Thus we have briefly glanced at the scriptural doctrine of election, and so far from finding in it any thing like a partial or an exclusive spirit we discover that in every instance, one man or one class of men is elected to promote the general good. In his election of Abram and his posterity, God declares the object to be that all the families of the earth should be blessed.

In his election of his son, the object is declared to be the salvation of the world. He elected, qualified and sent him to be the Savior of the world. In the election of believers in the early days of Christianity, when miraculous means were made use of to give evidence to the truth of the gospel, the object is declared to be that the world may believe, and that the world may know the truth that Christ was sent from God. The Apostle Paul was elected and miraculously converted to be a preacher to the Gentiles; but so far was he from thinking himself on this account a peculiar favorite of heaven, or belonging to any class who had an exclusive interest in the atonement, that he declares that Christ tasted death for every man. John was a beloved disciple and a chosen vessel, but yet declares that Christ aton-

ed for the sins of the whole world. We have shown in what sense and for what purpose God has an elect people, and that the elect are not chosen heirs of eternal salvation to the exclusion of the rest of the world, but for the salvation, through faith, of the world.—Thus we perceive that God elects a part of his creatures, not for their own benefit merely, but that they may fulfill certain purposes promotive of the general good. Thus among men legislators are elected, not for their own exclusive advantage, but to advance the interests of society at large. In the illustration which I have given of this scriptural, benevolent, and very rational doctrine of election, I have given my ideas the quaint dress of the scriptural representation, a representation well adapted to the periods in which these ancient writings were penned. To express myself more in consonance to modern modes of language, I would say that God has from the beginning constituted the natural and moral laws which control this world, in such a manner, that there is a cause appointed to produce every effect; and that there is a time peculiarly proper for each cause to act and each effect to be produced; that society is of a nature to advance through successive ages towards perfection; that one age is peculiarly suitable for the development of one truth, and that another development of intellectual light is better fitted for another period of the world;—that when society is ripe for a new acquisition of knowledge, minds spring up, peculiarly constructed by the God of nature, and peculiarly placed by the hand

of Providence in situations favorable to the unfolding of such truths as meet the demands of the age. Thus one individual is now elected and qualified by natural endowments and acquired energies, to give new accessions of light to the nation to which he belongs—and that nation to become a source of still wider advancement. Thus Abraham is elected to be the father of the Jewish nation,—thus Isaiah to be its most accomplished prophet. Thus Newton is elected to instruct the world in philosophy,—thus Washington was elected to be the champion of American freedom,—thus, we say it with reverence, Christ was elected to be the head of a spiritual kingdom for the dispensing of blessings to the whole world of mankind, the moral, the spiritual Savior of the world.

If these views of election are correct, no partiality or injustice is imputable to God. Every man is elected to fulfill some purpose, and is to be judged according to his rightful improvement or misimprovement of the capacities and advantages which his Creator has bestowed, so that strict justice will be rendered to every being, and sovereign mercy will, through various channels, bring human nature to purity and happiness. Having thus briefly given you my views of the nature and design of election, I shall endeavor to reconcile several verses of the text to these views.

What then are we to understand by the declaration, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy?' Unquestionably that the Creator exercises his mercy according to his own good pleasure, that he bestows it

on such individuals, and at such times, and in such manner as best suits the accomplishment of all his benevolent designs toward the whole family of his creatures. But surely we have no reason to suppose his mercy limited to a part of his creatures, when inspiration expressly informs us that he is good unto all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works. But again it is said, 'It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' All that we can infer from this is, that God does not equally manifest his mercy to all in the present state; but no proof is thence derived that all will not finally become the recipients of his grace. You will find by turning to Isaiah xxviii. 11, that it is declared of his chosen people the Israelites, 'Therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will show them no favor;' and in Hosea ii. 4, of Jerusalem God says, 'And I will not have mercy upon her children;' yet this withdrawal of mercy for a time, did not finally exclude them from mercy. For in Romans xi. the Apostle declares, 'that God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.' There are periods when God doth manifest his displeasure against sin by inflicting condign punishment on transgressors; but this does not prove that sin or his displeasure will continue forever. And it is expressly declared that he will finish sin, and make an end of transgression, that he will not be always wroth, that his wrath endureth for a moment, but his mercy endureth forever.

But, says an objector, it is also declared, 'and whom he will he hardeneth,' and Pharaoh is introduced as an example. 'For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.' It is very commonly supposed that it is implied in this passage that God brought Pharaoh into existence and raised him up to manhood for the purpose of making him an abandoned wretch, that his Creator might have the glory of destroying him. But what grounds have we for coming to such a conclusion? None whatever. Pharaoh was raised to the throne through the ordinary events of God's providence, as many bad men have been; and, like many other bad rulers, he abused and perverted his privileges, misused the means of benefiting mankind which his exalted station gave him, and instead of proving a blessing, became a scourge to the human race. Various evils came upon him as the consequences of his sins; but chastisements did not bring him to true repentance, he still remained a wicked man. Was he immediately destroyed? No, though a very wicked man, God still spared him, and even raised him up from the sore evils that had gathered around him. What could justify the divine Being in this procedure, in thus extending continued favors to one who so grossly and perseveringly abused them? The answer is thus given; 'That I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.' We have no reason to con-

clude that God hardened his heart, by infusing, through a special agency, an impenitent disposition into his mind, nor by placing him in a situation in which he could not avoid becoming and remaining a hardened rebel. Had Jehovah thus dealt with him, we ought rather to pity the unfortunate man for his hard fate, than to condemn him for being and doing that which he could not help being and doing. It wars against every honorable conception we can form of the divine character, as well as the scriptural declarations that God is love, that he is good unto all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works—to suppose that he should compel any of his creatures to be hardened and impenitent sinners, and then torment them forever for being that which they could not avoid being. The scriptures declare that God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. No, the case of Pharaoh is not an uncommon case. Pharaoh, like all the rest of us was made a free agent, capable of choosing good and of choosing evil, capable of doing right or of doing wrong, just as he pleased, and if capable of thus choosing and doing, of course liable thus to choose and do. Since it is not in the power of God to make man a free agent, capable of choosing good or evil, of doing right or wrong just as he pleased, and yet make him incapable of choosing evil and doing wrong, God could no more do this than he could produce what would imply a contradiction in terms in any other way. for instance, than he could make two mountains without a valley between them. How then was God

said to harden Pharaoh's heart? In no other sense than he may be said to harden the heart of every sinner, in having made him capable of doing right or wrong, and therefore liable to do wrong, and in having placed him in situations where good and evil were set before him, leaving him free to incline to the one or the other just as he pleased. He did please to incline to the evil, and thus he rendered the facts of his free agency, and of his situation, instruments of hardening his heart. Now, he had the same capacity to have chosen good that he had to choose evil, the same capacity to do right, that he had to do wrong, and had he chosen the good and done the right, then he would have rendered the facts that he was a free agent, and that good and evil were set before him, the instruments of softening his heart. Then God might have been said to have softened Pharaoh's heart. How? Through his having rightly improved the nature, capacities and advantages that God had bestowed upon him. But as the case was, God was said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart. How? By his having misimproved the capacities and advantages with which God had endowed him. But was it necessary that Pharaoh should be a bad man in order that God's power might be shown, and that his name might be declared throughout all the earth? The facts in the present case do not necessarily lead us to such a conclusion. We can conceive of so many other ways in which God could have made an equal display of his power, and sent his name abroad, that it seems hardly admissible that he was de-

pendent on the wickedness of Pharaoh to effect these purposes. To what conclusions, then, do we arrive from the passage under consideration? Plainly to nothing other than these; that the very favors which God had bestowed on Pharaoh, through his abuse of them, had become the instruments of hardening his heart, and that as his heart was thus hardened, God so overruled his wickedness that it became subservient to the display of his power, and to the declaring of his name throughout all the earth. The like conduct we believe God exercises towards all sinners. He does not compel them to violate his laws, but if they will do so, he overrules their wicked actions in such a way, that, though they shall not escape the just punishment of their sins, their wickedness shall not be able to frustrate his benevolent designs towards all mankind. Thus, though he does not by any direct agency force men to exercise wrath, yet if they will do it, he makes 'the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain.'

Thus far I hope my illustrations of the text, though necessarily brief, are in the main satisfactory. I proceed to examine what is implied in the question, 'Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another to dishonor?' Clay is a yielding, pliable substance; and the potter has power over it to mould it into one form or another, and thus fit his several vessels for one use or another, just as best suits his purposes; but no clay can be more completely subject to the will and power of the potter,

than human nature is to the will and power of Almighty God. But what wise potter ever moulded a mass of clay in such a manner that a certain number of vessels were made to exhibit evidences of the most nice and curious workmanship, and of design to adapt them to the most important uses, displaying thus the ingenuity and ability of the artificer, while from the same mass, equally under his power, he formed a certain number of other vessels so entirely unfit for use or ornament, that they were of no other consequence than to be broken and destroyed? And for what purpose? Why, that the power of the potter over his clay might be made known, or in other words, that men might say that this ingenious and skillful workman, who was able to construct out of a lump of dead clay vessels of the most exquisite beauty and for the most valuable purposes, had also the astonishing skill, out of the same lump to bring forth fabrics of the utmost deformity, and construct vessels that were good for nothing, and therefore fit only to be destroyed. What honor would any man of good sense award to a potter who acted on such principles? Would his useless works answer any better end to the maker than to remain as monuments of his vanity, folly and caprice? And are we to understand the Apostle in our text, as likening the all-wise, benevolent and all-powerful Jehovah to such a vain, simple and capricious artificer? By no means. Every wise potter will work up the whole mass of his clay, so far as he is able, to the best possible advantage; and though after all, through want of skill, he

may fail of making all his vessels to answer the useful ends for which he designed them, yet no similar failure can happen to the formations of the infinite Creator.

What then did Paul mean to illustrate by introducing the supposed case of the potter? Why, plainly this, that as the potter is able to construct vessels in different shapes and sizes to suit the general convenience of his customers, adapting some to uses which men call dishonorable, and others to uses which they pronounce honorable, so God, having formed the universe as a whole, to answer the best possible ultimate ends, has adapted every part of it to the most effectual promotion of these ends. So as it respects his allotments to mankind, he has bestowed upon one individual such endowments and advantages as are best suited to the sphere of action in which he is to move, and he has circumscribed that sphere just as he saw the ultimate interests of the individual and the general welfare would be best advanced. On another individual he has conferred some superior advantages, accompanied too with proportionably greater evils; or less advantages in some respects, attended with less disadvantages. He has pursued the same general policy with nations; he has endowed and placed one people in one manner, and another in another, just as he saw the world as a whole would derive the greatest benefit; and though men in their limited views of things may deem his allotments exceedingly partial and unjust, yet he, being all wise, knows best how the greatest final interests of all his creatures are to be promot-

ed; and compared with his infinite wisdom the wisdom of man is trifling. It would be equally proper for the unthinking clay, could it utter a voice, to arraign its maker for the several shapes into which he was moulding it, as for vain man to reply against God, to charge his Maker with partiality and injustice. In fact, if man knew the whole mind of the Deity, he would discover that partiality and injustice formed no part of his character, no feature of his administration, but that in the several bestowments of his blessings on different individuals and nations, he was showing that he was good unto all and that his tender mercies were over all his works. As the potter, though he fits one vessel for one purpose and another for another, yet has no more regard for one part of his clay than for another, and designs to work up the whole lump to the best advantage; thus God has so constituted human nature, and all the physical and moral laws to which it is subject, that of the race of Adam some attain to a more and others to a less honorable station; yet through this constitution of human nature the best final interests of the human race, as a whole, are promoted.

I feel assured that the more the human mind is brought to the contemplation of the divine government, the more it will be satisfied of the tendency of every thing to produce universal good. Yet, viewing the dealings of God's providence in a partial point of sight, man is but too prone to urge complaints against his Maker, and to indulge in very reprehensible views of his character. The wise and skillful potter knows bet-

ter than most who will gaze at his wares, in what manner his clay shall be rendered the most serviceable. He knows one vessel is demanded for one purpose, and another for another. He does not, therefore, make them all alike, but varies their structure according to the several purposes they are designed to answer.

But, says an objector, we read of vessels fitted to destruction. True; and we read of individuals and nations who have been destroyed, and we cannot suppose that they were thus destroyed, except through their having rendered themselves fit subjects of destruction. But have we ground to believe that destruction is the great end of their existence? Read the seventeenth chapter of Jeremiah, and you will find what awful destruction was threatened upon the Jews as a nation. It is declared, 'The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond,' and the prophet prays God to bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction. And read through the prophets, and observe how judgments were threatened against them under the word destruction. But what then? Suppose you that the pious Jeremiah prayed for the endless damnation of his nation, and suppose you that the threatenings of their destruction implied their consignment to endless misery in the future state? No rational commentator would give such a meaning to the word destruction. But notwithstanding all the iniquities of the Jews, and the swift destruction that came upon them, the apostle asks, 'Hath God cast away his people?' and answers, 'God

forbid,' and declares, 'So all Israel shall be saved.' In this very comparison of the potter it is almost certain that he alluded to the eighteenth chapter of Jeremiah, where it is stated that the Lord commanded Jeremiah to go down to the potter's house, and the prophet had there seen the vessel which the potter had made, marred in the artificer's hand, and formed again by him into another vessel, as it seemed good to him to make it. The question was then asked, 'O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter, saith the Lord? Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in my hand, O house of Israel.' If then when a vessel is marred in the hands of a potter, he can form it again, and continue his work, until he hath completed it to his own mind, shall it be said that Jehovah cannot do the same with his frail creatures? If they be marred under his hand in his dispensations towards them, and broken in pieces like a potter's vessel, can he not form them again, continue his dispensations towards, and his his operations upon them, until he has made them such as he can rejoice in, pure and happy beings? Shall it be said that God hath less power over his creatures than the potter hath over his clay? If God can mould the house of Israel as the potter does his clay when it is marred, can he not do the same with all his creatures? The Apostle declares, not only that all things are of God and through him, but likewise that all things are to him. But how can all things be to him, if the same vessels he has made are most sadly devoted to dishonorable and unclean uses?

From a right consideration of our subject, we may derive many useful practical reflections. In view of the love of God to each of us, we ought to be influenced by the highest, purest motives, to love him in return, to withdraw ourselves from all affections and practices which he has forbidden, and to devote our hearts and our lives to his service. In the second place, in view of the impartial justice of God in assigning his various allotments to his creatures, and making his various requirements of them, we ought to recognize ourselves as free and accountable beings, to be judged here and hereafter according to the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad, and to be rewarded or punished, not according to the blessings we enjoy, or the stations we occupy, but in exact proportion as we have improved or misimproved our several opportunities and advantages. Thirdly, we should learn from our subject, contentment in our several spheres of action, believing that whatever assignment God has allotted us is dictated by infinite wisdom and goodness, and that if we act well our parts in our respective stations in life, we shall not only meet the approbation of Heaven, but more fully accomplish our own felicity, and the good of the world around us, than we could do had we been differently placed. Thus should we rest satisfied in the conviction of the Apostle, that all things work together for good unto them that love God. Finally, in view of God's universal benevolence, we sdoulh be incited to imitate it, to go forth from the narrow walls which a selfish spirit is accustomed to build

around itself, and to stand out in the open and clear light of pure and expansive charity, beneath the broad heaven of an all-embracing love, manifesting in all our intercourse with our fellow-men a sincere desire not to advance our own interests by injuring our neighbor's, but of blessing ourselves by blessing others. And thus, my friendly hearers, let us be lovers of God and imitators of his goodness, fearers of God and haters of iniquity, faithful disciples of Jesus, admirers of his law, followers of his precepts and copiers of his example, and partakers in this world and the next of the salvation he came to effect. May it be the great aim of our lives to honor God cheerfully by honoring the noble natures he has given us, by doing good and not evil to the creatures he has formed, by rendering ourselves and all around us as wise, as good, and consequently as happy as we can.

SERMON X.

GOD THE FATHER OF ALL.

Malachi ii. 10. 'Have we not all one father, hath not one God created us?'

Most men agree in tracing the origin of the universe to the exercise of a creative power, whatever may be their respective notions of the essential nature of that power, whether it be matter or spirit; or whatever may be the names by which they choose to designate it, whether 'Jehovah, Jove or Lord.' No exercise of our minds is more natural than to contemplate an effect, as proceeding from some cause capable of producing it. To an effect which exhibits evident marks, of design we hesitate not to assign a cause capable of designing. Such a cause is an intelligent agent. We look at a dwelling suited in its constructions to the wants and conveniences of a human tenant, and the inference is irresistible that every house is built by some man. We look on the great fabric of the universe; we find as far as our observation extends, the most manifest tokens of contrivance; and we have a right to infer the existence of a contriver as much

superior in intelligence and power to the builder of the house, as the workmanship of the universe is more vast and complicated than the buildings which man is able to plan and erect. Hence our notions of an intelligent Deity. A self-existent creative power must exist somewhere; and from the order and harmony which every where meet our view in our contemplations of nature, we most naturally come to the conclusion that this self-existent power is an intelligent agent. Such we conceive to be the plain doctrine of Natural Theology. Revelation not only sanctions this doctrine, but it enters into a detail of the moral qualities of this wonderful intelligence, clothes it with the properties of a person, and brings into view the moral relations which subsist between him and all intellectual beings. In our text, as in many other passages, God and men are represented as bearing to each other the relationship of father and children. Jehovah is revealed to us, not only as the creator of all men but as the father of all men. In what sense God is said to be a father to us all, and in what respects he exhibits the parental character towards us, will form the subject of our present consideration.

I. Let us inquire, first, in what sense God is said to be a father to us all. God may with great propriety be called the creator of an object of which it would be improper to call him father. An ingenious workman builds a machine ; he is properly said to be its builder or maker, but not its father. There are no natural ties of affection, no similarity of moral qualities, no

moral obligations betwixt the workman and his unintelligent machine. So God is the creator of inanimate matter, but not its father; he is the creator of the brute, but not its father. He is the creator and organizer of the unthinking substances which compose our mortal bodies, but not their father. He is the source from which emanates the immortal spirit created in his moral likeness, bearing the impression of his moral image; and he is its father. He is 'the former of our bodies and the father of our spirits.' 'The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.' Now this formed or organized mass of inanimate matter was the mechanism of divine skill and power, but no more the child of God, than was the dust which composed it before the Almighty artificer had moulded it into an organic shape. But when the Creator breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul, endowed with such moral properties of the divine nature as enabled the inspired writer to declare, 'in the image of God created he him,'—I say, when God thus breathed a vital and moral essence of his own nature into man, when he thus imparted to him a principle of being which existed in himself, he established by a single act between himself and man the relationship of father and child,—a relationship founded in the most endearing ties of natural affection, and embracing in itself the strongest obligations of regard and protection on the one hand, and of submission and obedience on the other. Thus we find the origin of this kindred connection existing between man and

his Maker, on which inspiration loves so much to dwell, in the fact that God stamped on the soul of man in his original creation, the impression of his own moral image, that is, imparted to him qualities which appertain to the divine nature, and endowed him with capacities to understand and obey the same law of love which God makes his own rule of action.

In this relationship consists God's right to enforce a moral law, and man's duty to obey it. Now the truth of no proposition can be more evident than this, 'that the same natural relationship which any individual of the human race bears to God, is common to the whole human family,' or, as the Prophet Malachi implies, that one God is the creator and father of us all. St Paul declares, in his appeal to the Grecian poets, 'We are also his offspring.' 'He has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth.' All this is evident, whether we seek for the proof in the pages of Revelation or Nature, in the organization of our bodies or the structure of our minds. So strong is the resemblance of one human frame to another, that the medical professor is able, by acquainting himself with all the parts of a single subject, to detect the natural formation of all men. So striking is the analogy of mind, that the philosopher in investigating the operation of his own mental powers, is able to produce a theory of the mind whose general features are recognized to be true of the moral and intellectual faculties of all men. The discerning advocate, from a sense of what arguments weigh on his own understanding, and what impulses act

on his own passions, is able by one effort of eloquence to pour conviction on the minds, and incline to his favor the feelings of a learned Court, a sober Jury, and a mixed multitude of listeners.—The same principles which bind one man to duty, are equally binding on all men. But we need not tarry to illustrate what is of itself sufficiently plain.

II. God being the father of all men, we hasten to inquire secondly, in what manner in his dealings with all men he exhibits towards them the parental character.

And first we contend that God exhibits towards all men a perfectly parental character in the requisitions of his law. It is the part of a good father to wish and require his children to do that which is good, and in such requisition to have for his object their welfare. Now if we look into the nature of the divine commandments, we shall perceive, I trust, that our Father in heaven acts on precisely the same principle. All of his requirements are of that character that we can in no way so effectually promote our own real interests as by making them the rule of our conduct. The summary of the divine law is this—'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself.' God being the fountain of love and equity, an obedience to this heavenly precept implies that all our feelings should flow from the dictates of benevolence, and all our actions be squared by the unbending rule of right. To love God is to love what is good and just. He then that so loves what is good and just as to make it the rule of his conduct,

loves God. And no proof is necessary to convince you all, that the man whose heart is thus actuated by love, and whose mind is thus governed by principle, is possessed of the happiest character in the world. A good parent requires his children to live with each other in harmony and peace. Our Father in heaven requires the same. We are exhorted to love our neighbor as ourselves, to do unto men whatsoever we would that they should do unto us. He that steadfastly follows this rule can never do wrong. He can never infringe on the rights of his fellow-men, for this heavenly precept brings to his view a principle within him, as an infallible preceptor of duty. This principle is self-love.

What self-love, the strongest passion in our breast, directed by reason, tells us would be just and equitable for another man to do to us in any given circumstances, we know is just and equitable for us in the same circumstances to do to others. He who follows this Golden Rule' of duty is an exactly upright and honest man, 'the noblest work of God,' and the poet might have added too, the happiest work of God. Such a man, depend upon it, is the most certain to procure prosperity and enjoyment. He acquires the confidence, respect and love of the world around him, and what is of still greater consequence, he is able to respect himself, and enjoy that secret complacency of a good conscience which is a stranger to the bosom of the unprincipled worldling. Like some gentle river that forms a boundary betwixt warring nations, his life

pursues its course free and unruffled amid the discordant clashings which engage the sons of artifice and strife. He has no occasion for disguises to cloak his real character. His heart is like a lake of crystal; you may look to the bottom and you will find nothing impure; there are no turbid springs there to tinge the clearness of its waters, but in its calm mirror the image of the pure heavens above reposes.

Man loves to be happy. Happiness is his great aim, his chief good. Now the law of God directs him to the only path in which he can find it, by laying before him the great chart of his duty to his God, to his neighbor, to himself. As to the self-denial required of us, we are only commanded to abstain from that which would injure us. The divine law enforces as duties, the practice of temperance, chastity, sobriety, industry, moderation; and to disregard its precepts in these respects is to pursue a course of conduct which serves to mar our own peace, injure our health, property, respectability, and usefulness to ourselves and those with whom we are connected.

We thus perceive that God manifests the paternal character towards all men in the standard of duty which he has set up for all men to follow.

But, secondly, God exhibits the paternal character toward all of his children in the moral discipline of his government. It is the object of a good parent to place his children in such situations, and to pursue towards them such a course of discipline as he esteems the most conducive to their good. Now we maintain that

the common Father of us all, in his government of the whole family of man, acts on the same principle. Partiality to children, the common consent of mankind condemns in an earthly parent, and we are confident it forms no feature of the divine administration. The Scriptures declare that the wisdom from above is without partiality—that God is no respecter of persons,—that every man shall be rewarded according to his deeds whether they be good or bad. It then follows that the sin of one transgressor is punished with the same severity which is inflicted on another equally criminal offender, and that the same motive which induces the exercise of punishment on one individual, gives rise to its infliction on all transgressors. Now it forms a part of the belief of Christians of all denominations, that God punishes all men in mercy. Nothing is more common than to find good men, in the sacred books and elsewhere, expressing their sense of the goodness and mercy of God in the afflicting chastisements which he causes them to suffer. We maintain that the universal Father causes no distress to visit any of his moral offspring, but what is absolutely necessary to their ultimate good. The Scriptures affirm that God 'doth not willingly afflict or grieve,' not saints merely, but 'the children of men.' The Scriptures affirm that 'God so loved the world'—Whom did he love? The world. But the Scriptures again affirm that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

There is nothing in the nature of just and proper

punishment inconsistent with the most ardent and enduring affection and regard for the suffering offender. The best earthly parents are by no means those who are most sparing of the rod. They punish and yet they love their children. The punishment they inflict is dictated by love, not by caprice, or malice, or revenge. In like manner our heavenly Father loves his world of intelligent beings, and yet inflicts that due measure of punishment which is requisite to their temporal and eternal welfare.

The punishments of God we contend are as light as is consistent with the moral condition and true interests of his erring children, while his blessings are far greater than their merits deserve; and thus his parental character is manifested in perfect strength and glory. He punishes justly, he gives freely. The very name, father by which the relationship betwixt him and man is so frequently in the sacred writings expressed, implies something more than dealing with his children on the principles of adequate rewards and punishments alone. Show me the earthly parent who deals with his children only on strictly retributive principles, and I will show you an unfeeling monster in human shape. Children during the first years of their infancy merit nothing. They know nothing either of good or evil. At this tender period the truly parental character is displayed unincumbered by retributions. The right of punishment is something superadded to that character; but the exercise of this right does not militate against it. The child grows up and acquires a knowledge of

good and evil. It has now a capacity to do right and to do wrong. It does wrong; the parent exercises the right of punishment with the same good feelings toward it that dictated those acts of kindness, which its helpless infancy required before it had become capable either of meriting rewards or of incurring displeasure. The right of punishment begins when the child begins to sin. It is lost when the child has done sinning. Retribution is not a native but an assumed part of the parental character, to meet the exigencies of a fallible state of being. That man should pass through a fallible state of being was a part of the divine purpose in devising his being. This fallible state requires a law, or a code of rewards and punishments. Retributions will continue just so long as man remains a fallible creature. But when man is made willing to submit to the divine law, punishment becomes no longer necessary. It begins when man begins to be a sinner. It ends when man ceases to be a sinner.

Thirdly, we see that God is the author of evil, but not of sin. He asserts, 'I make peace and create evil.' He creates evil, but not for evil's own sake. This creation of evil results not from a love of evil, but from the love of the good which is to be promoted by this evil, and thus all evil in his universe is partial and results in universal good. Now an action, however painful in its consequences it may be, that results from a benevolent intention, is not sin. Consequently God is not the author of sin. A sinner loves evil, and this love of evil influences him to create evil, and this

malevolent affection in the heart, this evil intention is what constitutes sin.

The unfeeling assassin stabs his victim; he thus inflicts an evil, and the intention which prompts the act is an evil one—to destroy life. The assassin, then, is a sinner. The benevolent surgeon inflicts a painful wound on his patient, but his intention is a good one —to save life. In this act he creates evil, but is free from sin. A malevolent wretch concerts a scheme to bring disgrace and ruin on his neighbor. He designingly lays a trap and presents lures to seduce him into temptation. His plan succeeds; his neighbor falls a victim to the insidious wiles of his subtle adversary, and is thus deprived, perhaps, of his character and happiness, while his plotting betrayer is exulting in the ruin he has caused. This seducer is a villain of the blackest dye. He has created evil from an evil nature. A wise parent, on the contrary, places his children under the discipline of a just, but rigorous teacher. From his knowledge of the regulations of the school, and from his acquaintance with the mischievous propensities of his children, he feels certain of two facts: first, that his children will disobey the orders of the school, and secondly, that if they do thus disobey, they will be suitably punished. Thus he may be said to design, first, their disobedience, and next, the punishment they receive in consequence of it. But what is the ultimate design of this father? Surely not that his offspring should be utterly ruined by this discipline. No; but that through its exercise their characters

should be improved, their intellectual powers brightened, and thus that they should become better qualified to discharge the important duties of after life. Now the disobedience and consequent punishment of these children, viewed separately as an end, were undoubtedly evils. Yet with a full assurance of these evils in his mind, the father did not hesitate to place his children under the disciplinary care of the teacher. And yet every person of common sense and candor will say that he acted wisely and paternally in so doing. Why? Because it is evident he did not expose his children to these evils as an end; but merely as a means to secure for them a greater end, a means to procure for them a greater good than they could have ever enjoyed without having been subjected to these evils. In a similar light we believe the Apostle viewed the disciplinary government of God over his creation, when he declared, 'For the creature,' or as critics assure us the original word might be more properly rendered, the creation, 'was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature,' or creation, 'itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.'

But to return to our consideration of the wise earthly father's conduct, we say he subjected his children to the discipline of the school, not willingly, that is, not because he delighted in the disobedience of which he felt fully assured his children would be guilty, not because he delighted in the pain they would experience

in consequence of their guilt, but that through this discipline they might be delivered from the bondage of ignorance and folly, into the liberty of improved hearts, corrected propensities, and cultivated intellects. And here, if it will not be esteemed an unpardonable digression, I would observe that we can illustrate how God can design the acts of men and overrule them for their greatest good, yet have men act freely, and be really guilty, and justly deserving of punishment. If the children of the father whose intentions and conduct we have been canvassing, conducted in the school just as their father was well satisfied they would conduct when he placed them there, why were they any more criminal than he? I answer, because they did mischief for mischief's sake, they did evil with evil intentions, and were therefore criminal and deserving of punishment; while he subjected them to a state where he was fully assured they would transgress and be rightfully punished for their transgressions, with a good intention, namely, their future welfare. His intentions were good, and therefore his conduct worthy of approbation.

But it may be asked, If God be indeed our Father, all-powerful and all-wise as he is represented, how was it consistent with his nature to permit the existence of evil at all? Why did not God make man and preserve him in a state of entire reconciliation to his will. I answer, that the only way in which we can reconcile the existence of evil with the attributes of our maker is by supposing it to be a means of promoting a greater good

than could exist without it. In accounting for the origin of evil, we may compare it to poison in our food. God has given us food for the support of our bodies. Now we justly esteem this to be a very merciful provision of our heavenly Father's bounty. But it is a well known fact that poison enters into the composition of this food, and forms a very necessary and important ingredient of it. These poisonous particles in themselves, considered in their own nature separately, are the very essence of what is most destructive to life; but by their composition with other substances they become divested of their pernicious character. The poison in its own nature considered would produce death, but by being judiciously compounded, it is absolutely necessary to life. So evil in its own nature is opposed to the will of God and the happiness of all intelligent beings, but from the hands of infinite skill it may be so assorted out and distributed to his creatures as to be necessary to the best ultimate good of those creatures. It is suffered to exist not as an end, but as a means which will give rise to a greater good than could be experienced without it, in the same way that poison which in itself is the very bane of life, may become an ingredient among other materials promotive of a greater degree of health than could be enjoyed without it. In this view, and in this view only, can the existence of sin be reconciled with the goodness, wisdom and power of the infinite Creator. If sin is infinite it cannot give rise to a greater good, since nothing can be more than infi-

nite. If to be sinful and consequently wretched is to be the end of any being's existence, God knowing this, when from dead matter he produced that existence, could not be said to be good. For the existence of that being is an infinite loss to him. But 'he is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.'

Man is a being whose ideas flow from a comparison of one object with another and whose knowledge is dederived from reflection and experience. Thus capacitated he may be supposed to be placed in this world as in a school of education, to acquire a knowledge of the first rudiments, the elementary principles of existence. Happiness springs from what is good. To have a knowledge of happiness man must have a knowledge of good. How with his capacities is he to receive this knowledge? We have just observed that all his ideas flow from a comparison of one object with another. Then surely there is no method under heaven by which he can acquire a knowledge of good, but by being able to compare it with its opposite evil. The inexperienced infant darts his hand into the blaze of a candle. Why? Because he does not know that the flame will harm him. He feels the pain, and learns to be on his guard against the element which inflicts it. If a single trial does not operate on his senses so as to convince him that to have his hand in the flame is opposed to his comfort, a succession of trials will. It is thus that 'a burnt child learns to dread the fire.' Now from such experience the child acquires a knowledge

both of good and evil. He discovers that to have his hand in the flame is an evil, and to keep it out to be protected against the devouring element is a good. Again, man's affections are directed by his knowledge. He loves that which he knows to be good, he hates that which he knows to be evil. Sin then arises from an ignorance or a misconception of what constitutes solid good and what forms real evil. Now that the children of God may be delivered from this ignorance or misconception by actual experience, is we conceive the object which their heavenly Father has in view in subjecting them to their present disciplinary state of good and evil, rewards and punishments. Love is the fulfilling of the law, and our Savior declares that heaven and earth shall not pass away till every jot and tittle of the law is fulfilled. But how are God's creatures to fulfill a law which they do not understand? how are they to love that which they do not know is lovely? and how are they to know that which is lovely but by a comparison of it with an opposite quality, with something unlovely? and how with their capacities would they be able to make this comparison, unless they were placed in a state where they could in some way be brought to *feel* the good flowing from the lovely object, and the evil resulting from the unlovely object? If any one should ask the question why God so constituted man, that it should be necessary for him thus to derive his ideas of good, thus to be subject to vanity, I answer that the question might as well be asked, why God created man at all. Other created beings than men

doubtless exist, but a being constituted differently from man would not be man. But God has seen fit to create such a being as man. And it is evident that a perfect God has not acted imperfectly in so doing. It is the office of a rational creature not to question the propriety of his maker's creating him, but to use his reasoning powers to the best advantage in justifying the ways of his maker towards him. Perhaps it is not improbable however that there is no created intelligence in the universe, but what in some world or other has passed through a state of good and evil. In the resurrection, our Savior declares that we shall be as the angels of God, but in the resurrection we shall have been sinners. May it not be then that the angels of God have been sinners? Paul makes no exception of any creature, when he says, 'for the creature, or creation, was made subject to vanity.'

But this attempt to account for the admittance of sin into the universe falls short of being satisfactory, if we admit the doctrine of endless misery, or in other words, if any individual is to be a loser by that existence which it was equally in the power of the Creator to withhold or bestow. It does not indeed derogate from the perfection of God, not to be able to perform what would imply a contradiction. And to make intelligent creatures free agents, and yet to make them incapable of abusing their freedom might imply a contradiction. Unless the foreknowledge of God be limited, he must have known that intelligent creatures, endowed with liberty, would by the abuse of it plunge themselves into guilt

and misery. The difficulty therefore is to reconcile the goodness of God with his bringing creatures into existence, under circumstances, and endowed with powers, by the abuse of which he knew before he made them, they would make themselves endlessly miserable, so that existence would prove a curse to them. If he could not have made such a being as man without endowing him with such a capacity of sinning, as he knew would make him an ultimate loser by his existence, he certainly had it in his power not to have made him. And to human reason it seems more benevolent of the two, not to have made, than to have made, with the knowledge that the being created would, by the abuse of the power with which he was endowed, make himself miserable eternally. Virtue, which is the result as we have shown of free-agency, is doubtless attended with exquisite pleasure. But without this agency, mankind might have been in a certain degree happy. They might have had physical enjoyment, such happiness as the brute has.

If therefore the greater part abuse their free agency, and make themselves miserable, more happiness might have been enjoyed by them as a race of beings without, than with this agency. And more benevolence would have been displayed on the part of their maker in having made them physically good and physically happy, than to have entrusted a higher virtue and a higher happiness to a freedom by the abuse of which he knew they would bring on themselves such woful consequences. The father of ten sons having an inheritance for them

all, would see a fitness, when they were of age, to put each one into possession of his inheritance. But if he knew that by an abuse of their inheritance, they would make themselves more miserable with it, than they would without it, he would retain it in his own power and give it out in such portions as would prevent their misimprovement. Or if he knew that a part of his sons by being in possession of their inheritance, would render themselves more happy with it, and that the other part would not. he would give it to those only who would make a good use of it. As God has given this discretion and benevolence to parents to lead them so to conduct upon a certain knowledge of the actions of their children, he must be possessed of these qualities in a higher degree. In fair reasoning therefore it may be concluded that God upon a certain foreknowledge that mankind would make themselves miserable eternally, by the abuse of free agency, never would have brought them into existence with such a power; at least no more of them that he knew would make a good use of it.

Whatever the difference may be between a judicious and benevolent parent, and his little children, it cannot be greater than that between God and the most exalted of his creatures. And would a judicious and benevolent parent calmly look on and see his little children, though they had sense enough to keep out of the fire, run into a flame by which they would be utterly consumed? To teach them discretion, he might suffer them to feel the pain in a certain degree; but if he had

power to prevent, he would never suffer them to be consumed. How then, think you, would the benevolent Jehovah, the Father of us all, have endowed mankind with a power, by the abuse of which he knew, when he gave it, they would make themselves eternally miserable?

To account then, upon the principle of free agency, for the introduction of sin, while yet it is contended that sin is an infinite evil and will bring endless woe on a great portion of mankind, is no more satisfactory than to account for it on any other principle. We want some solution of the difficulty that shall vindicate the benevolence of God. Provided he knew mankind would so abuse free agency as to be wretched forever, from fair deduction I do not see how his benevolence can be vindicated, in the eyes of man; for to human reason it would appear more benevolent not to have made, than to make with a certain knowledge that the being created would make himself endlessly miserable. If you say God did not foreknow it, then you impeach his infallible knowledge. If you say, that God knew sin, by which a certain part of mankind would utterly perish, would be the unavoidable consequence of free-agency, then you indirectly attack his power, or his wisdom, or his goodness. Thus you will be driven to detract from the acknowledged perfections of the creator: and view the matter as you will, all the reasons which you can assign to account for the introduction of moral evil upon the supposition that it brings with it consequences of endless misery to any individual, will,

traced through all their consequences, involve some inconsistency, absurdity, or impiety.

The only solution is, that the whole system is capable of the greatest degree of felicity of which infinite wisdom, power and benevolence could make it; that this system consists of various orders, each enjoying a happiness the best suited to its state and capacity, and each subjected to partial inconveniences for the good of the whole; and that, notwithstanding these partial inconveniences, not only each order but every individual of each order, shall enjoy in the whole of its existence more than it shall suffer, and be qualified for higher degrees of enjoyment by its sufferings.

The conclusion then is, that God has created man, endowed him with certain limited capacities which he is to exert in a limited sphere of action, that he has given him a certain fund of abilities for the acquisition of virtue and consequent happiness. For his existence and natural endowments he is wholly dependent on the gracious will and power of his Creator. For the continuance of his good in time and eternity he is wholly indebted to the gracious constitution of the physical and moral laws which the Creator has established. For the advantages by which he is surrounded, and for the physical and moral powers by which he is enabled to avail himself of those advantages, and thus render his existence a blessing to him, he is likewise wholly dependent on the free grace of God. But God having thus formed, placed and endowed him, has, after constituting him a free moral agent, left him to act as freely

and independently within his little sphere of action as God himself acts freely and independently in his unlimited sphere of action; so that in regard to free-agency, man is made in the image of his Maker. But it is of great consequence to man how he conducts, how long and how deeply he makes himself miserable by the misuse of his powers, or to what heights of goodness and enjoyment he attains by the rightful improvement of them. Yet the Creator in the exercise of his infinite knowledge, benevolence and power so constituted his nature, and so hemmed in the sphere in which he is to exercise his free agency, that there are limits set as well to the degree and direction of the misery which it is in man's power to bring on himself by the abuse of his moral freedom, as there are to the degree of excellence to which he can attain.

If these conclusions are founded in truth, we perceive that by human reason, the ways of God can be justified to man, and that in the moral world, all things are as well-ordered and sure as in the natural. What a glorious being then is God! What claims has he on our constant gratitude, love, and obedience! How ought we unceasingly to adore the riches of his goodness, and strive to copy into our own hearts and lives an image of his perfections.

Come then, all ye that labor and are heavy laden with terror or grief, come to Jesus Christ the Savior of sinners, and through him to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God Here is a source of unmingled joy. O how tender is the mercy of heaven, how

full of hope and peace is the declaration that God is good! I trust there is not one of us but, at this moment, feels in his bosom the warm thrill of confidence, gratitude and love to his Maker. O, if the Christian ministry had but been true to its trust, it seems to me that ere this, the whole world would have been reconciled to God, would have been Christians. We say, then, to the advocates of all partial systems—systems of eternal cruelty, urge upon us no doctrine which subverts and unsettles the conviction of God's eternal goodness. Cast no stain upon the spotless character of our Father in heaven. Urge upon us no sentiment that tarnishes his mercy, saps the foundation of all happiness, all hope, and all heaven; but leave us that cheering, that animating, that soul-satisfying sentiment, that we all have one Father, and that he is good unto all.

SERMON XI.

HUMAN GUILT WITHOUT EXCUSE.

Romans i. 20.—'So that they are without excuse.'

The object of the Apostle in the text and context is to exhibit the evil consequences threatened upon sin, and to show that the Creator has afforded men such means of knowing him and his requirements, and such motives to seek and to serve him as to leave them destitute of all just grounds of excuse for swerving from his commandments. He says, 'For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it to them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse, because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.'

The plain doctrine of all this is, that God has given his rational creatures such capacities, endowments, and various advantages for attaining to piety and virtue as render them, if they fail to become pious and virtuous,

grossly criminal and utterly inexcusable. This sentiment I shall now endeavor to illustrate by exhibiting some of the numerous defences with which we are provided against impiety and vice.

In the first place, God has given us reason and understanding to discern between truth and falsehood, right and wrong, good and evil. These are gifts which form the chief basis of man's superiority to the other inhabitants of the earth, of his relation to higher spiritual natures, and of his accountableness for his actions. By reason and intelligence he can take his flight through the immensity of space, soar to distant worlds, and elevate his contemplations to the throne of the Deity, and to him that sitteth thereon. He can regard himself as a conscious being, distinct from every thing around him, and yet in his body, bearing a relation to all the elements and the various forms of matter, and in his mind claiming kindred with spiritual intelligence of the loftiest dignity. He can live in the past, and commune with the spirits of the mighty dead, draw instruction from their researches, profit from their experience, be incited and animated by their virtues and success, be warned by their frailties, misfortunes, or downfalls, and gather various lessons of wisdom from the events of even remote antiquity. He can investigate the proper and improper motives of human conduct, and trace effects through a line of intermediate events to their distant causes. He can judge of what is to be by what has been. He can hold up the light by which he has surveyed the sepulchres of ages gone by, and

cause its rays to stream upon the night of time to come. He can thus walk forth from the hermitage of reflections upon the past, to be the prophet of the future. He can travel in spirit through the regions of splendor above, he can penetrate the darkest recesses of the earth beneath. He can roam through regions of possibility, conjecture and action. He can apply all his observations and knowledge concerning what surrounds him to himself. He can thus learn what he is, and what he is not,—of what he is capable, and what is above his powers,—what he ought to do, and what he ought not to do,—what he may hope to be, and what he should fear to be,—where he should repose his trust, and from what he should withdraw confidence,—how he should estimate the value of things,—how pursue some objects, how shun others,—and by what rules he should moderate his wishes and desires, and govern his whole behavior. It is the inspiration of the Almighty that has given him this reason and understanding. Herein he has provided us with a strong guard against wrong-doing. 'When a proposition is distinctly and fully presented to the understanding, it rarely, if ever decides erroneously with regard to its truth or falsehood,' its propriety or impropriety. It never declares in favor of a known sin, but all its decisions are against it. When we sin, it is not usually in obedience to the dictates of our own understanding, but in opposition to them. Our sins also, are sometimes, in Scripture, attributed to inconsiderateness, to a neglect of consulting whether what we are about to do is right or wrong.

'My people,' says Jehovah, 'do not consider.' It is true that the understanding may be darkened and perverted so as to become an erroneous guide, but it is not the *natural* character of the understanding to decide erroneously upon any proposition which is presented to it. We may indeed misjudge, and so be led into serious errors; but we cannot be led into sin by our understanding, for sin is a violation of what we understand to be right. The understanding never decides in favor of our pursuing any course which we know in itself to be wrong, and which, were we to judge impartially, as in the case of another person, we should condemn. It must first be sophisticated, and warped by evil inclinations, and criminal indulgences, before it will decide falsely. As the Apostle observes, it must first be 'blinded' by 'the God of this world,' that is, by long habits of sin, before its decisions become perverted. Without such perverting influence, he plainly intimates that the understanding would perceive clearly and determine justly. A blinded understanding, then, is the effect of sin; but in its natural and unbiassed operations, its whole influence is opposed to sin, its whole strength cast on the side of virtue. If we occasionally fall into error, we may honestly plead in extenuation a defective understanding. But if we fall into sin, if we do that which we believe to be for our happiness, but which we know to be morally wrong, we cannot justify ourselves by the plea that God has not endowed us with a sufficient capacity to distinguish

between right and wrong, between what we ought to do, and what we ought not to do.

A second defence against sin which the Deity has implanted in our moral natures is *conscience*. Whether this faculty is usually distinct from reason and understanding or not, it is not necessary here to inquire. It is enough for my present purpose to know that we are accustomed so to consider it, and hence, have given it a distinct appellation. A nice critic might, I am aware, accuse me of philosophical inaccuracy, but my great object is to be generally understood, and for that reason I use words in their popular sense. There is a moral sense, an inward monitor, whose operation we all feel in some degree or other of perfection in our breasts, and which we call conscience. Its office is to ascertain the quality of our actions, to notify us of sin, and to dissuade us from it, to show us what is virtue, and to stimulate us to the practice of it. It is enthroned in our souls, to take cognizance of all our actions, and when correctly informed, it determines with the greatest accuracy the moral quality of our conduct. When our actions are in accordance with the known laws of God, it fills the soul with complacent emotions; when they are at variance with these laws, it consigns us to the torments of shame, remorse and apprehension. The mind can present it no temptation sufficient to bribe it to pronounce a false verdict.—By no effort of the will can the sinner silence its upbraidings. He must use means to drown all reflection before he can escape the reproaches of this faithful mon-

itor of the breast. If he sins, he cannot justly plead that he is not provided by nature with a guardian to warn and dissuade him from it. On this ground, then, he is without excuse.

In the third place, as a preventive to sin, God has prescribed to us laws for the moral government of our conduct. These laws are communicated to us in a two-fold manner: through the intimation of our own minds, and by the word of God. They are said by the Apostle to be written on the heart; that is, the understanding with which God has endowed us dicovers in certain actions a fitness or unfitness, a right or wrong, in reference to some known law. But the understanding left to itself, does not always discover the whole extent of moral obligation, but is liable to be so perverted by corrupt inclinations as to be incapable of discriminating with accuracy. God, therefore, has graciously seen fit to make a transcript of the moral law written on the heart, to give it a complete and definite form, and to embody the entire sum of our duty in his word. He has thus furnished us with general principles, precise and positive commands and prohibitions, and faithful instructions in regard to our duty in all the relations of life. If we sin, then, we sin against the best light of our own souls, and the clearest teachings of revealed truth,—and are therefore without excuse.

Fourthly, we are without excuse for our sins because the Deity has invested us with as full power to learn what is true as to learn what is false, to choose what is good as to choose what is evil, to do what is right as to

do what is wrong. Moral freedom is a splendid endowment of the human soul, and forms the ground of its accountableness, and chief worth. The sun, moving through the heavens in majesty, is glorious; the moon, walking in brightness, and the stars adorning the midnight sky, are beautiful; but they pursue all their movements and operations by fixed, mechanical laws unknown to themselves. They roll on through the immensity of space without any self-determining principle, and unconscious of their use and destination. The beasts of the field are impelled by blind instincts of nature; but man, though influenced by laws and motives independent of himself, is not wholly subjected to their control. He can by an effort of his will, throw himself into a thousand different attitudes, so as to vary the operations of these laws upon him, so as to change and control the effects they tend to exert on him. He can put himself under the steady and habitual influence of one set of motives or of another, just as he pleases. He is not therefore necessarily the slave of any outward impressions. He can now flee from the power of objects and associations which he finds are exerting a prejudicial influence upon his virtue and happiness. He can then place himself beneath the operation of more benign and auspicious influences. He can gain a mastery over his passions and appetites; he can bend their power in favor of virtuous pursuits. He can thus withstand their allurements, and rise superior to their control. He is not therefore necessarily the slave of lust. He can adopt firm resolutions, and by

various means gather around them great moral strength, and thus enable himself constantly to fulfill them. If he has been led into error, if he has turned aside into a wrong way, he need not remain there. The light of truth is not shut out from him, he can discover his mistake, and by a timely repentance forsake it and alter his course, change his conduct, and in future regulate his life by more prudent rules. He is not therefore necessarily the slave of an imperfect judgment. Thus he can be virtuous if he chooses to be, and he cannot be sinful without the consent of his will, without choosing to do that which his understanding and conscience, if he gives them a fair hearing, will tell him is wrong. He has then, just as much natural and moral ability to do right as he has to do wrong.

But fifthly, on the score of motives, the Creator has furnished man with the strongest motives possible to encourage him in virtue, and to dissuade him from vice. If he will make that exertion of his will which it is in his power to make, and place himself beneath the influence of these motives, he must be inclined to virtue. In nature and in revelation God employs the most powerful persuasives to lead us into a life of holiness. He has established even in this world an intimate connection between virtue and happiness, and between sin and misery; so that merely from our experience in regard to ourselves, and the conduct and fate of others, without the aid of revelation, we may be thoroughly impressed with the correctness of one of its most important declarations, 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that doth

he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.' This principle is as plainly true in the moral as it is in the natural world. The continued practice of any known sin, is attended with evil either to the health, reputation, or property of him that is addicted to it. Disease and premature death follow directly in the train of intemperance, and the various vices of sensuality. Ignominy and ruin tread on the heels of falsehood and all kinds of dishonesty.

This intimate connexion between vice and misery is of divine appointment. God has established it, undoubtedly with a design to deter us from wrong, and to reclaim us when we have sinned. I am aware it may be said we see much in the present constitution of things of a different moral tendency. We often see the good man borne down by affliction and sorrow, condemned to sickness, poverty, and unmerited reproach, while the unprincipled and vicious are triumphing in their sins, rioting in the enjoyment of firm health, ample possessions, and popular favor. True, there are exceptions to general rules, and cases of this character are exceptions to this very general rule, that 'the righteous shall be recompensed upon the earth, much more the ungodly and the sinner.' I have no wish to evade the force of what to me is as manifest a fact as any other, that some very corrupt men in this life, enjoy much more pleasure than others who are examples of goodness. I look upon it as all sophistry of the flimsiest character, to pretend the contrary. David was fully convinced of this. When he saw the prosperity

of the wicked, his heart was grieved within him, because he could not reconcile the retribution which took place in this world, with the justice and equity of the Divine Being. Speaking of the prosperity of the wicked, he says, 'There are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain, violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart can wish. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression, they speak loftily. They set their mouth against heaven, and their tongue walketh through the earth. And they say, How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High? When I thought to know this, is was too painful for me, until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.'

To prevent mankind from regarding sin with less terror on account of this occasional apparent inequality in rewards and punishments in this life, the sentiment has been diffused over the whole world, that there is a state of retribution hereafter. As to the existence of such a state, by far the greater part of Jews, heathens, and Christians have been agreed; and few doctrines, I believe, regarding a future existence, are capable of so much defence from the simple light of nature, as this. The wisest philosophers, ancient and modern, who have attempted to vindicate the ways of God to man, have regarded retribution as taking place in a future world. Viewing, as they have done, the

impossibility of supposing that in every case, just and equal rewards and punishments were awarded here, they have of necesssity been forced to admit the propriety, and extreme probability of retribution being extended to a future state. Sound philosophy, it is true, could fix no arbitrary punishment even there. It could fix none that would war with the attributes of infinite wisdom and goodness, none but what was the natural and inevitable consequence of long-fostered, evil inclinations, dispositions and desires. Nor could natural philosophy extend even these consequences to eternal duration. Viewing, as it does, mankind as beings capable of continual improvement, philosophy itself would consider that the great and good Being who endowed them with the capability of improving in wisdom and virtue would devise means for their instruction, and so arrange the disciplinary influences that were to act upon them as to effect the final attainment of the end for which they evidently were created. She could not suppose that an all-wise, almighty, and infinitely benevolent Creator would bring from unoffending nonentity, any being into existence, either with the design, or at the risk of its being an infinite loser by that existence which it was equally in his power to withhold or bestow. To me the doctrine of future retribution is inseparably connected with the doctrine of a future life. Perhaps the strongest argument from reason alone in favor of a future state at all, is the inequality of allotments and retributions in this world. It has certainly been the great argument of the most enlightened writers in all

ages, on the subject. I know that in the time of our Savior and his apostles, among the Jews and heathen it was a commonly received doctrine, that sinners were liable to punishment of some kind and duration or other after death; and I do not know of a single text in the New Testament to discountenance it. The commonness of the opinion might have been a strong reason why it was not more explicitly stated. And I confess I am unable to understand the Scriptures, if this doctrine is not by the general current of their teachings plainly implied. The same argument does not apply to endless misery, for whilst I do not know of a single text in its proper interpretation, which gives this tremendous doctrine support, I do know of a multitude of passages which I am utterly unable to reconcile with it. We all believe in a moral death; and we believe that this death is the wages of sin, the death of the mind to innocence, virtue, and happiness, and if the invisible mind, the conscience, the spiritual nature of man can suffer this death in this world, we can readily conceive that it may suffer it in another. Painful reflections upon past misconduct, tormenting apprehensions of future evil, mental darkness and condemnation are experienced here, and may be there, if sin is not cleansed and pardoned. The mind this year is virtuous or depraved, happy or miserable, in proportion as we formed and cultivated virtuous or depraved habits of thinking, feeling, and acting during the year that is past; our manhood is influenced and colored by the improvement or misimprovement of our youth;—and

why should we not expect that these same minds, if immortal, if they survive the destruction of the body, should carry with them into eternity the prevailing temper they fostered here. To me it is the most natural and philosophical supposition in the world. On the same principle that the guilty suffer misery of mind in reflecting upon past offences in this world, they may suffer in the next. In this state of being, sinners by various means may stifle their convictions of conscience, cover their sins under some false pretence or error, and even glory in their shame, and thus for a season escape the due reward of their iniquity. And being thus blinded to the evil of their ways, and hardened in iniquity, like the unbelieving Jews, who thought they did God service in crucifying Christ and persecuting his disciples unto prison and death: they know not what spirit they possess. But when they are obliged to know the truth, and they can hide themselves no longer under falsehood aud delusion, they will be pricked in their heart with the conviction of their sin, like the contemners and crucifiers of Christ.

From the understanding then, which God has given us, from the conscience which he has made his representative in our hearts, from the laws he has communicated, from the moral freedom he has imparted, and from the sanctions of rewards and punishments in the present life and in the future, it appears that we are without excuse if we neglect his commandments. Let us, therefore, profit by the thoughts which have occupied us; listening to the commands of reason and of

conscience, reverently hearing the laws of God, as announced by nature and by Scripture, using rightly our moral freedom, and striving to shun the evil consequences of sin, and to attain the rewards of virtue, both in the present world, and in that which is to come.

SERMON XII.

ON CONTENTIONS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

2 Timothy ii. 22, 23.—'But follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.'

These directions of the Apostle Paul to his spiritual son Timothy, show that in his day there were persons who were not contented to consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were disposed to invent articles of religious faith for themselves, to teach differently from what Christ taught, and casting practical godliness into the shade, to raise questions and strifes of words, and to insist upon these unimportant matters with so much earnestness and zeal as to produce in the place of Christian meekness and charity, envy, strife, railings and evil surmisings. The pride of opinion, and the love of power are deeply seated in the human heart, and in some form or other, open or disguised, never cease to operate.

Whenever or wherever men of active talents and ambitious views are found in the church, Christianity will be something for them to exercise their ingenuity upon. They will ever be engrafting upon it more or less of their own speculations, and impressing them

upon the minds of their contemporaries, and throwing firebrands into the community to enkindle into a flame the passions and feelings, and blind and bewilder the understandings of men. This is a permanent spring of contention in religion as well as in every thing else, and will remain so till men begin to feel that the gospel is taught more clearly by its author, than it can be by any body else; and especially till they universally acknowledge and adhere to those principles of individual liberty and responsibility, which he promulgated as the inalienable right of his disciples. When this shall be the case, when the right of private judgment is not only abstractly admitted, but practically enjoyed, and such a state of feeling and opinion exists that a man may hold or publish any doctrines that by fair argument and judicious interpretation he thinks be draws from scripture, without being denounced and persecuted in this world, or doomed by the breath of frail man to endless misery in the next; when not only the direct claim of infallibility by the Catholic, but what is full as bad, the indirect assumption of infallibility by Protestant sects, shall be laid aside, when all this shall constitute the ruling spirit of the church, then will the garment of charity cover the wounds that have been made in the fair form of Christianity, and though her votaries may still approach her altar by different paths, and thus take different views of her appearance, there will be no strife or envy, or railings or evil surmisings among them.

It will be my object, in the first place, to show that

these contentions owe their bitterness to the selfishness, pride, and other perverted principles of human nature.

In the second place, I shall call your attention to some considerations upon the overbalance of good which Divine Providence causes to result from even the rancor of sectarian strife.

The first great cause of heated controversy and acrimonious contentions among the professors and teachers of the gospel, is the same with that of all the other contentions in the world;—it is to be found in the character of man, in the passions, affections and impulses of the human heart. Why do men dispute, and quarrel, and contend about other things? Is it because the world is not broad enough to contain them or the earth not fertile enough to nourish them? Is it be-because they cannot, like Lot and Abraham, say, 'Go thou to the right hand and I will go to the left, or go thou to the left hand and I will go to the right?' Is it because God hath not given enough, and more than enough for all his creatures to rejoice and be happy? No; it is because each and all will not do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their fellow men and before God in the world. It is because pride and passion, avarice and selfishness lead them to do wrong, and defraud one another; or sensuality and sloth make them unjust to others, while they are the worst foes to themselves. So in religious contention, it is not because Christianity is deficient in any of the truths it communicates, or any of the precepts and duties it enjoins. It is not because it does not contain enough to make

all men who will receive it in sincerity, wise unto salvation: it is because the bad passions of men have operated in religion as well as in all other matters. It is because here, also, pride and vanity and ambition have been permitted to do their baneful work, disguised under the forms of a love of God and a veneration for truth.

I do not mean to say that all the contention and controversy which have agitated the Christian Church have arisen or been continued by the bad passions of men. I would not be thus unjust to human nature, or to the gospel of Christ. I believe there is such a thing as a high and holy, unbiassed and single hearted love of truth; and that many who have written and preached and contended and died for what they believed to be truth, have been guided by these principles alone. I could point your attention to a host of noble martyrs of former and of later days, to whom it would be manifestly unjust to attribute any baser motive. I only mean to say generally, that that love of power which is one of the strongest passions of the human breast, has not been completely cooled in the hearts of the disciples and ministers of Jesus Christ, or prevented from exerting its influence. In all ages the religion of a country has operated with great force upon its inhabitants, and has had more effect upon their character and destiny than even their social or political condition. According to its purity or corruption it has ever been the great cause which has wrought their glory or their ruin, binding them in the iron chains of des-

potism, or enkindling the fire of the intellect and heart, giving freedom to thought, and liberty and knowledge to the soul. And all who have ever sought for distinction and authority in the world, have done homage to the universal influence of religion, by appealing to its power in the breast of man. There has ever been, then, particularly in Christian countries, a strong temptation to aim at spiritual power, which the ministers of Christ have not always had firmness and purity enough to resist. If we go back to primitive days, we shall find this very principle in operation, to stir up contentions, and agitate the waters of Christian peace and fellowship at the head fountain of the church.

Dissensions and disputes arose among the disciples of our Lord, and the intimate companions of his life. With his example before them, and the influence of his character bearing upon them with all the force of daily intercourse, and with a constant sense of common danger and common suffering, they were even contending which should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. In the presence of him who washed their feet, we find them exhibiting the workings of worldly rivalry and ambition; so that he was under the necessity of using the words of persuasion and kindness, and of lifting the voice of admonition and authority to quell the spirit of dissension, and restore and preserve harmony in that ittle band of fellow-laborers. After the death of Jesus, we are furnished in the Epistles with frequent allusions to the strifes that arose to disturb the tranquillity of the infant church. The cry of 'I am of Paul, and I of

Apollos, and I of Cephas,' went forth to mar the peace of the Christian community planted at Corinth; and a like cry has continued to be echoed and re-echoed from age to age in every city, and village, and hamlet where Christianity has been established. Although our blessed Savior wore the title of the Prince of Peace, and although the annunciation of 'peace on earth, and good will to men,' bursting in the shouts of seraphs accompanied his advent, yet there never has been a time since the fishermen of Galilee forsook their nets and followed him, when the love of power has not broken forth from the recesses of the human heart to invade his religion, and to spread warfare in the ranks professedly marshalled beneath his banner.

Whence arose the animosities of which Paul speaks in the primitive church? Was strife engendered in relation to any important doctrine of the gospel? No. Some of the converts from the Jewish faith were loud in their clamors to keep up the ceremony of circumcision and other observances of the Mosaic ritual. It was too humbling to their pride to surrender the distinction which they had been educated to believe was given them over all the world beside, and to come down to a level with the Gentiles, whom they had been taught to look upon as outcasts from the favor of heaven. They wished to usurp authority over the faith of others, to dictate to them what doctrines they were to hold and what rites they were to practise. The long-cherished pride of opinion, and the prejudices of ancient forms and usages, the pomp and pride of a ceremoni-

ous, an arrogant and imposing religion, all sprung up in rebellion against the simplicity, against the free spirit of republicanism, of equal rights and equal privileges, which formed the very soul and essence, the heart and life of Christianity. It is from like causes that the subsequent history of the church presents so many pages black with the gall of baleful passions, and red with the blood of martyrs. The fault has not been in the gospel, but in men's hearts. The gospel is full of the principles of peace and brotherly love. If mankind would practise in accordance with its teachings, this world would be a paradise. But men have perverted its principles, and made them instruments of gratifying their base passions, and advancing their sordid interests. What have its professors been wrangling about? The simple facts laid down in the New Testament? Not at all. These are neither denied nor doubted by any class of Christians. What have they been contending about? Is it the meaning of those great and leading principles of moral obligation and duty which Jesus has inculcated? Not at all. In respect to these all are agreed. These are all so plain, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err. Love to God and love to man, gratitude and reverence and general piety towards the Supreme Being, and the doing to others as we ought to wish and to expect good men to do to us, is all that is required for our salvation. What then, have Christians been quarrelling about? Nothing but creeds, and formularies, and articles of faith. For these, for creeds and formularies, and wild

speculations, and theories of uninspired men, the shelves of theological libraries have groaned beneath the ponderous weight of nice definitions, and metaphysical subtleties, and infuriated controversy, and bitter sarcasm, and impious denunciation. For these the dungeon has echoed with groans, for these the gibbet has been reared, the rack stained with blood, and the faggot raised its accursed flame in the face of insulted heaven.

Whenever a man takes it upon himself to propose and insist upon a written creed distinct from the bible, as a standard for the religious faith of his fellow men, depend upon it, however much he may think himself influenced by a love of truth, he is altogether too much under the sway of self-love, of a pride of opinion, and a desire of dominion over others. And it will not be the case that controversy will cease to be an evil, until the Christian world shall have come to the conclusion, that the New Testament itself supersedes the necessity of any other confession of faith. Men will, it is likely, always continue to disagree in opinion; but there is such a thing as having peace and charity in differences of opinion; there is such a thing as agreeing to disagree. It is no evil for an individual to cherish and propagate such views as appear to him most correct. It is no evil for another to think differently from him, and publish his honest objections to what has been advanced. The cause of truth may be essentially promoted by such means, while the cause of charity need suffer no wound. But it is an evil for any one man to claim for himself, or for any body of men to arrogate to

themselves the exclusive right of judging for others, and if others dare to dissent from their views, to turn them out from the pale of their fellowship, to do all in their power to injure their Christian character, to denounce them as abandoned forever of God, as turned over to Satan, and as inheritors of everlasting woe. I say this is an evil, this is full of the elements of strife, this burns asunder all the cords of good feeling.

Such is a brief view of the nature and pernicious effects of religious strife. It has its origin in the pride of opinion, and in the love of power, principles which have ever been strongly exhibited in the human character, and which show themselves with mournful distinctness in the conduct of religious professors and teachers all around us. Preachers cannot bear to have their old dominions invaded; they cannot endure the thought that their infallibility is to be questioned; they cannot bear to have views at variance with theirs gaining ground among their flocks. It is dreadful to have it suspected that they can possibly be mistaken. It is humiliating that their influence is to be impaired, and that they are to be placed on a level with other men—to be considered frail and liable to err as others. Hence their alarm and resistance to every view of truth which clashes with their own. The effects of such feelings are to check the progress of liberal and rational inquiry, to bind the freedom of the mind, to dwarf the growing spirit of the age, to wound charity in the house of its professing friends, to give to unimportant doctrines a fictitious consequence, to draw attention from what is

essential in religion—the practice of it, and to give it a feverish anxiety for what is of far less moment—its speculative doctrines; to stir up broils and contentions and heart-burning in families and communities, and thus, by the abuses of religion, to disparage in the eyes of the world its real value.

These indeed are sore evils. But what are we to do? Are we to say that we will regard religion itself as a calamity, and withdraw from it all our thoughts and anxieties and sympathies? This you cannot do. You are religious beings by nature. Do your best to drive away religious thoughts and interests; there will be times when they will claim their power over your souls. Even the Atheist must have his religion. He may call it by another name—philosophy, if you please; but whilst in words he denies the existence of a God, he makes to himself a God; perhaps he calls it nature, but it matters not,—it is a something which interests his feelings of a religious character, and perchance he is as intolerant a bigot in his opinions as the devotee of any religion whatever. Man must and will have some religion or other, and if he does not have a rational and true one, he will have one that is absurd and false. Do you say then you will have your religion to yourself, but will not lift a finger to support any religious measure? You cannot do so in safety. Other men will be active; and should an illiberal, intolerant religion gain a final ascendency, you may live to see the time when your own wife and children will be taught to regard

you with horror, for not bowing at its shrine and exerting all your faculties in its promotion.

In religion as in every thing else, we are called by most solemn obligations to take an active part; not indeed for the building up of a sect, but for the building up of the cause of christian freedom and charity. We are not to sit down and fold up our hands, and cry out, 'the truth is mighty, it will prevail,' but we are to have that spirit which says, 'the truth is mighty, and by the blessing of God upon our exertions it *shall* prevail.'

Our duty is plain. We are to investigate truth for ourselves, for the truth alone can make us free. The more knowledge and liberty prevail, the greater will be the prevalence of virtue and happiness. For it is only knowledge, it is only truth, that sanctifies and saves the soul; and though many good Christians may be found who are in a measure ignorant and simple persons, it is not their ignorance, but their knowledge, as far as it goes, that makes them good. The more correct apprehensions we have of all parts of God's truth, the better we can be. But while truth should be earnestly pursued, we are never in our zeal to cast charity in the back ground. She in scripture occupies the foremost rank in the catalogue of Christian graces. Charity is placed before faith, before hope, before knowledge. In the differences of opinion among Christians, a fine opportunity is presented for cultivating and exhibiting this grace. Were there no prejudices of education; did all men see with the same eyes, and hear

with the same ears, and reason with the same understandings, all would think alike, and there would be no occasion to exercise charity in the extended sense of the term. These occasions now exist, and can be improved to the cultivation of that grace which is the bond of perfectness. Controversy can be conducted without asperity, and opposite opinions promulgated and defended without invective or censure, with that spirit which judges not lest it be judged; and though two cannot walk together unless they agree, they can yet, let them differ ever so widely, be agreed in this one thing—to walk together in peace. And as controversy can be conducted without uncharitableness, so doctrines can be discussed without being elevated to an importance their intrinsic nature does not demand. We ought to remember that we are saved not by a right creed, but by a right practice, and while we search for and contend for the truth, let us contend first and strive first for moral goodness. And while we are not to renounce all controversy, since by so doing we should be lending our aid to keep error on its throne, we are to seek the best means for remedying and preventing it. We are to have fervent charity to all men,—but to search the scriptures, and aid according to the extent of our ability, every measure that has for its object the knowledge and diffusion of the truth. We are, above all things, to show by our words and actions that whatever are our opinions and our zeal for the diffusion of our doctrines, our first great duty is to be purely and practically religious ourselves. And under all the un-

happiness which the contentions of Christians on earth produce, let our souls stretch forward in expectation to that hour when we shall know as we are known, and meet with that charity that never faileth, to rejoice before the throne of God.

SERMON XIII.

GODLINESS PROFITABLE TO ALL THINGS.

1 Tim. iv. 8.—'But Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.'

On a former occasion, I introduced this passage as the foundation of an inquiry into what Godliness is, and wherein its value consists. It was my aim at that time to show that Godliness is the frame of a mind possessed of a thorough conviction of the existence of the one true God, and of correct views in regard to his nature, his attributes and will, of what relations he sustains towards man, what duties he requires of him, what restraints he imposes on him, what rewards he offers to virtue, what recompense he theatens upon vice, for what end he has created us, why he demands our obedience, and what designs he has been pleased to reveal concerning the final destiny of our race. I went on to show that Godliness was the frame of a heart in harmony with an understanding thus enlightened, of a heart loving supreme goodness and seeking to conform all its desires and feelings to the law of God, or, what is the same thing, to the immutable standard of perfect virtue, and thus giving rise to a correct outward behavior. I proceeded to show that Godliness, virtue, true wisdom, and true religion were all to be re-

garded as one and the same thing;—that to possess true Godliness or true religion, was not merely to have passed through a prescribed routine of peculiar inward emotions, either of sorrow or joy, nor yet to practise a certain round of outward religious observances, unconnected with the ordinary feelings and avocations of life; but to have within us a broad and comprehensive principle, which serves to regulate all the desires, aims and designs of the heart, and to keep our outward conduct correct. I proceeded to show that Godliness, so defined, was profitable to all things; that it exerted a beneficial influence upon all aims and callings in life, and that its proper office was to teach us how to estimate the native gifts of the mind, and how and for what end to improve them; to teach us what value to put upon knowledge, upon honor, upon wealth, and upon sensual pleasures; for what purpose we are to desire, to pursue them, and how we are to use and enjoy them;—and I endeavored to enforce the great truth, that all outward goods are blessings no farther than they are rightly valued, innocently sought, honestly acquired, and benevolently and properly used. Godliness, then, my friends, is to have within us a strong and energetic principle of right-doing, to have a right understanding, a love and an habitual exercise of goodness. In this imperfect world, the principle of godliness is of greater strength in some persons who may be called righteous men, than it is in others who yet may merit the same appellation. Nay, in the same individual its power is not always equally felt. Duty appears plainer and

conscience is more vigilant at one time than at another. But in general, I doubt not that the distinction which the sacred volume observes in drawing a broad line between the righteous and the wicked, is a just one.

Though many shades and degrees of virtue and of depravity are exhibited in the human character, yet I think that close observation of men and things will allow us to say that while one part of the world is governed by one uniform principle—a desire to know and to do what is right between man and man, and before the eye of strict, impartial and unerring justice—another portion of the community is directed by no better principle than this ;—to indulge their sensual appetites and passions at all events, and to promote what they conceive to be for their immediate advantage, with very little regard whether they attain their end by fair means or foul, with little or no concern whether they build themselves up on the good or evil, the prosperity or ruin of others.

Here then is the true line of distinction. He is the godly man who reveres his Maker, and habitually desires and resolves to know and to do what is strictly benevolent, upright and just ; and in all cases to abstain from what is wrong. He is still an imperfect being, and therefore liable sometimes to fall into error concerning what truth and duty are, and to be betrayed into weak or wrong actions ; but when he discovers his mistake, he is always ready to rectify it. When he is convinced that he has been guilty of an improper indulgence, he regrets it ; and it is his first work to

guard against a similar failing in future. When his conscience convicts him of having done an injury to a fellow-creature he makes it his first care, so far as he has it in his power, to make restitution.

Who is the ungodly man? It is he whose sentiments and life are under no proper guidance, who heeds not the sanctions of religion and morality, whose whole soul is absorbed in self, and that self a very narrow and contemptible mass of wrong and mean thoughts, feelings and intentions; who acknowledges no other governor than interest, and makes that interest to consist in base and sordid gratifications; who means to obtain his objects, perhaps honestly, if he can, but at all events to obtain them; who hesitates not to defame his neighbor, to deceive him, to take undue advantages of his ignorance, of the pliability of his temper, or of his embarrassing circumstances, if by such means he fancies he shall be able to increase his own reputation or property. It is he who cares but very little how much distress he brings upon others, so that he thereby procures new means of gratifying his own depraved inclinations. It is he whom, in fine, we call, in common parlance, an unprincipled man, who exhibits no fixed regard to God, or conscience. Now such a man may do some good things, but he generally does them with bad motives. He does them perhaps with a view of passing in the world for a better man than he is, to conceal or gloss over the deformity of some of his vices, and to be thereby enabled to enlarge the circle of his abuses on society.

It matters not what faith *he* professes whom I have

before described as the godly man—whether he be Jew of Gentile, Catholic or Protestant, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, or Unitarian. It matters not by what peculiar forms of service he seeks to honor his Maker and stimulate his own piety,—he is a good man. He honors his Creator by the very best means, that of striving to assimilate his own character to His, that of imitating Him in doing good to his creatures. By whatever religious name he may be known, however popular or unpopular that name may be, he possesses true religion, and if there is a man in the world, on the road to heaven it must be he. Now it is my object in the following remarks to show still farther, that the religion of such a man is of very great importance, first, as it regards the proper enjoyment of this world; second, as it concerns that which is to come; and thereby to illustrate in the third place, how our religious character must be formed and cultivated.

I am to show, in the first place, that godliness is of great importance to the proper enjoyment of this life, 'having the promise' says our text, 'of the life that now is.' True religion affords satisfaction in the views it brings forward to the mind, and in the sentiments it cherishes in the heart towards God. To believe in a Supreme Being, of whose nature we can form some tolerably just conceptions through the resemblance which our own souls, created in his image, bear to him; to believe that in him exist in perfection all those excellencies which, though feeble and imperfect in us, demand and receive our homage and reverence; to be-

lieve that all that wisdom and justice, that kindness and compassion which we love in good men is separated from all weakness and impurity, and exists in perfection in God; to believe that he is the Creator, the Father and unchanging Friend of all his rational offspring; to believe that he requires our obedience, because without it we cannot be truly happy, and that he forbids our sins, because they war against our highest dignity and best interests; to trust in him as the ruler of all our destinies, who has connected no more evil with our respective allotments in life than is best adapted to the most successful development of our faculties; to believe that he inflicts punishment in the genuine spirit of fatherly tenderness and love; to repose in confidence on his Almighty arm; to feel security for ourselves, for our families or friends, and for all the objects of our affections beneath his just and merciful government; in health and prosperity to lift up our souls to him in gratitude, as the beneficent source of every blessing; in sickness or adversity to be confident that whatever he ordains is for the best, and thus to be able to bow in humble resignation to his will;—to believe thus of God, and to cherish such feelings in regard to him, is a source of purer, brighter, calmer, stronger, more immutable and enduring joy than all besides, within and around us, can supply. Wrest from me fortune, reputation, any thing but the sentiment of God, and I will yet smile and be cheerful; let other blessings pass away, but impair not, sully not my faith and hope in the Supreme Being. Blot out my fairest earthly pros

pects, mingle wormwood and gall in the cup of my enjoyments, but do not erase from my mind the image of heavenly love.

Again, to him whose religion is derived from, or nourished and matured by Christianity, is afforded a source of superior joy in the contemplation of Christ, of the strength of his mind, of the goodness of his heart, of the purity of his example, of the wisdom and benignity of his precepts, of all that he has suffered and done to bless a sinful and sorrowing world.

A third source of happiness to the truly religious man, is the harmony and regularity of feeling, the peace of conscience and self-satisfaction which he discovers reigning in his breast. While brutal lusts and unbridled appetites and passions are permitted to derange and desolate the mind of the bad man, while sensuality, while pride, or envy, or malice is spreading disorder and confusion within him, the obedient disciple of virtue discovers an order in his views and principles and feelings, and is sensible of a composure and a peace of conscience which render his existence a delight to him. While the one is looking forward with intense anxiety, lest disgrace or some just calamity should overtake him, while his future prospects are darkened by clouds threatening retribution, the innocence of the other is ever spreading light and sunshine over his past, his present, and his future path.

But if religion gives to its possessor cheerful views of himself, it affords him no less enjoyment in his various connexions with his fellow-men. Regarding God

as the universal Father, he must necessarily look upon his fellow-men and walk among them as his brethren. As he loves the Father, so he finds his affections bound to the children, and his regard for them is not in proportion to the outward distinctions they wear, but to their true merits, to the inward resemblance they bear to the infinite source of all integrity and benevolence. He walks among beings whom he has never injured, and whom he never designs to injure, but whom he has every disposition to aid and bless. He moves therefore among them without fear of reproach, without being under the necessity of cloaking his real intentions, or endeavoring to appear what he is not. He meets many grateful returns of that courtesy and kindness which he bestows on others; and though virtue does not always recompense her votaries with riches or fame, yet she always rewards them with that which is of far more worth and without which the most successful favorite of fortune is really poor and contemptible—the enjoyment of conscious innocence and self-respect. But still farther, she prepares and moulds a character which is far more likely to succeed in every valuable and worthy undertaking than any other. She gives habits of reflection, of discrimination, of correctness, and of industry and perseverance, which in and of themselves are better than the gifts of fortune; which are exceedingly certain passports to competence and respectability. My young friends, in particular, never forget this,—that however poor you may be at your setting out in the world, however little favored by hereditary

possessions or by family influence, yet if you have good principles, if you form right views of men and things, if you have strict honesty, if you have kind hearts, and if you have good habits,—habits of truth, of charity, of temperance, of industry, of faithfulness in your several callings, of frugality and economy,—you have those means which have ever been the most certain procurers of honorable wealth and distinction. If you are poor, if you now meet with occasional slight from the arrogant and undeserving, if you have many discouragements to encounter, and many mortifications to undergo—how much rather would I be in your place than be the heir of the richest estate and yet the wretched victim of dissipation and vice,—to be the heir of an estate which in all probability in a few years will be squandered, or which if retained cannot give respectability to a worthless possessor. If God has given you common health and common sense, he has given you the property which if rightly improved will make you almost any thing you choose to be in the world. Press on then, my young friends; do not think that religion is an enemy to present advancement. No, she is the great aider and director of our best energies to their highest attainments. Make of yourselves every valuable thing you can be; get property, get respectability, but get them by such means and by such means only as God and conscience approve. Choose rather to starve in a hovel, than to thrive by a dishonorable act. Be Christians then, my young friends, follow Jesus Christ; and to do this you must make up

your mind to forsake not only some but all unworthy things. 'Seek first,' he exhorts you, 'seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;' that is, seek first that purity of heart, that integrity of principle, those amiable feelings, and those good habits, which belong to the kingdom of God, and they will of themselves prove the most certain and efficient means of promoting your success in life, and crowning your labors with prosperity. Seek these first; for without them all the wealth, honors and pleasures of the world are glittering phantoms,—are no better than curses in the disguise of blessings. O my friends, if it were for the enjoyment of this life alone, you would be vast gainers by being Christians.

But religion has yet stronger claims to our attention than the promise she gives of this life, claims rooted in the relations we sustain to eternity,—'the life which is to come.' Yes, my hearers, the soul is of a progressive nature, and if she be immortal, as according to Christianity she is, then every advance she here makes in goodness, is an advance, the influence of which is to be felt throughout her whole existence, throughout eternity. Of all outward possessions we are bereft at death, but if our spiritual nature lives after death, then all our acquisitions of virtue, all the right views we have here obtained of God and truth and goodness, all the right feelings we have planted and cherished in our breasts, all the order and regularity we have established in our principles, sentiments and habits,—I say, all these must remain

with us after death. These are the treasures, which moth and rust do not corrupt nor thieves break through to steal. These constitute the true and imperishable wealth of the soul. These are the pearls of great price, which form the unfading ornaments in the crown of heavenly bliss.

Let it then, my dear hearers, be our first care to see that our minds are imbued with sound principles, that our hearts are governed by right motives, and that our lives are directed by well regulated habits. And then we may rest assured of obtaining the best enjoyments of this world, and the richest rewards of the next. So let us seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and so let us rely with full confidence upon the promise that all these things shall be added unto us.

How is this religion to be sought and cherished in the soul? I answer, by receiving Jesus as the author and finisher of our faith; as the divinely appointed teacher and guide; by diligently inquiring for what he has taught, by solemnly and resolutely coming to the purpose of making his precepts and his example, as nearly as we are able, the uniform rule of our belief, our feelings and our conduct; and by firmly going on through life, informing our understandings, correcting our errors, forsaking our sins, and shaping the general tenor of our behavior in accordance with his instructions. To seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness then is not the work of a moment only, but of a whole life.

Religion is to be sought not merely as a matter of

theory, consisting in correct apprehensions of mind, nor yet is it to be regarded merely as a matter of occasional feeling, throwing itself out in fitful ebullitions from an excited heart, but it is to be looked upon, and sought chiefly as a matter of action, disclosing its steady habitual influence in the practice of a well regulated life. If we would be Christians we are not merely to think religion, and talk religion, and sigh religion, and weep religion, but in the main drift of our lives we must properly and faithfully act it. And what is it to act religion? It is not to submit the judgment to the imagination; it is not to madden the passions; it is not to redden the eye with cherished sorrows; it is not to blanch the cheek with desperate fear; it is not to unhinge the health and wither the form with perpetual sadness; it is not to train every muscle of the face, to a show of peculiar sanctity; it is not to deaden all the charities of the heart and enshroud them in the cold folds of sectarian exclusiveness; it is not to pour denunciation on every man who is unable to pronounce the shibboleth of a religious party. No, this is not religion. No part of it has any countenance in the precepts or example of the meek and lowly Jesus. I repeat it, this is not religion.

The question again recurs to us and demands a reply. What is it to act, to seek and to practise religion? It is from a firm conviction of the being of God, from a sacred regard for the holiness of his perfections, from a deep sense of responsibility to him, from a heart-felt acknowledgement of the righteousness of his

law and from a sincere desire to meet his approbation; it is, under the influence of such sentiments and motives to strive to shape our conduct in harmony with the eternal principles of rectitude and benevolence. It is uniformly to exhibit the influence of the religious principle in the various duties and avocations of life. The parent who from a regard to the will of the Supreme Father, in the management of his household mingles wisdom and justice with kindness and love;—who neither by the rigor of arbitrary authority nor yet by the weaknesses of ruinous indulgence, sacrifices the good of his children;—who provides according to his best means for their bodily and spiritual welfare; who by even counsel, by just reproof, by correction, by warnings, by encouragements, and above all by an unsullied example, plants in their souls the seeds of honor and virtue and trains them up in the way they should go for usefulness, respectability and happiness,—that kind and prudent parent acts religion. The child that from a regard to the holy precept, 'Honor thy father and thy mother,' is induced to move on in a faithful course of filial affection, submission and duty,—that amiable child acts religion. The husband, who with a view to the commands of heaven, exhibits uniform fondness, constancy and regard toward the partner of his bosom, —that husband acts religion. The wife who from like motives is tender, faithful, frugal and domestic,—that wife acts religion. The brothers and sisters who are influenced by the divine law of love to exclude from the family threshold all jealousies, discord and strife

and in the habitual interchange of mutual tenderness and esteem live together,—those brothers and sisters act religion. The master who under a sense of his own responsibility to *his* Master in heaven, in his treatment of his servants mingles discretion with law, mercy with justice, compassion with authority, doing all in his power to soften the burthen of a dependant state,—that kind master acts religion. The servant who with his eye on the sacred injunction from above, 'servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eye service, as men pleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing God,' studies faithfully to discharge the circle of duties which devolve upon his station in life,—that servant acts religion. The man of civil office who perseveres in a fearless course of frank and unyielding integrity, resorting to no dishonorable means for supplanting a rival,—who keeps himself above the low arts of political circumvention, who never deserts principle for policy, but who amid the winds of faction and the fluctuations of party, guided by just sentiments, prefers the favor of his God and the approbation of his own conscience to success dishonorably won, —that high-minded politician, that patriotic son of true honor, that honest, noble man acts religion.

The lawyer who from a sacred respect to the supreme Law-giver, scorns the petty artifices which but too often soil the dignity of his noble profession, and appears the constant friend of equity and truth, the scourge of the oppressor, and the advocate of the oppressed,—that man, towering above the numerous temp-

tations which crowd alluringly around him, acts religion.

The physician who in the exercise of his arduous and humane duties, imitates the good Samaritan of our Savior, acts religion.

The preacher who prefers the flock to the fleece, who, unstained by sordid views, and unawed by the tumult of popular clamor, manfully plants and maintains his standard on the walls of truth, who bows not in homage of arrogant error, fawns not on wealth or pride, smiles not on vice, but keeps himself faithful to his God, to his Savior, to his own soul and to the immortal souls on whom his influence is exerted,—that preacher acts religion.

The merchant who disdains the petty meannesses which sometimes disgrace his honorable avocation, who deceives not his conscience by that infamous maxim that 'all is fair in trade,' who takes no undue advantages of the ignorance of others, but who from a regard to his maker's approbation, conducts all his transactions on open, honorable and manly principles,—that merchant, thronged as he is with opportunities and inducements to swerve from integrity, that honest merchant acts religion.

The seaman that amid the perils and temptations peculiar to his profession, keeps his lips from the intoxicating draught, his tongue from the defilement of an oath, and his feet from the polluted threshold of infamy, and who in the war of elements looks up in resignation and trust to that Being whose power careers on the whirlwind, whose voice commands the tempest to rage,

or hushes its clamors,—that seaman, not less in the shrouds than in the Bethel, acts religion.

The rich man who obeys and imitates the great proprietor of the universe in dispensing from his ample stores the blessings of charity,—whose ear listens to the widow's cry and the orphan's wail, whose hand is open to feed the famishing, to clothe the naked, and whose heart delights in kindling up the fire of comfort and cheerfulness upon the hearth of shivering proverty,—that rich man, that steward of Almighty God, acts religion.

The poor man who bows in resignation to his lot, blesses heaven for the share of mercies it has been pleased to allot him, receives his little pittance with a thankful heart, and improves his humble means with a diligent hand, avoids all the harm and does all the good he can in the humble sphere in which he moves, —that poor man, no less than his wealthier neighbor, acts religion.

SERMON XIV.

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY, THE 4TH OF JULY, 1833.

Lev. xxv. 12.—'For it is the Jubilee, it shall be holy unto you.'

The year of Jubilee ushered in by the sound of a trumpet and a proclamation throughout the land of universal restoration of possessions, liberty and rest, was on many accounts, among the ancient Jews, a season of great national triumph and rejoicing. Without designing to expatiate upon the benevolent object of its appointment, or the interesting circumstances attending its observance, I have selected the text merely as a suitable motto to stand at the head of a few reflections and sentiments, such as I deem appropriate to the time and place in which we are assembled. We have met here, my courteous audience, not to kindle the fires of sectarian controversy, nor to blow up the coals of political animosities; not to take sides with any religious sect, nor with any civil party. On proper occasions, it is our duty as Christians to defend what we esteem to be Christian truth, and to expose, in a right temper and spirit, what to us appears to be noxious error. There are occasions, too, on which the people should be warned of aggressions upon their rights by foreign power, or by domestic misrule. But it is remote from our present feelings and intentions to canvass

disputed tenets of religious faith or to enlist our passions in the turmoil of political strife. We would harbor no burning hostilities in our breasts; we would nurse no spark of hellish malignity in our souls; we would look upon the time and place as consecrated to better feelings. 'The shoes' that in the uneven pathway of the world have been soiled by the dust and mire of contention and rancor, we would put off from our feet, 'for the ground whereon we stand,' whether we regard the occasion or the spot, 'is holy.' We are collected together, within walls devoted to the service of no ruler, but the one supreme God—consecrated to the peaceful religion of Jesus—to the independence of the human intellect—to freedom of inquiry, and to universal charity; and we are convened on a day, bringing to mind events the most remarkable in the annals of nations—a day sacred to the cause of liberty, and most dear to the hearts of freemen—the Fourth of July, the Jubilee of American independence: 'it shall be holy unto you.' Let it be holy to grateful acknowledgments of the goodness of that Being who ruleth the whole earth in wisdom and love, and who has so bountifully shed abroad his favors on this happy country—let it be holy to reverent recollections of our ancestors—holy to the praise of our national fathers—holy to a cherished sense of the inestimable value of civil and religious liberty—holy to a prudent caution against those evils which may threaten the purity and permanence of our institutions—and holy to a proper understanding of, and a deep regard for those principles, manners and feelings by

which alone true freedom can be guarded and perpetuated. On this great national jubilee, when we behold a people of several millions extended over a country, whose soil teems with fertility, and everywhere brightens in the gleamings of a benignant sun upon the well-sped ploughshare, and whose rivers and coasts are whitened with the sails of a successful commerce, a poeple in the enjoyment of a government the most free, rights the most equal, and laws the most benign,—a people in the prosperous cultivation of the arts and sciences, and pressing onward and upward in a pathway of glory more brilliant than had been conceived in the most glowing speculations of political wisdom, or dreamed of in the fondest reveries of philanthropy: when we behold all this, how can we find a place in our hearts for other emotions than those of fervent gratitude to that God who has most mercifully preserved to us these blessings, and of ardent love and veneration for those distinguished worthies who bought with their blood, and faithfully transmitted to unborn generations these precious institutions.

Let us, then, with hearts warm with pious devotion, commune with the spirits of the mighty dead. Let us walk among the tombs of our fathers. Let us enter the sepulchre of the past; let us reverently put forth our hands to wipe off the dust and mould of forgetfulness from the coffin-lids of the wise and the brave, and gaze with filial awe and homage on the shrouded forms of patriotism and virtue.

With a generous tear we will moisten the sod where

repose the ashes of that genius and eloquence whose hallowed fires kindled the torch of our revolution, and we will bedew the memories of those sons of valor whose blood streamed on its battle-fields.

A more vigilant, resolute and undaunted band was never formed than the august assembly that gave to the world the immortal Declaration we have convened to celebrate, and which you have just heard so impressively read. It was not merely a sudden burst of resentment at one or two misjudged acts of the British government, that had determined them to engage in the perilous and sanguinary scenes of a revolutionary struggle. An effort at impost, no doubt, hastened, but is by no means to be regarded as the whole cause which produced our separation from England. The truth is, America had arrived at an age that qualified her for freedom, and she knew it. She discovered her interests, and her strength, and she was unacquainted with any right possessed by a government beyond the seas, to lord it over a heritage which she by her courage, wisdom and toil, had won for herself in these western wilds. The same principle, which liberates the child from the mother's arms, that of growth, the exhibition of a disposition and a capacity to take care of itself, was the efficient cause of our emancipation. A milder policy on the part of Britain might have protracted, but could not have finally prevented our escape from her control.

America saw that it was manifestly opposed to her dignity and her most important interests, to remain much longer in the lap of the mother-country, sustain-

ing the attitude of a dependent colony, subject to the arbitrary dictation of a foreign power. Such were her cool deliberations; such were her views, and on freedom she was resolved. Her voice of complaint against oppression was no muttering thunder of peevish discontent, and empty threats rolling in darkness, and at a distance from a determination to execute, but it was the full bold peal that announced in the vivid lightnings of its wrath, the illuminations of the all-conquering spirit of liberty. Our patriotic fathers were animated by a courage which no threats could intimidate, no danger appall; and impelled by a sacred ardor which no frost could chill, no sufferings blight.

With the torch of battle smoking in blood and glaring with rebellion in one hand, and the banner of their country in the other, they rushed upon the fortress and carried conflagration to the magazine of foreign despotism; and by the angry light of its flames, amid the thundering horrors of its explosion, inscribed 'Liberty' on the flag of the Union, and left it to wave in triumph over the blood-stained ruins of vanquished usurpation.

The history of the American revolution is marked throughout by the most surprising and interesting displays of human wisdom, prudence, bravery and virtue. It presents to the world the exhibition of a people small in numbers, weak in resources, but invincible in spirit, grappling in contest with a great, wealthy, powerful and renowned nation; and struggling on to final triumph through almost every variety of ill—now suffering a succession of defeats, now worn out with watchings,

now famishing for breaad, now shivering and freezing with cold, now witnessing dismay and defection in its ranks, now glared upon by the horrid visage of treason, now hearing the frantic shouts of an exasperated foe, now breasting the merciless torrent of savage barbarity, now gazing on the formidable array of a nation inexhaustible in wealth, and the fame of whose triumphant arms had filled the world with wonder. And yet at a moment when imagination could almost hear the clashing of future chains, when hope scarce shed a ray through the general darkness that brooded over the destinies of their country, when with storms of peril billowing all around them, they seemed to totter on the abyss of ruin, supported by a fixed, determined resolution, approximating to omnipotence, they withstood every shock of misfortune, braved the fury of every untoward circumstance, overleaped every difficulty, and came forth from the contest crowned with conquest and honor.

Thus in suffering and in sorrow, in danger and in death, did our fathers lay the foundations of this great and flourishing republic. The roots of our tree of liberty, like those of the fabled myrtle of Æneas, are imbedded in patriot blood.

The principal actors in the trying scenes to which we have so briefly and imperfectly referred, are long since passed off from the earth; whilst like the rainbow that arches the leap of the noble river down the cataract, the tears of a grateful nation of freemen have been

mingled with the splendor of a world's admiration, to encircle their transit with glory.

Fellow-citizens, you need no embellishments of rhetoric to establish in your minds a lively sense of the inestimable value of the free institutions acquired at so much cost, bequeathed to you as your inheritance, and solemnly entrusted to your guardian care as a blessing for remote posterity.

We all feel that we are exalted to the very gates of heaven in respect of national privileges. Let us take heed that we grow not dizzy with the height of prosperity to which we have attained, that we reel and stagger not on the summits of freedom, and that the very loftiness of our present station, be not the means of giving impulse to our downfall, and of sinking us awfully deep in the hell of domestic contentions, infamy and ruin. The instability of republics has ever been a theme of mournfulness to the philanthropist, and of triumph to the tyrant. They are exposed to peculiar dangers; dangers against which there is but one impenetrable shield, and that is the virtue of the people, a virtue founded upon a general diffusion amongst them of intelligence and religion. A government to be successful, must be adapted to the people. An unenlightened, a sensual, and debased community, will abuse liberty—will pervert it to a means of licentiousness. He whose whole nature fits him only for a slave, must have the necessary restraints of slavery. It was a sage maxim of the poet,

'Who rules o'er freemen must himself be free.'

The spiritual bondsman, the slave of ignorance, of error, of superstition, bigotry, prejudice and passion, is utterly unfitted to control the affairs of a people fitted for the enjoyment of civil and religious liberty. And equally evident is it, that a community enslaved by these evils, is entirely inadequate to the task of self-government. The ignorant must yield to the influence of superior knowledge, the weak and foolish to the plans and sway of wisdom, the idle and dissipated to the mastery of industry and prudence. The slave in mind will be, if not nominally, in effect, a slave in body, the tool of another, his course influenced, guided, governed by a loftier spirit; and a nation of intellectual slaves, let their government assume what name it may, republican or monarchical, will be a nation of political slaves, bowing in tame submission to the law, in servile dependence on the management, and in cringing subjection to the usurpations of some politic, energetic and daring leader. The excessive popularity of the Chief Magistrate, especially where the grounds of his hold on public favor are at all suspicious, is a portentous omen to any free government, and great virtue on the part of the people is requisite to prevent him either from motives of personal agrandizement, or from the influence of his ambitious partizans, from overstepping the prescribed limits of his office, and committing encroachments upon those rights he was elected to guard. And in any case, this public virtue, this general prevalence of correct views and pure sentiments in all ranks and classes of the community, is

our only rampart against the intrusions of a majority upon the legitimate privileges of the weaker party.

The vastness of our territory forms a broad and fruitful field of danger to the quietness and durability of our institutions. Our population is spread over an immense extent of country. The interests of widely separated portions of the inhabitants, must in the nature of things, be extremely discordant and conflicting; and the effects of legislation however impartial in its designs, will consequently fall with great inequality on different sections. The law that provides for the benefit of the North, may operate with a blighting energy upon the interests of the South, whilst that which promotes the immediate welfare of the South, may be blasting to that of the North. This contrariety of interest is a most natural source of dissatisfaction with the government, and nothing can prevent it from eventually undermining its peace, prosperity and very existence, but the omnipotence of that public virtue which embraces within itself a love of country and a scrupulous regard for the general weal that will sink all minor considerations, and dispose the people of each division of our land to surrender in their turn personal advantages, the retention of which would engender jealousy and discontent.

Our country is in danger from the excessive love of money. I know of no passion more withering to the purity of a free government than that of avarice, and I know of no form of government more capable of exciting and cherishing this passion than that of a re-

public. Where the avenues to wealth and the advantages it yields are choked by no laws of primogeniture, no hereditary titles or distinctions, but are equally open to every class of society,—where extensive possessions in whatever hands they are held, or by whatever means acquired, are accustomed to receive their full tribute of respect—where reputation and happiness are prone to be estimated by land measure, or by money scales—where the field of enterprize is unbounded, and the facilities of accumulation numerous, influences thicken and impulses beat quick and strong, to extend over the community a quenchless thirst for gain. And what is more destructive of all that is healthful in the social system than a grovelling, all-absorbing love of money? A love which an inspired writer, in accordance with universal observation, has pronounced to be 'the root of all evil.' Let mammon become the god of this country—let his infectious worship diffuse itself among our citizens, and impart its taint to our national character—let wealth be paid a profounder homage than talent, intelligence and honesty—let it be the grand lever to lift stupidity and baseness into public confidence and office—let it be made the all-engrossing object of general esteem and pursuit, and all that is sacred and valuable in the temple of our liberties, is at once demolished. When principles of rectitude are trampled upon, and the eloquence of conscience is drowned in the universal rage and bustle for money-getting; when the freest and holiest emotions of the soul are imprisoned within walls of sil-

ver and gold; when nothing is too precious to be bartered for lucre; when the best energies are palsied by a sordid debasement, then is the season of triumph for tyranny; then will the rich, the strong, and the many, coalesce in oppression of the poor, the weak, and the few. We boast that we wear no fetters of a foreign despot, but let us remember that we may forge for ourselves chains of gold more enslaving than chains of iron. And on what are we to rely as a defence against these evils so liable to spring up amongst us? I reply, upon guarding the virtue of the people, by diffusing amongst them those expanded views, just principles, and correct sentiments which will lead them to value wealth rightly—to pursue it honestly, and to employ it judiciously and kindly.

In a republic there is great danger from the violence of party spirit. I have already spoken of the unavoidable contrariety of interests in a territory so immense as ours.—In addition to this, all our institutions go to encourage free inquiry and to elicit the independent expression of individual sentiment. Among a people thus situated and influenced, it is impossible that there should be uniformity of opinion in regard to all the measures of the administration. Numerous causes will be perpetually in motion to produce varying parties.

These, indeed, when moderated by prudence and directed by principle, may prove useful checks, the one upon the other, thereby guarding from abuse the administration of the government. But unless restricted

within proper bounds by the general sentiments of the people, the spirit of party becomes a boiling spring of faction, pouring over the nation desolating torrents of disaffection, violence and rage.

Thus I might proceed in a vast latitude of remark to point out the evils which are peculiarly menacing to republics, and to exhibit public virtue as the great and only impregnable bulwark of their security. Yes, it is the good sense and good feelings of the great mass of the people, it is their knowledge of their true interests, and their regard for moral principle on which we must rely, to baffle the intrigues of selfish politicians, to check the career of ambitious aspirants, to hush the tumults of party, and save our country from degradation and ruin. We are in no danger from a foreign invasion, if we can be saved from ourselves. Statesmen may frame constitutions, and then wrangle with each other about their proper interpretation; they may build systems of checks and balances, and theorise upon rights surrendered and rights reserved, but after all, these will prove but parchment and paper barriers against power at the will of an individual, or a party disposed to tyrannize.

Arbitrary power never wants ability to construe written documents for itself; and if words will not do, it can resort to more efficient arguments. Of what avail is the whole system of checks and balances, when a popular chief magistrate or a ruling party extends its influence through each branch of the legislature, and by one means or another controls all its ramified operations? The truth is, there is a certain amount of

power condensed in these United States, which will spend its force somehow and somewhere; if not beneficially, most destructively. If its operations are obstructed in one channel, it will cut for itself another. If there is not virtue enough in the great mass of our population to see that it is well directed and employed, sectional and individual interest will grasp it and pervert it to the most oppressive purposes. It is not at all necessary that our country should be called a kingdom or an empire, or that our rulers should be encircled by a diadem, or wield a sceptre, in order to constitute us slaves and them tyrants.

We may be nominally independent republicans, and yet in reality, bending under the weightiest servitude, beneath the sway of a few unprincipled leaders of a misguided majority.

And it is plain that neither by an attempt to exercise any constitutional right, nor by any act of open violence, can a minor portion of this Union place itself in an attitude in which, if surrounded by a superior power bent on usurpation, it will not be subject to constant oppression. And what security have any of us, my countrymen, against an intrusion upon our rights of this formidable character? We have no other than what is founded upon the virtue of the great body of the people. We must rely upon their quickness of apprehension to distinguish betwixt right and wrong, upon the sense of justice reigning in their breasts, and prompting them to do unto others as they would that others should do to them, and upon the sway of a

wisdom that overleaps the narrow walls of sectional feeling, takes broad and comprehensive views of things, and induces all classes to sacrifice a private, immediate advantage to a general and durable good. Let the minds of the people, *en masse*, be thoroughly imbued with intelligence and a deep and true moral sense, and at the sight of a system of injustice in exercise by the government upon the weakest district of our country, a general suspicion and alarm will be excited, the springs of public sympathy for the injured will be opened, their cry of remonstrance will be anxiously listened to, and the voice of popular indignation against the agents of oppression, will roll loud and clear from north to south, from east to west, from the depths of the valley and from the mountain tops. In this case the principles and motives of the dominant party will be closely examined, its leaders will lose their hold on public confidence, its ranks be deserted, its power pass into more deserving hands, and thus its abuses become corrected. In an enlightened and conscientious nation, the triumphs of wickedness must be brief; truth will put forth her strength and justice will bear rule.—To build up a public virtue which presents so effectual a rampart to freedom, should be our great and united aim and effort. And how is this to be accomplished? I reply, by establishing a liberal system of education, extending to all ranks and classes of our community, and by diffusing among them the principles of religion.

In speaking of religion in particular, as a source of

public virtue, and thereby of national prosperity, I wish to avoid all misapprehension of my meaning, and I feel that I am surrounded by circumstances which render an explanation peculiarly appropriate. By religion, then, in the connexion in which I am now using that word, I do not mean an irrational and absurd system of ecclesiastical traditions and dogmas, which have no better claim to belief than that they are old and mysterious, and which when believed, do no one any good—exert no beneficial, practical influence. No; an implicit submission of the mind to what is unintelligible and inconsistent, serves to prepare it for the endurance of any servility, instead of exalting it to freedom. The surrender of our reason to a priest, fits us for the surrender of our civil rights to a King. In regard to religion, as in regard to every thing else, we would earnestly pray with the apostle, 'that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men.'

By religion, as promotive of national welfare, I do not mean a great burthen of ecclesiastical domination, saddled on the shoulders of the State. All history tells us that a union of Church and State is a most unholy alliance. Religion in the arms of civil power, becomes disrobed of her native simplicity and beauty. She appears no longer with a face illuminated by the chaste beamings of stainless innocence and love, breathing heaven from her lips, and scattering charity from her hands. No, she is debased by that union; she is a fallen angel, tricked out in the gorgeous apparel of vanity and pride; her cheek burning with the flame of

demon passions; her eye kindling with the blaze of sensuality; with one hand waving aloft the gleaming dagger of blood-stained cruelty, and lifting and binding with the other the clanking chain of servitude. Well were it for Christianity, if in every age of the Church its professors had been more mindful of the declaration of its distinguished founder, when he affirmed that his 'kingdom was not of this world.'

The reign of Christ is purely a spiritual reign, invested with no sceptre but that of truth, and having nothing to do with earthly governments, but in moulding the tempers and forming the characters of the individuals who compose them.

By religion, as the foundation of the virtue and enduring liberties of a people, I do not mean the exclusive spirit of a numerous and wealthy sect, rioting in the fullness of its power, fixing an arbitrary standard of faith, and awing men into submission to it by the horrors of the dungeon, the rack or the gibbet, or by loading the non-conformist with reproach and branding him with infamy. I know of no greater curse than the triumphs of religious illiberality. I know of nothing more blighting to the cause of freedom, more menacing to the existence of a Republic, than the successful exercise of that spiritual tyranny which usurps a control over men's consciences; which uses violence in regard to their opinions, awarding punishment as to a crime, to the frank avowal of belief. What mere mortal holds in his hand a commission from heaven to decide for another precisely how much or how little

he is to believe, and to visit him with retribution for not graduating his faith in exact accordance with his scale?

Error in doctrine is, doubtless, an evil and ought to be opposed, but in a right spirit and by proper means —in the spirit of kindness and love, and by means of demonstration and argument. Arbitrary force, whether it steps out boldly from legislative enactments, or whether it creeps in disguise along the influence of a strong religious party, exciting popular persecution against the avowal of this doctrine or that—arbitrary force, I say, though it may silence the tongue, can never expel error from the soul—can never make men believe correctly, or worship piously. Long enough has the experiment been tried. The faggot's flame has roasted the bodies of thousands, but never lighted the lamp of truth in a single soul.

The glowing iron of popular denunciation may brand the mark of reproach on the forehead of the victim, so as to cause him to walk among his fellow-men a thing of dread and horror, but it can never burn conviction into his mind.—Truth stands in no need of committing violence in its own defence. It wields a sharper weapon than the sword of persecution, whilst error is often promoted by injudicious efforts to suppress it. The blood that is shed to kill it, not unfrequently becomes the very nutriment on which it thrives and fattens.

By religion, I do not mean a wild and enthusiastic zeal, such as enabled Mahomet to fasten fetters of superstition on the eastern world, such as fired the breasts of

the crusaders, or such as animated the desolating career of jesuitical enterprise. By religion, I do not mean a formal parade of outward ceremonies, nor the incoherencies of a bewildered intellect, nor the ravings of tumultuous passions, nor any thing which carries confusion to the head, or phrenzy to the heart, or disorder to the life. No; but in speaking of religion as an agent of public virtue and a minister of liberty, I mean a rational, spiritual, generous and practical system, whose office it is to impress the mind with a firm conviction of the existence of the one true God, to impart a regard for his will as the prime rule of action, a love of his perfections, and a submission of the heart and life to those holy precepts of his Son which in all their tendencies and influences breathe 'peace on earth and good will to men.' A religion of this exalted and dignified character is God's best gift to his creatures. I would that a sense of its importance to the purity, peace and general welfare of individuals, and of communities, were deeply inscribed on every heart. Nothing will do in the place of it. Talk not of philosophy as a substitute for religion. Beautiful as are many of its representations, solid as are many of its deductions, and valuable as are many of its maxims, it lacks an energy to penetrate the soul and sink conviction deep in the heart. Specious as it seems in the seclusions of abstract contemplation, and benign as may be its influence there, it wants an adaptedness to act upon the great mass of men, and a power to shield them amid the duties, the trials, and the temptations of the world.

They have not the time to travel through labyrinths of refined speculations. They need a simpler and a more energetic director than Philosophy, and such an one is found in Religion. She points them at once to the all-seeing eye, and to the justly recompensing hand. She teaches them their accountableness for their most hidden acts. She associates in their minds eternity with time, brings the power of future retributions to influence the train of present conduct, animates by the hopes of heaven, and cautions by the terrors of hell. Her instructions are no matters of mere conjecture; they are plain and positive, and enforced by the most solemn sanctions. Talk not of honor as a sufficient spring of virtue; I mean of honor unbottomed upon a sense of responsibility to God.

It is a principle of action unstable as the sere leaf that rustles on the breeze of autumn—a principle floating on the capricious breath of the multitude who now agree to call this, and then that, honorable—a principle whose esteem of men is measured more by the success and splendor of their exploits, than by their intrinsic merits—a principle that in many communities brands the bravery of a courageous conscience with the epithet of cowardice, gives license to the grossest vices, and emblazons the bloodiest crimes—a principle nowhere to be trusted but in a society which religion has refined. France once made an effort to be free, and in that effort she tested the strength of a philosophy that ridiculed, not merely revelation, but the mention of a God, and of an honor which spurned the restraints

of his law. The event proved that she was too vicious for the possession and enjoyment of freedom.

Burning with lust, and reeking with crime, her eye glanced but to inspire sensuality; her breath issued, but to taint; her hand touched, but to pollute; her feet trod but to wither. Wherever she advanced, she advanced a terror and a desolation. Rapine, devastation, blight and ruin were in her march. Her liberties were strangled in the vortex of her licentiousness. And in every case the resesult, of a reliance on like principles must be nearly the same. Let infidelity seize the minds of the great body of the people; let the altars of piety be demolished; let atheism be enthroned on public respect; let the multitude be persuaded that there is no eye in heaven to witness, and no hand there to inflict justice on transactions of secret villany —that for crime to retreat from the eye of the world is to shelter itself from retribution; that persecuted virtue has no other protection, and triumphant wickedness no other avenger, than man; that nothing is to be hoped, and nothing to be feared beyond the narrow compass of the present life—let all religion, both natural and revealed, be thus treated with general scorn, and mournful experience will soon show us that in breaking the moral ligaments which bind the human soul to the throne of Deity, the most ennobling sentiments are prostrated, the strongest motives to virtue destroyed; that the power of conscience is shaken, and that all the firmest ties of a pure society are effectually dissolved.

I know the abuses of religion have been many and aggravated. I know that these have been the stumbling-blocks over which multitudes have fallen into skeptical distrust; but on 'religion pure and undefiled,' must be our last reliance. It is a sense of our perpetual responsibility to the Supreme Being for every thought, feeling and action, on which alone we can securely depend for a pure and constant virtue; a virtue, vigilant and active in private, as well as in public; in the darkness of midnight, as well as in the open blaze of noonday. Without public virtue, civil liberty is baseless; and without religion, public virtue is but a name. Our civil institutions, to be solid and permanent blessings, must be supported by the intelligence, christian piety and morality of our people. Let these sacred principles form the basis on which the pillar of our liberties rests, and the richest garlands of honor, prosperity and glory may cluster and bloom around it, without mining its bottom, or staining the beauty they fondly entwine.

Fellow-citizens, let us rightly improve the reflections in which we have just indulged. In reviewing our blessings, let us be grateful to God; in venerating the memory of our national fathers, let us imbibe what was noble in their spirit, and imitate what was pure in their example; in surveyiug our dangers, let us be excited to caution and vigilance; in contemplating the value of knowledge, let us strive for intellectual advancement; in urging the importance of religion, let us be practically religious; in sustaining our principles,

let us be conscientious and undaunted; in patriotic devotion to our country, let us be united and zealous—and may one deep-thrilling burst of emotion throughout this Union ever respond to the chorus,

> 'The star-spangled banner, O, long shall it wave
> O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.'

SERMON XV.

THE FUTURE DESTINY OF MAN.

[In inserting the following discourse, the Editor would not be understood as expressing an entire coincidence in all the views it contains. Indeed, it will appear from the memoir, that the opinions of Mr Pitkin himself underwent a change in relation to this subject, not long before his death. The main arguments of this Sermon however, are consistent with any liberal and enlightened views of the dealings of God with man in a future state: and the objections against some prevalent doctrines which appear to us erroneous, are here so forcibly and plainly stated, that the insertion of the discourse has been deemed advisable.]

John iii. 3.—'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

The kingdom of God, says the Apostle Paul, is righteousness, peace, and joy in the holy spirit. The new birth may be described in a great variety of ways, and its true and simple character may be obscured. But however it is described, by whatever load of strange words it is encumbered, the doctrine itself of regeneration, in the mind of intelligent Christians of all denominations, amounts to one and the same thing, a change of the mind, heart and life, from wrong views, feelings and practices to right ones. However much we may differ on other subjects, on this there is throughout Christendom but one voice. It is agreed on all hands that when a man ignorant of divine truth, habitually corrupt in his affections, and immoral in his life, obtains

a knowledge of Christianity, and through this knowledge becomes pure in his affections and correct in his practices, he is born again, and thus sees or enjoys the kingdom of God, enjoys righteousness, peace, and joy in the holy spirit.

Thus far we are all agreed. I am now going to discuss a controverted point, a question of great importance, one in the discussion of which we are all deeply concerned, and one which has given rise to much controversy and unfortunately to great bitterness of feeling. It is this; Have we any scriptural grounds to hope for the final conversion and consequent salvation of such of our fellow-creatures as leave this world without having experienced Christian regeneration,that is, without having exercised faith in Christ, and repentance for sin? Now the popular answer to this question is that we can have none, that there is no change after death, that this life is the only state of probation for eternity, that at death, the condition of the soul is unalterably fixed, either in immortal happiness, or unceasing misery.

To this answer, common as it is, I have many and weighty, and in my view unanswerable objections; a very few of which I beg leave at this time to present for your consideration. I object to it in the first place because it involves consequences which I am unable to reconcile with the impartial goodness of God. For if it be true that none can be saved in eternity, but such as have experienced faith in Christ here, it is certain that the great mass of mankind are forever lost; that

but a very small—but a comparatively trifling portion of the inhabitants of the world in past ages, or at present, can be saved.

Every Christian will admit that there is no such thing as Christian regeneration without faith in Christ. But can it be supposed that those little beings who are cut off from life in infancy or early childhood understand before death any thing about faith in Christ? A large body of our orthodox brethren believe that infants come into the world totally depraved. If so they must be born again in order to see the kingdom of God. But let me ask is there any condition in the Bible whereby a sinful soul can become cleansed and saved without faith and repentance; and if little children are totally depraved by sin, and if they do not exercise faith in the Savior and repentance for sin, before death, and if there is no such thing as being regenerated through faith and repentance in the future state, what grounds can we have either in reason or scripture to hope for their eternal salvation? I can see none. The doctrine of infant damnation was strenuously preached a few years ago. It was preached as many other horrid doctrines have been, till the common sense of the people got the upperhand of the dogmas of the clergy, and forced that body, as they valued popular esteem, to abandon it. But if the common views of infant sinand of the impossibility of regeneration after death, be correct, I see no just reason why that doctrine should not still be maintained.

I might introduce a like train of reflections, in regard

to the condition of idiots, but let the cases of those who die in early childhood, or in idiocy pass for nothing to the point, for though they really present weighty objections to prevailing doctrines, yet we can well spare the support they contribute to our argument. Let me now ask, if there is no regeneration after death, what must be the fate of the immense multitude of heathen, who have passed off from the earth without even having heard the name of Jesus Christ uttered? But is there any other name given among men whereby we can be saved? And is there in the whole Gospel any condition by which we can enjoy his salvation without having believed on his name? without having exercised faith in him? And does not the Apostle assure us that faith cometh by hearing? And do not all the efforts made by our pious orthodox brethren tend to show how indispensable to the salvation of the heathen is a knowledge of the Savior? And is it not indeed a great cruelty in them to furnish the means of salvation to these benighted people, when they are certain so few of them will embrace and improve them, if they think the heathen can be saved without the Gospel, and if they also believe that those who do have an opportunity of embracing it, and yet neglect the opportunity, are sure to fall into an endless hell at death. The truth is, it is out of the question for our Orthodox friends to reconcile either their creed, or their zeal to christianize the heathen, with the admission that a soul dying in heathenism can possibly be saved. I assert then, most boldly, that if the work of Christian regeneration is limited

to this life, the inconceivably vast host that for ages have successively swarmed in heathen lands, and passed off from the earth destitute of Christian faith, are lost forever.

Now, my hearers, I wish to direct your attention to a consideration of the condition of the Jews. To them the Gospel was first preached. On them the Star of Bethlehem first arose, and they refused to be guided by its light, and they turned a deaf ear to the teaching. For nearly eighteen hundred years they have been separated from their ancient dominion and scattered among the various nations of the earth, living monuments of the truth of ancient scripture prophecy. A great portion have been born and educated in Christian countries, associating in the various walks of life with Christian communities, and enjoying every opportunity of becoming Christians. And yet how rare, how almost unheard of an occurrence has been the conversion of a Jew to Christianity! In the course of nearly eighteen hundred years, millions and hundreds of millions of this numerous people have lived and died in utter rejection of the Gospel. Now, if there is no such thing as Christian regeneration in the future state, it is a plain, a palpable case to every Christian believer, that this immense army of God's chosen people are irrevocably lost; and yet among them have been very numerous examples of the most devout apparent piety towards God, and benevolence towards man; and yet too the Apostle Paul asserts that 'All Israel shall be saved,'

and that 'God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.'

We will now bring our thoughts to bear upon Christian nations. Look to the immense community beneath the influence of the Greek and Catholic churches; and think how small a part evince either by their lives or their deaths that they are the true disciples of Jesus. Think of the degraded state of morals in Spain, in Portugal, in Italy and other sections of the world where the church of Rome presides in her magnificence; and without harboring a doubt that many sincere and pious believers are within that communion, yet stretch charity to the farthest limit, and what myriads and myriads, in her several ages of corruption must, we conclude, have sunk from her pale into eternity, unborn of the Spirit of Truth?

In the next place, to say nothing of the prevalence of open infidelity, to say nothing of the thousands in France and other countries who have lived and died in undisguised rejection of the Scriptures, think of the numbers in both Catholic and Protestant countries that evince a total disregard to the doctrines and precepts of religion, that live and die in stupid indifference to the concerns of their soul's salvation. Think of the millions all around us that are constantly swelling the stream of death, without ever having professed the least attachment to religious subjects.

Again, look within the precincts of the several Protestant churches, and think how many of those who 'say Lord, Lord,' and who throng the communion tables, are

to be regarded, by the most expansive charity, in no better light than that of mere formalists, self-deceivers, or designing hypocrites: think of the thousands that wear a religious dress, merely because it is a customary or a fashionable one, merely as a badge of introduction to more respectable company than they could otherwise keep, or to secure popular favor in obtaining official or professional advancement, or to attract customers in the way of trade. Think of the thousands of young and thoughtless minds who are crowded into churches in seasons of peculiar religious excitement, and who after the fever of the first impulse is cooled, are restrained within them by no better principles than those of pride and the fear of a rigid discipline. In the little church of twelve members instituted beneath the scrutiny of an eye that pierced deep into men's hearts, was a Judas. I think it no breach of charity to believe that there is now in Christian churches a far greater proportion of deceived or deceiving professors than there was in the chosen band of our Savior.

Arithmetic is a useful science. Let us apply it in illustration of our subject. The Christian world embraces one hundred and seventy millions. These are divided among the Roman Catholic, Greek, and Protestant Churches; the first of which is double the number to that of either of the others. And you know how little hope our orthodox neighbors have for this immense community. Taking all the nominal Christians there are in the world into the account,—all the unregenerate; all the world's people; all rank

heretics, all hypocrites belonging to the different churches (which in the judgment of a broad charity we can hardly suppose less than one twelfth part, as the proportion was among the Apostles) it would be a moderate calculation to say that not more than one out of ten dies prepared to meet his God. What then is the result? Out of each successive generation of human souls, which are computed to form an average of eight-hundred millions; there are eternally lost ten millions of Jews, one hundred and forty millions of Mohammedans, four hundred and eighty millions of Pagans, one hundred and fifty-three millions from Christian countries, making the total amount that go to hell every generation, supposing it to pass away every thirty-three years, no less than seven hundred and eighty-three millions, and to heaven only seventeen millions. In every century, according to this calculation, there go to everlasting punishment two thousand three hundred and forty-nine millions of wretched souls, appointed by their Maker, and given over to endless despair; while in the same time there go to heaven as the purchase of Christ's blood, only the comparatively insignificant number of fifty-one millions. If we suppose the world to exist six thousand years only, and that there are on an average twenty-four hundred millions of human souls which come into and go out of existence during each century (and that the present time may be supposed to yield a fair average) it would give a total of one hundred and forty-four thousand millions; of which one hundred and forty thousand nine hundred and forty

millions of souls will have gone to misery, while only three thousand and sixty millions will have gone to happiness.

Now, my orthodox brother, do you not stand appalled at this horrid picture? Then you ought to stand appalled at the frowning creeds that furnish the canvass and the coloring for its direful representation. If, as is maintained, not one human soul can ever be saved who does not in this life experience religion according to the terms and under the forms which are constantly urged as indispensable, it follows that in every century the enormous multitude of two thousand three hundred forty-nine millions of human souls are crowding the portals of endless damnation; while Christ with all the power with which he is clothed is able to rescue but little more than one twentieth part of that number. How can you reconcile such a view with the acknowledged attributes of the Deity or with the scriptural representations of the triumphs over sin, death, and hell, of the Redeemer? I know you will start back from the legitimate consequences of the views you are upholding.

You will begin to retract, you will begin to say that some of the Jews, and some of the Mohammedans, and some of the Pagans, and some of the heretics in the Christian Church, and some of the world's people may be saved, not lost. You will summon up every shadow of hope for death-bed conversions. But in so doing you show when brought to the test that your whole system totters on pillars of straw. You show, that

your bewildered understanding is cleaving to a theory which your benevolent hearts rise up to falsify. There is no room for retraction. If you will embrace the promise, you must not shrink from sustaining its plain and inevitable consequences. What is the constant tone of your preaching? Is it not most decidedly and unequivocally that not one can be saved in eternity who has not in this world been a believer in Christ? And how often have you heard the same views stated in your missionary addresses? Let me ask, are not all your missionary efforts predicated upon the supposed fact that the heathen are all sentenced to eternal misery, and that without a belief in your religion before death there is no salvation from them? If you admit that without such a belief a single individual can be saved, you at once tear down the bar which you have erected, for if one soul may be thus saved, show me why all souls may not also be saved.

The fact is, people are too prone to think on the surface of doctrines, without ever diving into their awful depths. Thousands of persons limit their reflections by the narrow bounds of their creeds, and forget that there are human souls as valuable as theirs, created by the same Almighty hand, beyond the circle of their acquaintance and sect. Like the poor unlettered hind who supposes that the visible horizon is the boundary of the earth, and that his hamlet is the most important portion of the world, they draw a little sectarian circle around a small part of God's works, and dream that the sun of his love shines only within that narrow compass they have circumscribed.

Now, my friends, can you believe that a God of infinite wisdom and goodness has brought from unoffending nonentity into existence, a universe of wretchedness? Can you believe that he of whom it is declared that he 'will have all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth,' has so constituted a world that so vast a portion of his rational creatures must inevitably suffer endless tortures, that so few of them will obtain salvation? Can you believe that that God, who is good unto all and whose tender mercies are over all his works, has brought into being so vast a number of creatures, with the seeds of everlasting wretchedness deposited in the very germ of their nature; and placed them in a moral soil and surrounded them by moral influences to make them sure of shooting forth, and growing rank and bearing their destined fruit? For my own part I dare not so impeach the wisdom of God as to suppose that he has so arranged his universe that the weight of a whole eternity of consequences is left to poise on the tremulous hand of human volition, that the hazard of eternal joy or woe is to be decided by the short and uncertain game of a mortal life.

I should deem that father imprudent and unwise in the extreme who should throw into the entire control of his little thoughtless child, to be squandered by his witless caprices, the ample estate he had designed for his maturity; but what comparison would the imprudence of suspending even the wealth and temporal destinies of a nation upon the will of a most capricious child, bear to that of suspending an eternal heaven or hell upon

the fluctuating turns of mind to which in this short and changing life the human soul is subject? O what is frail man, a reed in the wind of circumstance, a leaf rustling on the breeze of events, on the gale of precarious passions,—O, what is mortal man, surrounded on all sides by doubt, perplexity, darkness, temptation and sin,—O what is he that he should be intrusted by his all wise Creator, with the inconceivably momentous concerns of an unalterable eternity, all dependant upon the influences that act upon him during his brief period of mortal existence? I believe indeed in the freedom of the human will, but dare not maintain that the benevolent Creator has given this active and powerful principle to any being with a certain foreknowledge that its exercise for a few brief days on earth would ensure everlasting tortures to his soul.

I dare not fling such high charges in the face of heaven. I know it has been said that eternal misery was necessary to promote the glory of God, and the happiness of his saints. But I cannot, I dare not, as I value the esteem of my immaculate Maker, even dream for a moment, that he can have a glory dependant for promotion upon the utter ruin of his dependant creatures. Nor can I dream that the air of paradise is dependant for its odor of bliss upon the steams of wretchedness that rise up from the polluted gulf of endless despair, to a display of divine justice in rewarding men according to the deeds done in the body. It is the height of inconsistency for our orthodox brethren to pretend that on their system any such dis-

play is made. On the contrary, if their views of future retribution be correct, the vilest sinner, the sinner old in crime, if he chances to be placed under influences favorable to conversion, and to be converted sometime before his death, is admitted into eternal felicity; while a moral man, a Washington or a Franklin, who may have been the eminent benefactor of his species, and who has left behind him no evidence of having experienced any thing which the popular religionists of our time would call regeneration, is sent to an endless hell.

I can draw no such exact line of distinction between the characters, the deserts or the destinies of my fellow-men, as seems to be drawn by our Orthodox brethren. I have seen human nature sunk into the most mournful state of degradation; but I never met with a man so bad but that he might be worse; I never became acquainted with a human being, however deeply he might be involved in sin, in whom I could not still discover some amiable disposition, some feeling of compassion for another's woes, some thrill of benevolence, some shuddering of guilt, some sympathy for virtue, some redeeming quality, some relic of native purity, some trace of the divine image in which the human soul was originally formed. On the other hand, it has been my happiness to witness among men examples of the most exalted virtue, to view human nature brought to a degree of excellence, that seemed nearly to verge on perfection, but after all I must confess, I never met with a man so good, but that he might be much

better, I have never seen human nature untinctured by imperfection, unstained by a fault. Between the characters of the best, and those of the worst members of the community, I have had occasion to notice almost every possible degree and shade of virtue and vice. I have seen in the same individual, great virtues associated with great vices, striking excellencies of character with equally striking moral deformities. When I have looked upon those in the lowest scale of what is termed holiness by the church, and upon those in the highest scale of what is called morality by the church, when in fine I have thought, how trifling, how imperceptible must be the shade of goodness and depravity betwixt them, I have been irresistibly led to the conclusion that there existed no such essential difference in human character, as to justify the supposition that rewards so disproportionate to merits as those implied by our opposers would ever be administered by an infinitely wise and just God. I cannot believe that the just judge of all the earth, who will do right, who will do every thing in complete accordance with the eternal principles of rectitude, I cannot believe that he will make such an apparently partial distinction in deciding the everlasting fate of his poor fallible creatures, as to give where there is scarcely a perceptible shade of difference in character such an infinite difference in allotments; to the one part an endless heaven, the other an endless hell. Still less can I believe that the vilest wretch in existence, the wretch gray in wickedness who chances to be placed sometime before his death under

circumstances favorable to repentance, and repents, is to be admitted into a state of unalloyed and infinite delight, while the amiable and moral young man who is cut off without an opportunity to repent is consigned to endless woes. Yet such things must very often take place if prevailing opinions are true.

What then are my conclusions? Happy am I in being able to find in Revelation an answer in exact accordance with the views I have gathered from nature. My conclusions are these, that every man shall be rewarded according to the deeds done in the body. In this world, I believe a man is, generally speaking, happy in proportion as he is virtuous, and miserable in proportion to his vices; and though I am far from believing that men are always recompensed according to their deeds in this world, yet this very circumstance goes far to prove to me the existence of a future world, where every thing will be made equal.

Here indeed I sometimes see a man blessed with a vigorous constitution, that carries him perhaps to old age in the most debasing excesses; I see him blessed with wealth, with suavity of manners to conciliate friends, with talents, or other extraneous ornaments to throw a gilding over his vices;—thus I see him pass along with apparent smoothness through life in the exercise of example, that throws pollution on every thing around it. I see another man, virtuous in his sentiments and correct in his example, struggling with the most delicate health, with poverty, with coldness from the world, and often doomed to sustain for conscience sake the most

unmerited reproach. Now all the sophistry in the world cannot blind our eyes to experience. I cannot believe that these two men are recompensed according to their deeds in this world; hence I conclude, there is another world in which all these apparently crooked ways of Divine Providence will be made straight. I have no idea that death, a mere prostration of physical energies, a mere destruction of the animal body, is either to corrupt or to purify the soul. I should as soon think of becoming a man of the most profound learning, by losing my arm, a part of my body, as I should think of becoming perfectly holy and happy by being divested of my whole body. While from the animal frame, the clay tabernacle, particles are continually passing off, so that in a very few years not a solitary particle of the body remains, but the whole structure is composed of new matter, the mind, the thinking capacity, the loving or hating capacity remains. It constitutes the same person; amid all the revolutions that are going on in her exterior kingdom, the soul has a spiritual palace of her own, and remains the same. Are you wiser this year than you were seven years ago? You are so from the operations of your mind, not from the changes of your body. Are you better? The workings of your mind have added to your goodness.

Now what is the resurrection state? Surely nothing other than the surviving of the soul in another form, after the destruction of the body. The soul then I suppose to go into eternity with precisely the same

degree of holiness or depravity which it had fostered and cherished here. When we speak of the punishment which God inflicts upon sin, we mean the natural and necessary consequences which result to the soul from the exercise of sin. If the soul has neglected to form and cherish pure desires here, and if it leaves the world unreconciled to God, unimbued with his goodness, and carries its depraved dispositions along with it into eternity, it must be miserable in proportion as it is depraved; and if by being stripped of those shields to the power of remorse which guilt in this world puts before itself, the soul is operated upon more forcibly by the power of truth and is brought to repent of its rebellion against holiness, and to exchange its sinful inclinations for holy ones, then the misery it is made to feel in consequence of its guilt becomes an instrument in the hands of divine grace to purify it from sin, to make it a new creature, to make it alive in Christ; and when through such influences all human minds shall be made thus alive in Christ, then will be fulfilled the scriptural declaration, 'as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' Then will be realized the vision of John in the Revelation, 'And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever.'

Now, how far the agency of man to make himself miserable is permitted to extend, we know not. Revelation is silent on the subject. We are ignorant therefore of both the possible degree and the duration

of misery. We have therefore every possible motive on the ground of caution to be exceedingly alarmed at our iniquities, and to forsake them without delay, to 'cease to do evil and learn to do well.'

I object to the doctrine which maintains that those only who have come to a belief in the gospel in this life can be saved in eternity, that it is at war with the plainest scriptural promises, connected with the gospel blessing. St Paul informs us, Gal. iii. 8, 'The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.' This he explains verse 16, 'Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.' If we turn to those scripture promises recorded in the book of Genesis, we shall find this promise which was made to Abraham, renewed to Isaac, and expressed in the fullest manner to Jacob. Gen. xxviii. 14. 'In thee and thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' This blessing, St Paul explains to be justification through faith. The promise, with the Apostle's comment, affords a full and direct proof of the point in question. A false faith is not a justifying one. A dead faith would be a curse, and not a blessing. The justification through faith here promised was to be a real blessing to all the families of the earth. The Angels who proclaimed the birth of Christ to the shepherds, said, 'Fear not, behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.' But surely the gospel cannot be great joy to all people, nor to any people, till they be-

lieve it; and they must believe it with a saving faith, or it will only aggravate their misery. St Paul, speaking of Christ, says, Phil. ii. 9, 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.' Now every thing in heaven, in earth and under the earth, strictly speaking, will together comprehend the whole created universe. When this revealed purpose of the Deity shall be fulfilled, where will be found the unbelieving, unsubdued rebels against his authority?

To what conclusion then in regard to our subject must we arrive? To my mind it is as clear as if written in sunbeams; that Jesus Christ was born and came into the world, as he testified to Pilate, for this one great end, to bear witness to the truth;—that he found the souls of men lost in ignorance, in error, and in sin, and that he came to save that which was thus lost; that he was called Jesus because 'he should save his people from their sins,' that he came to open the blind eyes to the light of truth; that he came to open the deaf ears by the power of his impressive and eloquent instructions, that he found a world darkened by Jewish traditionary corruption, bewildered by gentile philosophy, and cramped and fettered by pagan idolatries and superstitions; and that he came to deliver it from these, and from consequent degradation and misery, into the knowledge of the one true God, into just conceptions of his nature, attributes, requirements and pur-

poses, into the love and practice of virtue, and into that felicity which in this world and the next follows in the train of wisdom and holiness;—that to accomplish this end he taught and labored, wrought miracles, suffered, died and rose again, to confirm the truth he declared; and that through the truth thus established he strove to redeem the wandering and captive soul from its delusive bewilderment, and its chains of spiritual bondage;—that for this end he delivered his testimony to his disciples, commissioned them to preach it, and thus made provision for its faithful transmission in the collected form of the New Testament to all future generations. This divine testimony, this record of truth, this embodied system is called the Gospel, a name signifying good news, or a kind message.

Now he that believes what it teaches is saved—from what? From wrong views, and wrong feelings towards God and man, and wrong practices and consequent punishment. When is he saved? Just as soon as he believes. How far is he saved? Just so far as his belief is correct and as it induces him to forsake sin. He that believeth not this testimony is condemned. Condemned to what? To the loss of all that divine knowledge which the gospel contains; to the loss of that purity which it inspires; to the loss of that practical morality it enjoins; to the consequent loss of all those delightful hopes and encouragements it presents; to the loss of that peace and satisfaction it affords. How far is he condemned? Just in proportion as he wilfully blinds his eyes to the truth; just so far as he is left in ignorance and error; just so far as his affections are impure, and his life immoral.

How long is he condemned? Just so long as he persists in his opposition to the truth and remains in any degree enslaved to error and vice. In fine, the salvation of man in this world we have no reason to suppose is ever complete, but he is in regard to this, a gainer, just as he is in regard to every other subject, in proportion to his devotedness to the truth, and a loser in proportion to his neglect, slothfulness or contempt in respect to the truth. He is saved by believing the gospel, so far as his belief renders him wiser and better and happier, and he is condemned for his unbelief so far as his rejection of the gospel leaves him involved in ignorance, error, wickedness and misery.

I have one farther objection to urge against the opinions I have set out in this discourse to oppose; and let me add, it is one of far greater weight in my mind than all the others I have adduced. The heathen, however sincere in his idolatry and however upright in his life, is doomed to endless woe, for not having had faith in a Savior of whom he had never heard! The Jew, however honest in his attachment to the religion of his fathers, however pious in his devotion to the one God of the Old Testament,—the Jew, who though persecuted in every country, though set up as a target of reproach for bigotry and fanaticism to pierce, though passing among the nations a bye word and a reproach, though impelled by every earthly interest to change his creed and his national name,—shows his sincerity by braving the frowns of an unjust world in his adherence to his faith, is doomed to irretrievable woe, for not embracing a system which all the influences of his birth and education would make

him tremble to embrace! Eternal salvation, upon the orthodox system, does in no wise depend upon the amount of good or evil we have practised on earth. No; it depends upon the circumstances of our having believed certain doctrines, and passed through certain forms and feelings. The Unitarian who cannot in the Bible find the Trinity, or the dogmas of Total Depravity, Election and Reprobation, and Endless Misery, though sacrificing every thing like popular favor and worldly interest upon the altar of his conscience, and though ever so diligent in his search for truth, and though ever so honest in the conclusions at which he arrives, though ever so liberal, charitable and forgiving towards his enemies, and though ever so blameless in his life, is sentenced to irretrievable ruin for understanding his Savior to mean what he said when he declared, 'My Father is greater than I;' (John xiv. 28.) Whilst the man who knows nothing of scripture from his own examination, but believes implicitly as he is taught by his priest, and is able to relate strange and mysterious feelings, though he retains wealth dishonorably gotten, though he is denouncing and intolerant, and though a great part of his life has been spent in high-handed acts of wickedness, is at death received up to glory.

But upon whatever salvation depends, whether on faith or works, or both, it is unreasonable to suppose that mankind have on earth any thing like a fair, sufficient, and equal state of probation for it. It may indeed be a sufficient trial to draw down unceasing torment upon the souls of millions. But in no sense can it be called fair and equal. No one of us can help the

fact of his having been born and educated under unfavorable circumstances; and yet these circumstances, we all know, give a strong bias to our leading sentiments and characters. Let me ask then, supposing for instance Presbyterianism should prove to be the true and saving faith, if the child of pious Presbyterian parents, lisping its first accents in a Presbyterian infant school, drawing in the Presbyterian doctrines in its earliest childhood in a Presbyterian Sabbath school, and constantly trained at home and at church to Presbyterian tenets,—let me ask if there is any comparison in the chance for salvation of such a child, and the offspring of a Jew, born and educated under influences so strong and so unfavorable to the embracing of Christian faith, that an instance of Christian conversion can scarcely be found recorded among the millions of his people? Mankind too are cut down in all ages. Thousands of children have died when they had committed but few sins and enjoyed but a few hours of probation; and yet a single sin unrepented of, we are told is sufficient to procure eternal wrath. Others have lived to old age. Let me ask, has the child enjoyed as fair a trial as the old person? Look over the community and see how exceedingly favorable are all the influences that act upon one mind, and how unfavorable are those operating upon another, and then recollect that a whole eternity of joy or sorrow is urged to be dependent upon the course pursued during this short and unequal probation of mortal life?

And can you while supporting prevailing opinions vindicate the ways of God to man? We are taught in Scripture, Psalm cxlv. 9, that 'The Lord is good un-

to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.' Again it is declared, Mal iii. 6, 'I am the Lord; I change not.' If God's mercies are over all his works, and he changes not, then he will continue to be merciful to all his creatures throughout all eternity. The Scriptures abound in promises that sin shall be destroyed, and this proves that the means of grace are not limited to this life. Daniel speaking of the Messiah says, chap. ix. 24, 'He shall finish the transgression and make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness.' St John says, John i. 29, 'Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;' and St Paul declares, Heb. ii. 14, that Jesus Christ took part of flesh and blood, 'that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is the Devil;' and, Romans v. 29, that 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' John the Evangelist says, 'For this purpose the son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil.' Now if Christ shall finish transgression and make an end of sin, take it away from the world, destroy the Devil and his works, and cause grace to abound beyond the power of sin and death, then there must be repentance unto life beyond death; for this work we know, is not accomplished in this world. In further proof that the means of grace will extend beyond death, we will notice a few of those passages which speak of the final reconciliation of all things.

Jesus says, Matt. xi. 27, 'All things are delivered unto me of my Father.' John vi. 37, 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and he that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' Verse 39, 'And

this is the Father's will who hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.' John xii. 32, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' In the fifth chapter of Romans the final holiness and happiness of all men is expressed as explicitly as it can be in human language; the Apostle begins at the 18th verse, and says, 'Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many,' [just as many] 'be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound; but where sin abounded grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.'

In the foregoing language the following particulars are distinctly brought to view. Firstly, that as condemnation comes upon all men in consequence of sin, so shall the gift of eternal life come upon all men, through Jesus Christ. Secondly, just as many as were made sinners, shall be made righteous. Thirdly, that where sin has abounded, grace shall much more abound. And fourthly, he tells us how far sin doth abound, and then, how much farther grace abounds than sin. Sin reigns unto death or condemnation;—but grace reigns unto eternal life. How any person can read these texts and not come to the conclusion that it was the apostle's design to teach the final holiness and happiness of all, I know not.

Then if all men shall be made righteous, the work of regeneration will extend beyond the grave, for it is certain all are not made righteous in this life.

Again, this same Apostle declares in the eighth chapter of Romans, verses 19—23, 'For the earnest expectation of the creature, waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature,' or the whole creation, as the original Greek words are with more propriety rendered, 'was made subject to vanity not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also,' the same creature or creation that was made subject to vanity, 'shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also which have the first fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, to wit:—the redemption of our body.' This language is plain and explicit, and fully proves the final reconciliation of all things. It assures us that the whole creation, which is now groaning under the bondage of corruption, shall be delivered from this bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Again, this same apostle says, 1 Tim. ii. 4, that God 'will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth;' and Peter declares, Acts iii. 21, that 'the heavens must receive' Jesus 'until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.' Who now can doubt the final restitu-

tion of all things, since it is declared by an inspired Apostle that this restitution has been spoken of by the mouth of all God's holy prophets since the world began?

Again, Paul declares, 1 Cor. xv. 22, 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' And again he says, 2 Cor. v. 17, 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.' The first of these texts declares all shall be made alive in Christ, and the other that he that is in Christ is a new creature; therefore all must be made new creatures, and if all must be finally made new creatures, then the work of regeneration must extend beyond death, for all are not made alive in Christ, or new creatures in this life. Again, the apostle says, Eph. i. 9, 'Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.' The expression, 'gather together in one,' signifies to reduce into one sum or whole, a number of scattered and disunited parts. Again, Col. i. 19, 'For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself. By him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.'

God declares by the prophet Isaiah, xlv. 23, 'Unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness

and strength.' And the Apostle Paul expresses the same sentiment, though in stronger terms. Phil. ii. 9, 'Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' Bowing the knee must certainly mean humble submission and adoration. And the expressions in these passages are absolutely universal. They take in all in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and represent all as making the same confession. Therefore all must either be willing or unwilling subjects. If those in heaven shall confess as willing subjects, those on earth and under the earth must, for all are to confess alike that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Finally, the scriptures assert, 1 Cor. xv. 25, that Jesus 'must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.' And Rev. v. 13, 'And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.'

If these passages do not prove the final subjection and reconciliation of all things to God, it is impossible to express that idea in any language whatever.